



FARGO GROWTH PLAN 2024



August 2024



Planning
Consultants



Acknowledgements

City Commission

Mayor Timothy Mahoney
Denise Kolpack
Dave Piepkorn
Arlette Preston
John Strand
Michelle Turnberg

Planning Commission

Joseph Cecil
Paul Gleye
John Gunkelman
Amy Hass
Jennifer Holtz
Tyler Mohs
Dawn Morgan
Art Rosenberg
Thomas Schmidt
Rocky Schneider
Brett Shewey
Scott Stofferahn
Maranda Tasa

Advisory Committee

Lucruchia Alford King
Mike Almendinger
Jason Benson
Dave Bietz
Chris Brungardt
Joe Burgum
Steve Burian
Amber Carlton
David Cook
Don Dabbert, Jr
Shawn Dobberstein
Cale Dunwoody
Jason Eid
Susan Faus
Heather Fischer
Shara Fischer
Tracy Jordre
Rupak Gandhi
Katherine Grindberg
James Hand
Cole Hansen
Christine Holland
Jennifer Holtz
Karla Isley
Bryce Johnson
Elizabeth Kosel
Michael Love
Deb Mathern
Michael Maddox
Dr. Tracie Newman
Adrienne Olson
Konrad Olson
Joel Paulson
Arlette Preston
Joe Raso
Michael Redlinger
Kim Sattel
Rocky Schneider
Suzanne Senske
Cody Severson
Phil Siek
Beth Slette
Melissa Sobolik
Tom Soucy
Taylor Syvertson
Maranda Tasa
Chris Wilson
Jon Youness
Mike Zimney

Technical Committee

Levi Bachmeier
Jason Benson
Dave Bietz
Nathan Boerboom
Chad Brousseau
Brenda Derrig
Nicole Crutchfield
Ben Dow
Michael Ellingson
Katie Ettish
Jenn Faul
Desi Fleming
Jeremy Gordon
Troy Hall
James Hand
Cole Hansen
James Hausauer
Tom Knakmuhs
Michael Maddox
Bekki Majerus
Paul Mattys
Mark Miller
Scott Olson
Shawn Ouradinik
Shawn Paschke
Dan Portlock
Michael Redlinger
Ahmed Shiil
Tom Soucy
Michael Splonkowski
Steve Sprague
Travis Stefanowicz
Susan Thompson
Mark Williams
David Zibolski



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Strategic Economics
MRB Group
Code Studio

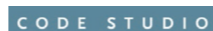
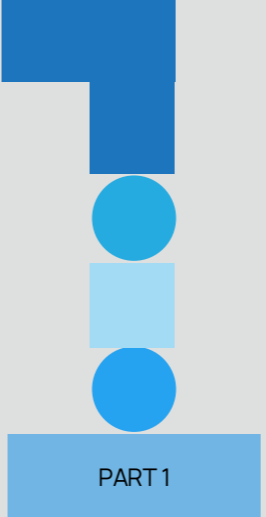


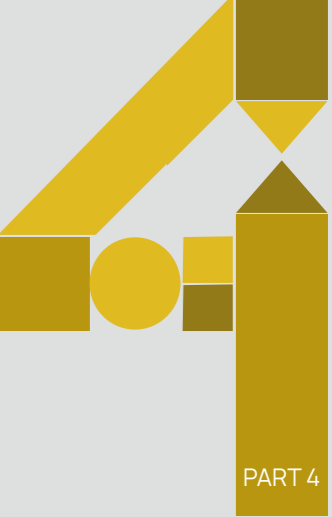


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Introduction

Fargo Growth Plan 2024 is a master plan to help navigate the Fargo community through a critical time in its development history.

Coming on the heels of a decade when Fargo added over 20,000 residents—more than any previous decade—and experienced rapid growth on its edges as well as an uptick in downtown reinvestment, Fargo now faces pressure on a number of fronts, each an opportunity and a test.

Pressure to Accelerate Southward

When completed in 2027, the FM Area Diversion Project will dramatically lower the risk of flooding in protected areas. And if recent drivers of growth—strong employment and household expansion—persist and create demand for more development of all types, there will be pressure to satisfy most of this demand to the south and southwest of Fargo’s core, the favored direction of growth for the last half century.



Indeed, the more than 10 contiguous square miles in Fargo’s southern extraterritorial jurisdiction seems destined for this next chapter, poised to be filled in, block by block, with new homes, apartments, and commercial centers.

Pressure to Constrain and Conserve

While the diversion project begins to relieve much of Fargo and its neighbors from the threat of regular flooding, it will also introduce conditions that give protected areas a big advantage over unprotected lands beyond the project. This unofficial growth boundary will change how land is viewed, going from a seemingly limitless commodity to one that is undisputedly finite.



In the near term, there will be pressure to constrain the development of this already constrained supply of remaining, undeveloped land. Some of this pressure will come from an environmental perspective. Some will come with an eye towards improving Fargo’s fiscal strength by limiting inefficient sprawl. Ultimately, most of the pressure will come from the simple economics of supply and demand, and the drive to make a commodity more valuable by limiting its supply.

Pressure to Grow Inward

Constraining the supply of developable land would make land throughout Fargo more valuable, too, not just shovel-ready land in the extraterritorial jurisdiction. And these pressures will support the math of redevelopment, as will the reality of land on Fargo’s edges becoming more expensive. In fact, the more land is constrained, the more the math of redevelopment will not just be generally supportable, but able to finance higher and higher quality.



To satisfy a portion of growing demand through redevelopment, pressure will be strongest on the edges of downtown and other desirable areas—land that is adjacent to high-demand blocks but has lower acquisition costs. This will create tension with existing occupants of transitional blocks.

Pressure to grow inward will also come in the form of increasingly recognizable opportunity costs—the costs of not stimulating enough reinvestment in older parts of Fargo to offset the accumulation of deferred maintenance and the creeping presence of blight.

Pressure to Grow. Period.

There will also be a less tangible pressure on Fargo in the years to come—a pressure to view growth as automatically positive and its absence, or even its deceleration, as a fate to avoid. Fargo has never not grown, but a slowdown in the 1960s and 70s led to a pro-development policy posture that has been accepted for so long that it is barely perceptible. It is a posture that errs on the side of “making something happen” because something is always better than nothing.



This pressure will be particularly felt during slow periods in the years ahead, whatever the causes of slowness may be. And it would be acutely felt if anticipated rates of population growth fall short due to unescapable demographic changes that are now likely to blunt population growth nationwide.

This Growth Plan is a deliberate effort to contend with and weigh these and other pressures. It establishes and communicates clear intent about what kind of development should go where so that—above and beyond growth for growth’s sake—the community can be confident that development and redevelopment in the coming decades will be consistently aligned with Fargo’s growth intentions: to be a city that grows in a more urban, balanced, and practical manner.

What is a growth plan?

Fargo’s previous growth plans—including the last one it adopted in 2007—have been used to provide the City with special guidance on land use and infrastructure decisions arising from Fargo’s rapid growth. Most of the attention of previous plans centered on Fargo’s extraterritorial jurisdiction and how to effect the orderly development of those lands. The 2007 plan has thus been used to influence the location of growth and land uses in the ETJ for nearly 20 years.

This growth plan addresses growth from a broader perspective—one informed by Go2030, Fargo’s most recent comprehensive plan (2013), which calls for greater attention to infill development and the quality of development citywide. Go2030’s priorities have been elaborated upon in subsequent years by supplemental planning work, including the Downtown InFocus Master Plan and, most recently, the Fargo Transportation Plan.

Consequently, Fargo Growth Plan 2024 is a plan to guide future development of land in Fargo’s ETJ but also a plan to guide the intentional balancing of future growth between the ETJ and parts of Fargo that have already been developed.

It is informed by the growth intentions outlined by previously adopted plans, reflects updates to those intentions from conditions in the early 2020s, and will help to shape future planning and policy-making on a number of fronts, including:

-  Fargo’s Land Development Code (LDC)
-  Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs) for public infrastructure
-  Economic development planning
-  District planning for areas of targeted growth
-  Planning for public facilities

A community-wide process



Development of the Fargo Growth Plan 2024 was informed and guided by the Fargo community through several methods of engagement, including:

An **advisory committee of local stakeholders** worked closely with project consultants and City staff to help identify key issues, interpret findings, and guide the planning process.

Advisory committee members hosted **Kitchen Table Conversations**—small, facilitated discussions that aided the identification of important issues and how the community makes decisions about land development and growth.

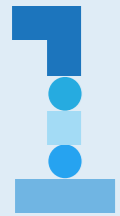
Online surveys in June/July and October/November 2023 sought broad public feedback on important questions that shaped the plan and its decision-making framework.

Open houses in June and October 2023 provided an opportunity for Fargoans to learn about the planning process and have in-depth conversations with project consultants, Fargo staff, and advisory committee members about issues important to them.



How to use this plan

Fargo Growth Plan 2024 is divided into four parts that cover the conditions that have shaped growth in Fargo through the present day, the community's intentions for growth, a framework for growth management that mirrors those intentions, and the changes that will need to be implemented to existing policies and practices to put that framework into action.

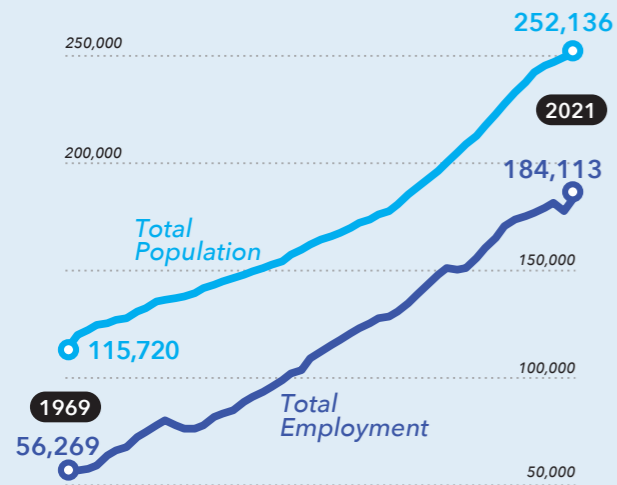


PART 1

Fargo's Growth History

Part 1 establishes a shared understanding of historical and recent growth patterns, the forces and systems that have shaped those patterns, and the implications of remaining on or deviating from Fargo's current path.

Steady Employment and Population Growth in Fargo-Moorhead Area, 1969-2021



Key Takeaways

- Fargo is planning for the future from a position of genuine strength
- Growth patterns have improved over the past 10-15 years
- Implementation of growth-related goals has been constrained by missing or outdated tools
- The FM Diversion creates urgency to "get it right," especially in the south
- Opportunities to be proactive about redevelopment will be important to seize



PART 2

Intentions for Future Growth

Part 2 defines the growth intentions that emerged during the planning process and that serve as the basis for the development of tools, policies, and processes to implement those intentions.

Fargo's intentions for growth are grounded by a commitment to Practical Growth, which will be echoed in decisions that demonstrate:

- Far-sightedness
- Fiscal responsibility
- Good stewardship
- Entrepreneurialism

Fargo's Preferred Growth Scenario reflects its application of principles for practical growth

Where Fargo Will Grow

66% No more than two-thirds of Fargo's growth should be absorbed by greenfield areas, a sharp reduction from previous periods of growth



33% At least one-third of Fargo's growth should be accommodated by downtown, core neighborhoods, and other developed areas



How Fargo Will Grow

No matter where growth is happening, it will be notably different from the late 1900s and early 2000s for having:

- Substantially better form and design in neighborhoods and along commercial corridors
- Greater mixing of different land uses and amenities
- Greater integration of different housing types
- Better connections between neighborhoods
- An urban form that expands the range of travel options for Fargo residents



PART 3

Framework for Practical Growth Management

Part 3 lays out a policy framework that will shift Fargo in the direction of its intentions for growth by clearly expressing what Fargo can say "yes" to. The models within the framework all emphasize growth patterns that are more urban in character—more intensity, greater mixing—than recent patterns.

Practical Growth Management Components

Context-Sensitive Expectations

Fargo's growth intentions, and how those intentions relate to specific settings in existing parts of Fargo and on its edges, are communicated through four interconnected models for growth:

- Fargo's Transect
- Place Types
- Growth Grid
- Growth Centers



By-Right Development

A commitment to a streamlined system of by-right approvals ensures that projects that align with Fargo's growth intentions—and its clearly communicated expectations—receive the predictability and transparency of automatic administrative approvals.



Optimal Growth

Projects eligible for by-right approval are not automatically eligible for assistance or incentives. Only projects that represent "optimal" growth under the Framework for Practical Growth Management are actively helped by the City of Fargo as a way to encourage and promote developments that best express Fargo's intentions.



PART 4

Implementation Steps

Part 4 calls attention to the tools, policies, and processes that will need to be modified to successfully implement the Framework for Practical Growth Management. It recognizes that while the growth intentions described in Part 2 are not substantially different from the visions described by plans of the past 20 years, critical pivots to Fargo's growth systems are necessary to bring them into fuller alignment with Fargo's goals.

Tools, Policies, and Practices in Need of Attention



A New Land Development Code



Changes to Financial and Economic Development Practices



Enhanced Coordination of Public Infrastructure and Facilities

Outcomes to Measure and Monitor

At a basic level, Fargo will know if the Framework for Practical Growth Management is working—or if it needs adjustments over time—by measuring and tracking just a few key metrics.

- Is the distribution of growth outlined in Part 2 (66% in greenfield areas / 33% in already developed areas) being achieved?
- Are at least 95% of projects approved under a revamped LDC receiving by-right approval?
- Is the full market value of real estate growing at levels that reflect healthy value generation?

Glossary of Terms

The following technical terms are found in one or more places throughout this document and are compiled and defined here to assist the reader with understanding core concepts of the plan.

Term	Definition
By-Right Development	A land development process that allows proposed projects to get automatic, administrative approval if it conforms to/with a community's stated and codified intentions for growth.
Context-sensitivity	Planning and land development that recognizes differentiation in physical character from one district to another and aims to reinforce the character that exists, or is intended for, a given location.
Density	A reference to the intensity of development in a given area, usually measured as population or housing units per acre; a key characteristic of the built environment, regulated by zoning, that influences land consumption, access to services, and infrastructure costs.
Diversion	Shorthand reference to the FM Area Diversion Project. When completed in 2027, the project and its system of flood mitigation infrastructure will significantly limit flood risks in much of the area it protects while also acting as an informal growth boundary.
Extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)	A practice authorized by the North Dakota Century Code that allows municipalities to regulate land beyond their corporate limits in order to promote orderly land use planning. The Fargo ETJ, as illustrated in this plan, has been authorized fully and wholly as Fargo's ETJ.

Term	Definition
Greenfield development	Development that occurs on land not previously occupied by an urbanized land use, such as agricultural fields or fallow farmland; also known as undisturbed or virgin soil.
Growth	Development or redevelopment that helps the city absorb more population and more economic activity.
Incentives	Any policy tool that intends to make certain investment behaviors or development outcomes more desirable to the private sector. In the context of this Growth Plan, an incentive is any tool that reduces the costs or risks shouldered by the private sector in order to induce activity that achieves community goals.
Infill development	Development that occurs on a parcel of land in an area that has already been built-out. The site may be vacant due to demolition of a prior structure, it may currently be used as a surface parking lot, and it may have been passed over during an earlier wave of building.
Land Development Code (LDC)	The formal name for the ordinance in Fargo that regulates land use and development, as well as signage and subdivisions; unofficially known as the zoning code.
Land Use	The specific use categorization given to a building—such as residential, commercial, and industrial—based on the nature of the property's occupancy. Historically, zoning codes have regulated what can go where primarily on the basis of land use.

Term	Definition
Leapfrog	A growth pattern whereby new development skips over undeveloped land, creating gaps in the urban footprint that may result in infrastructure inefficiencies.
Mixed-Use	A land use categorization that recognizes multiple uses within the same structure or on the same parcel of land, such as an apartment building with ground-floor commercial space.
Place Types	A system, related to the transect, that categorizes locations within a city according to a comprehensive set of characteristics that include land uses, density, transportation and infrastructure systems, and overall function.
Redevelopment	Development that takes place on a parcel or parcels that are already developed, resulting in a higher level of utilization and market value. Redevelopment may require demolition, repurposing, or reuse in some combination.
Special assessments	A financial tool used in Fargo that pays for new or reconstructed infrastructure by placing an assessment on the properties that benefit from the improvement.
Sprawl	The outward spread of lower density development at the edges of a city, usually in a manner that seems haphazard, unplanned, or poorly managed.

Term	Definition
Suburban form, or suburban character	A form of development that tends to exhibit lower densities and greater separation of land uses. This form of development became dominant after World War II with the widespread adoption of automobiles and single-use zoning codes.
Transect, urban	A method of analysis that categorizes parts of a community based on how they fit along an urban-to-rural continuum.
Urban form, or urban character	A form of development that tends to exhibit higher densities and greater mixing or integration of land uses. This form of development predated the rise of suburban forms in the middle of the 20th century and is often referred to as "traditional" urban form. In Fargo, downtown and parts of the core neighborhoods reflect this form of development, as do some newer areas that have consciously adopted a more traditional form.
Walkable	A walkable place is one where people can easily and safely access services and amenities by foot; a 15-minute or one-mile walk is the rule of thumb for a distance that is reasonably walkable.



