

Chapter Four

Growth in the Next 20 years

Although the city of Fargo has pushed to the limits planned for in the original growth plan, the city still has substantial amounts of land available for growth. To support our commitments to a more sustainable future we need to plan for growth but at the same time do all that we can to keep development compact and efficient. This growth plan sets a two tier approach to growth for the next 50 years. Tier one is planned to handle growth for the next 20 to 25 years and should become a de facto growth limit line for that time period. To allow unplanned expansion of infrastructure into tier two prior to filling in tier one would be prohibitively expensive and wasteful. Allowing rural developments within tier two during the next 20 years would be counter to the idea of planning for the growth of the city.

Leapfrog Development and Sprawl

The area surrounding Fargo has experienced “Leapfrog” development consisting of rural residential subdivisions, individual residences and commercial subdivisions. These are developments that have occurred outside of the city of Fargo, leaving undeveloped land within and adjacent to the urbanized area. This has continued to happen despite concerns expressed in the initial growth plan published in 2001. This type of development has proven to be problematic when the growth of the city eventually brings roadway corridors, urban subdivisions and utilities into and around these rural subdivisions. Policies, zoning laws, and subdivision laws have allowed these developments to occur in the past with individual septic systems and subdivision configurations that can not be easily re-subdivided to be more economically feasible in an environment that provides urban services and urban lot sizes.

One result of leapfrog development is urban sprawl, described as a “shotgun” disorderly pattern of development on the fringes of an urban area. Urban sprawl results in an uneconomical pattern of extended urban services, disjointed development patterns and some of the typical commercial mall areas and large lot suburban subdivision styles that have occurred in the last 20-30 years. The public generally finds this rambling, disorderly style of development unattractive and heavily oriented toward automobile use rather than transit, pedestrian or bicycling. Carefully planned extensions of the city as a result of demand for housing help to counter disruptive leapfrog development.

The following short-term strategies work against urban sprawl and leapfrog development while encouraging sustainable, walkable, and highly livable development:

- Encourage and obligate compact development within and adjacent to the existing city by:
 - Establish a 20 year utility service area to match the Tier One growth area and prohibit individual septic systems within that area, consistent with the requirements of the Land Development Code.

- Establish guidelines and information regarding sewage treatment options with the 20 year service area.
- Update the 20 year service area annually based on acreage consumption data, annexation data, and development trends and projections.
- Utilize zoning tools such as AG zoning districts to limit non-farm land uses in areas where individual sewage treatment systems are allowed.
- Establish, in conjunction with Cass County, an Agricultural Preservation zoning district which limits non-farm residential development to one dwelling unit per 40 acres rather than one dwelling unit per 10 acres as currently allowed by AG zoning.
- Create an inventory of vacant parcels within city limits including information about zoning, parcel size, ownership, availability of utilities and streets, special assessments, etc. Update the list on a yearly basis.
- Work with property owners and developers to keep an adequate inventory of land readied for development in each zoning district.
- Bring about development patterns that do not result in the occurrence or the appearance of urban sprawl.
 - Limit roadway and utility extensions to areas within the 20 year service area and only is directly adjacent to areas currently receiving services.
 - Avoid utility and roadway extensions that traverse areas where property owners are not interested in developing their property. If these extensions are necessary and in the best interests of the city; avoid the use of special assessment deferrals that encourage tracts of land to remain undeveloped while growth continually pushes outward.
 - Require large lot (rural) residential developments to be constructed only in the areas in the plan designated for their development or construct them in a manner that will allow the lots to be split for additional development in the future when the installation of city services results in high special assessments.
 - In areas that have already been zoned and subdivided, continue to strictly hold extraterritorial development to the same development standards as development within the city of Fargo to ensure that these developments fit into the urban environment once the city grows out into these areas. This should also equalize the cost of development in these areas.

- Through the use of zoning, encourage compact urban residential development and mixed commercial/residential development that concentrates the developed portion of a subdivision in one area, thus reducing the length of roadway and utility extensions, and leaving land available for commonly used open space.

Density Targets for the Fargo Growth Areas

The average number of people per acre in Fargo is 10 people per developable acre. This is the average residential density throughout the city. The density of people ranges from 4 people per net developable acre to about 15 people per net developable acre. A developable acre is the land that can be developed after all of the streets, utilities, park land, etc. are removed from the total. Planners talk about density in terms of people per acre and in terms of dwelling units per acre. The average density of 10 people per acre in Fargo equates to approximately 6 dwelling units per acre.

