DOWNTOWN IN FOCUS

A BLUEPRINT FOR FARGO'S CORE

DRAFT

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[letter from nicole/mayor?]

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Introduction

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Introduction

WELCOME TO DOWNTOWN FARGO!

> "I feel like we stand a chance to build a stronger community, and a stronger community that's outside of what most people think is typical of Fargo."
>
> *— Corey Cliett, Owner of NerdQ from Fargo Monthly*

Downtown InFocus is a comprehensive, action-oriented guidebook for the future of Fargo's historic Downtown. Downtown is the foundation of the region where "Fargo in the Timbers" was established in the 1800s on what is now the Mid-America Steel site. Like many cities across the country, both larger and smaller, Downtown has weathered booms and busts. Many Fargoans remember when, not long ago, Downtown suffered from disinvestment and empty storefronts. So much has changed since then. Thoughtful leadership and key investments have helped Downtown to turn a much-needed corner. Today, Downtown is a growing residential neighborhood, home to small and innovative businesses; it possesses a collection of locally-owned stores and restaurants that rivals that of cities with much larger populations. The positive energy in Downtown has resulted in significant press coverage and national attention.

While Downtown has momentum not seen since its heyday, some issues persist and new challenges have emerged. On the one hand, Downtown still suffers from too many surface parking lots that were once occupied by stores or housing. It can be hard to find basic services and goods (try buying Advil or a phone charger Downtown), and the infrastructure along and under many streets – the oldest in the City – is in need of major improvements.

On the other hand, with growth, we now face the challenge of ensuring that the Downtown experience is positive one for everyone. How do we ensure that visitors can easily find their way to their destinations? As Downtown grows in popularity, how do we support and retain existing retailers and keep from pricing out the very things that give Downtown its character in the first place?

Perhaps most importantly, other cities and Downtowns are competing – they are working hard to attract new jobs, new residents, visitors, and thus more vitality. From Sioux Falls to Grand Forks but also in cities across the country, downtowns are focusing on their "experience." The experience of a downtown helps to retain and attract talent and bring customers back time and time again. *Downtown InFocus* is an opportunity to figure out what's next for Downtown Fargo.

To develop this plan, all members of the community – those who live, work, learn, and play in Downtown – were welcomed as participants, each with a story or perspective to share. Through this process, residents and stakeholders created a vision for their Downtown and identified the key actions for change to help make that vision a reality. There was no shortage of ideas and opinions. Thank you to everyone who engaged with this planning process so closely and in doing so enriched the plan. Your words and ideas are present on every page.

> "For too long, people have let outsiders define us. The plan needs to let local voices decide on our identity." *— interview*

This project is the product of ongoing commitment by the City of Fargo to strategically invest in Downtown. But Downtown's future is not the City's full responsibility. Many agencies, organizations, business owners, and residents are hard at work to improve Downtown. This plan, therefore, is a guidebook for not just City action but the actions of all of the Fargoans who have already committed to creating a vibrant and distinctive Downtown that remains the economic, social, and cultural center of the region.

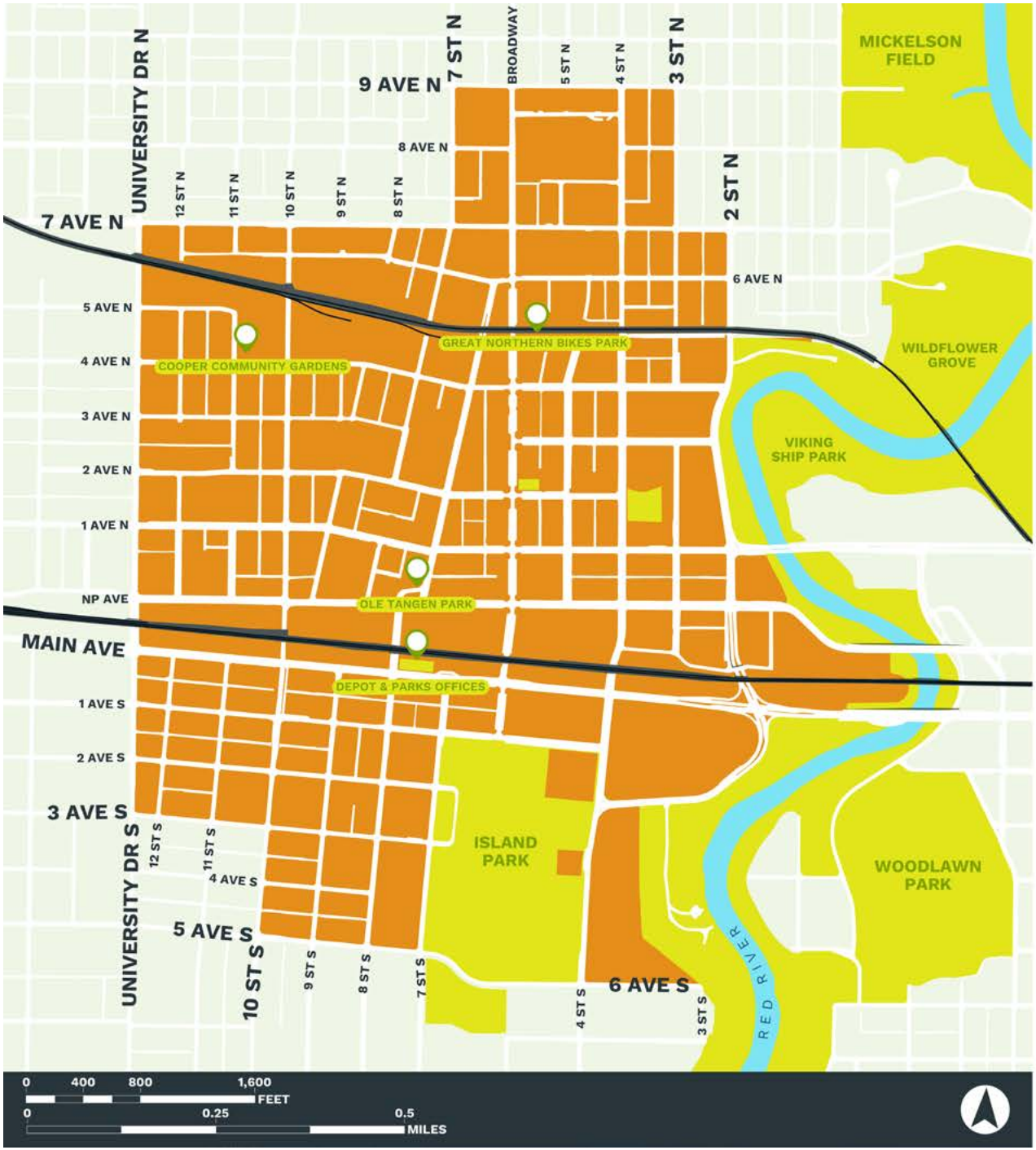

FIGURE 1: Map of the Focus Area

Location within the City limits

The *Downtown InFocus* focus area is comprised of 560 acres in the heart of Fargo. It includes all of the Business Improvements District (BID) and the Renaissance Zone and stretches from University Avenue to the Red River and roughly from Sanford Hospital to the southern edge of Island Park. This study area is larger than the traditional Downtown "core" to account for the fact that the connections between Downtown and the near neighborhoods are critically important to the future of Downtown. It is also important to note that while there is a dotted line around the study area on most of the maps, the plan recognizes that the study area boundaries are fuzzy meaning that we have not planned for Downtown in a vacuum. This plan does include data and strategies that extend outside of the Downtown study area based upon the feedback and guidance from residents and local leaders.

The Focus Area

Source: Interface Studio

RAIL

OPEN SPACE

DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

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WHY PLAN?

There are no shortage of ideas for the future of Downtown Fargo. Organizing, prioritizing and implementing these ideas requires a clear plan of action. What are the key issues the community faces, and how can we best overcome them? What is most important to the community? What can we achieve now, and which projects will take time, coming to fruition further down the road? These questions and more are the reason for a plan – one that is generated in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders. Specifically, *Downtown InFocus* outlines a plan to:

> Coordinate and inform budgeting decisions by the City

> Guide the investments and activities of key Downtown partners including the Downtown Community Partnership (DCP), Downtown Fargo Business Improvement District (BID), Fargo Park District, and many other partners over the next 10 years

> Leverage private investment dollars by clearly signaling where improvements will be made Downtown

> Identify additional opportunities to raise funds for implementation from outside Fargo

> Empower residents and local stakeholders as agents of implementation

While this document contains many specific ideas, things can and will change. New development is already occurring in Downtown, and more is in the planning phase. It is critical to have a common vision, developed by the community, to help drive this change so it is compatible with what the City wants for its future. As living documents, plans often need to be updated based on local conditions and/or larger economic trends like recessions that can hamper even the best laid plans. But while some of the specifics in this document may change over time, **effective planning establishes the vision and core ideas that reflect the values of your community.**

> “Downtown already has the buzz, so how do we mold it and make it better?”
>
> – *interview*

Now complete, *Downtown InFocus* can serve multiple purposes

HOW DOES THIS PLAN RELATE TO PREVIOUS PLANS?

Fargo has a number of effective plans that have helped to shepherd in the improvements now seen in Downtown. Beginning more than 20 years ago, the ***Downtown Area Plan*** in 1996 followed by the ***Riverfront Master Plan*** in 2000 helped to establish some of the principles still discussed today. The last true strategic Downtown Plan – the 2002 ***Framework Plan*** – included a 16-point framework to improve Downtown including better connectivity with the Red River, enhanced flood protection, a quiet zone for freight trains, the Broadway streetscape improvements, and redevelopment of the Mid-America Steel site. Today, many of these 16 objectives have been implemented including the transformation of Broadway. This work was followed with the 2007 ***Framework Plan*** developed jointly between Fargo and Moorhead. The 2007 plan emphasized connecting to and across the River and identified redevelopment opportunities in both cities.

More recently, there are a number of plans and studies that have been integrated into this work.

> In 2012, the City finished ***Go2030 – The Fargo Comprehensive Plan.*** Completed with citywide engagement, the plan highlights Downtown as an opportunity to: engage with the Red River; provide more programming and activities; offer more complete streets for those seeking to walk, bike, or take transit; preserve the City's heritage; and support new and existing businesses by retaining and attracting a talented workforce.

> The 2015 ***Riverfront Design Study*** evaluated opportunities for creating active park spaces along the River in the context of the construction of the flood wall.

> The 2015 ***Fargo Housing Study*** provided an economic overview of housing in Fargo and noted both continued growth in the City but also a need for additional low-income housing.

> In 2015 a feasibility study was completed for a Performing Arts Center Downtown. Looking at the existing Civic Center, the study identified the possibility of either reusing that facility or demolishing it and building a new center in its place specifically designed for the performing arts.

> The ***Fargo Renaissance Zone Development Plan*** in 2015 specifically identifies development opportunities to guide Renaissance Zone activities.

> For economic development, two regional studies are seeking ways to further enhance Fargo as a business center and attract national talent to the region. These include the ***Regional Workforce Study*** in 2015 and the ***Cass-Clay Economic Plan*** 2015-2020.

> In 2016 the ***Downtown Fargo Streetscape Guidelines*** were created to provide guidance on the use and design of sidewalk space Downtown. These principles are integrated into the recommendations of this report.

> Also in 2016, the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) completed the ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*** which provides programs, policies and investments to enhance walking and cycling in the region.

> In 2017, a ***City of Fargo Public Art Master Plan*** was completed, designed to stimulate new public art and programming across the City.

Downtown InFocus helps tie some of the big ideas in the ***Go2030 Comprehensive Plan*** to specific places within Downtown Fargo...

...and provides a district-wide framework for more targeted studies, such as the ***Riverfront Design Study***

In addition to these completed plans, the City continues to work on specific projects including (but certainly not limited to) a new City Hall, a City Hall plaza, new parking garages, specific street improvements, and an evaluation of the existing stormwater infrastructure. All of this work provides the foundation for *Downtown InFocus*, which is designed to act as an umbrella for all of this work and provide one unified vision and action plan for Downtown.

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Planning Process

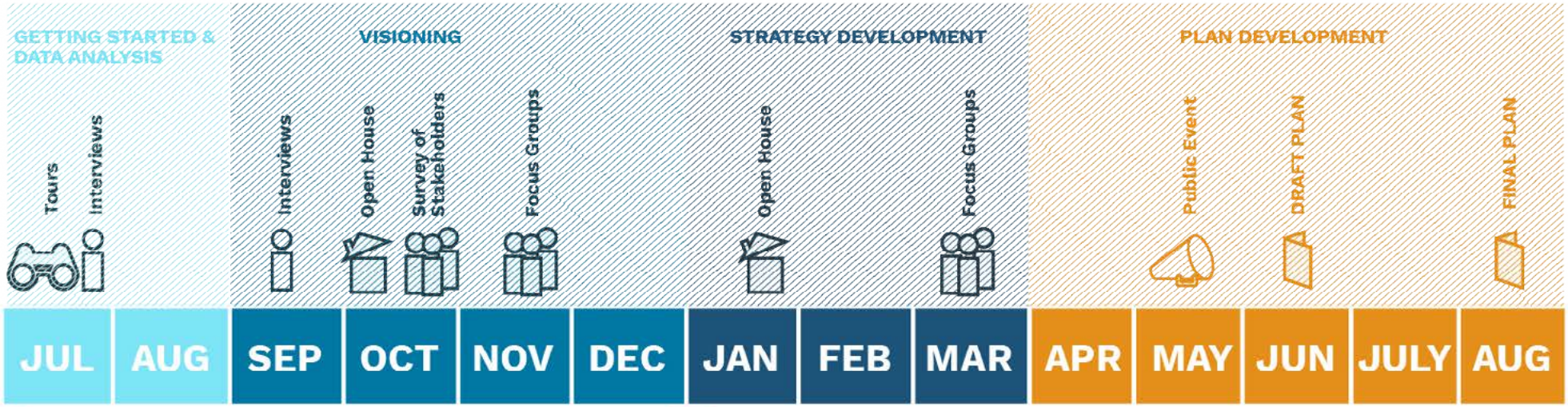
THE *INFOCUS* PROCESS

Downtown InFocus launched in Fall 2016, led by Interface Studio who provided planning and urban design services, Bishop Land Design who focused on ecology and landscape design, Ninigret Partners who provided the economic and market analysis, Sam Schwartz Engineering, who provided the transportation planning and parking analysis, and Hash Interactive who developed and maintained the project website. The planning team designed the process to be driven by both data analysis and active listening to community members and stakeholders.

The team's work evaluated all manner of different factors impacting Downtown using existing City data, US Census, other third party data, as well as a detailed parcel by parcel evaluation of every property in Downtown. This research was evaluated and presented to community members throughout the planning process to help set clear expectations for how Downtown could (and should) change. It is not enough to say that we want to encourage more residential units Downtown or support existing retailers, for example. The data analysis and research undertaken for Downtown through this process establishes a baseline from which we can set targets and measure performance towards achieving these objectives.

The planning team coupled data analysis with discussions with residents, business owners, city leaders, local institutions, and anyone else who had concerns or opinions about the direction Downtown was heading. The charge from the City and the expectations from those most connected to Downtown is that this work would be collaboratively developed and inclusive of all voices with a stake in Downtown's future.

Downtown InFocus time line



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Community members weigh in and catch up at the first public open house held at the Historic Union building on NP Avenue; more than 280 people attended!

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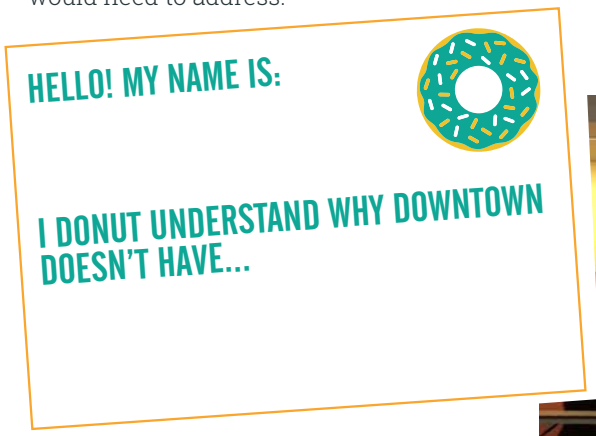
To ensure widespread and active participation in developing this plan, the engagement process included multiple and unique opportunities to get involved:

- **Breakfast Meet & Greet** – At the outset of the process, Downtown community members and stakeholders had an opportunity to meet the design team in the lobby next to Sandy's donuts. This informal gathering served as an excellent opportunity to talk about Downtown and identify some of the issues that the Downtown plan would need to address.



- **Interviews** – Over 50 one-on-one interviews were conducted with a mix of residents, business owners, employees, local leaders, non-profits, institutions, City representatives, developers, realtors, architects, and advocates. These conversations present a chance to have open and honest dialogue about what Downtown needs going forward.

- **Working Committee** – The City convened six meetings with a Working Committee comprising local residents, business owners, City representatives, non-profits, regional agencies, institutions, and Downtown representatives. The Working Committee's role was to help guide the work and promote major public events ensuring that the process would be driven by community input.

Working Committee members, ready to work

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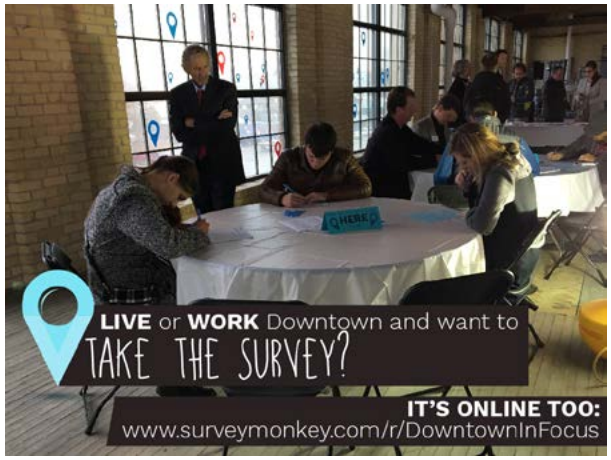
> **Website / Social Media** – The *Downtown InFocus* website (www.fargoinfocus.org) served as the online home for the project. Presentations and key information was posted to the site regularly for those who could not attend a major public event or meeting. Over the course of the project, the website drew more than 2,100 unique visitors! The planning team also managed a Facebook page to update the community on public events and news about the process and plan.

> **Surveys** – Community members from the Fargo-Moorhead metro area completed 519 surveys, offering detailed opinions about Downtown from both the resident and employee perspective. Over 50% of surveys were completed by those who live in Downtown or in an adjacent neighborhood.



Social media plugs for the website and survey

Some summary statistics about the survey population

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> **Brown Bag Forums** – The design team regularly sought opportunities to update City Commission and the public through the City's brown bag forums.

There were formal presentations...

> **NP Open House** – Reusing an empty loft space in the former Union Storage building on NP Avenue, the first Open House invited the public to review data about Downtown and share their vision for Downtown. Over the course of the four-hour event, more than 280 people came to the space and provided a lot of insightful comments and ideas. A special thanks to Valley News Live for the highlight during the morning show the day of the event!

> **Frostival Open House** – The second open house was held during Frostival 2017 at Theatre B's temporary space at the Broadway Theater Garage. Over 180 people dropped by to learn about some preliminary ideas for the future of Downtown and offer feedback to help refine the plan's recommendations.

...and informal opportunities to share insights about Downtown today and ideas for Downtown tomorrow

Selection of site-specific ideas collected at the first Open House and online via collaborative map

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> **Fargo Theatre Public Event** – 140 people attended an event at the Fargo Theatre in May 2017 to see more details about where the plan was headed. After the presentation and questions, the lobby was used to engage attendees on their priorities for Downtown.

> **Focus Groups** – Of significant help in developing the overall *InFocus* strategy was a series of focus groups to discuss specific aspects of Downtown in detail with those most familiar with the issues. The City organized 10 focus groups to discuss ideas around: transportation; stormwater; local retail; homelessness; resident concerns; the arts; and how to finance future improvements. These discussions helped the planning team connect with and learn from distinct populations in Fargo including residents, employees, business owners, students, non-profits, and those with special needs in the Downtown.

In short, the process included formal events, surveys, and many one-on-one and small group discussions. We were able to capture the input of those who live and work Downtown but also those who live across the region and visit Downtown on occasion. As the center of a growing region, Downtown Fargo is everyone's Downtown. The outreach approach reflects this fact, as does the enthusiasm of the community.

This could not have been possible without the active support and hard work of the City of Fargo who helped connect the planning team to the right mix of local voices necessary to help shape this plan. Coupled with the efforts of the Downtown Community Partnership, local retailers, non-profit organizations, and many others, this planning process provided the opportunity for those who care about Downtown to not just talk with the planning team, but also with each other.

Prompt from the second Open House

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So, after all that listening,

WHAT DO FARGOANS WANT FROM THEIR DOWNTOWN?

The critical result of the outreach is what was learned and applied to this plan. Each outreach activity or forum helped the planning team inform the community about research findings as well as learn from local experts about the day-to-day experience of Downtown. Results from the public engagement activities are distributed throughout this document. However, below are a few common themes and highlights that emerged again and again in conversations:

> "It's even more vibrant! There are community events every weekend, and awesome outdoor activities year round. Downtown has some great food trucks, cafes, and plenty of green space to enjoy!"
>
> *– Community vision statement*

WE NEED MORE THINGS TO DO DOWNTOWN

If there was one universal sentiment expressed by Fargoans, it is that Downtown needs more things to do. More services, more entertainment, more activities, more stores ….just more. The list of ideas from the survey and open houses includes restaurants, entertainment venues, public art, family programming, winter festivals (like Frostival!), and day-to-day services like groceries and convenience stores. Participants specifically identified the need for more outdoor activities and programming particularly at night and in the winter. Embracing Fargo's seasons and ensuring that there are unique experiences Downtown at all times of the day and year is of real interest to residents, employees, and visitors alike.

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I LOVE DOWNTOWN, BUT IT'S HARD TO FIND PARKING

Those visiting or working Downtown ranked parking their number one "dislike." For years, it was free and easy to find parking close to where you work Downtown. This is changing, of course, as more residents and employees find their way Downtown. Parking is an important part of the experience that shapes people's perceptions of Downtown. As the outreach process revealed, Fargoans recognize that protecting or building more surface parking is not the answer, as this is space that could better be used for new housing or stores. In the second open house, participants selected preferred development types Downtown. Almost 52% were in favor of parking garages hidden by new mixed-use development. Another 27% identified street-facing retail with parking tucked behind the buildings, and 9% said there should not be any parking at all. In total, 88% of participants prioritized street-facing uses over stand-alone parking lots and garages. In an exercise on trade-offs, participants noted that they would rather park for free a few blocks away and take a shuttle to work, or ride transit and/or bikeshare for free, than pay for spaces at their place of employment. In short, residents and employees may have concerns about parking Downtown but recognize that if we focus on only building parking, we're not creating the Downtown we all want.

> "Most of the parking lots have been converted back to buildings, but no one complains about having to walk farther because there is so much going on that it's an enjoyable experience."
>
> *– Community vision statement*

> "It's more walkable than ever. The City of Fargo also expanded the trails and created access from downtown. I can do my long runs without having to change course every few miles. I can do pretty much everything Downtown even shop for groceries!"
>
> *– community vision statement*

MORE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS, PLEASE

Participants in outreach activities expressed a desire for a number of things that could help reduce driving in Downtown. These include expanded bikeshare, better and more frequent transit, and safer streets for pedestrians. In fact, the "big ideas" exercise from the first open house had more ideas related to more transportation options than anything else. The important caveat here is that bikeshare, transit, and walking are not options for everyone. Some people will always prefer to drive and never really consider walking to work even when the weather is nice. However, others will be more flexible, and the outreach indicated a desire for more choices in how to get around. That Downtown is "walkable" was identified as one of the best characteristics of Downtown by residents, employees, and visitors.

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WE NEED MORE PARKS, TREES, AND RIVER ACCESS

Almost 20% of the community's "big ideas" had to do with creating new park space and bringing more trees to Downtown. Of collaborative map comments and ideas, 20% focused on enhancing access to, and creating more activation along, the Red River. The planning team showed pictures of what other cities were doing in their Downtowns and asked Fargoans to identify which ideas they liked the best. Almost 80% of the votes identified a preference for public realm improvements (like seating areas and small plazas), riverfront activities, outdoor lighting, and events and temporary uses. In the second open house, creating a trail network and integrating more green spaces Downtown ranked 3rd and 5th in terms of priorities from a list of 10 big-picture ideas for Downtown. Toward the end of the process, when asked which ideas from this plan were the most important to jumpstart, participants emphasized the need to create a riverfront plaza on the Mid-America Steel site, boost tree coverage Downtown, and integrate stormwater management into Downtown streets and plazas. It is clear that residents, employees and visitors alike see the potential in creating new spaces that celebrate Downtown and bring people together.

> "The lush tree canopy and stormwater gardens bring life to the sidewalks... I can't wait until winter when the ice trails open!"
>
> *– community vision statement*

DOWNTOWN SHOULD BE INCLUSIVE

Many recognize that Downtown is already one of the most inclusive and diverse places in North Dakota. As Downtown grows, some have expressed a real concern that new development cannot come at the expense of those who have helped to shape Downtown today. The need to provide and protect affordable housing and affordable workspace in the wake of new development consistently ranked as a top priority throughout the *InFocus* process. This includes protecting space for the arts and planning for those experiencing homelessness. Of the final ideas presented to the community, expanding education about homelessness and building awareness of the existing service network emerged as a priority. When asked to describe Downtown in one word "today" and "tomorrow," inclusive, diverse and vibrant were frequently used terms to describe Downtown "tomorrow." In the second Open House, participants finished the phrase – "I'm focused on a Downtown that is: _____" and tied for the top-ranked answer was "welcoming to all."

> "There's a richness that comes with diversity. Need to embrace that diversity."
>
> *– interview*

> "It's diverse and includes lots of different cultures. Downtown is where you come to get culture."
>
> *– community vision statement*

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> "I don't feel targeted, but sometimes I do feel the need to cross the street."
>
> *– interview*

I DON'T ALWAYS FEEL SAFE/THERE ARE NUISANCE ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

Nuisance issues including noise and drunken behavior ranked as a top concern for Downtown residents. In addition, concerns about public safety were also expressed by Downtown residents and employees. Although crime statistics demonstrate that Downtown is a very safe community, too often the perception that Downtown is unsafe takes control of the story. And, there are very real issues to address with respect to aggressive panhandling and late-night drunkenness. The Downtown residents as well as the City and BID are hard at work to address these issues. This plan reinforces the steps already taken and recognizes that for Downtown to continue to succeed, people, regardless of their comfort level with Downtown, need to feel safe at all times of the day and evening.

KEEP DOWNTOWN... DOWNTOWN

Overall, those who participated in this process simply want Downtown to be a better version of itself. Fargoans love their Downtown, its unique collection of stores and restaurants, the historic buildings, scale, and walkability. As Downtown changes and grows, what was clearly expressed is the need to retain and celebrate those characteristics that truly distinguish Downtown Fargo from any other part of the region and from any other city. We hear you, Fargo, and this plan reflects all of your input and ideas to reinforce what is special about Downtown.

> "It's the perfect mix of old and new, Retro, modern, classic, and edgy."
>
> *– Community vision statement*

An Overview of Downtown Yesterday and Today

A QUICK HISTORY

Fargo was officially born in the 1870s when the Northern Pacific Railroad was built. It's crossing at the Red River established Fargo on what is now known as the Mid-America Steel site. 2nd Street was the center of steamboat activity, and the Red River was used frequently for the movement of goods and materials from Fargo to Winnipeg. At that time, Downtown's fabric was built mostly of wood including its sidewalks. A fire in 1893 destroyed Fargo but set the stage for a complete reconstruction, some of which remains today. Important buildings like the Great Northern Depot built in 1906 hosted speeches by both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman. The Fargo Theatre, built in 1926, was placed on the National Register in 1982 and remains the most identifiable image of Downtown Fargo.

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By the 1930s, Fargo was home to 30,000 residents, and Downtown was a thriving business and economic center. Images from the early 1900s through the 1950s demonstrate the wide range of uses and services available in Downtown. In 1928 for instance, Downtown was home to well over 80 businesses including multiple groceries, hardware stores, theaters, restaurants, drug stores and services like barbers and beauty shops.[1] During this time, Broadway served as Downtown's center, forming a north-south connection between the two east-west rail lines. The building boom of the early 1900s left a legacy of distinctive structures that help to characterize Downtown today including 18 buildings on the National Register of Historical Places.

Downtown continued to grow after World War II until the 1970s when national investments in highways and support for suburban housing negatively impacted the historic role of downtowns. Residents started to live farther afield and jobs and retail followed. For Fargo, this meant a drastic change to its Downtown in the latter part of the 20th century. Funded by the federal Urban Renewal program, many Downtown buildings between 4th Street and the Red River were demolished beginning in the late 1950s and stretching into the 1960s. Property values declined, stores closed, and surface parking was built to accommodate those commuting to work from other neighborhoods, overwriting whole blocks of Downtown's walkable historic fabric.

Over the years, during good times and bad, Downtown has had a mixed relationship with the Red River. While essential to Fargo's early economy, the Red River has also caused significant damage to Downtown and the region. Fargoans can cite each year flooding has occurred and recall in detail the recent floods and their impact on Downtown including those in 1997, 2009, and 2013. For this reason, there is a sense of apprehension about the Red River. While Fargoans often expressed a desire to see more activity, green space and plazas they remember the sandbags and collective efforts to "fight" the Red River when cresting and threatening the City.

Today, Downtown is thriving once again. Thoughtful leadership has spurred a number of critical investments that have set the next stage in Downtown's evolution. The streetscape improvements along Broadway, the Renaissance Zone, and other initiatives by both the City and DCP have helped to bring new private investment Downtown. There are proposed developments across Downtown that are slowly filling the gaps that were once empty or occupied only by surface parking.

So, what does Downtown need today? How can we best make the most of this momentum to create an even stronger Downtown? This process included extensive data analysis to help shape the conversations about Downtown trends, challenges and opportunities.

ADD SOURCES

1 From data collected by Tony Larson

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Downtown needs to become more of a neighborhood...

In 2010, there were almost 3,900 residents living Downtown. With new development since that time, the number of residents continues to grow. But while Downtown is growing, there are limited retail options and services for residents and employees. It is easy to see why. A map of existing residents illustrates many 'gaps' Downtown where there are no residents. The lack of residential density requires that stores rely on visitors and employees to make up the difference.

Data from other successful downtowns across the country indicate that for a Fargo-sized downtown, we'd need approximately 10,000 households or over 12,000 residents to attract amenities like a grocery or pharmacy and have services like coffee shops and laundromats that are open Saturday mornings. In fact, if we tried to fully support the existing businesses based on local households alone (in other words, not counting visitors), Downtown would need another 4,500 households. In light of the desire for more stores and services and the need to better support existing businesses, Downtown needs to embrace and encourage growth. That growth must cater to a mix of family types, sizes, and incomes.

> "Retail cannot survive just on events, and we're an event driven Downtown. Retail cannot survive on student incomes... We need Downtown to become more of a neighborhood." *– interview*

...But remain a destination

Retail data indicates that Downtown functions like a 'resort town' where exiting businesses make the majority of their yearly income in a handful of months. Until there are a lot more residents Downtown, it is clear that for the foreseeable future Downtown will remain a destination. And a vibrant destination it is. There are over 61 bars and restaurants in Downtown, and Downtown currently is home to over half of the City's annual events including some of the largest ones like Street Fair. The future of Downtown needs to embrace its role as a destination and ensure that those visiting Fargo for either the first or tenth time enjoy their experience and support local businesses.

> "I'm so proud of our Downtown, especially on the weekends at night. The brand Fargo is immense - people everywhere know it." *– interview*

Downtown is vital to the regional economy

There are almost 18,000 jobs Downtown. While the largest number of jobs are in health care, Downtown is home to a large share of the region's talent-driven businesses including those in professional, scientific, and technology services. Talent is attracted by a combination of opportunities [are there jobs available?] and location [are there things for me to do?]. Along these lines, Downtown Fargo is competing with other downtowns across the country for the same talent. Downtown should be considered a product, and to compete with these other cities, the quality of the place matters. But regardless of whether a business is located Downtown or not, Downtown is essential in attracting talent to the region. Downtown Fargo is where local employers take candidates out to dinner and often where they stay. It is their introduction to Fargo, and in order to fill jobs both in Downtown and in the region—where there are an estimated 6,500 unfilled jobs at present and the number stands to balloon by an additional 30,000 as Baby Boomers retire—a successful and thriving Downtown plays a key role.

> "Downtown is a huge factor in attracting talent. People want a vibrant downtown whether you're a downtown person or not."
>
> *– interview*

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Downtown is growing, but still lags the region

There is a pace to development in Downtown that frequently tells a story of rapid investment and change. Downtown is in fact seeing a lot of change. However, Downtown only accounts for 3% of total building permits issued in the City over the past five years. New development in South Fargo, in particular, still greatly outpaces Downtown. To support existing businesses and attract new ones, Downtown will need to capture a greater percentage of the City's growth and development.

> "We need to be smart and sustainable with our growth." – *interview*

Downtown is changing, which means transportation and parking must change

Downtown Fargo, like every other downtown across the country in cities both large and small, faces the challenge of managing parking. Growth and investment only places an increased spotlight on this challenge, as there is more competition for limited space Downtown. Based on an analysis of on- and off-street parking utilization, Downtown has sufficient parking to meet current demands; however available spaces are not always in the location most critical to supporting Downtown businesses. Spaces in the core of Downtown around Broadway are often full, and this will only get worse with continued growth Downtown. A few blocks away, however, there are ample opportunities for parking. Downtown needs to better use the spaces that are available while offering real choice for those looking to drive a little less.

> "We need more density downtown and fewer surface parking lots."
>
> – *interview*

Downtown has a unique ecology... and unique environmental challenges

Downtown sits in the glacial Lake Agassiz basin, which acts as a vast floodplain of the Red River. As a part of Lake Agassiz, the clay soils make for challenging soil conditions that impact building construction. Due to these soils and the fact that Downtown is extremely flat, the area faces two threats from flooding including the rising Red River as well as local rainfall. The Diversion Project is designed to mitigate the flooding of the Red River by diverting it around Fargo. However, local rainfall can quickly overwhelm Downtown's stormwater infrastructure and create localized flooding conditions that also cause property damage. To better protect businesses and reduce the cost of infrastructure Downtown, we need to look at alternative ways of managing water in Downtown's streets, public spaces and new development.

As the storms of 1992, 1993, and 2000 taught us,

> "We never thought of preparing for the rain... and rain and rain. If the Diversion gates are going to be closed, and we don't have a place to store the water, it'll back into the houses." – *interview*

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Downtown is a center for services

Downtown has emerged as a center for services for those most in need. This is for a number of reasons: Downtown is already the center of the region and a center for jobs of all kinds; Downtown has the best transportation options for those who cannot afford a car; and as the largest City in the State, Downtown has more capacity to address some of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness. There is currently an infrastructure in place Downtown that represents the best chance of helping those in need find a job or a home. For these reasons, Downtown will remain a hub for various services that must be an active part of the planning for the future of Downtown.

> "There are some pretty phenomenal people in Downtown's service provider community. It's not just services, they treat us as equals – we get a human connection."
>
> *– interview*

Downtown needs more street life, and experiences that will draw people

Residents, business owners, employees and visitors have all expressed some level of concern about safety. For some, Downtown is perceived as unsafe. This of course impacts the bottom line of local businesses and the ability to attract new renters or homeowners. While the current efforts by local residents, the City, and the BID are extremely valuable in addressing some ongoing concerns, more street life is the best solution to perceptions about crime. More people or "eyes on the street" make a huge difference in how people perceive Downtown. One of the issues that impacts perceptions about a lack of public safety is inactive frontages. Today, only 9% of Downtown streets have an active frontage (an entrance or front door) and these are largely concentrated along, and very near to, Broadway. Conversely, 71% of streets are inactive meaning they are characterized by empty lots, parking, blank walls, or fencing and do not provide for an opportunity of "eyes on the street." These environments reinforce perceptions that the streets are unsafe and also explain why many people unfamiliar with Downtown are hesitant to park too far away from Broadway.

> "We have more people here at night; it feels a lot safer than it used to." *– interview*

But the broader point here is that Downtown thrives because it offers a unique experience, one that is hard to duplicate in other places. Today, visitors come for festivals and events, to go to dinner and snap a picture of the Fargo Theatre. To bring them back, we need to offer other experiences and opportunities to explore Downtown. New public spaces, both small and large, new programming and safe, active connections throughout Downtown are essential.

> "The theater marquee attracts people like moths to a flame." *– interview*

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PLAN ORGANIZATION

This is a unique moment in Downtown's history. Downtowns across the country are benefiting from renewed interest, with increasing numbers of residents, stores, and jobs. Fargo's Downtown is no different. To help leverage investment and address some of the ongoing challenges in Downtown, this plan set out to work with Fargoans to craft a community-led vision and set of recommended actions that will act as a guidebook for decision making.

The remainder of this plan is organized into three main sections:

> **Vision** to describe the community's vision for the future of Downtown;

> **Goals and Strategies** that outline specific actions for housing, economic development, parking, and more; and

> **Implementation** to describe how to transition from ideas to reality.

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Vision of *Downtown InFocus*

postcards from the FUTURE
greetings from FUTURE DOWNTOWN
greetings from FUTURE DOWNTOWN FARGO!
greetings from FUTURE DOWNTOWN FARGO!
VISION STATEMENTS
At the first public open house, participants had a chance to close their eyes, envision the Downtown they hope to see, and then write a postcard from the future, describing their vision...

DRAFT

HI MOM,

YOU SHOULD SEE DOWNTOWN FARGO TODAY! YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH IT'S CHANGED. NOW IT'S...

"...there is family space for play and exercise. It has great, green activities everywhere we gather. It is safe, and affordable."

"...a perfect mix of old and new. Retro, modern, classic, and edgy."

"...diverse and includes lots of different cultures. It's where you come to get culture."

"There are 100,000 people living downtown, and not just college kids, but all ages and incomes. There's even a bunch of old people like Dad! I'm still riding my bike to work, but now it's safer because the City reconstructed roads to balance the needs of all users. Most parking lots have been converted back to buildings, but no one complains about having to walk farther because there is so much going on that it's an enjoyable experience."

"It's even more vibrant! There are community events every weekend, and awesome out door activities year round. Downtown has some great food trucks, cafes, and plenty of green space to enjoy!"

"... It's more walkable than ever. The city of Fargo also expanded the trails and created access from downtown... I can do pretty much everything downtown even shop for groceries! The only time I really have to leave is for work. I love it!"

"It's a magnet for innovators and artists."

"... a must see of the Midwest!"

"...Inviting streets are filled with pedestrians walking to and from all the shops and restaurants. The lush tree canopy and stormwater gardens bring life to the sidewalks.... I can't wait till winter when the ice trails open!"

A HANDFUL OF VISION STATEMENTS

Here are a few excerpts of what the Fargo hopes to see in Downtown come 2026.

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A Collective Vision Statement

The community's words, hopes, and dreams provided the foundation for a shared vision statement that frames all that follows in the plan.

This statement echoes our priorities as a community and as a Downtown.

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Where we've been, and where we're headed

Fargo's history is rooted in Downtown. It was established as the bustling center of a region. After decades of decline, Downtown Fargo has emerged as a unique destination thanks to deliberate and forward-thinking investment spearheaded by local leaders and a do-it-yourself culture embraced by community members. These actions recognized that Downtown is fundamentally different than the rest of the region. The infrastructure is older, the buildings are denser, the bones are good, there is more to see and do. Breathing additional life into Downtown will build upon these unique characteristics, ensuring that Downtown continues to serve as the center that drives the regional economy and hosts the region's social life.

Our shared vision for the future:

Downtown Fargo is a **family-friendly destination, full of variety** and **welcoming to all**. We **celebrate the diversity** of our Downtown residents and businesses, and we **cultivate creativity and the arts** as part of the day-to-day Downtown experience. New local jobs make Downtown a **magnet for innovators** and a **place where great ideas are demonstrated.**

Our streets are **walkable** and **vibrant, rich with color and texture** and **designed for a sustainable future**. New multi-use **trails connect Downtown to the Red River** and beyond.

As a creative center, Downtown offers **big-city amenities** and talent within a **small-town atmosphere.**

We welcome new buildings but also value preservation, resulting in a Downtown that is the **perfect mix of old and new…classic and modern, a must-see of the Midwest.**

At the second public open house, held during Frostival, community members reviewed a first draft of the vision statement and struck a pose with the words or themes that they liked best.

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Goals & Strategies

Seven goals organize the strategies that together comprise *Downtown InFocus:*

GROW AS A NEIGHBORHOOD. Invest in housing to increase the population living Downtown and maintain Downtown's diversity.

PROSPER AS A BUSINESS CENTER. Increase the number and type of jobs Downtown (or accessible from Downtown).

THRIVE AS A DESTINATION. Create a unique Downtown experience with an activated riverfront and vibrant sidewalks and public spaces that serve as the backdrop to the community's social life.

BE A MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT. Protect Downtown's diversity and evolve as a model for equitable growth and development.

COMPLETE OUR STREETS. Make complete streets common place and encourage trips by foot, bicycle, and bus, as well as car.

PARK SMART. Manage parking resources to meet the needs of drivers, while also making room for new development and activity.

PLAY WITH PURPOSE. Develop a system of connected all-season green spaces designed for people (of a range of ages and interests) and purpose (as infrastructure that absorbs stormwater).

1

> "We need more density Downtown and fewer surface parking lots!"
>
> – *interview*

> "Retail cannot survive just on events. And we're an event driven Downtown. Retail cannot survive on student incomes... We need Downtown to become more of a neighborhood."
>
> – *interview*

Grow as a Neighborhood

by investing in housing to increase the population living Downtown and maintain Downtown's diversity.

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WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

More residential and income density Downtown and in near neighborhoods will support a full-service Downtown with retail and restaurants, helping to offset the "resort town" risk of a destination Downtown

Downtowns across the country are establishing themselves as thriving neighborhoods due to an increasing demand to live in walkable, mixed-use places. The benefits are enormous. More people living downtown results in more people supporting local retail during all times of the day and week. The greater the number of those living downtown, the greater the range of services and activities that, in turn, further attract more residents. It is a reinforcing cycle that brings substantial economic benefits.

Downtown Fargo today is a growing neighborhood. The population jumped 10% between 2000 and 2010 and new housing developments coming on line will expand the Downtown housing product by 10% in the next two years. The growth is in clear response to a strengthening market, as Downtown Fargo has the lowest vacancy rate for multi-family housing in the City at 4%.

More people living Downtown will create added foot traffic, lessening vehicular traffic and improving perceptions of safety

Residents Downtown have re-started the Downtown Neighbors Association (DNA) to tackle some lingering concerns and issues facing residents. These include nuisance issues and public safety. But Downtown residents also lament the lack of basic services that are available in other Fargo neighborhoods. They recognize that for Downtown to improve, it needs to have more residents.

Currently, of the nearly 18,000 employees Downtown, only 430 (or 2%) both live and work in Downtown. This means that while these employees may support

local retail during lunch and perhaps after work, there are a significant number of people getting in a car and driving to and from work, which only adds to Downtown's parking challenges. More people living Downtown will create added foot traffic, lessen vehicular traffic, and improve the perception of safety.

For Fargo, and Downtown in particular, to capture its share of projected growth, housing opportunities must appeal to shifting demographics

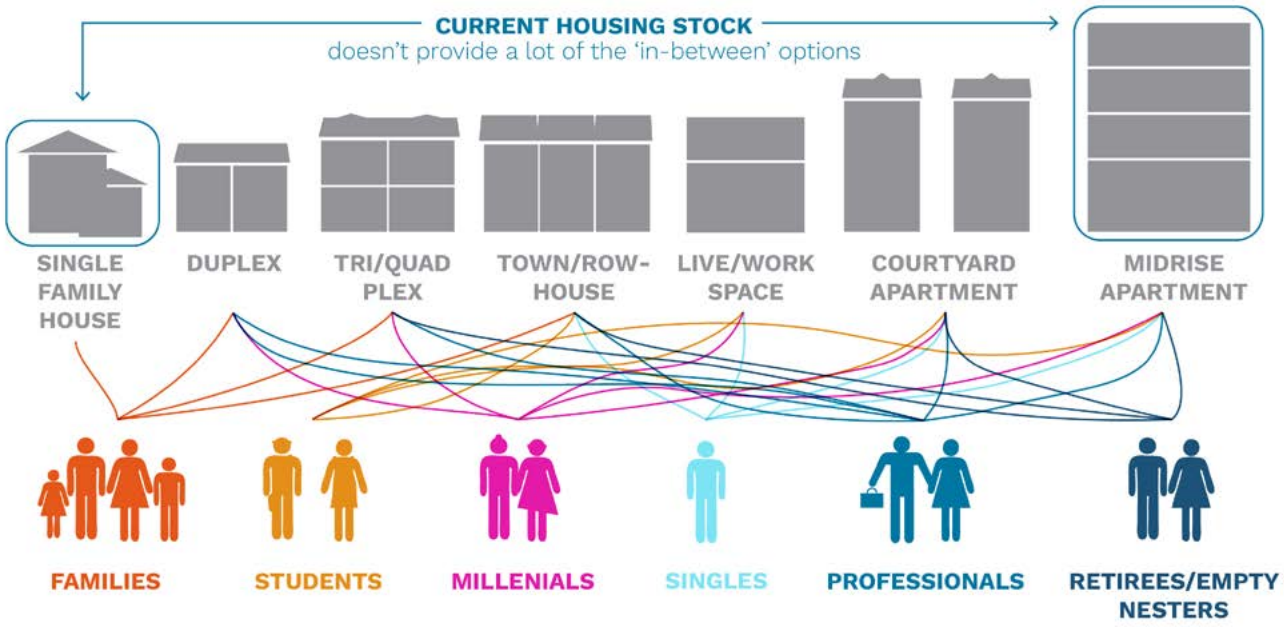
Historically, Downtown has captured about 4% of the City's growth. If Downtown maintains that rate, it could add 700 households by 2025 (with potentially more, of course, if Downtown can capture a higher percentage of that growth). This is where Downtown will need to encourage the right kind of growth. The often-coveted millennials are aging and looking for options other than apartments, and many older residents are aging in place and also looking for different housing options. Currently, over 40% of those who live Downtown are under 34 years of age. Those right out of school often make less money and are facing student loan debts that limit their available income for rent.

A diversity of housing types offered at a range of price points will ensure that Downtown remains a diverse and open neighborhood

But Downtown is also home to many units for those who are sensitive to housing prices. There are currently about 375 income-restricted housing units Downtown plus another 60 units of transitional and supportive housing. Almost 250 of those 375 units are in one high-rise structure. Overall, this amounts to a little less than 20% of Fargo's total supply of affordable housing. With over 2,000 Fargoans on the waiting list (about a three-year wait) for affordable housing, the affordable units that exist Downtown are extremely important.

Recognizing these trends, it will be important to encourage more residential development that caters to wide range of housing needs. A Downtown filled with too much of one thing – i.e. too many higher income residents or too many students – will fail to adequately support a mix of stores and services. Successful downtowns are mixed-income.

As with many downtowns across the country, Downtown Fargo is starting to see a lot of development for those with higher incomes. What is missing are housing options for households sometimes referred to as the "missing middle," or those that cannot afford current market-rate rentals but whose incomes are not low enough to qualify for an affordable or income-restricted unit. To meet this challenge, there will need to be a diversity of housing types offered at a range of price points in Downtown.



The current housing stock in Downtown and the near neighborhoods offers few options aside from single-family homes and apartment-style units.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

First and foremost, continue to foster a unique, vibrant, and welcoming neighborhood at the heart of the City. To meet this goal, Fargo must increase its residential population Downtown.

To grow the residential population will require an increase in housing units and types for all income levels, including affordable and workforce housing to maintain a diverse population base. As Downtown does not exist in a vacuum, it is critical to also stimulate investment in the nearby neighborhoods and create stronger connections to Downtown.

A unique Downtown neighborhood must include the preservation and reactivation of historic buildings where possible but also strategic new development to help fill the gaps Downtown. Setting clear design standards in local codes will help to encourage the kind of growth and development Fargo is looking for.

> "We need to embrace diversity and how diversity contributes to healthy communities."
>
> *– interview*

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HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

1.1 Encourage a mix of housing types for a range of price points

Currently, Downtown and the near neighborhoods offer predominantly two types of housing: low- to mid-rise apartments and single-family homes. Millennials are entering their 30s and beginning to look for alternatives to apartments, while seniors are looking to age in place. Both demographics remain interested in downtown living, but housing options in Downtown Fargo are limited, thus limiting residential growth. To meet these needs and others, a greater range of housing types are required in the market to offer real choice to residents. This includes attached townhomes, duplex units, live/work units, and smaller courtyard apartments, offered at a range of prices.

Enable the construction of multi-family or townhouse developments for recent grads, young couples, and empty nesters as well as flats for seniors looking to age in place by re-zoning the edges of Downtown

High land costs and increasing development pressure Downtown most often result in new buildings that maximize density and the return on investment. The opportunity is to encourage smaller-scale development on the fringe of Downtown that can help to step down in scale between Downtown and surrounding single-family neighborhoods but also provide a greater range of housing types.

Currently, outside of the Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zone, there are commercial zones that allow housing only as a conditional use. Commercial areas along University, west of Downtown, and near Island Park and Main should be rezoned to allow, by right, a greater range of housing types and densities. By allowing greater densities on the periphery of Downtown where land costs are lower, the City will provide the opportunity to create housing products that are also less expensive than if they were constructed Downtown.

Allow for smaller units in targeted areas

One way of encouraging more housing options for middle-income residents is to build smaller. Many cities are finding a lot of success in enabling developers to build micro-units for young professionals and recent graduates. These units are affordable due to their size but also provide added density that can help to support more retail and services Downtown. These are allowed in the DMU but limited by lot coverage requirements in other zones. In conjunction with the strategy to encourage a greater range of housing along Downtown's periphery, adjust both the lot coverage and the dwelling units per acre requirement to enable smaller, more affordable units. To stimulate some market interest by local developers, invite a national developer with success in micro-housing to give a talk to local leadership and the Fargo development community.

