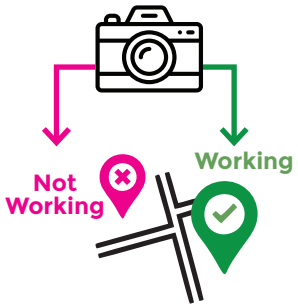
Core Neighborhoods Master Plan

April 3, 2020 | Progress Report to the Project Steering Committee

Since we first met with you on February 25th, much has happened to put the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan on a positive course—even with the scheduling uncertainties caused by COVID-19. Productive meetings will all three Sub-Area Committees during that kick-off week in February, and subsequent efforts to gather additional datasets and solicit direct input from the public give us, as your planning consultants, much to work with from our home offices.

The following is an overview of progress made as of the beginning of April, along with work currently underway.

What's Working / What's Not Working



Before our first meeting with the three Sub-Area Committees, we asked the volunteers to go into their neighborhoods to take pictures that would demonstrate what they think is 'working' and 'not working'—a technique we typically use to get an early sense of what neighbors believe are their key assets and most pressing issues.

We spent time during each Sub-Area meetings in February going through the photos, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, to learn 'why' they had been taken. In **Appendix A** to this progress report, you will find lists of the issues that were identified in each neighborhood. To us, this exercise revealed many commonalities across the neighborhoods (on both the 'working' and 'not working' fronts), as well as differentiating issues that will be important when it comes time to tailor strategies for each neighborhood.

Do you see anything in the results that surprise you? Or any patterns that you want to make sure we notice? **If you do, please send us a note with your observations.**

Online Survey

The online survey that is now open through the end of April (link provided in the cover e-mail) was designed to supplement the "What's Working / What's Not Working" exercise by putting a similar question before the general public. The survey asks people to identity the top three 'selling points' about their neighborhood that are likely to attract new residents, as well as the top three 'turn-offs' that might deter people from choosing to live in the neighborhood.

Over 150 responses have been received as of April 1st, driven by social media posts and traditional media notices from the City. The City will also be working to distribute the survey through the Nextdoor platform, and we will be encouraging Sub-Area Committee volunteers to share the link with neighbors and relevant community listservs. **If you know of individuals or organizations that live in or are involved in the core neighborhoods, please share the link with them.**

Neighborhood Outcomes

Another component of our February meeting with the Sub-Area Committees was an exercise to begin the process of identifying the outcomes that the planning process should be aiming for. We did this by asking committee members to fill in the blank to the following statement:

"In 10 years, this neighborhood will be a place where _____."

In **Appendix B**, you will find the list of draft outcomes that were identified in each neighborhood based on committee member responses. This gives us a preliminary sense of what progress might mean to each neighborhood. Refining these outcomes and identifying ways to measure progress on each one with be important work in the coming months.

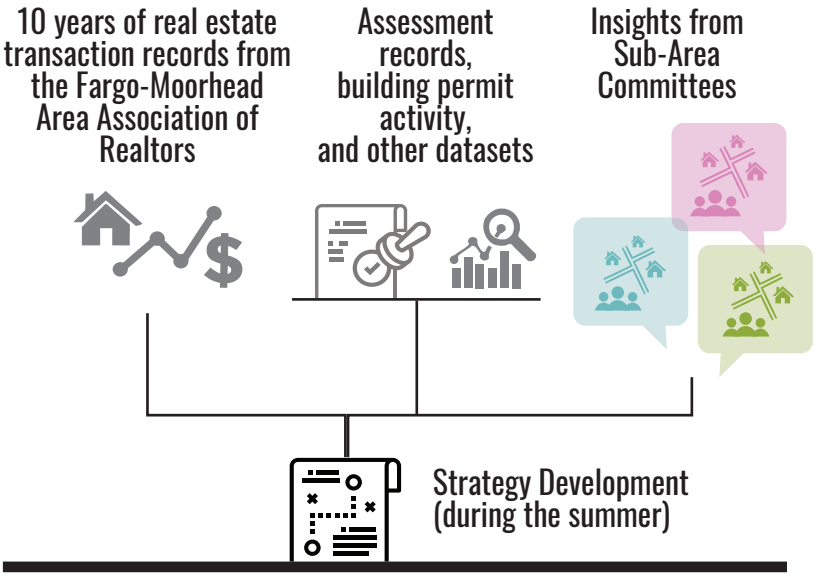
At the end of our February meetings with the Sub-Area Committees, we asked the volunteers to gather small groups of neighbors during March and to present them with a similar statement to complete—in order to see if similar and/or different outcomes were expressed. Some volunteers were able to complete this task before the pandemic made such gatherings inadvisable, and we will use their notes to supplement the draft outcome statements.