As stated earlier in this growth plan, in order to address issues of livability, walkability, quality of life and sustainability it is desirable to raise the overall density in the city. Our approach in the growth plan is to set a higher overall density for the growth area of the city and then encourage the planning staff and city officials to look for ways to increase the overall density in the existing city. We have set a fairly minimal increase in density for the growth area; 12 people per developable acre or approximately 7 dwelling units per acre.

In order to better understand these density goals it is important to dispel a widely held belief about what higher densities look like. It is a commonly held belief that areas where apartment buildings are located, such as near West Acres Mall, are high density residential areas while single family areas such as the Horace Mann and Roosevelt neighborhoods are low density areas. The following photographs and descriptions paint a little bit different picture of what density might mean.

The residential area directly south of West Acres Mall, which is illustrated to the right, contains mostly medium to large sized apartment buildings with one small townhouse development. The following are the characteristics of this area:

- The density is 11 people per net developable acre
- This equates to 5.5 dwelling units per net developable acre
- Only two types of housing exist in this area
- The range of housing costs is very narrow

The residential area know as the Horace Mann and Roosevelt neighborhoods, also illustrated to the right, contains a broad mix of housing types including single family, small apartments, townhouses, and condominiums. The following are the characteristics of this area:

- The density is 11 people per net developable acre
- This equates to 5.5 dwelling units per net developable acre



Minimal mix of residential type in a neighborhood south of West Acres mall.



Mixed residential type in the existing Horace Mann and Roosevelt neighborhoods.



Mixed residential type in a recent development in Fargo.

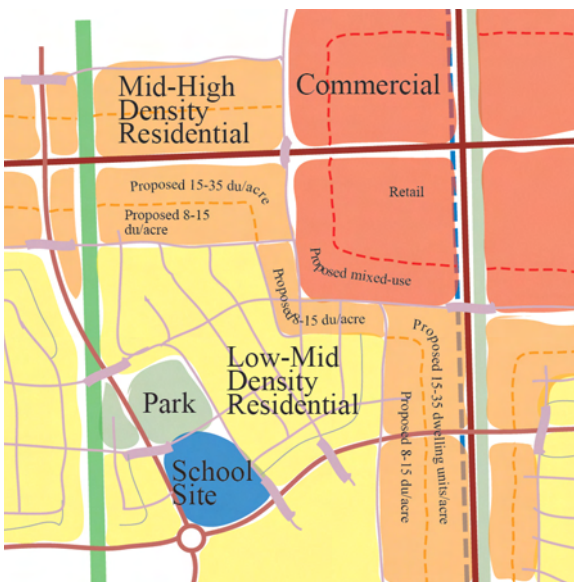
- Many types of housing exist in the area
- The range of housing costs is extensive

Mixed Residential Neighborhoods

The Comprehensive Policy Plan addresses the importance of mixed residential neighborhoods in two policies. One policy states that the city should ensure a fair, equitable, and rational distribution of housing to meet the needs of several population groups. This policy recognizes that the concentration of any given population group in one area can invite future problems and isolate certain age and income groups.

The other policy relating to mixing housing types states the city should achieve a higher degree of interaction of various housing types in residential areas through mixed use design standards. To some extent, the Land Development Code has already established a hierarchy of residential zoning designations that include a variety of housing styles. Buffering and other landscaping requirements ease the transition between low, medium, and high density residential developments. The following two standards address the issue of mixed residential neighborhoods.

- Provide a variety of housing types, styles, choices, and cost levels within each neighborhood.
 - Require the use of the full range of zoning designations offered by the Land Development Code to foster variety in subdivision arrangements, densities, and housing styles/ types, and cost ranges.
 - Work with property owners and developers to establish large areas with multiple zoning designations so future home buyers have knowledge of land uses and zoning designations in the area.
 - Continue to educate the community about the need for affordable housing and the characteristics of residents who choose to rent versus own homes in the community.
- Provide a variety of housing types, styles, choices, and cost levels within each block of each neighborhood.
 - Encourage developers to build a variety of housing units within each block of a development in order to offer true choice to residents.
 - Work with the city housing authority, property owners and developers to achieve a true mix of housing options for people throughout any sub-neighborhood.



A diagram illustrating the concepts of land use transitions and mixed type.