> "There is a lot of subsidized housing and extremely affordable housing and very expensive housing Downtown but very little in the middle." – *interview*

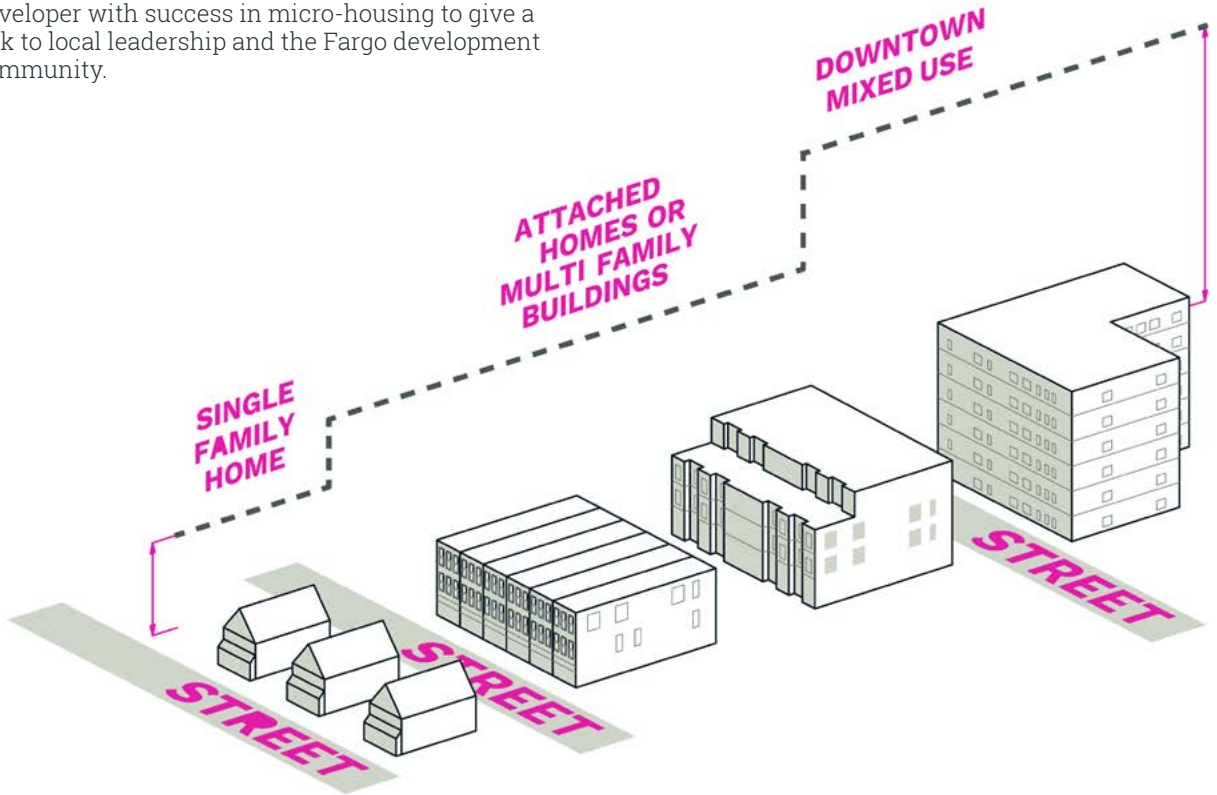
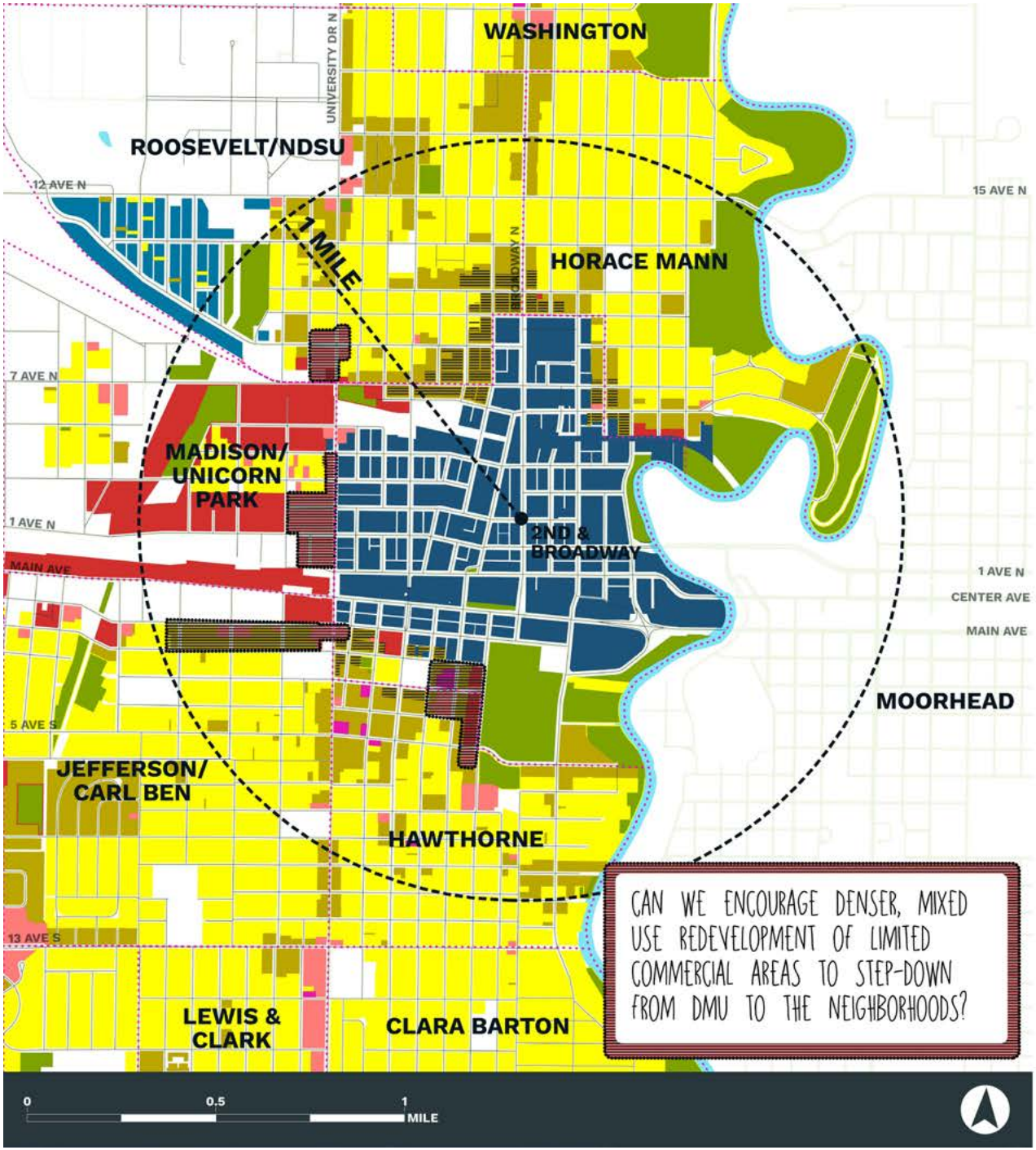


FIGURE 2: New Housing Typologies, Setbacks, and Height Requirements to Transition from DMU to Residential Areas



How can we ease the transition from Downtown to near neighborhoods?

Source: Interface Studio

ZONING PERMITS RESIDENTIAL

- DOWNTOWN MIXED USE (DMU)
- UNIVERSITY MIXED USE (UMU)
- SINGLE DWELLINGS (SR 1-4)
- MULTIPLE DWELLINGS (MR 1-3)
- NEIGH. COMMERCIAL (NC/NO)
- DENSITY BONUS WITHIN 600' of DMU in MR3

RESIDENTIAL AS CONDITIONAL USE

- LIMITED COMMERCIAL (LC)
- GENERAL COMMERCIAL (GC)
- DENSER, MIXED USE, AS-OF-RIGHT TRANSITION ZONE

- NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY

FIGURE 3: Transition Zones from DMU to Near Neighborhoods

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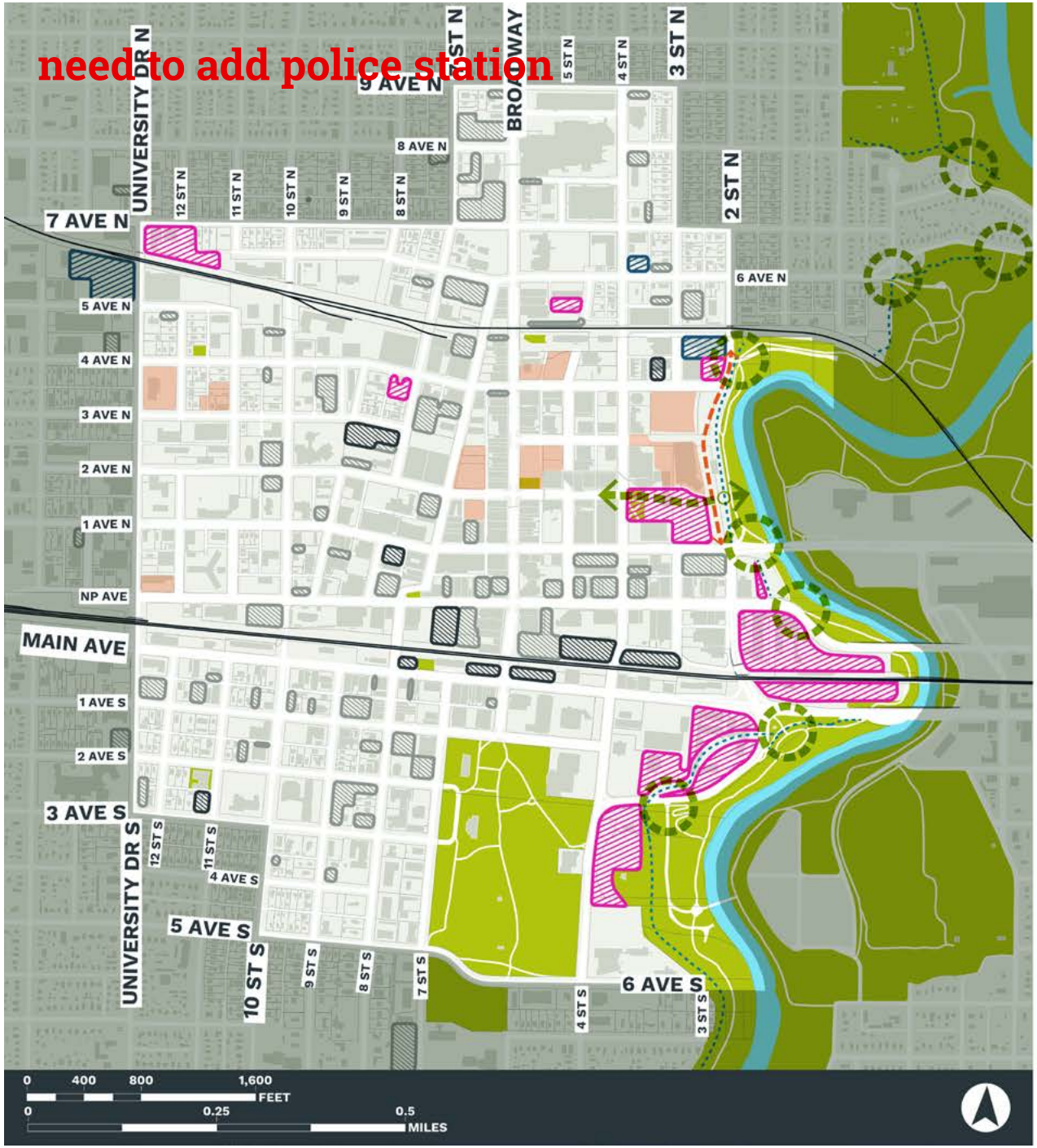

Target key sites for redevelopment

Part of what makes housing less affordable is the lack of supply. The City has a great track record in working to secure land and encourage private development Downtown. Work to secure land control where possible, and target the redevelopment of smaller underutilized sites in Downtown for mixed-use development. Assist and encourage developers to explore alternative housing models as described above where possible to create a broader supply of units at different price ranges.

Opportunity Sites

Source: Interface Studio

UNDERUTILIZED SITES
- PUBLICLY OWNED
- PRIVATELY OWNED

SURFACE PARKING LOTS
- PUBLICLY OWNED
- PRIVATELY OWNED

- RIVER ACCESS POINT
- FLOOD PROTECTION LINE
- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT [COMING SOON]
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 4: Opportunity Sites

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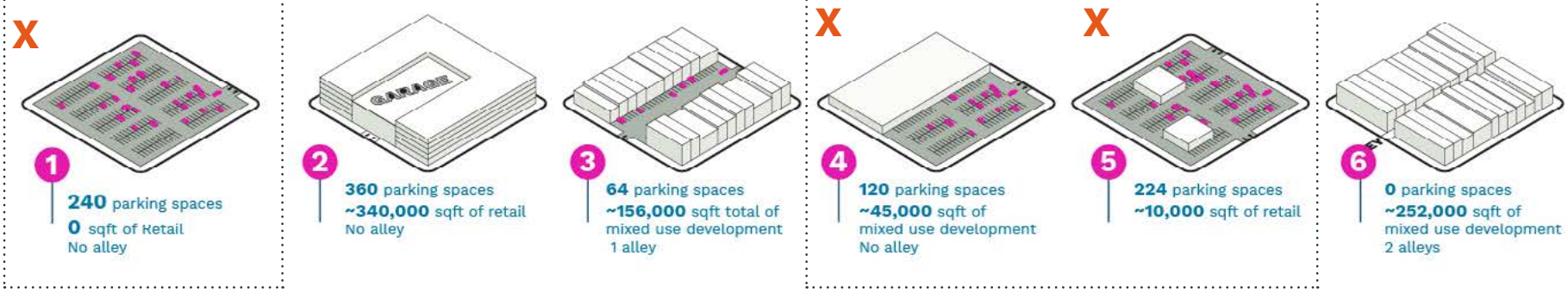
Current development types allowed by-right in Fargo's DMU zoning requirements.



The permissive Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zoning allows for development compatible with a dense, walkable downtown district, as well as development patterns more appropriate for auto-oriented suburban areas.

1.2 Tweak the DMU

For many cities looking to reinvest in their downtowns, limited flexibility in their zoning can be an issue. In Fargo, the DMU zoning for Downtown is extremely flexible. In fact, its flexibility actually allows some types of development that would not be welcomed Downtown.

Develop form-based requirements that guide the placement of buildings, parking, and other key design considerations for Downtown

What makes Downtown attractive and unique is the character of its buildings. Streets like Broadway have a welcoming scale, no setbacks, and buildings that actively engage the street. However, the DMU zoning also allows surface parking and large, single-story commercial uses that are oriented to cars, not people. To help further encourage the type of development Fargoans want throughout Downtown, tweak the DMU to integrate some form-based restrictions. "Form-based" measures speak to the location and site design of a building rather than just its use.

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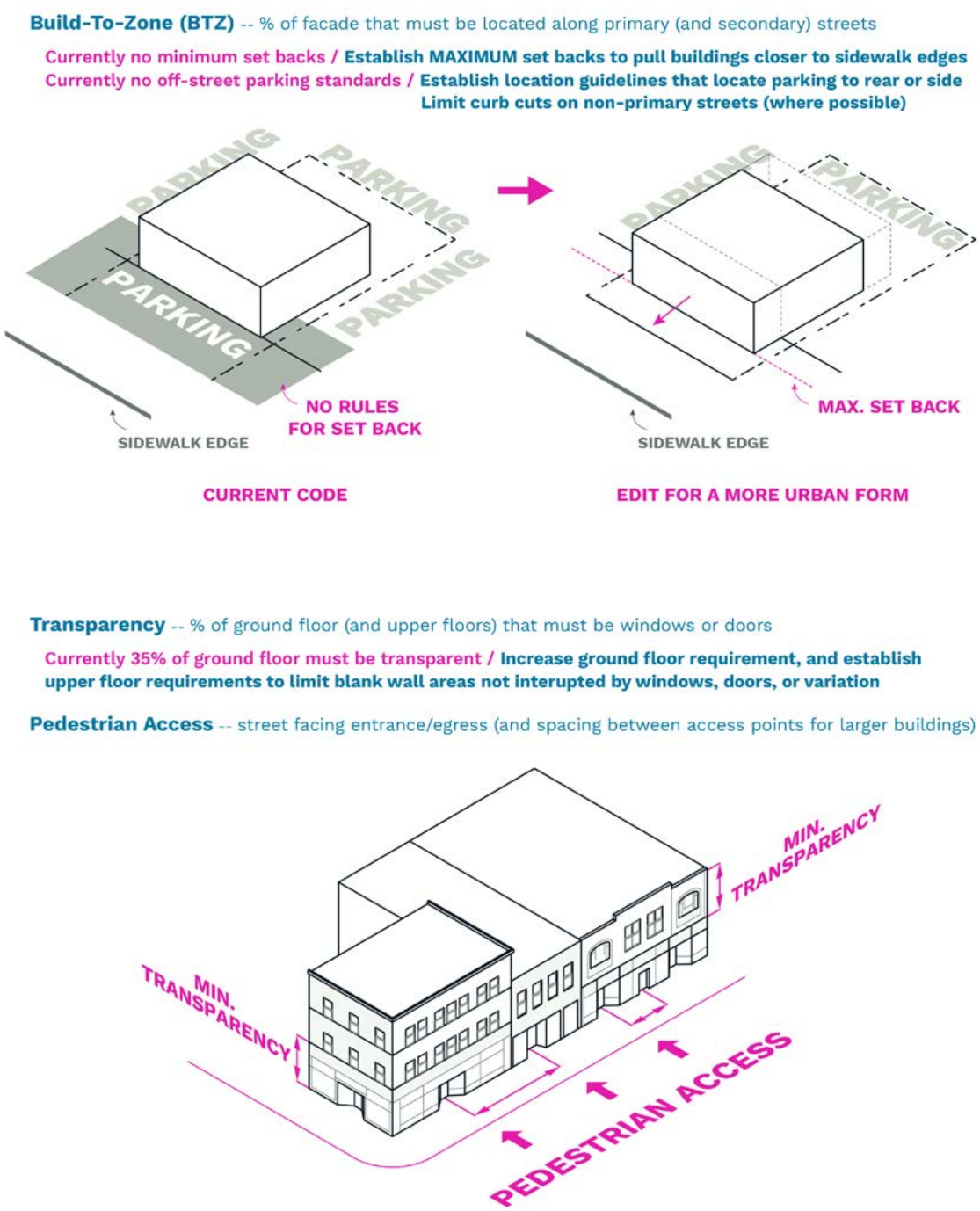
For Downtown, form-based considerations should include:

- **Transparency –** Some streets are more important than others. Some, like Broadway, Roberts, or Main should have transparency standards close to 75%, while the transparency requirements other streets where there is a need for access or loading could be greatly reduced. Align the code requirements to meet the goals for each specific street and its future land use.
- **Pedestrian access –** Ensure a visible entrance / egress for pedestrians from primary streets, and develop controls for entryway spacing for larger buildings.
- **Height –** There is currently no minimum height required in the DMU. Adjust to include a minimum height of at least two stories to encourage mixed-use development.
- **Parking –** Eliminate non-accessory parking lots as an allowable use. Also require new parking be designed to the rear of a building's primary entrance, and limit curb cuts where possible.
- **Setbacks –** Ensure zero-lot line setbacks or a Build-To Zone along key Downtown retail streets. Establish maximum setbacks for all development Downtown.
- **Street trees –** Include a requirement for street trees associated with new development.

FIGURE 5: Proposed Form-Based Code Considerations for the DMU zone



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1.3 Fill the gaps to create "two cities, one Downtown"

If Fargo and Moorhead were in the same state, it would be one Downtown focused around the Red River. Many expressed the need to create stronger connections between the two cities and embrace the River as a seam and not a dividing line. For years, Fargo has focused on revitalizing its core centered along and around Broadway. With development filling in many of the opportunities in the core of Downtown, the next big opportunity is to step toward the Red River and integrate new development along it. Recent concepts for Downtown Moorhead are looking at similar ideas. In fact, the majority of development opportunities are nestled between Broadway and the River on currently unoccupied land or on sites occupied by parking or City facilities. There are three major opportunity areas for development that will help to expand the vibrancy of Downtown toward the Red River.

Redevelop the police station, health center and nearby available properties to help activate City Hall Plaza

City Hall Plaza is an opportunity to create a true amenity at the doorstep of the Red River. Anchored by the library and new city hall, this space can be home to new programming and activities that engage residents and visitors alike. Chapter 7 – Play with Purpose – describes in detail options for the design of this space. An important element in creating a truly engaging park is that it serve new housing nearby. Today, there is very little housing near City Hall owing to the area's historic use for primarily commercial and industrial uses. However, adjacent and across from the Civic Center are two City-owned properties that could be redeveloped for new housing thus expanding the Downtown neighborhood toward the River. These sites include the current Police Station and the Health Center – both under discussion for relocation to sites that better serve each organization's needs. The redevelopment of these sites, plus privately-owned properties along 1st Avenue near the proposed City Hall Plaza would have a dramatic effect on this portion of Downtown.

Existing conditions where Downtown Fargo meets the Red River, looking south from Viking Ship Park in Moorhead

FIGURE 6: Conceptual Sketch of Development Potential along Riverfront and Reaching toward Moorhead along Main

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Redevelop the Mid-America Steel site

The most dramatic redevelopment opportunity in Downtown Fargo is to redevelop the site the City of Fargo was founded upon – Mid-America Steel. Bought by the City in a deal to relocate the steel facility, it includes a substantial piece of land on either side of the rail line and along the Red River. Although environmental studies still need to be completed, the site essentially offers three unique opportunities:

1. The upper portion of Mid-America Steel primarily along 1st Avenue provides a gateway to Fargo from Moorhead and is the widest portion of land. There is ample space here to develop either housing with ground floor commercial space or new office space should a major commercial tenant seek a location in Downtown Fargo. A performing arts center could also be sited here, but the location would be removed from the restaurants that would benefit from a location closer to Broadway. Given the size of this portion of the site, there is room to build a new parking garage to serve the needs of multiple buildings on site.
2. The lower portion of the site sits along the Red River. Due to the slope and location in a flood prone area, this is an opportunity to create a true riverfront plaza that is actively programmed. The design of the plaza should provide stormwater management through a series of wetland terraces and ponds stepping down to the River. This will help to clean stormwater before it enters the River and reduce localized flooding. The plaza itself is an opportunity for market stalls and boating facilities to connect Fargoans with the River.
3. Along Main Avenue, there are opportunities for limited development facing Main as well as also a continuation of the plaza described below, as the site dips down to the River.

After environmental studies are completed, the City should issue an RFP for development following the concepts described in this plan, including the new plaza but also the incorporation of elements that serve the public including a percentage of affordable housing or workspace.

Existing conditions at the Mid-America Steel site, looking west from Moorhead

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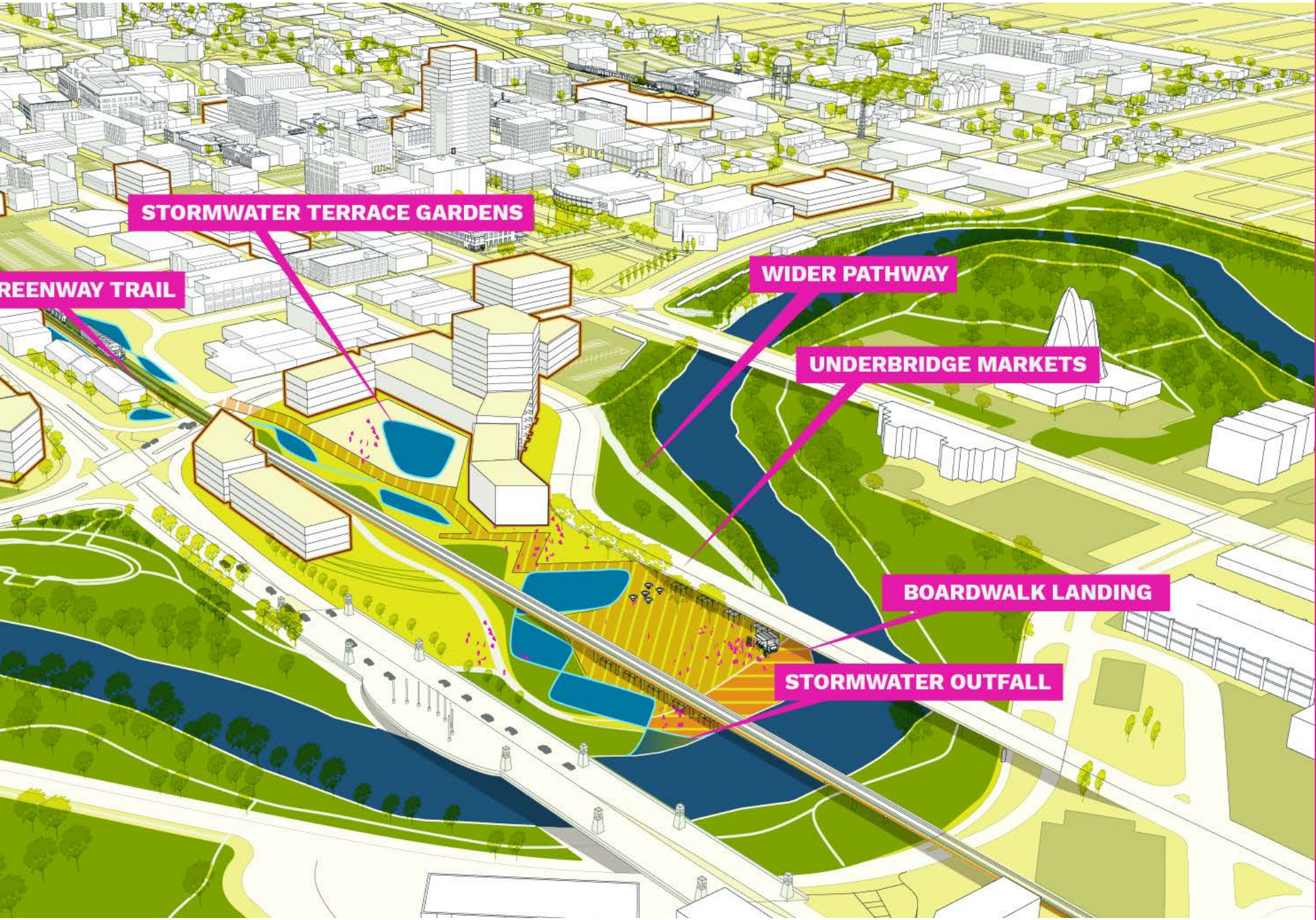

FIGURE 7: Conceptual Sketch of Mixed Use Redevelopment Potential and Riverfront Plaza at former Mid-America Steel Site

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> “Downtown should be more connected to Moorhead.”
>
> *– interview*

Fill in the gaps along Main and create the infrastructure to support development

Main Avenue in its current state is a street with multiple personalities. On the one hand, it is a quaint and attractive collection of small, locally owned stores for one block west of Broadway and nearby along 8th Street. On the other hand, it is a highway designed to carry cars between Fargo and Moorhead which results in low, one-story, auto-oriented buildings including drive thru uses. But Main also has a number of development opportunities that could help to not just create a stronger connection between Broadway and Main, but between Fargo and Moorhead as well. Walkable, mixed-use redevelopment along Main would help to create a more seamless connection between the two cities.

The major challenge to this idea is the north side of Main Avenue, which is characterized by very narrow parcels, about 60-65’ deep, sandwiched between the roadway and the rail right-of-way. To maximize the development opportunity, new buildings would need to be built to the property line with zero setback. However, the character of Main with five lanes, fast moving traffic, and narrow sidewalks effectively discourages this kind of development. The design of the street must change to unlock the potential of these sites.

The proposal is to take Main from a five-lane road to a four-lane road. The approach is to keep two lanes heading toward Moorhead, one turning lane (where the road is wide enough to accommodate it), and one lane heading west from Moorhead. This is the exact reverse of the current design of 1st Avenue, which is one lane heading to Moorhead and two lanes heading west. The two corridors will effectively act as a pair to handle the same number of cars as they currently do while providing space on Main to create a wider sidewalk on the north side of the street. Without a wider sidewalk and a slower, more walkable road, sites would likely be developed with more drive thru uses.

The immediate opportunity is to focus on the intersection of Broadway and Main. Transform the current green space into a true Gateway Plaza. Begin to develop designs for the parking lot owned by the City, and work with the Park District on design approaches for its lot north of Broadway.

The proposed road diet on Main Avenue would create the reverse of 1st Avenue North's traffic flow, allowing 1st and Main to function as a pair to handle traffic moving between Fargo and Moorhead.

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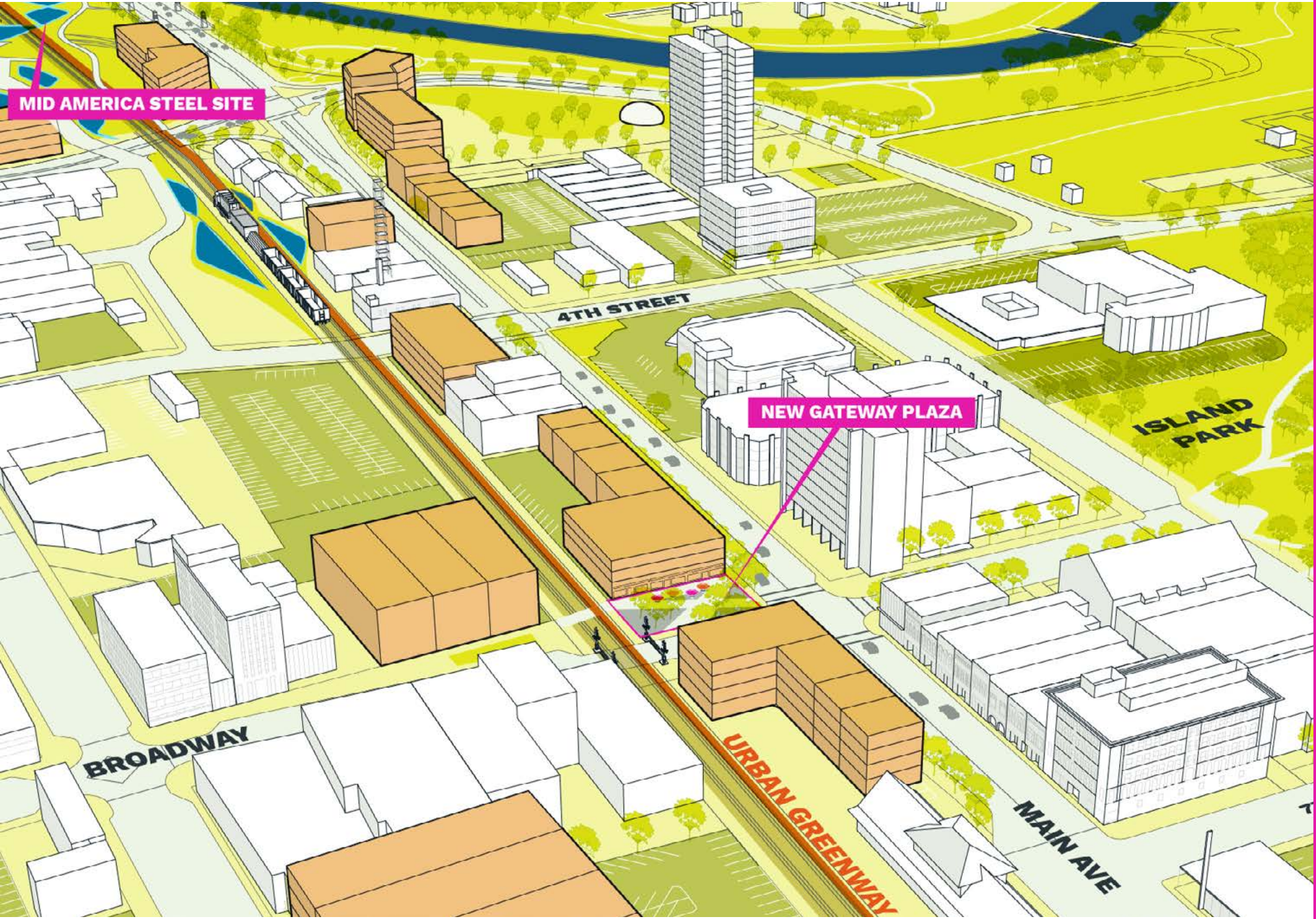

FIGURE 8: Conceptual Sketch of Infill Development Potential along Main Ave

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EXISTING: Photo of the intersection of Main and Broadway showing intact urban fabric on south side of Main and surface parking on north side of Main, separated by five-lane road that encourages speeding rather than walking.

PROPOSED: Rendering showing road diet to bring Main Avenue from five lanes to four to make room for wider sidewalks on the north side of Main. The goals of the redesign are to: encourage slower driving speeds, make crossing and walking along Main safer and more comfortable, and ultimately position the parking lot for redevelopment.

FIGURE 9: Rendering of Main Avenue Roadway Improvements

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PROPOSED: Rendering showing Main Avenue road diet plus mixed use redevelopment to mirror existing shopping and dining destination south of Main at Broadway. The combination of new development, streetscape, and an improved plaza (not pictured) will create a true gateway to Downtown Fargo.

FIGURE 10: Rendering of Main Avenue Roadway Improvements, followed by Infill Development

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1.4 Preserve existing single-family housing in near neighborhoods

There is increasing evidence across the nation that as millennials age and begin entering the life stage of family formation, they are choosing to migrate from downtown apartment living to the walkable, single-family neighborhoods that exist near most downtowns across the country. Downtown Fargo has several adjacent single-family neighborhoods but the state and quality of the housing varies. Moreover, some of these neighborhoods are under increasing pressure as a location for multi-family housing. Preserving these neighborhoods as a single-family housing option going forward is a key component of supporting the development of Downtown Fargo as a neighborhood as well as a destination.

> "We want our neighborhoods to engage with Downtown but to be preserved as family-oriented neighborhoods, with kids attending local neighborhood schools."
>
> *– interview*

Expand capital sources to support single-family rehab and revitalization

The City's Gate City Bank / Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI) is a response to the need to provide financing tools to rehabilitate this aging housing stock. It provides low interest second mortgages to existing homeowners for homes needing extensive renovation and rehabilitation. More than $8 million has been invested in the program since 2003. Gate City / NRI has supported 287 projects. Working to expand this program by adding banks or increasing the present pool of capital available (approximately $2.1 million) will ensure that sufficient financial resources can meet any emerging needs.

However, it is possible that underwriting limitations due to property appraisals or credit scoring could limit access to the existing financing program. One of the key learnings from the Gate City / NRI program is the rehabilitation has led to home value increases after assistance by 32%. Developing additional capital resources or funds to help amortize based on these increased valuations could be a viable option. For example, the City's residential rehab exemption program (57-02.2) exemption can be applied for after the remodeling has occurred. Consideration should be given to allow this exemption to be "prefunded" so a homeowner can use it in fashion similar to a TIF for a commercial development. Alternatively, prior approval with an escrow-like feature could allow it to be used as collateral or source of repayment for a rehab loan.

Bring back the scattered-site TIF program to encourage rehabilitation of existing housing or new infill housing at affordable pricing

Fargo in 2003 maintained a scattered site Tax Increment Financing district (TIF District 2004-01) to support the redevelopment of the housing stock in several neighborhoods near Downtown. The program supported rehab of existing homes or infill tear down/new construction on acquired blighted properties. The housing units involved in the program in 2002-2003 saw a collective increase of 288% in property value. Restoring this program will give the City an additional tool to facilitate single-family housing development. One additional mechanism to consider is putting any acquired property that utilizes this financing tool into a housing trust to help maintain its long-term affordability for young families and middle income households.

Explore employer-assisted housing options

In a number of communities, employer-assisted housing programs can help create middle income housing options. The structure of these can vary widely but may include land contributions with discounted rent for employees, master leasing of apartments, down payment assistance, forgivable loans programs, and other forms of assistance. Eligibility requirements typically involve targeted neighborhoods usually near or adjacent to the major employment sites. For employers, these programs can help serve two purposes. First, they help stabilize the adjacent neighborhoods, and second, they reduce the demand for parking and transportation solutions that draw financial resources away from the core business.

Given the presence of several large institutional employers adjacent to Downtown, an employer-assisted housing program can be an important component of promoting single-family housing near Downtown, relieving some of the parking demands, and fostering a more vibrant and pedestrian-connected Downtown.

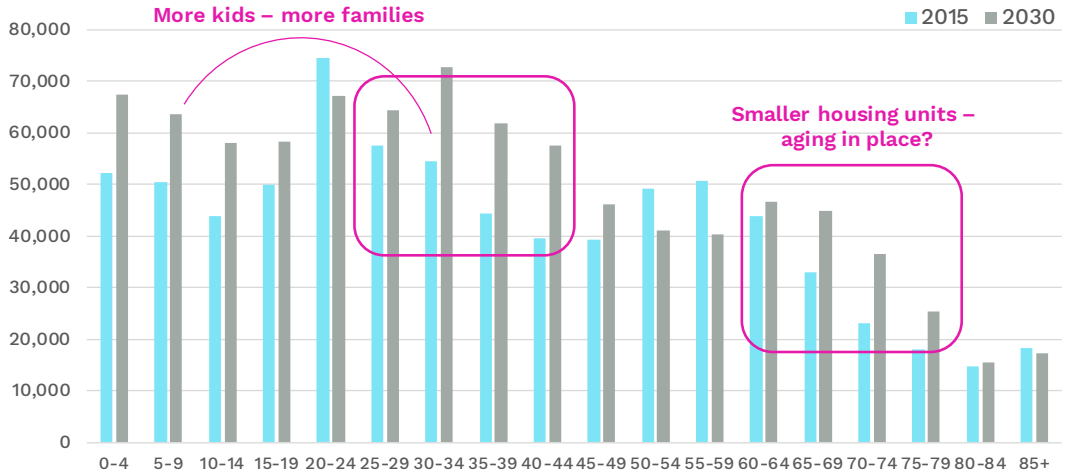

FIGURE 11: Cass County Population Forecast by Age Cohort, 2015-2030

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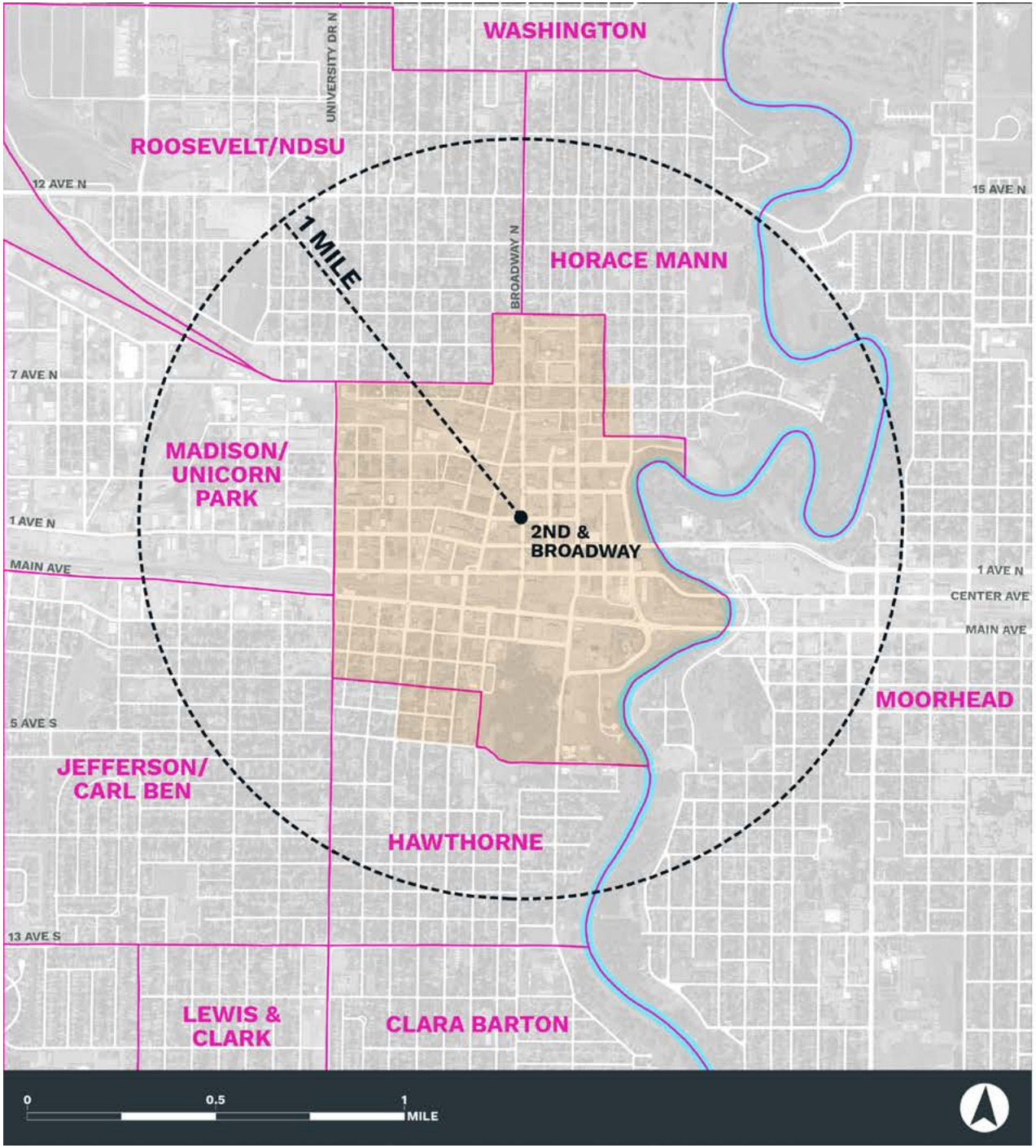

FIGURE 12: Near Neighborhoods

Build upon *Downtown InFocus* with subsequent Fargo InFocus neighborhood plans; focus on housing, especially for young-professionals, working professionals, and middle incomes.

Downtown Fargo and its near neighborhoods cannot carry the full burden of providing the mix of housing types and price ranges the city will need going forward to support its population growth and changing demographics. Neighborhood plans will need to address how each neighborhood can contribute to the emerging housing needs of the city. Some of the tools and approaches for the Downtown and near neighborhoods may have application for the rest of the City.

Near Neighbor-hoods

Source: Interface Studio

NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARY

DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

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1.5 Preserve housing affordability to keep Downtown within reach of low- and working-income households

> "The cost of living Downtown is very prohibitive." – *interview*

The cost of building housing has five major components: land costs, development costs, construction costs (materials/labor), financing costs, and financial return requirements. To address affordability, significantly reducing parts of these cost items becomes critical. Construction costs are very difficult to attack because materials are now a national market, and labor costs depend on availability, which is based on the amount of construction activity in an area. The ability to impact development costs is largely related to the regulatory process. Financial return requirements in part depend on whether the developer is a nonprofit. Addressing financing costs and land costs are a more typical approach.

Use City-owned land to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing and affordable workspace in private development

In Fargo, there are inherent difficulties limiting the creation of affordable housing. In other cities, zoning is used to offer density bonuses for some provision of affordable housing, but in Fargo, the flexible DMU zoning has no height or density restrictions. Additionally, the clay soils in Fargo make mid- to high-rise construction very costly, which limits the return on investment. The primary leverage and tool that the City has to provide affordable housing and affordable workspace is in how it disposes of its land for private development. When seeking private development on City-owned land, if the land is provided below market rates, it is entirely within the City's right to expect a "public good" as a quid pro quo. As defined in this process, a "public good" would include affordable housing, affordable workspace, public art, and/or green infrastructure.

To fully execute the strategy, a few policy considerations must be agreed upon. Will the City sell or lease the land? Will the land be sold or leased at market value or below market value to some degree? To what degree below market value justifies the expectation of affordable housing for people of low- or moderate-incomes? Specific targets to consider include:

- For land sold or leased below market rates, require that 10% of units be priced for households between 80% and 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) and that half of the ground floor commercial space be rented at low-market rates.
- For land sold or leased significantly below market rents, require that 10% of units be priced for households between 30% and 60% of AMI and that half of the ground floor commercial space be rented at low-market rates.

Reserve select publicly-owned properties for the development of income-restricted housing for families below 60% of AMI

It is very difficult to develop affordable housing with larger subsidies in Fargo. The State receives only enough Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (or 'LIHTC,' which is the primary tool for financing affordable housing) to really undertake one, small development project a year in the entire State. As these funds are extremely competitive, careful planning is required to submit for LIHTC funding but also to apply for other sources of housing dollars to make a deal achievable. Key parcels of land in public ownership are key to begin planning for a development to retain affordability in Downtown. Opportunities include the current property owned by the Housing and Redevelopment Authority on Broadway. The Housing Authority has outgrown its space in this location and will likely need to move in the future. Should the agency decide to do so, this parcel could be redeveloped with new retail facing Broadway and affordable housing above, which fits perfectly within their mission to provide.

1.6 Plan to preserve as well as grow

> "There's really nothing to rehab anymore – all of the cool buildings got ripped down in the 60s." – *interview*

New development is indeed fueling growth Downtown and should we welcomed. At the same time, part of what makes Downtown, Downtown is the character and quality of its existing building stock. Preservation is an essential tool in downtown redevelopment.

Continue to track and assist in Downtown preservation efforts

Some buildings have been restored, adding substantial value to Downtown. As development pressure continues, Fargo should seek to ensure that older structures are not replaced with new ones to maximize returns on investment. The City already does an excellent job in maintaining data on over 400 historic buildings Downtown and streamlines the review process for Certificates of Appropriateness. This work significantly contributes to the current attractiveness of Fargo's Downtown. Consider expanding the existing historic overlay districts to include some buildings not traditionally considered historic but valuable to Downtown's future, and develop additional materials and events that celebrate Downtown's past. Also, work to encourage local residents and visitors to explore these historic buildings where possible. Many participants in this study's first open house came, in part, to see the inside of the Union Storage building on NP Avenue. Organizing a "hidden city" festival could promote greater awareness of Downtown's unique buildings and further encourage their preservation and reuse.

See Philadelphia's Hidden City program: http://hiddencityphila.org/

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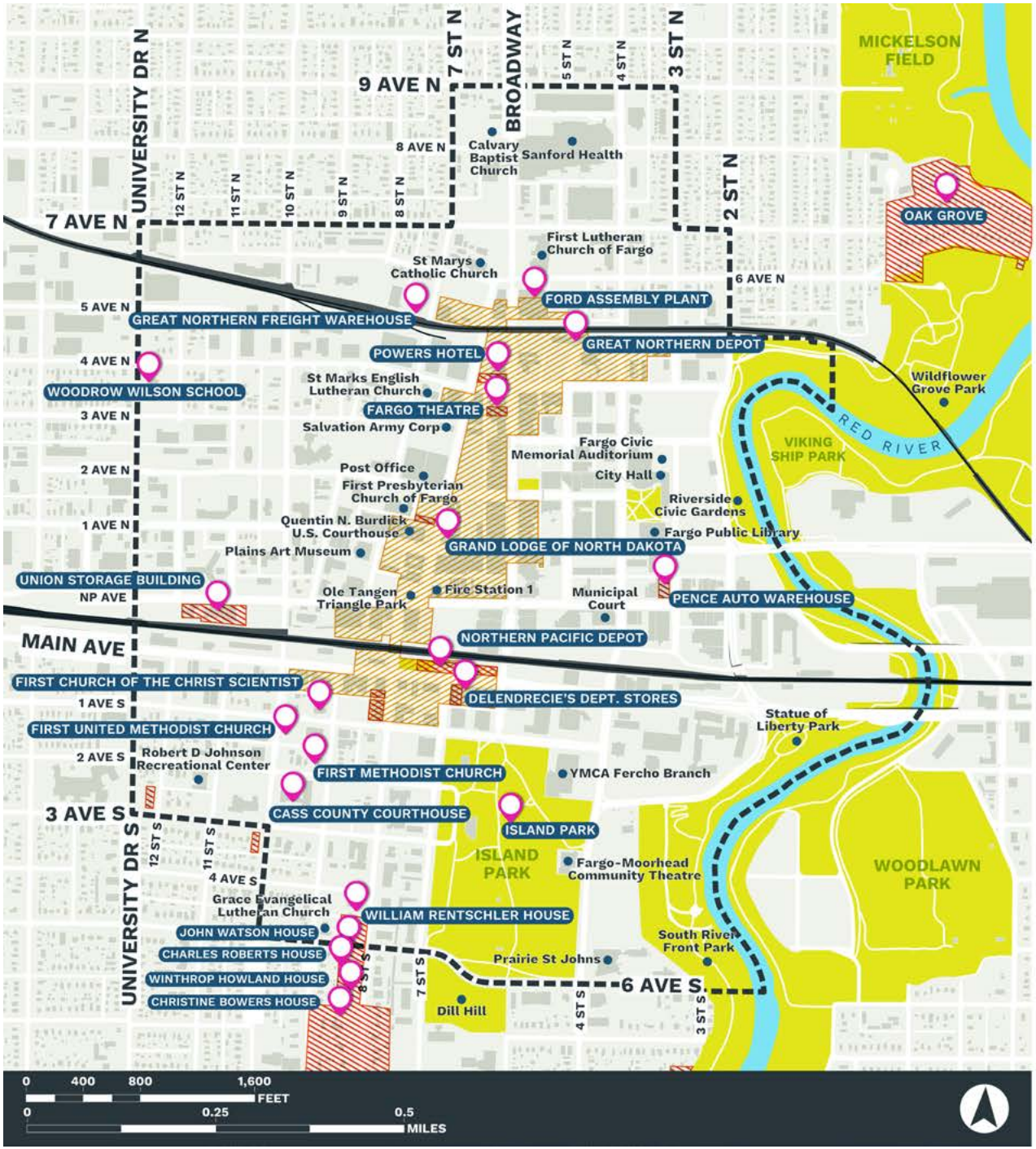

THERE ARE **18**
HISTORICAL PLACES
WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

Historical Assets

Source: Interface Studio, National Park Service

- NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORICAL PLACES
- DESTINATION POINTS
- DOWNTOWN FARGO DISTRICT
- HISTORIC DISTRICT
- RAIL
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 13: Historic Assets Downtown

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1.7 Address quality of life issues shared by Downtown residents

Downtown faces unique challenges that other, traditional neighborhoods do not. It is a destination, active during longer periods of the day, and acts as the region's front door. As it also grows into a neighborhood, those who live Downtown face day-to-day challenges that need to be addressed. Some issues will lessen as the population grows and new residents add to street life activity (which improves safety) and support more basic services. But other issues require immediate action.

Improve lighting Downtown

The perception by some is that Downtown is unsafe. This limits the ability to encourage those who might take transit to do so if they are working late but also discourages visitors from parking even a block off of Broadway at night even though street parking is often readily available. Broadway itself is well-lit, but an effort is needed to strategically upgrade lighting off-Broadway, particularly on the cross streets, to create a more welcoming night-time environment. To prioritize investments in lighting, use the pedestrian count data discussed in Chapter 2 to target key streets where there is more pedestrian activity to further improve these locations in the evening. Two options for lighting should be explored:

> Street lighting, both in the form of traditional stand-alone fixtures and tree lights like on Broadway (a less expensive option), should be evaluated in the context of street reconstruction projects.

> Façade / front porch lighting can be implemented incrementally by working closely with property-owners in targeted areas. Offering a matching grant or design assistance would help to encourage property owners to participate. While this requires time and money to accomplish, this kind of approach is far cheaper than traditional street lighting or stand-alone pedestrian fixtures.

Expand cleaning and greening to beautify Downtown

The BID currently cleans and maintains property Downtown in accordance with its mission. Downtown is divided into zones that receive different levels of treatment. An expansion of the BID's role is necessary to support other recommendations in this plan in particular with respect to maintaining new landscape and trees Downtown. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City should set the expectations for what the BID and the City are responsible for going forward. As development continues Downtown, the BID should continue to re-evaluate their service zones and focus on Downtown greening, which will help to create a more attractive and safer Downtown environment.