Fargo's Growth History

Fargo is in the middle of its 16th consecutive decade of growth—a history of growth that has been noteworthy for its steadiness, especially in recent decades. As Fargo looks ahead to a future that may bring continued growth, what can it learn from the past, especially from the forces that have driven and shaped growth so far in the 21st century?

Part 1 distills the historical growth patterns that are visible and influential in Fargo today and pays special attention to the nature and impacts of recent growth and how they provide direction for Fargo's next steps.

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Historical Growth Patterns

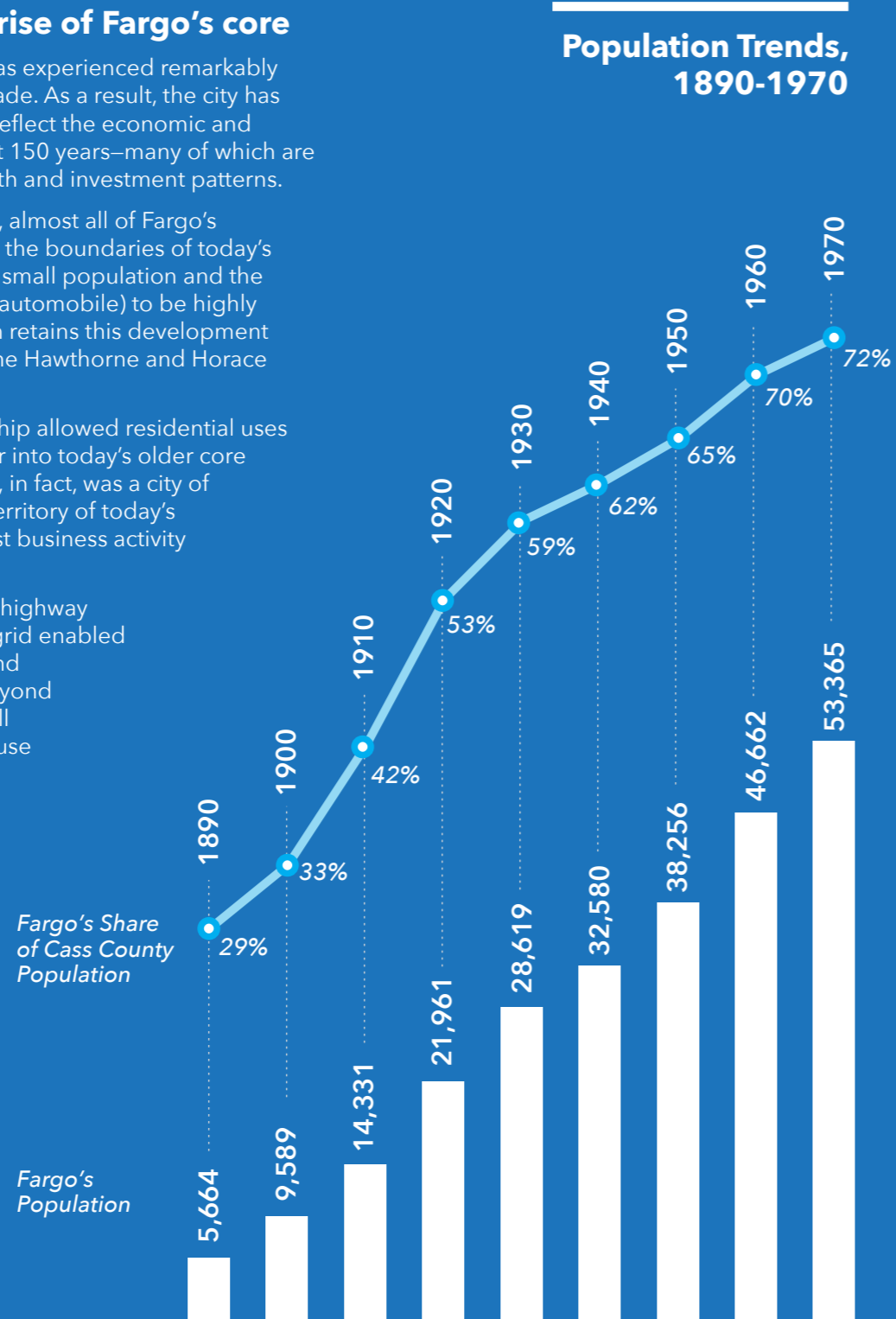
Steady growth and the rise of Fargo's core

Since its founding in 1871, Fargo has experienced remarkably steady growth from decade to decade. As a result, the city has visible layers of development that reflect the economic and technological influences of the past 150 years—many of which are still relevant to contemporary growth and investment patterns.

Up through the 1910s, for example, almost all of Fargo's growth was confined within or near the boundaries of today's downtown—a reflection of the city's small population and the need for most urban activities (pre-automobile) to be highly compressed and mixed. Downtown retains this development pattern today, as do the edges of the Hawthorne and Horace Mann neighborhoods.

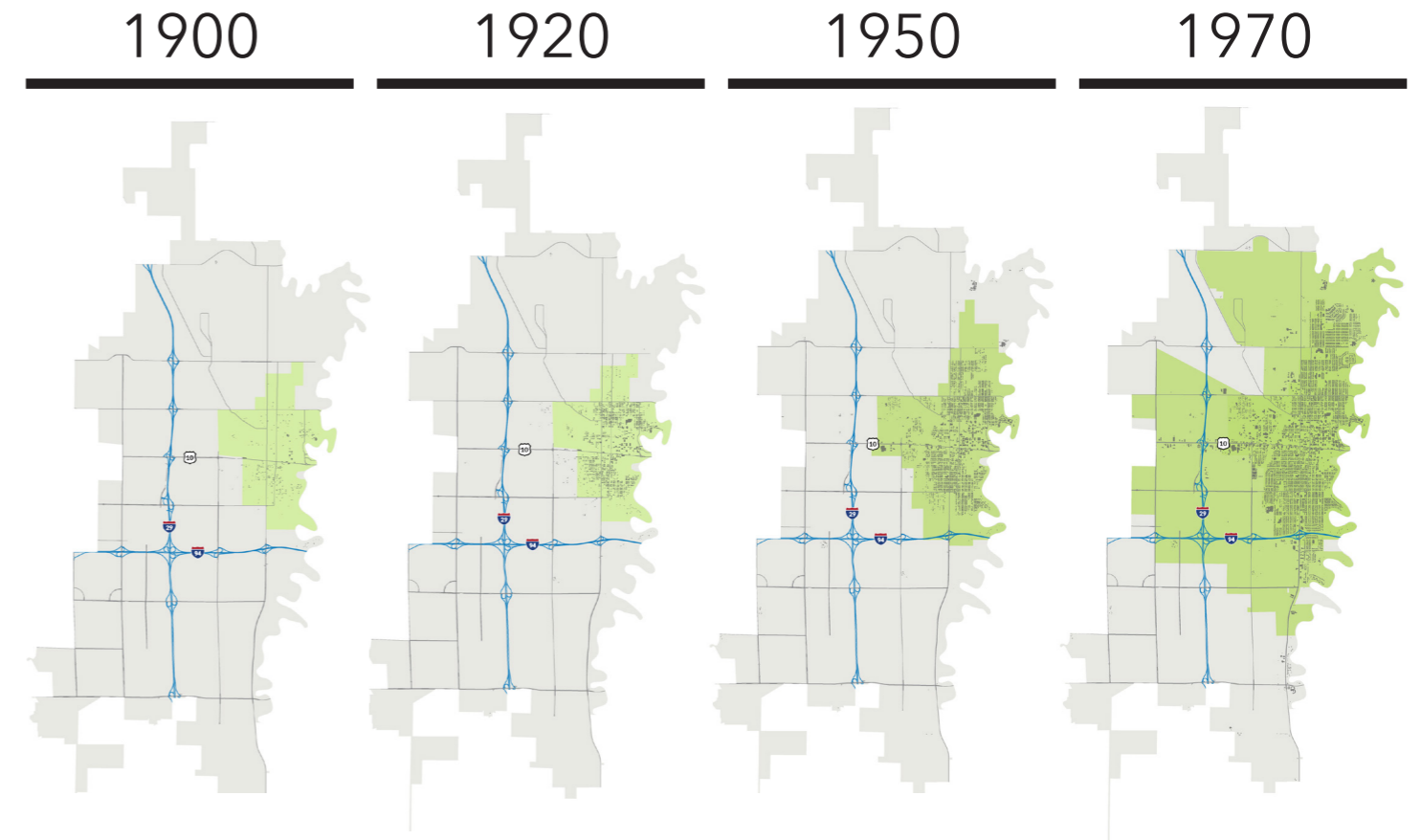
By the 1920s, growth in car ownership allowed residential uses to begin to spread out much farther into today's older core neighborhoods. The Fargo of 1950, in fact, was a city of 40,000 that occupied most of the territory of today's core neighborhoods, although most business activity remained in or near downtown.

Between 1950 and 1970, road and highway expansions and a better electrical grid enabled residential—and now commercial and industrial—uses to begin spilling beyond the core. Development densities fell dramatically as single-story, single-use commercial properties surrounded by parking became common.



Evolution of Fargo's Development Footprint Through 1970

Fargo's 2024 boundaries
Modern boundaries and highway network included for comparative purposes



Acres Inside City Boundaries	2,860	2,860	4,974	16,467		
Population	9,589	21,961	38,256	53,365		
Total Developed Acres	201	633	1,882	6,111		
Persons Per Developed Acre	48	35	20	9		
Persons Per Newly Developed Acre	1900-1920: 29		1920-1950: 13		1950-1970: 3.6	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; czb analysis of historical development footprint via UrbanFootprint

Modern Growth Patterns

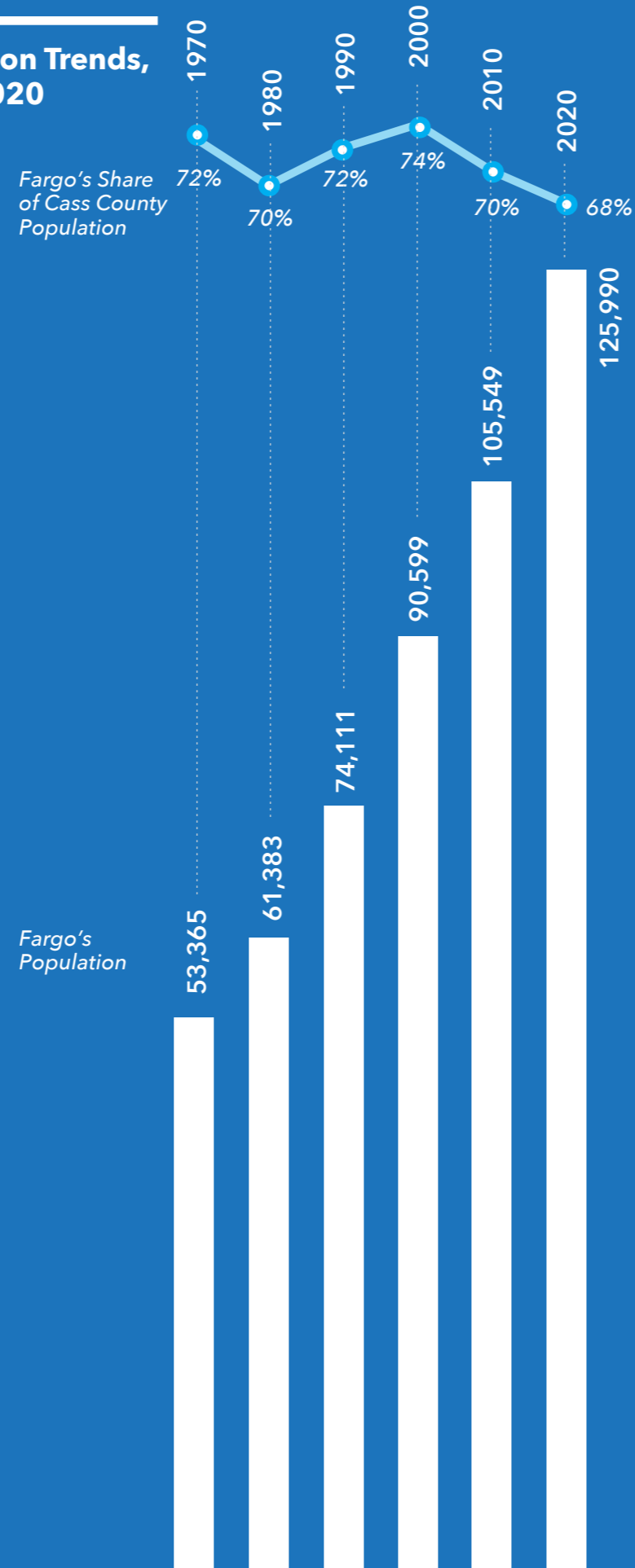
Growth accelerates and pushes new development to the south and west

As late as 1980, Fargo's population was still small enough that the vast majority of its residents and businesses remained north of I-94 and east of I-29. The edges of Fargo's residential development at that time extended northward into the Longfellow, Northport, and Trollwood neighborhoods, southward into Lincoln and Brunsdale, and westward into Prairiewood and Westgate. West of I-29, the West Acres Mall had established a beachhead of commercial activity, industrial uses continued to spread westward along the Burlington Northern line, and the City of West Fargo had emerged as a distinct residential and commercial hub along Main Avenue.

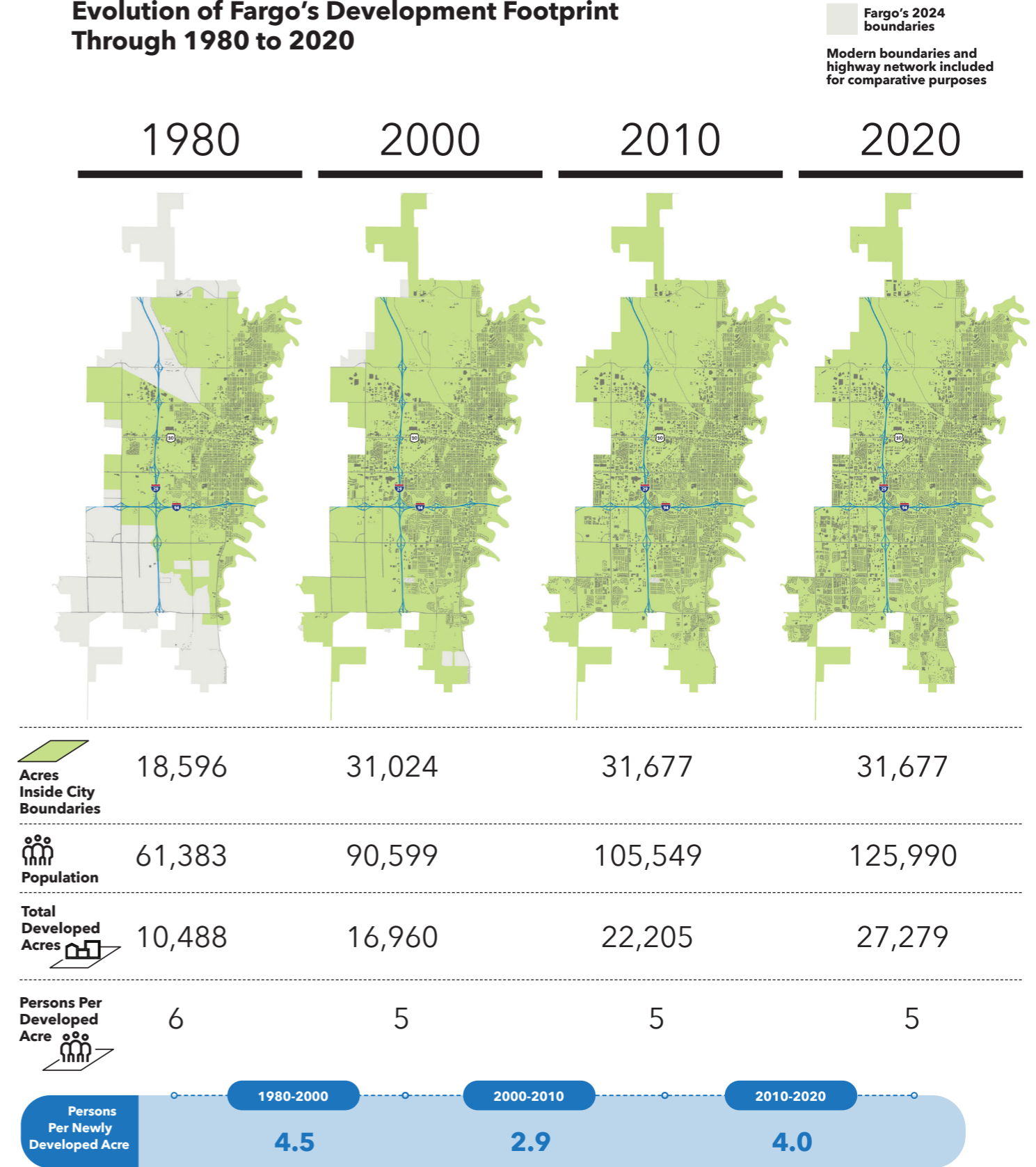
Since then, Cass County's population has more than doubled, and most of that growth has been accommodated beyond the interstates. Rapid annexation during the 1990s greatly expanded Fargo's boundaries, allowing it to absorb a significant share of this growth. Owing to floodplains, the airport, and other factors that limited the spread of development to the north, most of Fargo's new growth occurred to the south and southwest of the established core.

