



GROWTH PLAN 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

August 2024





How has Fargo been growing?

It has grown **rapidly**

The City of Fargo added more residents between 2010 and 2020—over 20,000—than it did during any previous decade. And between 2000 and 2020, the city’s population expanded by nearly 40%.

This rapid population growth is directly tied to the equally fast pace of job growth that Fargo has enjoyed in recent decades—growth largely attributable to Fargo’s role as a hub for health care, education, trade, and finance for a vast region.

Its growth patterns have **improved**

Before the Great Recession (2007-2009), Fargo’s population growth was accommodated mostly by low-density expansion of residential and commercial uses on virgin soil—especially to the south and southwest of the city’s core. While growth since 2010 has remained concentrated on Fargo’s edges, those greenfield growth patterns have been characterized by greater densities, limited leapfrogging, and more durable public infrastructure.

Combined with a rise in redevelopment and infill in already developed parts of Fargo—especially downtown—Fargo’s recent growth patterns have been more fiscally sustainable and a more efficient use of infrastructure and land.

It has **endured growing pains**

Improvements to Fargo’s growth patterns have been guided by good planning—including the 2007 Growth Plan and Go2030 Comprehensive Plan, which called for more infill development, more walkable development patterns, and more thoughtful consumption of greenfield land.

But tools to achieve Fargo’s growth intentions have not always kept pace. Outdated or out-of-sync facets of the 1998 Land Development Code, for example, have made it challenging to consistently achieve high-quality urban development beyond downtown.

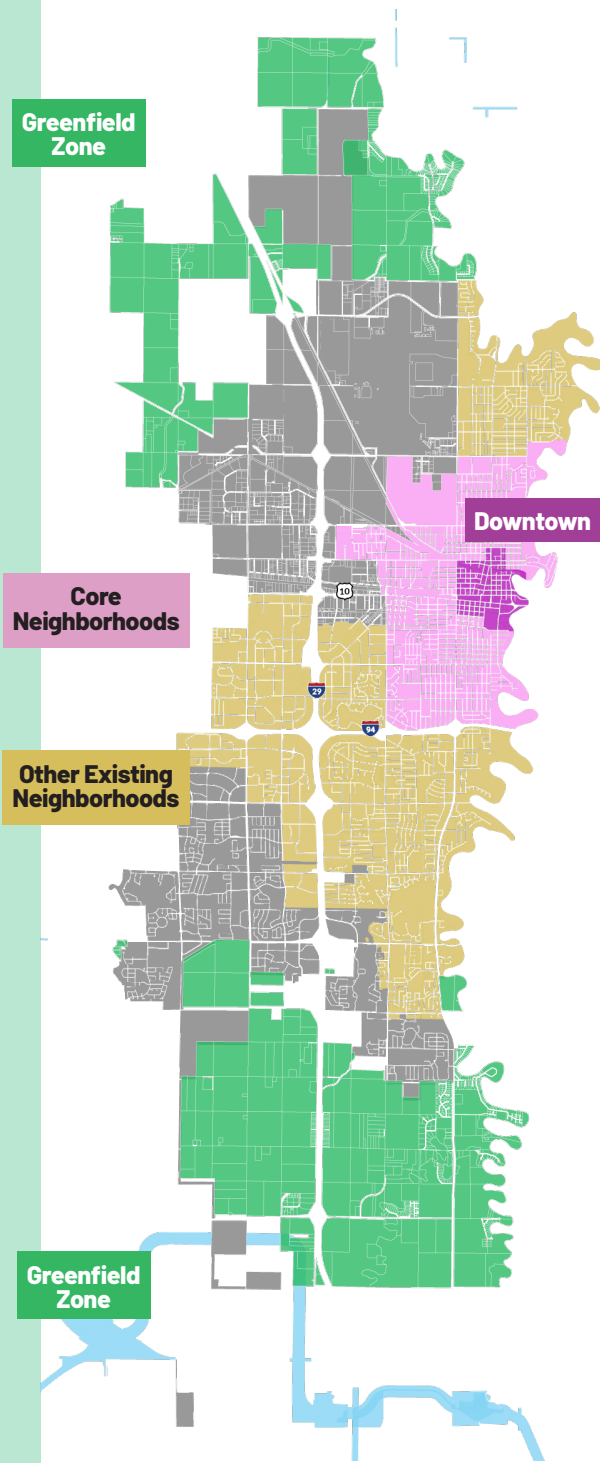
It faces the future—and critical choices—from a **position of strength**

Fargo is in an enviable position. Over a decade of strong growth in real property value, a revitalized downtown, a solution to chronic flooding, plenty of utility and infrastructure capacity—all of these put Fargo in the driver’s seat to shape its future.