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Support efforts of neighbors and businesses to clamp down on nuisance activity

The Fargo Downtown Neighborhood Association is working closely with the City and the BID's Ambassadors to address the lingering concerns around drunkenness, panhandling, and trash. These efforts are critical for the future of Downtown as a thriving neighborhood. Continue to hold regular meetings between the BID, City, and Downtown Neighborhood Association to target nuisance activity. Provide monthly crime reports to members and publish the successes of the partnership online and through newsletters. Also consider a more formal Downtown "Town Watch" to identify residents willing to play a more active role in monitoring and reporting nuisance activity Downtown.

Market Downtown as one of Fargo's safest and most diverse neighborhoods

All downtowns face some level of crime due to their nature as the most active places in any given city. Downtown Fargo is no different. There are concerns about aggressive panhandling and other nuisance activities often associated with late night activities. Despite these challenges, Downtown is, in fact, very safe, as noted by both the City's police and BID Ambassadors. Good communication between all parties is a hallmark of Downtown's success.

Unfortunately, perception is reality for many people and too often Downtown is perceived as unsafe due to one negative experience or something described in the media. Retailers, business owners, Downtown residents, the DCP, and the City need to work to market Downtown as one of Fargo's safest neighborhoods. This is a process of education but also telling positive stories from those who either work or live Downtown. These first-person stories and clear reporting of data can help to slowly dispel some of the myths about Downtown crime and safety.

FPD INTELLIGENCE-LED POLICING

IN PLACE

* New patrol shift schedule
* Downtown Resource Officers (DROs) day and evening shifts
* Community Works Program
* Shift resources on weekends
* Additional cameras Downtown
* Increased emphasis on bike and foot patrol (Spring)
* Improved communication between FPD and Downtown stakeholders

LONGER-TERM STRATEGIES

* Add third DRO in 2018 or '19
* Increase number of Downtown officers to 12 by end of 2017
* Continue to focus on individuals causing problems
* Continue to partner with stakeholders

Current efforts by Fargo Police Department, customized to keep Downtown safe, orderly, and comfortable for all

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2

Prosper as a Business Center

Increase the number and types of businesses and jobs Downtown (or accessible from Downtown).

Downtown is a core location for talent-driven businesses.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Downtown has long been a center of economic activity

Downtown represents approximately 1,200 businesses and 18,000 employees and is a critical location for talent-dependent businesses. For example, it is the home to 21% of the professional/technical firms in the metro area and represents 24% of the employees in the information/communications industry in Greater Fargo.

Estimates of the current available office space suggest that a total of 64,000 square feet of space are on the market in Downtown. At the time of this analysis there was one major property available with approximately 22,000 square feet. Most of the available space Downtown, however, is under 6,000 square feet. In total, these spaces could support between 250 to 450 additional workers.

Downtown rents range from $11-$18 per foot NNN (triple net) with most rents falling between $14-$16 and, depending on the building, additional Common Area Maintenance (CAM) charges. With rents at this level, speculative new office construction is virtually impossible. Any new office space would likely be part of a development with an anchor tenant.

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Downtown has momentum, but retail sales are flat for existing businesses

Downtown is also a destination retail center for Fargo. Retail sales are an estimated $134 million, and the number of retail establishments approach 10% of the total across the metro Fargo-Moorhead region. The amount of retail activity in Downtown compared to the spending capacity of its residents point to the fact that Downtown is a destination-driven market. Retail sales exceed local demand by between $60-80 million. For purposes of understanding the population scale needed to fully support that level of retail by the "neighborhood," an additional 3,500 to 4,500 households would need to be added to the existing population base of roughly 3,000 households.

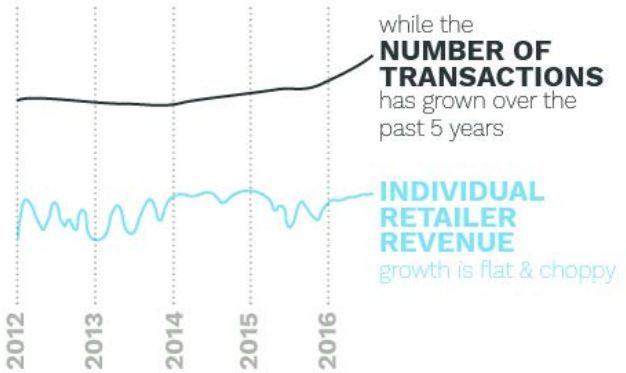
Downtown's role as a destination helps keep local businesses open

	1/4 mile retail/ restaurant	1/2 mile retail/ restaurant
Estimated Demand	$17 m	$51.8 m
Estimated Supply	$79 m	$134 m
Difference	$-62 m	$-82.2 m
Number of Additional Households to fully Support Retail	+$3,487	+$4,524

Downtown lacks basic retail services that would make it an even more attractive location and encourage more residents and Downtown employees to shop there

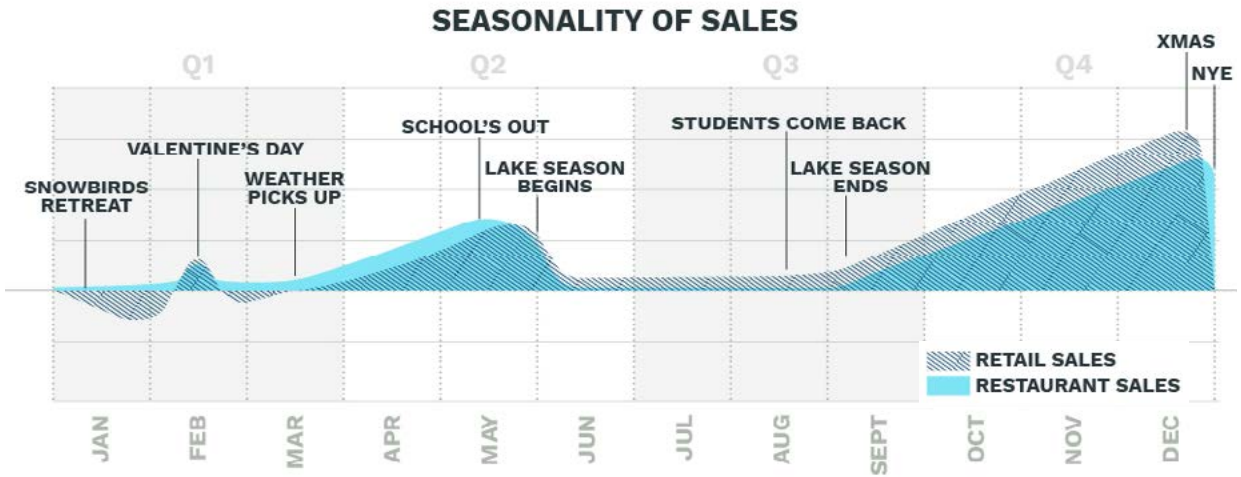
However, one of the challenges for Downtown is that, at present, it lacks the retail mix typically associated with a "neighborhood." Basics such as over the counter medicine, simple fruits and vegetables, and other day-to-day items are very difficult to find Downtown. This presents a chicken or the egg problem. Downtown needs more residents to support basic amenities, but can it get more residents without the amenities?

Downtown has maintained its growth momentum, but the benefits of that momentum are not necessarily driving growth to existing businesses. Credit card sales data obtained for *Downtown InFocus* identified an increased number of sales and transactions, but the activity for existing businesses remained flat. In other words, Downtown has more businesses and more transactions (likely at lower ticket sales), but existing businesses are not seeing the benefits of these trends.



Credit card sales data suggest that while the number of sales transactions is increasing in Downtown, revenue at individual retailers has remained flat.

One of the challenges to Downtown as a retail center is seasonality. Seasonality is driven by a combination of factors. Weather, seasonal impacts caused by vacations, and the student population that ebbs and flows with the academic calendar have created a "resort-town" effect in Downtown.



Due to vacation patterns and the academic calendar, Downtown functions as a "resort-town" in which businesses must do the bulk of their sales in a limited number of months.

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With rising rents, businesses that are sensitive to price have a difficult time finding or retaining the right space

One of the challenges for Downtown is that as the building stock improves and growth in activity is apparent, rents have been increasing. However, rents appear to be increasing faster than sales for existing businesses based on "same store" sales data. Moreover, the wide seasonality puts added pressure on the retailers and other small businesses to make most of their revenue in a very short time frame. Downtown Fargo is at a critical juncture.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Reinforce Downtown's historic role as the center of commerce for the region.

Downtown is an important destination serving as a unique front porch and gateway to Fargo. Part of that uniqueness of Downtown is its mix of businesses, artists, retailers, and restaurants. Losing that mix is a risk to the health of Downtown as a destination, as these commercial and cultural institutions help define the character of Downtown. At the same time, however, accommodating new development and growth is also a priority. Destination-based strategies require reinvention, new programming, and new concepts to keep Downtown fresh and inviting so that people to return. This plan seeks to balance those two needs.

HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

2.1 Strengthen local retail

Retail helps create a sense of vibrancy and activity Downtown. However, existing local retail is challenged in a few different ways – the changing economics of rents in Downtown, pressure from online sales, and the change in spending habits by consumers from purchasing "things" to buying "experiences" are all forces at play. The analysis uncovered that Downtown merchants and property owners do not have a common understanding of what is happening in terms of overall Downtown activity, nor an understanding of visitors to the Downtown and who are its customers. Given the small scale of a number of these businesses, working together is the only way the resources and information can be organized and deployed efficiently to help maintain the overall vibrancy and health of the storefronts of Downtown.

Collect and track pedestrian counts

Pedestrian counts are kept for two locations Downtown by a property owner. This information provided insight into the amount of foot traffic by time of day. More extensive pedestrian counts maintained by the BID can help better understand the volume of pedestrians, patterns of activity, and help prioritize "experience-oriented" investments such as lighting, streetscapes, safety activities, and signage.

Conduct quarterly meet-ups of retailers

The rapidly changing dynamics of retail and the development environment of Downtown create the need for regular "state of Downtown retail" type meetings. These meetings can serve as useful information sharing on retail conditions Downtown and can facilitate joint activities.

> "People in North Dakota are good people; a buy local campaign really pulls at their heartstrings."
>
> – *interview*

> "Downtown has become vibrant and important because it has been home to independent small businesses (especially women owned), creative types and start up entrepreneurs. I am afraid those days may be gone and we may lose our uniqueness and vitality." – *interview*

> "Local businesses need to be talking, setting some ground rules before national retailers come in."
>
> – *interview*

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Work together to increase the potential customer pool and improve the Downtown customer experience

In addition to the regular "state of retail" quarterly meetings, Downtown merchants and restaurateurs should work together to help drive the overall customer pool for Downtown. Retail sales generation takes place across a chain of activities.

Chain that leads to sales generation:

POTENTIAL CUSTOMER POOL > **SHOPPING OPPORTUNITIES** > **SHOPPERS** > **BUYERS**

> "When people come to shop on a Sunday, it can be frustrating... Most places are closed, and there are few places to eat, nowhere to point people to."
>
> *– interview*

Collectively, the Downtown merchants can work with the City and the CVB to help increase the potential customer pool. There are a number of levers that can be used to drive more customers to Downtown. The merchants should focus on a shared customer analysis to understand customer geographies and key messages to help direct joint marketing efforts. The merchants can also work together on the overall shopping experience such as creating common operating hours and seasonal promotions to help create a consistent retail experience. Lastly, the merchants should maintain an important voice within the BID to work on other key customer experience components such as safety, parking, and signage.

2.2 Concentrate new retail locations to maintain retail density and vibrancy

Encourage new retail on blocks close to Broadway to expand the Downtown shopping and dining experience by linking activity on Broadway with activity on Main and in SOMA

The analysis indicates that with existing development there is approximately 19,000 feet of linear first floor frontage in Downtown of which only 68% is occupied. The remaining frontage translates to an estimated maximum of 240 storefronts. However, as noted earlier, traditional retail has a number of challenges making its widespread expansion across Downtown challenging. As also noted, Downtown Fargo for non-employees and non-residents is really about a Downtown experience different from a traditional strip mall shopping trip. Broadway is clearly the hub of Downtown and has the highest demand for parking as well as the greatest intensity of traffic, particularly in the evening hours. Its success could ultimately serve as a major challenge if it becomes viewed as "too crowded" or "too congested" or "has no parking." Focused expansion of the Broadway hub into nearby intersecting blocks will help relieve some of the pressure on Broadway and help maintain the experiential nature of Downtown. Additionally, a focus on Main Street extending to the Red River and Moorhead gives Downtown the potential addition of new signature street.

See "Figure 8" on page 41 and "Figure 10" on page 43.

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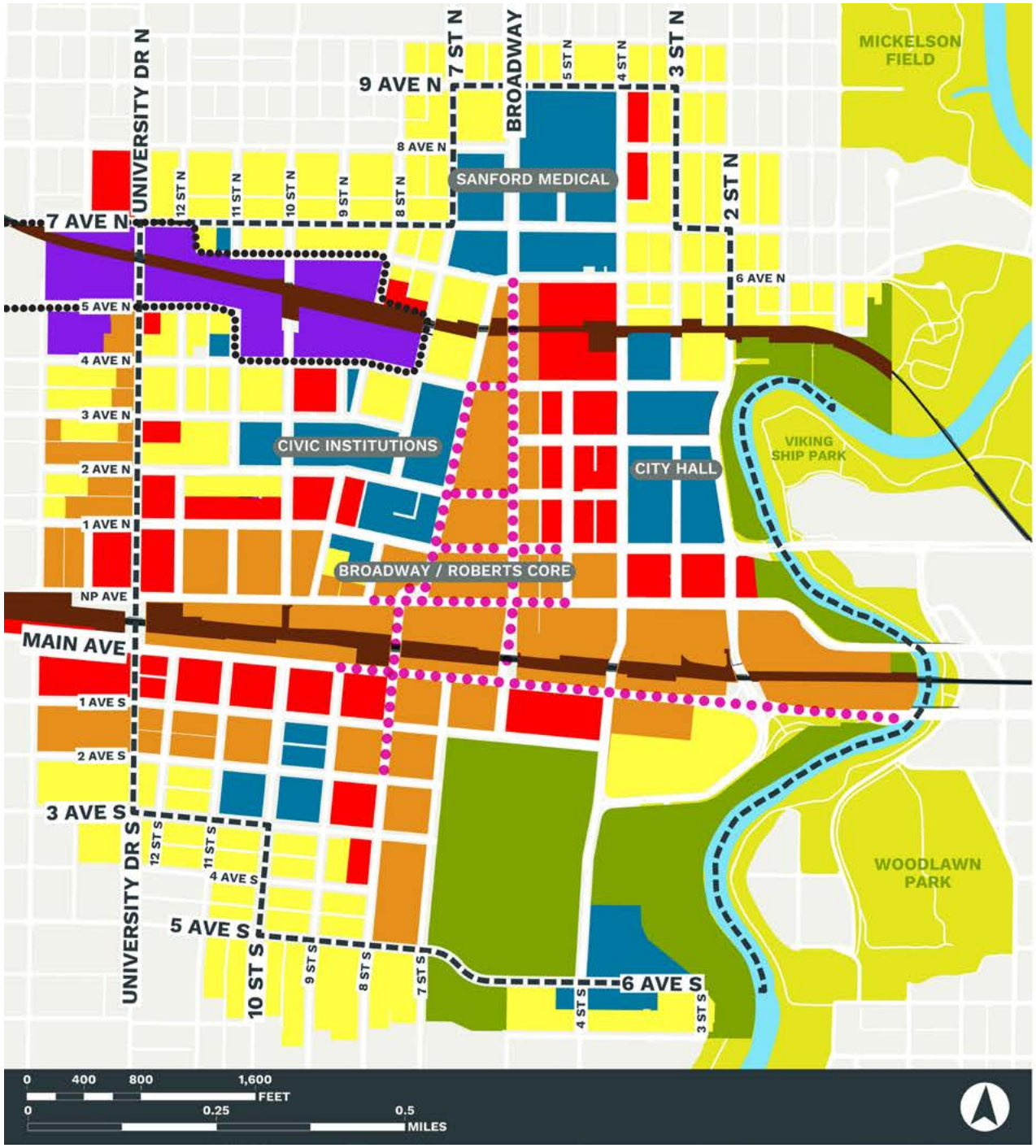


FIGURE 14: Future Land Use Map

The recommended future land use map illustrates the Downtown InFocus approach. There are a lot of areas designated as "mixed-use;" however, only some of them are appropriate for encouraging new retail. These areas are identified with pink dotted lines and include Broadway, Main, and portions of 8th Street, 1st Avenue, NP Avenue, Roberts Street, 2nd, and 4th Streets. The areas not designated for retail should focus on first floor commercial office or workspace for local businesses, startups, and other activities. It should be noted that this map does not exclude some retail from streets not designated as "retail" streets. A destination restaurant or café for instance integrated into the Mid-America Steel site is completely appropriate. The idea is to encourage the majority of retail in areas where retail presence supports other retailers and creates a cohesive experience.

Future Land Use

Source: Interface Studio

- RETAIL FOCUS
- INDUSTRIAL PRESERVATION
- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- MIXED-USE
- INDUSTRIAL
- PARKS & RECREATION
- PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL
- UTILITY & OTHER
- RAIL
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

DRAFT

2.3 Encourage the creation of new commercial spaces for local businesses, start-ups, and artists

Link incentives for new development to efforts supporting entrepreneurial activity

During the interviews, an expressed area of increasing concern was rising rents in Downtown that impact not only retailers but also small office leaseholders and artists. Small office users represent 231 or nearly 20% of the total establishments in Downtown and are a critical part of the lunch and after-work customer base. Moreover, Emerging Prairie is located Downtown, and as companies grow out of this co-working space—if they follow the path of these types of businesses in other cities—they will tend to take the next stage of their development in or near Downtown. However, these businesses remain cost sensitive and prefer to deploy their financial resources on developing their businesses rather than paying escalating rents.

> "We don't own our space; we rent, and our future is up in the air." – *interview*

As part of the "public goods for public resources" concept in the plan, if public funds are used for development, one of the requirements should be linking ground floor commercial space be rented to either artists, start-up businesses, or small, local retailers through flexible leases or discounted rents that reflect the low end of the market range. These rents should not be below market because of the potential distortions that it could cause to the rental market, but should be in the lower range of the market. Expectations from the tenant should not include any tenant improvements; those should be at the discretion of the property owner.

Create a tenant development program providing both recruitment and launch assistance

Nationally, there is increasing evidence that tenant recruitment, particularly for retail tenants, is becoming increasingly difficult. A tenant development program can help create a pipeline of merchants and businesses to complement a normal recruitment program for existing office users and merchants. The Robert's Alley retail program is positioned as an incubator concept.

Comprehensive tenant development programs typically incorporate a business planning competition, seed funds, advisor network, flexible leasing and tenant improvement limitations, a financing network, and a migration plan.

Encourage pop-up retail to test the Downtown market

Pop-up retail is a tool that can be used to allow established merchants to test the market in Fargo. Some national retailers have used seasonal pop-up stores as a way to enhance their presence during key shopping seasons. Online retailers are considering pop-ups as part of their "omnichannel plan" allowing them to have a physical presence in selected markets without making long-term financial commitments to real estate.

Implementing this idea has two important drivers. The first necessary component is property owners willing to consider short-term leasing ideas. The second necessity is to ensure there are no local regulations, licenses, or ordinances that would make developing a temporary structure or undertaking build-out difficult within the desired window of time.

> "We need smaller programs targeted for the smaller businesses that make our Downtown unique." – *interview*

Flexible retail space, adaptable for pop-ups

DRAFT

2.4 Encourage selective alley development

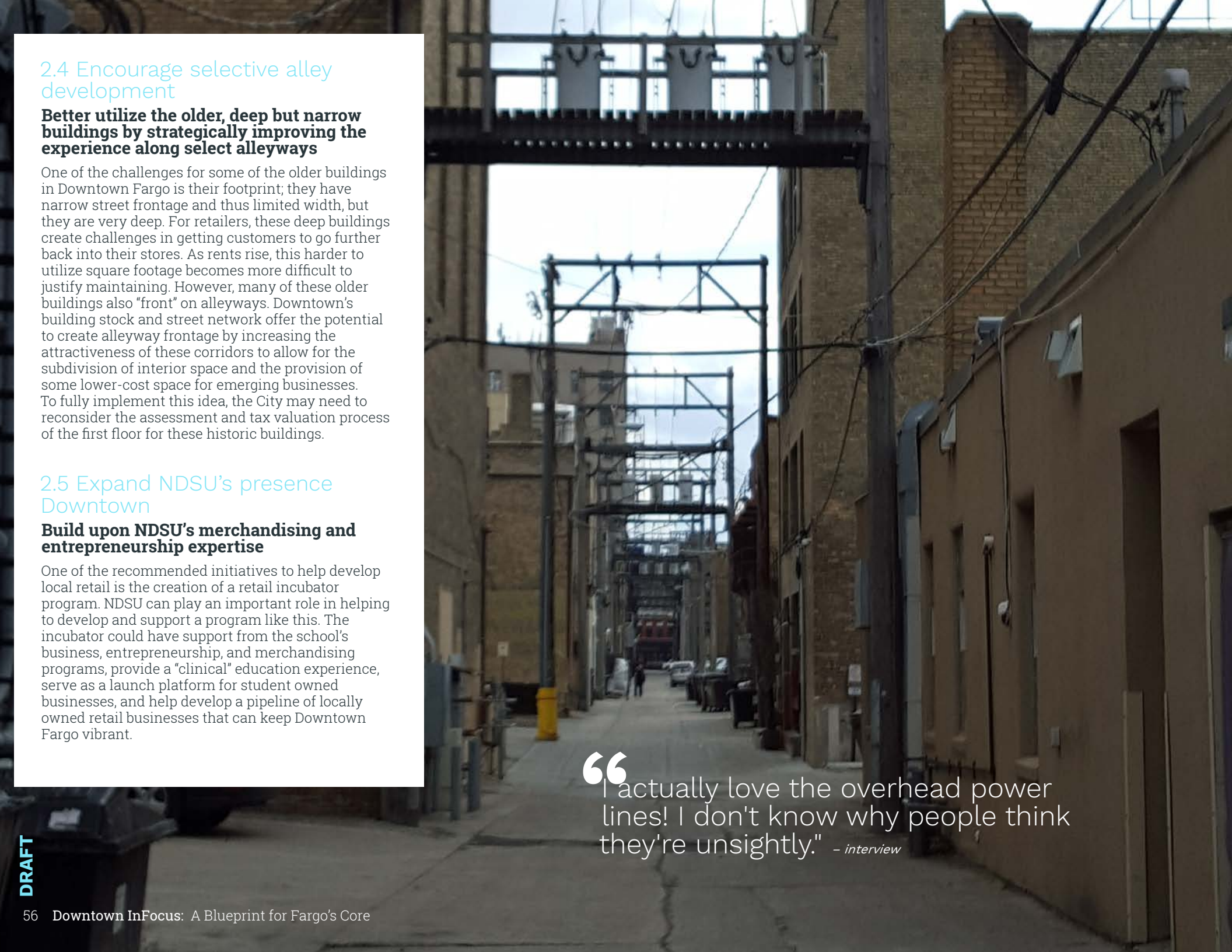
Better utilize the older, deep but narrow buildings by strategically improving the experience along select alleyways

One of the challenges for some of the older buildings in Downtown Fargo is their footprint; they have narrow street frontage and thus limited width, but they are very deep. For retailers, these deep buildings create challenges in getting customers to go further back into their stores. As rents rise, this harder to utilize square footage becomes more difficult to justify maintaining. However, many of these older buildings also "front" on alleyways. Downtown's building stock and street network offer the potential to create alleyway frontage by increasing the attractiveness of these corridors to allow for the subdivision of interior space and the provision of some lower-cost space for emerging businesses. To fully implement this idea, the City may need to reconsider the assessment and tax valuation process of the first floor for these historic buildings.

2.5 Expand NDSU's presence Downtown

Build upon NDSU's merchandising and entrepreneurship expertise

One of the recommended initiatives to help develop local retail is the creation of a retail incubator program. NDSU can play an important role in helping to develop and support a program like this. The incubator could have support from the school's business, entrepreneurship, and merchandising programs, provide a "clinical" education experience, serve as a launch platform for student owned businesses, and help develop a pipeline of locally owned retail businesses that can keep Downtown Fargo vibrant.



"I actually love the overhead power lines! I don't know why people think they're unsightly." – *interview*

DRAFT

2.6 Improve the customer experience

Downtown Fargo is a destination. Its merchants and cultural activities are dependent on spending from across Fargo and the Upper Midwest to remain viable. For many of these potential customers, Downtown Fargo offers a "big city" experience. As Downtown's density increases, maintaining Downtown Fargo as an accessible, manageable experience is critical for its continued success.

Focus on signage, lighting, and safety programs

As surface parking is replaced with infill development and parking decks become more prevalent, pedestrian focused signage and other wayfinding devices will play an important role in helping visitors navigate through Downtown. Additionally, this signage can be used as advertising platforms for merchants. As the density increases and street frontage fills in, proper lighting, and other safety programs such as safe rides or safe walks will help ameliorate the perceptions and concerns regarding Downtown safety.

The use of the pedestrian counters and their application for mapping walking corridors from planned parking to key locations will help prioritize where initial investments should go.

Wayfinding in Downtown Greenville, SC directs visitors to businesses, amenities, and natural features.

2.7 Plan for major events

Work with CVB to maximize conventioneer activity in Downtown

If the convention center is located in Downtown, one of the key considerations will be its impact on the urban fabric, pedestrian experience, and event staging. However, if the convention center is located elsewhere, Downtown will still play a critical role in the quality of the conventioneer experience and be an important selling tool for the CVB. The Downtown BID should be actively involved in the convention selling and management process. Issues to be worked through will include conventioneer access to Downtown via bus staging, events, and activities that may require access to plazas, open spaces, or street closures.

> "Downtown is the face of Fargo; it's the face of the largest, most progressive city of the state. It's the largest economic driver. It's the location of the two highways coming together. How do we get those people to come here as a destination?" *– interview*

DRAFT

3

Thrive as a Destination

Create a unique downtown experience with an activated riverfront and vibrant sidewalks and public spaces that serve as the backdrop to the community's social life.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Downtown's resurgence has benefitted from experimentation and creative efforts to adapt the public realm for a more vibrant public life

Downtowns across the country function differently than they did even a few decades ago. Successful downtowns, those that garner national attention and attract investment and jobs, are quickly adapting to meet today's opportunities. There are more people living and excited to live in Downtown Fargo than in recent memory. At the same time, businesses across the region are competing for talent with cities across the country. A key factor in supporting both residential and job growth is the quality of the place. Downtown Fargo needs to provide a unique experience that cannot be found regionally or even in other cities.

> "Alumni are starting to claim this place. We used to have a major brain drain problem, but not Downtown Fargo is cool again." – *interview*

DRAFT

Despite the unique collection of retailers, Downtown is often quiet on nights and weekends

The experience of Downtown is defined by the quality, character, and amenities provided on Downtown streets, in Downtown parks, within destinations like the Fargo Theatre, and through events and programming that bring people together. Many are proud of Downtown today, with a great collection of locally-owned retailer and restaurants. While this can make for a vibrant day-time environment, others lament the lack of activity Downtown on nights and on Sundays. This is particularly the case during different times of the year when vacations, the academic calendar, or the desire to escape the heart of winter leaves Downtown even emptier during these times of the week.

The foundation of creating a one-of-a-kind Downtown experience is taking care of the basics—ensuring that Downtown is clean and safe, that public spaces are well managed and maintained. There are mixed feelings about safety Downtown depending on who is talking. For those less familiar with Downtown and cities in general, the issues of panhandling, trash, graffiti, and news reports that highlight crime in the city can result in strong negative perceptions about Downtown. Recognizing that perception can be reality to many, DCP and the BID ramped up Downtown cleaning and maintenance. In 2016, the BID removed 12,649 pounds of trash, cleaned up 807 instances of graffiti, and helped to maintain Downtown holiday lights and remove snow from 65 block faces.

The most effective tool for changing perceptions, however, is more activity. More people on the streets, more businesses, and more programming provide what is frequently referred to as "eyes on the street"—a key factor in improving safety in other successful downtowns. The challenge is that much of Downtown's built environment does not actively support street activity. Only 9% of Downtown streets are lined with "active uses," which help to make a street feel safe.

Coupled with the quality and character of Downtown streets is the role of parks in bringing people together. Currently, almost 14% of Downtown comprises open space; however, almost all of this space is located in Island Park. At this time, there are almost no real plazas and parks in the core of Downtown. As Downtown grows, additional parks and plazas will be needed to provide space that brings together residents and/or visitors. This is the basis for creating a new City Hall Plaza described in Chapter 7 and for the Kilbourne Group's proposal to transform the United Bank Plaza as a part of their Block 9 development. While these public spaces present opportunities to bring more activity to Downtown, there is a need for more and varied spaces to support local businesses and cultivate added vibrancy throughout Downtown. Downtowns thrive on the quality and diversity of their public spaces including a mix of large parks, formal plazas, riverfront trails, and small, programmed open spaces. Fargo has the opportunity to create more public space in the places that best support the needs of residents and businesses.

A near-term opportunity is to ramp up Downtown programming. Street Fair, Frostival, and other programs and events already transform Downtown into a local, regional, and national destination at specific times of the year. A full slate of major events, year-round, as well as continuous smaller gatherings welcomed by parklets and other temporary "pop-up" spaces can provide spaces that people want to use. In fact, participants in the Open House prioritized programming such as festivals, outdoor dining, food trucks, art installations, winter programming, and outdoor seating to help activate Downtown streets.

Current regulations obstruct investments that would improve streets and sidewalks, limiting economic development and sense of community fostered in these shared spaces

Creating more open spaces—and programming them—is a collective effort. The City needs to play a role but in today's downtowns, motivated and creative residents and business owners are taking initiatives into their own hands. These experiments, sometimes as small as adding seating to an unused space, are valuable and necessary to test ideas and find ways to add more vibrancy downtown. Too often though, regulations can stand in the way of some of this activity and limit the investment of both dollars and time dedicated to improving Downtown.

> "There is a lack of pride here—it's flat, it's cold, there's nothing to do here. But there is also a sense of possibility—people feel that energy and know they can create here." – *interview*

This section focuses on creating unique experiences Downtown that will bring people back again and again while also serving the needs of a growing neighborhood. The arts, programming, and public spaces are essential ingredients to support economic growth in Downtown and the region. Ask yourself today, if you have a visitor coming to town, where would you take them? If they were here on a Sunday, what would you show them Downtown? In the future, these questions should be easier to answer.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Downtown is unique not only in Fargo but in North Dakota. The region's and State's largest city, **Fargo's Downtown should offer different and varied experiences that draw customers back time and again.** While Downtown safety is essential to the Downtown experience, we must also **design Downtown streets and public spaces to welcome visitors and residents and provide opportunities to enjoy Downtown at all times of the day and throughout the year.**

Fargo is home to a lot of talented individuals who have helped to stimulate a growing arts scene. Quite a few Fargoans have noted, however, that talented artists, designers, or musicians often leave Fargo. As a part of the Downtown experience, we need to **reinforce that Downtown Fargo is hub for the arts and should serve as a testing ground for new ideas.** Downtown is an opportunity to showcase the region's creativity.

HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

3.1 Deregulate

Laws, codes and regulations are designed often with the best of intentions. They help to establish a level playing field and set clear expectations for how public space can be used. However, too much regulation can also inhibit investment and creativity. As in other cities, Fargo should consider loosening some specific restrictions to encourage more activity and investment Downtown.

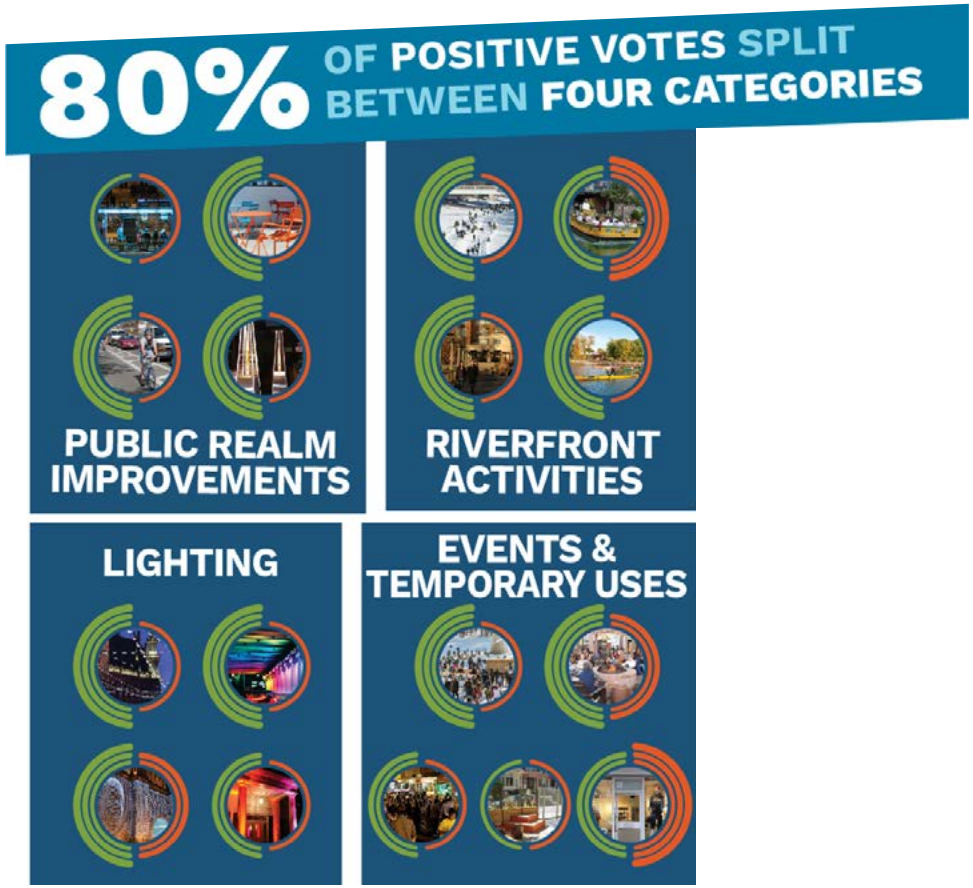
> "The sidewalk regulations make it hard to help people with creative ideas."
>
> – *interview*

Downtown InFocus shared 26 ideas from other cities, and asked for some feedback.

You said:

I love it!

Mmm, not so much.



The Downtown community responded strongly to ideas about activating common space Downtown.

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Encourage outdoor dining, food trucks, and pop-up uses to activate Downtown streets and support local businesses

Current rules in place for regulating outdoor dining and other pop-up uses emerged from reasonable concerns around issues like ADA accessibility. However, understanding how to work within the rules and the process for obtaining permission takes time, which can be a major deterrent to creating a parklet or creating outdoor dining Downtown.

The City should work with DCP to create a streamlined process for applying for and creating parklets, outdoor dining areas, and other temporary uses. This process would follow a small, user-friendly manual that sets clear expectations with respect to a range of temporary uses. In some cities, the downtown organization – their version of the DCP – is empowered to obtain permits and approvals to directly help those with creative ideas to implement them downtown. In these scenarios, the downtown organization offers design assistance to ensure that the temporary use meets City guidelines and to reduce insurance risk. The current memorandum of understanding (MOU) in development between DCP and the City should also explore the ability for DCP to assume more responsibilities with respect to permitting over time.

The key temporary uses include:

- **Parklets –** Create a detailed parklet design guide, and identify the streets where parklets will be supported. The design guide should include allowable uses, materials, edge treatments, placement, and the timeframe for use.
- **Outdoor dining –** Develop rules that allow more flexibility with respect to the placement of outdoor dining and the removal of furniture each evening. Also work to streamline the process to obtain an encroachment agreement.
- **Outdoor seating –** Develop a clear step-by-step process for integrating new seating into unused Downtown spaces. Include spec sheets for a range of furniture options.
- **Food trucks –** Current rules that regulate food trucks include no service on public property, no cooking on site, minimum spacing between food trucks, and bathroom requirements for food trucks operating on private property. Consider eliminating all of these rules and instead identifying designated zones for food trucks. These can help new chefs to test restaurant ideas but also generate more activity, which has been shown to support existing restaurants in downtowns across the country.
- **Outdoor sales and push carts –** There are also limits to outdoor push carts and the ability to sell merchandise on the sidewalk. Consider loosening these restrictions as well, and work with retailers to better activate the sidewalks during good weather.

Advocate for changes at the State to change existing laws around liquor sales and outdoor dining

Some laws that impact Downtown are, in fact, State laws. These include those that control where liquor can be sold. One of the limiting factors in outdoor dining Downtown is that in order to serve alcohol outside, the dining area must be attached to the restaurant. Given the size of existing sidewalks on many streets, this hinders outdoor seating opportunities, which could otherwise be located in curbside bump-outs. If outdoor dining is located in a bump-out, the customer can only get a glass of wine by ordering inside and bringing it out themselves. To better support the needs of Downtown restaurants, the City should seek to change the State laws that limit the Downtown.

Push to change local liquor laws to support emerging business models

Not all liquor laws are state issues. The cost, type, and ability to obtain a liquor law in Fargo all hamper the ability for a new restaurateur to enter the market. While liquor licenses for restaurants without a bar are reasonably priced compared to other cities, those for restaurants with a bar are very expensive. The City should continue to reevaluate the pricing for existing licenses but also reduce the number of license types to help simplify the process. In addition, new business models will require some changes to provide better support. These include breweries and taprooms that exist in an awkward realm between manufacturing and retail. Some of their activity is governed by the State, but the City should seek to proactively find ways to support these uses, as they are proven economic drivers in many downtowns.

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3.2 Mix It Up on Broadway

The transformation of Broadway about 15 years ago has stimulated a lot of activity Downtown. While that investment feels all too recent for those who raised the capital to make it happen, like any major investment, it needs some updating to respond to current opportunities.

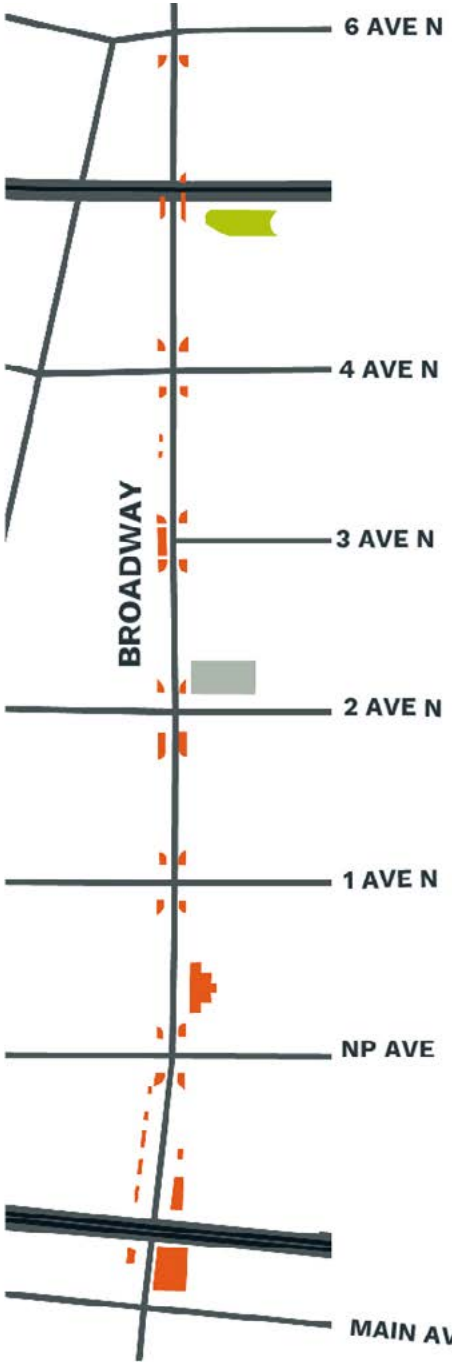
With more restaurants and retail Downtown than 15 years ago, there is a desire for more public space to support these businesses. While Broadway is a great front door for Downtown, there are opportunities to improve it even further.

In Holland, MI, the main retail street is similar in size to Broadway, with angled parking and bump outs. The difference is in how the sidewalk bump-outs are used. In some cases, they are used as public space with winter warming huts, in others they serve as outdoor seating for restaurants or home to seasonal plantings. Broadway has the space to do something similar with just a few changes to the design.

> "Outsiders are often more enchanted with Fargo than locals – how can we use this process to help residents see this place in a new light and fall in love with their city again?"
>
> – *interview*

Small gathering space and warming hut on sidewalk bump-out in Holland, MI

Bump-outs used for outdoor dining



The underutilized spaces in the public realm along Broadway amount to over a half acre of space (or roughly twice the size of Block 9 Plaza)!

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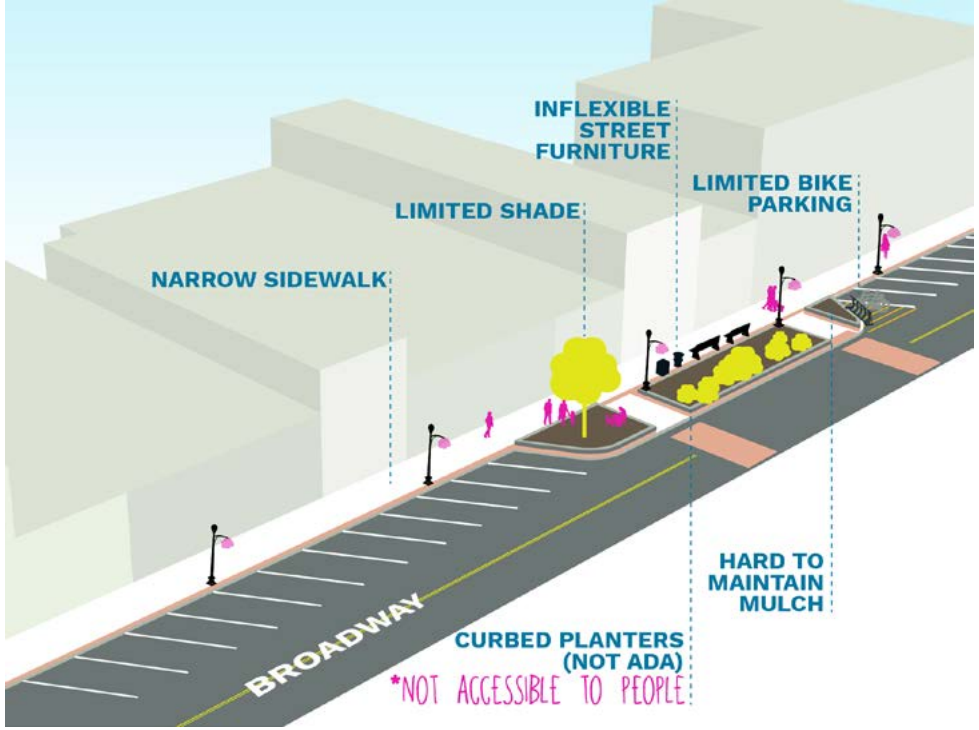
Reclaim select planted areas for active programming and use.

Along Broadway, there are some plantings, but mostly these spaces are unusable—constrained by immovable furniture on the edges, limited shade, and amenities like bike parking awkwardly forced into the street next to parking. From 6th Avenue to Main Avenue along Broadway alone, there is over a half acre of underutilized public space including the bump-outs and some adjacent spaces that serve as building entranceways. This is more than twice the size of the proposed Block 9 Plaza. A redesign could have a dramatic impact on Downtown.

Akin to what is happening next to Atomic Coffee, the idea is to clear these bump-outs and integrate new features that invite active use. The elements include:

- Flexible street furnishings including movable tables and chairs
- Shade trees where possible
- Improved ADA accessibility from the sidewalk and street
- Public art where appropriate
- Winter warming huts, preferably designed locally by NDSU architecture students
- Bicycle parking
- And, if adjacent an adjacent restaurant will agree to help maintain the space, dedicated space for seasonal outdoor seating

Should liquor laws remain as they are and a restaurant requires the outdoor seating to be immediately adjacent to the building, an alternative approach is integrate the sidewalk into the bump-out to allow access and egress around the seating. The design process will need to engage immediately adjacent retailers and restaurants to determine the best design for each bump-out.



EXISTING: Challenges in activating public realm along Broadway

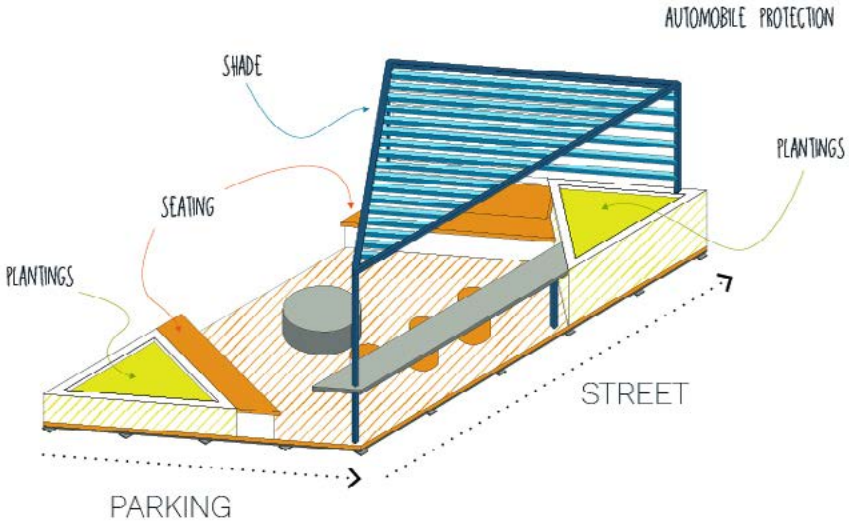
FIGURE 15: Design Concepts for Retrofitting Existing Broadway Bump-Outs & Adding Seasonal Parklets

DRAFT

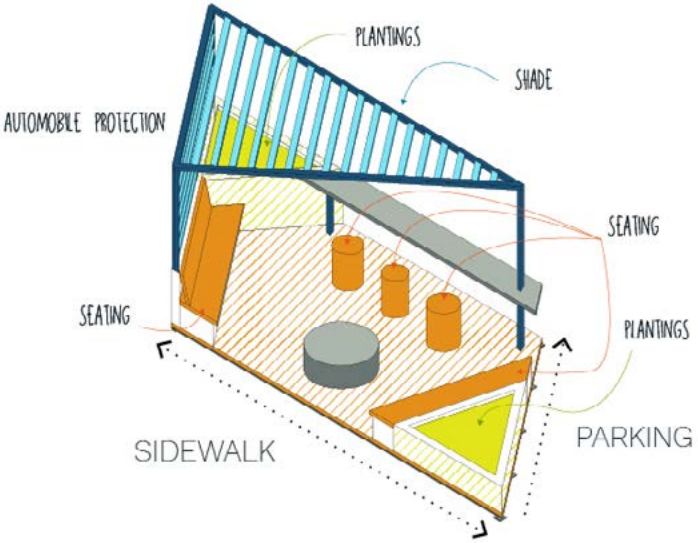
Design additional sidewalk bump-outs (both temporary and permanent) to create more public space, usable in all seasons

There are also opportunities to expand public space along Broadway by utilizing select on-street parking spaces for temporary outdoor space, sidewalk, or seasonal outdoor dining. In the case temporary space becomes extremely popular and supported by the local retailer or restaurant, this could be considered a permanent change after discussions with the City and DCP. The intent is to offer choice to local businesses in how best to support their business. If parking is most important to them, then the current situation is ideal. If they would like something different, they should have the choice to work with the City and DCP to create this kind of a public space. A design should be developed that is flexible and easily removable during off season. Figure 16 shows one approach for reusing two on-street parking spaces for a small outdoor parklet on Broadway. It is intended to help jumpstart this conversation. The design uses CVB's North of Normal logo as a shade structure and integrates seating, protection from passing cars, and plantings.

EXISTING: Diagonal parking on Broadway



Conceptual design of parklet built for repurposing diagonal parking; view from street edge.



Access from sidewalk edge, with seating to complement adjacent food-related businesses.

FIGURE 16: Rendering of a Parklet in the Place of Parking on Broadway

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3.3 Encourage More Programming "Off-Broadway"

Fargo holds a large number of events each year, many of which are focused Downtown. These events are important for the City's economy as they bring visitors to town. In 2016, there were 105 events held in Fargo, with just under half (49) focused in Downtown. Most of these events occur between June and September, and the majority attract between 100 and 1,000 people. TedX Fargo and Frostival are larger, but far and away, Street Fair is the largest event in the City, attracting close to 150,000 people.

While the events are important for any City, sometimes they bring unintended consequences. In 2016, 16 events closed Broadway, but this number could be higher given the number of requests to hold events on Broadway. In a City where retailers make the majority of their annual income in a handful of months, street closures during these times can have a large impact on their bottom line. Some festivals and events tend to attract people who also support existing retailers; other events do not. Broadway is important as the front door to the region, but if it is overused, the very things that make it unique are threatened.

> "We need to create that wow-factor off of Broadway." – *interview*

Relieve pressure on Broadway by encouraging more events and programming in other designated areas

Start designating and marketing other portions of Downtown for regular events to take the pressure off of Broadway. "Off Broadway" locations should include the upcoming Block 9 Plaza, City Hall Plaza (described in Chapter 7), Island Park, and 2nd Avenue stretching from City Hall Plaza west to Roberts Street. Depending on the size of the event, multiple corridors/ locations should be considered.

Some events will and should continue to occur on Broadway. Work with local retailers to create a set of principles that should govern decisions regarding whether an event is appropriate for Broadway and how it will be managed.