Between 2000 and the Great Recession, new subdivisions and commercial complexes began occupying spaces south of I-94 and west of I-29, following in the footsteps of the new Microsoft campus. After the Great Recession, overall development densities saw an uptick as subdivisions in this area were completed, multi-family housing complexes became a more dominant component of greenfield development, and as major new activity hubs—such as Sanford Medical Center—were completed. Importantly, post-2010 growth patterns also included reinvestment in already developed parts of Fargo—especially downtown.

Population Trends, 1970-2020



Evolution of Fargo's Development Footprint Through 1980 to 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; czb analysis of historical development footprint via UrbanFootprint

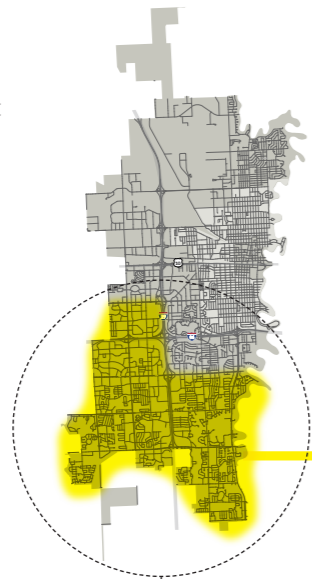
Rapid growth to the south and southwest is reflected in all land uses

Development and investment in the south and southwest of Fargo's core areas in recent years—creating a city with an increasingly elongated, north-south orientation—has had many facets. One of the more obvious is this area's role in the expansion of Fargo's single-family housing supply. With over 3,000 homes constructed here between 2010 and 2020, it accounted for 96% of all new single-family dwellings in the city.

But the period between 2010 and 2020 included an important residential pivot. Due to more cautious lending after the U.S. housing bubble of the 2000s, as well as demographic changes, multi-family housing complexes became the largest part of new residential development in this part of Fargo. Over 4,400 apartments were added here after 2010—far more than were added anywhere else in the city, including downtown.

In addition to residential development, locations in the south and southwest also dominated the expansion of office and retail space in Fargo. Just over a million net new square feet of office space was added here, or 96% of net new office space citywide. And 80% of net new retail space occurred in this part of Fargo (which includes West Acres).

While the bulk of additional industrial space in Fargo continued to concentrate to the northwest of the city's core (close to railroads and the airport), the south and southwest still accounted for one-third of net new industrial space between 2010 and 2020.



The Southwest accounted for over 90% of Fargo's net population growth between 2010 and 2020

	Space or units added between 2010 and 2020	Share of space added citywide
Single-family homes	3,052 housing units	96%
Multi-family apartments	4,441 housing units	76%
Net additional Retail space	358,000 sq ft	80%
Net additional Office space	1.05M sq ft	96%
Net additional Industrial space	393,000 sq ft	32%

Source: Analysis of net real estate production for multi-family, retail, office, and industrial space by Strategic Economics using data from Costar; analysis of permitted single-family production by czb using City of Fargo permit database

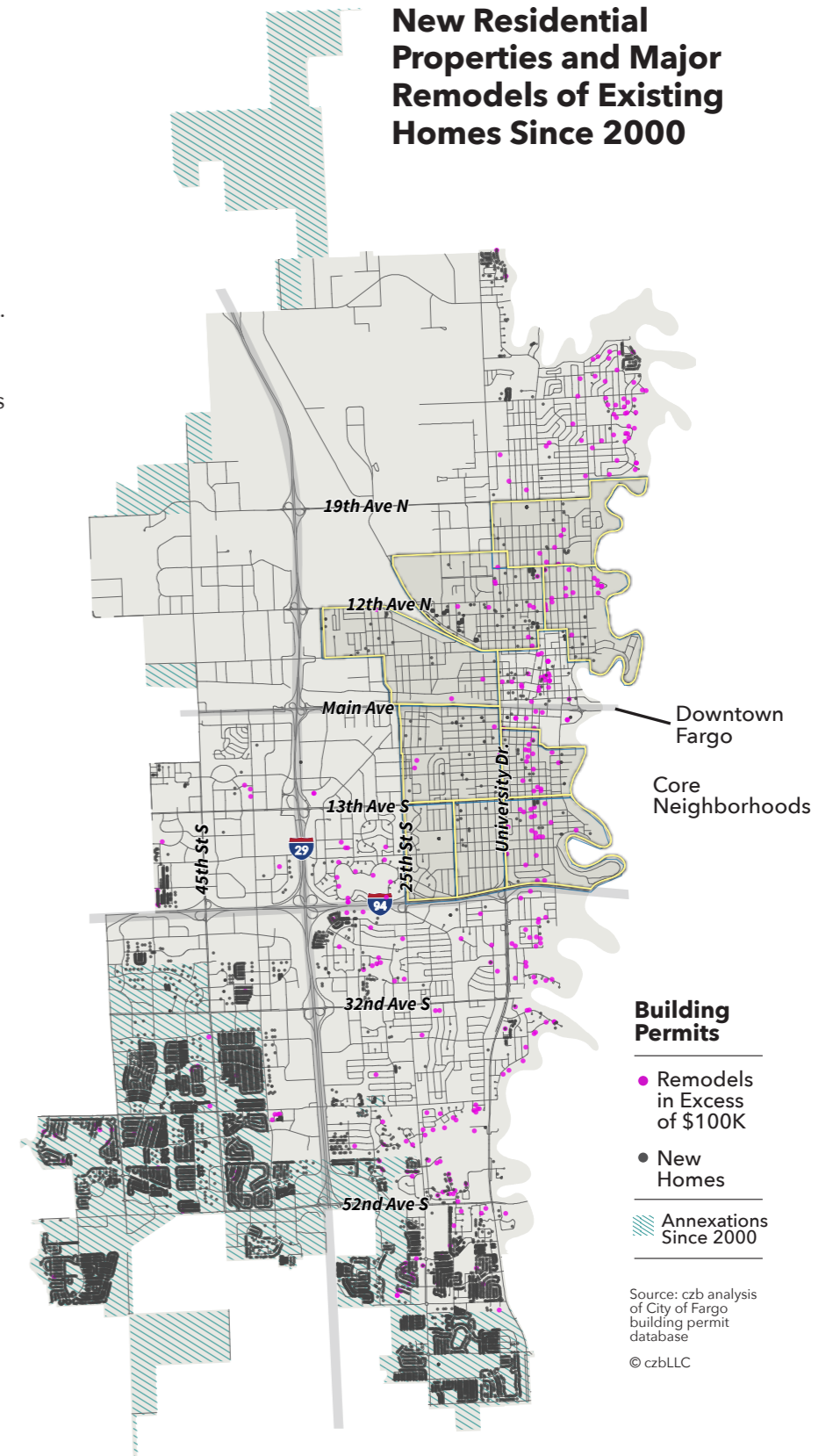
Reinvestment in the core and other older areas represents a steadily emerging trend

While areas to the south and southwest of the core have dominated Fargo's modern growth patterns, reinvestment in the core has emerged—especially over the past decade—as an important counterpoint to greenfield development.

The most visible expression of this reinvestment trend is in downtown Fargo, where the availability of incentives through the Renaissance Zone program (starting in 1999), followed by years of good planning and supportive infrastructure investments, have turned downtown Fargo into a much more vibrant and mixed-use neighborhood than it was in 2000. This success, which includes over 200 projects assisted by Renaissance Zone incentives, is underscored by the rise in real estate values. Downtown's aggregate value, which has grown faster than the citywide average, now represents 6.6% of Fargo's full market value while accounting for only 1% of the city's territory.

And while Fargo's core areas accounted for a relatively small share of housing units in brand new structures in recent years, core areas and other already developed areas accounted for rising levels of major remodels (in excess of \$100,000 in construction value). This has been especially true in the stronger residential markets of Hawthorne, Horace Mann, Clara Barton, and within downtown itself.

New Residential Properties and Major Remodels of Existing Homes Since 2000



Drivers of Modern Growth

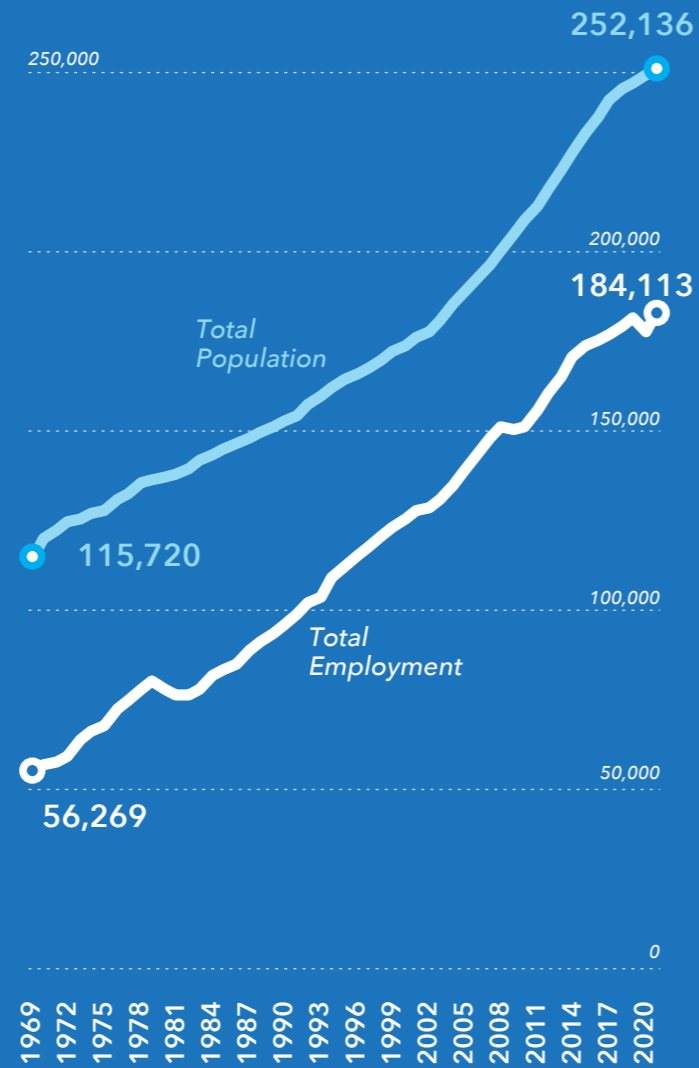
Consistent economic and job gains have been the primary driver of Fargo's modern growth

Population growth tends to follow closely on the heels of job growth—especially in relatively isolated and self-contained communities like Fargo. And 50 years of employment and population data for the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area (Cass and Clay counties) reveals the consistency of job growth and the extent to which job gains have been closely mirrored by population increases.

Since 1969, the number of jobs in Fargo-Moorhead has grown by nearly 230%—for an average annual growth rate of around 4.5%. The few aberrations to this growth rate include the recessions of the late 1970s, the Great Recession of 2007-2009, and the sudden dip at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. But those interruptions were far more muted in Fargo-Moorhead than there were in the rest of the U.S., and the recession of the late 1970s represents the last time the area dealt with true, multi-year employment stagnation.

Annual population growth in the region has consistently held in the 2.0-2.5% range with no interruption—even during the few periods of recession. As it did nationally, job growth rates in the region exceeded population growth rates—a pattern linked, in part, to the rise in female labor participation during the late 20th century.

Population and Employment in Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area, 1969 to 2021



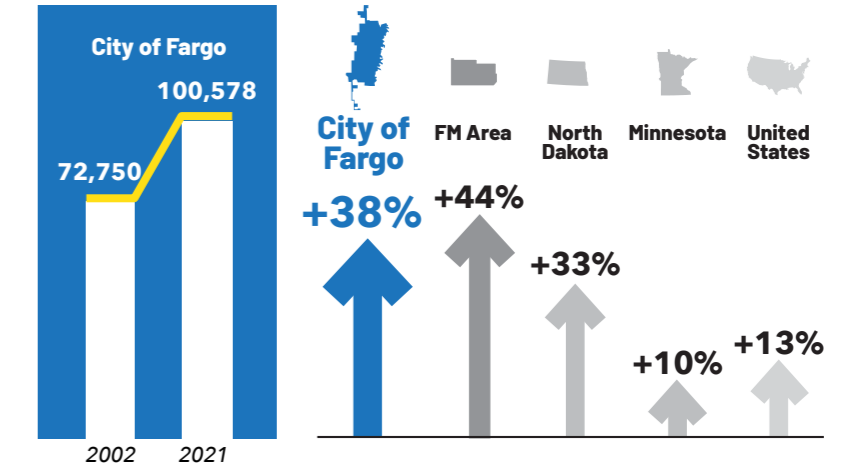
Source: Strategic Economics analysis of data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA); BEA employment numbers reflect estimates for full- and part-time wage and salary employees

Job growth in the 21st century has outpaced national growth and narrowed regional income gaps

Since the start of this century, the number of jobs (public and private) based in the City of Fargo has risen by nearly 40%—a growth rate slightly higher than the rest of North Dakota but lower than the rest of the Fargo-Moorhead area. Compared to neighboring Minnesota and the rest of the U.S., however, Fargo and the broader metropolitan area have posted much faster growth rates—more akin to job growth experienced in Sun Belt regions than most of the Upper Midwest. Metropolitan Atlanta, for example, experienced a job growth rate of 27% over the same 2002-2021 period.

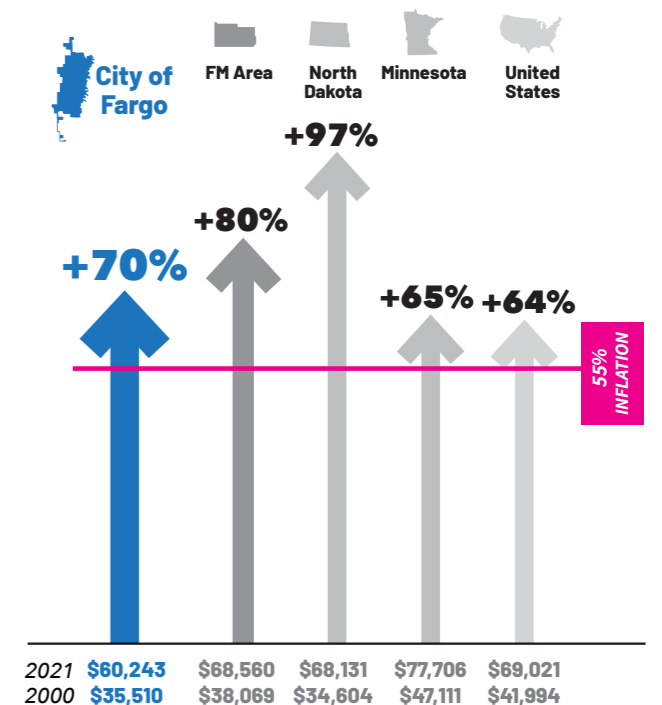
Income growth in Fargo and the region has also been outperforming the rest of the U.S. while outpacing inflation by a comfortable degree. Although incomes in Fargo and Fargo-Moorhead still lag the rest of the U.S., the gaps have narrowed. Notably, however, an income gap is widening between the City of Fargo and the rest of Fargo-Moorhead.

Change in Total Jobs, 2002-2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program

Change in Median Household Income, 2000-2021



Source: 2000 Census and 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

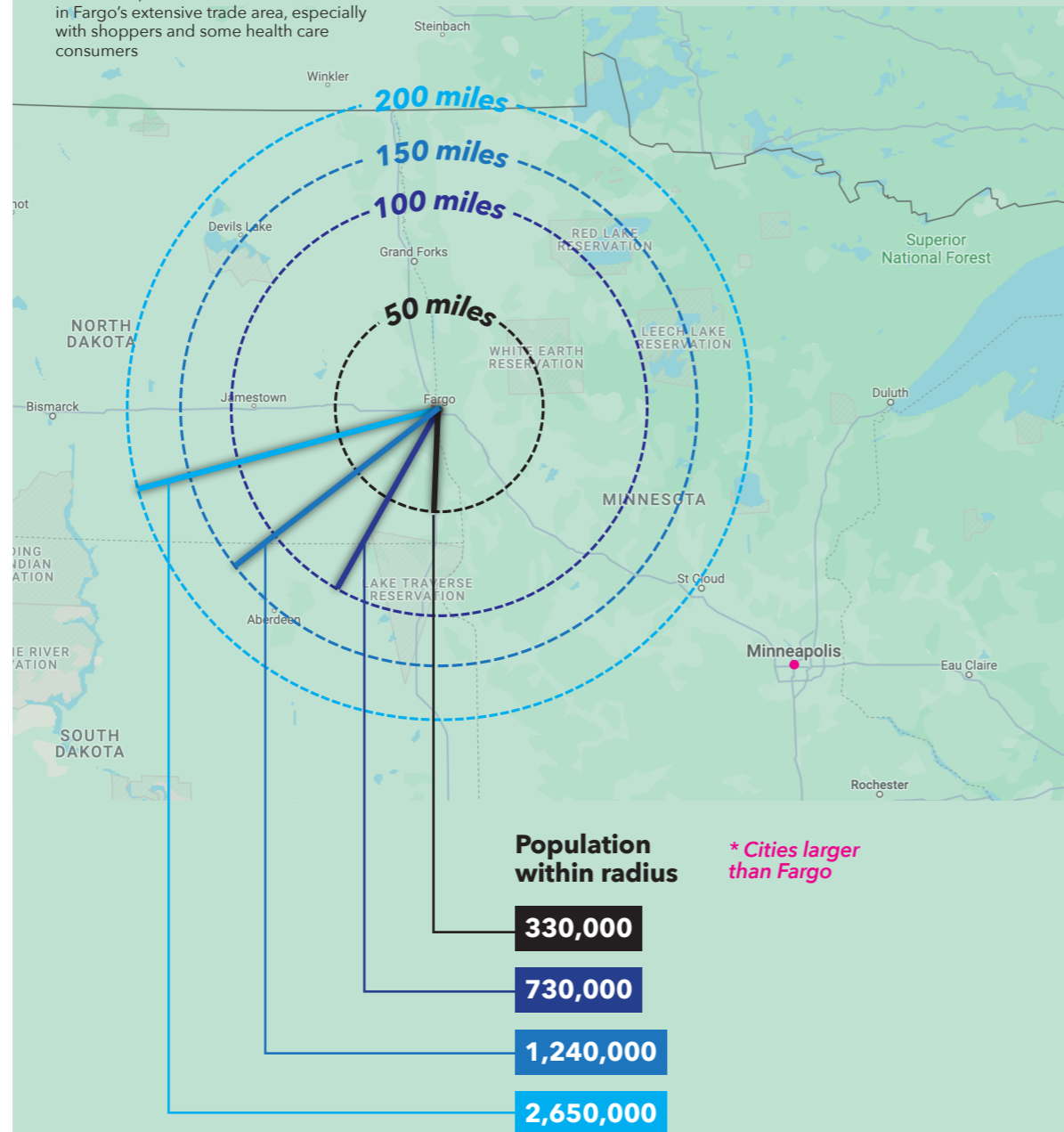
Fargo's location and economic composition have helped drive steady job growth

Unlike the national economy, which has experienced growth as well as recessions over the past 25 years, Fargo's growth has been remarkably steady and without major cyclical swings. This, along with the faster-than-average growth rate of employment in Fargo, is primarily due to the region's industry mix and Fargo's function as the central city for a very large geographical trade area.