For now, does anything about these draft outcome statements surprise you or concern you? **If you have any observations you want us to know about, please let us know.**

Housing Market Analysis

Thanks to efforts by City staff to assemble a wide range of local datasets, we have everything we need to make good progress on our housing market analysis during April. We now have 10 years of real estate transaction records from the Fargo-Moorhead Area Association of Realtors, which we are analyzing alongside assessment records, building permit activity, and other datasets that were mapped and presented at our first meeting in February.

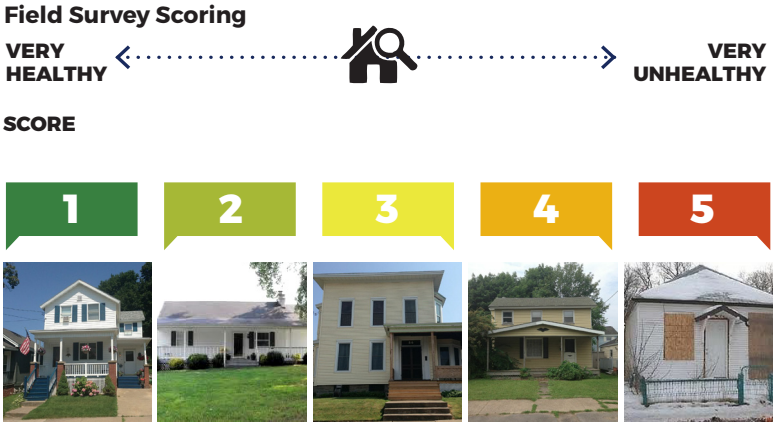
Our data analysis will supplement what we are currently learning from Sub-Area Committee volunteers about key issues and desired outcomes, and it will be a critical factor in the second phase of this project (during the summer) when we shift into strategy development mode.



Field Survey of Residential Property Conditions

An additional element to our housing market analysis will be a windshield survey of every residential property in the core neighborhoods and citywide. As we described briefly during our first meeting in February, this is a method we use on most of our projects and involves scoring each property on a simple 1-to-5 scale. How a property gets scored depends on the 'signals' that the property sends to passersby. Are there signs of conscientious upkeep and pride of ownership? Are there visible signs of deferred maintenance? What trajectory does the property appear to be on?

In early April, we will be training a combination of NDSU students and volunteers from the Sub-Area Committees (already identified) to begin the scoring process, which will cover 8,900 properties in the core neighborhoods and 18,500 properties in non-core neighborhoods. The data collected will be added to our housing market analysis and become an important part of strategy development during Phase 2.



Covering 8,900 properties in the core neighborhoods and 18,500 properties in non-core neighborhoods.

Questions?

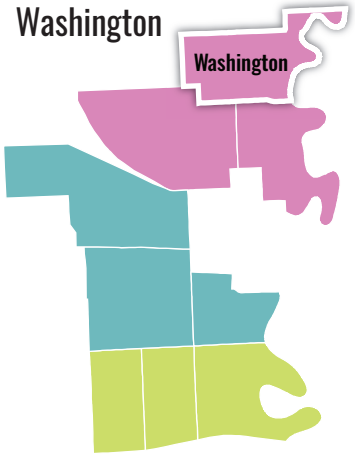
Please reach out to us if you have any questions about the project components summarized in this progress report, if you wish to discuss any aspect of the project, or if anything is happening in Fargo that you think should be thought about in the context of this project. Until we see you again in person, we look forward to keeping you apprised of progress from afar to ensure that everyone involved is up to speed and able to contribute.