Bird's eye view of Broadway, closed for Street Fair

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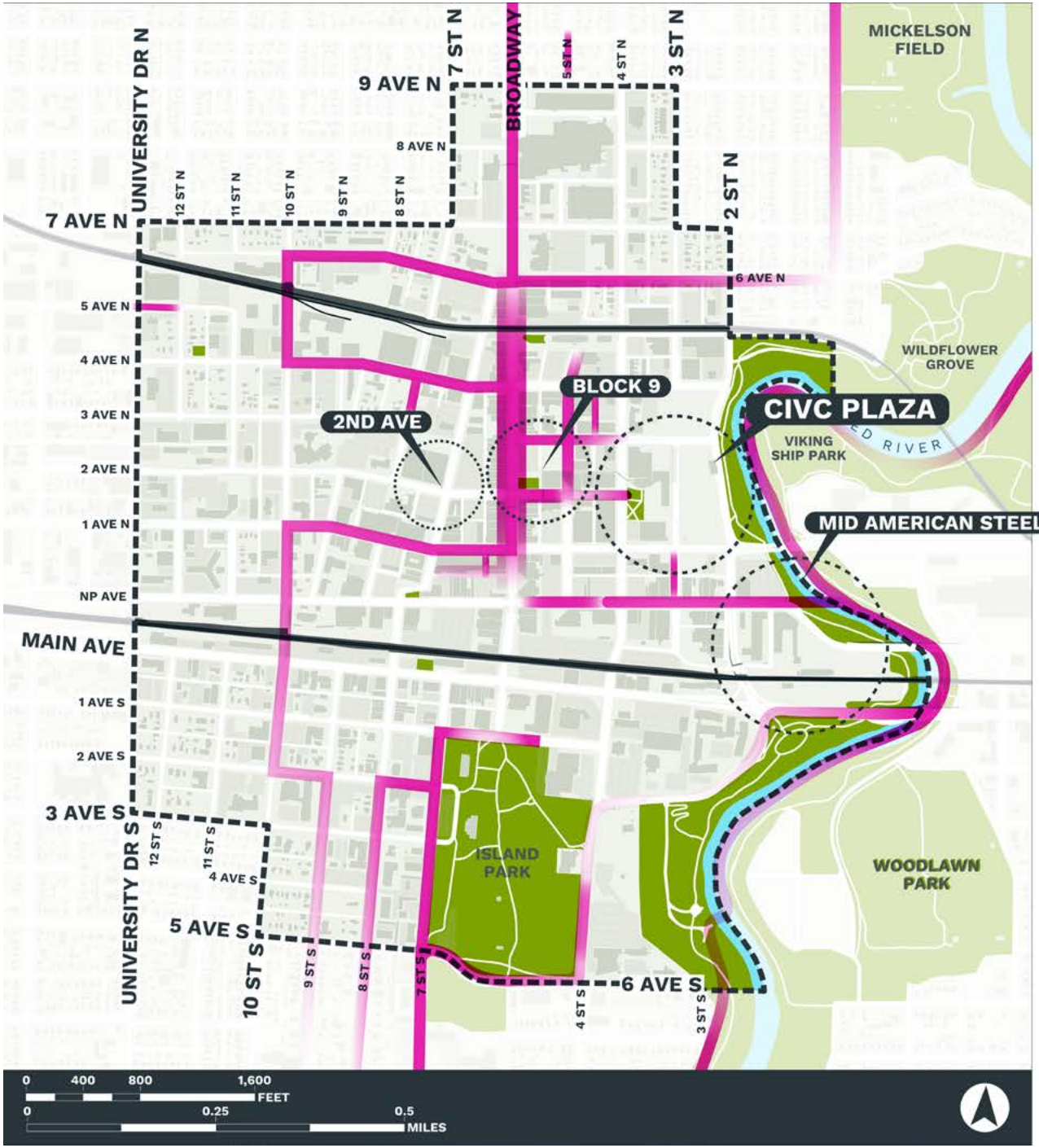


In 2016, **16** special events closed Broadway

Potential Sites for Special Events

Source: Interface Studio

0 — 5+

# of street closure requests in 2016

RAIL

OPEN SPACE

DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 17: Alternative Sites for "Off-Broadway" Events and Programming

DRAFT

3.4 Raise the profile of the arts and design

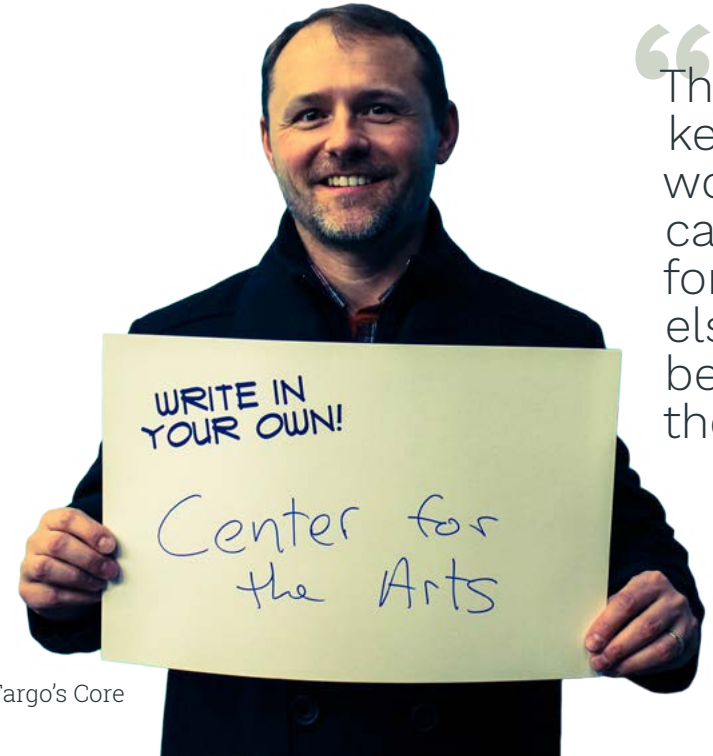
The arts are alive and well in Downtown. There are nearly 20 museums and galleries in Downtown (not including those in Moorhead) as well as other attractions like the Fargo Theatre and Sanctuary Events Center. Coupled with these amenities, Downtown is home to the performing arts with the Fargo Moorhead Symphony, Fargo Moorhead Community Theater, F-M Ballet, and Theatre B. These are significant assets that generate a lot of economic activity. There is a burgeoning movement to celebrate the arts led by groups like the Fargo Moorhead Visual Artists that organizes an annual studio crawl. To building upon these efforts, the City, DCP and local artists and Downtown stakeholders should work to:

Brand and promote a design district

Given that Downtown is also home to other small and creative practices including those who work in architecture, graphic design, web design, and other design-related fields, there is an opportunity to broaden the conversation about Downtown's arts sector and further brand Downtown as a center for design. Designate portions of Downtown as a "design district" and develop branding and wayfinding that calls attention to major Downtown anchors like the Plains Arts Museum and NDSU Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Work with the CVB and DCP to track and promote the number of creative businesses and employees in the district, and encourage public art within the district. Organize lectures around the arts and design, and form a design district committee to organize networking events between local businesses and artists.

Build upon annual arts events to create a Design Month in Downtown

The studio crawl has been successful in introducing the region to artists in both Fargo and Moorhead. Consider expanding the crawl into an annual "design month" that includes studio tours, lectures, events, and the launch of specific temporary or pop-up uses Downtown like the parklets described in this chapter. Market the event far and wide to attract visitors and ensure close coordination with retailers to promote Fargo's local businesses. For this reason, consider organizing the event in a month when the retailers could use some additional foot traffic and customers.



> "There is a colony of artists who keep their heads down and keep working. People are realizing you can be an artist here, make a name for yourself here, and work/create elsewhere too. The internet has been transformative, particularly for the flyover states." *– interview*

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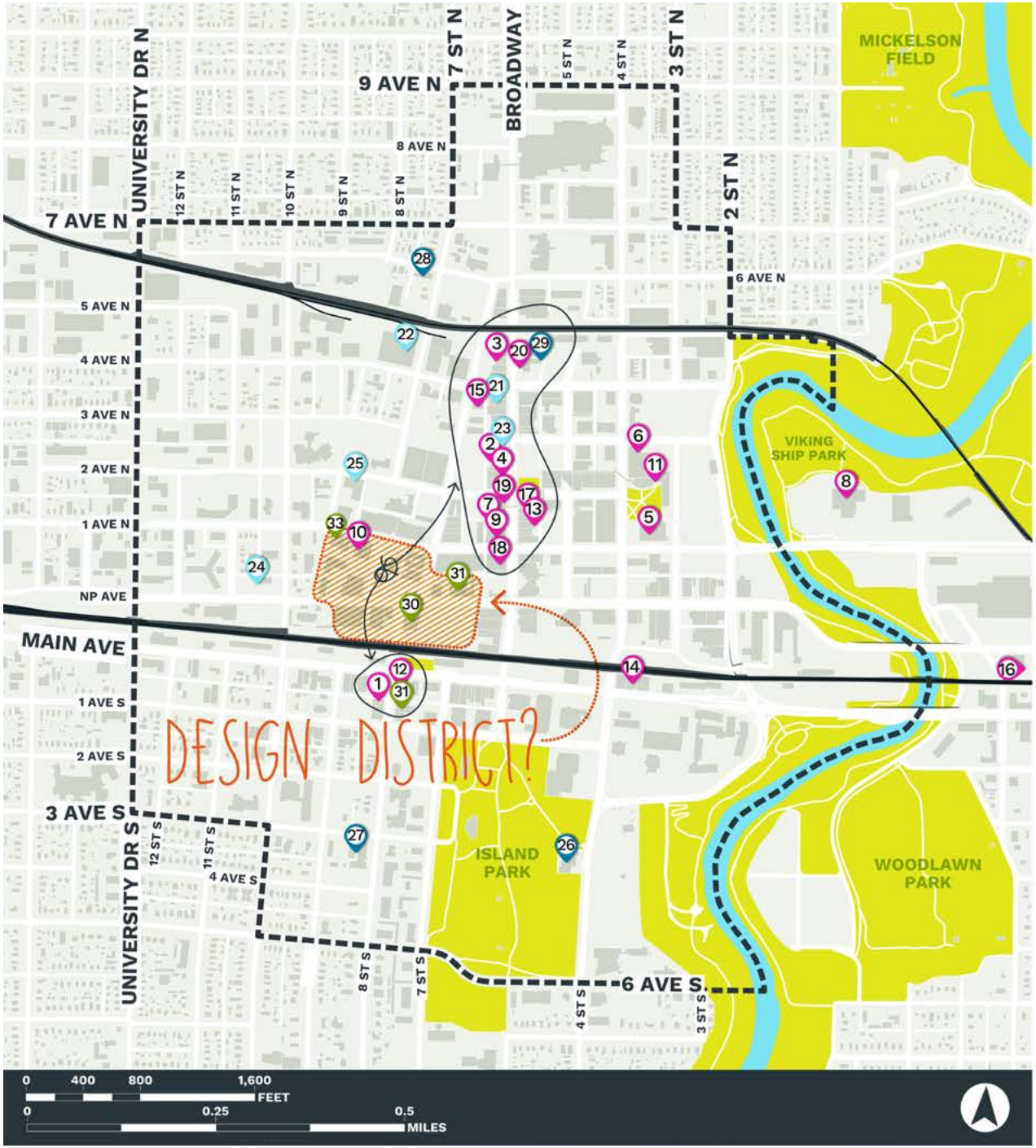

Arts & Cultural Assets

Source: Interface Studio, City of Fargo

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

1 8th Street Art Gallery
2 Boerth's Gallery and Design Studio
3 C.Lizzy's
4 Ecce Gallery
5 Fargo Public LIbrary
6 Fargo Civic Memorial Auditorium
7 Gallery 4
8 Hjemkomst Interpretive Center
9 Parallel Galleries
10 Plains Art Museum
11 Public Art Exhibit at City Hall
12 Rando Art Studio
13 River Cities Literary Arts Center
14 Riverzen Art Studio & Salon
15 Roberts Street Chapel
16 Rourke Art Museum
17 Spirit Room
18 The Uptown Gallery
19 The Whipped Stitch
20 Revland Gallery

ATTRACTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT

21 The Fargo Theatre
22 Sanctuary Events Center
23 The Aquarium
24 Nestor Tavern
25 Sons of Norway

PERFORMING ARTS

26 Fargo Moorhead Community Theatre
27 Fargo Moorhead Symphony
28 F-M Ballet
29 Theatre B

DESIGN SCHOOLS

30 NDSU Department of Architecture
31 Josef's School of Hair Design
32 Moler Barber College of Hairstyling
33 Katherine Kilbourne Burgum Center for Creativity

DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 18: Arts & Cultural Assets and Potential Design District

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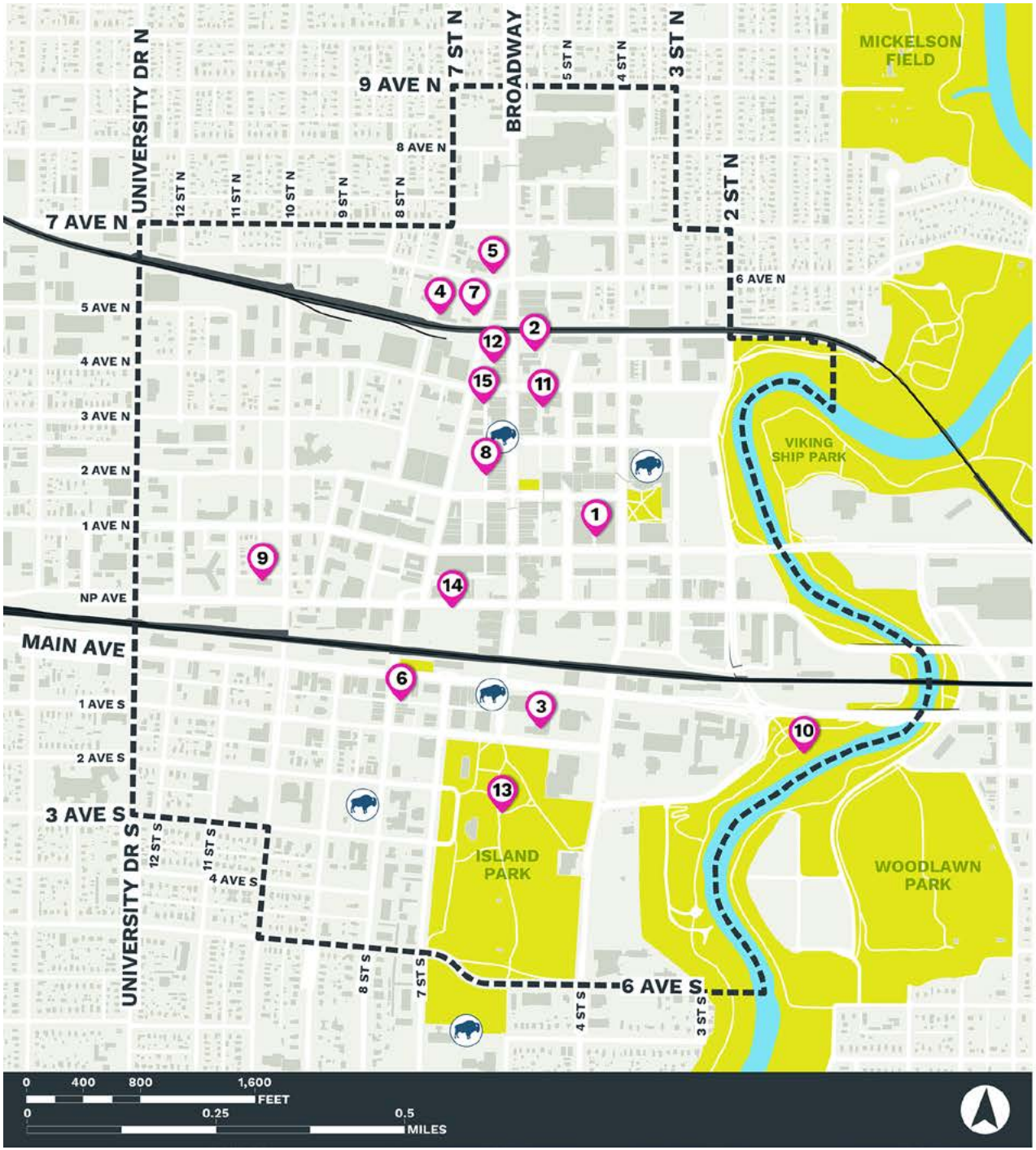

Public Art Sightings

Source: Interface Studio, City of Fargo

Herd About the Prairie "A Visual Stampede" Sculpture Project

1. ART ALLEY 1st Ave N between 4th & 5th St
2. Hotel Bison
3. Island Park Ramp Installation
4. MEADOWLARK 503 7th St N
5. PEACOCK 7th Ave N on Roberts St
6. PENGUINS 14 8th Street S
7. PRAIRIE ROSE 506 Roberts St N
8. Roberts Alley Mural Roberts St N
9. SKATEFUL DEAD 1001 NP Ave N
10. Statue of Liberty
11. SUNNY BROOK WHISKEY / THE COWBOY McCormick Building 320 5th St
12. WHEAT 300 Broadway
13. HENRIK WERGELAND STATUE Island Park
14. SCULPTURE, 620 NP Ave
15. TRISTAN POLLACK MURAL Roberts St N

RAIL
OPEN SPACE
DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 19: Public Art in the Downtown Focus Area

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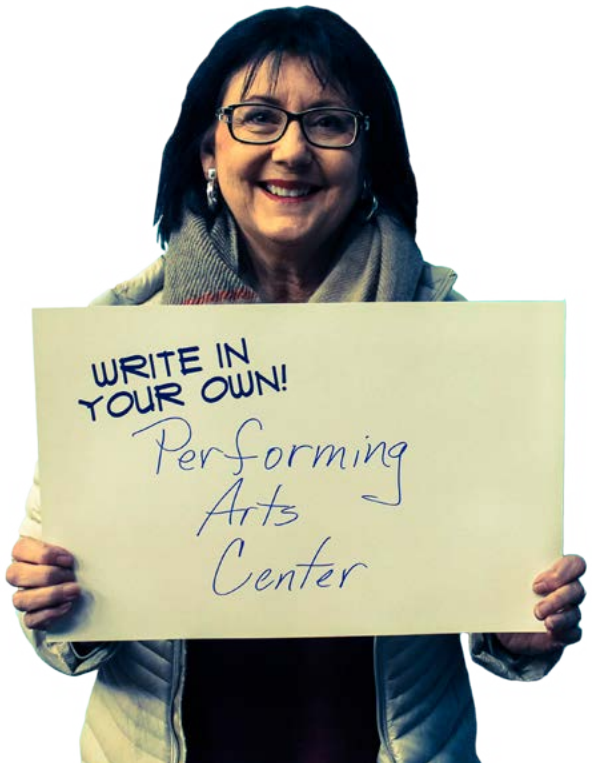
> "How do we create a brand? The arts are an enormous asset. Creative placemaking comes from creative assets." *– interview*



3.5 Invest in new public art

Cities across the country have been investing in public art to enhance the downtown experience and brings economic benefits to their local businesses. There are at least 20 examples of public art in Downtown alone, and the City's recent Public Art Master Plan is devoted to nurturing more public art in Fargo.

Encourage new public art within new development and as public expressions of Fargo's identity.

Many cities include a 1% for Art program for projects that receive public funding or support in any way. This helps to both support the local arts and add value to new private investment. This should be considered for Downtown, but even without a formal program, public art is a "public good" that needs to be included in publicly issued RFPs for the development of land owned by the City. Other parts of this plan refer to "public good" as including public art, green infrastructure, affordable housing, and affordable workspace, all of which need support as Downtown continues to grow.

Bring artists in on key public projects.

For key public spaces including streets, an artist involved in the design process can help to enrich the design and build in art from the outset. Examples include the design of City Hall Plaza, riverfront plazas, the redesign of Broadway's bump-outs, and the design of key corridors like Main Avenue and NP Avenue. Consider identifying two or three stipended "artists in residence" each year to support key public works projects. Their role would be to attend design meetings and public presentations, and present concepts for art that support the overall intent of each project.

3.6 Pursue the Performing Arts Center

There is widespread support for a performing arts center that supports major concerts but also smaller scale, community events. A study was completed to evaluate the cost of renovating the Civic Center or demolishing it and building a new center. The costs were approximately the same. While this is a major public investment, it could bring real benefits that outweigh the costs over time.

Consider a final site for the Performing Arts Center

The Civic Center site has been under discussion for some time. It has the benefit of being close to Broadway and facing the proposed City Hall Plaza. The advantage for this location is that a typical performance includes a dinner and drink either before or after the show. Performance Centers in this way add customers to Downtown restaurants. It is important to keep these customers Downtown.

The other option is to build a Performing Arts Center as a part of the Mid-America Steel site. Facing the Red River, this site offers the potential to be a signature building and provide another "wow" moment for Downtown. This would also free the Civic Center site for private development that could add more housing closer to City Hall Plaza. However, the Mid-America Steel site is more removed from Broadway and could end up being a destination type use. In other words, concert-goers drive to the Performing Arts Center, park, and leave afterwards without dining in Downtown.

Either site provides unique opportunities to be considered in the context of leveraging potential private investment. RFPs for development at Mid-America should include a Performing Arts Center as a potential use to stimulate a conversation with interested developers about options.

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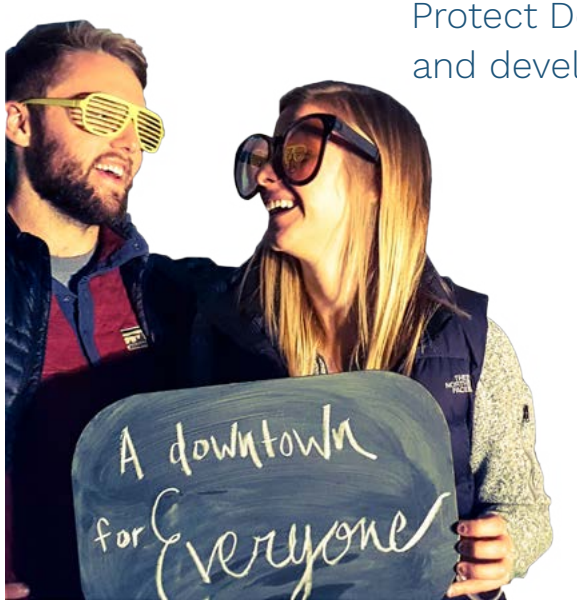
4

> "We need to be more thoughtful about redevelopment. We don't want to price out the poor, the homeless. Fifteen years ago, they were the only people in Downtown." – *interview*

Be a Model for Inclusive Growth & Development

Protect Downtown's diversity and evolve as a model for equitable growth and development.



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Downtown Fargoans expressed a commitment to inclusivity as Downtown revitalizes

Fargo's Downtown community shares a vision for a Downtown that is welcoming to all—a place that not only remains diverse but celebrates its diversity. Such comments reflect a mindfulness of the changes unfolding as development momentum builds and housing Downtown becomes more expensive. There is a desire not to push out the long-term community members who have called Downtown home for decades, even when it was a less desirable place to live.

DRAFT

Tensions are building between different factions of the community as Downtown redevelops

But there is also recognition of a new tension emerging between newer neighbors and visitors drawn Downtown by the growing number of events, the shopping, restaurants, and nightlife and the community of people living Downtown under different circumstances—either homeless or at risk of homelessness, perhaps working but unable to maintain housing as Downtown's economics change. While some interactions are polite, aggressive panhandling or drunken behavior can be intimidating, whether the target of an uncomfortable interaction be a shopper who is asked for money or a person experiencing homelessness who is taunted by binge-drinking students.

> "The people experiencing homelessness Downtown live and work Downtown. They are a part of the place and the stories." – *interview*

The prompt: describe the Downtown Fargo of tomorrow you hope for in one word of phrase. The bigger the word, the more times it was offered as a response by community members.

Downtown is host to a range of social services that belong Downtown, near transportation

The Fargo Moorhead region has a very high quality network of shelters and associated service providers and advocates for individuals experiencing homelessness. There are five local shelters: two in Moorhead (Churches United, which can accommodate families and Dorothy Day, which is a smaller shelter with wraparound services for 13 people) and three in Fargo (YWCA for women and children, New Life for men, and Gladys Ray, which is a damp shelter operated by the City of Fargo and a noted exemplar in all aspects of its service). Fargo also has two youth shelters, Youth Works and Stepping Stones.

The only Homeless Health Services clinic in the State, the Ground Transportation Center, and the Main Branch of the Public Library are located within Downtown Fargo, and a host of meal providers are located within Downtown or at the periphery. The clustered location of services means that the local population of homeless people does traverse Downtown to meet their needs—and they will continue to do so.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

A healthy Downtown is not only diverse, but equipped with resources tailored to meet the needs of its citizens of different life circumstances. Through education and awareness as well as new programs, policies, and investments in brick-and-mortar projects, Downtown Fargo can remain a place that is safe and welcoming to all and where the city's most vulnerable residents can make use of quality services where they are most needed and most accessible.

> "We need to embody what it means to be a community of compassion. We won't tolerate exclusivity Downtown."
>
> – *interview*

DRAFT

HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

4.1 De-stigmatize homelessness and cultivate a sense of community

Expand Homelessness 101 trainings and build awareness of the Downtown service network

Downtown Fargo has a team of service providers, advocates, and engaged neighbors and businesses who are working together on the topic of homelessness, each approaching the issue from a different perspective – be it out of curiosity about the people often seen on the corners or out of concerns for public safety or unease in panhandling situations. The City's Homeless Outreach Specialist along with the Fargo Police Department, Downtown BID, and FM Coalition for Homeless Persons are collaborating to bring a Homelessness 101 training curriculum to Downtown businesses. This training should be expanded and offered more broadly to neighbors and resident groups, faith groups, student groups, and other concerned citizens.

Beyond sharing some statistics about Fargo's homeless population—and humanizing the issue with stories of real people—topics should cover who to call (the BID, the police, or the City's Outreach team) in certain situations, how to best handle being asked for money, and how to work toward building community on Downtown's streets and sidewalks. Downtown residents and stakeholders who attended the final *Downtown InFocus* meeting prioritized this strategy, demonstrating a desire to work on de-stigmatizing homelessness and breaking down barriers between people passed by on the street.

> "People don't understand issues around homelessness. But as they learn more, they can grow more compassion." – *interview*

CASE IN POINT:

DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY WORK GROUP

Building trust, changing relationships

A new program being piloted by the Fargo Police Department's Downtown Resource Officers is building respect and connections between service providers, law enforcement, and people receiving citations for public drunkenness or disorderly conduct. Rather than paying a fine or winding up in prison, offenders can opt for community service, donating time to Downtown maintenance projects instead, and in so doing build better relationships with service providers and law enforcement, as well as a stake in the community.

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4.2 Make space for the most vulnerable, 24 hours a day

Develop a day center close to other services

Most shelters that serve the local homeless population close to guests sometime between 8:00 and 10:00 AM; the shelters do not reopen for guests until 5:00 PM. When guests leave, they have to take their belongings with them, leaving those without a home, place of work, or a place to leave their belongings carrying bags, which is burdensome and also comes with a stigma—serving to identify the person's housing status. Soup kitchens and other meal providers in the area do not open until mid-day. The Homeless Health Services clinic at Family Healthcare on NP Avenue fills a void, as some spend time in the lobby until the clinic closes at 12:30 PM. While some homeless individuals visit the Public Library, throughout portions of each day, there is no space where this portion of the community feels welcome.

Particularly in places with a harsh climate in certain seasons, it is critical to offer a safe and warm (or cool) place for individuals experiencing homelessness to be at any time of the day. Some cities have built day centers to complement the coverage provided by overnight shelters. Day centers offer needed services and amenities, including showers, laundry, internet, telephones, health care and counseling (or referrals), and classes. Additionally, they provide a place to get out of the elements, a place to rest, a sense of community, and a safe space to simply be. The City of Fargo should work with area service providers and the Fargo Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons to identify possible locations for a day center in or near Downtown, where other services and transportation options are clustered. In addition to providing necessary services, providing space also means that Downtown's sidewalks will not be the default hang-out for those with nowhere else to go.

In the near term, Downtown Fargo community members who are currently homeless emphasized the need for large coin-operated lockers where they could leave their bags during the day. While lockers could be a feature at a future day center, in the interim, the City and the Homeless Health Services clinic should explore opportunities to integrate a locker area in close proximity to the clinic, which already serves as a hub.

4.3 Integrate necessities in select public spaces

Design water fountains, water bottle filling stations, and restrooms into new park spaces

When the weather turns warmer, being outside in Fargo is pleasant. For people without money to spend at a Downtown restaurant, creature comforts can be difficult to accommodate, particularly after hours when the Public Library is closed. Integrate water fountains and water bottle filling stations near recreation areas along the Red River such as the proposed Riverfront Plaza as well as in new trail or greenway segments along the Red River and rail corridors through Downtown. Integrate a public restroom as well, ideally with composting toilets. These amenities will serve families and students who come Downtown on a budget and people out exploring and exercising, in addition to those without guaranteed access to water and restroom facilities during the day.

> "Sometimes you just want a place to lay down, but you can't do that in the winter—you'll die." – *interview*

Daybreak Day Center precedent, Macon, GA

DRAFT

4.4 Expand the service network to meet shifting social challenges

The biggest gap in the Downtown service network cited by service providers is the lack of options for behavioral health and chemical addiction treatment. For the people who are chronically homeless in Fargo, mental health and addiction issues are frequently the root causes that make maintaining housing or holding a job so difficult. However, with the rise of the opioid epidemic nationwide, a struggle that does not discriminate by income or housing status, this topic is of particular interest, not just among service providers, but among the whole Downtown community.

Fargo, and the Mayors' Blue Ribbon Commission on Addiction (in Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo, Horace, and Dilworth), is making the news, proactively engaging experts and targeting prevention, early intervention, treatment, and recovery. Among the initiative's priorities is reprioritizing funding for treatment programs, and recommended strategies include transitional services to provide safe and sober housing and resources, detox, medication-assisted treatment, housing, and community-based services. This suite of services—the need for which is now elevated by the opioid crisis—dovetails with the needs identified by local homelessness service providers.

As noted above, Downtown functions as a regional hub for many things—jobs, entertainment, transportation, and services too. As such, the Downtown (or near-Downtown) service network should be prepared to expand to meet new needs, including behavioral health and addiction treatment. A public awareness campaign that engages near neighbors with education about prevention, treatment successes, and who to call for help or concerns can help to break down stigmas and avoid a "not-in-my-back-yard attitude" that forces treatment facilities into less accessible locations.

Indeed greater understanding of the disease of addiction applies not only to opioids, but to addiction in general, which many acknowledge extends to alcohol and a culture of binge-drinking in Fargo, and Downtown in particular. Use this time of focused-thinking, action, and resources for treatment needs to also have a conversation about a Serial Inebriate Program (SIP), based on a successful and cost-saving San Diego model,[2] that integrates law enforcement, emergency medical services, hospitals, and the courts, offering known, chronically homeless, alcoholics treatment in lieu of custody through a court order.

> "Mental health is one of the biggest issues – treatment is needed. We have a habit of arresting rather than treating, and the jails are full of people with mental illness."
>
> – *interview*

2 https://www.mhsinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SIP-Brochure-Final_web_2012.pdf

DRAFT

> "I have housing now, and it's changed my life. It is hard to adjust from being on the street to being back in an apartment, but I have a place to be, I haven't lost my stuff in four months, haven't gotten in trouble, and someone checks in with me about my appointments." *– interview*

> "Most of the available jobs are past 45th Street. The lack of transportation wears people down." *– interview*

4.5 Provide a range of housing options within Downtown, at a range of price points

Help a Housing First approach take root in Downtown

The recommendations in Chapter 1 focus both on building new and preserving existing housing units that are affordable at a range of price points such that low-income and working-income households can continue to live in a mixed-income Downtown Fargo. Service providers and advocates combatting homelessness in Fargo have embraced the Housing First philosophy, a policy approach gaining traction in cities across the country that prioritizes offering permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible, and then offering necessary supportive services to help individuals and families remain in that housing.

For Housing First to function well, it is critical to maintain an inventory of units and landlords open to housing this vulnerable population within the Downtown—the part of Fargo considered home by many individuals experiencing homelessness and the neighborhood that offers them access to their friends and services. Beyond maintaining the existing units of transitional and supportive housing Downtown, the City should work with transitional and affordable housing providers to identify development opportunities that can house very low-income people and families; a subset of new micro-units discussed in Recommendation 1.1 can serve this purpose for individuals. Beyond building new, create an inventory of existing lower-market units that serve as de-facto affordable housing, and support the Fargo Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons' Landlord Risk Mitigation program by developing a contact list of landlords willing to rent to people with rapid re-housing subsidies or housing vouchers.

> "The individuals who are homeless Downtown hang out there because that's their neighborhood."
>
> *– interview*

4.6 Support pathways to work

Connect those who are able to work with job training and transit options that bring available jobs within reach

Many people who come to Fargo without a support network or a place to live came for the jobs, the sense of opportunity. While the jobs in oil that drew so many to North Dakota are largely gone, there is still work to be found. Although some experiencing homelessness have found day labor jobs in construction with transportation provided through area employment agencies, barriers to more consistent and living-wage work can include a lack of training, criminal records, and transportation. Coordinate with Legal Services to offer a criminal record expungement clinic at the Homeless Health Services clinic or proposed day center. Integrate continuing education or job training targeted to entry-level positions in the region. Partner with MATBUS to adjust bus schedules for routes servicing industrial areas such that the schedules match shift changes. Offer additional bus passes to service providers and advocates working with individuals experiencing homelessness, specifically for people job-hunting or awaiting first pay-checks.

5

> "I'm from Grand Forks – I lost 20 pounds from walking everywhere, the health benefits are huge for living in a more walkable community."
>
> – *interview*

Complete Our Streets

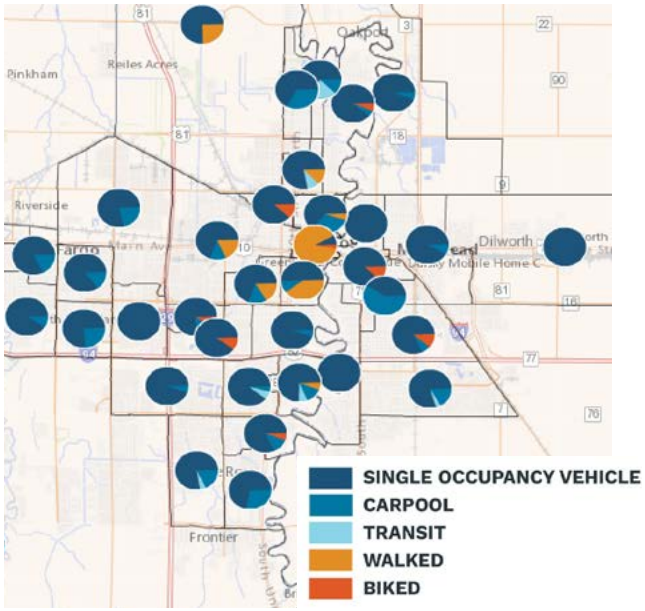
Make complete streets common place and encourage trips by foot, bicycle, and bus, as well as car.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In a dense, walkable Downtown like Fargo's, streets must serve many purposes and multiple modes.

Fargo's Downtown is growing, putting more demand on Fargo's streets than ever before. Housing in Downtown and the nearby neighborhoods is becoming more popular with students and young professionals who want to live in a walkable urban area. But, Fargo's businesses still rely on customers coming Downtown from throughout the region. It is important to consider the daily local and regional flows of people in and out of Fargo.

Commute mode analysis shows walkability Downtown



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2006-2010 5 year estimates. Special Tabulation: Census Transportation Planning

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Cities all over the country are starting to see a shift in priorities for urban streets. People living in or close to urban centers are choosing to drive less. However, the ability of people to make this choice requires supporting infrastructure to make non-driving modes safe, accessible, and enjoyable.

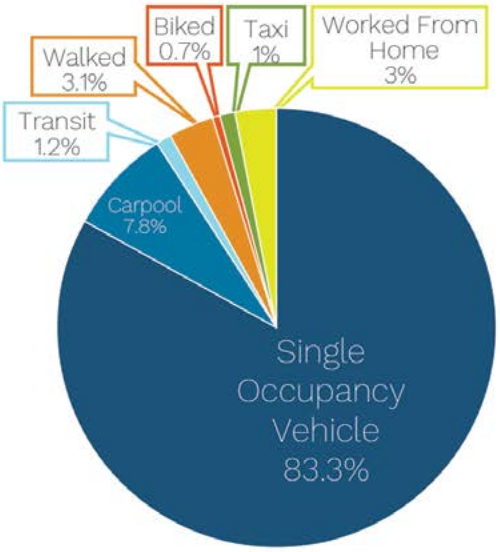
Mode share analysis based on U.S. Census data shows the proportion of people who chose to walk, bike, taxi, carpool, take transit or drive for their journey to work on a typical day. Illustrated in these charts, it is clear that people living in the most central census tract, which covers most of the Downtown study area, walk (17.5%) and take transit (16.8%) for their commute much more often (by percentage) than residents of the City as a whole or Cass County.

People living in communities that give them the option to walk, bike or take transit to their destinations often pay less in total housing and transportation costs than those who live in areas with lower housing prices that are more auto-dependent.

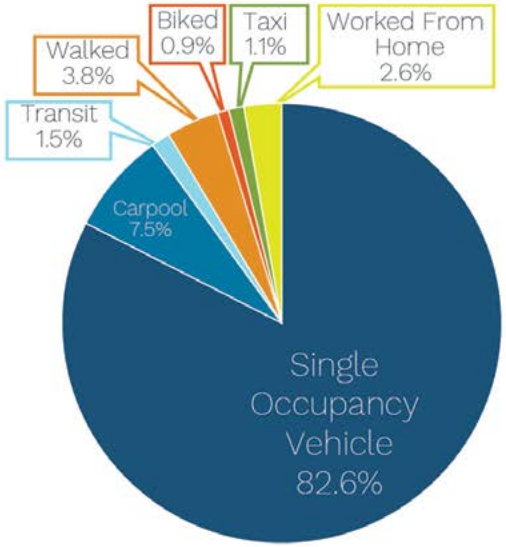
-Center for Neighborhood Technology (March, 2010)

Live/work flows illustrated here show that people who work in Downtown Fargo commute from homes throughout the region, primarily by car.

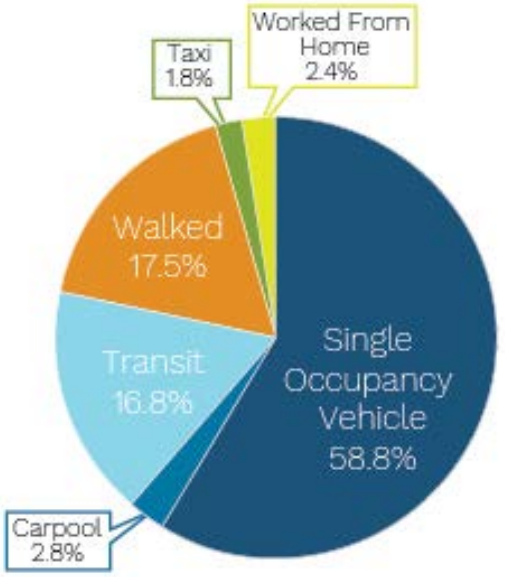
Cass County



City of Fargo



Downtown Fargo*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
* Census Tract 7 Only

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Changing the look, feel, and function of Downtown streets can shift behaviors and support alternative transportation choices and active lifestyles.

Fargo's Downtown is a small geographic area that is dense with destinations. For areas closer to Downtown, there is a big opportunity to shift mode choice toward more walking, biking, and use of bikeshare and transit to get to and around Downtown. The quality of the experience traveling on foot or by bike, however, has a significant impact on a person's mode choice. Fargo's streets today support driving first and foremost. Vehicle lanes are wide, and parking is available along most streets. *Downtown InFocus* proposes a new approach to street design.

With more activity Downtown comes the demand for more trips. Achieving the fewest trips that can be made with a car results in less traffic on the road and less space needed for parking. But, this requires better infrastructure supporting non-driving modes. In recent years, the lane miles of bike facilities on-street in Fargo has grown, but there is work to be done in creating a connected network of all-ages facilities spanning Downtown and reaching desirable destinations.

Corner of 4th Street and 1st Avenue today lacks street trees, shade, and degraded crosswalks

7-minute walkshed from the center of Downtown

4-minute bikeshed from the center of Downtown

A person on foot at a central point near Broadway and 2nd Avenue can walk to almost any point in Downtown in under 10 minutes. On a bike traveling at a moderate speed, a person can reach beyond the study area boundary in less than 5 minutes.

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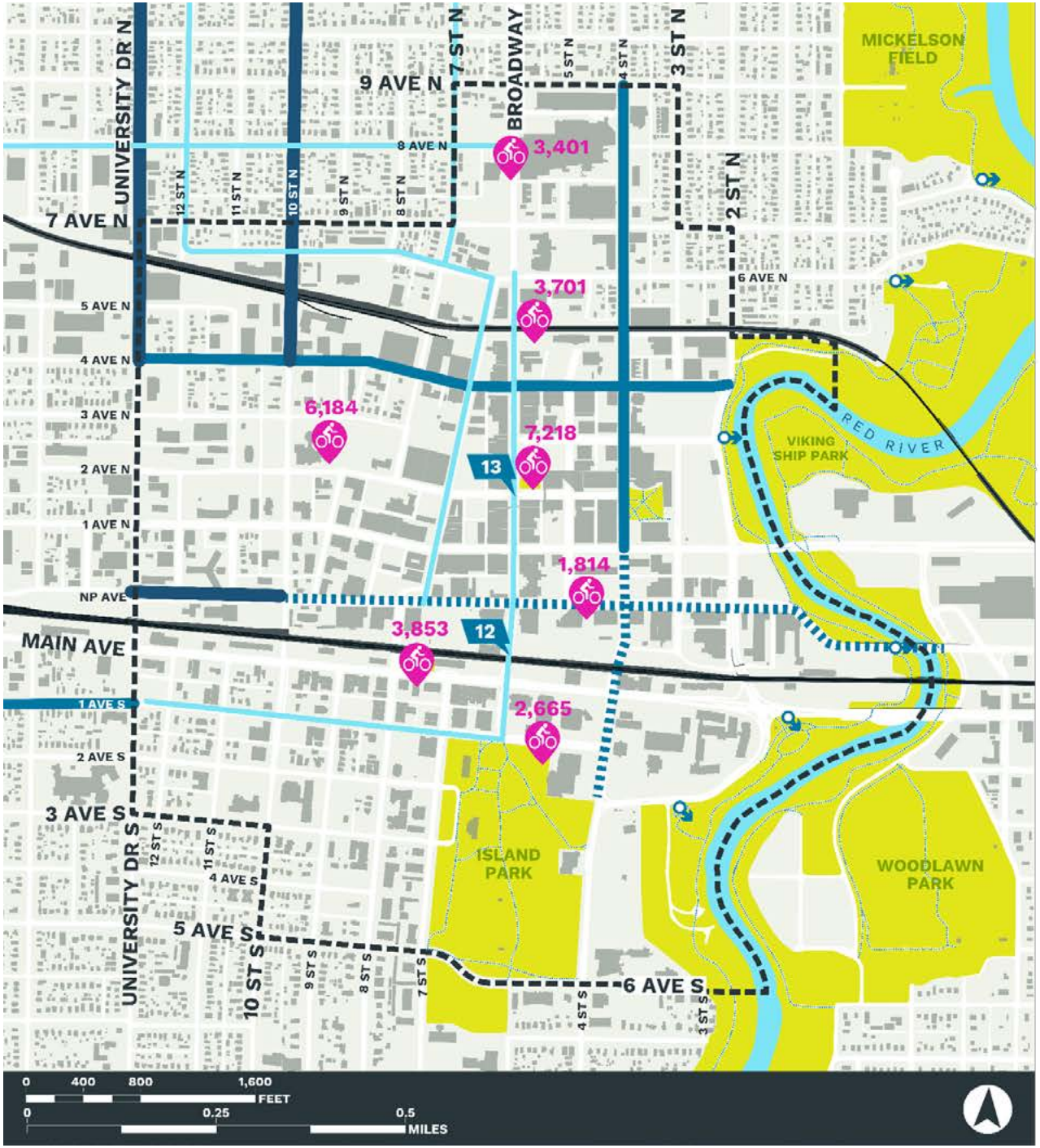


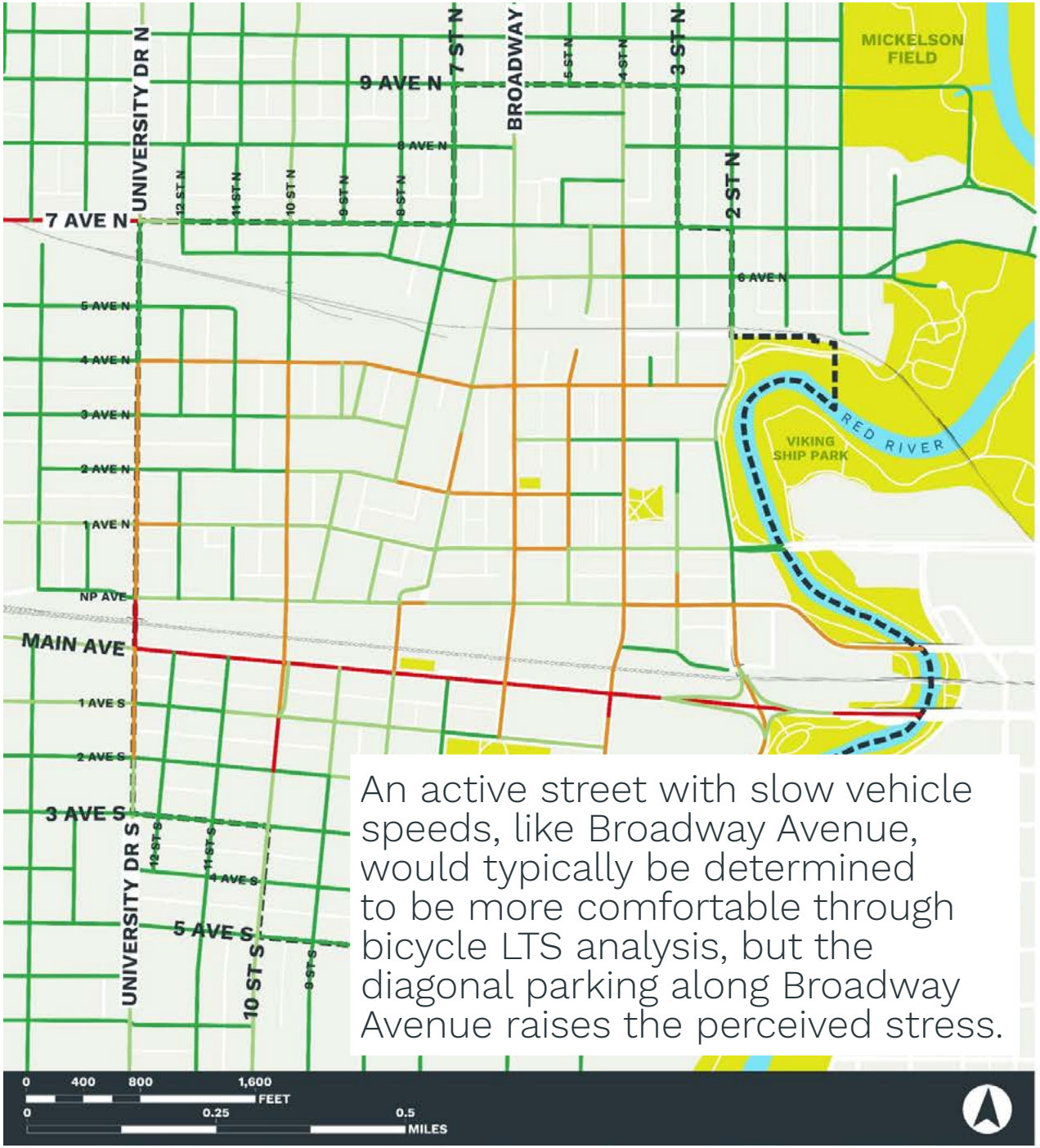
FIGURE 20: Existing and [previously] Planned Bike Facilities

Fargo has a robust network of off-street pathways and trails, mostly centered around the Red River, but no on-street bike network. Dedicated on-street bike facilities make the experience less stressful for a cyclists, as they have a dedicated space to use on the street. There are acres of riverfront green space and parks in the Downtown area. Most are accessible for people walking, but for people who want to bike, safe, on-street bike facilities in Downtown are limited and disconnected.

Existing & Planned Bike Facilities

Source: City of Fargo

- EXISTING SHARED LANES
- EXISTING BIKE LANES
- EXISTING PROTECTED/ BUFFERED
- PLANNED ON-STREET FACILITY
- RECREATIONAL PATHWAYS
- TRAILHEAD
- #,### HealthyRide STATION & RIDERSHIP
- 13 MetroCOG Bike Counts (2015) 1:00pm-6:00pm



There are many streets in Fargo, including those with and without bike facilities, that have conditions that pose a higher-stress environment for cyclists. Bike Level of Stress Analysis (LTS) depicts the experience of biking in Downtown Fargo . Bicycle Level of Street analysis uses qualities of a street like posted speed, number of lanes, typical traffic, and other factors to determine the level of stress a cyclist might feel when biking down a street. Factors like on-street parking make an environment more stressful because the experience is less predictable. When biking alongside parked cars, there is a risk that someone may open their door to exit their vehicle at any moment. Cyclists are less visible to drivers backing out of diagonal parking spaces, and there is a higher incidence of vehicle fender-benders along streets with diagonal parking. The presence of a dedicated bike facility, on the other hand, makes a street feel more comfortable because it offers a biker dedicated space within the street.

Level of Stress

Source: City of Fargo

- **LTS 1 (High Comfort, Low Stress)**
- **LTS 2 (Med. Comfort, Med. Stress)**
- **LTS 3 (Low Comfort, High Stress)**
- **LTS 4 (Extremely Low Comfort, High Stress)**
- **OPEN SPACE**
- **DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA**

FIGURE 21: Street Level of Stress Analysis

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In 2015, the total Great Rides bike rides in the first year of operation exceeded Madison, Minneapolis, and Denver's first year of rides reported. Within this same timeframe, the total number of rides per bike exceeded Madison, Minneapolis, and Denver almost sixfold. In 2015, 95% of Great Rides ridership can be attributed to student members, 3% to guest users, and 2% to non-student memberships.

The changing transportation habits of students and young professionals create an opportunity for a culture shift in how people get around. Fargo has a huge advantage in achieving the adoption of a car-lite lifestyle: the Great Rides Bike Share and its early adopters, NDSU students. Students are building habits that they should be able to continue as young professionals in Downtown, but today the enthusiastic adoption of bike share demonstrates this potential in Fargo.

As these students graduate, many will have incorporated Great Rides into their daily routine. For those desiring to move into Downtown Fargo, the availability of a Great Rides station near their future home and place of work can be a big draw and ensure transportation habits and membership in the Great Rides system continue into the future.