Indeed, several of Fargo's largest industries are those that typically serve local households. But they are significantly larger and more specialized in Fargo than they are in most places because they serve such a large territory. While the Fargo-Moorhead region now has a quarter of a million residents, there are nearly 750,000 people within 100 miles of Fargo—an area within which Fargo is by far the largest population center. And although the pull of services in the Twin Cities diminishes the extent of Fargo's trade area to the southeast, it has an elongated trade area to the north, west, and southwest due to the limited size of potential competitors (Bismarck, Minot, Grand Forks, Aberdeen).

Fargo's Locational Context in the Upper Midwest

Although nearly four hours to the north and across an international border, Winnipeg and its 700,000+ residents is another factor in Fargo's extensive trade area, especially with shoppers and some health care consumers



Within this context of certain economic sectors having an outsized role, health care, retail, and education are particularly notable.



Fargo's health care sector, with nearly 24,000 jobs in the city and 29,000 in the metropolitan area, is nearly twice as large as it would be if it mirrored the national concentration of health care employment. Fargo recently added the newest and largest medical center in the state of North Dakota, the Sanford Medical Center, which serves as a regional hub with 60 percent of their patients coming from outside the Fargo-Moorhead area.



Retail accounts for twice as many jobs in Fargo as it does in the rest of the U.S., (6%), with the West Acres Mall serving a trade area 10-times larger than a typical regional mall. And Fargo has nearly 64 percent of the total retail space inventory in the Fargo-Moorhead area while representing only half of the total population of the MSA.



Fargo also has a very high concentration of workers in the education sector. While it is not unusual for school districts to be the largest employers in a relatively small community, Fargo's education sector is driven by North Dakota State University, which generates almost 3,700 full-time equivalent jobs. The University also brings in millions of dollars in research grants, which can also have long term benefits for Fargo's economy.

Together, health care, retail, and education function much more like traded sectors for Fargo—those that sell goods or services to customers outside of the region—than they do in most places. This adds to already robust growth in traditional traded sectors such as finance, manufacturing, logistics, agriculture, energy—and, increasingly, Fargo's large software sector.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program; location quotient analysis by Strategic Economics

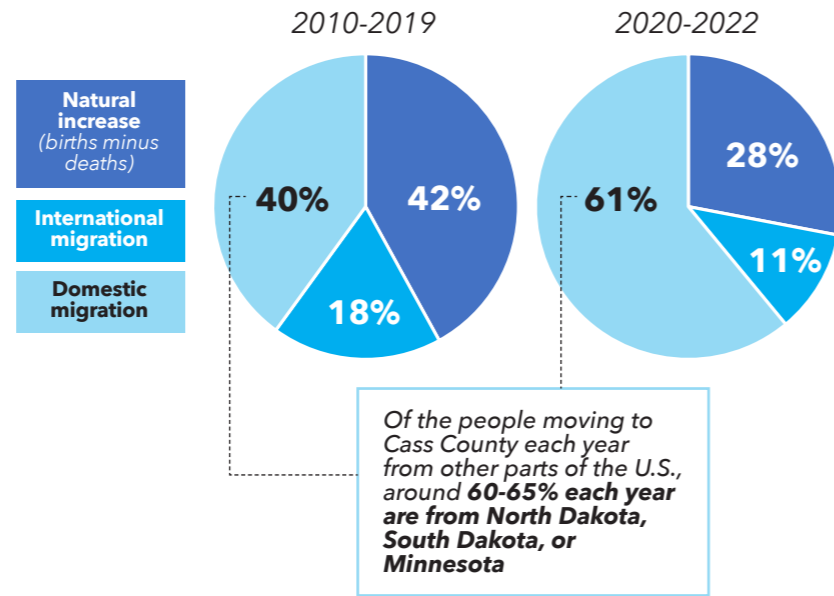
Several sources are contributing to population and household growth, but migration from other parts of the U.S. is now by far the leading source

Three components of population change are at work at any given time in any community: natural change from the combination of births and deaths, migration to and from other parts of the country, and migration to and from other parts of the world. In Cass County, all three components are net positive contributors to population change, but the degree to which they contribute has been changing.

During the 2010s, natural change was the single biggest contributor to population growth in Cass County, followed closely by domestic migration. By the early 2020s, a combination of falling birth rates and rising death rates (tied, in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic) eroded the role of natural change. International migration also fell as a contributor. This has left domestic migration as by far the largest source of population growth. And within the category of domestic migration, arrivals from elsewhere in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota remain the largest sources of in-migrants—underscoring Fargo's gravitational pull in the Upper Midwest.

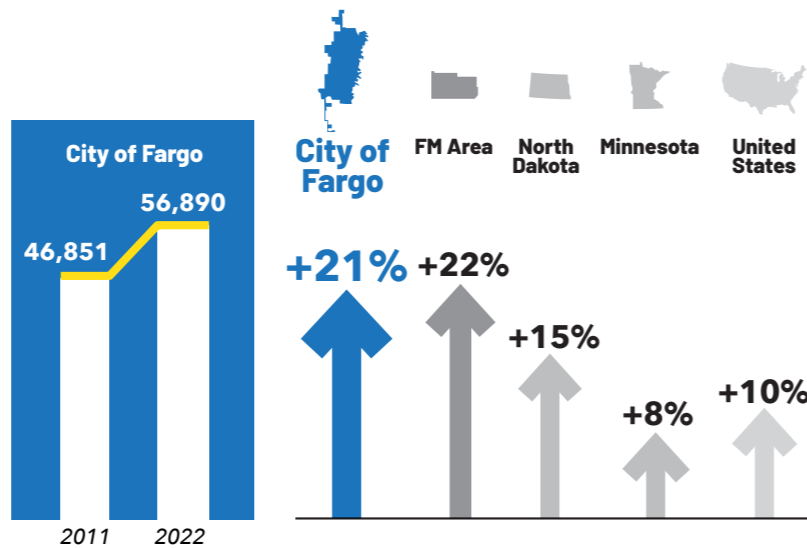
Regardless of the components of population change, Fargo's population growth contributed to just over 10,000 new households (occupying 10,000 additional housing units) between 2011 and 2022—a rate of household growth that was slightly lower than the Fargo-Moorhead area as a whole, but more than twice the national rate of growth.

Components of Population Growth in Cass County Since 2010



Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program; Internal Revenue Service Migration Data

Change in Total Households, 2011-2022



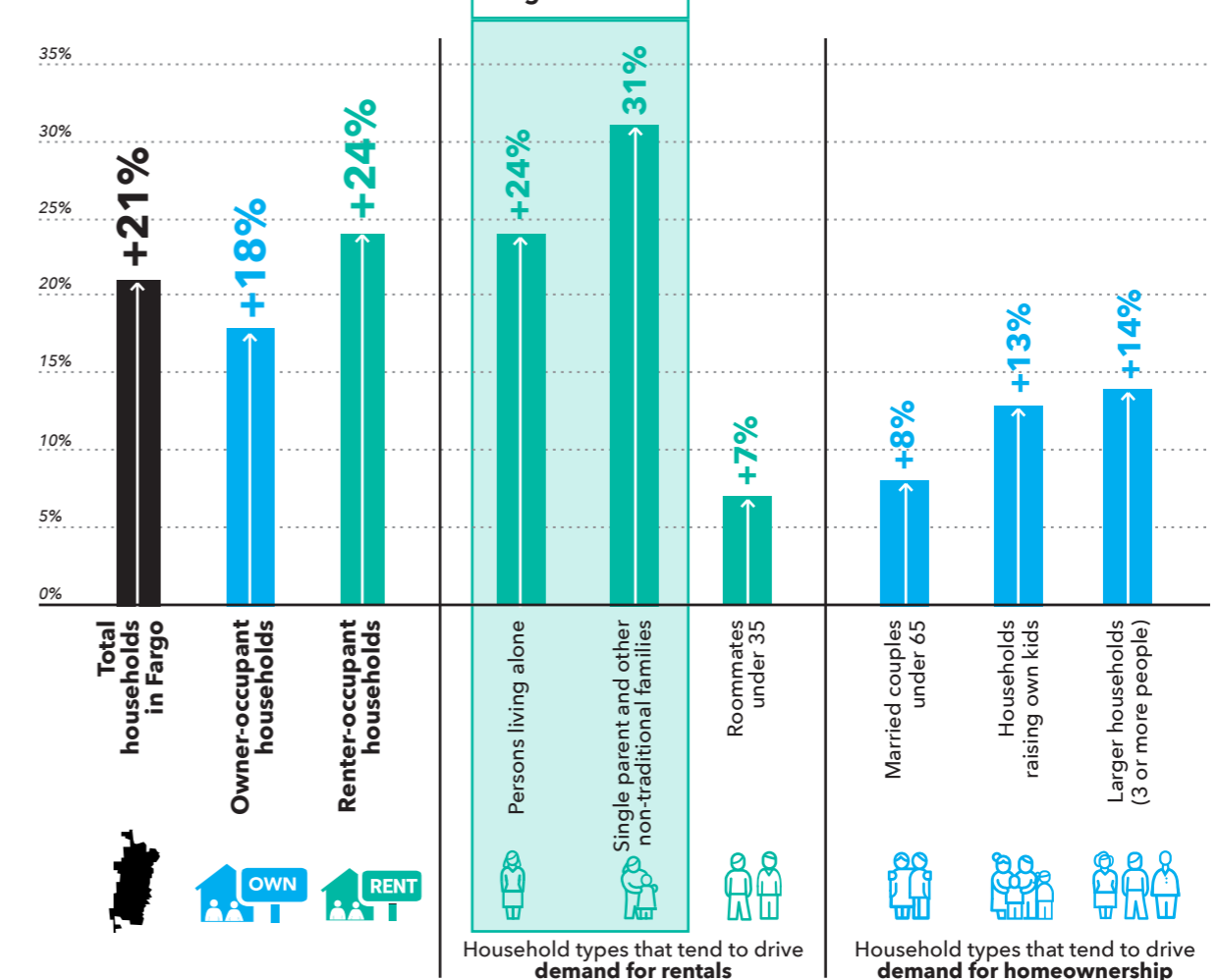
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2011 and 2022

Rental-occupied housing has grown faster than owner-occupied housing, driven to a large extent by demographics

Fargo's housing supply has been shifting in the direction of renter-occupancy for decades. Since 2000, renters have grown from 53% to 56% of all households. Meanwhile, Moorhead and West Fargo—which still have homeowner majorities—have also experienced a rise in renting since 2000.

While the fallout from the 2000s housing bubble made lending standards for homeownership more stringent and led to a nationwide slowdown in single-family homebuilding, demographics have played an important role in driving demand for rental housing. In Fargo, the fastest growing major household types—people who live alone, and non-traditional families—help drive demand for rental housing. Households likely to drive demand for homeownership—such as married couples under 65—have also been growing, but not nearly as fast. These trends are likely to persist and influence housing production in the coming decades.

Rate of Change, 2011-2022



Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates for 2011 and 2022

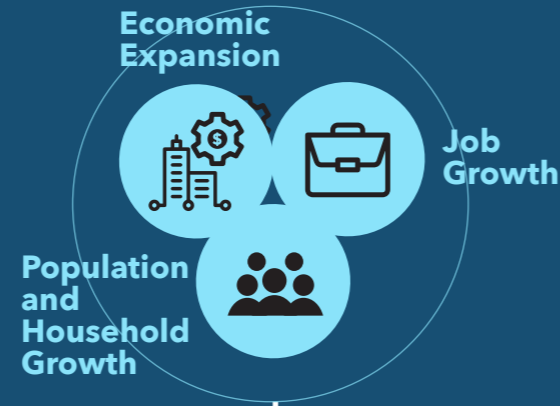
Systems Shaping Fargo's Growth

A complex set of factors have interacted over the decades to shape where and how Fargo grows

The existence of economic and demographic forces that drive growth—resulting in jobs, households, and the demand for spaces to conduct daily life—are one part of Fargo's modern growth patterns. Just as important are the natural and human-made systems that influence where growth happens and how growth happens.

All of these systems are currently in flux in Fargo. Natural shapers of growth are being influenced by major civil engineering works, while this Growth Plan reflects ongoing efforts to reassess the policy framework that guides both public and private investments.

Growth Drivers



Growth Shapers



Growth Outcomes

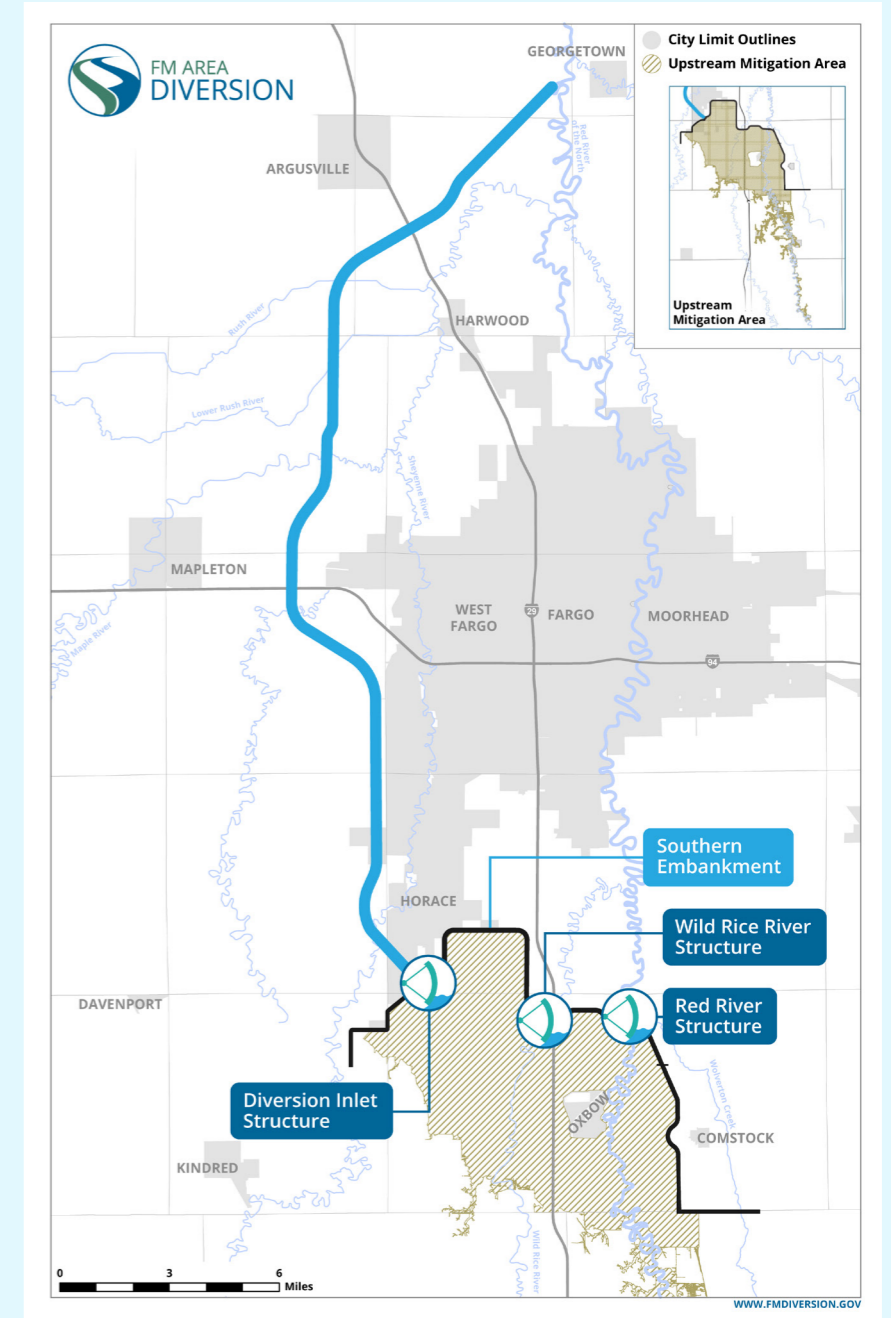


The Red River has long shaped where and how Fargo grows, and those dynamics are about to change

While the Red River Valley has not shaped Fargo's growth as dramatically as a mountain range, a coastline, or a desert, it has had an influence on where growth has happened and on the costs associated with development and property ownership. The river and its flood patterns, for example, have conferred advantages on areas to the west and southwest of Fargo's core, which have lower flood risks than areas to the north and south. And the fertility of the valley's farmland has given it economic value sufficient to withstand—to a point—the pressures of urbanization.