Capitalizing on these strengths to fully achieve the community’s growth intentions, however, is not guaranteed. Overcoming the growing pains of recent years and putting systems in place that reflect Fargo’s goals and emerging stature will require important pivots to where and how growth happens.

What are Fargo's intentions for future growth?

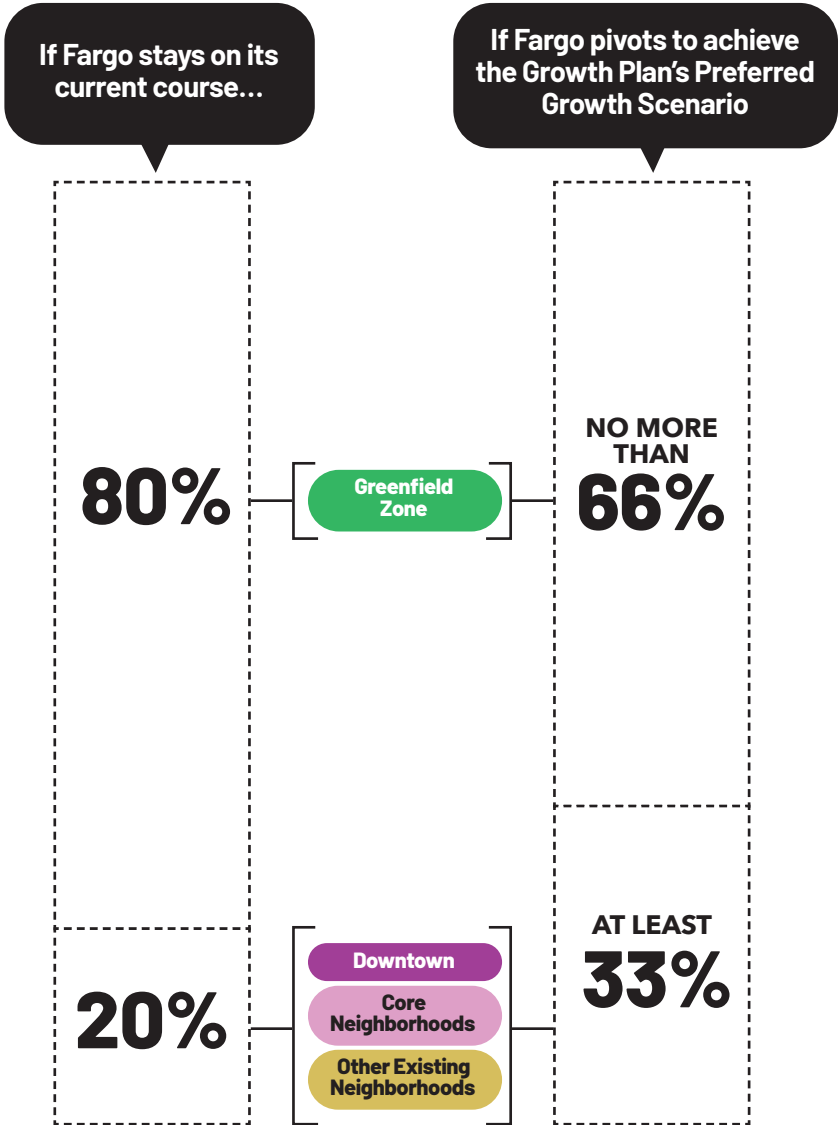
WHERE GROWTH HAPPENS



**Note: the gray areas on this map include non-residential land, recently developed residential land that is too new to be redeveloped before 2050, and areas where residential development is imminent and assumed to happen*