Great Rides by the numbers

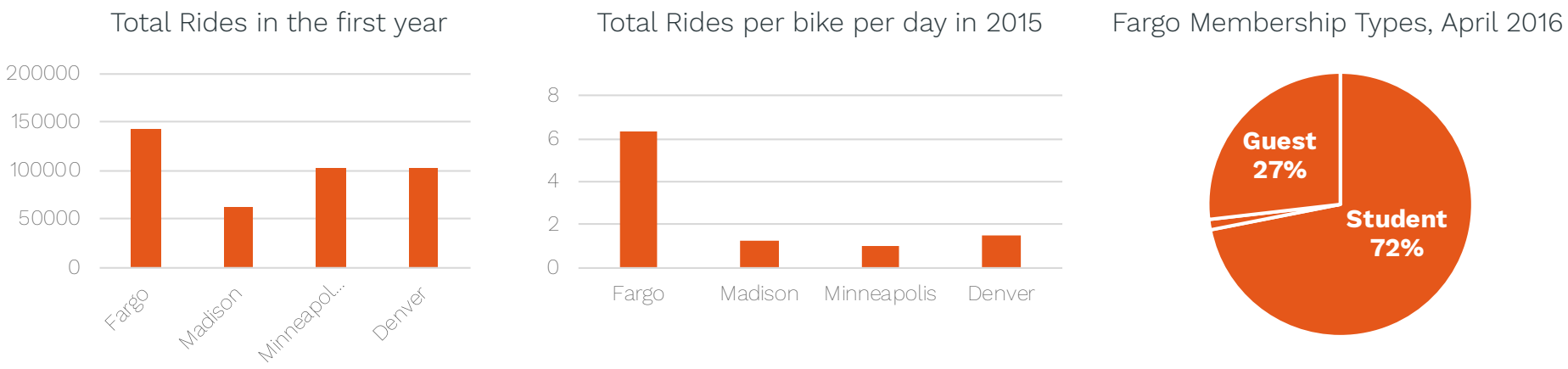

FIGURE 22: Great Rides ridership compared to other cities

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MATBUS is the public transportation system serving Downtown Fargo. Twenty-five routes extend in all directions from the City of Fargo into West Fargo, Moorhead, and Dilworth. Most of these routes converge in Downtown at the Ground Transportation Center (GTC) located at NP Avenue and 5th Street North. This transit hub is an asset in Downtown. In an effort to improve connectivity between Downtown Fargo and Moorhead, the LinkFM was created in 2014. This free service connects riders to the GTC, City Hall, and several stops around the Moorhead Mall. MATBUS is actively partnering with local businesses and organizations to offer discounts to help encourage people to go shopping with the Link. Today, ridership is low, but increasing. LinkFM is able to provide flexible service hours to help manage event-based demand for access to Downtown, and to provide access to available parking amenities farther afield.

Car-ownership is part of the Fargo status-quo. Pro-car design and parking policy discussed in Chapter 6 illustrate just how deeply rooted is the relationship between car-ownership and daily life for Fargoans. Student habits break from the norm and seed the potential for more people to live car-lite in Downtown, sharing vehicles, making use of rideshare, relying less on a car for day-to-day trips. The change doesn't happen overnight. It is a long process of building infrastructure supportive of non-single occupancy vehicle (SOV) modes, and disentangling the assumption that getting around Downtown means owning a car.

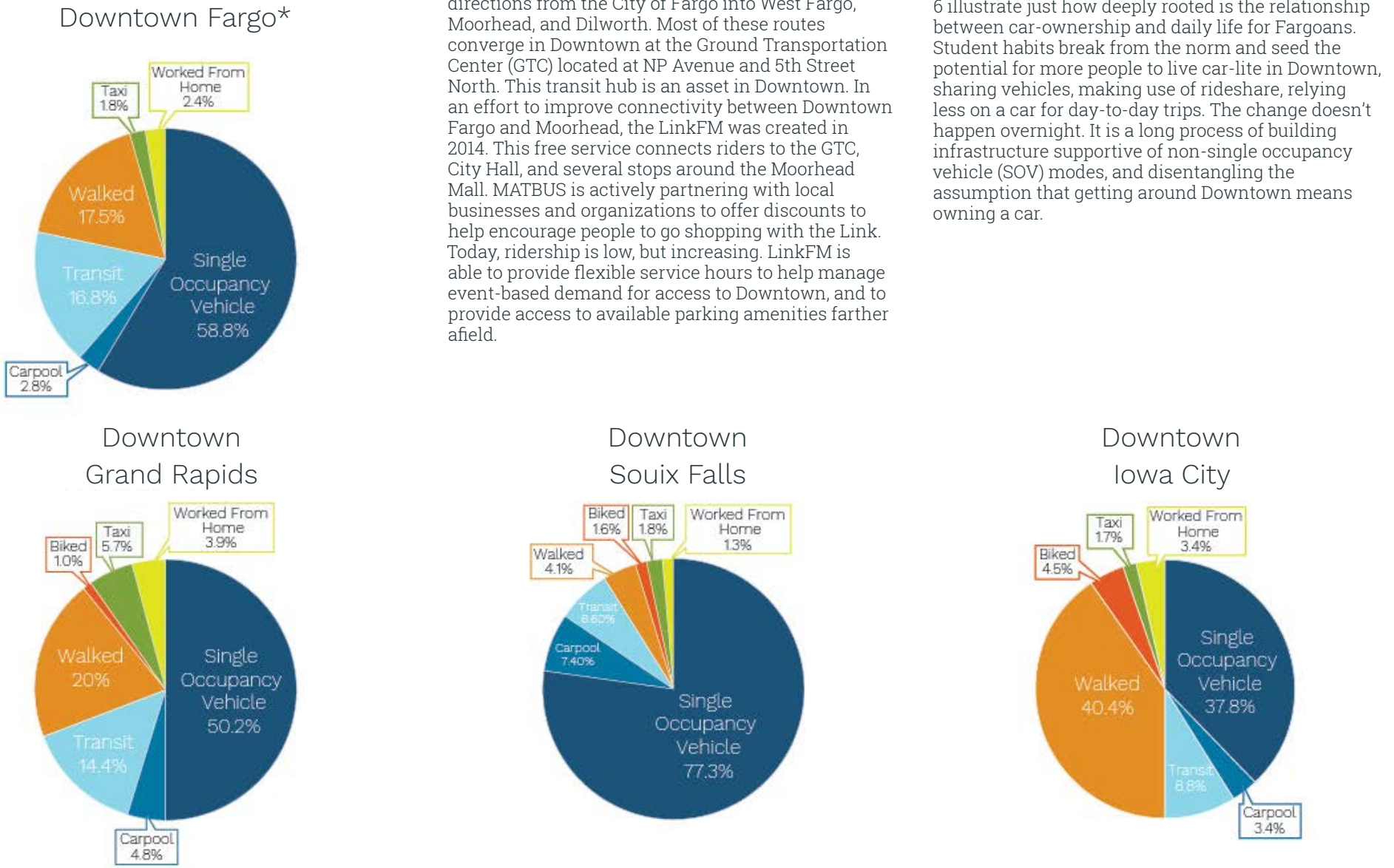

FIGURE 23: Commute Mode as compared to other cities
* Census Tract 7 Only

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> “Growing up, I never thought I’d live here. I’m a 5th generation North Dakotan and the first to live an urban lifestyle. I walk to work. I fell in love with the possibilities.”
>
> *– interview*

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Fargo must rebalance its streets such that they continue to move cars while also making space for other modes.

Downtown Fargo is at a crossroads. The demographic data illustrate that people in Downtown are shifting toward a more progressive attitude about urban mobility. There is growing enthusiasm for a livable, walkable Downtown full of active spaces and safe streets. Changes to design approach and policy in support of growth are needed to maintain this momentum. Fargo needs “Complete Streets,” streets designed to serve everyone. A Complete Streets approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the transportation network.

Street space is in high-demand. Although every street can be a Complete Street, not every street needs to have specific space dedicated to each and every mode. For example, a neighborhood street should be comfortable for cyclists with or without a bike lane because there is typically less traffic, and cars should move more slowly along the street. In Fargo, the approach to transportation improvements must happen at the network level. This helps to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local businesses, residents, and natural environments.

To best position Fargo to develop a coordinated future network of Complete Streets, *Downtown InFocus* created the *Downtown Fargo Playbook.* The *Downtown Fargo Playbook* outlines a coordinated approach to street reconstruction that **aims to improve safety and offer transportation choice by rebalancing important car-moving streets to create space for other modes where it is most needed to ensure safe movement no matter how people choose to get around.**

Designing a streetscape goes far beyond the curbs. *Downtown InFocus* **aims to create a more beautiful and resilient Downtown by integrating greening and stormwater management into street design.**

Streets and sidewalks that lead into Downtown are the first impression offered to Fargo’s visitors. **Economic development in Downtown is reinforced by improving the look and feel of Downtown’s streets.** Ensuring not only access, but an enjoyable experience reaching Downtown destinations, will help the business district to flourish.

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HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

5.1 Establish a street hierarchy Downtown to inform all reconstruction projects

Downtown's streets have growing demand from new and different users. In the past, the decision to reconstruct Fargo's streets was driven solely by the physical condition of the pavement and underground infrastructure. The prioritization of street projects by functional demand, or the state of underground utilities and surface condition, is still important today. The *Downtown Fargo Playbook* proposes that the role a street plays in the street network Downtown and the potential benefits to street users should also play a role in project prioritization. This presents a new lens through which projects can be prioritized. New technology and greater mode choice should be supported by the design of Downtown's streets. The *Playbook* lays out a roadmap for the redesign of Downtown's streets, so that when the time comes to rebuild them, design and construction yields a coordinated network that can meet new transportation demands as time goes on.

As seen in the map to the right, streets work as a network, and not all streets play the same role. A Proposed Street Network was developed to illustrate the role different streets might play in a coordinated future vision for the transportation network in Downtown.

Some key factors influenced the future role of a street:

- Current business density, and future capacity along each segment
- Parking demand in the area based on a zone analysis of parking demand (see the next chapter)
- Coordination with the proposed on-street bike network
- Proximity to parks, open space, and riverfront access
- Arterials that play a key role in connecting to the regional highways network
- Capacity of a street segment to carry vehicles, and
- Flexibility to rebalance vehicular lanes to other uses

The *Downtown Playbook* documents the existing streets in Downtown, their existing and future roles in the street network, and illustrates a proposed street configuration that better supports future conditions. The *Playbook* identifies streets that play key roles in the street network and for which modes, and makes recommendations that take advantage of streets with excess capacity with the flexibility to change.

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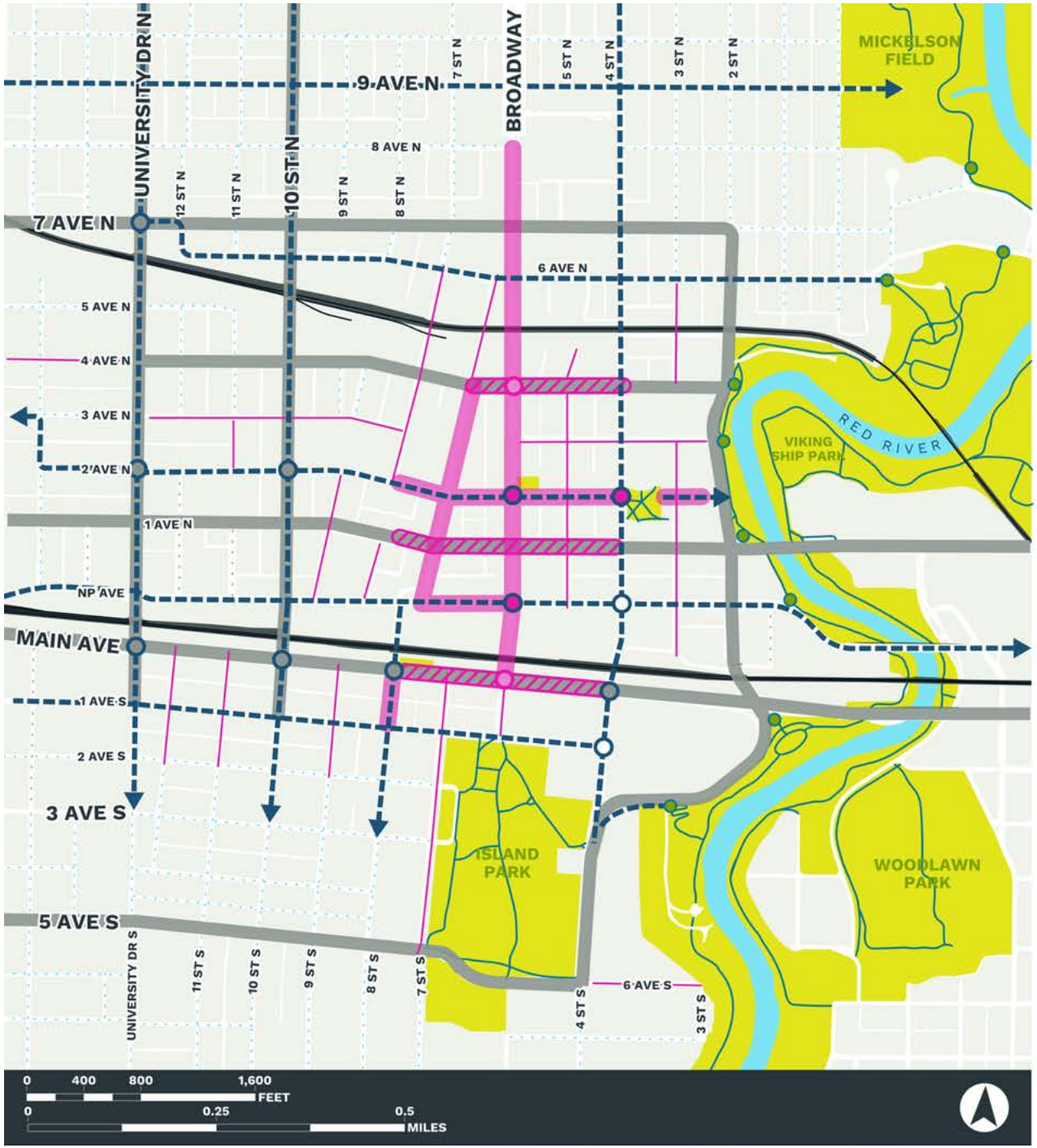

Proposed Street Network

Source: Sam Schwartz

- EXISTING OFF-STREET TRAILS
- PEDESTRIAN ENHANCMENT FOCUS
- VEHICLE FLOW FOCUS
- BICYCLE CONNECTION
- INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENT
- LOCAL / FLEX STREETS
- NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER SLOW STREETS
- INTERSECTION ENHANCEMENT
- EXISTING TRAILHEADS

FIGURE 24: Proposed Street Network

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A Street Capacity Analysis was performed for all streets within Downtown. Inputs considered were average daily traffic, number of vehicle lanes including through lanes and turn lanes, and the presence of parking. Based on these factors, a volume range was determined for the various inputs associated with a Level of Service E which was deemed to be "At Capacity." This is the traffic engineering equivalent to a volume to capacity ratio of close to 1.0; in other words, the existing street design meets the vehicular travel demand. A Level of Service above an E indicates that the capacity of the existing street design is greater than traffic demand on the street, and the street segment is Under Capacity. A Level of Service grade at F indicates that traffic demand was higher than the capacity of the existing street design, or Over Capacity and congestion is likely.

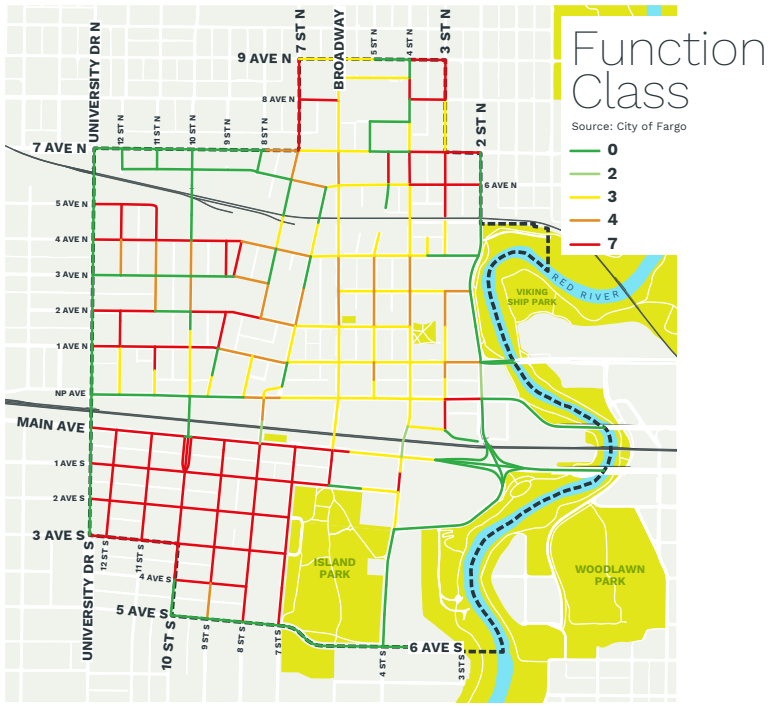

FIGURE 25: Street Capacity Analysis

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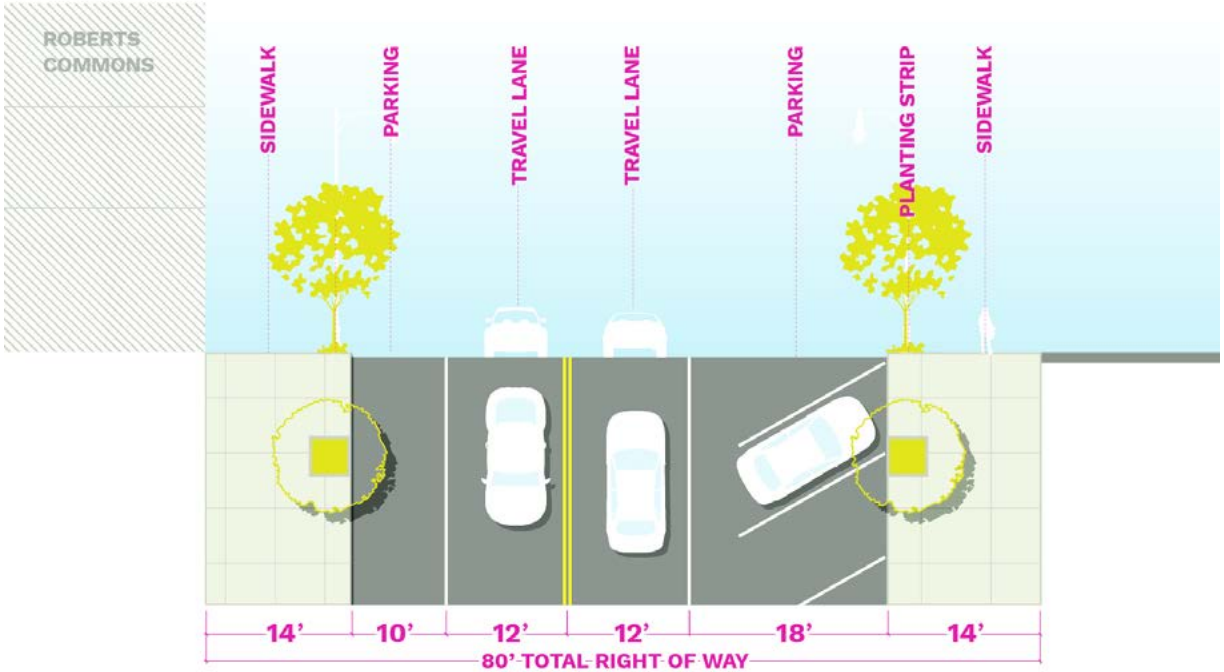
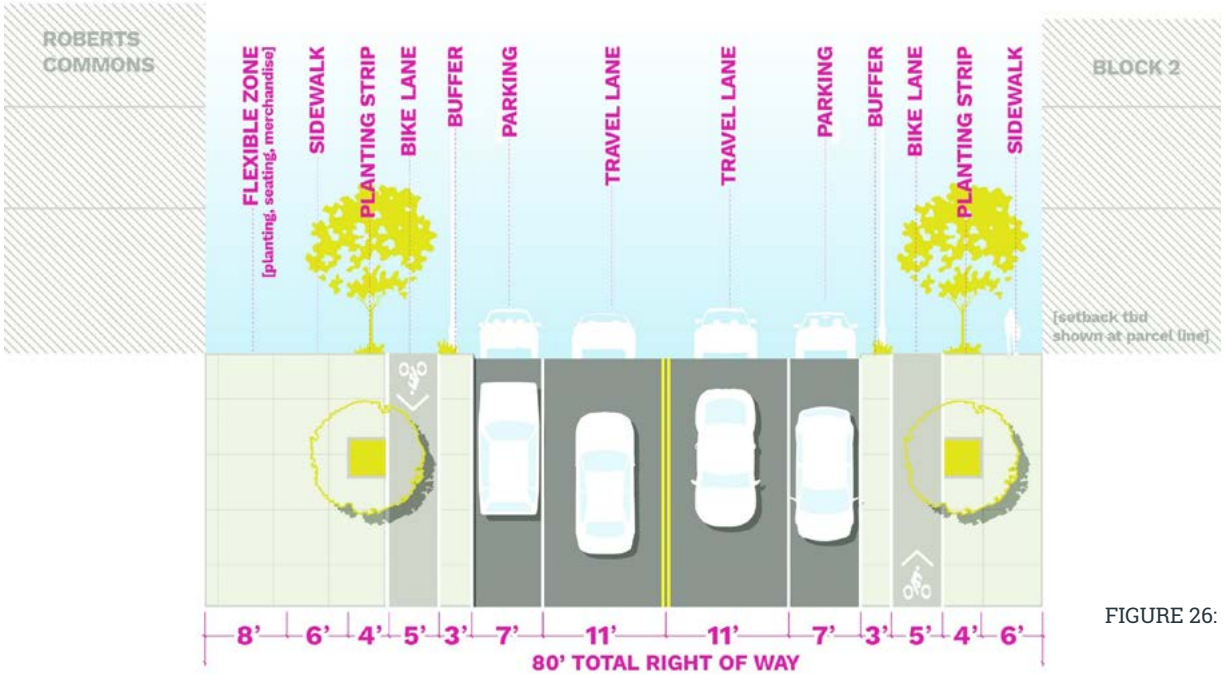
2ND AVE: TODAY

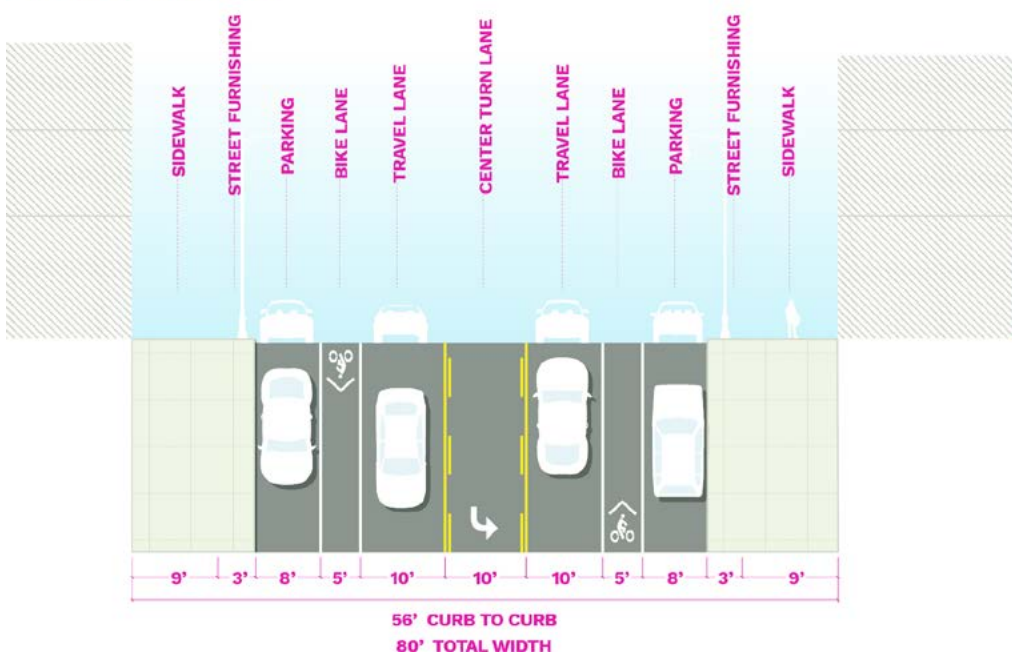


2ND AVE: PROPOSED



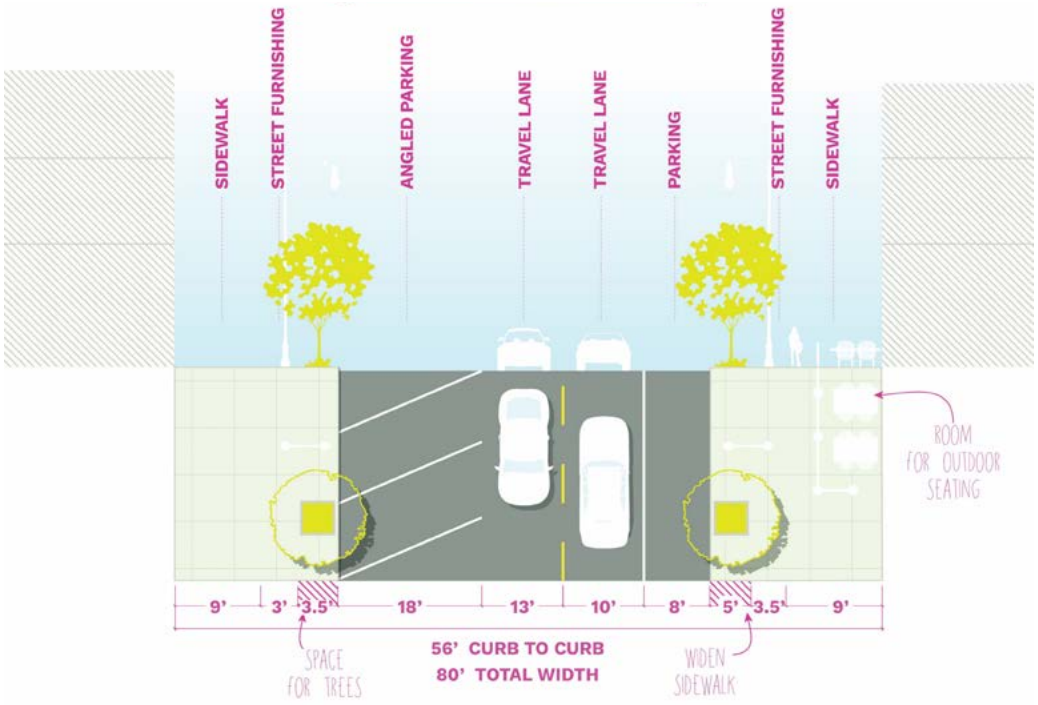
An example of a before and after street section from the ***Downtown Streets Playbook***. This section depicts the potential 2nd Avenue. Currently, it is a critical east-west corridor that connects NDSU facilities with City Hall, the Library and River. For these reasons it's a great street for bikes. The opportunity is to make this a bike-friendly street and improve pedestrian safety –create safe bike lanes, wider sidewalks and more greening.

FIGURE 26: 2nd Avenue Street Sections



4TH AVE: TODAY

[draft]



4TH AVE: PROPOSED

4th Avenue, however, is an opportunity to increase street parking and ensure it is a safe street for pedestrians. Here Downtown would be able to retain bike lanes while increasing the amount of on street parking.

FIGURE 27: 4th Avenue Street Sections

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5.2 Prioritize safety for the slowest speeds first

Safety should be the number one priority in a street's design. People on foot are the most vulnerable on any street. Designing for the slowest speeds means safer conditions for everyone. Everyone is a pedestrian at some point in their journey.

Improve pedestrian safety throughout Downtown

An intersection that is well designed should make people at the corners waiting to cross visible from all approaches. When a person steps into the crosswalk it should be no surprise to others around them. A predictable environment is safer for everyone. Along with street enhancements outlined in the *Downtown Playbook*, some intersections in Downtown need design enhancements to ensure pedestrian safety.

Retrofit streets to calm traffic; focus on near residential typology and side-streets not called out in Playbook

Outside of Fargo's core commercial heart are growing neighborhoods. As drivers transition out of the commercial center, they should experience a transition to a more residential context. Visual elements like neighborhood gateways should signal to drivers there is a change in context. Design treatments such as chicanes and neck-downs divert drivers from a straight path along the street forcing slower speeds and more attentive driving. These elements have an equally positive impact for other modes. They can be installed without impeding cyclists, and provide opportunities for small-scale water retention and planting in the public way.

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5.3 Create a bicycle network Downtown

Ensure safe, connected spaces for bicycles.

In recent years, more bicycle lanes have been designed and installed on Fargo's streets than ever before. With the increasing use of the Great Rides Bike Share, there is increasing demand for facilities that serve all riders. Bike share systems play a key role in helping communities embrace cycling by removing the barrier of ownership.

The proposed bike network identifies streets that provide the safest and most direct pathways for cyclists to navigate Downtown. The network connects cyclists to Downtown commercial destinations, and offers key links between parks and open spaces. A network of bike facilities is one layer of the proposed street network proposed in Strategy 5.1. The proposed bike network as it is illustrated in the Proposed Bike Network Map to the right also categorizes some segments as in-fill, on-street bike lanes, and extension lanes.

- **In-fill Lanes** shown on the map should be higher priority for Fargo to design and implement, as these are the street segments that connect between existing on-street facilities and local trailheads.
- **Extension / On-street Bike Facilities** are segments that play a key role in bringing cyclists into Downtown from nearby neighborhoods in all directions.
- A **Proposed Greenway Trail** is introduced in Chapter 7. These green corridors provide an opportunity for a "rail-trail," or off-street bike trail running parallel to freight corridors and designed to connect Downtown with a regional trail network. Research and assessment of new Rails-with-Trails projects are gaining momentum in the U.S., as many cities are realizing the opportunity that open, off-street rail right-of-way presents for bike and ped connectivity. Some unique design elements outlined here can help to ensure a safe and enjoyable bike facility design in the context of freight rail, including maximizing the setback between the trail and active railway, and providing a secondary pathway for the trail around constrained areas such as bridges.

In a Downtown area where streets are slower and more active, cyclists should be able to bike comfortably on any street. But, the traffic demand on some streets requires more robust bike facilities to ensure cyclists of all ages and abilities can feel comfortable. There are design elements that help enhance these slow streets for all users and signal to drivers to be alert for cyclists:

- Increase shade cover - trees provide a sense of enclosure which tends to slow drivers
- Consider chicanes and neck-downs on neighborhood streets - changes to a street's geometry or perceived narrowing of a street typically result in slower vehicle speeds
- Clear bicycle markings - consider "Bike BLVD" striping on key neighborhood streets
- Install signs along preferred routes - direct people to nearby trails and bike-related amenities like Great Rides Stations and bike shops.

> "It's so much safer to ride my bike on the streets. The obvious and protected bike lanes finally got drivers to pay attention to people on bikes. There is so much more art installed outside, too - very cool- especially the interactive ones like the water feature in Island Park. Hope you can come up to see it soon."
>
> *– community vision statement*

Survey responses about cyclist priorities

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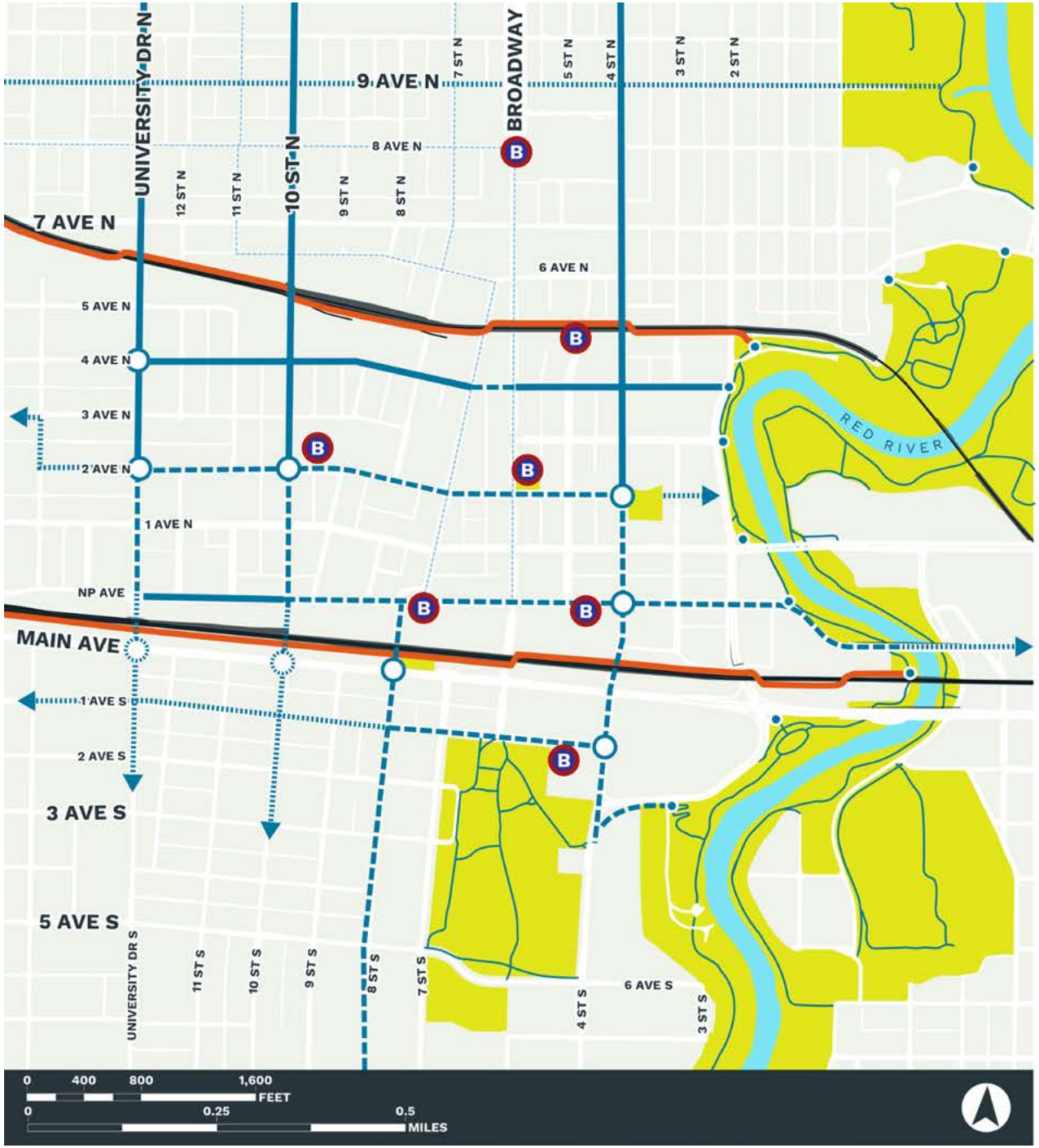

Proposed Bike Network

Source: Sam Schwartz

- EXISTING OFF-STREET TRAILS
- EXISTING ON-STREET BIKE LANES
- EXISTING SHARROWS
- INFILL ON-STREET BIKE LANES
- EXTENSION OF ON-STREET NETWORK
- PROPOSED GREENWAY TRAIL
- BIKE FACILITY THROUGH INTERSECTION
- TRAILHEAD
- EXISTING GREAT RIDES BIKE SHARE STATION

FIGURE 28: Proposed Bike Network

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5.4 Enhance local transit stops

Increase the visibility and improve the quality of bus stops.

Many bus routes along the same street segment result in a high frequency of buses. For riders making a short trip into or around Downtown, this means transit already provides frequent service. But many have not embraced the use of transit in their travel habits. Fargo should celebrate the network of transit service in Downtown by increasing the visibility and improving the quality of bus stops.

The cultural shift away from car-ownership toward transit adoption will be slow. Investment in bus stops with amenities and an improved street presence will help to reassure riders that service is present and reliable. Physical infrastructure at bus stops, such as covered benches and lighting, make riders feel more comfortable waiting for the bus, and give the service a permanent presence in Downtown.

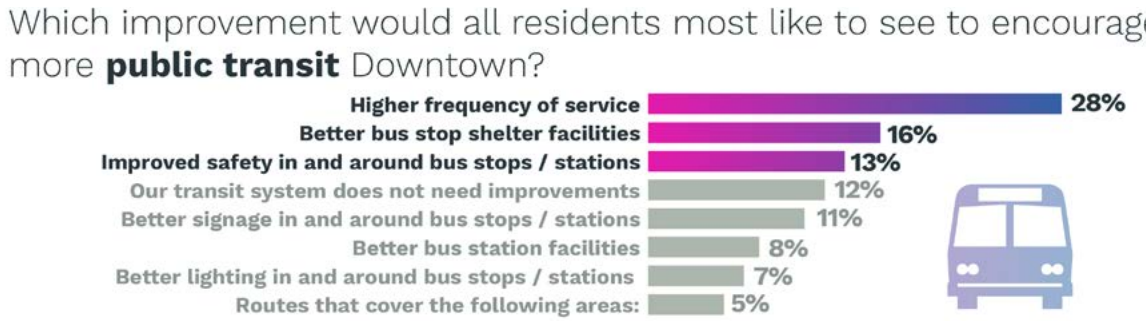
Transit service in Fargo is flag-stop on all routes, which allows riders to "flag" a bus to pick them up anywhere along the route in addition to designated stop locations. This type of service is very flexible for the rider, but is less intuitive to new users. Within Downtown, once improvements are made to the visibility of stops, the City should transition to provide service to fixed stops only. Signed stops with rider amenities reinforce to riders that the bus service is reliable and consistent, and will aid in adoption of transit service by new users.

Improve main pathways to the GTC and better integrate the station into the fabric of Downtown

The GTC is in the heart of Downtown Fargo, but it is disconnected from Downtown destinations. The GTC building and transit plaza is an island surrounded by fences and an expanse of parking lots. The entrance to the GTC should be visible, and pathways should be accessible for all modes. In addition, enhanced intersection accommodations should be designed at the GTC along NP Avenue in concert with the proposed bike facility to minimize potential conflicts with turning vehicles.

Over time, underutilized portions of the GTC and surrounding properties should be evaluated for potential redevelopment. The infusion of new housing and/or offices would help better connect the GTC with the fabric of Downtown and potentially provide MATBUS with revenue to upgrade their facility and other stations Downtown.

Survey responses about public transit priorities



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5.5 Make it easy to get around without owning a car

Leverage transit habits of students, and bolster ridership with intentional marketing and connections to necessary destinations

Similar to Great Rides Bike Share, NDSU provides partnership and financial incentives for MATBUS to provide transit service specifically tailored to student needs. Fargo-Moorhead Transit relies on revenue from student use, and students rely on public transit to get around. This is evident in higher ridership numbers during the school year, and lower counts during summer months. As with the use of bike share, this presents a great opportunity to capture a population that has already adopted public transit, as they move into Downtown. The City should strive to support these habits.

Currently, it is very easy to own a car in Fargo. Parking in residential neighborhoods is available and even employers work hard to accommodate parking demand of employees. To maintain the ridership from students and young professionals, the City should support MATBUS in engaging local employers, employees, and residents to identify key connections and services that would help to extend the use of public transit Downtown. This includes exploring:

> Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies like employee transit passes

> Marketing connections to daily services and destinations like groceries, pharmacies, etc. and

> Tap-in, Tap-out type fee structure

Make walking, biking and taking transit more comfortable in the winter

There are two key components to this:

> Prioritize investment in bike lane snow clearing and sidewalk clearing (particularly around transit stops)

> Create warming shelters and weather-appropriate transit stops to support riders through the winter months. Winter winds were a common concern voiced by local transit riders. Waiting for buses to pick up at unprotected transit stations is a daunting experience for any rider; doubly so for older riders or those with impaired mobility. Providing shelters, lighting, and wind panels or other wind-protective design at stations can make conditions more comfortable for all riders.

Bus stop & winter warming hut!

Taking care of bike lanes in the winter, Montreal
Credit: Bartek Komorowski

5.6 Build out the bike share system in and around Downtown

Fargo's bike share system received national attention after launching, with some of the highest ridership numbers in the nation. The small system was embraced immediately by the NDSU student population. Station locations and student memberships indicate that they are still the most likely users of the system. But, bike share is an amenity that can be integrated into everyone's lives in Downtown. At the system grows, it needs to grow to be more of an asset for more of Fargo's population, particularly the near neighborhoods that would benefit from connectivity to existing stations Downtown.

Increase year over year programmatic and financial commitment to the bike share program to ensure its longevity

The Great Rides Bike Share system is a non-profit entity. The majority of its upstart funding came from private entities in the Fargo area and from NDSU. Therefore, it is no surprise to see that the station locations today cater to the student population at NDSU. The City of Fargo contributed to the system's start-up, but is minimally committed to funding the program into the future.

72% of Great Rides memberships are NDSU student memberships, which are included in student fees annually. 27% of memberships are "guest users," or less than one-hour rides by the day ($4), and only 1% are non-student memberships.

Although NDSU and private partners have been generous contributors, crucial to the success of the Great Rides Bike Share system, there is no long-term commitment of support from these funding partners.

Bike share in Fargo should be seen as a public amenity, and supported as such by the City of Fargo. This is not only to ensure the longevity of the transportation asset, but also the City's investment in the future of Great Rides Bike Share would facilitate an expansion approach that could better serve existing Downtown residents, and help to make bike share an integral part of local transportation patterns.

Grow the program to be most useful for Downtown and near-neighborhood residents and employees (who are not served by the current system)

Looking to the future of the system, bike share systems in urban areas tend to thrive when bike share stations are located no more than ¼-½ mile apart. Co-location of stations near major employers, commercial pockets, and institutions or recreational destinations helps to grow ridership. Co-location of bike share stations with other transportation hubs, like the GTC or large parking amenities, can help make bike share an integral part of a commuter's journey to work by offering a transportation option to make the last mile connection from one's bus or car to the door of their office or home.

The following map offers guidance on station placement based on an expansion model to better serve Downtown Fargo as a whole.

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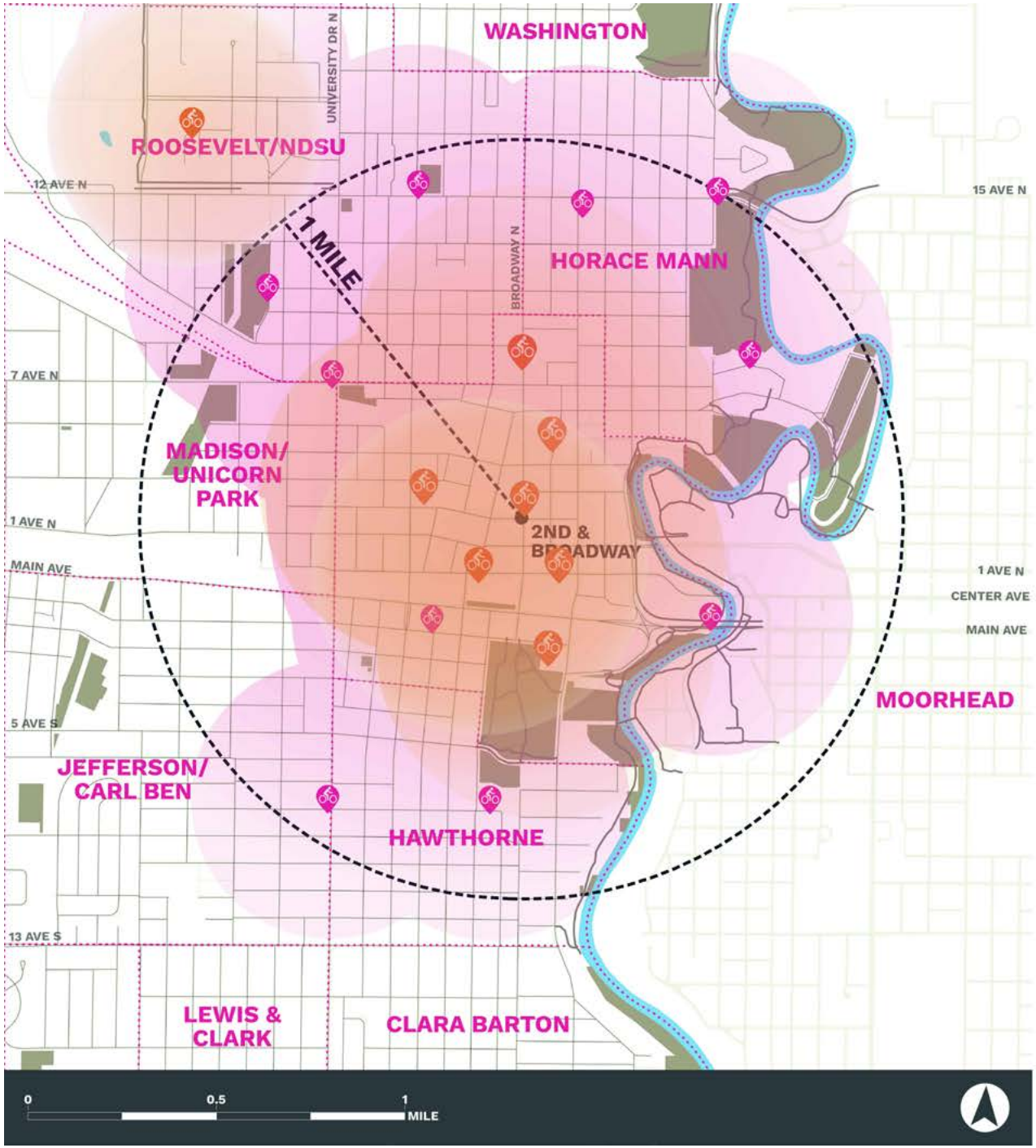

FIGURE 29: Proposed Bike Share Expansion Locations

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6

Park Smart

Manage parking resources to meet the needs of drivers, while also making room for new development and activity.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Parking is the first and last experience many have of Downtown. It needs to be well designed and well managed.

There is significant demand for parking spaces in the core of Downtown but many available spaces just a few blocks away. Demand for parking will only strengthen with upcoming new development. Fargo cannot build its way out of the problem. Parking is a means to an end: a thing we do to achieve something else, like going to a restaurant or seeing a concert. But, as the first and last experience for everyone who drives, it has a tremendous impact on the overall impression of a visit to Downtown Fargo. The success of any downtown relies on optimally managing parking assets.

Parking has supported the prosperity of Downtown over the years. However, the increased success and interest in new services and amenities is adding pressure to the City's existing infrastructure. New development and the growing number of events taking place in Downtown bring even more people—and more cars—to visit the area. This influx of people is great for Downtown but puts some strain on the existing parking supply.

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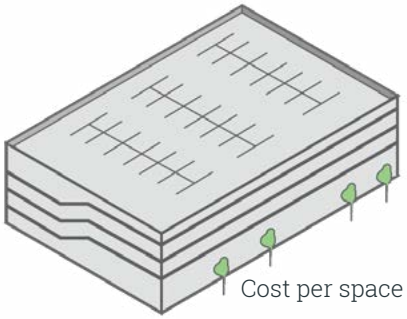
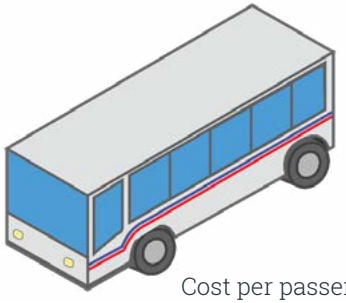
In the short term, building new parking will alleviate pressure for parking in Downtown, but that will not solve the problem forever.

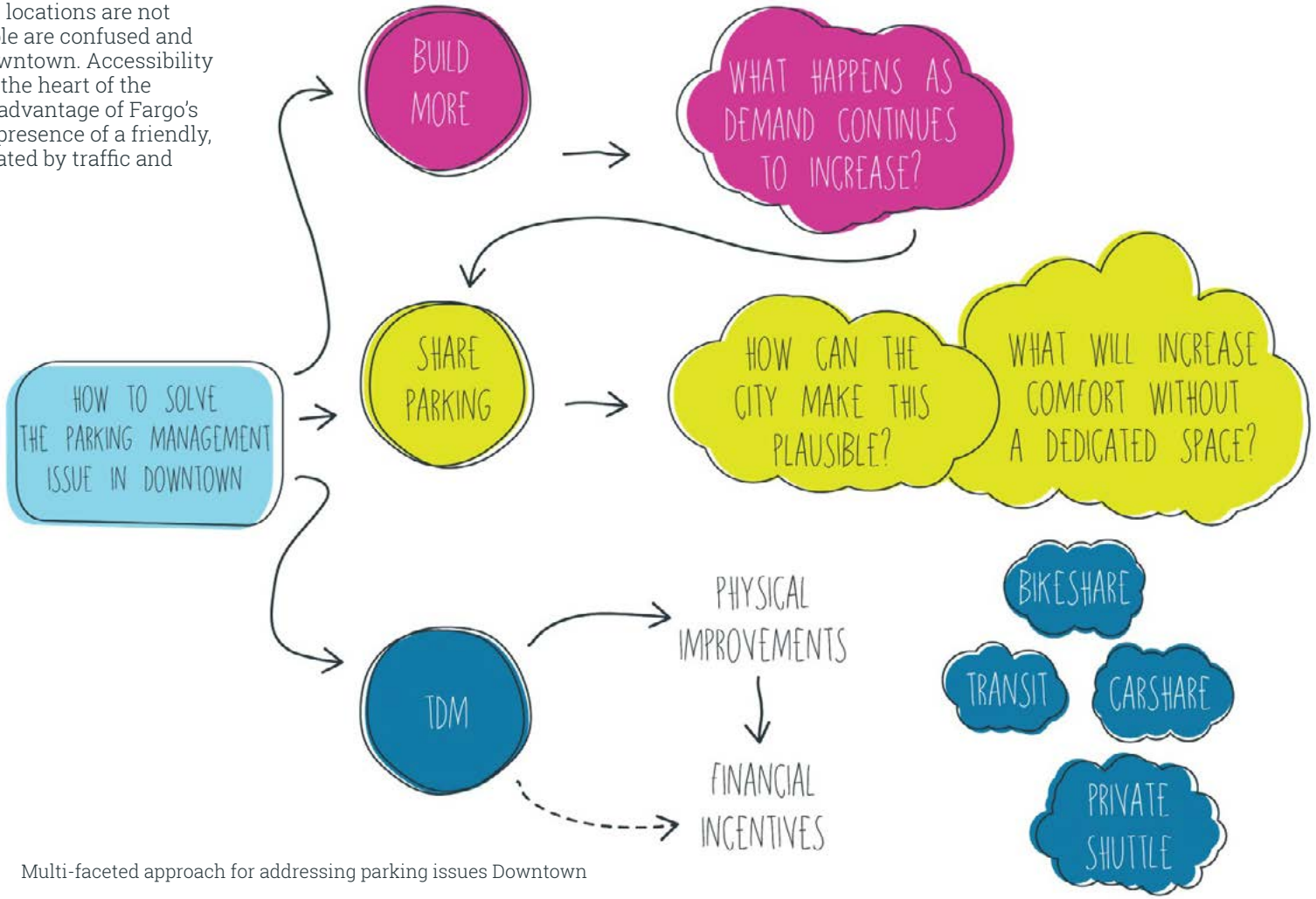
For years, the City has been able to manage its parking with traditional methods that include time limits, on-site enforcement, and adding supply where land is available. But there is more to the parking solution than simply adding capacity. While parking can support the vitality of a community, it can also have negative impacts on a user's experience. If time limits chase people away, businesses hurt. If employees or long-term visitors keep their vehicles parked in retail corridors for extended periods of time, incoming visitors have few spaces and get frustrated. If alternative parking locations are not effectively communicated, people are confused and there is a risk of lost sales in Downtown. Accessibility and urban character are both at the heart of the attractiveness and competitive advantage of Fargo's Downtown, which relies on the presence of a friendly, walkable core that is not dominated by traffic and parking lots.



Cost per space $30,000



Cost per passenger $5,000



Multi-faceted approach for addressing parking issues Downtown

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WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Fargo must find new ways to balance the existing parking supply with demand for parking to reconcile the parking deficit Downtown with the parking surplus in the periphery of Downtown.