Best regards,

czb

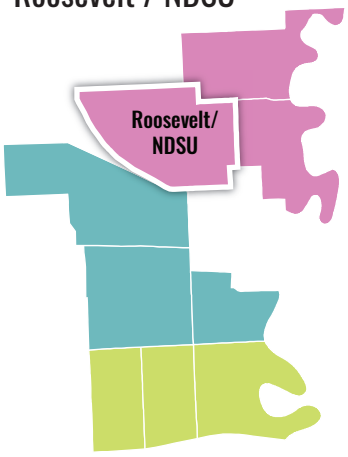
North Sub-Area Committee

Washington



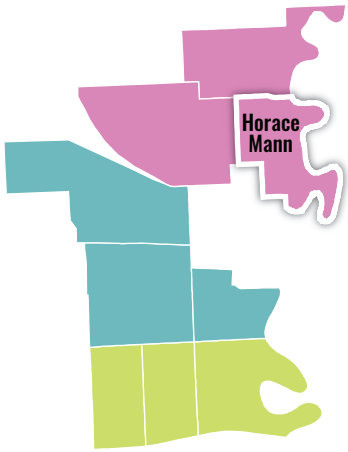
What's Working	What's Not Working
Visible reinvestment in homes	Multi-family infill development – concerns about how far it will spread
Walkability – good sidewalks	Non-conforming designs of recent infill
Signs of growing diversity of population	Vacant commercial properties in prominent locations (old Stop-n-Go)
Alleys – esp. those that are well-lighted	Some distressed homes; older residents who could use some help with maintenance
Diverse housing types	Poor trimming on some trees
Good transit service and infrastructure	
Convenient commercial areas and well-loved businesses (Papa Murphy's)	
Great parks	
Schools	
El Zagal Shrine	

Roosevelt / NDSU



What's Working	What's Not Working
Roosevelt E.S. – community center, identity, family relationships	Front yard parking (and parking in general)
Tree canopy and streetscapes	Blighted/distressed properties
Roosevelt Park – winter and summer	Single-family homes turned to rentals
NDSU	One-way arterials not conducive to friendly neighborhood atmosphere
New townhome infill as boost to diversity of housing stock	Slumlord rentals
Fargodome	Uncertainty about long-term land use patterns east of University Dr.
Well-maintained and charming homes	Infill that doesn't seem to fit
"In-between" housing (small multi-family properties)	
Fargo Brewing Co.	

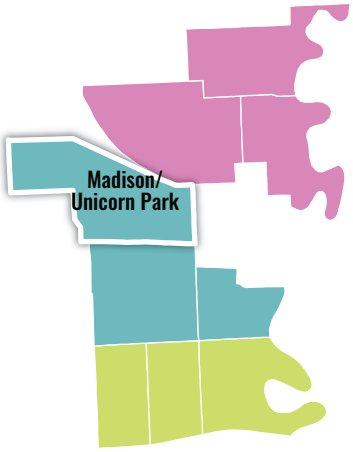
Horace Mann



What's Working	What's Not Working
Oak Grove Park and other great parks	Nice streetlamps, but poor bulb choice
Diverse housing stock; granny flats	Poor placement of utility fixtures
You can still buy starter homes here	Poorly managed rental properties
Architectural variety and integrity	Unused cars as yard/driveway clutter
Good examples of infill and sensitive renovations to existing homes	'Pest House' property currently derelict but an opportunity
Horace Mann E.S. – low student-to-teacher ratio and sister to Roosevelt; prominence of children	Steve's Package and Sahr's as sources of commercial blight (but in transition)
Walkability tied to school	Perception of crime
Sense of pride	Speed and noise pollution from busy arterial streets
Hardware store and other convenient commercial amenities	Uptick in traffic volume on 12th Ave. since removal of tolls on bridge