The FM Area Diversion Project, set for completion in 2027, will change the river's influence in the years ahead. Flood insurance will no longer be mandatory for most areas within the project's boundaries, including the more than 10 contiguous square miles in Fargo's southern extraterritorial jurisdiction. This will reduce flood insurance costs and flood damage.

The diversion project footprint will also act as an informal growth boundary for the region. Most areas outside the protected area will remain or become flood prone, dampening its future marketability for urban uses.



Source: Red River diversion diagram from Metro Flood Diversion Authority



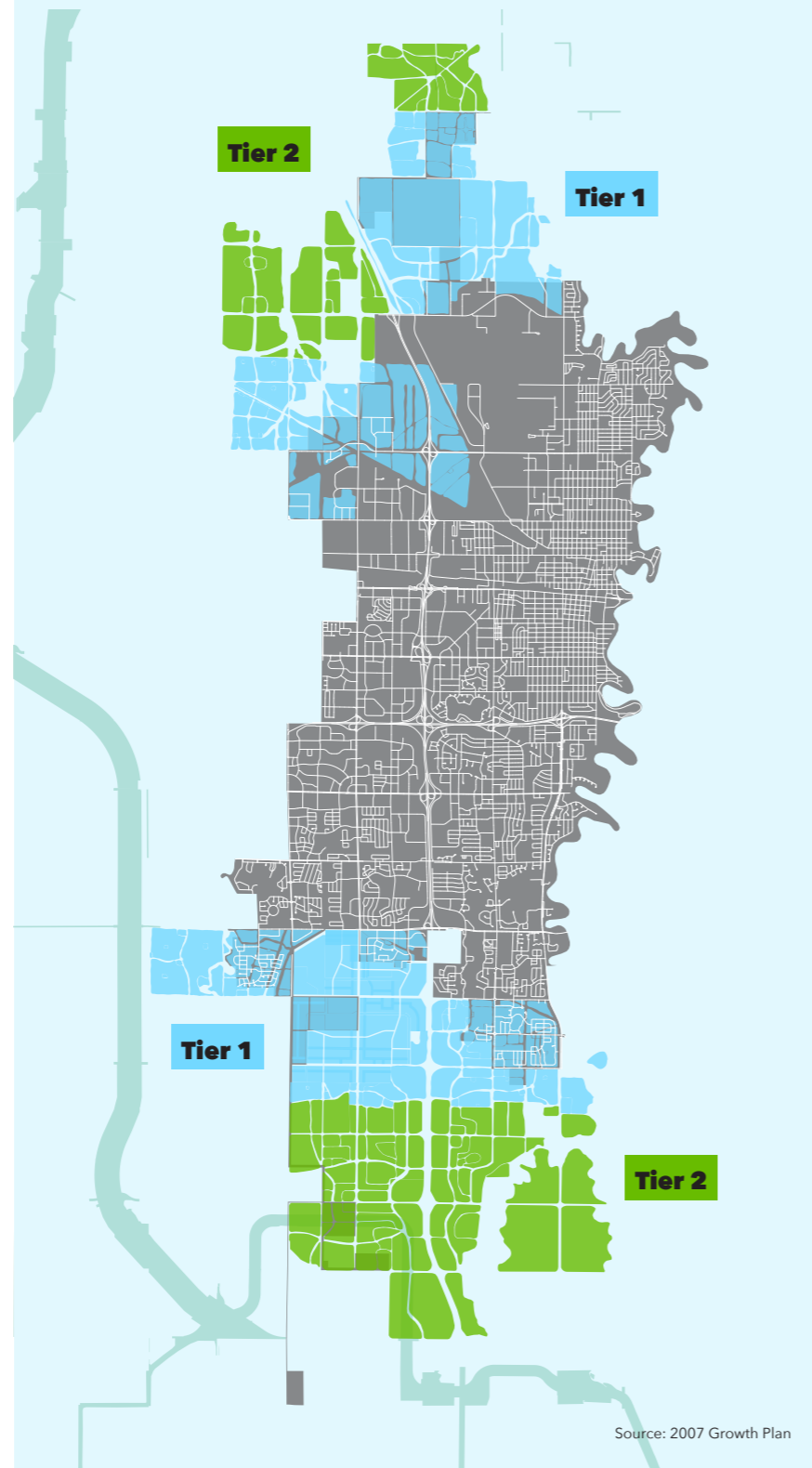
Planning and regulatory systems have guided how and where growth happens, but keeping up has been a challenge

Since the 1920s, when it was still a city of less than 30,000, Fargo has used municipal plans and ordinances to guide public and private investments and regulate what can go where. Over time, its plans and codes have shifted to reflect emerging best practices and address the challenges of the day.

The City's current comprehensive plan from 2013 (Go2030), and its 2007 Growth Plan, reflect early 21st century best practices and have influenced recent growth patterns and investments—from the prioritization of flood protection and infill development in Go2030 to the growth plan's direction on orderly greenfield expansion. They've been supplemented by plans providing special guidance for downtown (Downtown InFocus, 2017) and older neighborhoods (Core Neighborhoods Master Plan, 2020), as well as more recent guidance on transportation and housing.

As in any fast-growing city, keeping plans and policies responsive and farsighted in the midst of rapid change and uncertainty is a perennial challenge in Fargo. A particular challenge in recent years has been the growing distance between the City's Land Development Code (LDC), which has not been substantially updated since 1998, and its plans.

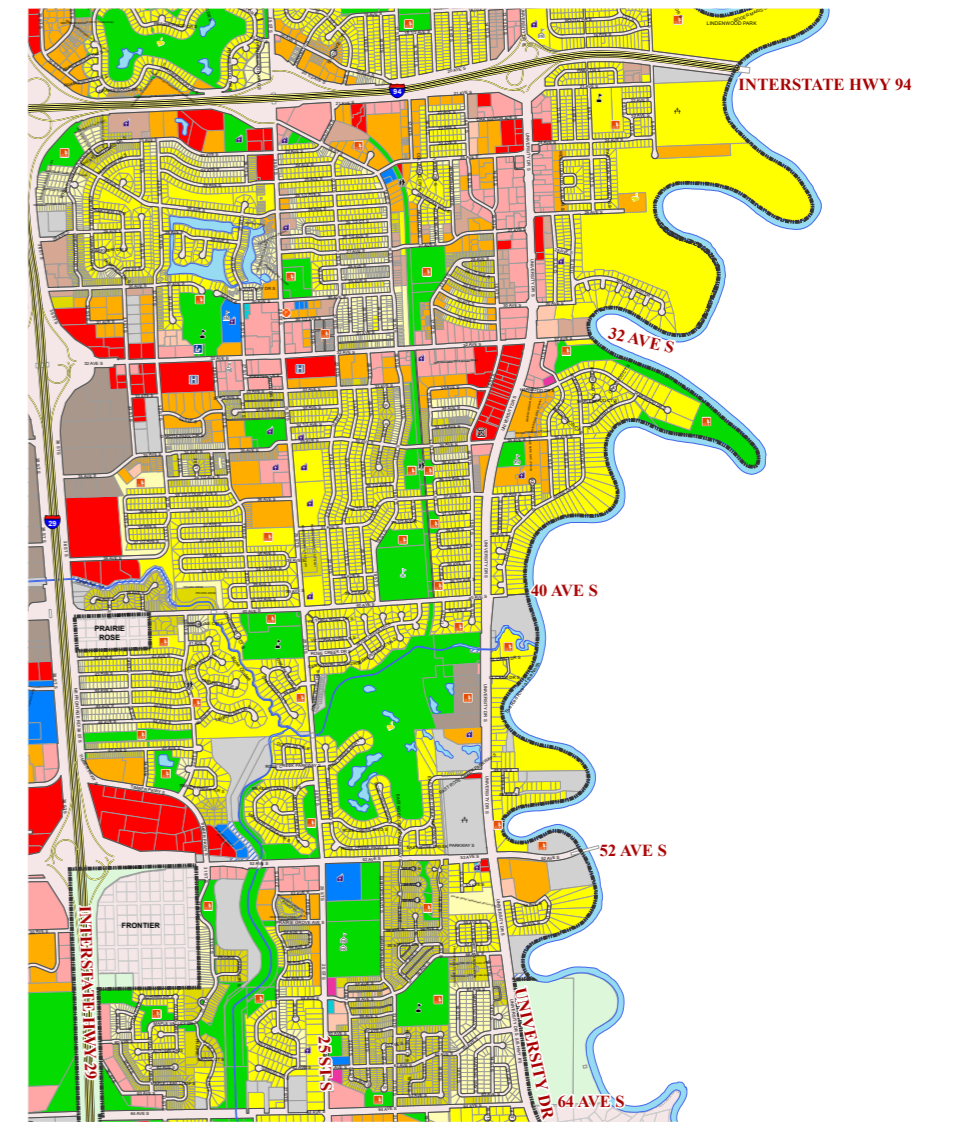
Map from 2007 Growth Plan showing 20-year (Tier 1) and 50-year (Tier 2) growth areas



The LDC that has shaped Fargo's growth in the 21st century dates to 1998, when the City overhauled its 1965 code. It has been amended numerous times over the past 25 years but is still largely a reflection of best practices from the late 1990s—making it a code that is largely contemporary but with some features that are outdated or not well aligned with current planning.

The City commissioned the LDC Diagnostic Report in 2020 to identify areas of particular concern. That work noted the following among its findings:

- The code does not have the right zoning tools to implement Go2030.
- The City relies on negotiated zoning, such as planned unit developments and conditional overlays for flexibility and additional protections.
- Walkable, mixed-use centers are only achievable in two zoning districts that cover a very limited area.
- The code does not contain many built-form standards, such as building and frontage requirements.
- The code's minimum parking standards and parking placement requirements are outdated.
- Infill development is difficult on most infill lots in core neighborhood areas.
- There are inadequate provisions to create new parks and other public spaces.



Zoning

AG - Agricultural	MR-1 - Multiple Dwelling	Zoning Unknown
DMU - Downtown Mixed Use	MR-2 - Multiple Dwelling	Zoning in Transition
UMU - University Mixed Use	MR-3 - Multiple Dwelling	
GC - General Commercial	NC - Neighborhood Commercial	
GI - General Industrial	NO - Neighborhood Office	
GO - General Office	P/I - Public Institutional	
LC - Limited Commercial	SR-2 - Single Dwelling	
LI - Limited Industrial	SR-3 - Single Dwelling	
MHP - Mobile Home Park	SR-4 - Single Dwelling	
	SR-5 - Single Dwelling	

Source: Findings from LDC Diagnostic Report (2020); image from Fargo's current zoning map



Utility and infrastructure systems have been expanded and updated over the years to handle growth and have plenty of additional capacity

The extension of water, water reclamation, and road services to serve new development has been guided over nearly two decades by the 2007 Growth Plan. This, along with Fargo's system of special assessments that requires the beneficiaries of new infrastructure to pay for it, has contributed to a modern growth pattern that is characterized by limited leapfrogging. In other words, the development of previously undeveloped (or underdeveloped) land has mostly occurred in an orderly fashion, although there have been some exceptions to this rule.

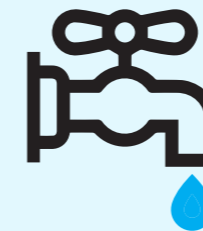
Aside from recent growth being shaped by the deployment of utilities and infrastructure, it has also been shaped by abundance—the recognition that basic city services are capable of handling growth and can continue reliably doing so for years to come. This level of assurance, much like the flood protection to be provided by the FM Area Diversion Project, has been enabled by a history of significant and far-sighted capital planning and investments.

Population projections from Metro COG suggest that Fargo may grow by 15,000 households (or 30,000 residents) through 2045. All major utility systems—water, water reclamation, and solid waste—have more than enough capacity in 2024 to absorb those levels of growth. Additionally, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, which will make Missouri River water accessible to Fargo, will provide long-term flexibility and water security when completed.

Fargo's highways and major roads, meanwhile, have been built with enough capacity and redundancies to handle traffic from anticipated growth—and to be modified, as needed, to accommodate traffic management technologies and to better serve alternative modes of travel. As the new Fargo Transportation Plan (2024) makes clear, getting more out of existing infrastructure—rather than building bigger roads—will be the emphasis going forward.

One notable challenge for Fargo's existing streets and utilities in relation to future growth is the impact of Fargo's increasingly elongated geography. Additional growth in the south will require longer trips by solid waste trucks unless a new transfer station is built. And police and fire services will encounter similar service-delivery challenges without the establishment of new facilities.

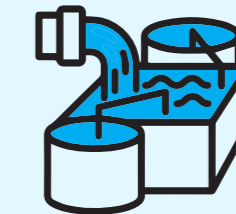
Water



Existing supply and treatment capacity for an additional **50,000 residents**

Red River Valley Water Supply Project to ensure long-term alternative source (Missouri River)

Water Reclamation



Existing capacity for an additional **90,000 residents** after ongoing upgrades are completed

Ability to absorb discharges from new water-intensive industries

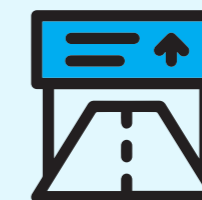
Solid Waste



20 years of future capacity at current growth rate and disposal practices

Potential for expansion at current landfill site, or creation of a regional landfill outside of Fargo, to expand capacity

Streets and Highways



Interstates and gridded system of primary roads has absorbed sustained growth and provides **high levels of redundancy to accommodate future traffic**

Most primary roads are wide enough for high quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure

Source: Capital Facilities Analysis prepared by MRB Group for Fargo Growth Plan 2024



Fargo uses several methods to pay for services and infrastructure used by existing and new users

Fargo has five primary funding sources it uses to pay for the City's ongoing operations, including infrastructure construction, the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, and special facilities. While these are not the only revenue sources Fargo uses, they represent the major share of the City's funds and influence how the City responds to the needs of a growing community.

Funding for General City Functions (General Fund)

(Police, Fire, and other non-revenue generating services)

Property Taxes

Property taxes are based on the assessed value of all privately owned property in Fargo. Property values are reassessed annually to calculate the City's total assessed value. Mill rates are then set based on the needs of the General Fund.

Encouraging reinvestment in existing neighborhoods and keeping property values stable is important to the long-term health of the City's General Fund and its overall financial health.

Governmental Transfers and Grants

(For ongoing programs or opportunistic projects)

State and Federal Funds and Grants

State and Federal Funds and Grants come from a variety of sources. Some state and federal funds (transfers) are automatically allocated to Fargo based on population. Other funds, like the state's Prairie Dog Fund, can only be used for specific purposes. Federal funds, which are primarily grants, are disbursed to Fargo through MetroCOG. These grants tend to be tied to regional or national priorities and often require a local funding match for projects to claim eligibility.

Funding for City-Operated Utilities and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

(Water, water reclamation, and other utility services; new or rebuilt infrastructure)

Special Assessments

Special Assessments are another funding source levied on property owners to help pay for some infrastructure related costs. Assessment amounts and rates are determined both by the type of infrastructure (water, water reclamation, storm water, road, street lighting, sidewalks, etc.) and by whether the facility being funded is a first time installation, or rehabilitation or replacement.

Fargo's Infrastructure Funding Policy details how these assessments are applied.

Utility Fees

Utility fees are the user fees people pay to use City-operated utilities including water, water reclamation, storm water, garbage, forestry, mosquito abatement, and street lighting.

Utility rates are set based on both operating costs and long-term capital facilities planning. Each utility is responsible for its own operating costs and revenues. Acting as regional service providers has enabled some utilities to lower costs for Fargo users.

Sales Tax

Sales Tax is charged at a rate of 7.5% in Fargo. But the City only keeps 2%. The rest of the sales tax revenues go to the state and to Cass County.

Of the 2% kept by the City, 1.25% goes to funding the FM Area Diversion Project and 0.75% funds other infrastructure categories (including water and water reclamation). One significant advantage to the sales tax is that it allows Fargo to capture revenues from people who don't live or work in the city but come there to shop.



Incentives have helped spur financial investment in many real estate product types

Financial tools that reduce private risk in order to facilitate certain types of development in certain locations have been important shapers of growth in recent decades.

Fargo's Renaissance Zone incentives, for example, have transformed Downtown Fargo

by offering a number of incentives that can be combined, or "stacked," to significantly reduce development costs and offset some business operating costs. The stacked incentives have helped to offset both the higher cost and the higher financing risk associated with high-quality, dense, mixed-use buildings in what was (and to some extent still is) an untested market.

Special assessment districts used for new capital improvements, primarily in "greenfield" areas have also had a significant impact on where and how growth has happened. These districts act as an incentive for developers by sharing the upfront risk of investing in expensive infrastructure between these developers and the City.