Fargo must manage its parking assets to best support the success of its Downtown and encourage sustainable development. This requires decisions to be made that balance parking location, supply (which occupies land that could otherwise be a developable property), demand, and the needs of the community.

With these decisions must come a set of solutions that provide parking options for all Fargoans, including seasonal visitors, employees, customers and residents. In short, **balancing a parking system means making different types of parking spaces available to meet different user needs.** To accomplish this, it is key to understand the perspective of Fargo's various user groups, their preferred parking locations, and the pressure incoming developments will have on parking demand. The first step is to identify who is currently parking where and what motivates them. Gaining an understanding of existing parking behavior within Downtown enables development of more effective policies that will shape user behavior. The success of this program will come with the implementation of innovative and comprehensive solutions that distribute the demand throughout the system as a whole, and ensure that excessive supply is not constructed, but rather that the core Downtown area prioritizes the pedestrian experience.

Although each person acts in their individual self-interest when parking, the majority of people parking can be classified in one of three types based on their behavior: Convenience Parkers, Reasonable Parkers and Bargain Parkers. The defining characteristics of each are presented below:

> **Convenience Parkers:** Convenience parkers are generally new or occasional visitors traveling to Downtown for a relatively short period of time to shop, eat, or run errands. They are typically unfamiliar—and sometimes even uncomfortable—with the higher concentration of activities within a downtown and would like their parking experience to be as seamless as possible. They prioritize convenience and are willing to pay or park in a timed area for a space in close proximity to their destination. This user group is also the most likely to give up and drive to an alternative location to shop, eat, or run errands if they are unable to locate a space.

> **Reasonable Parkers:** Reasonable Parkers are frequent visitors, nearby residents or customers who are more familiar with the area, making medium length trips to meet a friend for coffee, shop for the day, or go out to dinner. They may also be part-time or full-time employees who are willing to pay a higher price to park closer to their job. Like all user groups, Reasonable Parkers prefer free parking but are willing to pay or walk, as long as it is within reason and they understand the logic behind their parking options.

> **Bargain Parkers:** Bargain Parkers are residents, employees, or long-term shoppers frequently making long-term trips Downtown. As the name implies, bargain parkers avoid paying for parking at any cost. They are the most willing to circle the block to locate a space, walk a few blocks away, or alter their commute in order to save money. Some thrifty parkers may even decide to walk or bike instead of paying for parking, or they may decide to shop somewhere else altogether if they cannot find free parking.

Each type of parker has different priorities. These priorities can be managed by implementing parking management policies that distribute parkers throughout Downtown's parking system. **A balanced system will increase utilization and help parking work for Downtown rather than just serve single users.**

Parking complaints were a common theme among survey-takers, regardless of whether the respondent lived, worked, or just visited Downtown.

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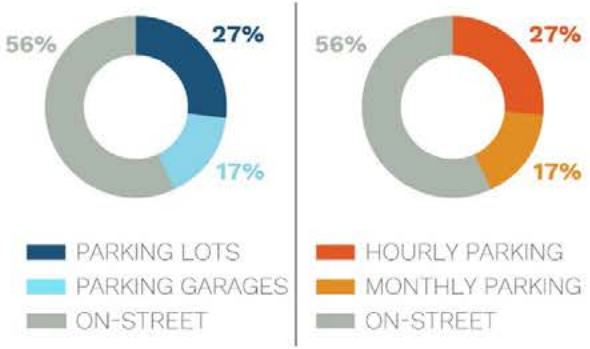
Land Distribution

PARKING LOTS: **10** ACRES

PARKING GARAGES: **3.5** ACRES

NUMBER OF SPACES:



All Parking

Source: City of Fargo, Interstate Parking

OFF-STREET PARKING

- **MUNICIPAL LOTS**
- **PARKING GARAGES**
- **PRIVATE LOTS**

ON-STREET PARKING

- **30 MINUTE**
- **90 MINUTE**
- **2 HOUR**
- **4 HOUR**
- **ALL-DAY (no time restriction)**
- **PARKING RESTRICTED**
- **NO PARKING**

FIGURE 30: Parking Assets and Restrictions

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HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

6.1 Create a tiered parking management approach

Change parking rates, time restrictions, and assign penalties according to how close to the core you are

In a typical downtown, the most desirable parking spaces are on-street along commercial corridors where the majority of businesses and retail activities take place. Closely following in desirability are on-street spaces along adjacent side streets. Surface lots are less desirable, but are still easily accessible for patrons to enter and exit. Structured parking facilities, or remote surface lots are typically the least popular due to the perceived hassle associated with getting in and out of them.

Downtown InFocus recommends a three-zone strategy to help guide parking policy and better manage the demand for parking spaces in Downtown.

Zone 1: Core Downtown area

> This area should be prioritized for initiatives to make the area more walkable to increase cross-shopping, safety, and social interaction.

> Accordingly, the City should limit the construction of additional supply; integrate new parking garages selectively into new development; prioritize short- and mid-term shoppers and visitors, and invest in creating a more welcoming environment for visitors.

Zone 2: Immediate periphery

> This area should be prioritized for mid- and long-term shoppers/employees.

> The City should invest in structured parking and/or shared parking opportunities to balance demand and optimize existing facilities that may be underutilized.

Zone 3: Outlying periphery

> This area should be viewed as an opportunity for remote parking.

> Prioritize regular long-term employees and invest in a remote parking program.

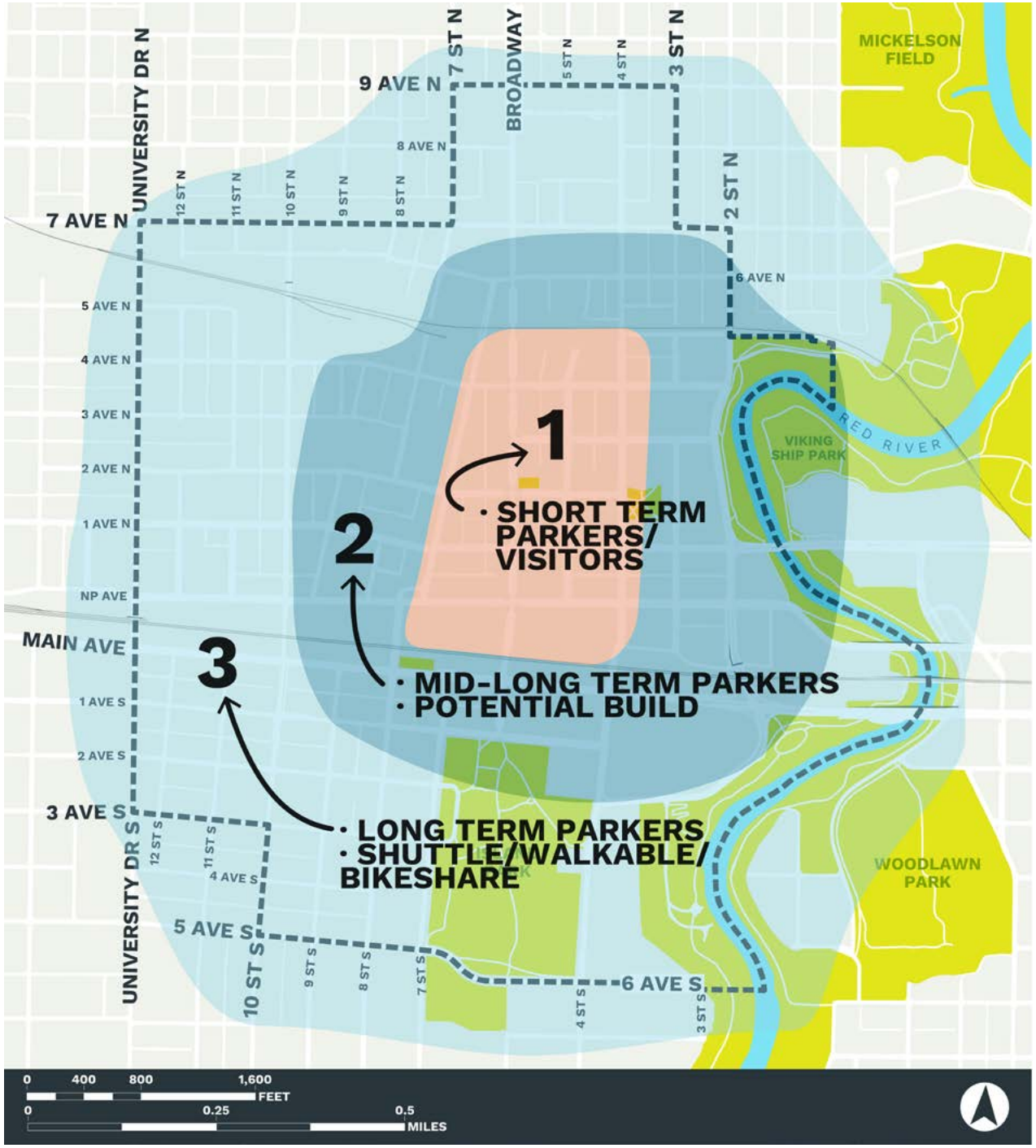

FIGURE 31: Parking Zones

Align supply with demand by looking at parking utilization system wide.

With the variation in parking demand across Downtown, it is evident that some parking facilities are more desirable than others. An effective way to reduce high parking demand is to increase pricing in high-demand facilities in combination with strategies that improve the quality of alternative modes. The effective and efficient turnover of convenient parking spaces is most successful when the facility reaches an 85% occupancy rate, meaning that 10% to 15% of spaces are not occupied at any given time and are available for incoming parkers. This translates to approximately one to two open spaces per block. When this threshold is exceeded, incoming drivers end up circling the block looking for parking, creating congestion, confusion, and possibly resulting in people leaving the area out of frustration. Facilities that consistently display a utilization rate exceeding 85% should increase fees to reduce demand.

> Facilities that consistently display a utilization rate exceeding 85% should increase their rates at increments of 20% to 35%.

> Facilities that consistently display a utilization rate below 60% should decrease their rates at increments of 20% to 35% to encourage drivers to park there.

Not only does this parking rate structure distribute demand evenly throughout the system, it also provides incoming parkers with more equitable options that may have been an issue previously.

When a facility's utilization rate does not exceed 60% it is underutilized, indicating that the amount of land dedicated to parking is not balanced in comparison to other land uses such as commercial, retail, or residential. The over-supply of parking separates land uses, lessens walkability, and induces sprawl. Facilities that consistently display a lower utilization rate should be targeted for shared parking agreements, or should be considered for development/alternative uses.

6.2 Advocate for metered parking

Continue to lobby the State to eliminate the ban on metered parking.

Parking pricing policies are used to align supply with demand and are intended to encourage long-term parkers to locate in areas with lower demand, while ensuring that high demand spaces have high turnover and are available for incoming shoppers. Although time limits may be able to guide behavior, enforcement can be extremely costly to the City. For these reasons, it is vital for the City to continue to advocate for on-street meters to manage demand, increase turnover, and enhance economic development.

According to Chapter 39-01-09 of the North Dakota Legislation “It is unlawful for the state of North Dakota....to establish and maintain any mechanical device....requiring the deposit therein of coins or tokens for the privilege of parking cars or other vehicles upon the streets”.

Bring parking meters to Downtown, where collected revenue could be used for streetscape improvements, improved signage, or to improve parking lots.

One of the main reasons people are opposed to paying for parking is because they feel that the money they pay for parking typically does not fund any immediate or tangible benefits. Reserving a portion of the generated revenue and putting it back into the community to increase safety efforts, promote alternative transportation modes, or make physical improvements to streets and the public realm ties the payment to a benefit, and makes people more likely to accept and support these changes.

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6.3 Make it easy for visitors to park once, when spending the day in Downtown

Adopt strategies to increase turnover for high-demand spaces.

One of the most valuable aspects of a downtown is that drivers are able to complete a variety of tasks within a single area. For example, a shopper might come Downtown to grab lunch with a friend, go to a hair appointment, pick up some groceries, and grab a coffee on the way out. Ideally, a person driving would be able to do all those things while only using one parking space, as opposed to getting back into their car and parking in a separate lot or on-street space for each activity.

The park once strategy allows people to complete tasks quickly, conveniently, and in a lively, safe environment, while encouraging walking and social interaction. The particular characteristics that enable people to do a variety of different things in a small area are distinctly what makes downtowns attractive places to live and visit. Density, a mix of uses, and walkability are all enhanced in a park once environment.

Provide easy-to-find areas where visitors can park for the day without worry, or spot-hopping.

While the vast majority of parking in Downtown is currently designated for employees, development plans and other efforts to make the core area more walkable and livable will result in an increased number of visitors driving—and parking—in Downtown on a regular basis. This parking user group should be prioritized as they stay parked for shorter durations of time and are spending money in the City, contributing to Fargo's economic development.

Accordingly, it is important to quantify the volume of additional visitors. Based on incoming development data, there will be a 52% increase in visitor parking by 2026[3], or an annual growth rate of 5%. There was a total of 111 parkers at peak utilization[4] during counts performed in November of 2016. At an annual growth rate of 5%, this would translate into approximately 178 visitor parking spaces by 2026. This estimate is based on land use; it is not possible to forecast the impact of employees moving their cars for lunch and other activities. This subset of the employee population increases competition for visitor spaces.

> "People don't know where to park. We need better signage to make it easy. That's the number one reason people like the West Acres Mall." – *interview*

Develop clearer wayfinding to help drivers find available parking to reduce the number of people circling for spots.

For those who know it well, Downtown's parking lots and garages are easy to find. However, to the unfamiliar visitor, many of the City's parking assets are not so easy to spot. Gateway and wayfinding signage is an effective tool to welcome and direct visitors to key parking destinations. Additionally, a well-coordinated sign program is an effective method to communicate the City's unique character and identity.

All sign elements should be designed to maximize clarity and legibility. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards are applied to sign features within state rights-of-way and identify elements such as lettering height, color, and placement. This manual will be considered as appropriate for signage located along local roads as well.

When developing signage/wayfinding strategies, parking information should be presented to drivers early in their approach to Downtown on major roadways coming into Downtown such as Main Avenue, 1st Avenue North, 2nd Street North, and University Avenue. Gateway and wayfinding signage should connect visitors entering the community from main corridors to local roads and to their ultimate destination. Sign features should be reflective of the roadway type and legible given the speed of traffic. Broadway Avenue, in particular, should have frequent signage alerting drivers to off-Broadway parking opportunities.

A willingness to walk five or 10 minutes from where you park to your destination covers most of Downtown Fargo. Between the rail lines, a seven minute walk stretches from the River over to 10th Street.

3 Based on the incoming square feet of visitor developments (provided by Kilbourne Group)

4 Utilization data provided by Interstate for 11/16/2016

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6.4 Make desirable parking spaces available to customers, even at night

Extend enforcement of on-street parking to 9:00 pm to ensure that turnover continues into the evening, allowing more people to come, park, dine, and enjoy Downtown.

Effective on-street parking provides incoming visitors with access and contributes to Downtown economic development that cannot occur if parking is not available. In order to ensure that spaces are available for restaurant patrons, *Downtown InFocus* recommends extending the hours of enforcement to 9:00 pm.

Change duration of evening parking intervals to accommodate dinner or movie outings.

Currently, two-hour time limits along Downtown street segments are enforced between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm Monday through Saturday. While this allows bar and restaurant patrons to park on-street without being concerned about exceeding the two-hour time limit, there is a tendency for these parkers to remain in spaces along core retail corridors long-term (or overnight), which prevents incoming visitors from accessing these spaces. If drivers wish to remain parked long-term, they have access to off-street surface lots or garages that are no longer being used by employees.

> "I close my business early – before 5pm – because residents come home at 3:30pm and know they can park for free until 10am the next day." – *interview*

FIGURE 32: Existing On-Street Parking Regulations

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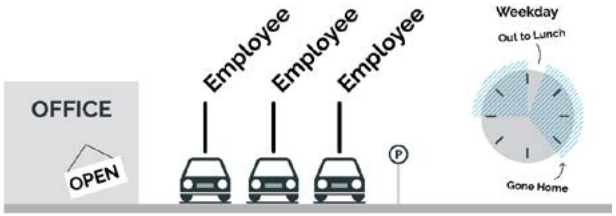
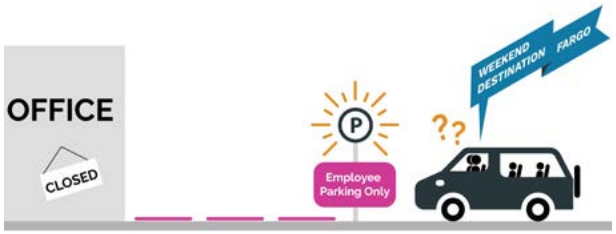


Weekday daytime, all of the spaces are full of employees, but not on the weekends...



Private lots could provide lots of extra parking.

6.5 Pursue a shared parking model

Partner with local employers on shared parking opportunities so that parking resources better serve everyone.

Identify viable locations for shared parking arrangements at private lots and garages to increase parking supply, maximize use, and avoid the public cost of new garages.

After conducting a series of utilization surveys and collaborating with the City, the peak parking demand period was identified as weekdays between 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. While some facilities in the Downtown core displayed a utilization rate above 85% (exceeding their functional capacity), several nearby parking assets consistently displayed low occupancy rates. This indicates an opportunity for shared parking. Table 1 identifies facilities that have an inventory of over 75 spaces and a utilization rate below 75%. These are the facilities recommended for shared parking agreements, and locations where proposed Downtown shuttle options should include stops.

TABLE 1: Shared Parking Facility Opportunities

Zone #	Name	Lot #	Inventory	Utilization	# of available spaces
1	1st Lutheran/Sanford	1	207	53%	98
2	Lutheran Church	24	102	13%	89
4	Sanctuary Event Center	27	102	5%	97
4	Elim/Northern Lot	68a	155	50%	78
4	NDSU STAFF	70	76	55%	34
5	Plains Art Museum	32	83	55%	37
5	GO M/D	30a	77	40%	45
5	First Presbyterian Church	72	82	51%	40
7	Sanford Research Center	57a	82	20%	66
8	YMCA	56	90	50%	45
8	*Island Park**	*J*	*355*	*75%*	*89*
8	*Main Ave Lot**	*I*	*75*	*60%*	*30*
8	Sanford Professional Building	54	199	55%	90
	Total		**1,683**		**837**

* Facilities are owned and operated by the City (not private)

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Existing Parking Zones

Source: City of Fargo, Interstate Parking

PARKING ZONES

- ZONE 1 (+41)
- ZONE 2 (+142)
- ZONE 3 (-44)
- ZONE 4 (+66)
- ZONE 5 (+91)
- ZONE 6 (+171)
- ZONE 7 (+215)
- ZONE 8 (+211)
- OPEN SPACE
- DOWNTOWN FOCUS AREA

FIGURE 33: Current Utilization within Existing Parking Zones

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6.6 Work with willing local employers to incentivize alternative modes of commute

Educate employers on the issues associated with paying for employee parking; encourage employers to offer transportation options outside of free parking

Although employees, students, and visitors traveling to Downtown have access to a variety of alternative transportation modes, the existing policies and parking rates make driving by oneself the most convenient means of transportation. This has led to an extremely high demand for parking Downtown. As Downtown continues to expand and develop, the parking demand will do so as well, creating the need for additional facilities or expansions if the status quo continues. However, if Fargo is able to successfully develop programs and policies that shape driving behavior, parking demand can be managed and land that might otherwise be paved for parking will be available for other uses that contribute to the quality and livability of Downtown. Below are a series of potential programs to help encourage different transportation choices for those who are willing to do so:

- **Parking Cash-Out:** Financial incentives such as a **Parking Cash Out** or **discounted transit pass** can help to incentivize commuters to find a new means of getting to work. Parking Cash Out refers to a program in which commuters are offered the (approximate) cash equivalent of what the business or private entity would pay for the construction and upkeep of a parking space in exchange for the commuter's agreement not to drive when traveling to and from work. Forms of compensation vary between yearly, monthly, or daily payments, depending on the parking system. Implementing a Parking Cash Out program could potentially reduce parking demand in over utilized facilities, ensure parking availability for incoming visitors, and create space for future expansions and developments within Downtown.
- **Discount bike share:** Fargo's Great Rides has 11 stations that currently operate between the months of March through November. The rates are currently $4 per hour, $15 per month, or $75 per year. While the vast majority of trips are taken by students, Great Rides does offer an Employee Benefit Program which allows employers to discount the bikeshare rate. Bikeshare can serve as an effective means of solving the first/last mile issue for employees taking public transportation, making it more viable to not chose driving when commuting to and from work each day.
- **Support carpooling employees:** Reserve spaces in high demand garages for carpooling employees. Carpooling programs that offer carpooling employees a discounted permit and/or a preferred parking space in prime parking facilities are becoming standard programs throughout the country. Carpooling benefits may vary based on the number of users in one car, the number of days people still drive alone, or the parking facility people use. Given that there are approximately 1,419 off-street spaces overseen by the City, every 5% increase of users who carpool creates 35 newly available spaces.
- **Bring car-share Downtown:** Couple car-share program memberships with transit passes for employees who take transit. Studies have found that each shared vehicle removes 9 to 13 other vehicles from the road[5], which can significantly reduce traffic and congestion. Because there are currently no carshare vendors in Fargo, Fargo should work with a vendor to establish carshare in Downtown and within NDSU and other local colleges and universities. Promoting this program would make people aware of substitutes to personal car use and encourage people to utilize alternative transit modes.
- **Offer a discounted rideshare to serve as a guaranteed ride home for employees who take public transit**: As ridesourcing services such as Lyft and Uber gain popularity, some universities and small towns are establishing partnerships with these companies to encourage employees and students not to drive and park their own cars. These efforts range from providing discounts to users who hail a ride within a specific boundary, to allowing people not regularly driving a set number of vouchers to serve as an "emergency ride home." Downtown could benefit from establishing this type of partnership, as many employees, students, and visitors have used, or are familiar with, these ridesharing services already.

5 Robert Cervero, Aaron Golub, and Brendan Nee. 2007. "San Francisco City CarShare: Longer-Term Travel-Demand and Car Ownership Impacts," Transportation Research Record, Journal of the Transportation Research Board, no. 1992: 70–80.

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Different approaches to a parking shuttle solution

TABLE 2: Alternative Shuttle Solutions

Option	Pros	Cons
Consolidate routes 33, 13U, and/or 13. Reallocate service to increase redundancy along route to ensure <5 minute headways during peak commutes.	> Uses existing transit and parking resources. > Could encourage overall transit ridership and create new riders.	> Feasibility only as long-term solution due to lack of cost-pressure. > Potential to add minimum of 12 minutes to passenger commutes (most optimistic estimate). > Relies on willing transit adoption.
Create dedicated shuttle route between major employer(s) (Sanford) circulating between FargoDome parking and Employment Center.	> Cost sharing model already used for NDSU circulator routes. > Faster speeds/reduced user confusion due to limited destinations. > Potential to be short-/mid-term option.	> Increased cost since there are fewer potential funding partners involved. > Limited impact to general. Downtown parking challenges.
Propose new Parking Shuttle/ Trolley in Downtown. Model combines tourist amenity trolley and parking circulator.	> Easily used and accessed for employees and visitors > Enables incoming visitors and employees who drive to park once and use the shuttle for all other errands > Potential to be mid-term option > Potential to be seen as new amenity, providing leverage for new parking sharing partnerships.	> High cost to create high frequency new, branded route. > Confusion or competition with LinkFM.

FIGURE 34: Potential Parking Circulator Route to Bring Shared Lots within Closer Reach

Consider a circulator that connects major Downtown job centers with off-site parking to free up spaces in the core.

In order to maximize use of the potential shared parking facilities identified in Table 1 previously, additional or alternative shuttle routes should be evaluated and pursued to better link parking with major employment locations. While LinkFM carries passengers to and from a remote parking lot in Moorhead, it does not serve a large contingent of commuters coming in from the west or north. A large proportion of Fargo employees come into Downtown from the north and east, and the LinkFM has limited benefit for this commuting group. Three alternative shuttle solutions are presented and discussed in Table 2.

The optimal solution is a shuttle with frequent headways dedicated to maximizing the use of Downtown's underutilized parking lots as shown in the accompanying map. The benefits of a shuttle are weather protection and convenience but also cost effectiveness, as the price of operating a shuttle is significantly less than building and operating a parking space within a parking garage.

Shared Parking & Circulator

Source: Sam Schwartz

City-owned Lot

Proposed Circulator Route

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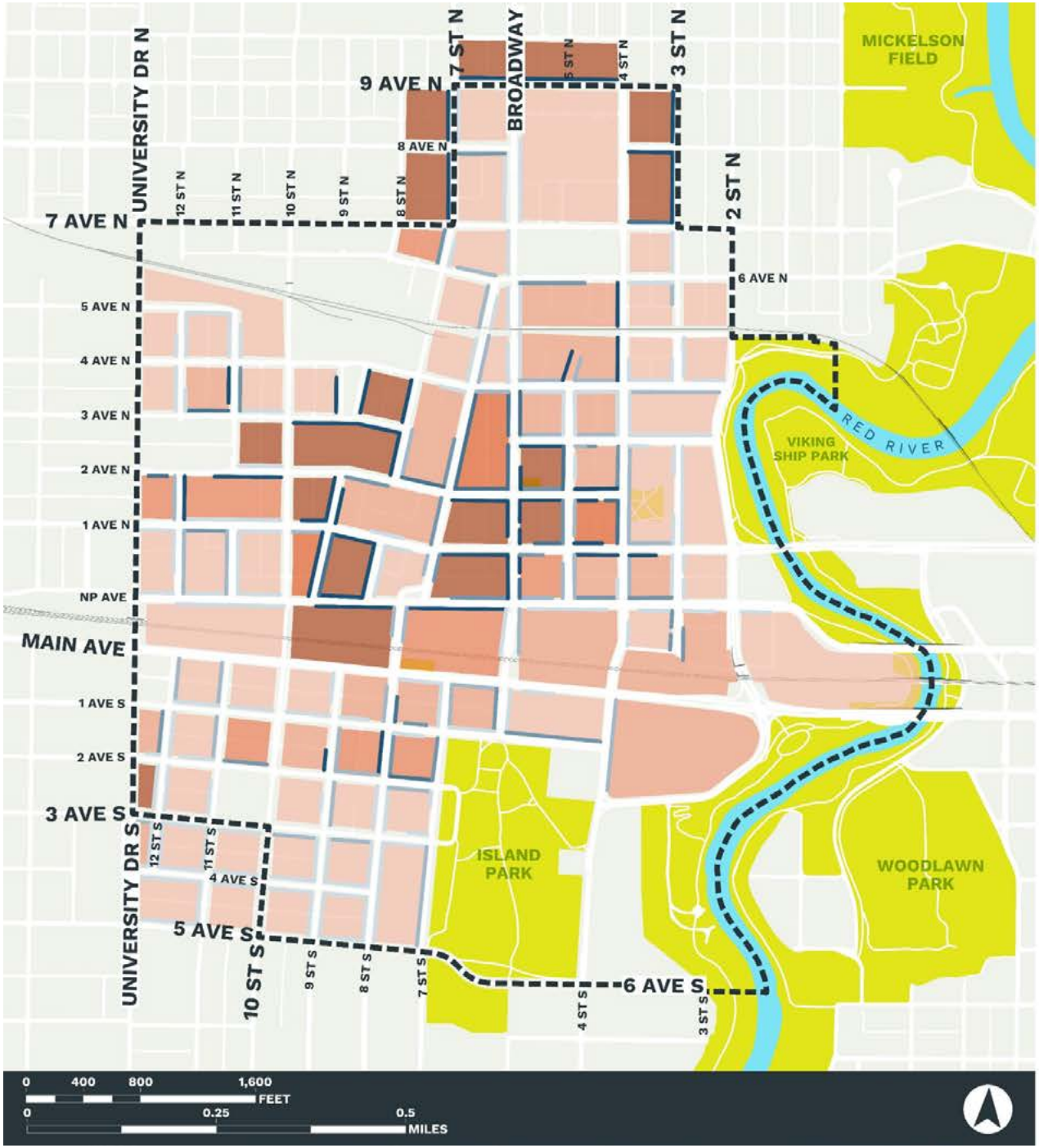

FIGURE 35: Parking Utilization by Block, October 2015

6.7 Create an on-street parking permit for Downtown employees

Mitigate long waiting lists at Downtown garages by offering employee permits for on-street parking in designated areas along some of the peripheral or underutilized streets for a lower monthly fee.

As seen in on-street parking surveys performed by the City, there are several street segments that displayed an occupancy rate below 50%, indicating that these facilities are underutilized. While the state restricts charging for on-street parking, there are opportunities to optimize the use of their on-street parking supply through developing an on-street parking permit program for employees. The City should work with State regulators to establish and pilot an on-street employee permit parking program. Not only would this maximize the use of currently underutilized parking facilities but it would reduce long-term parking in centrally located surface lots and garages, opening up those spaces for customers and visitors.

On-Street Utilization
October 2015

Source: City of Fargo, Interstate Parking

ON-STREET UTILIZATION

- 0 - 50%
- 51 - 70%
- 71 - 80%
- 81 - 90%
- 91 - 145%

OFF-STREET UTILIZATION

- 0 - 50%
- 51 - 70%
- 71 - 80%
- 81 - 90%
- 91 - 100%

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6.8 Consider implementing parking maximums

Establish parking maximums in the core Downtown area to foster a more dense, walkable environment. Maintain parking minimums outside of the study area.

Excessive parking requirements make market-rate housing more expensive, reduce the number of affordable housing units, reduce the amount of space for non-parking uses, and encourage people to own more cars and drive more frequently. The regulation and management of parking in Downtown Fargo should prioritize safeguarding against parking oversupply and reducing the parking footprint within the core Downtown area.

Upcoming large developments occurring within the Downtown core, which are aligned with the master plan, are likely to create a denser, walkable environment. This type of growth supports the concept of eliminating parking minimums within Downtown, particularly along core retail corridors. This is reinforced by a strong trend toward less parking and more pick-up/drop-off services like Uber/Lyft. Therefore, even while traffic volumes may stay the same, parking demand is likely to decline.

6.9 Beautify parking lots

Prioritize landscaping, repaving, striping, and lighting so that parking lots contribute to Downtown's public realm and improved perceptions.

As the first and last experience visitors have with Downtown, the maintenance and upkeep of parking facilities should be monitored and improved. Fargo should upgrade the design of necessary surface parking to fit into the context of Downtown and makes users feel safe and comfortable when walking to and from these facilities. This may include increasing landscaping, reducing impervious surfaces, improving lighting, restriping, improving the crosswalks and pathways to and from the surface lots, and ensuring the visibility of signage for incoming parkers.

> "All the streets and sidewalks are new. There are actually trees, and there are no more old ugly parking lots."
>
> – *Community Vision Statement*

Bird's eye view of Downtown, dominated by surface parking, a legacy of Urban Renewal.

7

Play with Purpose

Develop a system of connected all-season green spaces designed for people (of a range of ages and interests) and purpose (as infrastructure that absorbs stormwater).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

New flood infrastructure aims to protect against riverine flooding, but it does not reduce the threat of localized flooding of Downtown property caused by rain events.

Fargo is long familiar with the hazards of living next to the Red River of the North, but the conditions that exist in and around the city were set in place over 13,000 years ago when the glacial Lake Agassiz receded, leaving behind several distinct layers of clay that are nearly impermeable to water.

The drained lake bed became the vast floodplain of the Red River of the North, which, flowing northward as the name suggests, creates another seasonal flooding phenomenon when the northern part of the river has yet to thaw and the spring floodwaters to the south have few places to go. This natural phenomenon is exacerbated by the change in land cover from the native prairie to agricultural use, which speeds up the rate of water flow, thus exaggerating the peak flow.

To protect the metropolitan region from flooding, the FM Diversion project was created. The FM Diversion introduced a large levy and canal flood protection system which traps water to the south of the city then releases it at a slower rate via a canal west of the city and through the Red River. In addition, flood walls and levies have been created in Downtown Fargo to protect the City from the regional flooding events.

This massive infrastructure protects the City from regional flooding events occurring at the scale of the watershed, but it does not protect or reduce the threat of localized flooding of Downtown properties caused by local rain events. In some cases, it may exacerbate or limit the flow of these local events because the evacuation of water from the Downtown watershed is now limited by underground pumps and the flood walls when previously it could more easily flow into the river.

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Clay soils limit Downtown stormwater absorption potential.

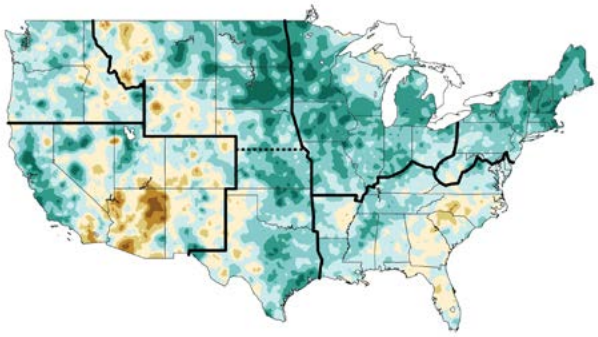
Clay soils limit stormwater absorption potential, which rules out one major tool for managing stormwater infiltration (i.e. allowing water to slowly seep into the soils). However, functional landscapes can be created to utilize other blue/green infrastructure techniques that ultimately create spaces that add beauty, value, and recreational spaces while contributing to Downtown's infrastructure system.

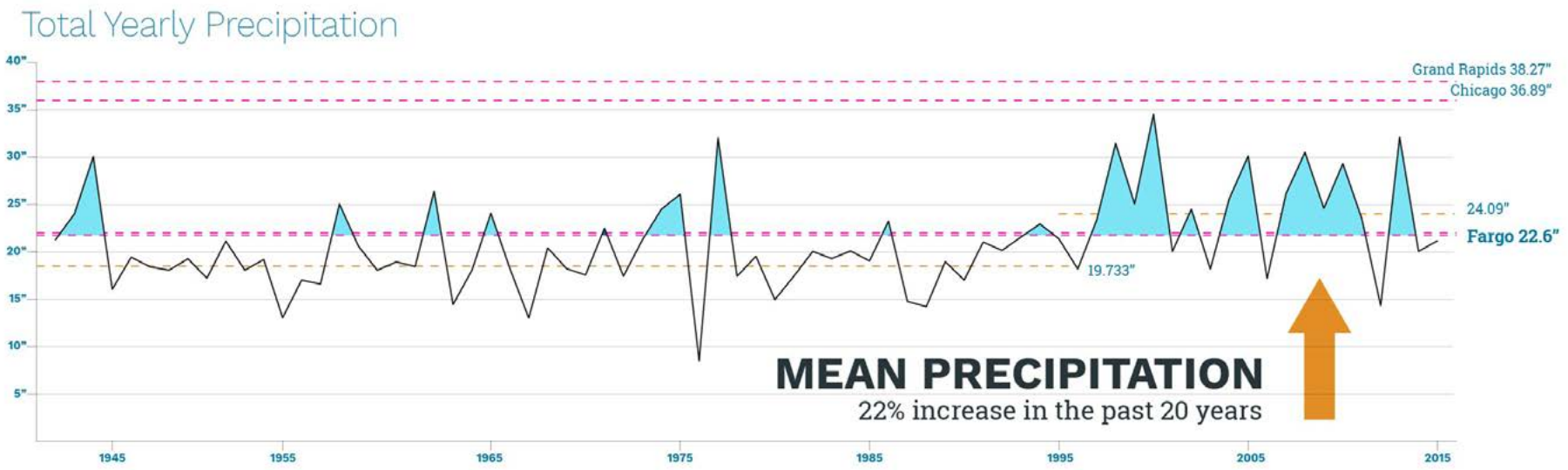
Prior to human development, the prairie soils that developed after the glaciers receded formed a sponge-like layer of organic material. This beneficial layer helped to store water, reducing flash flood events while anchoring down sediments that can negatively impact water quality. The landscape-based infrastructure that we look to create in Downtown aims to accomplish similar goals.

One of the critical goals is to reduce the threat to property from localized flooding. Several factors contribute to current issues, but we must also consider how future climate projections are shifting the previously established baseline for the design of the current infrastructure.

The mean precipitation in the Fargo area has increased by 22% over the past 20 years. The storms themselves are becoming more frequent with higher peak precipitation. Shallow grading of roads due the relatively flat terrain reduces the rate at which the stormwater moves to the inlets. Because of the storms' increasing intensity, the stormwater system that was initially accommodating a 2-year, 24-hour event is now performing at a 0.5 year, 24-hour event.

There are two issues that the creation of functional landscapes can help to solve; one is the issue of water quality, the other is water quantity. Water quality can be managed by controlling the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and other pollutants such as oil that are entering the Red River directly from a grey infrastructure outfall without treatment. The May 2012 study by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency describes two major fish kill events in 2003 and 2006 that illustrate the current impact of these contaminants and conditions in the Fargo-Moorhead area.





Total annual precipitation has been increasing.
Source: http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=83624

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The water quality of the Red River is impacted by localized flooding.

Fargo's separated sewer system creates an opportunity to intercept that water and polish or clean it before it enters the River by running it through a landscape that will strip out nutrients, allow the sediment to drop out of the water column, and increase oxygen levels.

The amount of water that needs to be treated for water quality is called the first flush and is the amount of water that is generated by a 1- or 2-year, 24-hour storm, which is usually about 0.6-1.5" of rain. Specific techniques will be discussed further in this document, but the goal of water quality is to protect and enhance the habitat of the Red River of the North, but even more critically for those who call the area home, it is to protect the primary source of drinking water for the region.

Blue and green infrastructure solutions for water quality help us to find the types of living systems that we need to integrate within Downtown open spaces, but handling the issues related to localized flooding and water quantity help us to define the scale and extent of the open space system.

We need to reduce the threat of localized flooding.

The lack of large scale detention basins that exist elsewhere in the City means that the roads themselves become the temporary storage for local rain events. During high intensity storms (storms exceeding a 50-year storm or 6.5"/hour) cascade events can occur where catchment areas overflow into adjacent catchment areas, leading to greater flood depths and higher velocity water movement that ultimately creates greater amounts of property damage and risks to health and safety.

This study looks to understand the scale of landscape needed to have the capacity to deal with both events – local rain events and high intensity storms. Understanding the movement, flow and subsequent risks to individual property owners will require further study and is listed as a future task in the action matrix provided at the end of *Downtown InFocus*. It is critically important to understand that reducing capacity within one or all of the systems would put additional burden on the other.

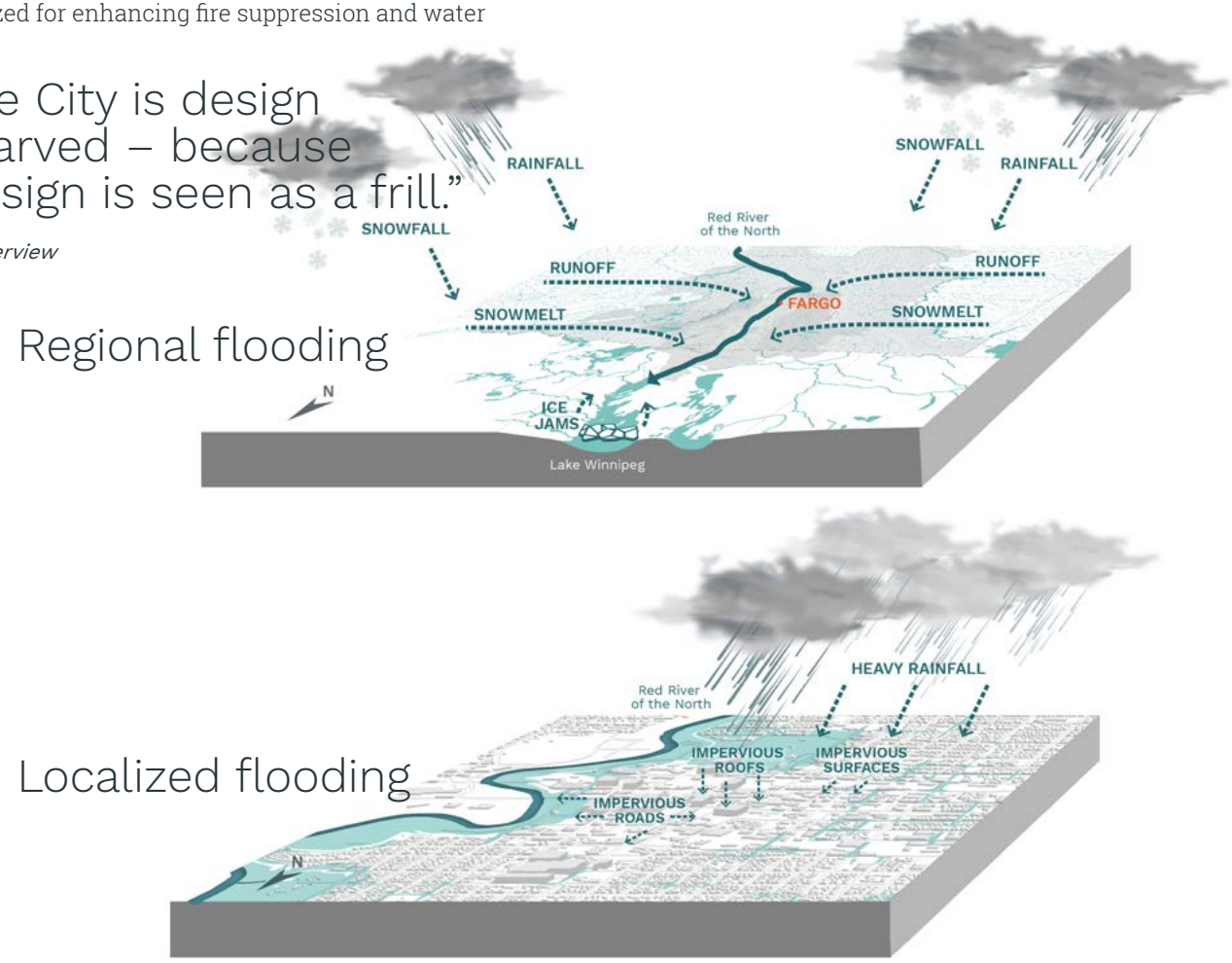
An investment in functional landscapes can save the City money over time.

The construction of landscapes that work as infrastructure helps to shift and reduce the cost burden of expanding grey infrastructure - which has cost limitations as systems scale up. Grey infrastructure is also harder to maintain, takes significantly more energy to construct and operate, and offers no additional amenity to the public, being that it is underground and unseen. Functional landscapes:

Additional synergies exist as water is collected in the various systems and at various elevations. Collected water in green roofs and rooftop systems can be utilized for enhancing fire suppression and water can be drawn from landscape retention systems to irrigate street trees and other landscape vegetation. Further, these systems help conserve energy from a passive standpoint, by decreasing heating loads, shading building facades, and providing additional insulation on rooftops which reduces heating and cooling costs.

The integration of blue/green infrastructure into open spaces will lead to a healthier and safer Downtown, but public spaces will do even more to support, grow, and bring vitality to the Downtown's residents and visitors.

> "The City is design starved – because design is seen as a frill."
>
> *– interview*



Design is a necessity when it comes to stormwater and flood protection infrastructure

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WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

The working landscapes that support the unique and necessary stormwater infrastructure are, in many cases, linked to road, rooftop, railway and flood infrastructures; however, it is also important to increase the capacity of the stormwater infrastructure system by creating new public spaces in Downtown that can support a growing number of residents and visitors, and will connect the Downtown to the region.

Create new public spaces Downtown that bring together the community AND serve as infrastructure

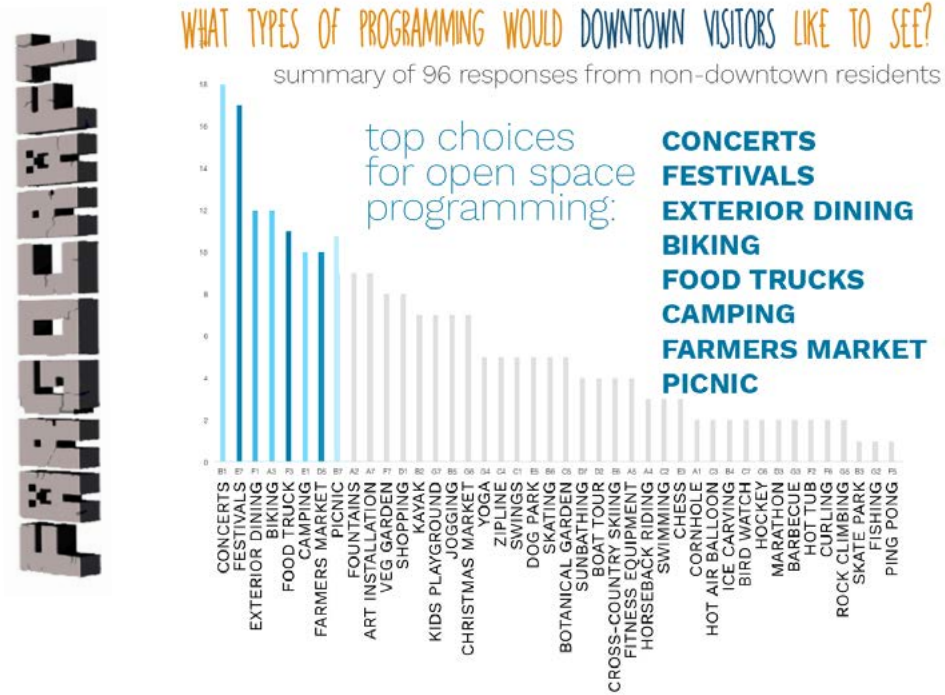
Through the public engagement process, people identified strongly with landscapes that allow for social gathering. Given the topographical position of Downtown next to the River, it is critical that the development of new public open spaces serve a greater function related to the blue/green infrastructure systems than just servicing the just needs of that particular park or site.

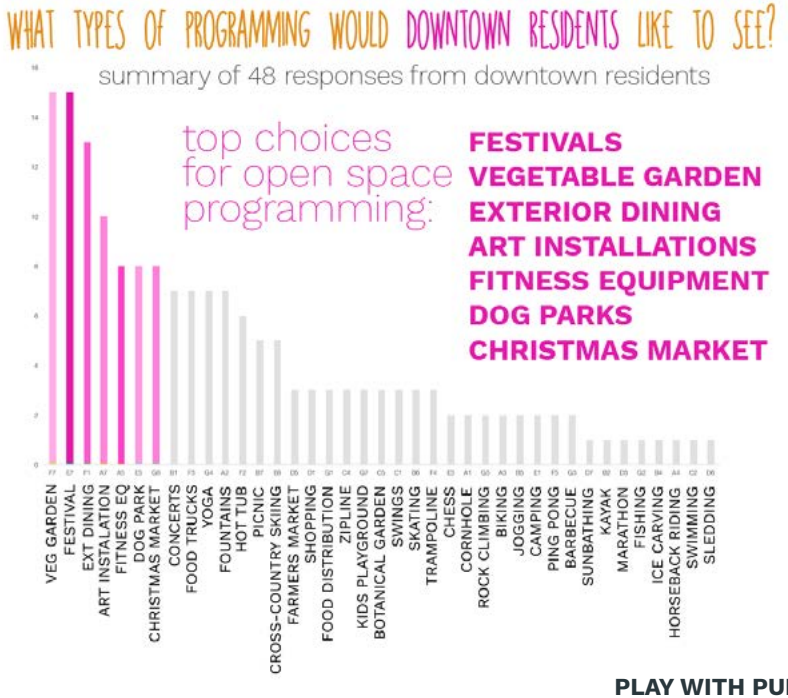
We look to the design of the landscape to integrate stormwater infrastructure, not as a burden to the site, but as an amenity and feature that brings a unique identity to Downtown. Retention/detention basins can be ponds, streams or fountains, and an increased tree canopy to help green Downtown and control air pollution. The creation of these larger connected systems allows for more robust habitat to develop, and for people to access trails and greenways at various points throughout Downtown, the City, and the region.

Connect Downtown to regional and national trails

Exploring different methods for connecting Downtown Fargo to the region becomes a critical way to support Downtown's growth and economy. Fargo's position amongst regional and national trail systems helps to support this type of connectivity. New trails can serve residents locally for recreation and commuting, while regionally and nationally they allow Fargo and its Downtown to become a destination, a hub that will expand visitors' interest in outdoor and active lifestyles.

Open space programming prioritized by Downtown visitors and residents





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HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

7.1 Cultivate a Downtown open space network

Program open spaces to welcome families and visitors to Downtown while providing Downtown residents with a vibrant "front yard"

It is also important that when visitors arrive to Downtown the public spaces feel welcoming to families and visitors of all ages. New open spaces should serve as a social gathering space, a "front yard," and be supported by programs that encourage interactions between generations, rather than just adults.

Stitch together alleys, small parks, the Block 9 Plaza, City Hall Plaza, and the River

The creation of a robust open space network in Downtown starts with the recognition and improvement of existing assets like Block 9, City Hall Plaza, and Riverfront Park, but instead of being singular destination points, they become a system connected via new greenways, improved streetscapes, bikeways, and alleyways.

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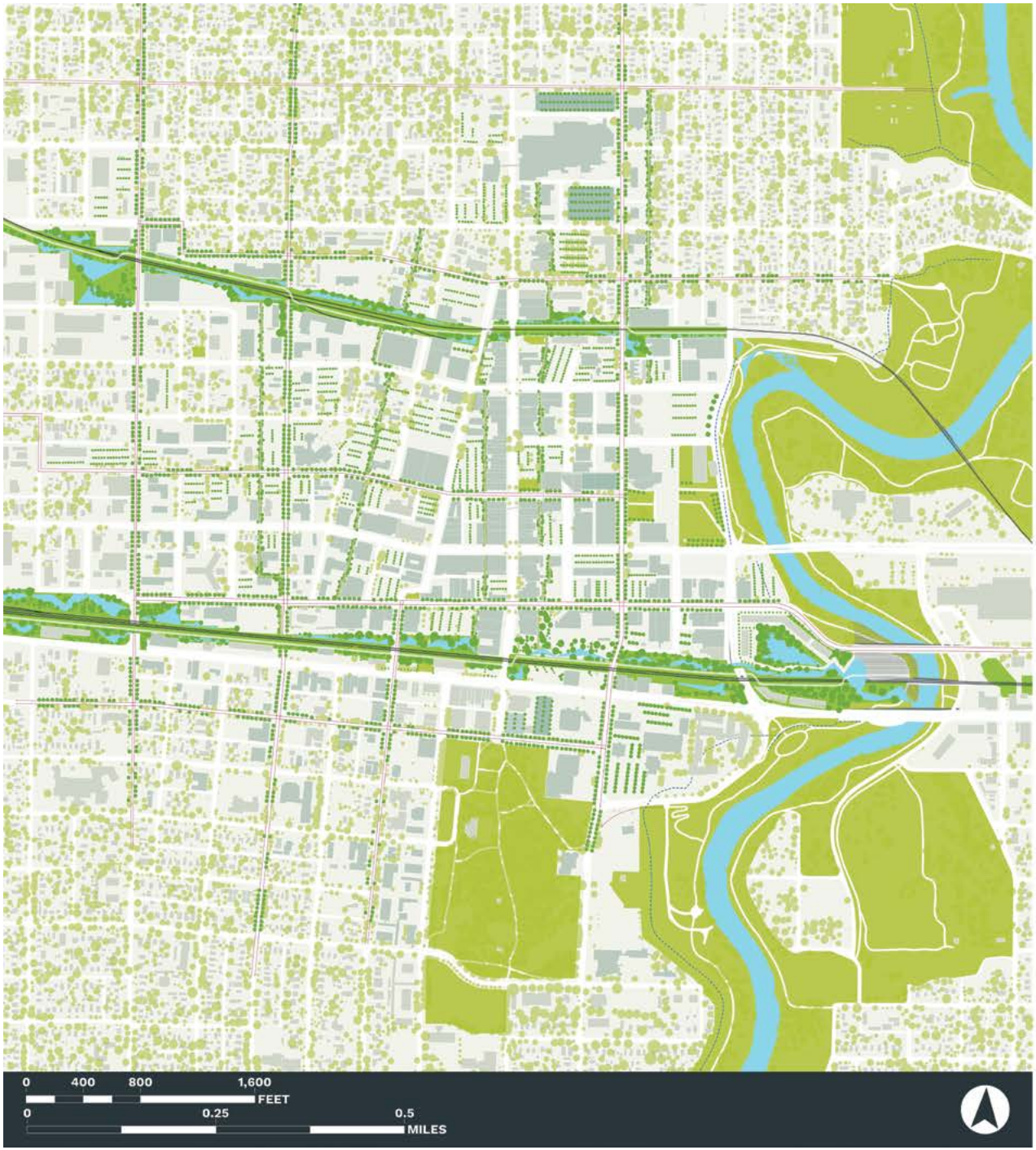
FIGURE 36: Potential Open Space Network



These linear and connective systems are enhanced by increased programming and opportunities to boost the environment with more trees and vegetation. The open space network is a long-term goal to be built out by investing in upgrading streets and creating new parks and plazas over time.