Land Use Transitions

The land use plan identifies broad categories of land uses that transition from one land use to another in a way that is generally compatible. However, it is important to look for zoning combinations that provide logical transitions between land uses. It is also important

to recognize that the higher density residential zoning districts do not automatically result in higher demands on surrounding roadways and infrastructure, because the smaller sized homes constructed in SR-3, SR-4, and the MR districts generally attract a smaller family size, resulting in fewer trips per household. Nor do the higher density residential zoning districts always result in greater lot coverage. For example, MR-1, which is the lowest density multi-dwelling zoning district, requires more open space than SR-4 zoning. A neighborhood commercial site may provide a better transition between an arterial roadway and any type of residential neighborhood in that it keeps residential development away from the arterial roadway, and provides a low intensity commercial use of a residential scale. Therefore, it is important to take these factors into consideration when making the transition from land use planning to zoning.

One of the main purposes of a land use plan is to set forth land use patterns that provide smooth transitions between high intensity uses like industries or large retail developments and low density residential areas. Between those two extremes there are a number of other land uses that can be planned to buffer residents from the impact of high intensity uses. These transitional land uses also buffer these high intensity businesses from chronic conflict with neighboring property owners.

- Provide adequate separation/transition between incompatible land uses.
 - Use transitional land uses such as commercial, office, or public/institutional to separate industrial or large retail land uses and residential land uses.
 - Establish conditional overlay zoning districts where appropriate, in situations where adequate transitions between land uses cannot be provided through direct land use compatibility or through application of the Land Development Code buffering and setback requirements for those particular needs.
 - Designate industrial land use in areas where environmental and physical features make other land uses undesirable, such as interstate highways, sewage lagoons, railroad tracks and areas in close proximity to the airport.
- Use zoning to transition varying residential styles within a neighborhood
 - Use a variety of residential zoning designations to establish gradual transitions between low, medium, and high density residential development.
 - Implement zoning of large development areas to establish a more detailed base of information for potential home buyers.
- Provide a mix of land uses that balance residential development with the services, retail, and amenities needed to establish a high level of convenience, efficiency, and livability.
 - A variety of sizes of retail commercial land use districts have been designated to establish a high level of convenience and efficiency for residential neighborhoods in the growth area.
 - Educate the general public about the land use plans to encourage the public to seek out existing and future land use information.
 - Improve the dissemination of information regarding land use plans to realtors, home buyers, and others, to inform the public and prevent conflict over planned neighborhood commercial sites in future years.

North West Tier One

The proposed development patterns for the next 20 years in the north-west section of Fargo are shown on the map to the right. This area has the unique situation of having an incorporated city, Reile's Acres, in the middle of the area. The city of Fargo and the city of Reile's Acres have jointly agreed to allow the city planning office of Fargo to determine the development strategy for the extra-territorial area of Reile's Acres. This allows both Fargo and Reile's Acres to move forward with a consistent vision of development in the area.

Growth within the existing industrial area, shown in brown on the plan, is expected to continue at a consistent pace while it fills up the existing industrial park between 12th Avenue North and 19th Avenue North. The area north of 19th Avenue North shows industrial uses extending along the railroad corridor. To the north of these industrial uses is a buffer of medium density housing between the industrial uses and the lower density residential areas surrounding Reile's Acres. It is anticipated that the pressure to build residential units in this area will come from increasing enrollment at North Dakota State University and increasing work opportunities associated with the NDSU Research Park. Some low lying areas near Reile's Acres may not be easy to develop or economically viable for development.