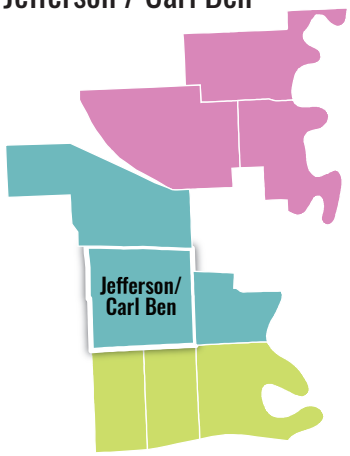
Central Sub-Area Committee

Madison / Unicorn Park



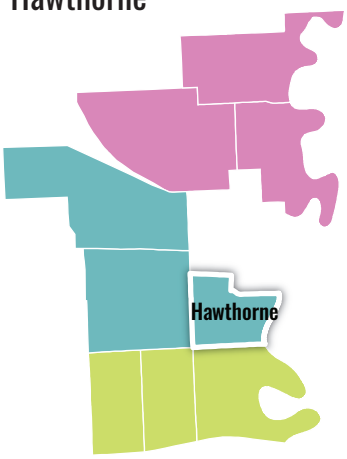
What's Working	What's Not Working
There are many good examples of older buildings being reused in positive/ creative ways	Unicorn Park (park and neighborhood) lacks a strong identity
The police presence in the neighborhood (HQ) is noticeable and appreciated	Residential disinvestment is noticeable, especially on busy arterials
Sidewalks and the sidewalk network are an important asset	Notorious junk piles (commercial and residential) are an issue
	Unpaved alleys are a maintenance headache and unsightly
	Parks are an asset but could also use some work

Jefferson / Carl Ben



What's Working	What's Not Working
Cultural diversity and food options (Balkan, Nepali, etc.)	Unsupervised playgrounds (kids but no parents) can be problematic and noisy to those living nearby
Some good examples of positive infill development	Many examples of poorly maintained homes and/or eccentric owners
Parks have many features that are neighborhood assets – playgrounds, new shelter at Jefferson Park, skating rink	Mobile homes present multiple issues (safety, living conditions, etc.)
Little neighborhood libraries are friendly and neighborly (and people use them)	Park design – hit or miss
There are good examples of homes being renovated and improved	Overgrown foliage blocking sidewalks
	Unsightly/unsafe utility fixtures
	Insensitive examples of infill

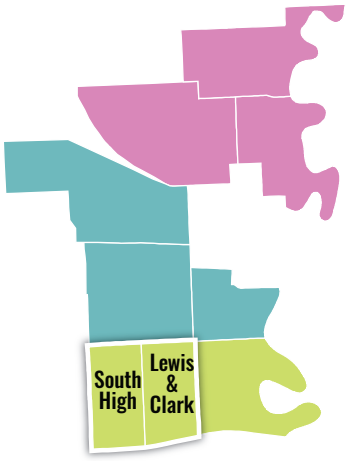
Hawthorne



What's Working	What's Not Working
Tree-lined streets	Unsightly utilities on some streets, and bad tree trimming by Xcel
Good examples of infill – a sign of confidence and investment	Spotty maintenance of some older homes
Island Park, neighborhood playgrounds, Dill Hill	Investment in older properties hampered by difficulty finding qualified contractors
Signage – welcoming and creates sense of identity	Poorly managed rental properties
Continuous sidewalk network; recent work to make crosswalks and other pedestrian infrastructure more prominent and safer	Winter parking rules
Variety of housing styles and types	Underused parking lots at hospital site (feels desolate)
Proximity to 8th Street S commercial district	