Potential Open Space Network

Source: BLD

- GREENWAY
- RETENTION BASINS
- POTENTIAL GREENROOFS
- BIKE LANES
- STEEL YARD DECK
- FLOODWALL
- PROPOSED TREES
- EXISTING TREES

FIGURE 37: Potential Open Space Network with Existing and Proposed Trees

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7.2 Program for families

Focus on programming for families with children and for students under the age of 21

Currently, Downtown serves primarily those over 21 with its restaurants, shops, and bars. Many of the events that are held throughout the year also tend to cater to that age group (with the exception of Street Fair). By expanding program opportunities for people under 21, entire families are invited to participate in Downtown activities, like outdoor reading and story time, aboriginal and historical presentations and tours, dog parades, live animal exhibitions, community snowball fights, snowman and fort building contests, puppet shows, outdoor cooking demonstrations, temporary play equipment, concerts, picnics, and many more.

Program the City Hall Plaza to encourage regional visitors

The new City Hall Plaza should be one of the "Front Yard" experiences in Downtown, programmed to encourage visitors from throughout the region. These types of programs could include larger outdoor performances, outdoor viewing of global sporting events like the Olympics or the World Cup, classic car or boat shows, and food and wine/beer events.

> "We want to see strollers on Broadway. That's the sign of a safe, healthy neighborhood." – *interview*

Range of programming potential for Library/City Hall Plaza

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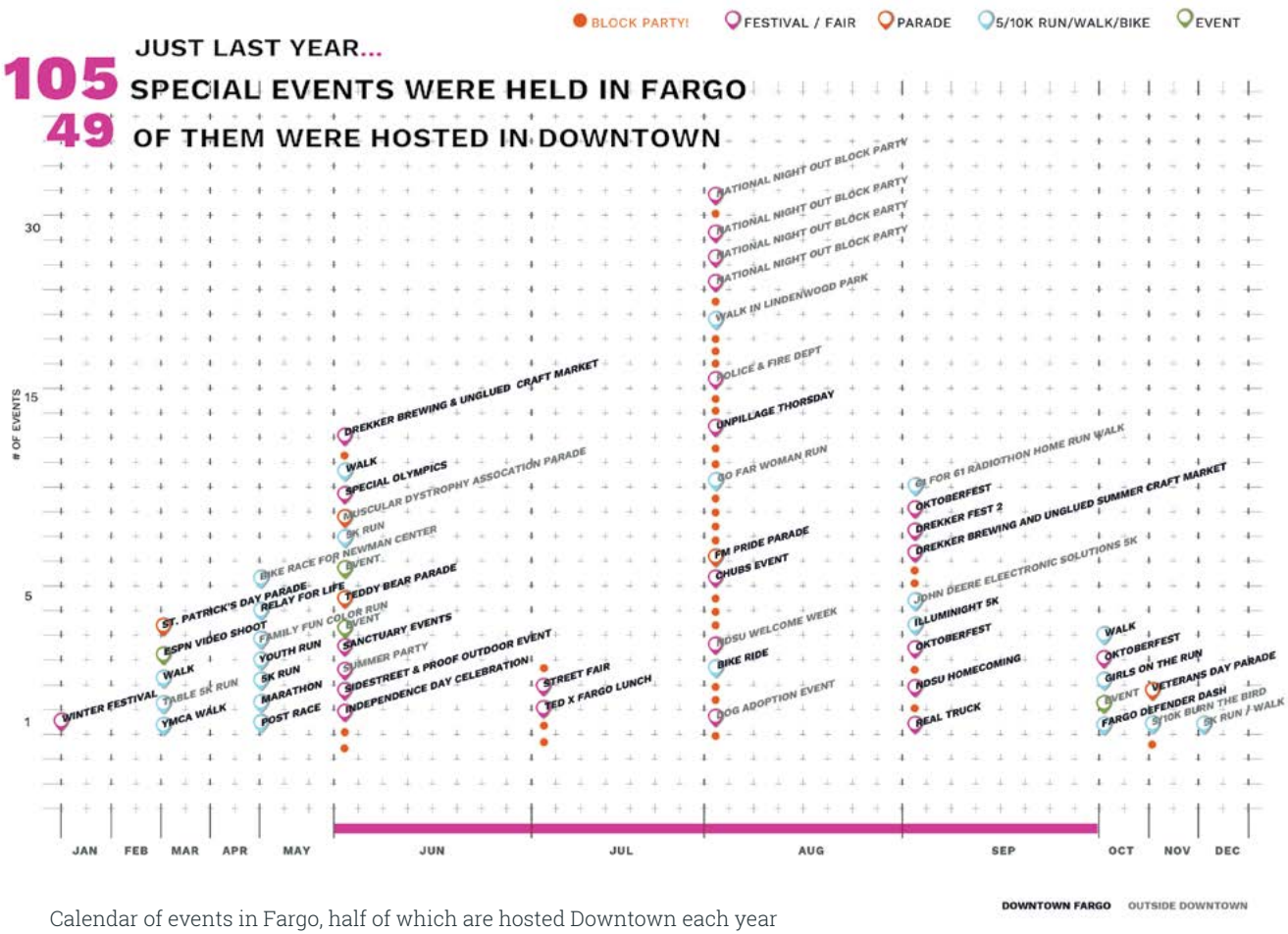
Develop more all-weather venues and events like Frostival

Regardless of the specific Downtown venue, whether it is Broadway, Block 9, the New Civic Plaza, or the Riverfront Plaza at the Mid America Steel Site, Fargo and its Downtown should continue to embrace outdoor seasonal programming; the amenities in those spaces should reflect and support seasonal shifts.

Supporting the Nordic and Native American traditions of sweat lodges and saunas can expand the success of Frostival. Potential events include cross country ski or biathlon racing events that utilize the new greenway system, while future retention ponds could be utilized for ice fishing events. The installation of skating rink hydronic systems in places like the Block 9 Plaza, streetscapes and smaller pocket parks retrofitted to include warming stations, heated benches, bus stops, or outdoor heaters that extend the season for outdoor dining would all build a culture of being outdoors into the cold winter months.

Summer can be enhanced by integrating splash pads and other water play elements such as misters, or promoting shade and vegetation that help to control the micro-climate. The Riverfront Plaza can offer further water based recreation, including kayak and canoe rentals. Intercity Fishing tournaments can also boost regional attendance and can utilize existing sites like Dike East Park, but also proposed sites like the Riverfront Plaza for additional events and ceremonies.



Calendar of events in Fargo, half of which are hosted Downtown each year

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7.3 Reconnect and activate the flood wall

In order to activate the riverfront sites, the plan considers different ways that we can reconnect people to the River, a connection that has been fractured by the introduction of the floodwalls that block direct access from Downtown to the Red River of the North's riverfront.

Design spaces on both sides of the flood wall to help people navigate the barrier

By designing solutions for people to get up, over, and back down the flood wall, such as vegetated berms or unique structured switchbacks, access points can be dramatically expanded and can serve as gateways to the riverfront. In some cases, where stormwater outfalls exist, they can serve as an end of system blue/green water quality control mechanism.

Integrate public art and programming at nearby open spaces

Public art activation is another way to ameliorate the negative aspects of flood wall and overpass infrastructure. The public art master plan, developed in 2017, should be referenced as it further outlines key goals. In addition to those recommendations, this plan proposes that gateway spaces to the river be further enhanced with the addition of public art to draw visitors and explorers to the river's edge.

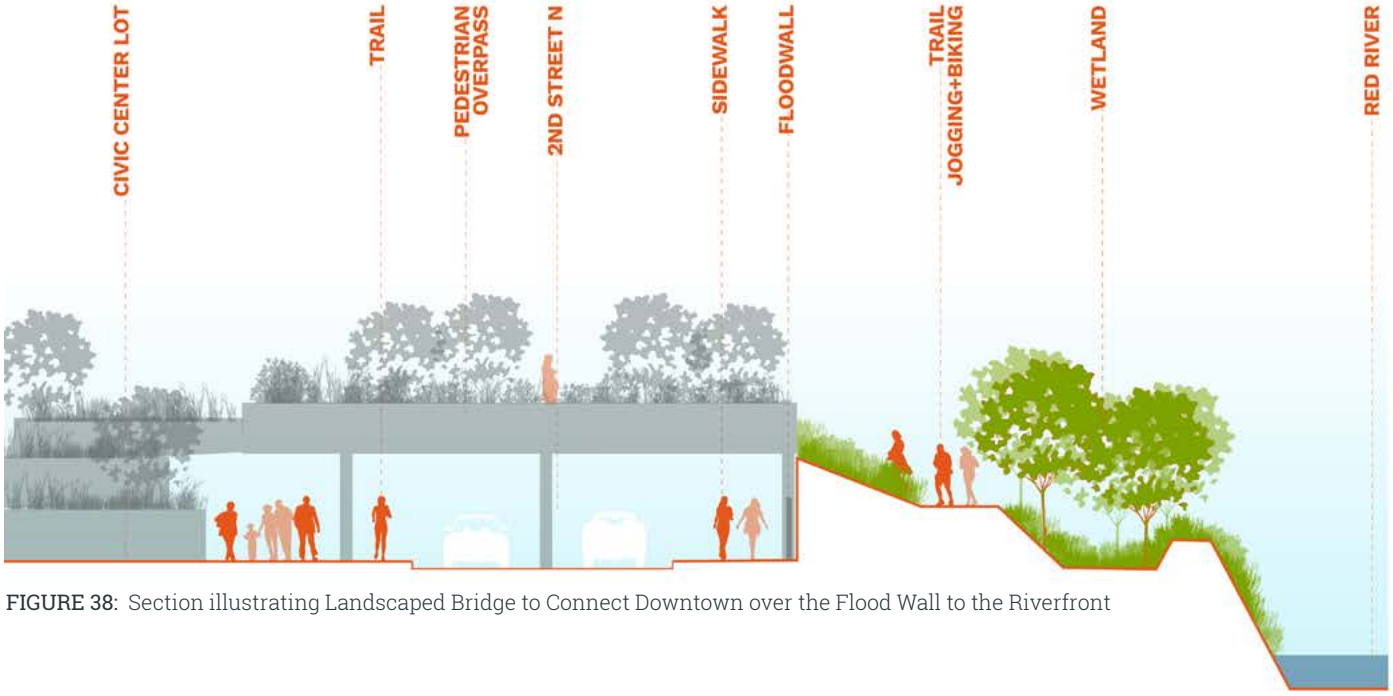

FIGURE 38: Section illustrating Landscaped Bridge to Connect Downtown over the Flood Wall to the Riverfront

Riverfront trail

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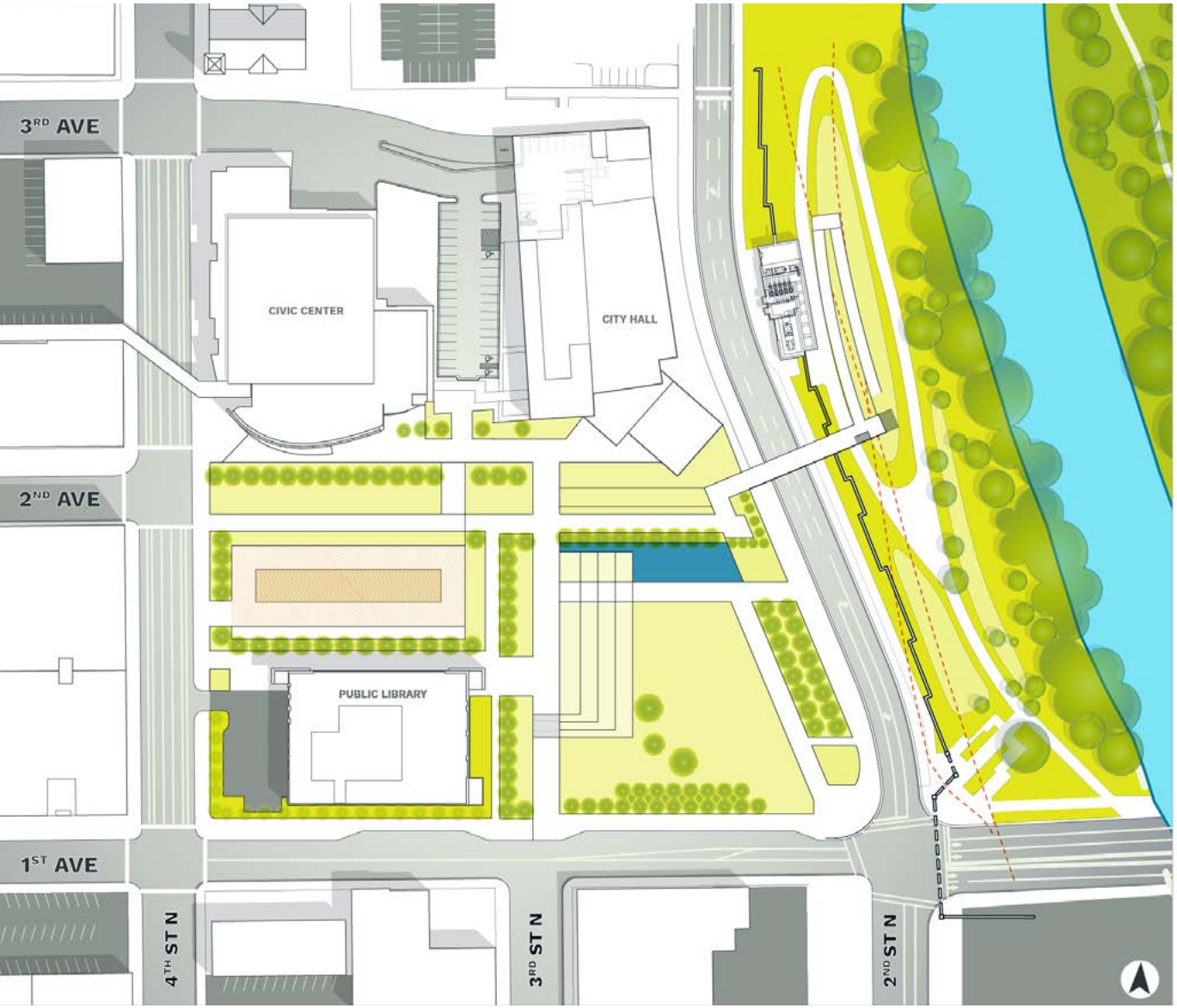

FIGURE 39: Current Concept Drawing for City Hall Plaza

Create a new, actively programmed City Hall Plaza and pursue a bridge aligned with 2nd Avenue

City Hall Plaza has been in active discussion for some time. With City Hall under construction, a design for the plaza needs to be finalized to serve City Hall and provide a true amenity in this portion of Downtown. There is a current concept drawing for the plaza that shows a number of elements including a stepped green space with an outdoor amphitheater and a surface parking lot for the library that can double as a space for outdoor markets.

Downtown InFocus has developed two approaches for the design of the plaza for consideration. It is important to note that both designs bring with them unique opportunities and challenges.

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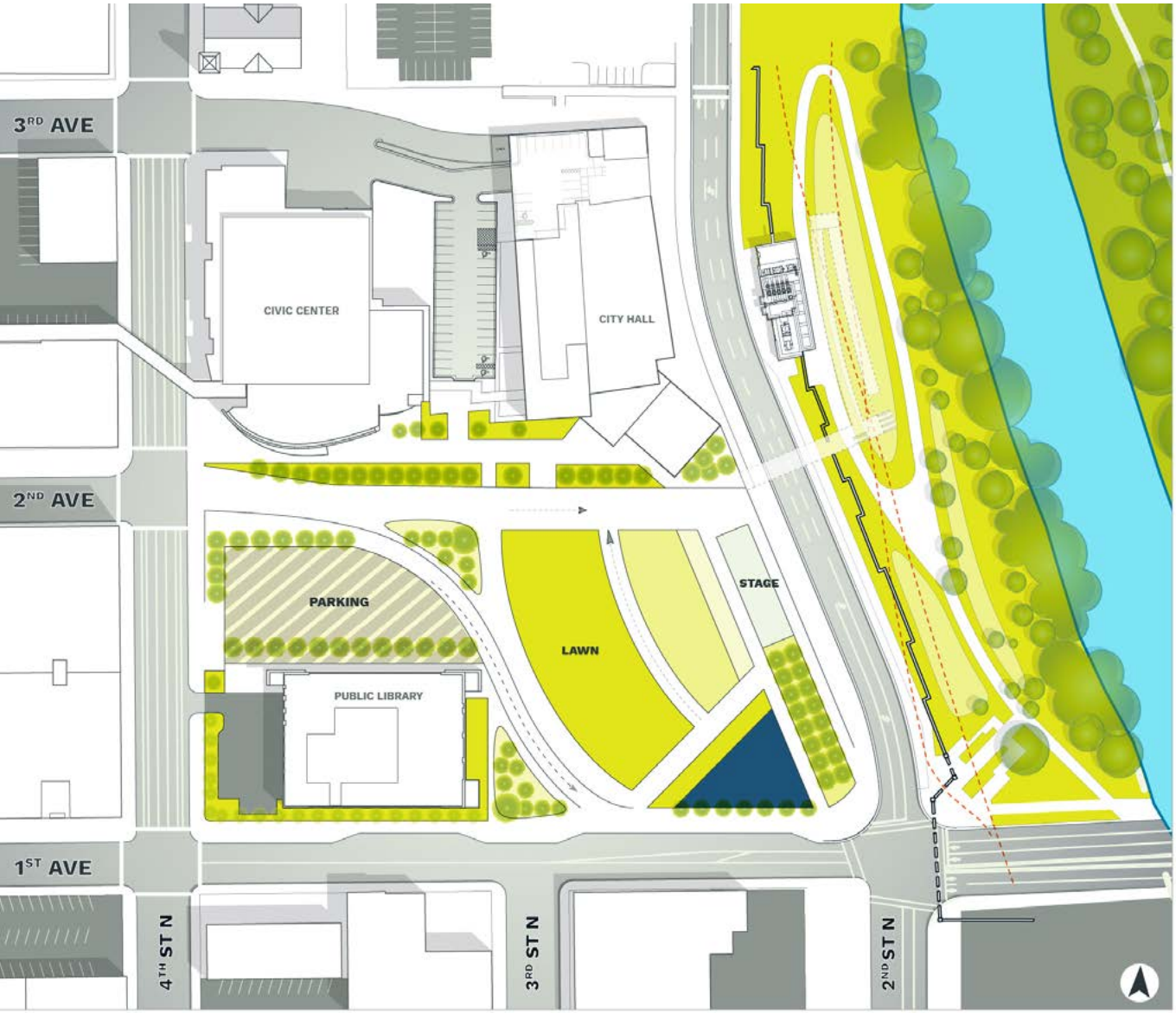

FIGURE 40: Conceptual Site Plan Alternative extending 2nd Ave through Site to River

The first option is a simple tweak from the design that is already in discussion. The approach creates one large, sloped green space from 4th Street to 2nd Street. The critically important connection that runs through this space is the connection from 2nd Avenue over 2nd Street and to the River. This connects pedestrians and new bike infrastructure to the Riverfront trail system. The amphitheater is moved to back up to 2nd Street and provides a stronger eastern edge to the space. Coming from Moorhead, there will be a clear view through the plaza toward the heart of Downtown Fargo. This option is easier to build but raises concerns about the use of the space at all times of the day and week. Without active uses like housing facing the plaza, the risk is that it becomes a space used only when the Library or City actively programs it.

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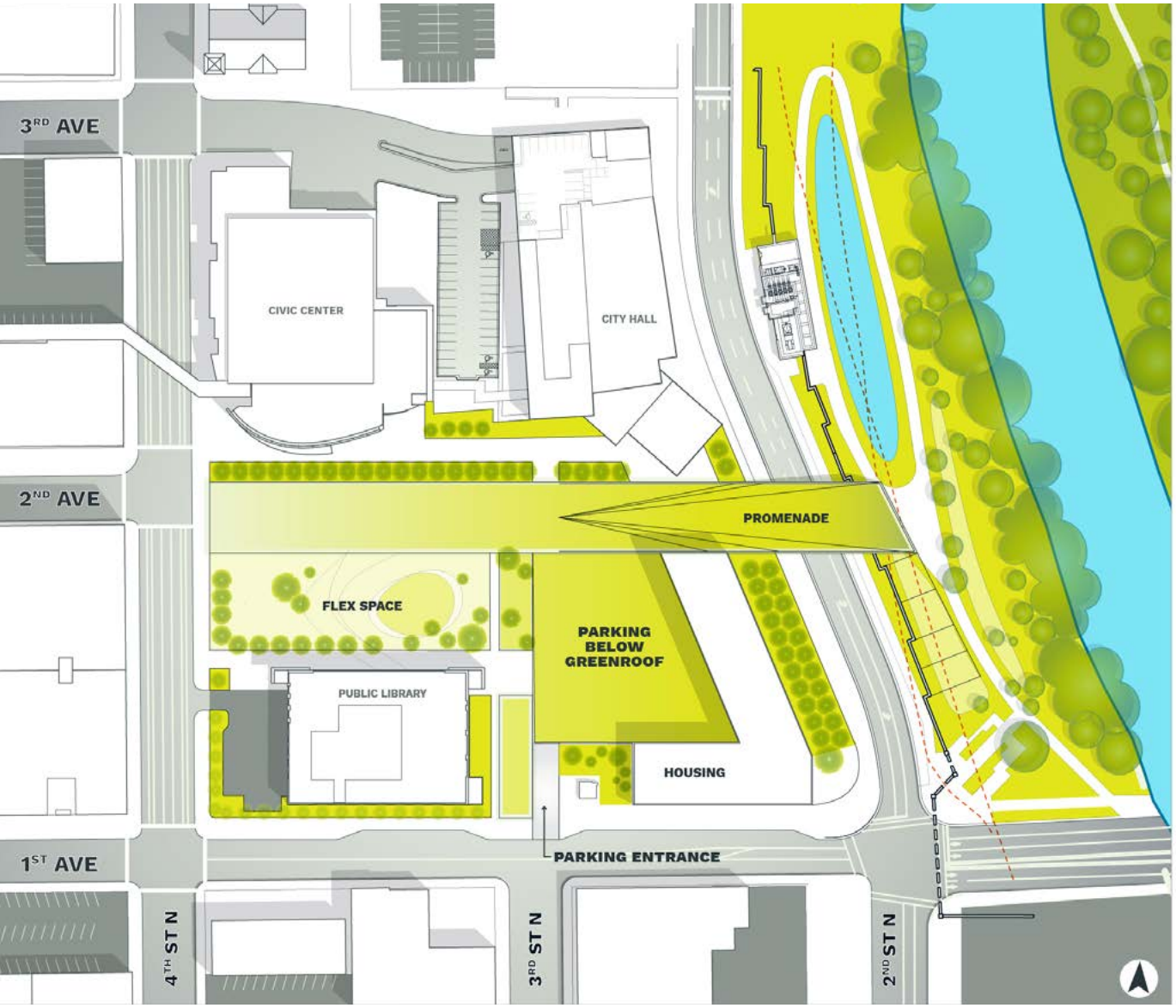

FIGURE 41: Conceptual Site Plan Alternative with Cantilevered Promenade connecting City Hall Plaza with Riverfront

The second option is to redevelop the plaza as a flat space stretching east from 4th Street, integrating both new housing and underground parking. One large park would connect the Library, City Hall, and Civic Center, and new housing would anchor the southeastern edge. This housing would serve to naturally activate the plaza throughout the day and week, as residents would use it as their front yard at times when it is not programmed for an event. Parking to serve the Library as well as the new housing would be tucked underneath the plaza. This option has the potential to provide a vibrant, multi-use plaza that is a true destination and amenity for Downtown.[6] The new development would also provide revenue to help offset the cost of construction. However, this approach is more difficult to implement due to the need for structured parking and coordination with private developers.

It is important to note that both options illustrate a potential bridge connection over the floodwall to better connect riverfront trails and Downtown. Complications have arisen in the original design of this bridge, as a portion of the newly constructed City Hall exists where the bridge abutment was planned. There is a resulting misalignment between the planned abutment of the bridge and of the abutment structure that was built into the current floodwall and foundation. This, however, should not prevent further work on making this important connection to grant the community access over the floodwall.

There are several possible approaches outlined in the plan as options for the Civic Plaza that are technically feasible and have the potential to create an iconic visual gateway to the river. It is recommended that a cantilever option be explored further not only for its visual aspect, but because it conforms to strict limits and regulations imposed by the FM Diversion Authority on loading of the wall and the addition of overburden on the river side of the wall.

6 This design provides the same amount of green space as the first option due to the removal of surface parking, which is now tucked underground.

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Design a river park on the Mid-America Steel site

A river park and plaza concept design at the Mid-America Steel site emerged from input at the first Open House. Participants expressed a strong desire for a Riverfront Plaza that could host markets and other events on the Red River of the North. This is a space unique to Fargo, and was a great fit for redevelopment of the former steel site.

Positioned at the end of a potential urban greenway system that parallels the rail, the new hydrological system containing biologically cleaned stormwater makes its way from the greenway, cascading down the bluffs of the Red River in a series of wetland terraces and ponds that are surrounded by riparian woodlands. The multi-use regional trail, site circulation, and local circulation culminate on a new Riverfront Plaza.

Market vendors can set up booths and tents under each of the bridges passing overhead, while a boardwalk edge defines a public landing suitable for a variety of boats. The water elements work their way around the plaza and become an ecological habitat, as clean water flows into the river and aquatic life makes its way into the wetland system.

> "The river was a huge asset in the 40s and 50s – they had a ski jump down there! They used to use it as their playground." *– interview*

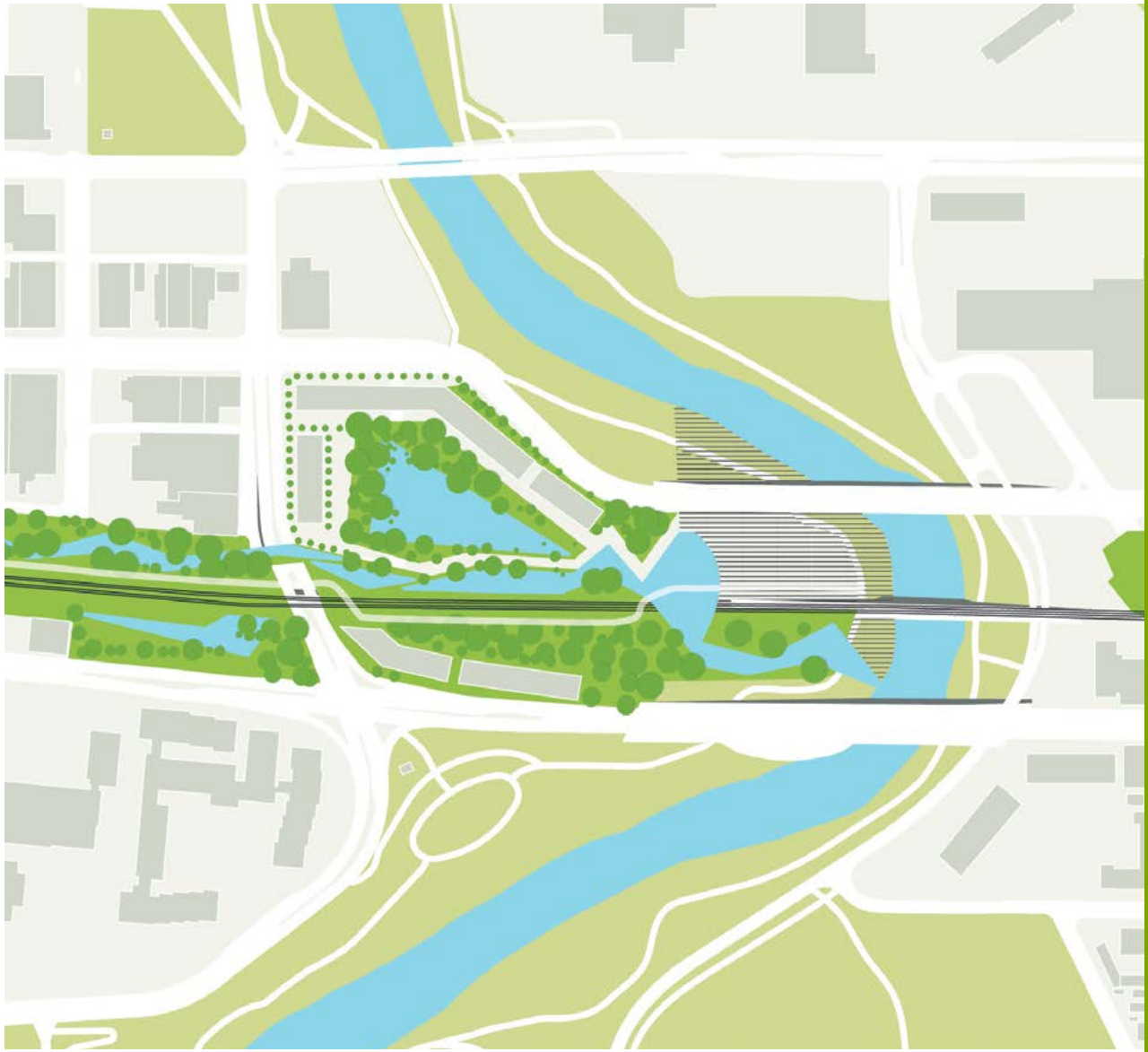

FIGURE 42: Conceptual Site Plan of Stormwater Infrastructure and Park Space at Proposed Riverfront Plaza

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7.4 Create urban greenways and an integrated, regional trail system

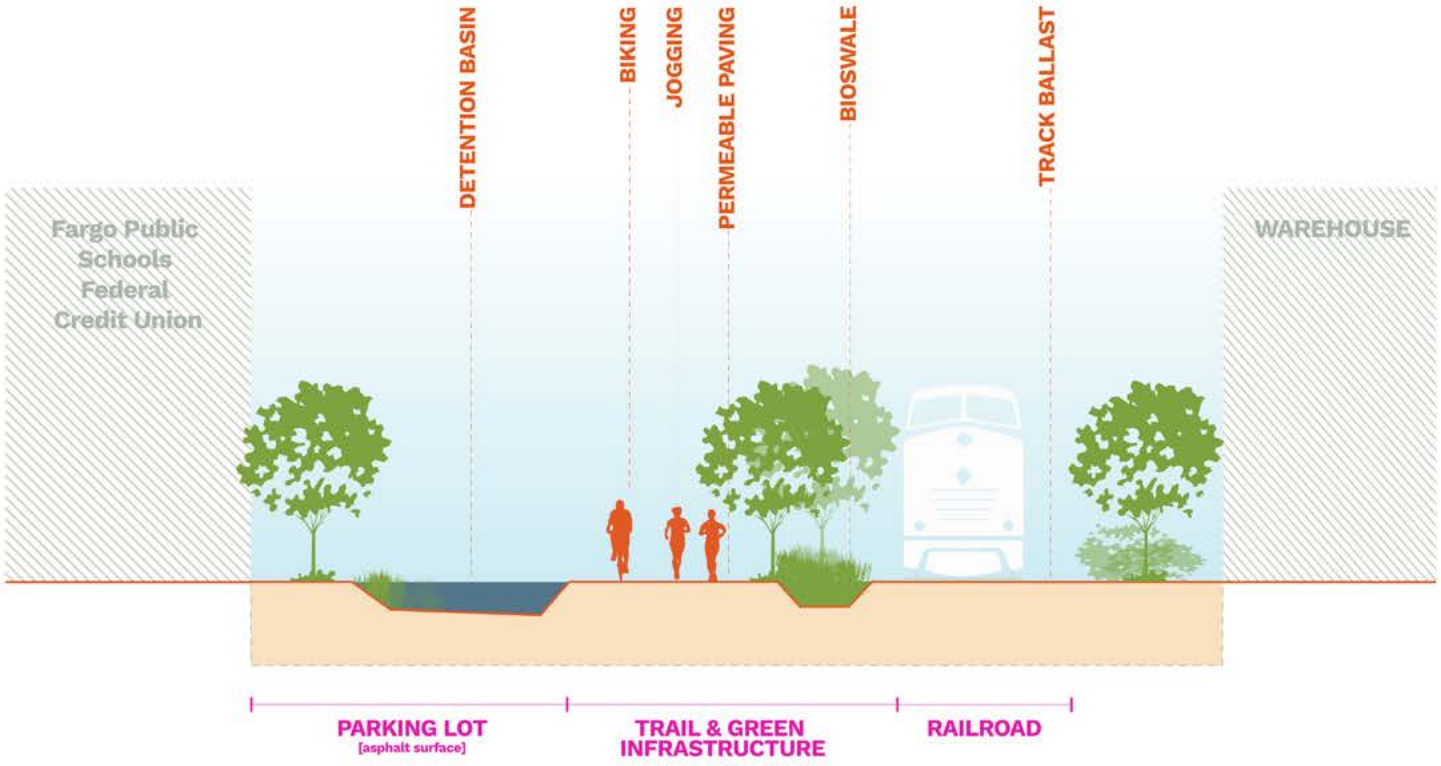
The creation of urban greenways, another high priority emerging out of the community engagement process, is also a critical goal related to the identity and growth of Downtown. Its importance is also noted as a critical piece of the blue/green infrastructure system adding an estimated 1,140,000 cubic feet of stormwater capacity to the Downtown system.

Explore opportunities along rail right-of-ways to introduce protected trail systems that connect Downtown Fargo and Moorhead with the regional trail network

Opportunities exist for the creation of a connected greenway along the rights of way of both major rail lines and on underutilized portions of adjacent parcels. The system stretches from the Red River westward with the northern line taking a northerly turn as it heads out of the Downtown; the southern line maintains its vector westward. Both intersect with the proposed trail system that is part of the FM Diversion, creating a 14-mile loop.

Users of the Greenways are protected from oncoming trains by the ponds, streams, vegetation, and where necessary, other protective barriers such as vegetated fences or walls. The specific designs will need to be closely coordinated with the rail operators to ensure first and foremost that any safety concerns are addressed and that the design does not interfere with the current quiet zones through Downtown.

This will necessitate a lot of planning and coordination to implement. In some cases where the rail right-of-way is too narrow or where adjacent properties are too small to create space for the greenway, on-street alternatives will need to be evaluated. Careful mapping from Downtown to the Diversion will help to identify, as a first step, the locations where coordination with private property owners will be necessary. Further engagement is also warranted to discuss with residents in neighborhoods adjacent to the potential greenway about their ideas for creating this connected trail system.



Precedent trail along existing rail

FIGURE 43: Section illustrating Multi-use, Multi-purpose Trail along Existing Rail Line

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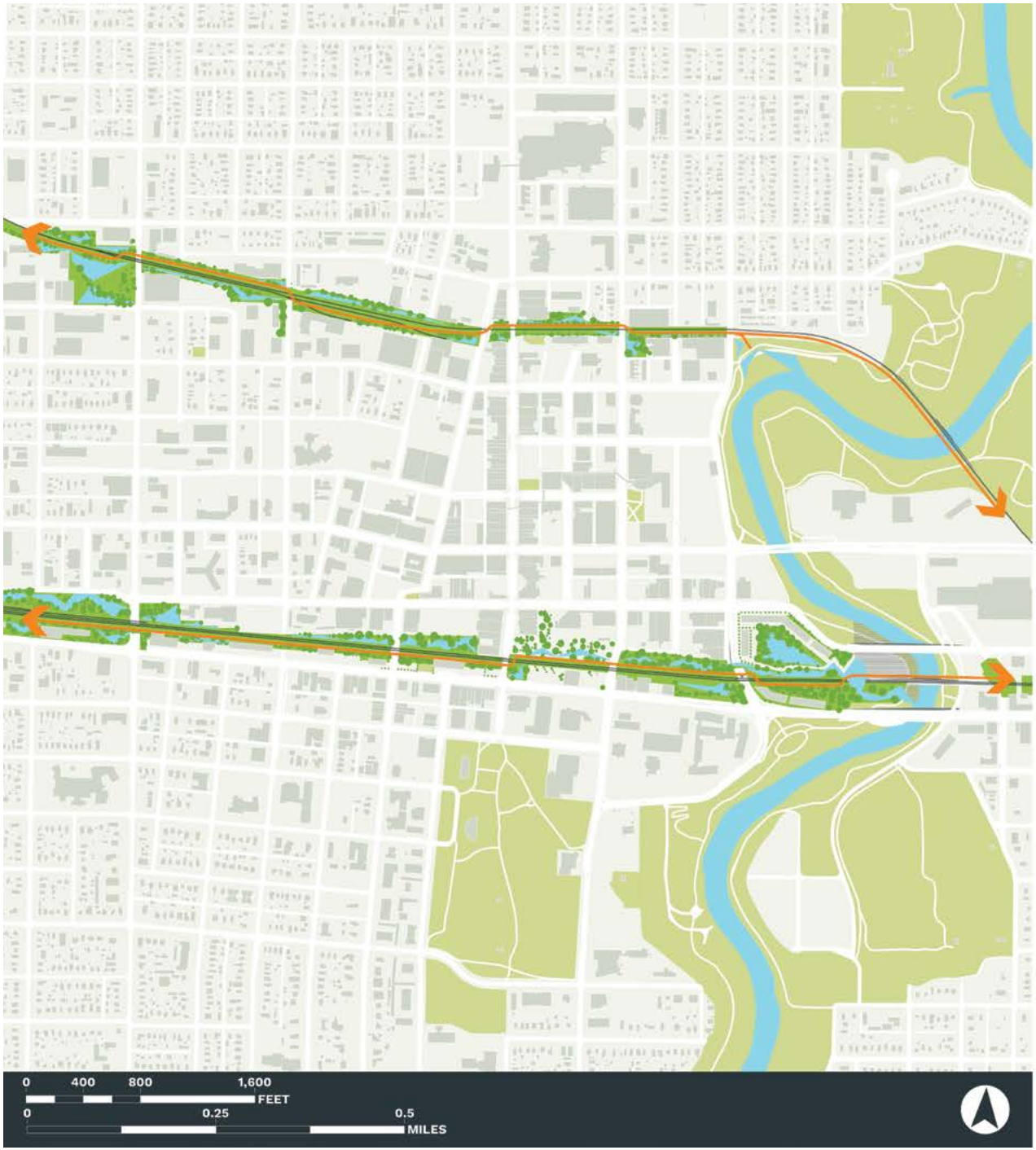

FIGURE 44: Proposed Urban Greenway Routes along Rail Lines, coupled with Stormwater Detention Features

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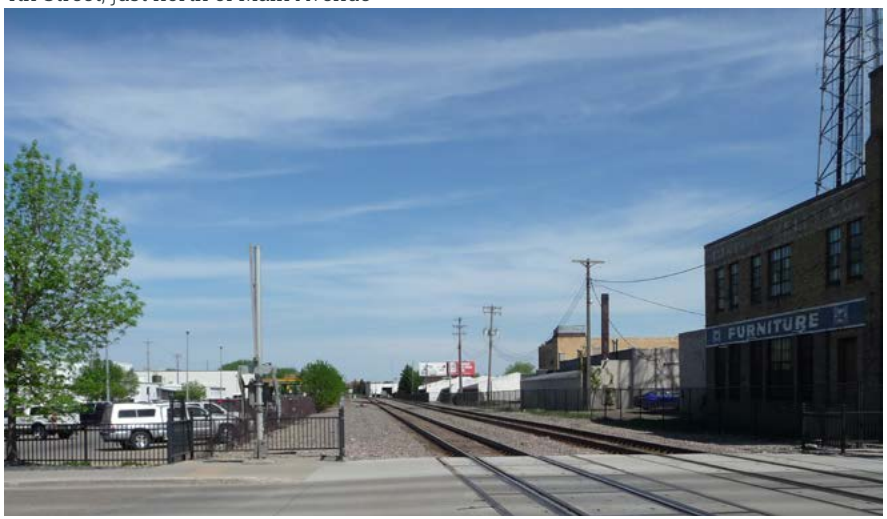
PROPOSED: Urban greenway / all-season multi-purpose trail and stormwater detention pond

FIGURE 45: Rendering of Proposed Urban Greenway, looking East at 4th Street North

> "Beautiful greenway through town (the heart of Fargo) with a bikeway, and the pedestrian accommodations are to die for. I so love all the open markets and places to eat. What a vibrant lovely city I live in. Love living here in Fargo."
>
> *– community vision statement*

EXISTING: View of rail and public parking lot, looking east at 4th Street, just north of Main Avenue



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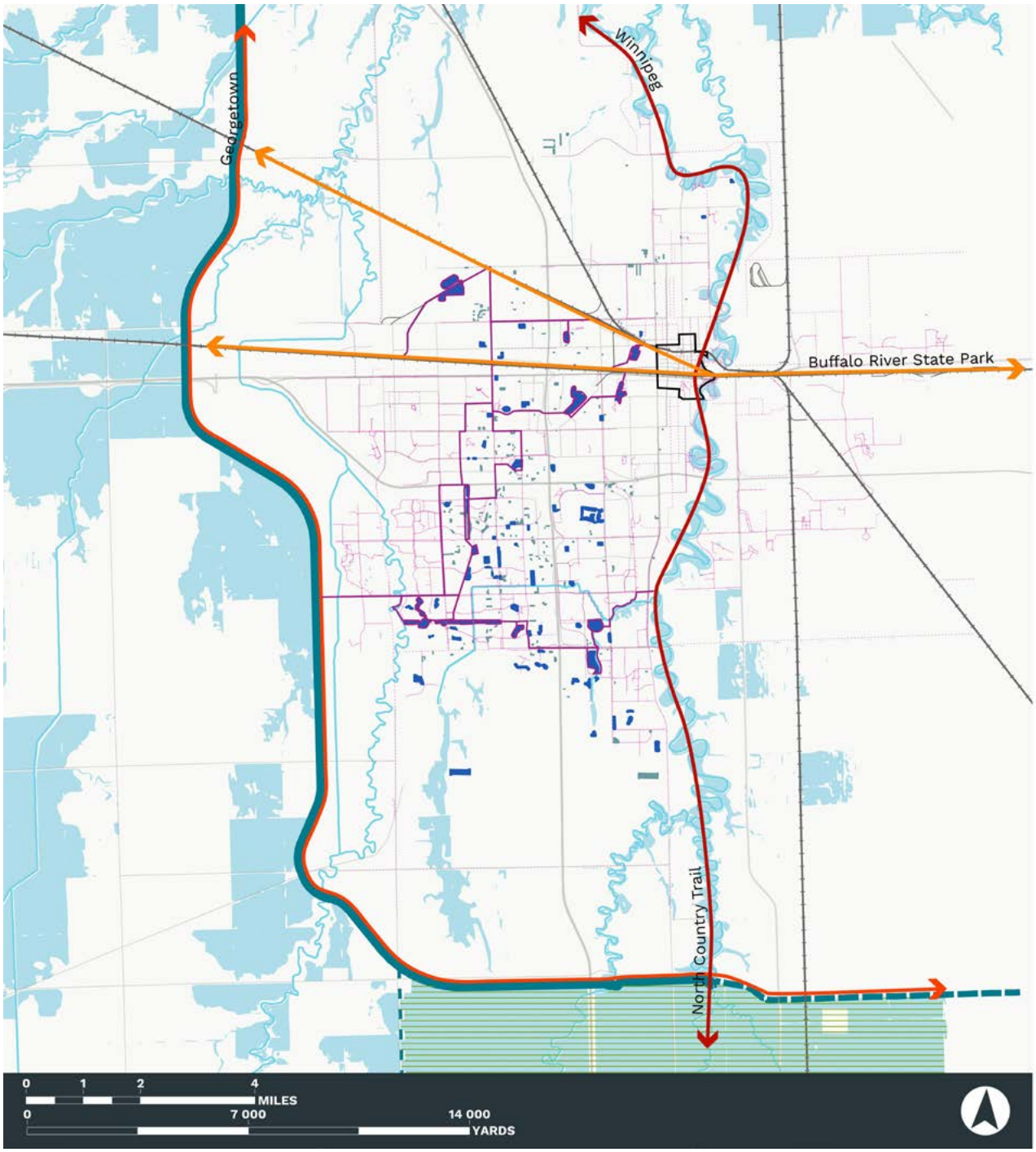

Fill gaps in a multi-use trail on both sides of the River, and connect to regional trails associated with the Diversion

The north/south trail system is equally as critical, and potentially more so, than the east/west trails, as it has the potential to connect Fargo south to the North Country Trail, which would allow travel from the Appalachian Trail to the Badlands. A northern route to Manitoba should also be explored. The planning team identified some immediate gaps in the riverfront trail currently in Downtown Fargo, but filling in gaps on both sides of the river, from the North Country trail to the south and the Diversion trails to the north, should be a goal for insuring regional and national connectivity.

FIGURE 46: Connectivity to Regional Trail Network offered by Proposed Urban Greenways

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7.5 Encourage roof-top retention in new developments and parking garages

Look at green roofs as a means of capturing water before it hits the street

Utilizing green roofs to mitigate stormwater quantity issues and to control water quality, in addition to the greenways and roadways, is one of the three largest opportunities in Downtown Fargo in the creation of the blue/green infrastructure system and the ability to store and reuse water collected at that elevation for fire suppression.

The analysis explores the capacity of this system by evaluating existing buildings with flat roofs that could be retrofitted with an extensive system that can hold 2 inches of water and through evaluating existing parking structures that could be retrofitted with intensive systems - green roofs that can hold up to 1.5 feet of water. Further, new buildings could be required to have similar requirements depending on whether they are building with or without parking structures.

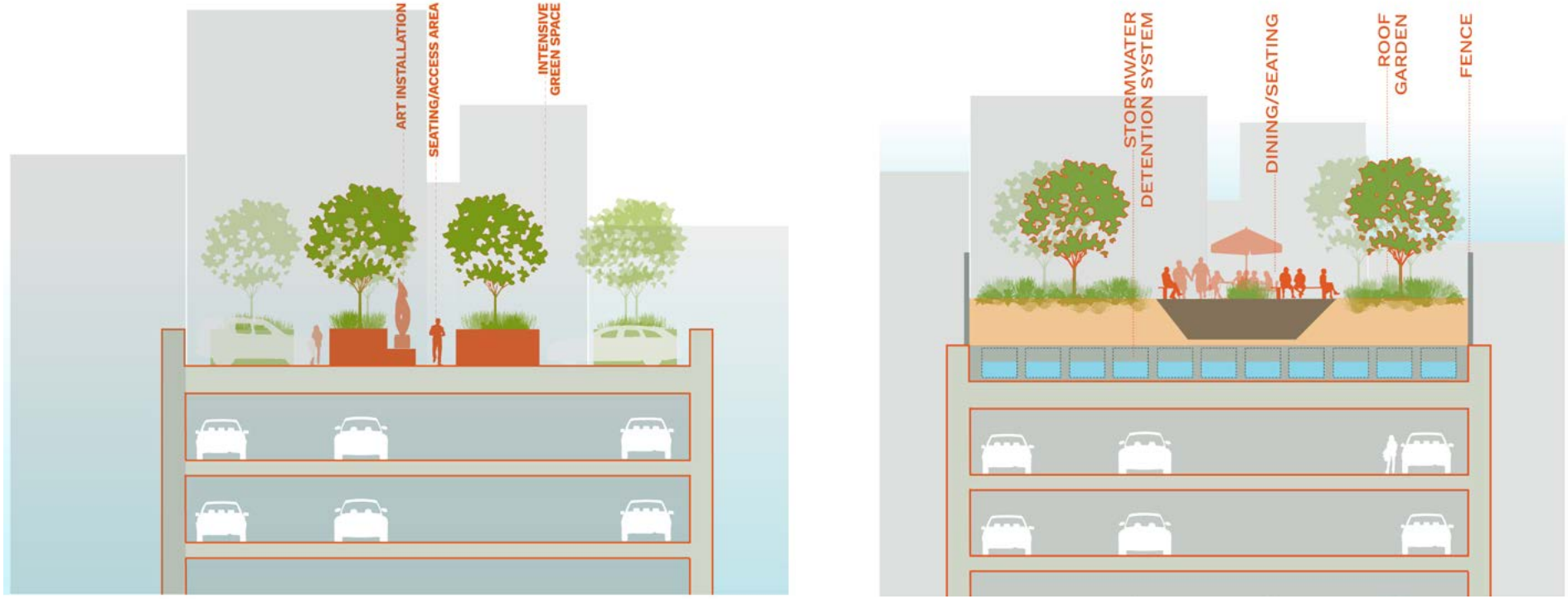

FIGURE 47: Sections illustrating Intensive and Extensive Green Roofs atop Parking Decks

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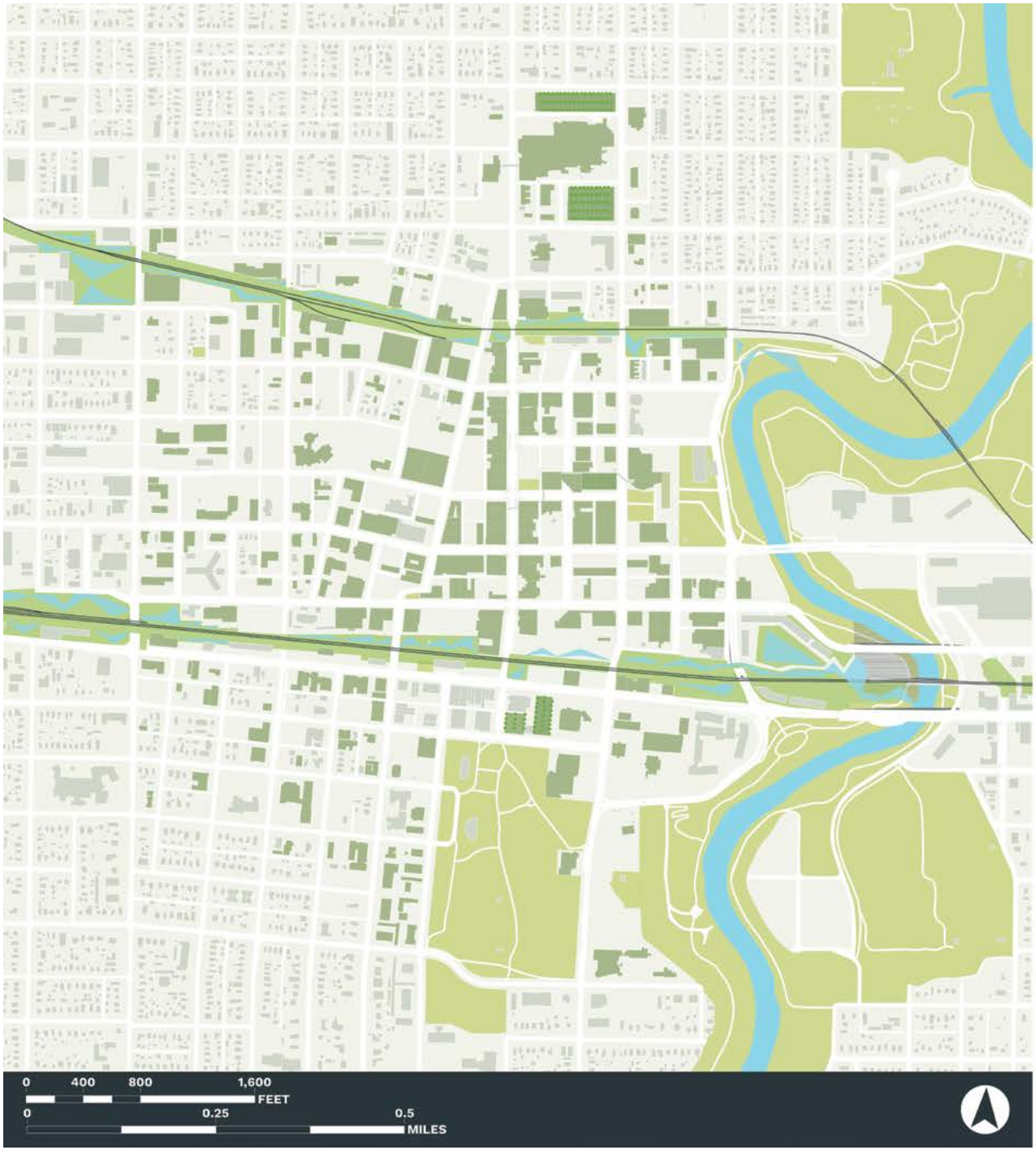

FIGURE 48: Locations of Potential Green Roofs

The total potential capacity for green roof systems is approximately 875,000 cubic feet, but as with most of the landscape systems, this element has other programmatic benefits to residents and commercial enterprises as amenity spaces for relaxation, dining, and outdoor enjoyment for work and play.