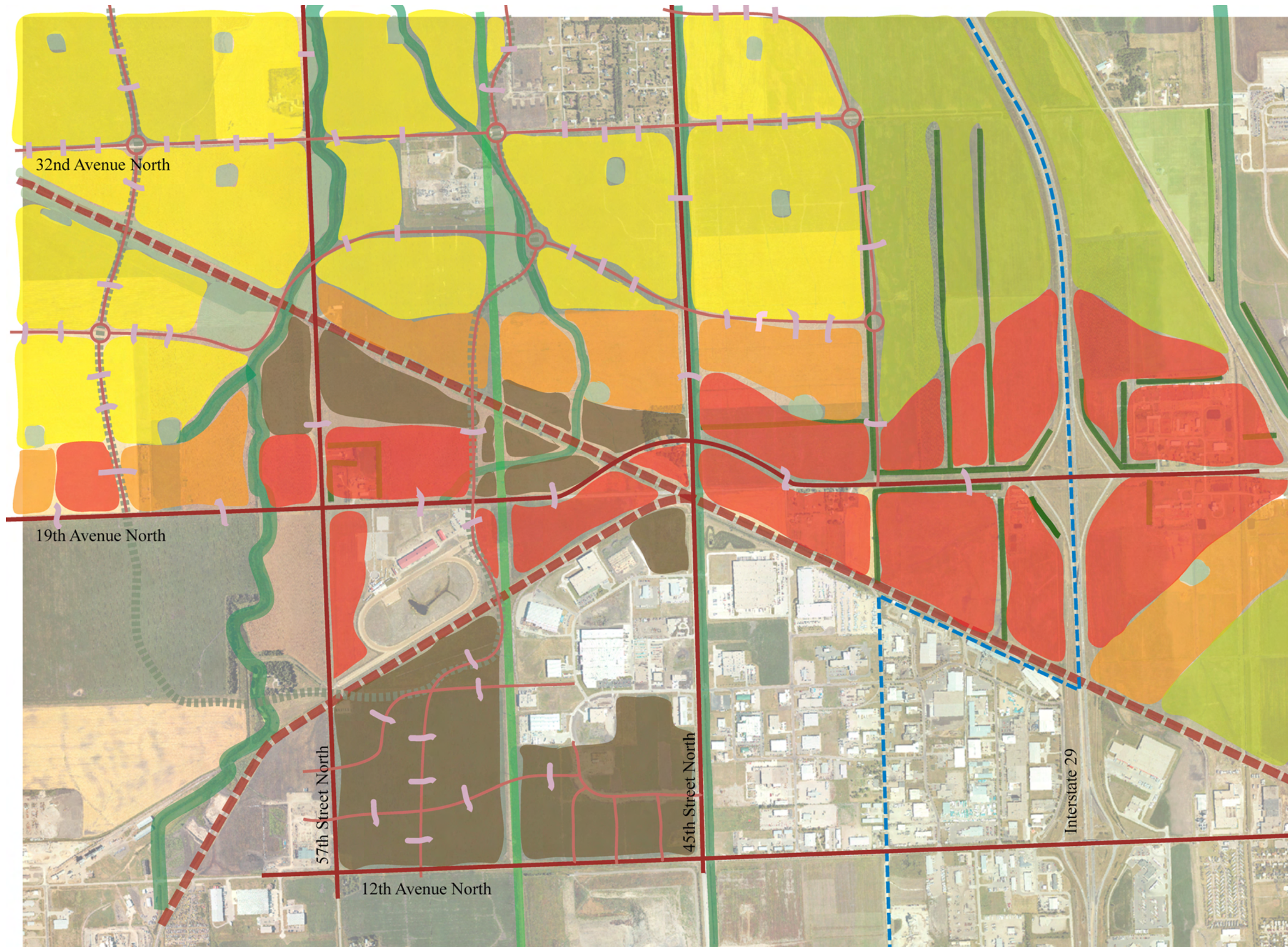
Please note the development of walking and bicycling paths within utility easements and along drainage ways to connect a series of parks being introduced into the area. Small parks are also introduced into each sub-neighborhood.

Planning for development along 19th Avenue North also responds to the anticipated growth of both the number of students and the number of programs at North Dakota State University. NDSU owns significant pieces of property along 19th Avenue and along Interstate 29. The areas designated as commercial uses provide possibilities for expansion of the NDSU Research Park as a part of a mixed use development also including retail uses and the potential for student housing above the research or retail uses. These uses extend along 19th Avenue toward the horse park and conclude with a small neighborhood commercial area beyond 57th Street.