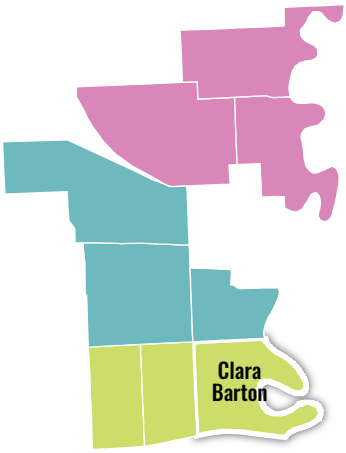
South Sub-Area Committee

South High / Lewis & Clark



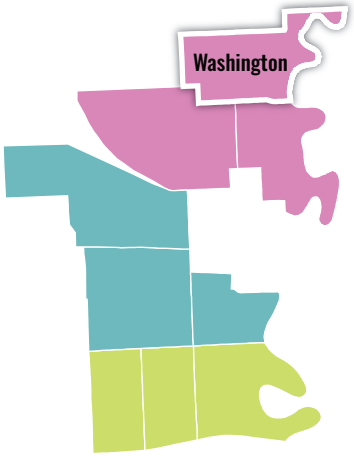
What's Working	What's Not Working
Many homes are in good shape and express pride of ownership	Noise from the Interstate is pervasive and noticeable
Recreational facilities are an asset (though some are rarely used)	Pedestrian safety is an issue on busy arterial roadways, especially near recreational facilities
Very convenient location	There are distressed-looking homes here and there
Little neighborhood libraries send friendly/neighborly signals	Some older apartment buildings are becoming problems (declining maintenance, behavioral issues)
Numerous commercial amenities nearby	Sidewalk conditions in winter are uneven (some property owners don't shovel)
South High School	
City services (road maintenance/clearing among them) are good	

Clara Barton



What's Working	What's Not Working
Schools are a big asset	13th Avenue and University Drive are not as safe and walkable as they could be
Visible uptick in young families over the past decade (transition from older homeowners to young families)	There are examples of infill development that are at odds with prevailing residential character
Many, and perhaps most, homes express pride of ownership and high standards of maintenance	Charming but distressed homes are noticeable in some pockets of the neighborhood
There are many nice gardens and well-landscaped homes	There is a good variety of housing types, but small homes have a tendency to be in rougher shape
The tree canopy is a major asset and contributes to neighborhood walkability	

Washington → Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."



Households of a Variety of Incomes and Backgrounds Live Here and Are Welcome

Affordable
Diversity in residents
Attainable housing
Post-war starter homes are valued
Diversity in housing

The Neighborhood Has More Owner-Occupied Units Than It Does Now

Mostly owner-occupied [units]
More owner-occupied housing

There is a Community Center or Local Coffee Shop/Restaurant Where Neighbors Can Meet and Socialize

Neighbors know each other

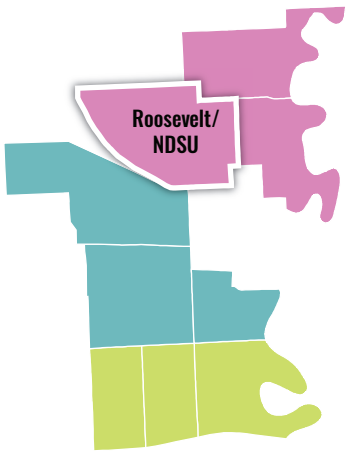
People Feel Safe

[It feels] safe [to walk around anytime]

New and Safe Bike Lanes Are Added to the Neighborhood Connecting it to the Downtown and Core Neighborhoods

Diverse transport

Roosevelt / NDSU → Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."



Public and private property exhibits pride and contributes to a positive image that attracts and keeps good neighbors

People take pride in their home and neighborhood
High standards for home maintenance are observed
Landlords take good care of their properties
Trees contribute strongly to the area's image and desirability

Neighbors and students interact in positive ways and have great places to meet and connect

Locally owned businesses are prominent and serve as meeting spots for neighbors
The community is involved; people are proactive and engaged about key issues
People get together and interact with each other
There are more commercial opportunities along University
Non-student residents make good use of NDSU facilities and resources
There is positive collaboration between the neighborhood and NDSU
Families and students live together and respect each other

Roosevelt / NDSU

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

Young families put down roots and support the schools as strong community anchors

Roosevelt and Horace Mann schools are both thriving and able to revert back to K-5
Younger families choose to live
Many single-family homes have been restored to family ownership
Owner-occupancy of single-family homes is well above 60%
The housing stock serves the needs of both families and singles

