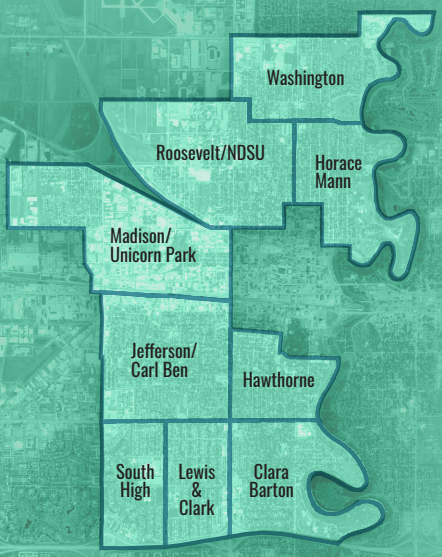
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City of Fargo CORE NEIGHBORHOODS Master Plan



City of Fargo
CORE NEIGHBORHOODS

Nine neighborhoods surrounding a resurgent downtown Fargo

Fargo's traditional 19th and 20th century neighborhood fabric

34,000 residents in 14,000 households

9,000 residential properties

Major institutions and cultural assets

A wide variety of pressures, challenges, and opportunities

JANUARY 2021

THE CITY OF Fargo FAR MORE

PREPARED BY czb

What is the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan?

Fargo's core neighborhoods are a vital part of the city's past, present, and future. As Fargo's original neighborhoods, they house many of its most important assets and offer a wide range of residential and economic opportunities to a growing and increasingly diverse region.

Appreciation of the roles that these neighborhoods play in the life of Fargo—and the issues that inevitably affect neighborhoods as they age and evolve—is the impetus for this plan. In the wake of the Downtown InFocus plan from 2018 and the earlier Go2030 Comprehensive Plan, the need for renewed and focused attention to the core neighborhoods has become broadly recognized.

Rather than a piecemeal approach to planning for the future of the core neighborhoods, a process was designed for residents and other stakeholders to come together and create a unified plan for the core that also responds to the opportunities and challenges in each neighborhood.

The result is a Core Neighborhoods Master Plan that achieves both a core-wide perspective for long-term policymaking and a neighborhood-level focus on desired outcomes and implementation.

Who was involved in developing the plan?

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan was shaped by the contributions of over 80 community volunteers who served on four project committees in 2020. Through an online survey and a month-long virtual open house to accommodate COVID-19 public health protocols, more than 400 other core neighborhood residents provided feedback on issues, assets, and potential actions to pursue in their neighborhoods.

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan is organized into **five interconnected parts to guide decision-making and action** by the City of Fargo, resident leaders, and a variety of other stakeholders from individual neighborhoods up to the regional and state levels.

Broad commonalities across Fargo's core—revealed throughout the planning process—resulted in a plan that offers a unified approach to decision-making and strategy development throughout the core. This is evident in the issues described in Part 1, in the neighborhood planning concepts covered in Part 2, and in the shared vision—driven by a set of common values and planning principles—presented in Part 3. All of these pieces are echoed in the blueprint for a core-wide toolkit of policies and programs in Part 4.

Successfully implementing the toolkit, however, will require respect for the distinct characteristics and goals of each of the core neighborhoods. Part 5 features implementation briefs for each neighborhood that call attention to these distinctions and how they can be used to inform implementation efforts.

PART 1

Key Issues, Conditions, and Trends

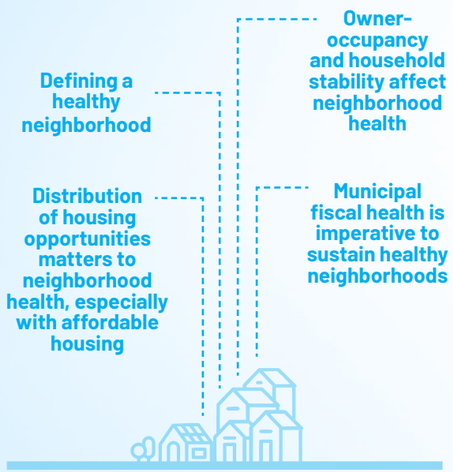
Four issues are singled out as priorities in Part 1 due to their currency, at some level, throughout the core neighborhoods. Of those four issues, the two that were voiced most frequently are directly related to the condition, maintenance, marketability, and impact of the core's aging housing stock.

PART 2

Critical Concepts for Neighborhood Planning in Fargo

Fargo's core neighborhoods feature residential areas developed late in the 19th century when the city was in its infancy, areas developed during the height of the postwar Baby Boom, and everything in between. There are also areas where new construction is a prominent part of the landscape.

This level of variety, and the life cycles of homes and social fabric that go with it, are part and parcel of having neighborhoods that have been around for generations. For a relatively young city like Fargo—where most people now live in much newer neighborhoods outside the core—this requires recognition and application of planning concepts that are especially relevant for aging neighborhoods.



PART 3

Vision, Values, and Planning Principles

On what basis should decisions on a wide range of issues be made? And how can those decisions be made in a manner that cumulatively moves Fargo and its core neighborhoods in their desired direction?