Greenfield infrastructure in Fargo is typically 100 percent special assessed, meaning that benefiting properties pay the entire cost of infrastructure. For infill projects, the City pays a certain share of special assessments, reducing the burden of repayment on developers, new occupants, and existing residents benefitting from the infrastructure improvement.

Renaissance Zone "Stacked" Incentives



Property tax exemptions and credits for new construction or building rehabs with commercial leases



Direct public investment in placemaking, street, and parking improvements

Special Assessments



Greenfield Development

City borrows money from capital markets to pay for infrastructure construction. 100% of the cost is then paid off, over time, by special assessments on the benefitting property.

Development is assisted by lowering the developer's costs and risks.



Infill Development

City borrows money from capital markets to pay for infrastructure construction, but covers a share of the costs through City revenues.

Development is facilitated by lowering the developer's costs and risks, while also lowering the costs of new or existing occupants—giving preferential treatment to infill development, which is more costly and risky.

Fargo's Growth Outcomes

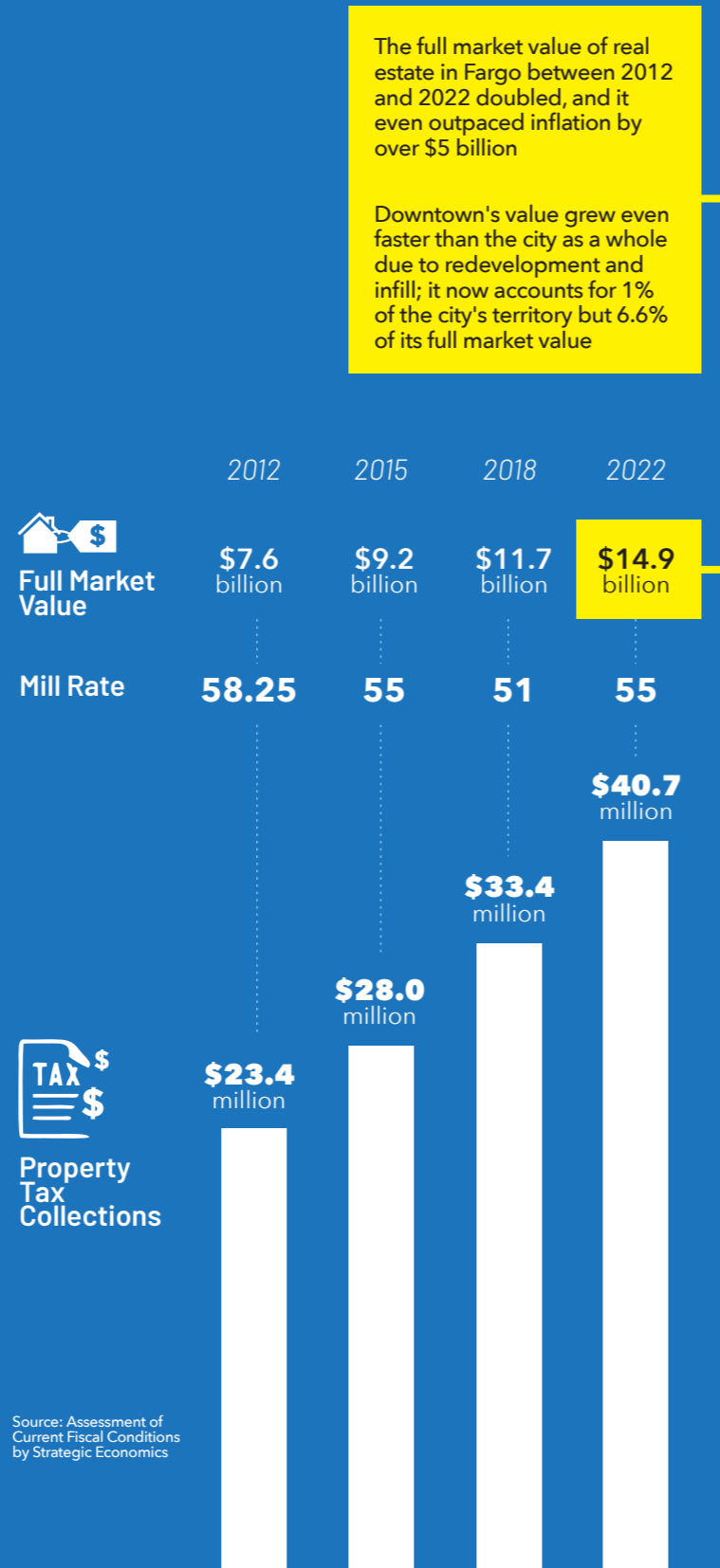
Fargo has grown steadily and rapidly in recent decades, driven primarily by job growth and shaped by a wide range of factors. The outcomes, or results, experienced by the community are another part of Fargo's growth story that inform the process of determining how and where to grow in the coming years.

Fargo's recent growth patterns have contributed to value creation and a strong fiscal position

An important and highly measurable outcome for any city's development and growth strategy is its fiscal health. And a major determinant of fiscal health in a city that depends on the property tax to fund essential operations is the value of real estate.

For Fargo, the growth of the city's full market value over the past decade suggests that prevailing patterns of development and redevelopment have aided the strength of the City's balance sheet. Between 2012 and 2022, the aggregate value of property in Fargo doubled from \$7.6 billion to \$14.9 billion in current dollars. When adjusted for inflation, values over the period still rose by nearly \$5 billion.

A consequence of this rise in value is that, even as expenses rose to expand operations and services in response to growth, the City's mill rate was able to remain stable (and even fall for a period), thus maintaining the mill rate as a fiscal lever to exercise if and when necessary.



The full market value of real estate in Fargo between 2012 and 2022 doubled, and it even outpaced inflation by over \$5 billion

Downtown's value grew even faster than the city as a whole due to redevelopment and infill; it now accounts for 1% of the city's territory but 6.6% of its full market value

Source: Assessment of Current Fiscal Conditions by Strategic Economics

How did recent growth patterns contribute to positive financial outcomes for Fargo?

During the 1990s and early 2000s, Fargo was growing in a pattern that could be characterized as "sprawl." Population density on a per acre basis was dropping from what it had been in previous decades, and roads were being designed to facilitate maximum auto movement with no consideration for transit, bicycles, or pedestrians.

This pattern changed by the late 2000s, around the time the 2007 Growth Plan was adopted. Between 2010 and 2020, **population density on a per acre basis rose** and the City actually added more multifamily units than it did single family homes—a change that coincided with a major uptick in **downtown development** (tied to the Renaissance Zone) as well as **denser greenfield development**.

Road construction standards also changed so that new roads being built were narrower, which decreased the amount of pavement to maintain, and built to higher standards.

The City also **discouraged leapfrog development** where new subdivisions are built far apart from each other, making it expensive to build out new infrastructure. The special assessment system was part of this and a highly effective **"pay as you go"** mechanism for local roads, local water and sewer lines.

Altogether, these factors helped the City absorb an annual average growth rate of two percent without causing significant stress to the City's fiscal health.

What other factors related to growth have an impact on Fargo's fiscal capacity and health?

Most funding sources, including special assessments and utility fees, are set based on actual costs and are paid only by the people who directly benefit. Similarly, mill rates can be raised or lowered in response to specific General Fund needs.

But Fargo residents, like most people, want to keep their property taxes and utility rates low, so there is **ongoing tension between keeping rates low and providing high quality services and infrastructure**. To the extent possible, Fargo has been able to balance these competing needs by using sales tax revenues and state and federal funds to offset funding gaps, especially for the CIP. **This balancing act has become increasingly challenging with high inflation.**

Inflation is always a challenge for local governments because this can drive cost increases for personnel and construction materials much more quickly than growth in local revenue sources. While the impact of inflation has been especially acute over the past few years in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the costs of road maintenance and repair have been increasing much more quickly than the overall rate of inflation. In fact, federal data shows that annual road construction inflation has been significantly higher than overall U.S. inflation since 2011.

Another factor contributing to increasing CIP costs is **the need to rehabilitate or replace roads that were built twenty or so years ago when standards were lower** and the streets produced were less durable than those constructed today.

Growth in the form of reinvestment has been on the rise, but disinvestment is an emerging concern

Reinvestment and redevelopment within downtown Fargo and parts of the core neighborhoods have been part of Fargo's recent growth story—an important accomplishment of priorities identified in Go2030 and the 2007 Growth Plan.

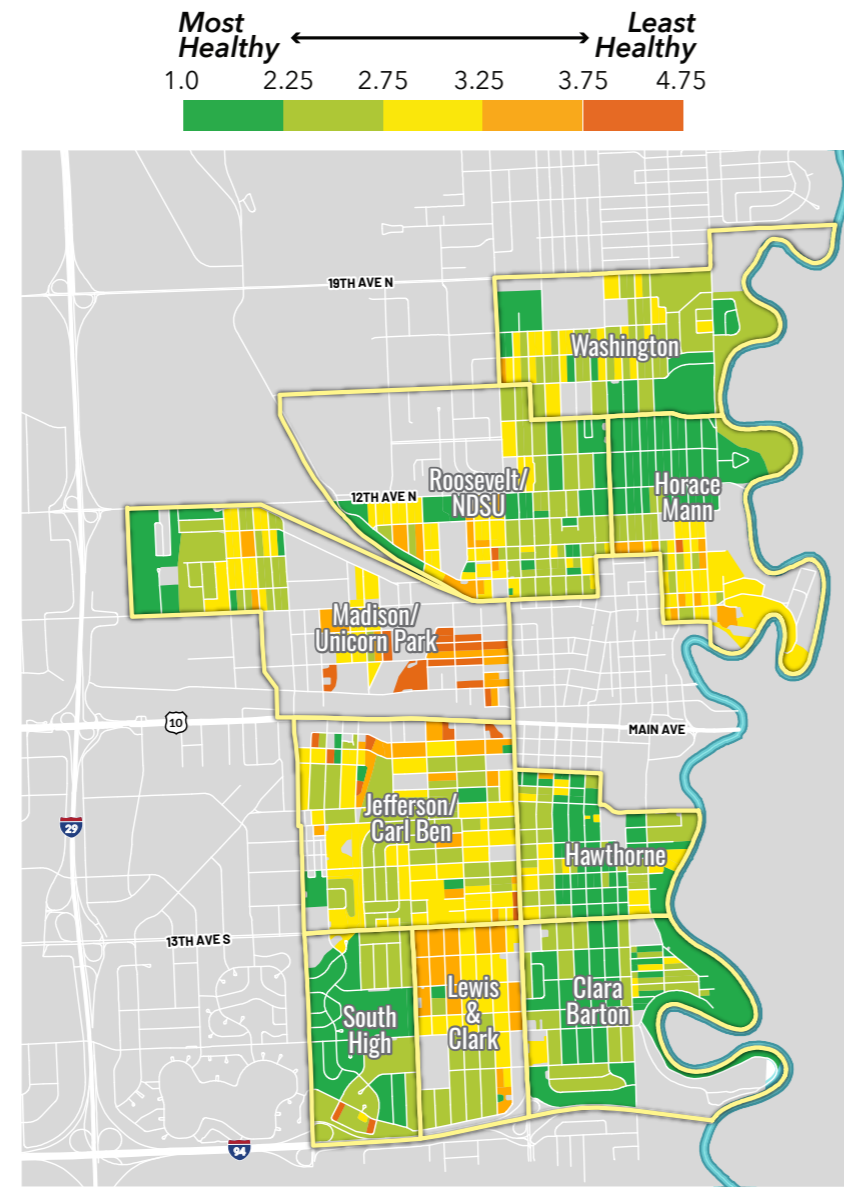
At the same time, however, there are parts of Fargo where disinvestment and deferred maintenance are an ongoing concern. As a property condition survey for the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan found, roughly 1 out of every 6 residential properties in the core neighborhoods shows signs of slipping or distressed conditions—a concentration that is much higher in parts of Horace Mann, Roosevelt, Madison/Unicorn Park, Jefferson/Carl Ben, and Lewis & Clark.

Efforts to enhance code enforcement are underway, but special reinvestment tools for single-family homes and rental properties will be needed in the years ahead to catch up and stay ahead of the deterioration of older core properties.

Over 1,500 properties in the core neighborhoods—or 1 in every 6—are slipping or distressed



Core Neighborhoods Property Condition Survey, 2020



Source: Core Neighborhoods Master Plan (2020)

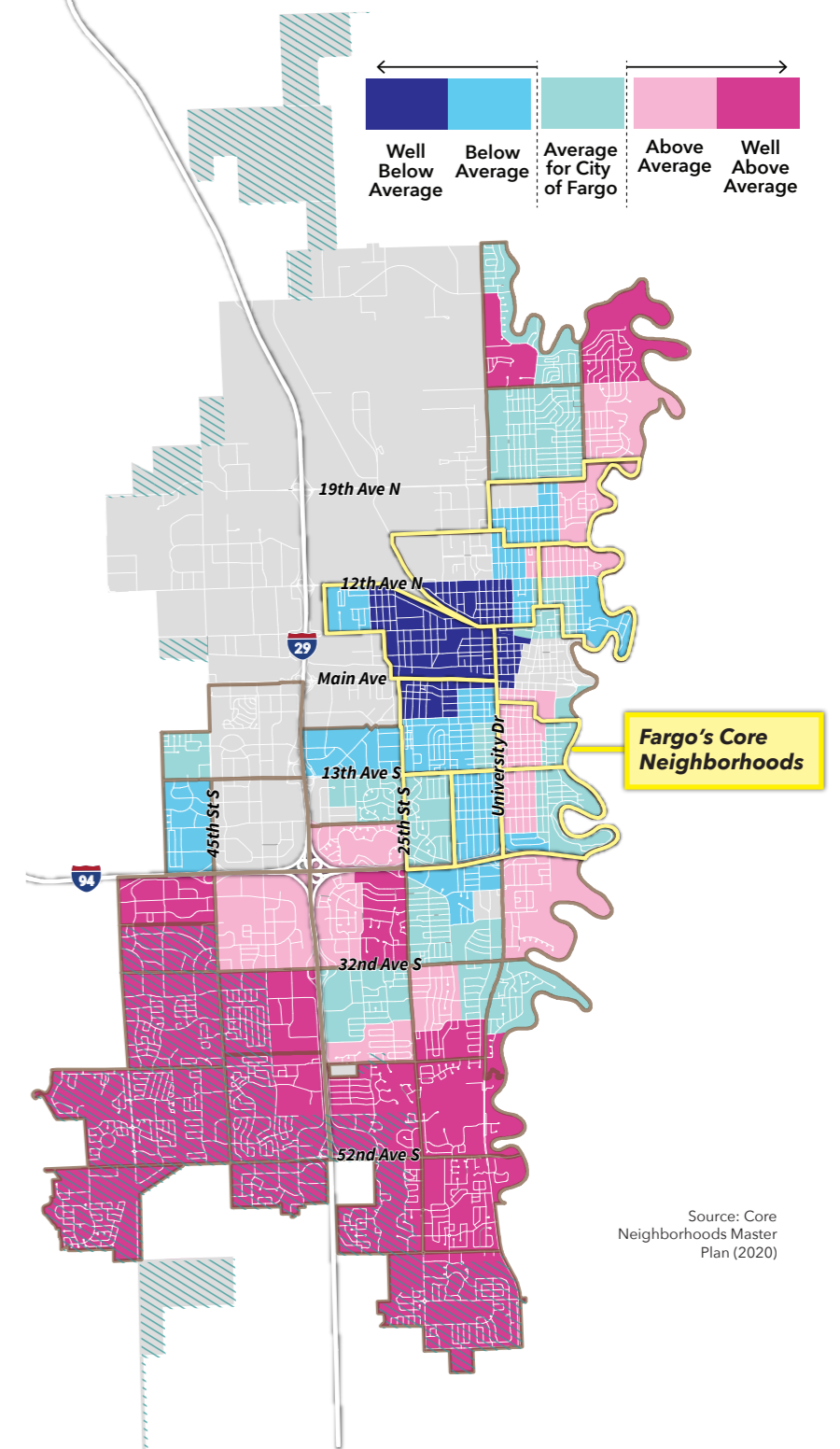
Patterns of residential demand suggest areas vulnerable to disinvestment beyond the core

Getting ahead of disinvestment in the core neighborhoods will be critical in the years ahead. It may matter, too, to neighborhoods beyond the core that have softer levels of residential demand and housing supplies—framed by older commercial corridors—that may struggle.

A map of residential demand across Fargo from the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan shows that areas with the strongest levels of demand (based on values, homeownership rates, and investment activity) are—not surprisingly—on the edges of Fargo where housing and infrastructure is practically new. And areas with the lowest levels of demand are concentrated in older neighborhoods with less desirable housing stocks.