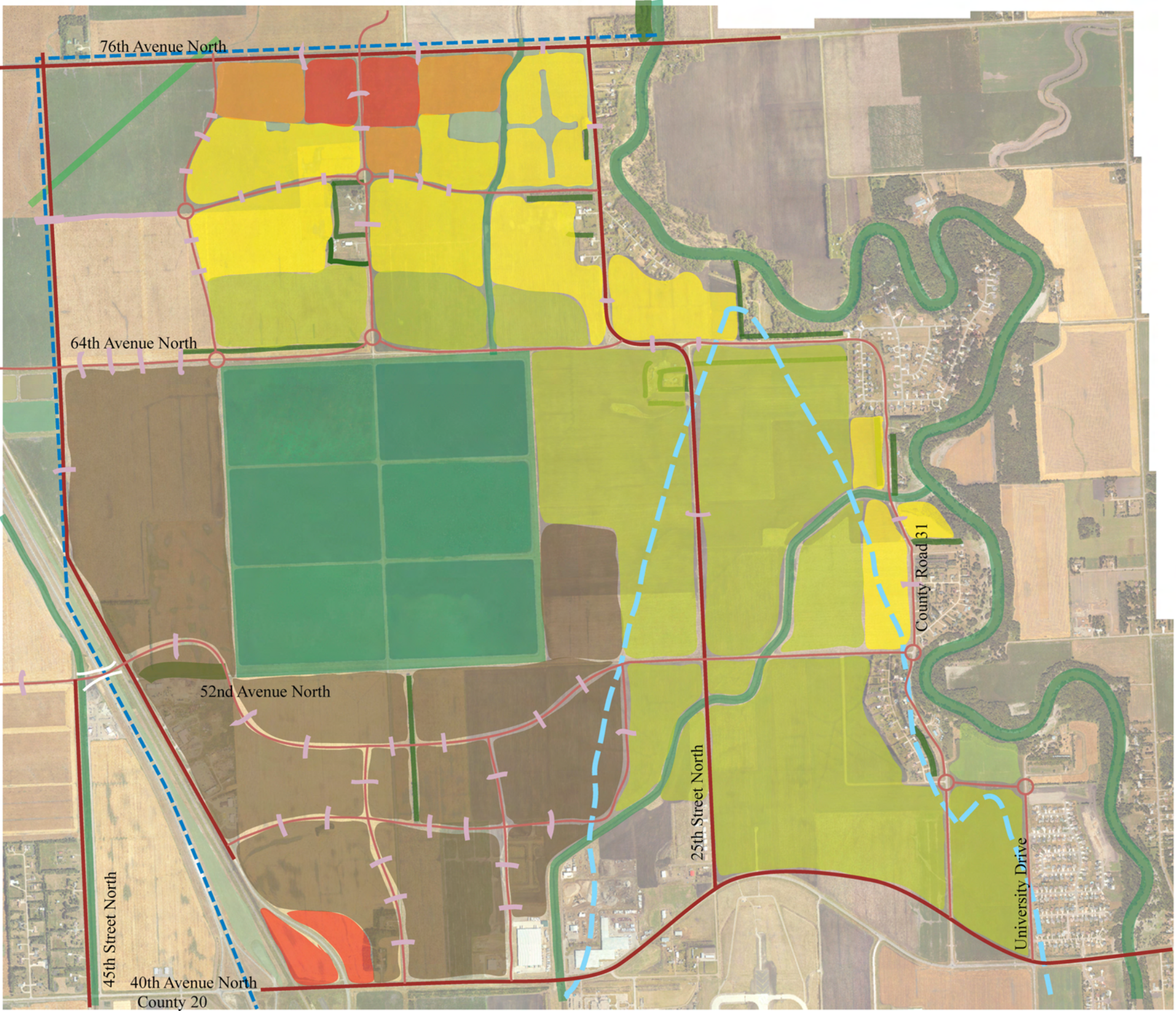
The areas owned by NDSU that flank Interstate 29 are designated as agricultural research areas. This use meets several needs within the community. It allows NDSU to move or expand their agricultural research plots and fields for the future. It also provides an attractive entrance sequence into the city for freeway travelers coming from the north. There are several windrows existing in this area that should be preserved within the future development.

Fargo Growth Plan

North Fargo Tier 1 West



- Existing Infrastructure**
- Greenspace - water related
 - Greenspace - utility related
 - Existing Windrow
 - Existing Park
 - Railroad
 - Schools - existing and proposed
 - School District Boundary
- Proposed Infrastructure**
- Proposed Park
 - Freeway changes
 - Arterial Streets
 - Collector Streets
 - Local Street Intersections
 - Parkway
- Proposed Land Uses**
- Residential Area - lower to medium density
 - Residential Area - medium to high density
 - Residential Area - rural
 - Commercial Area
 - Industrial Area
 - Agricultural Research



Fargo Growth Plan **North Fargo Tier 1 East**

- Existing Infrastructure**

 - Greenspace - water related
 - Greenspace - utility related
 - Existing Windrow
 - Existing Park
 - Railroad
 - Schools - existing and proposed
 - School District Boundary
 - Airport Noise Contour
- Proposed Infrastructure**

 - Proposed Park
 - Freeway changes
 - Arterial Streets
 - Collector Streets
 - Local Street Intersections
- Proposed Land Uses**

 - Residential Area - lower to medium density
 - Residential Area - medium to high density
 - Residential Area - rural
 - Commercial Area
 - Industrial Area
 - Agricultural Research

North East Tier One

Several factors have combined to impact the development potential for this section of Fargo within the next 20 years. The existence of the overflow sewage lagoons in this area, shown in green on the map to the left, severely limits uses adjacent to the lagoons. Although they are only overflow lagoons, at times of significant rain fall and at times of flooding, the lagoons are active. The uses surrounding the lagoons have been limited to industrial uses, agricultural research land, and park uses.

The existing industrial area north of 40th Avenue North is anticipated to grow and expand in the future. The proximity to the freeway and the airport make this an attractive area for light industry and light manufacturing. A small commercial area has been allocated at the intersection of 40th Avenue North and I 29 to serve the needs of workers in the industrial area.