Green Roofs

Source: BLD

POTENTIAL GREEN ROOFS

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7.6 Integrate greening in the streets

Retain rainwater on-street, and increase the green in Downtown

The final piece of the blue/green infrastructure system is the implementation of the street retention system. As noted earlier in this section, the geology of Fargo does not allow for infiltration at a meaningful rate; thus a new system needs to be developed that retains water that would otherwise be held in the roadway.

The creation of mineral sumps beneath the roads can add the additional capacity needed to handle the water quantity issues in Downtown. Mineral sumps are basins under the street that hold and treat stormwater. This water can be used to feed street trees thus creating one, integrated landscape along streets that both adds tree coverage and manages rainwater.

This type of hybrid solution should be synced with future road improvements, repairs, and the development of the new open space network. The scale of the system can be adjusted to accommodate different levels of road improvement and sized to handle more or less water depending upon the space available for the mineral sumps.

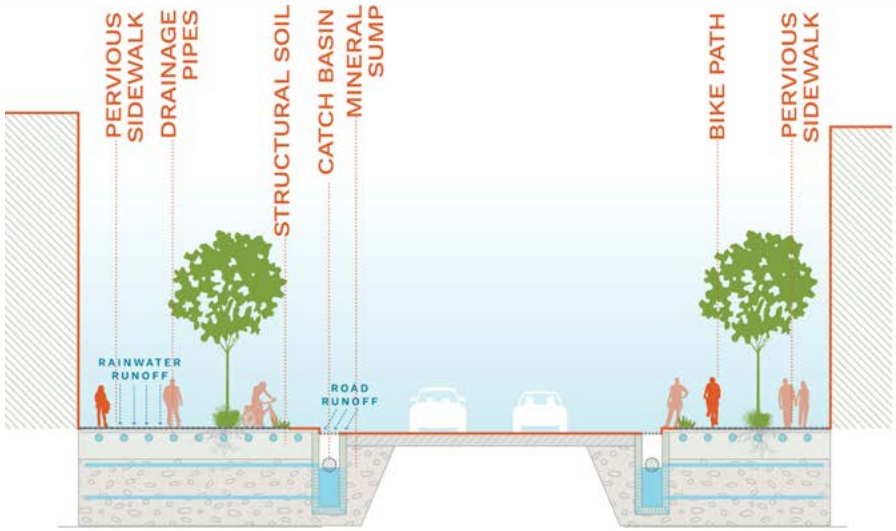

FIGURE 49: Section illustrating Blue/Green Infrastructure to allow Stormwater Infiltration despite non-absorbing clay soils

Blue/green infrastructure adds beauty above ground as well as functionality below ground.

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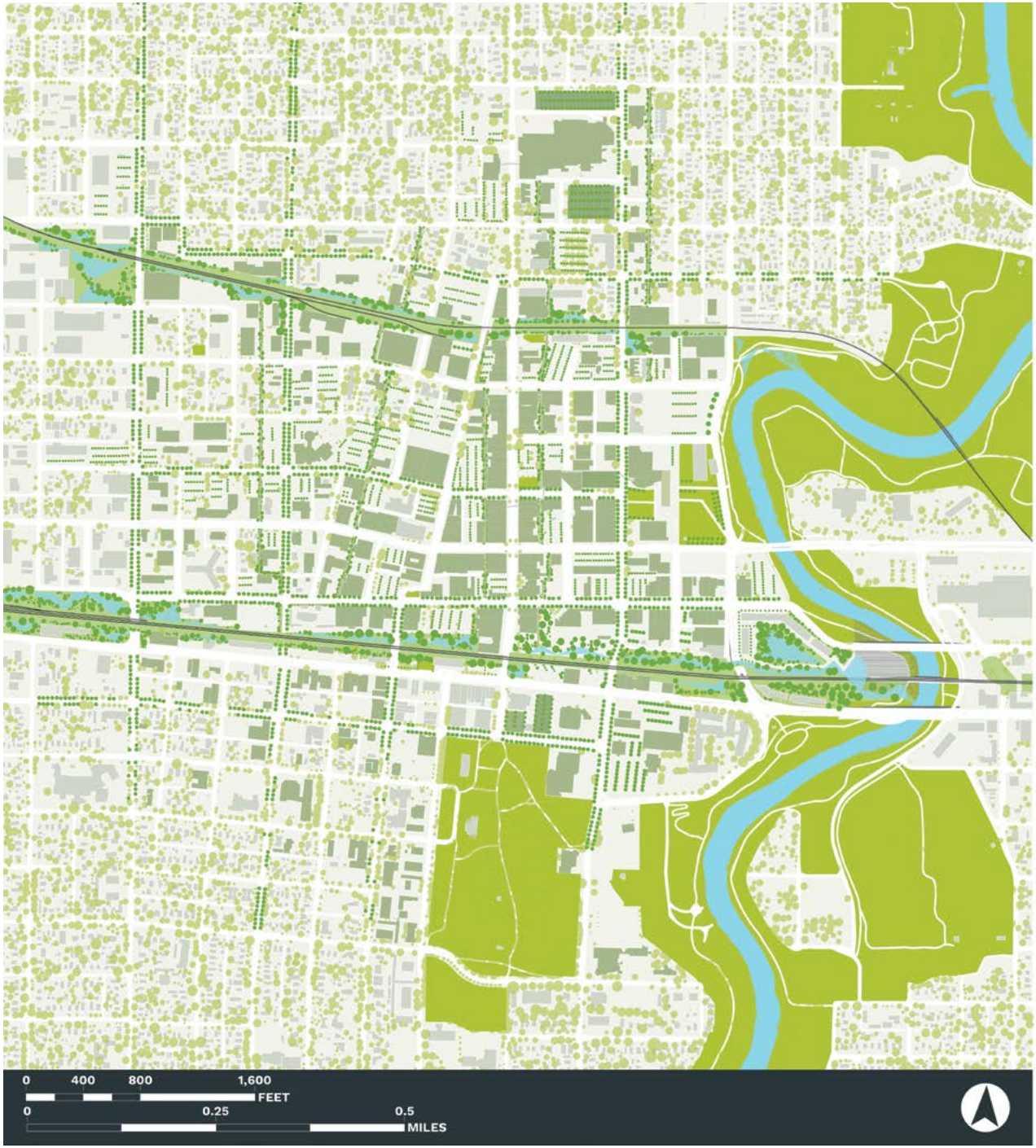

FIGURE 50: Proposed Tree Cover

Boost tree coverage Downtown to reduce the urban heat island effect, utilize captured rainwater, and enhance the Downtown experience

With the right selection of trees, each larger tree could transpire between 20,000-40,000 gallons of water per year, conveying water out of the sump system and cooling local conditions. Trees and vegetation can lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade and through evapotranspiration. Shaded surfaces, for example, may be 20–45°F (11–25°C) cooler than the peak temperatures of unshaded materials. Evapotranspiration, alone or in combination with shading, can help reduce peak summer temperatures by 2–9°F.[7]

Similar to the utilization of water on the rooftops, the mineral sumps can be tapped as a resource for irrigating streetscapes, vegetation, and green walls in alleyways. This approach will create a lush Downtown environment that enhances the experience of the visitor and resident alike.

7 https://www.epa.gov/heat-islands/using-trees-and-vegetation-reduce-heat-islands

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7.7 Adjust stormwater regulations

Enable flexibility in addressing rainwater issues

Current flood ordinances address issues related to regional flooding rather than addressing issues related to localized flooding. The flood plain ordinance (21-0601.7) gives the City power to regulate localized flooding, but no other methodology has been created to asses such risk.

The FIRM (FEMA Insurance Rate Map) maps the regional flood risk, not the localized flood risk. Therefore, the risk is not assessed nor can it be enforced. This plan's recommendation for moving forward is as follows:

> Create a map that assesses local flood risk, include 21-0602.B

> Review and enforce the flood proofing code; ideally variances would not be granted without conformance to this code or a critical portion therein.

Current flood proofing codes ensure that the current insurance remains at a reduced rate. If the City grants too many exceptions, it will lose preferred pricing, and all rates will increase for all owners in a known risk area. These areas are more related to the regional flooding risk, but areas identified based on potential infrastructure bottlenecks may be at equal or greater risk of localized flooding despite the flood protection being in place.

While this may not seem like a more flexible approach, understanding where localized risks exist and where they do not will limit the number of people affected. As the blue/green infrastructure is implemented throughout Downtown, the risk to property owners will decrease significantly.

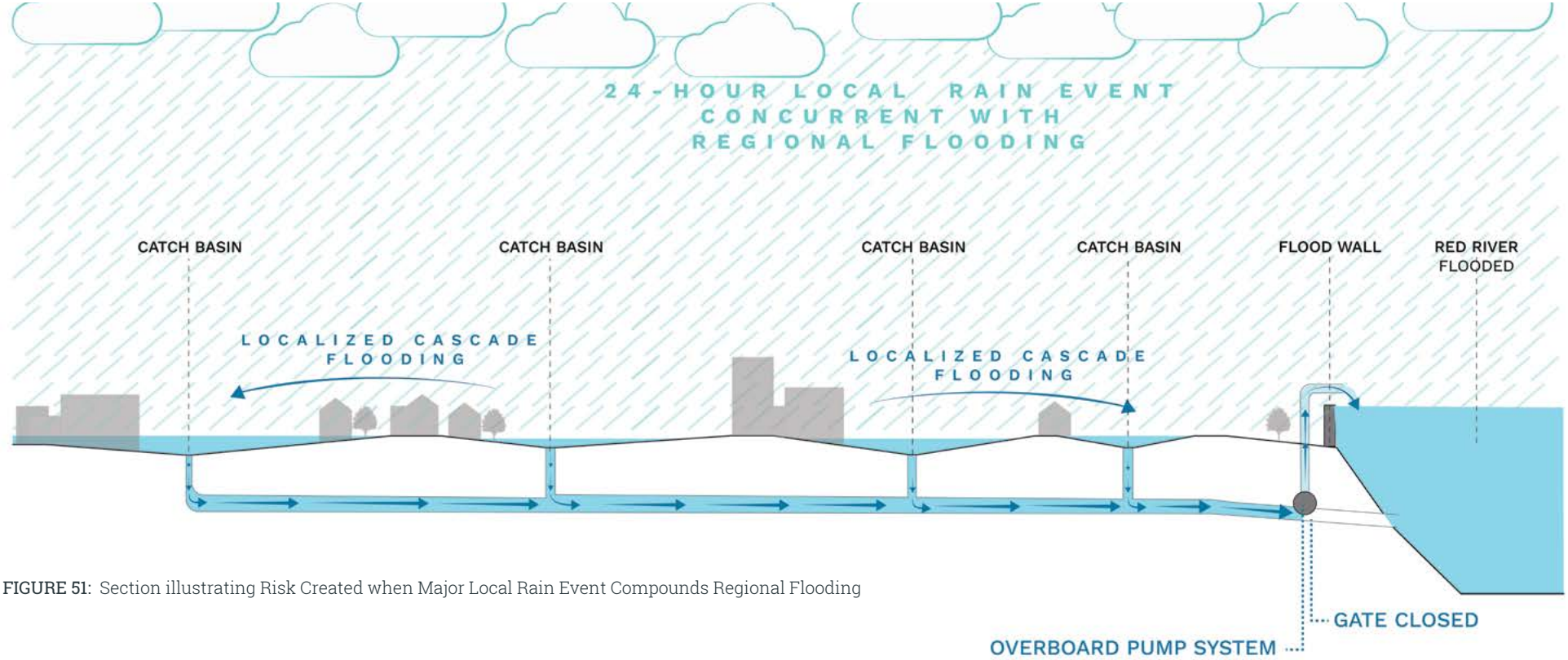

FIGURE 51: Section illustrating Risk Created when Major Local Rain Event Compounds Regional Flooding

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Implementation

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Implementation Approach

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

With the plan for Downtown complete, efforts must shift from planning to action

Downtown InFocus represents an ambitious vision for the future of Downtown. To achieve the desired outcomes, a significant effort will be required including additional engineering and analysis, changes to City (and some State) policies, new community-driven initiatives, and financing. Various entities will need to help drive implementation efforts over the coming years. There is no one agency, project, or funding source that can do it alone – coordination will be critical to achieve the goals described in this plan.

Before implementation commences in earnest, it is important to acknowledge the constraints or barriers to implementation such as limited resources – in terms of both money and time. The City has driven a lot of positive change Downtown through strategic investment and management. The City will, of course, continue to play a prominent role in Downtown's future. However, there are many strategies in the plan that can, and should, be led by those outside of City Hall to maximize resources. To truly guide investment, the work must be managed by a group of individuals and key organizations and agencies that are committed to the Downtown vision.

Priority capital projects and programmatic initiatives have been determined through an extensive public outreach process and the planning team's analysis. *Downtown InFocus* included a review of funding and implementation strategies with several stakeholder groups. Although some of the recommendations presented in this plan represent long-term strategies, others can be achieved relatively quickly. This chapter outlines the approach to bring the ideas to reality.

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Create an implementation task force

There are a number of very active organizations, outside the City, its internal departments and its commissions, that have a direct stake in Downtown's future and already contribute to activities that make Downtown what it is today. These include (but are not limited to):

- **DCP / BID:** Key actions – street cleaning, maintenance, safety, snow removal, programming, marketing, tenant recruitment, merchant coordination
- **CVB:** Key actions – marketing, programming, Downtown advocacy
- **Retailers:** Key actions – marketing, coordination, customer data collection and sharing, parking
- **Park District:** Key actions – programming, open space development, maintenance
- **Developers:** Key actions – investment, integration of "public good" amenities for public support, retail attraction
- **Residents:** Key actions – Downtown advocacy, coordination, marketing, safety
- **Social service organizations:** Key roles – service provision, education, coordination with retailers, neighbors, and local police
- **The Arts Partnership:** Key actions – public art, Downtown advocacy, programming, education
- **Folkways:** Key actions – Downtown advocacy, demonstration projects, programming
- **NDSU:** Key actions – marketing, Downtown advocacy, bike share, retail assistance
- **Employers:** Key actions – Downtown advocacy, talent attraction and retention, parking

Note that many of these groups' "key actions" include initiatives that overlap with each other and with the strategies discussed in this plan. Some of the existing work already happens due to effective local partnerships between those with similar missions or roles Downtown. To implement this plan, these partnerships must continue but also expand to ensure the key voices are at the table.

Central to the success of bringing these ideas to reality is a clear management structure on the ground that is charged with coordinating different initiatives, bringing key stakeholders together, fundraising, and taking on the task of driving different strategies forward. To help transition the planning conversations into a sustainable management structure, local partners should work toward creating a Downtown Task Force. The task force should include the following core partners:

- **DCP / BID**. As the critical connection to Downtown, DCP, its board of directors and its key local partners should all be represented on the Task Force.
- **LOCAL NON-PROFIT / SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS.** There are a significant number of local institutions and non-profits that provide specific services and amenities Downtown. Representatives from a cross-section of these organizations are needed to bring local issues to the Task Force during the implementation of this plan.
- **MAJOR EMPLOYERS.** NDSU, Sanford, Gate City, and other major employers comprise a significant amount of Downtown's footprint, provide thousands of jobs, and generate economic activity in the area. This plan includes many opportunities for these employers to work with the community to achieve mutual goals and potentially bring additional resources and capacity toward implementation where specific strategies align with their core missions.
- **CITY OF FARGO.** The City has demonstrated a keen interest on working with the Downtown community to define its future. The City will play an active role in the improvement and creation of new open spaces, stormwater initiatives, potential development, street design and reconstruction, public art, public safety, parking, and policy and funding actions.

The Task Force would meet quarterly to bring these and other partners together to coordinate and track the progress toward implementation around key initiatives. Subcommittees should be established as necessary to address specific action items. At this time, we recommend creating subcommittees around the following topics:

- **Parking** - to help address upcoming projects and implementation of this plan's parking strategy
- **Programming** – to coordinate and plan for year-round events that draw customers
- **Downtown services** – to further homelessness outreach and plan for a potential day center
- **Retail recruitment and support** – to further organize retailers, share data, and develop specific actions to help make Downtown an even better shopping and entertainment destination
- **Safety** – to coordinate the activities of the DCP, BID, FPD, and Downtown Neighborhood Association.

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WHAT ADDITIONAL TOOLS DOES DOWNTOWN NEED?

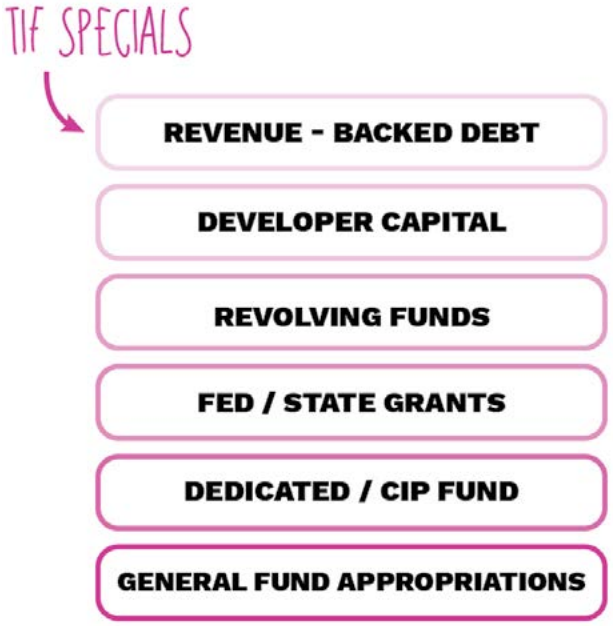
Create new financing streams, incentives, and mechanisms for implementation

As Downtown begins to enter its next phase of development and regeneration, lessons from the last decade need to be considered on how to get these various ideas from plan to reality. Several of them will require financial resources to implement. As a practical matter, financial resources will come from a variety of sources and programs and will likely be mixed and matched to best meet the needs of each project.

But for Fargo, the big considerations for funding implementation efforts are:

- If public money is used to make private development more feasible, should a public benefit in addition to the new development be linked to the use of public funds?
- How fast should some of these projects, particular those related to infrastructure, be implemented to gain maximum advantage from the public investment?
- How do you create sustainable funding to support the "Downtown experience" that spans across election cycles and budget priorities and makes the Downtown "self-funded"?

The recommendations below address some of these key questions.



The "Capital Stack" for Implementation

Scale public benefits based on public investment in private development deals

During the course of this planning process, a number of key concerns and considerations were raised based on the impact and subsequent lessons from the transformation of Downtown over the prior decade. A number of these were described in the prior sections of ***Downtown InFocus*** and accompanied with suggestion on potential strategies and solutions to address these issues. Several of these solutions will require financial resources to implement them.

Linkage should be created between providing public resources to a project and receiving a public good in return. Public resources could include direct cash investment, tax incentives, or land considerations. It will require defining an appropriate "public good" provided for a specific type of public investment – public art, green infrastructure, affordable ground floor work space, and affordable housing. However, the public good requirement needs to be calibrated to the level and type of public support. Public goods requirements that are far in excess of the relative value of the incentive may only serve to exacerbate development challenges. This will be a challenge in pursuing affordable housing targets through this type of approach. It is likely that a sliding scale will need to be considered on requiring affordable housing in new developments. However, some cases, such as ground floor uses, are somewhat easier because every building will have a ground floor that will require some type of use to maintain the vibrancy of the pedestrian experience.

Developing policy guidance around the "public goods for public resources" will help frame developer expectations, community expectations, and assist the City in shaping development deals going forward.

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Align financing mechanisms with development needs

Aligning financing mechanisms with development needs is absolutely critical. One of the major questions is whether the normal infrastructure development and improvement program should be accelerated for Downtown. The present funding approach tends to be project-specific, and it requires the use of special assessments tied to the neighboring geography that "benefits." However, some of the infrastructure proposed with this plan such as green spaces, trails, bike lanes, and parking increases value across the entire Downtown district, not just the neighboring sites, by being part of a connected network. Accordingly, a slow, disconnected development of elements such as green space, green infrastructure, and bike lanes limits the overall value through the lack of connectedness (think of the value of a road that does not go to anywhere).

To accelerate the development of this connected infrastructure, a district-wide financing approach that captures a portion of the value being created in Downtown makes the most sense. It provides the capital resources to accelerate the construction of the new infrastructure while at the same time spreading the cost across a wider geography than would be typical through a special assessment process. Focusing this district-wide financing strategy on the new, networked infrastructure rather than roads or water/sewer, makes the most sense since the road and water/sewer networks have already been established and the value created across Downtown from roads, water and sewers has already been realized.

The specific approach to the district-wide financing strategy involves the utilization of the Urban Renewal authority granted by the State and the issuance of general obligation bonds. The bonds would be repaid by the creation of a restricted Downtown fund where a portion of the incremental revenue (fees, parking, taxes, rents) generated by additional Downtown development and gains in Downtown property values would be used to retire the bonds. This way **Downtown is paying for its own improvements through its incremental gains in value and tax generation.**

This structure has several advantages over traditional Tax Increment Financing (TIF) models:

> 100% of the revenue generated can be used to pay down the bonds rather than a portion of being set aside for debt reserves and revenue misses

> Downtown is in the Renaissance Zone, which means property tax collections would lose 5 years of value because of the property tax exemptions

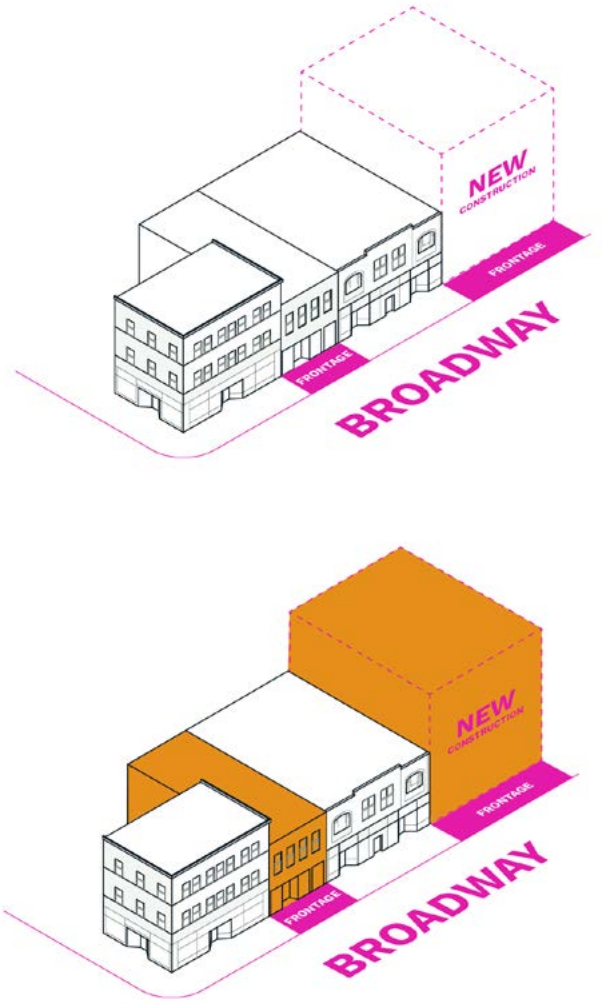
> Existence of pre-existing TIFs makes a district-wide one more complex to determine values and administer

> TIF only considers one revenue stream whereas Downtown generates a variety of fees, assessments, taxes, and other revenues

> TIF can still be used for a high priority project

Modify special assessment allocations to consider density and scale of buildings for Downtown specials projects

Presently special assessments consider primarily frontage as the basis for assessing the fees to pay back bonds issued to pay for capital improvement such as roads and water/sewer projects. However, new construction projects are taller and in some cases wider creating more overall density and impact than is accounted for by considering frontage as the primary determinant.



Why it makes sense to reconsider the linear frontage-based special assessment for larger-scale new construction that adds density.

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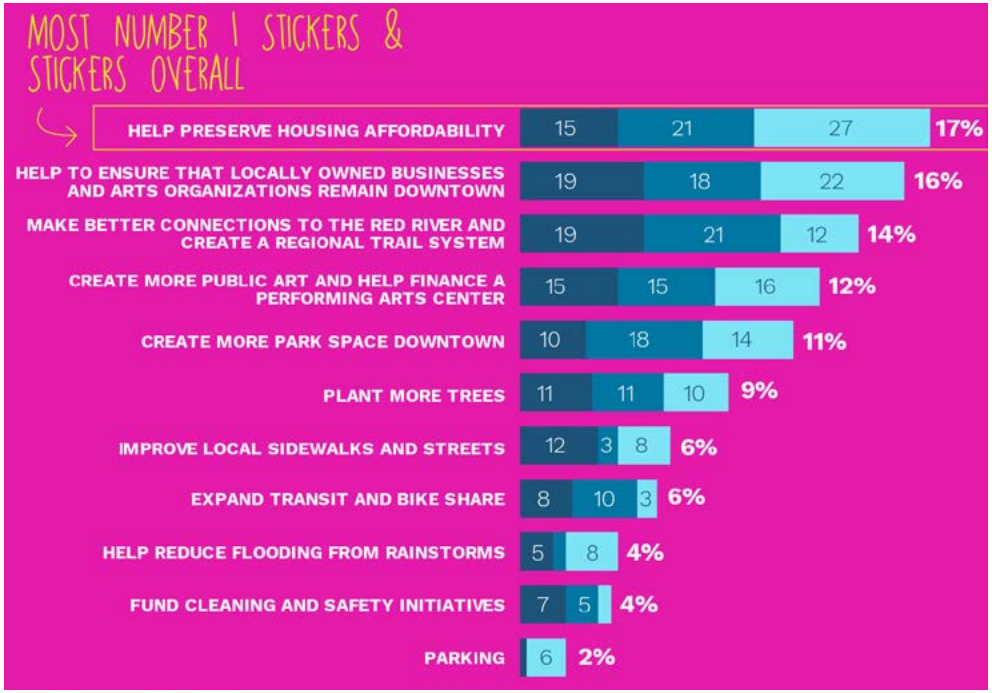

Community priorities polled at second Open House

1st priority 2nd priority 3rd priority

> "Fargo does not save for maintenance... because of the Special Assessments. Our maintenance plan is to replace."
>
> – *interview*

Ensure funding to manage the Downtown experience

Throughout this plan it has been noted that Downtown Fargo is a destination for people throughout North Dakota and the upper Midwest. Its power is in offering an authentic, urban experience at a scale that is not overwhelming. Moreover, its status as a destination is vital to its continued economic wellbeing and vibrancy of Downtown until more households of a diverse income mix move to Downtown and its near neighborhoods and can support a series of neighborhood-style amenities.

Downtown also serves as both an employment center and recruitment tool for talent. As denser, vibrant, pedestrian friendly environments become the location of choice for tech centric and creative driven businesses, a healthy Downtown will serve as an important element in the City's drive to continue to build this side of its economy.

To maintain this status and accommodate the wide variety of visitors and users of Downtown, a strong BID with clear responsibilities for managing and leading activity is essential. There are a variety of activities that require an organization with capacity to execute them including:

- Clean and safe programs
- Event programming
- City / Merchant coordination
- Marketing
- Tenant recruitment and development

In addition, a sustainable funding mechanism needs to be developed that can support the maintenance of the proposed new infrastructure. Several components such as the green infrastructure proposals and green space are also contributors to the overall place-making initiatives and will require on-going maintenance.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a necessary first step to clearly state who is responsible for which activities and to what degree. This is already in process. Following the MOU, a period of adjustment will take place in which the BID will be able to determine what kind of funding is needed to truly lead the activities noted above. In other cities, BIDs have a substantially larger budget due the activities they undertake. In Fargo, it will be critical to talk with property owners around current assessment levels to determine the potential for raising assessments to correlate with greater benefits and ultimately more economic activity.

Work with philanthropic partners to establish a community challenge grant that funds community-driven grassroots efforts in the spirit of Downtown InFocus

Explore the possibility of developing a Downtown-focused community challenge grant fund, perhaps under the umbrella of the FM Area Foundation. If the Downtown Task Force can find a philanthropic partner or partners to capitalize the fund, a challenge grant program can be a great way to get members of the public involved as active participants in plan implementation. Interested community members would be invited biannually to pitch a project and project budget, provided that the concept responds to an idea or a goal of *Downtown InFocus*. Selected projects would receive grants for implementation. Empowering citizens to take on smaller-scale projects through a competitive micro-granting process can accelerate implementation efforts and maintain momentum and excitement built during the planning process.

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AN IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Prioritize projects for a phased implementation

The following represent those catalytic projects or programs recommended for priority implementation. *Downtown InFocus* identifies early action items across the major goal areas of this plan, but it is important to note that some of the plan's strategies will only be accomplished over a longer timeframe (up to 10 years). The implementation matrix on the following pages includes necessary actions and potential funding sources for each recommendation. Agencies and organizations that should be responsible for leading implementation are also identified. Priority projects include:

Grow as a Neighborhood

- Enable the construction of multi-family or townhouse developments for recent grads, young couples, and empty nesters as well as flats for seniors looking to age in place by re-zoning the edges of Downtown
- Allow for smaller units in targeted areas
- Develop form-based requirements that guide the placement of buildings, parking and other key design considerations for Downtown
- Redevelop the Mid-America Steel site
- Expand Capital Sources to Support Single Family Rehab and Revitalization
- Bring back the scattered-site TIF program to encourage rehabilitation of existing housing or infill new housing at affordable pricing
- Use City-owned land to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing and affordable workspace in private development
- Support efforts of neighbors and businesses to clamp down on nuisance activity

Prosper as a Business Center

- Collect and track pedestrian counts.
- Conduct quarterly meet-ups of retailers.
- Encourage new retail on blocks close to Broadway to expand the Downtown shopping and dining experience by linking activity on Broadway with activity on Man and in SOMA
- Link incentives for new development to efforts supporting entrepreneurial activity
- Focus on signage, lighting and safety programs

Thrive as a Destination

- Encourage outdoor dining, food trucks, and pop-up uses to activate Downtown streets and support local businesses.
- Advocate for changes at the State to change existing laws around liquor sales and outdoor dining.
- Reclaim select planted areas (on Broadway) for active programming and use
- Design additional sidewalk bump-outs (on Broadway) to create more public space, usable in all seasons
- Relieve pressure on Broadway by permitting unscheduled programming in other designated areas

Be a Model for Inclusive Growth and Development

- Expand Homelessness 101 trainings and build awareness of the Downtown service network
- Develop a day center close to other services
- Help a Housing First approach take root in Downtown

Complete Our Streets

- Develop the Fargo Street Playbook
- Improve pedestrian safety throughout Downtown
- Ensure safe, connected spaces for bicycles
- Increase the visibility and improve the quality of bus stops
- Increase year over year programmatic and financial commitment to the bike share program to ensure its longevity

Park Smart

- Change parking rates, time restrictions, and penalties according to how close to the core you are
- Align supply with demand by looking at parking utilization system wide
- Continue to lobby the State to eliminate the ban on metered parking
- Bring parking meters to Downtown, where collected revenue could be used for streetscape improvements, improved signage, or to improve parking lots
- Adopt strategies to increase turnover for high-demand spaces
- Develop clearer wayfinding to help drivers find available parking to reduce the number of people circling for spots
- Extend enforcement of on-street parking to 9pm to ensure that turnover continues into the evening, allowing more people to come, park, dine, and enjoy Downtown
- Educate employers on the issues associated with paying for employee parking; encourage employers to offer transportation options outside of free parking
- Establish parking maximums in the core Downtown area that allow for a more dense, walkable environment. Maintain parking minimums outside of the study area

Play with Purpose

- Stitch together alleys, small parks, the Block 9 Plaza, City Hall Plaza, and the River
- Focus on programming for families with children and students under 21
- Develop more all-weather venues and events like Frostival
- Design spaces on both sides of the flood wall to help people navigate the barrier
- Create a new, actively programmed City Hall Plaza and pursue a bridge aligned with 2nd Avenue
- Design a river park on the Mid-America Steel site
- Fill gaps in a multi-use trail on both sides of the River, and connect to regional trails associated with the Diversion
- Retain rainwater on-street, and increase the green in Downtown

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
1 GROW AS A NEIGHBORHOOD					
1.1 ENCOURAGE A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES FOR A RANGE OF PRICE POINTS					
●	Enable the construction of multi-family or townhouse developments for recent grads, young couples, and empty nesters as well as flats for seniors looking to age in place on the edges of Downtown	< 3 Years	--	City	Adjacent Community Organizations
●	Allow for smaller units in targeted areas	< 3 Years	--	City	Adjacent Community Organizations
	Target key sites for redevelopment	Ongoing	City, Private Capital	City	Private Land Owners
1.2 TWEAK THE DMU					
●	Develop form-based requirements that guide the placement of buildings, parking and other key design considerations for Downtown	< 3 Years	--	City	Downtown Neighborhood Association, Property Owners
1.3 FILL THE GAPS TO CREATE "TWO CITIES-ONE Downtown"					
	Redevelop the police station, health center and nearby available properties to activate city hall plaza	< 10 Years	Private Capital	City	Developers
●	Redevelop the Mid-America Steel site	< 10 Years	City, Private Capital	City	Developers
	Fill the gaps along main and create the infrastructure to support development	< 10 Years	State, City, Private Capital	City	State Dot, Private Land Owners
1.4 PRESERVE EXISTING SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING IN NEAR NEIGHBORHOODS					
●	Expand capital sources to support single family rehab and revitalization	< 3 Years	City	City	Developers
●	Bring back the scattered site TIF program to encourage rehabilitation of existing housing or infill of new housing at affordable pricing	< 3 Years	City	City	Developers
	Explore employer assisted housing options	< 6 Years	Private Employers	City	Private Employers
	Build upon *Downtown InFocus* with subsequent Fargo InFocus neighborhood plans	< 3 Years	City	City	Neighborhood Organizations
1.5 PRESERVE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY TO KEEP Downtown WITHIN REACH OF LOW- AND WORKING-INCOME RESIDENTS					
●	Use city-owned land to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing and affordable workspace in private development	< 3 Years	--	City	Developers
	Reserve select publicly-owned properties for the development of income-restricted housing for families below 60% of ami	< 10 Years	City, State, LIHTC, HUD, Private Foundations	Housing Authority	City, State
1.6 PLAN TO PRESERVE AS WELL AS GROW					
	Continue to track and assist Downtown preservation efforts	Ongoing	City	City	Downtown Residents
1.7 ADDRESS QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES FACED BY Downtown RESIDENTS					
	Improve lighting Downtown	< 3 Years	City	City	Developers
	Expand cleaning and greening to beautify Downtown	Ongoing	City	City	Developers
●	Support efforts of neighbors and businesses to clamp down on nuisance activity	Ongoing	Private Employers	City	Private Employers
	Market Downtown as one of Fargo's safest and most diverse neighborhoods	< 3 Years	City	City	Neighborhood Organizations

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
2 PROSPER AS A BUSINESS CENTER					
2.1 STRENGTHEN LOCAL RETAIL					
📍	Collect and track pedestrian counts	< 3 Years	Retailers, DCP	Retailers	DCP, City
📍	Conduct quarterly meet ups of retailers	< 3 Years	--	Retailers	DCP, City
	Work together to increase the potential customer pool and improve the Downtown customer experience	Ongoing	Retailers, DCP, City, CVB	Retailers	DCP, CVB, City
2.2 CONCENTRATE NEW RETAIL LOCATIONS TO MAINTAIN RETAIL DENSITY AND A VIBRANT Downtown					
📍	Encourage new retail on blocks close to Broadway to expand the Downtown shopping and dining experience by linking activity on Broadway with activity on main and in soma	< 3 Years	--	City	Downtown Neighborhood Association, Property Owners
2.3 ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF NEW COMMERCIAL SPACES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES, START-UPS AND ARTISTS					
📍	Link incentives for new development to efforts supporting entrepreneurial activity	< 3 Years	--	City	Developers
	Create a tenant development program providing both recruitment and launch assistance	< 6 Years	DCP, Private Capital	DCP	Developers
	Encourage pop-up retail to test the Downtown market	< 6 Years	DCP, Private Capital	DCP	Developers
2.4 ENCOURAGE SELECTIVE ALLEY DEVELOPMENT					
	Better utilize the older, deep narrow buildings by strategically improving the experience along select alleyways	< 10 Years	City, Private Capital	City	Developers
2.5 EXPAND NDSU'S PRESENCE Downtown					
	Build upon NDSU's merchandising and entrepreneurship expertise	< 3 Years	NDSU, DCP, Private Capital	NDSU	DCP, Developers
2.6 IMPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE					
📍	Focus on signage, lighting and safety programs	Ongoing	DCP / BID, City	DCP / BID	City, Police, Downtown Neighborhood Association, Retailers
2.7 PLAN FOR MAJOR EVENTS					
	Work with CVB to maximize the conventioneer activity in Downtown	< 10 Years	CVB, City	CVB	City, DCP

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
3 THRIVE AS A DESTINATION					
3.1 DEREGULATE					
📍	Encourage outdoor dining, food trucks and pop up uses to activate Downtown streets and support local businesses	< 3 Years	DCP, City	City	DCP
📍	Advocate for changes at the state to change existing laws around liquor sales and outdoor dining	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP
	Push to change local liquor laws to support emerging business models	< 3 Years	--	City	Business Owners
3.2 MIX IT UP ON BROADWAY					
📍	Reclaim select planting areas for active programming and use	< 3 Years	City, Private Capital, DCP	City	DCP, Retailers, Developers
📍	Design additional sidewalk bump-outs to create more public space, usable in all seasons	< 3 Years	City, Private Capital, DCP	City	DCP, Retailers, Developers
3.3 ENCOURAGE MORE PROGRAMMING "OFF-BROADWAY"					
📍	Relieve pressure on Broadway by encouraging more events and programming in other designated areas	< 3 Years	--	City	Parks, Event Organizers
3.4 RAISE THE PROFILE OF ARTS AND DESIGN					
	Brand and promote a design district	< 6 Years	CVB, City, DCP	DCP	FMVA, DCP, Businesses, Artists
	Build upon annual arts events to create a design month Downtown	< 10 Years	CVB, City, DCP, Cass County	CVB	FMVA, DCP, Businesses, Artists
3.5 INVEST IN NEW PUBLIC ART					
	Encourage new public art within new development	< 3 Years	--	City	Arts Commission, Developers
	Bring artists in on key projects	< 6 Years	City, Philanthropic Support	City	Arts Commission, Developers
3.6 PURSUE THE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER					
	Consider a final site for the performing arts center	< 10 Years	City Bond, Private Capital, Fundraising Campaign	City	Arts Commission, CVB, DCP, Developers
4 BE A MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT					
4.1 DE-STIGMATIZE HOMELESSNESS AND CULTIVATE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY					
📍	Expand homelessness 101 trainings and build awareness of the Downtown service network	Ongoing	City, BID	City	Police Department. FM Coalition For Homeless Persons
4.2 MAKE SPACE FOR THE MOST VALUABLE, 24 HOURS A DAY					
📍	Develop a day center close to other services	< 10 Years	City, Private Capital, Philanthropic Support, Private Fundraising	FM Coalition For Homeless Persons	City
4.3 INTEGRATE NECESSITIES IN SELECT PUBLIC SPACES					
	Design water fountains, water bottle filling stations and restrooms into new park spaces	< 6 Years	City, Parks	Parks	City, FM Coalition For Homeless Persons

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
4.4 EXPAND THE SERVICE NETWORK TO MEET SHIFTING SOCIAL CHALLENGES					
	Increase education and expand coordinated service provision	< 6 Years	City, Philanthropic Support, Sanford, DCP	FM Coalition For Homeless Persons	City, Police, Sanford, DCP / BID
4.5 PROVIDE A RANGE OF HOUSING OPTIONS WITHIN Downtown, AT A RANGE OF PRICE POINTS					
	Help a housing first approach take root in Downtown	< 10 Years	City, State, HUD, Philanthropic Support	FM Coalition For Homeless Persons	City, Housing Authority, Local Landlords
4.6 SUPPORT PATHWAYS TO WORK					
	Connect those who are able to work with job training and transit options that bring available jobs within reach	< 10 Years	City Bond, Private Capital, Fundraising Campaign	FM Coalition For Homeless Persons	City, MATBUS, Local Employers
5 COMPLETE OUR STREETS					
5.1 ESTABLISH A STREET HIERARCHY Downtown TO INFORM ALL RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS					
	Develop the Fargo playbook	< 3 Years	City	City	DCP, MATBUS, Metro Cog
5.2 PRIORITIZE SAFETY FOR THE SLOWEST SPEEDS FIRST					
	Improve pedestrian safety throughout Downtown	< 3 Years	City	City	DCP, MATBUS, Metro Cog
	Retrofit streets to calm traffic	< 3 Years	City	City	DCP, MATBUS, Metro Cog
5.3 CREATE A BICYCLE NETWORK Downtown					
	Ensure safe, connected spaces for bicycles	< 10 Years	City	City	Metro Cog
5.4 ENHANCE LOCAL TRANSIT STOPS					
	Increase the visibility and improve the quality of bus stops	< 3 Years	City, MATBUS, Private Capital	MATBUS	City
	Improve the main pathways to GTC and better integrate the station into the fabric of Downtown	< 3 Years	City, MATBUS	MATBUS	City
5.5 MAKE IT EASY TO GET AROUND WITHOUT A CAR					
	Leverage transit habits of students, and bolster ridership with intentional marketing and connections to necessary destinations	< 6 Years	MATBUS, City, Metro Cog, Universities And Colleges	City	MATBUS, Metro Cog, Universities And Colleges
	Make walking, biking and taking transit more comfortable in the winter	< 10 Years	MATBUS, City, Metro Cog,Private Capital	MATBUS	City, DCP, Metro Cog
5.6 BUILD OUT THE BIKE SHARE SYSTEM IN AND AROUND Downtown					
	Increase year over year programmatic and financial commitment to the bike share program to ensure its longevity	< 3 Years	City, NDSU, Employers, Metro Cog	City	DCP, NDSU, Metro Cog
	Grow the program to be the most useful for Downtown and near neighborhood residents and employees	< 6 Years	City, NDSU, Employers, Metro Cog	City	DCP, NDSU, Metro Cog, Neighborhood Organizations

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
6 PARK SMART					
6.1 CREATE A TIERED PARKING MANAGEMENT APPROACH					
●	Change parking rates, time restrictions, and penalties according to how close to the core you are	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP, Employers
●	Align supply with demand by looking at parking utilization system wide	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP, Employers
6.2 ADVOCATE FOR METERED PARKING					
●	Continue to lobby the state to eliminate the ban on metered parking	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP, Metro Cog, MATBUS
●	Bring parking meters to Downtown, where collected revenue could be used for streetscape improvements, improved signage, or to improve parking lots	< 3 Years	City	City	DCP, Metro Cog, MATBUS
6.3 MAKE IS EASY FOR VISITORS TO PARK ONCE WHEN SPENDING THE DAY Downtown					
●	Adopt strategies to increase turnover for high demand spaces	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP, Retailers, Employers
	Provide easy to find areas where visitors can park for the day without worry, or spot-hopping	< 6 Years	--	City	Private Lot Owners
●	Develop clearer wayfinding to help drivers find available parking to reduce the number of people circling for spots	< 6 Years	City	City	DCP, Retailers, Employers
6.4 MAKE DESIRABLE PARKING SPACES AVAILABLE TO CUSTOMERS, EVEN AT NIGHT					
●	Extend enforcement of on-street parking to 9pm to ensure that turnover continues into the evening, allowing more people to come, park, dine and enjoy Downtown	< 3 Years	--	City	Restaurants, DCP
	Change duration of evening parking intervals to accommodate dinner and movie outings	< 3 Years	--	City	Restaurants, Fargo Theater, DCP
6.5 PURSUE A SHARED PARKING MODEL					
	Partner with local employers on shared parking opportunities so that parking resources better serves everyone	< 6 Years	MATBUS, City, Metro Cog, Employers	City	MATBUS, Metro Cog, Employers
6.6 WORK WITH WILLING LOCAL EMPLOYERS TO INCENTIVIZE ALTERNATIVES MODES OF COMMUTING					
●	Educate employers on the issues associated with paying for employee parking; encourage employers to offer transportation options outside of free parking	< 3 Years	City	City	DCP
	Consider a circulator that connects major Downtown job centers with off-street parking to free up spaces in the core	< 6 Years	City, NDSU, Employers, Metro Cog	City	DCP, NDSU, Metro Cog, Employers
6.7 CREATE AN ON-STREET PARKING PERMIT FOR Downtown EMPLOYEES					
	Mitigate long waiting lists at Downtown garages by offering permits for on-street parking in designated areas along some of the peripheral or underutilized streets for a lower monthly fee	< 6 Years	--	City	DCP, Employers
6.8 CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING PARKING MAXIMUMS					
●	Establish parking maximums in the core Downtown area that allow for a more dense, walkable environment. Maintain parking minimums outside of the study area.	< 3 Years	--	City	DCP, Developers
6.9 BEAUTIFY PARKING LOTS					
	Prioritize landscaping, repaving, striping, and lighting so that parking lots contribute to Downtown's public realm and improved perceptions	< 10 Years	City, Private Capital	City	DCP, Private Lot Owners

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Priority Project	Recommendation	When Could This Happen?	What Are Potential Funding Sources?	Who Will Lead This?	Who Are The Key Partners?
7 PLAY WITH PURPOSE					
7.1 CULTIVATE A Downtown OPEN SPACE NETWORK					
📍	Stitch together alleys, small parks, the block 9 plaza, city hall plaza and the river	< 3 Years	City, Private Capital	City	DCP, Parks, Developers
7.2 PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES					
📍	Focus on programming for families with children and students under 21	< 3 Years	City, Parks, Private Donations	City	Parks, DCP
	Program the city hall plaza to encourage more regional visitors	< 6 Years	City, Parks, Library, Private Donations	Library	City, Parks
📍	Develop more all-weather venues and events like Frostival	< 3 Years	City, CVB, Downtown Businesses	City	CVB, DCP, Businesses
7.3 RECONNECT AND ACTIVATE THE FLOOD WALL					
📍	Design spaces on both sides of the flood wall to help people navigate the barrier	< 6 Years	NDDOT, FM Diversion Authority, City, Park, Developers	City	Parks, FMDA
	Integrate public art and programming at nearby open spaces	< 10 Years	City, Private Donations	City	Arts Commission
📍	Create a new, actively programmed city hall plaza and pursue a bridge aligned with 2nd avenue	< 6 Years	City	City	Library
📍	Design a river park on the Mid-America Steel site	< 10 Years	City, State, Developers, Parks	City	Developers, Parks
7.4 CREATE URBAN GREENWAYS AND AN INTEGRATED, REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM					
	Explore opportunities along the right-of-ways to introduce protected trail systems that connect Downtown Fargo and Moorhead with the regional trail network	< 10 Years	City, Parks, Developers	City	Parks
📍	Fill gaps in the multi-use trail on both sides of the river, and connect to regional trails associated with the diversion	< 6 Years	Parks, MetroCOG, FM Diversion Authority	Parks	City, MetroCOG, FMDA
7.5 ENCOURAGE ROOF-TOP RETENTION IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND PARKING GARAGES					
	Look at green roofs as a means of capturing water before it hits the street	< 6 Years	Private Capital	Developers	City, DCP
7.6 INTEGRATE GREENING IN THE STREETS					
📍	Retain rainwater on-street, and increase the green in Downtown	< 3 Years	City, Downtown Businesses	City	Businesses
	Boost tree coverage Downtown to reduce the urban heat island effect, utilize captured rainwater, and enhance the Downtown experience	< 6 Years	City, Downtown Businesses, DCP / BID, Parks	City	Parks, DCP / BID, Businesses
7.7 ADJUST STORMWATER REGULATIONS					
	Enable flexibility in addressing rainwater issues	< 3 Years	--	City	

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