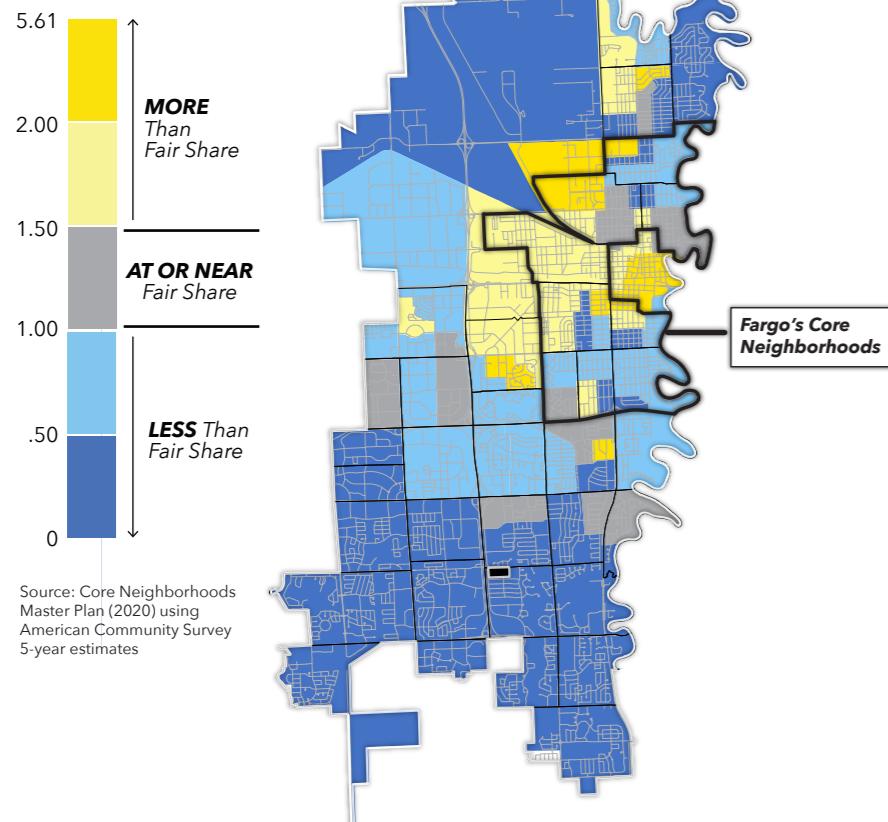
But areas of below-average demand can also be found outside of the core neighborhoods, in areas with older suburban housing that may struggle to find good buyers and receive sufficient investments over the next few decades—a possible threat to progress closer to the core and to the City's fiscal health.

Housing Market Demand Typology, 2020



Source: Core Neighborhoods Master Plan (2020)

Share of Households Making \$25,000 or Less Compared to Expected Share Under "Fair Share" Scenario for City of Fargo



Source: Core Neighborhoods Master Plan (2020) using American Community Survey 5-year estimates

Robust economic growth has contributed to strong income growth, but inequities remain

Fargo's strong economic growth has translated to strong income growth—which influences the ability of households to participate in Fargo's housing market and economy.

But income gaps still exist and shape the location options of lower income households, as well as the degree of investment in areas with lower income levels—such as core neighborhoods. Because brand new development is expensive, it will tend to be within reach only to higher income households unless subsidies are involved to make new housing more accessible. In Fargo's newest areas, to the south and southwest, the share of households making less than \$25,000 is far below citywide levels.

Areas with much higher shares of lower income households are more likely to see visible levels of disinvestment—even as growth fuels investment in other parts of Fargo. And they are more likely to house Fargo's growing population of racial and ethnic minorities, who are substantially younger than Fargo's white population and have lower median household incomes.

Median Household Income by Race for City of Fargo, 2022

	As a % of Fargo's Median Household Median	Median Age
White	108%	34.0
Black or African American	59%	26.7
Hispanic or Latino	72%	23.6
Asian	63%	27.1
American Indian and Alaska Native	74%	21.1

Sources: American Community Survey; Strategic Economics, 2024.

Growth has not yet resulted in serious traffic congestion

Other communities growing at rates similar to Fargo have had to deal with transportation headaches as a consequence of growth—be it serious highway congestion at peak periods or gridlock in busy suburban commercial areas.

Due to Fargo's flat terrain and limited geographic barriers—which enable an orderly and gridded street and arterial system with many redundancies—growth has not fundamentally changed how people get around in recent decades. The average commute to work for Fargo residents is still just 16 minutes—up from 15 minutes in 2000 and 2011—though slightly higher for residents in the far south. And the distribution of work travel across different modes (driving, transit, biking, walking) has changed very little since 2000, with around 90% of all work trips happening by car.

And while older parts of Fargo are generally easier to navigate by foot than newer areas, newer parts of Fargo tend to be more walkable than newer parts of more sprawling cities due to relatively compact development with limited leapfrogging, and land use distributions that provide commercial services in fairly close proximity to newer subdivisions.

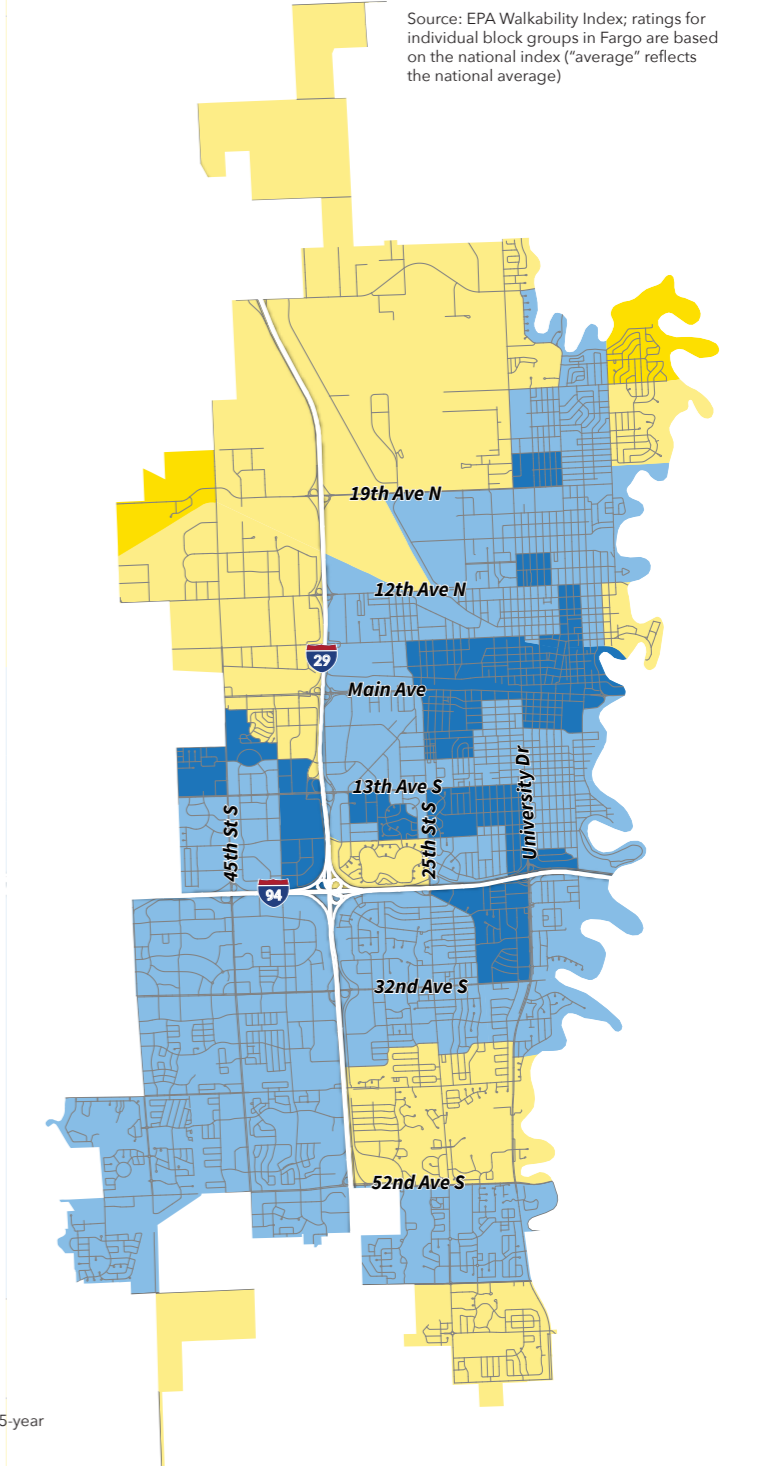
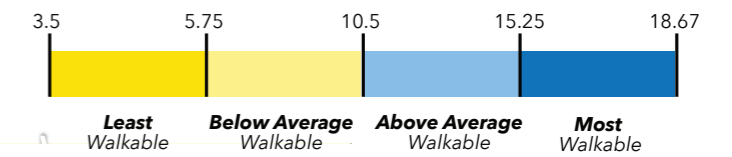
	2000	2012	2022
Average Commute Times	15 minutes	15 minutes	16 minutes

Share of workers getting to work by car	91%	90%	86%
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Share of workers who work primarily at home	3%	3%	7%
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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2000) and American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2012 and 2022); travel by car includes driving alone and car pooling

EPA Walkability Index



New development has tended to deliver places of basic quality and function, but of limited charm and questionable durability

An important but harder to quantify growth outcome is how the growing parts of Fargo look, feel, function, and are experienced—all of which contribute to whether or not people will feel good walking around a given area. While there are some significant differences in how growth looks and feels in different parts of Fargo—with downtown being an obvious outlier in terms of the urban character of its growth—there are clear patterns visible in Fargo's recent growth that suggest how future growth would look if Fargo stayed on its current path. And many of those patterns convey an overall lack of objectively good urban form and design—despite relatively high densities.

These 'quality of place' shortcomings in the parts of Fargo developed in recent decades have resulted despite efforts to call attention to and prioritize this problem. Design standards and the quality of new development, for example, were among the key initiatives outlined by the Go2030 comprehensive plan. But there are a few key issues that stand in the way of making consistent progress on this front:

Outdated Land Development Code (LDC): The LDC, which governs private development, is a solid zoning and development code. But it did not receive major updates in the wake of Go2030's adoption in 2013 and does not include objective design and development standards for the range of development types and locations that would begin to improve quality of place in a more consistent and widespread manner.

Difficulty funding better public infrastructure: Improving quality of place goes well beyond private development. It requires better quality streets with more trees, sidewalks, and bike facilities, more trails, and more natural amenities. But there is currently no consistent mechanism for upgrading the quality of Fargo's public realm. Some years, the City is able to piece together funding for such improvements using regional grants, but they require a local funding match and the only discretionary local source is sales tax revenue. Yet, when sales tax revenues are used to leverage grants, they are being diverted away from other local projects that people want. This leaves little room for funding the things people want, but might not need, relative to basic street repairs or storm water management.

Assessment of Components of Community Character and Form

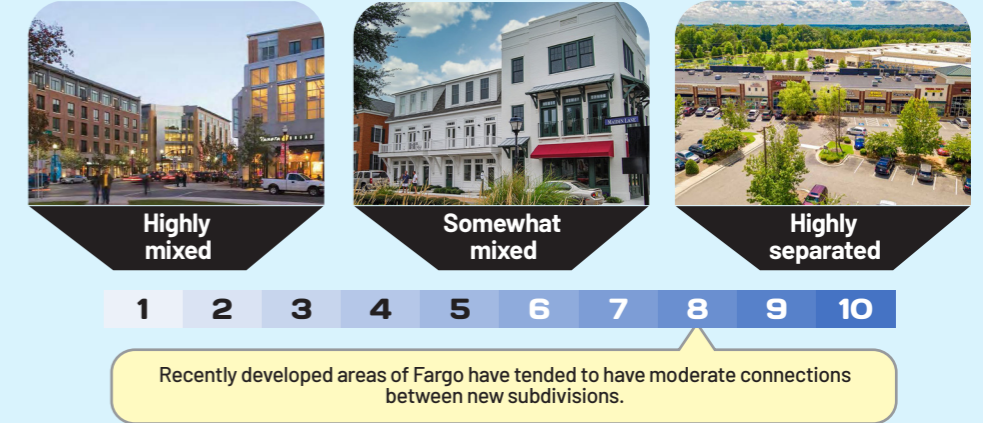
What are the components that contribute to "quality of place," and what are the general outcomes from new development in recent decades?

Assessment of Components of Community Character and Form

Distribution of land uses

Land uses are highly separated when retail and other commercial uses are strictly contained to commercial-only properties such as retail plazas, "Big Box" stores, and office buildings. Homes and apartments are kept on residential-only blocks that feel separate and contained.

When land uses are more mixed, commercial and residential uses are integrated to some degree. They may include small apartment buildings with ground-floor retail or offices, as well as residential blocks that are short, easy, and pleasant walks to retail and services.

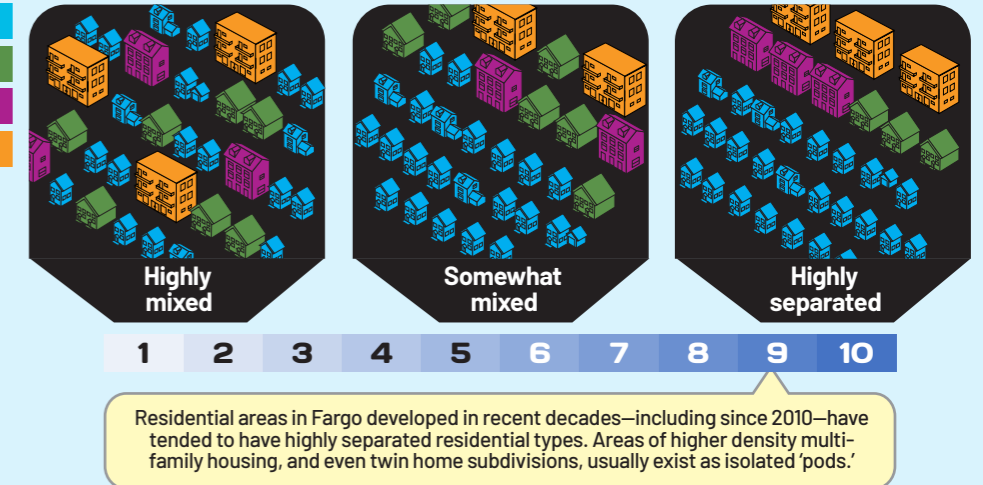


Distribution of residential types

- Single Family
- Duplexes
- Triplexes
- Quadplexes

Residential types are highly separated when single-family homes, duplexes, and apartment buildings are kept apart from each other.

When residential types are mixed, there may be different residential types (and a mixture of owner and rental opportunities) blended together on the same block.



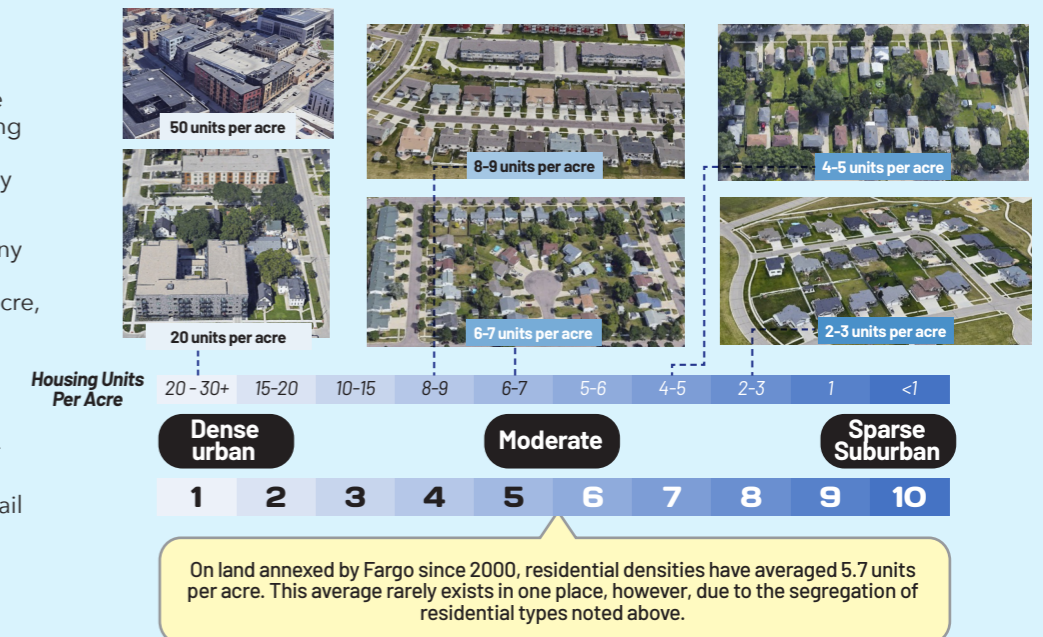
Density examples are all located in or adjacent to the City of Fargo

Residential Densities

A sparse suburban or more rural neighborhood is dominated by large lot sizes and small numbers of housing units per acre. These tend to be comprised exclusively of single-family homes.

Fargo's core neighborhoods and many of the newest parts of Fargo reflect moderate densities of 6-7 units per acre, a density that is only possible when lot sizes are smaller and multi-family housing is part of the mix.

Parts of Fargo that currently have a denser, more urban form have larger multi-family structures creating high densities of customers for nearby retail and services.



Assessment of Components of Community Character and Form

Neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections

Residential areas with few connections tend to include cul de sacs and other street patterns that channel traffic onto just a few main streets.

Subdivisions with moderate connections have more options for internal circulation while also keeping subdivisions separated from each other.

Areas with many connections distribute traffic more evenly across a large grid and allow subdivisions to blend into one another.



Residential areas in Fargo developed in recent decades—including since 2010—have tended to have highly separated residential types. Areas of higher density multi-family housing, and even twin home subdivisions, usually exist as isolated 'pods.'

Quality and character of neighborhoods

Residential neighborhoods with basic levels of aesthetic quality and design perform their duty as places to live without much attention given to their architectural character. They are utilitarian and do not attempt to create a memorable sense of place.

Neighborhoods with special levels of aesthetic quality and design have architectural and other physical attributes that create a strong sense of place. People immediately recognize such a block for its attention to detail, its durability, and the overall quality of the pedestrian experience.