The areas directly north of the overflow lagoons has been designated as parks and provide an excellent opportunity for activity parks for the northern part of the city. Just north of the parks are lower density residential, yellow, with a small neighborhood commercial area on 76th Avenue North and medium density housing flanking the commercial area.

Hector International Airport is located just to the south of 40th Avenue North and it also has significant impact on the potential for development in this section of the city. There have been some fairly major changes to this part of the growth plan since the year 2000. To avoid negative issues associated with airport noise and to help secure the military mission of Hector International Airport, the Airport Authority has been buying most of the land within the noise contour illustrated on the plan. To avoid future conflicts with noisy aircraft we have designated this land as research agricultural to provide additional research fields and plots for the Agriculture College at NDSU. Much of this land is already farmed under contract to NDSU. This designation provides some protection from noise associated with the airport and it keeps residents out of a potentially harmful area at the end of the existing runway and at the end of a proposed north/south runway.

Fargo Growth Plan

South Fargo Tier 1 West



South West Tier One

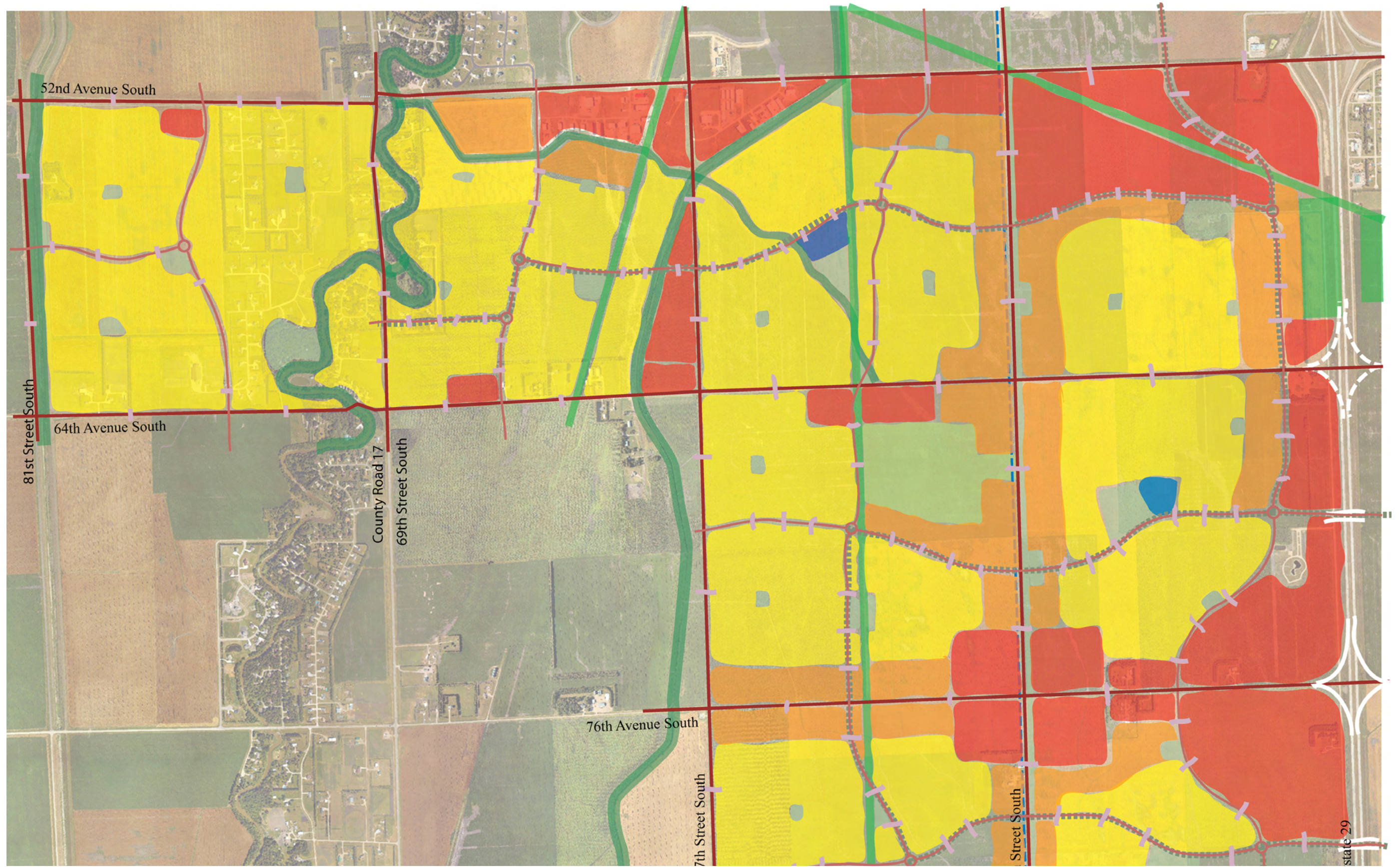
Development in this section of the city for the next 20 years is not as constrained as it is in parts of north Fargo. The pattern of development being pursued in this growth plan is much more apparent in this plan.