Land use and development patterns are harmonious and predictable

Businesses are thriving, but commercial activity does not interrupt/damage the character of residential blocks
NDSU students have good residential options, with neighborhood amenities to support lifestyle
Student housing reinforces/enhances neighborhood strength and desirability for both students and non-students
Parking is well-planned to meet the needs of NDSU (faculty, staff, students), residents, and businesses
A variety of neighborhood components fit together well and fell coherent/cohesive

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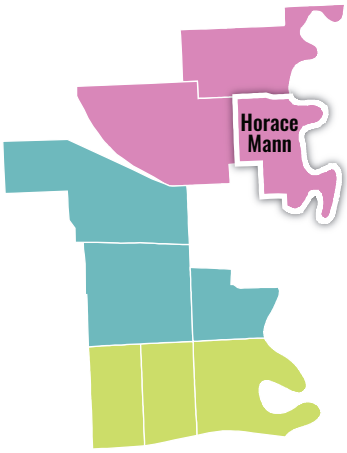
Horace Mann

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."



People Have Easy Walkable Access to Everything Needed in Daily Life, Including Access to Downtown

Cars could be optional
Safe walkable area to downtown
Easy walkable access

Everyone Feels Safe and Proud of the Area

Lower crime rate
Environmental design enhances safety
People feel safe

Neighbors Hang Out, Know Each Other, Collaborate and Play Together

Families are still attracted
Neighbors interact with each other often
People are out walking and interacting with each other
People want to live long-term, raising families and staying to host their grandchildren

People Are Confident in a Stable Future, Including Neighborhood Schools as Anchor Institutions

Our school continues to educate our kids
The future of the neighborhood is not in question
School continues as anchor

Horace Mann ⟶

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

People of a Range of Incomes, Ages, Households, Etc. Love Living Here and Find Opportunities to Do So

Increased home value
More senior housing
Property sells quickly (people want to live here)
Homes are resident owned
Focus on beautification, not gentrification
Preferred owners or responsible landlords
Continued affordable housing
Where young families can afford to live
Effort made to return homes built as single-families to single-family occupancy

Quality of Public and Private Property Shows that People are Passionate about Maintaining a Standard of Pride

Preferred owners or responsible landlords
Blight does not exist
Well-maintained and improved hoes, keeping historic integrity
Renters and landlords are held accountable
Significant owner reinvestment occurs
Stronger regulation on rental
Reinvestment is incentivized
Focus on beautification, not gentrification
House design approval on new construction and additions
Reduction of blight
Investment in property

People Enjoy a Small-Town Feeling and Live, Work and Play in an Attractive, Family-Friendly Environment

I can work, play and raise a family, etc.
I can live, play and shop in a beautiful, family-friendly neighborhood
Family and individual households live here
Fourth Avenue is as attractive as Broadway
Beautify feeder streets between downtown and core neighborhoods

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Madison / Unicorn Park ⟶

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

Households of a Variety of Incomes and Backgrounds Live Here and Are Safe and Welcome

A place for young families to grow/learn
Small school
Families want to live [here]

The Parks Are Upgraded and New Walking Trails Are Added

There is a giant unicorn [located in the park]
Great walking paths and greenspace for community activities

Madison / Unicorn Park ⟶

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

The Neighborhood Has a New Mixed-Use Zoning Code That Reflects Our Unique Character & There is Stronger Zoning Enforcement

Smart density and mixed-use strategies
Mixed blend of GC/LC/SR/MR/DMO [zoning]
Maintain clear and planned zoning
Better [zoning] enforcement: property upkeep, signage enforcement, maintenance
Industrial meets residential in a cohesive way
You go for a unique experience
Prescribed growth and pattern goals
Planned growth and downtown expansion
Tackle what is coming for our neighborhood
Infrastructure improvements: finish protectors, reduce utilities overhead

Private and Public Property Are Cared For and Show Pride

Residents are proud to belong to [our neighborhood] (like Hawthorne)

City Government Provides New Economic Incentives for Property Improvement & Business Development