The values and planning principles in Part 3 provide a basic and flexible framework for evaluating opportunities and options—foreseeable and unforeseeable—that are likely to have either a direct or indirect impact on the health and vitality of core neighborhoods. Importantly, this framework makes it clear that many decisions that impact the core in some manner are often not recognizable at first blush as relevant to the core.

VALUES

- Character
- Sustainability
- Inclusion

PLANNNING PRINCIPLES

- Housing is balanced, diverse, and contributes to neighborhood character
- Neighborhoods are amenity-rich
- Settlement patterns do not inhibit economic mobility
- Growth pays for itself (including negative externalities)

PART 4

Core Neighborhoods Toolkit

1. **Development Regulation and Incentive Tools**
2. **Neighborhood Leadership & Engagement Tools**
3. **Housing Reinvestment Tools**
4. **Public Infrastructure Investment Tools**
5. **Public Health & Safety Tools**

Owing to the range of issues that affect the healthy and vitality of Fargo's core neighborhoods, a comprehensive toolkit will be needed to adequately address the opportunities and challenges facing the core.

The five components of the toolkit in Part 4 acknowledge current practices around each set of tools and recommend changes or additions to those practices. Rather than treating the toolkit as an a la carte menu, it will be critical to view them as parts that reinforce each other. In other words, deriving the full impact of one set of tools will not be possible without the others.

PART 5

Neighborhood Implementation Briefs

- **Assets**
- **Issues**
- **Conditions**
- **Vision**
- **Outcomes**
- **Implementation Guidance**

While there is much that each of the core neighborhoods have in common, there are significant differences that can and should be reflected by how decisions are made and how tools identified in Part 4 are applied.

The implementation briefs for each neighborhood describe the characteristics and trends that shape life in each neighborhood, the vision that residents have for their neighborhoods, and guidance for implementing the toolkit in a manner that responds to local conditions.

Essential Takeaways

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan provides detailed findings on a number of issues and provides broad direction of decision-making and the implementation of a specific set of tools. When boiled down to its essence, however, four essential points are critical for understanding what the core neighborhoods need and how to approach the work in coming years.

Preventive maintenance—to avoid more serious and widespread problems in 10 or 15 years—is what Fargo's core neighborhoods need in the 2020s

Blight is not widespread or overwhelming in the core neighborhoods today, but it is likely to become a bigger issue over time without careful intervention. While the housing market in the core is now generally strong, it would be a mistake to not induce property owners to catch-up on deferred maintenance costs while they can do so for pennies on the long-term dollar.

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan provides an approach to preventive maintenance to make sure that smart, and quite modest, investments in the near term save the community from having to make far costlier interventions in the future.

A comprehensive set of tools—not an isolated policy or two—will be needed to address the issues and opportunities that exist in the core neighborhoods

Neighborhoods, especially older ones, are complicated and influenced by a wide range of social, economic, and environmental factors. Such factors are rarely within the sole discretion of any single neighborhood or any single public agency to manage.

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan includes a toolkit for the core that covers land use policy, resident engagement, housing reinvestment, public infrastructure, and enforcement of basic health and safety codes. It also provides a set of values and planning principles to serve as a flexible decision-making framework.

A citywide—and even regional—perspective is needed to achieve core neighborhood goals and sustain broad public support for policies and investments

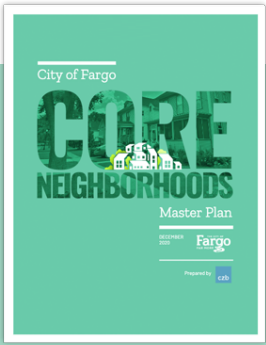
The core neighborhoods contribute much to the city and the Fargo-Moorhead region in terms of the desirability and diversity of the housing stock and the institutional, cultural, and recreational assets located there. The relative age of their housing also means they contain a vital repository of the city's less costly housing.

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan identifies investments in housing, regulatory systems, and infrastructure that make good long-term fiscal and strategic sense to the City of Fargo. It also identifies opportunities to rethink how growth occurs within and beyond the core, how affordable housing opportunities are distributed, and how to balance preservation and redevelopment in order to keep core neighborhoods and their housing markets vibrant and competitive.

Patience, risk tolerance, and collaboration are required for success to be achieved and sustained

While the task at hand for Fargo is preventive maintenance in its core neighborhoods, changes to current practices are needed and this is never easy or quick work. A tolerance for trying new and bold approaches to longstanding issues, and giving those approaches the time and space to be tested, will be required of City leaders, residents, and everyone else involved.

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan is designed to be implemented over the course of a decade and will rely on high levels of coordination, ingenuity, and trust to work. It recommends specific tools but leaves many details up to those doing the work to collectively design, test, and adapt those tools as needed.



Learn more

The Core Neighborhoods Master Plan is available online by visiting the City of Fargo's website at the link below. The Master Plan achieves both a core-wide vantage point and a localized focus on implementation, building upon the Downtown InFocus Plan and the Go2030 Comprehensive Plan.

https://fargond.gov/CoreNeighborhoodsPlan