The north-south arterial streets extend from the existing arterials at section lines. The east-west arterial streets create intersections at Interstate 29. This grid of arterials streets forms a set of new neighborhoods for the growth area of Fargo. Collector streets are more curvilinear to facilitate the creation of appropriate land use areas. A park is provided at the center of each neighborhood with a small park at the center of each sub-neighborhood. The large park near the center of the map shows the location of the Fargo Park District's next regional activity park. Each of the parks is linked with walkway/bicycle paths along collector streets and in utility easements as well as in drainages. The utility easement that runs north and south between 45th Street and 57th Street South gives us the opportunity to create a major walkway/bicycle/cross-country ski trail that can run for several miles for the part of the city that is west of the interstate. This will provide connections to several neighborhoods and an opportunity for recreation all year long. It is envisioned that this path could be similar to the Milwaukee Road path that runs north and south between University Drive and 25th Street South.

The extension of the parkway system begun in the 2001 growth plan is shown in a dashed grey-green line. This provides an opportunity to create a linear path through Fargo that is different than the typical street system and can accommodate a more leisurely drive.

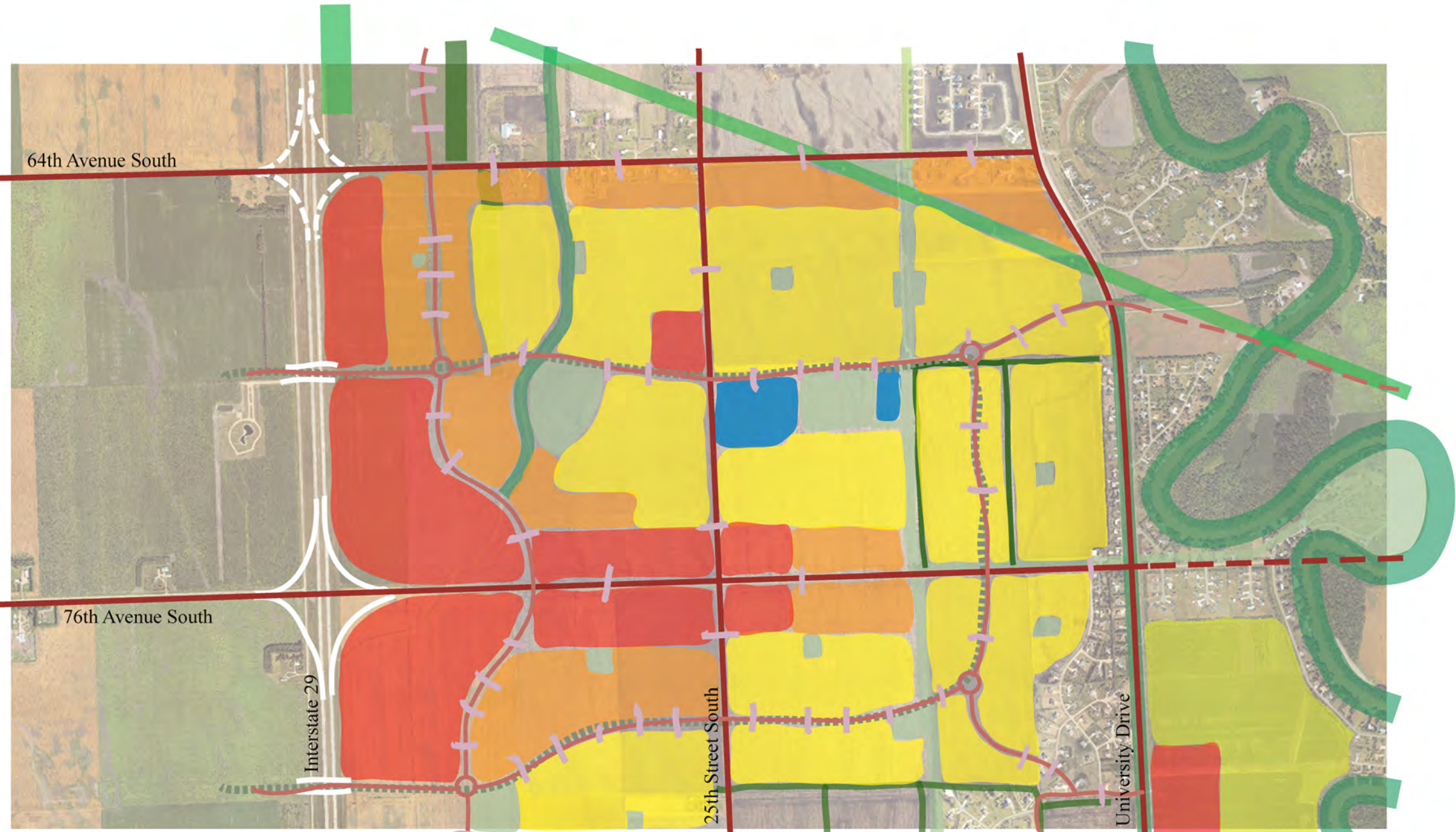
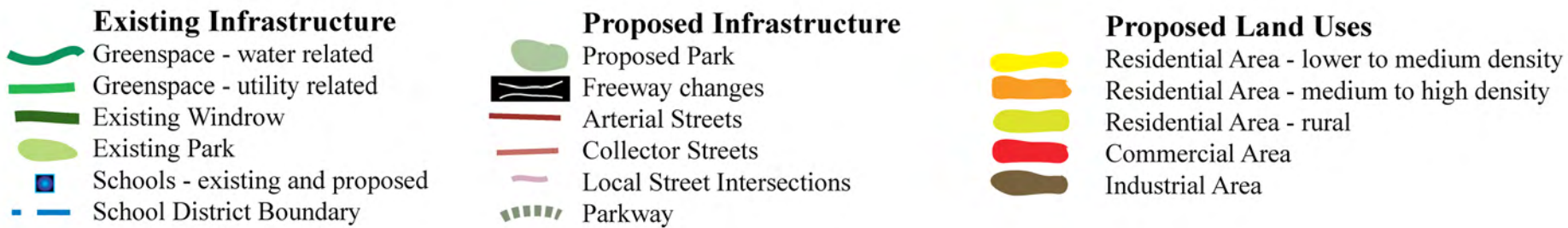
Major commercial areas have been concentrated along Interstate 29 at the planned intersections. A mixed-use development is anticipated at 52nd Avenue South and I29 as well as at 76th Avenue South. These commercial areas provide opportunities for major retail as well as office and support commercial along the freeway. These commercial developments will help buffer the noise and pollution of the freeway from residential areas. You will also notice that smaller neighborhood commercial areas have been allocated within walking distance of most neighborhood residents. Neighborhood commercial areas have been located at the intersections of arterial streets and collector streets at the point that could be considered entrances into the neighborhoods.