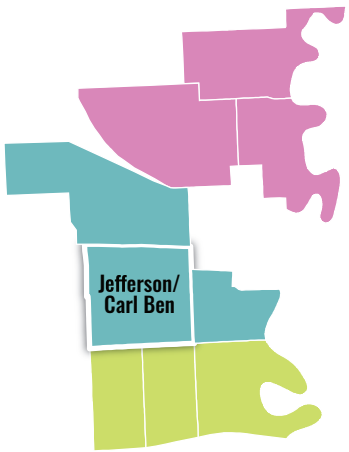
Strengthen the rehab program, reconstruction program and tax deferral program
Buyouts – prescribed
Utilize 'Opportunity Zone(s)' to full potential – properly
Incentivize small business investment

People Feel Safe & Want to Walk Around the Neighborhood

People walk everywhere / don't need a car
People actively explore vs. drive through
Safe place for kids of all ages to hangout
Residents and businesses feel safe
A place to know our neighbors
A safe place for teens to stay out of trouble

Jefferson / Carl Ben ⟶

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."



Public spaces feel safe and friendly and connect neighbors

Neighborhood parks are maintained to a high standard
Kids can play safely
Everyone can walk safely by themselves
Biking on the streets is safe
Walkable, bikeable, and easy to access through all modes of transportation
Everyone feels safe
Kids feel safe going to and playing in the park
There are more paths, areas to connect neighbors, nice fixtures, etc.
Community gardens are present and support healthy food systems

Jefferson / Carl Ben ⟶ **Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."**

Young families have opportunities to plant roots and become engaged neighbors

Young families and folks can create a home
Young families live
Homes are appealing and accessible to young families
Most blocks have block parties every summer

A strong identity and diverse options for homebuyers make it a community of choice

A destination in Fargo/Moorhead
Members of the neighborhood encourage friends to move in
There is regular, noticeable investment in private property
Most homes are maintained and owned instead of rentals
Diverse housing options
There is a unique identity
People are investing in community rather than commodity
People who live here want to keep living here for as long as they can

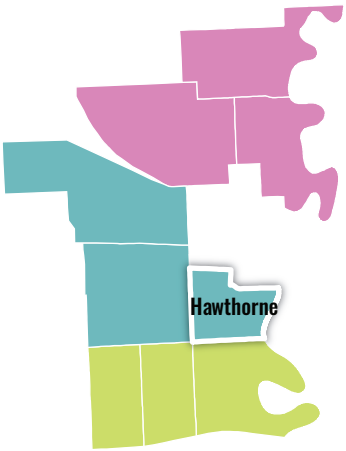
Diversity is valued and people feel safe and respected

Diversity is supported and celebrated
All cultures are respected and appreciated
Projects consider the diversity of the population so that all groups can benefit from improvements

Convenient commercial amenities add to quality of life and neighborhood health

There is a strong small business presence
Neighborhood businesses are thriving
There are convenient retail/service options nearby
Healthy food is easily available / everyone can access it

Hawthorne ⟶ **Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."**



Households of a Variety of Incomes and Backgrounds Want to Live Here and Are Safe and Welcome

Affordable housing is still available to both owners and renters
Young families choose to live here
School age children to elderly are welcome and a variety of demographics can afford to live here
Infill proposal consistency – commitments in public comment period are honored/ enforced
There is affordable opportunity for single-family housing
Families seek to move here
Both new and established families can afford to purchase homes
Demographics of neighborhood keep school thriving and open
Families can thrive with schools and parks
Young families with children and older can live in single family homes that they own

Hawthorne →

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

Outdoor Activities and Lifestyle are Easy and Safe

Children can safely walk and bike
Bike path interconnects in all directions
Walkability continues to increase; becomes a way of life year-round
There is efficient and safe bike infrastructure
No automobile is required
Free range kid friendly
Needs of pedestrians and cyclists prioritized over cars
Kids prefer to play/hang out throughout neighborhood

The Entire Neighborhood is an Attractive Destination for Homebuyers, Visitors and Others