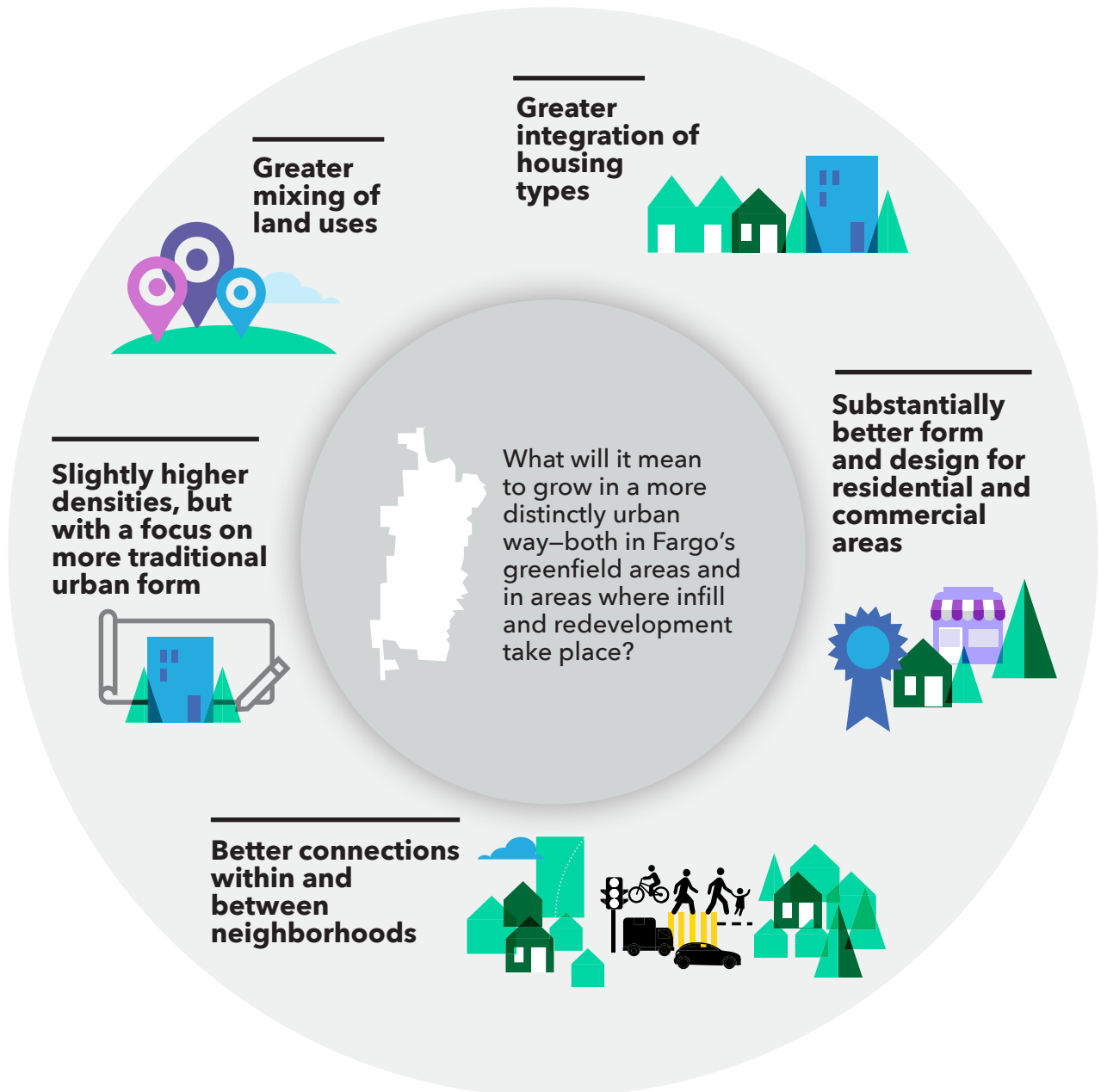
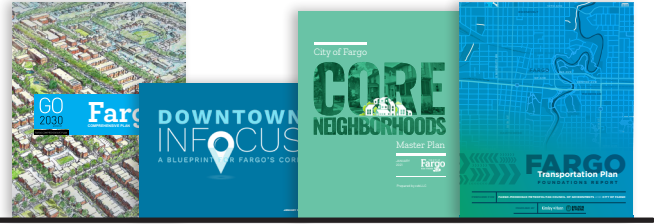
Population projections by the Fargo-Moorhead Metro COG suggest that the City of Fargo will grow by another 30,000 residents, or 15,000 households, by 2045. If Fargo continues to grow in a way that reflects growth trends since 2010, 80% of these new households would be added to greenfield areas in and near Fargo's current extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and 20% would be added to already developed areas such as downtown, the core neighborhoods, and other existing neighborhoods.