Medium to high density residential has been placed adjacent to 45th South Street which is a major arterial. Medium to high density residential has also been used as a buffer between commercial uses and lower density residential uses.



Fargo Growth Plan

South Fargo Tier 1 East



South East Tier One

The planning for the next 20 years extends the pattern established on the west side of the freeway across the Interstate 29 divider. Here we see an extension of the arterial streets south from the existing city and east-west at the freeway intersections. Again, the collector streets are allowed to meander to break the rigidity of the grid while also allowing the streets to define appropriate use areas. The collector planned at 70th Avenue South is designated as a Parkway which extends that system east across the freeway with a more esthetically pleasing roadway running past the site, at 25th Street and 70th Avenue South, designated for the next high school in the Fargo School District. The land is already owned by the school district for the purpose of building a new high school. East of the high school site we have designated a site for a new elementary school which is connected to the extension of the Milwaukee Road trail.

Both 70th Avenue South and 76th Avenue South are shown with dashed extensions across the Red River into Minnesota. Both of these options have been discussed for years and no resolution to an additional connection across the river seems in sight. The development pattern shown in this growth plan would be facilitated by a river crossing at 76th Avenue South, the arterial street.

Commercial development mirrors that on the west side of the freeway with major commercial uses along the freeway and at 76th Avenue South. Medium to high density residential provides a buffer between the commercial uses and the lower density residential uses.

South University Drive is planned to become the flood protection feature at the Red River for this part of the city. This leaves an area between the river and University Drive that is designated as rural residential. All areas designated rural residential do not have flood protection provided and are set aside for large lot residential development. These lots will require that building sites be raised above the 100 year flood level established by the U.S. Corps of Engineers.