There exists a greater sense of community and cohesiveness
The strong image of 8th expands to the rest of Hawthorne
Hawthorne has a positive identity/ desirability
Not only 8th Street has Trick or Treaters

Private and Public Property Are Cared for and Show Pride

Run down property is repaired
There is more home ownership as opposed to rental
The "Taser House" disappears
Housing codes enforced for more stable housing
Very few run-down houses
Code enforcement is a priority

The Historic, Tree-Lined Integrity of Hawthorne is Maintained and Celebrated

Its historic nature is embraced and nurtured (w respect to design and landscape)
Historic homes are preserved with continuous investment
There continues to be evident pride in the neighborhood
The elm trees survive

City Government Provides Top-Quality Services in a Timely, Transparent, Trustworthy Way

Roads and sidewalks are smooth
Infrastructure and snow removal systems are upgraded
Good, transparent, trustworthy city government services
Streets are finally repaired
Adjust zoning to meet needs of neighborhoods

People Feel Safe

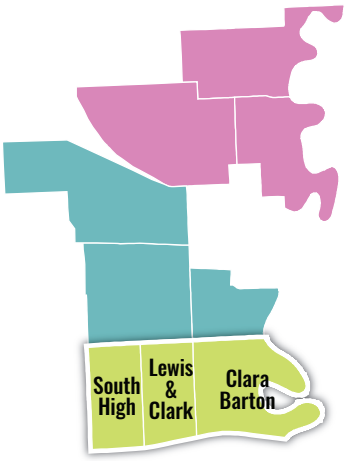
Criminals are fearful of entering
Crime is not an issue
Drug dealers avoid living
Safety remains a priority
Law-abiding citizens feel comfortable being here

Hawthorne → Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

Business Districts and Properties Integrate Well and Contribute to the Desirability of the Neighborhood

There are still diverse and vibrant businesses to walk to
RDO campus is not empty/is reused positively
Seamless integration of small businesses and homes
Multi-use properties enhance quality of life through increased neighborhood activation
Grocery store, fresh food available

South High, Lewis and Clark, and Clara Barton → Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."



Homes and Public Areas Show Pride and Help Promote a Positive Image for Neighborhoods

Every street has a beautiful tree canopy
Gardens are flourishing and flow together and are pollinator-friendly
Neighbors take pride in their homes
More children and families using parks and greenspace
People maintain property
Houses, both single family and multi-family, fit in aesthetically
Properties are well-maintained
Neighborhood shows pride of ownership
All yards will be inviting

Strong Buyers Choose to Live, Including Families with Children

Families continue to invest and plant their roots
People want to live here
Activity areas will be safe for children (streets, etc.)
Young families will want to live here
Families stay and grow roots

Neighbors Are Proud of Their Neighborhood and Confident in Its Future

Neighborhoods have a community feel and pride
Neighbors feel confident about investing their time, money and energy in the neighborhood

Neighbors Enjoy a Walkable Community

People can get where they need to without depending on a car
Walkable
Car traffic is well managed, in a way that protects pedestrians and cyclists
Kids still walk and bike

South High, Lewis and Clark, and Clara Barton

Fill in the Blank: "In 10 years, the neighborhood will be a place where _____."

Neighborhoods are Known for Being Neighborly

Neighbors gather for fun, and to help and support each other
People connect with each other
People take care of each other
People are neighborly
New residents, diverse residents are welcomed to community and feel comfortable here
People know their neighbors
People can gather in outdoor space
Neighbors are committed to the neighborhood and to being neighborly
People do things outside

There Are a Wide Variety of People and Housing Types/Price Ranges

Variety of good housing options
New residents, diverse residents are welcomed to community and feel comfortable here
Neighbors of diverse ages and family types
Diverse prices and incomes

People Feel Safe

People feel safe to live (including safe from traffic
Car traffic is well managed, in a way that protects pedestrians and cyclists
Safe and stable

Schools are Thriving, and Schools and Residential Areas Reinforce Each Other's Success

Schools are strong
School and residential areas reinforce each other
Schools are thriving and provide a "walk to school" experience