Fargo Growth Plan 2024 calls for a seemingly modest but significant pivot toward Practical Growth. Echoing the growth intentions outlined by the Go2030 Comprehensive Plan and more recent plans, it calls for a greater focus on infill development and redevelopment, so that at least 33% of future growth is absorbed by downtown, core neighborhoods, and other developed areas.



HOW GROWTH HAPPENS

A greater focus on infill development and redevelopment necessitates not just a pivot in where growth happens but how growth happens. Fargo Growth Plan 2024 calls for more distinctly urban growth patterns—mirroring those that shaped Fargo’s first 80 years and those that are prioritized by Go2030, Downtown InFocus, the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan, the Fargo Transportation Plan, and other recent signals of Fargo’s growth intentions.



What will it take to achieve Fargo's goals?

Fargo's growth intentions cannot be fully realized without the policy and financial tools that will make them both possible and a priority. While Fargo's growth patterns have improved since 2010—with higher densities and greater levels of redevelopment resulting in growth that is more urban (in some places) and fiscally responsible—the community's policies have not kept up with its aspirations.

Fully aligning Fargo's policy systems with its growth intentions will require that new growth models be used to clearly communicate Fargo's expectations, and that a predictable path to approval and assistance is provided to projects that meet Fargo's expectations and advance the types of places that Fargo wants to cultivate.

Four Models to Communicate Fargo's Context-Sensitive Expectation

1

THE FIRST MODEL



Fargo's Transect

The first model is based on the urban-to-rural transect—a method that categorizes development patterns into six general zones of rising intensity from the rural edge to the urban core (downtown).

This model has been adapted to demonstrate existing patterns of development intensity in Fargo and Cass County, and to show how those patterns would change if Fargo's growth intentions are realized in the coming decades.

2

THE SECOND MODEL



Place Types

Fargo's transect provides the scaffolding for the second model—a system of place types that describe the general character of places that currently exist in Fargo and, more importantly, of places that Fargo intends to nurture and develop as it grows.

Each of Fargo's identified place types fits into one or more of the six transect zones and can be described by a combination land uses, densities, and infrastructure requirements—providing more flexibility and a greater focus on form than a traditional land use plan.

3

THE THIRD MODEL



Growth Grid

A Growth Grid model is proposed to organize and sequence future greenfield development in Fargo's ETJ, where up to 66% of future growth is intended to occur. The model includes prototypes that describe place type compositions and corridor treatments for new areas that will help to achieve good urban form on Fargo's edges.

4

THE FOURTH MODEL



Growth Centers

A Growth Centers model is proposed to direct infill and redevelopment in existing parts of Fargo into a network of distinct nodes with higher density and mixed-use development patterns.

The model includes a hierarchy of growth centers - regional, community, and neighborhood - to provide jobs, services, and recreational opportunities to all parts of the city.

A Commitment to By-Right Approval and the Promotion of Optimal Growth



By-Right Approval

Clear expectations tied to a predictable system of approvals are key parts of Fargo’s approach to Practical Growth Management. Under this approach, development that conforms to the place type Fargo is cultivating at a given location—according to transparent rules laid out in a new land development code—will be eligible for By-Right Approval through administrative processes.



Optimal Growth

The place type conformance test needs to be passed for a development to be eligible for By-Right Approval, but that will not be sufficient for a project to receive assistance or incentives. The City of Fargo will actively promote projects only if they represent “optimal growth” - a threshold that refers to strategic locations and the provision of well-defined public benefits.

Updates to Tools and Processes

Fargo will need to update and upgrade specific tools, policies, and processes to put this Growth Plan’s Framework for Practical Growth Management into practice. Until changes are made, implementation can only be expected to occur partially and inconsistently, with gaps remaining between what the community says it wants and what its systems are capable of delivering.

Three areas for proposed changes are outlined in detail at the conclusion of the Growth Plan.

The three areas are:



A New Land Development Code



Changes to Financial and Economic Development Practices



Enhanced Coordination of Public Infrastructure and Facilities



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