Since 2000, new residential neighborhoods in Fargo have leaned towards the "basic" end of the spectrum.

Quality and character of civic spaces and buildings

Civic spaces and buildings of basic quality and character are functional and presentable. They perform their intended role.

Civic spaces and buildings that exhibit special levels of quality and character go several steps beyond being functional and presentable. They reflect an effort to create iconic and memorable public spaces.



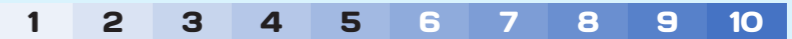
New civic spaces and buildings in Fargo have leaned toward the "special" end of this spectrum. City Hall, the Fargo Public Library, and Broadway Square, among other facilities and spaces, represent an emphasis on quality.

Assessment of Components of Community Character and Form

Quality and character of commercial districts and major intersections

Commercial districts and development at major intersections with basic levels of aesthetic quality and design are functional and presentable. They do not attempt to be a memorable space or create an experience for the user.

Commercial districts and development at intersections with special levels of aesthetic quality and design put a premium on architectural and landscape design to create a high quality and memorable user experience.



Newly developed commercial areas and development at major intersections have leaned toward the "basic" end of this spectrum. They serve important functional purposes, but without much attention to quality of place.

Distribution of amenities

Amenities (retail, services, entertainment) that are strung along major arterial roadways tend to be somewhat scattered and require several separate stops on a typical errand run.

Amenities that are all located in the same area (a commercial complex with numerous types of shops and services, for example) are very clustered and require less re-parking by a driving customer.



Since 2000, amenities in Fargo's neighborhoods have tended to be somewhat clustered at major arterial intersections.

Commercial district accessibility

Commercial districts that prioritize easy car circulation are designed first-and-foremost for easy automobile access. Pedestrians and bicyclists are accommodated to some degree but may feel unsafe or inconvenienced.

Areas that prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists put their safety and convenience at the forefront at the possible expense of automobile inconvenience.



Since 2000, new commercial areas in Fargo have tended to learn towards the prioritization of easy car circulation.

Key Takeaways

From the late 1800s through the early 2020s, steady growth has been a predictable presence in Fargo's history. And while national population growth has slowed substantially and makes it harder to predict future growth than ever before, population projections by Metro COG anticipate that Fargo's growth will continue through at least the middle of this century, with another 15,000 households anticipated by 2045.

As Fargo looks ahead, what key takeaways from recent growth in Fargo should shape how it considers its next steps?



Fargo is planning for the future from a position of genuine strength

There is much to improve upon as Fargo plans for its future. But many growing places would be envious of Fargo's recent achievements and how they allow the community to plan from a position of strength.

- It has addressed big, expensive problems head-on, with impacts that will last generations (the FM Diversion)
- It has utility and transportation systems that have been steadily updated and have additional capacity
- It has successfully revitalized its downtown, which now stands as a regional model for great placemaking
- Over a decade of strong real property value growth has improved the City's tax base and fiscal outlook



Growth patterns have improved over the past 10-15 years

Fargo's current strength is tied, in part, to improved growth patterns since the late 2000s. New development has become more dense and efficient, leapfrogging has been limited, and reinvestment in existing parts of Fargo has been on the uptick—especially in and around downtown.

All of this means that recent growth has been more fiscally sustainable and a better example of long-term community stewardship than growth patterns of the previous several decades. As it plans for the future, Fargo has already been on a better growth trajectory.



Implementation of growth-related goals has been constrained by missing or outdated tools

Improvements in recent years have not, however, kept up with intentions outlined in Go2030 and other planning efforts. While the City's plans have consistently called for better urban form and design, it has mostly fallen short of those aims outside of downtown—even as development patterns have become denser.

Key missing ingredients for pushing growth patterns further in the direction of the community's intentions include a full update of the Land Development Code that was last overhauled in 1998 and rethinking how Fargo pays for better streets and amenities.



The FM Diversion creates urgency to "get it right," especially in the south

The FM Area Diversion Project is a major accomplishment for the community. But its pending completion is also a source of some anxiety. When it becomes operational, it will effectively draw a growth boundary around Fargo and its neighbors, making the remaining land in Fargo's ETJ a limited and valuable commodity.

As Fargo shifts from a historical mindset of land abundance to land scarcity, will it make the most of its limited remaining supply of land? Will Fargoans be proud of what gets built there? What will it mean to "get it right"?



Opportunities to be proactive about redevelopment will be important to seize

The 2007 Growth Plan and Go2030 marked a transition away from viewing growth almost entirely through a land consumptive, greenfield lens and towards more balanced thinking that includes reinvestment and infill development.

Striking the right balance will be increasingly important. Concerns about disinvestment in core neighborhoods and the aging of areas that were inexpensively built in the 1970s and 1980s all require careful thinking about how to spur reinvestment, how to avoid blight contagion in the years ahead, and how to ensure that every increment of greenfield growth does not undermine demand elsewhere in Fargo.



Intentions for Future Growth

Fargoans have been consistent about their future growth preferences since the 2007 Growth Plan and the Go2030 Comprehensive Plan—policy documents that identified Fargo’s intention to move in the direction of growth patterns that strengthen existing neighborhoods and improve the quality of place wherever growth happens. And these inclinations were echoed and refined during the Fargo Growth Plan 2024 process, shaping the Preferred Growth Scenario.

Part 2 both reiterates and updates Fargo’s growth intentions as a basis for organizing the work of implementation. In addition to defining where and how Fargo intends to grow, it also provides a decision-making foundation for “Practical Growth” to serve as a filter for future planning and policymaking that relates to Fargo’s physical development.

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Future Growth Summary

Fargo’s intentions for future growth can best be defined by the following series of statements that describe a future where Fargo—in being true to its core values and rigorous in the application of principles tied to those values—has achieved its preferred balance of outward and inward growth while also nurturing the types of places that will make Fargo proud and keep it financially and economically strong.



Fargo in 2045 is a place where...



Growth is happening in a practical manner that expresses what Fargo values most. Patterns of growth and their outcomes can be described as:



Far-sighted



Fiscally responsible



Demonstrating good stewardship



Entrepreneurial



Policy, planning, and investment decisions are adhering to principles that reflect Fargo’s vision for practical growth.



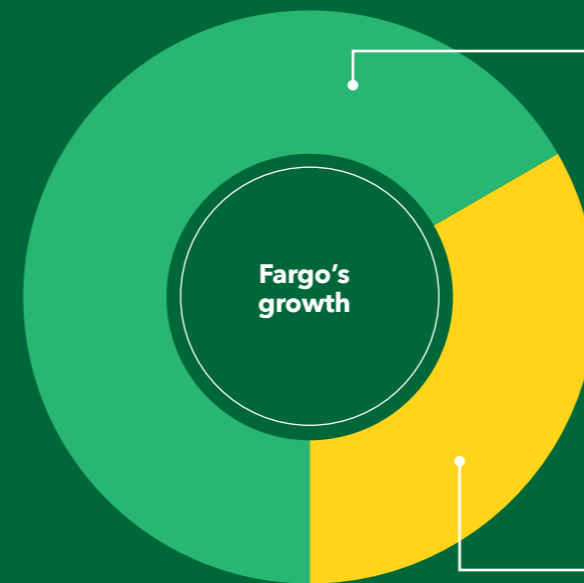
The rules that govern development and redevelopment are predictable to everyone



An intentional balance is being struck between new development and redevelopment



Practical conditions are framing orderly growth in greenfield areas



66%

No more than two-thirds of Fargo’s growth is being absorbed by greenfield areas, a sharp reduction from previous periods of growth



33%

At least one-third of Fargo’s growth is being accommodated by downtown, core neighborhoods, and other developed areas



No matter where growth is happening, it is notably different from the late 1900s and early 2000s for having:

Substantially better **form and design** in neighborhoods and along commercial corridors

Greater mixing of different **land uses** and amenities

Greater integration of different **housing** types

Better connections between **neighborhoods**

An urban form that expands the range of **travel options** for Fargo residents

Practical Growth: Fargo's Approach to Value-Driven Development



For a plan to stand a chance of being implemented—especially a long-range plan that requires continual fidelity to a payoff that is years and often decades down the road—the plan's intentions must relate directly to what the community most deeply cherishes: the beliefs and attitudes that define how the community operates and why it makes the decisions it does. When a vision is rooted in this way, a plan—and its Preferred Growth Scenario—will reflect what the community has already demonstrated a willingness to do.

Of the many cherished values central to Fargo's community DNA—frugal, modest, respectful—one value consistently stands out for its influence on community and individual decision-making:

Fargo values what is practical.

Practicality and its influence as Fargo's overarching value

Consistently choosing to be practical reflects a commitment to delivering tangible, real-world benefits and, in doing so, embracing the wisdom that the best solution to a problem is often the simplest.

The practicality in Fargo's DNA taps into this basic meaning of "practical," but there is more to it—especially as it relates to how Fargo has grown. Fargo's practicality has driven decision-making around growth in subtle and specific ways that have served the community well:



Far-sightedness

Practical is not synonymous with short-sighted. Fargo has many practical AND far-sighted achievements in its history and its present. The FM Area Diversion and its long-term flood protection impact is a far-sighted achievement with immense, long-term practical value to future generations. As a result of the project, Fargo will have flood-protected lands with potential to serve any number of practical future needs. It is a big, expensive project that the community was willing to undertake (with considerable local resources devoted to the project) primarily because of its practical value.



Fiscal responsibility

Though it faces fiscal headwinds from time to time, Fargo has a history of fiscal conservatism and of preserving its capacity to invest in basic services and infrastructure. This is reflected in Fargo's practical, pay-as-you-go approach to growth in recent decades that has paid for infrastructure expansion through special assessments on the end users. Though not without shortcomings, this is a more practical and orderly way to grow than the heavily subsidized sprawl found in most places that have grown as quickly as Fargo has over the past 40 years, and one reflection of this is Fargo's lighter leapfrogging footprint compared to so many other places in America over the same period.



Stewardship of assets

The careful tending of an impressive tree canopy is perhaps the best and most visible example of Fargo embracing an ethic of community stewardship that imparts very tangible benefits to the community—from cooler streets in the summer, to wind screening in the winter, to the market value added to properties on beautiful tree-lined streets. Importantly, nor is the management of the city's impressive tree canopy the only excellent example of the community stewarding something of civic importance. The city's recovery and subsequent expert nursing of downtown is another, revealing a willingness to do what is necessary to ensure Fargo's future is anchored by Fargo's past.



Entrepreneurialism

Fargo has long been a community of practical risk-takers. From the early settlers who took a chance on Fargo to better their economic prospects to modern-day software entrepreneurs, Fargo has attracted people who are risk-tolerant but sensible. The steady, bit-by-bit improvement of downtown Fargo over the past two decades is a reflection of an approach to development that takes measured and patient risks.

No community is always far-sighted, always fiscally responsible, always a good steward of its assets, or always risk-tolerant, and Fargo is not special in this regard. When lapses occur, there may be any number of forces within or beyond a city's control that result in regrettable decision-making. Often in Fargo, lapses can be traced back to the community's practical nature.

The practicality of avoiding "no"

It may be cliché to say that Fargoans are polite and that the politeness owes to immigrants having to get along with each other to survive harsh winters, homesickness, and loneliness on the frontier. But there is no getting around the pronounced degree of politeness and reserve plainly visible to outsiders—a politeness that can make it difficult for the community to say "no" even when it should.

When it comes to how Fargo grows, difficulty with saying "no" has produced visibly uneven results. While Fargo's policy of making growth pay its own way has been both practical and wise, what has ultimately been built is often impractical and unsightly—thoughtlessly designed buildings in poorly proportioned subdivisions that will not add value to the community in the long-run.

Mistaking expedient for practical

Saying "yes" to something that isn't optimal but probably "good enough" can often be rationalized as practical. Why demand higher standards when a proposal clearly delivers basic utility (habitable housing, serviceable commercial space, etc.)? To demand better may sometimes feel insufferably fussy, or even greedy, to a practical people.

When such compromises are made, however, the community isn't actually being practical—it's not tapping into the practicality of being far-sighted, fiscally responsible, and practicing good community stewardship. Such compromises, rather, are a form of expediency that lead to short-sighted decisions and detract from creating larger, long-term benefits.

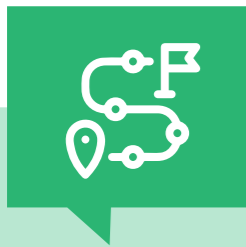
With "practicality" as a core value that also acts as a double-edged sword, Fargo's intentions for growth, and the decision-making filters based on those intentions, must (1) amplify Fargo's historical tendency to view the more difficult path as eminently superior if it creates tangible, long-term value, and (2) help Fargo avoid situations where it's prone to distort "practical" into harmful behaviors—the inability to say "no" and the acceptance of expedient solutions.

Decision-Making Foundation for Practical Growth

The healthy characteristics of Fargo’s practicality represent values that can and should form the foundation for future decision-making. They are values that are translatable into distinct Principles for Growth as well as principles to guide other processes that require clear and consistent starting points for weighing complicated choices.

Aiming for Practical Growth

Through the adoption and implementation of the Fargo Growth Plan 2024, our community embraces a distinctively Fargo path called *Practical Growth*. Regardless of how much Fargo grows in the coming decades, we aim to grow in a manner that expresses our practical commitment to:



Being far-sighted

We consider long-term implications of decisions big and small and ask “Is this something we’ll be proud of and that will add value to our community in 30 years?” It is more practical to get things right from the start and create something of lasting value than to be saddled with something either costly or regrettable in the not-so-distant future.



Being fiscally responsible

If something is cheaper, it doesn’t necessarily mean it’s the fiscally responsible choice. Part of being far-sighted is making sure that we are being smart with our community’s resources and can pay our bills and be self-reliant in the long-run. It is more practical to guard our community’s resources and use them wisely than to put the next generation in the position of paying for our mistakes.



Being good stewards

Fargo is filled with natural, historical, recreational, and other community assets that have served us well and will continue to serve us well if we invest in them and keep them strong. It is more practical to invest wisely in our most cherished assets than to see them diminished and devalued.



Being entrepreneurial

Long-term rewards require practical risk-taking. We know that many of our achievements as a community were not considered “guarantees” when they were conceived. Being practical does not mean shying away from solutions that are unfamiliar.

We will not approve projects that are not far-sighted, fiscally responsible, or developed in such a way as to enable affordable stewardship. Nor will we reject a project merely because it seems risky. These are values closely tied to our community’s practicality.

To make decisions that are in line with these commitments and to avoid habits that can lead to comfortable but impractical choices, we embrace the following principles for growth

Principles for Practical Growth



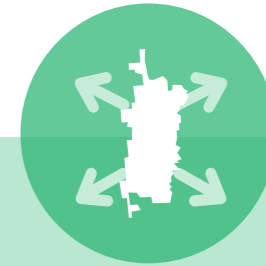
Development or redevelopment, and the rules that govern it, must be predictable

- ✓ Our land development policies and processes should be as predictable and consistently applied as possible, avoiding case-by-case discretion. Transparent rules that are evenly and automatically applied reduce the number of situations where a Fargoan is forced to render “impolite” verdicts.
- ✓ We must guard against a tendency to see convenience and expediency—which can lead to unpredictable decision-making—as equivalent to being practical.
- ✓ The rules that govern the public realm and private development and redevelopment in Fargo should reflect practical standards of quality and durability—creating neighborhoods that have lasting value and are fiscally responsible.



Achieve an intentional balance between new development and redevelopment

- ✓ Go2030 and the downtown and core neighborhoods master plans all assert the importance of reinvestment. Not letting established parts of the city decline is practical as it avoids failing to maximize the value of the existing infrastructure previous generations worked so hard to put in place.
- ✓ Fargo’s growth rate in recent decades has required new development to accommodate thousands of new households, and Fargo’s 2007 growth plan called for an orderly and balanced approach to accommodating growth on the city’s edges.
- ✓ Going forward, we will be intentional about achieving a balance between redevelopment of existing areas and development on the frontier. We recognize that diverse living options to suit different needs and lifestyles is an important part of keeping Fargo competitive. At a community-wide level, and within different areas, we should strive to achieve a mix of fiscally responsible development types to make Fargo as adaptable as possible to evolving market demands.



Outward expansion should occur within a framework of practical conditions

- ✓ Growth patterns that are balanced and predictable should be tied to well-understood conditions, much as the 2007 Growth Plan communicated a tiered system (Tier 1 and Tier 2) for shorter-term and longer-term areas of development.
- ✓ Going forward, transparent and practical conditions for outward expansion of Fargo’s footprint should reflect an intentional balance between development and redevelopment, with new development steered in certain directions when specific conditions are met in already established areas.

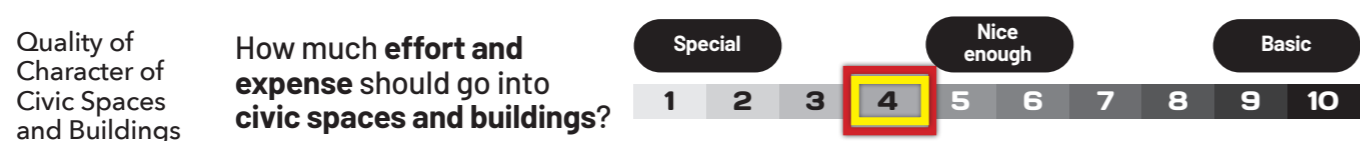
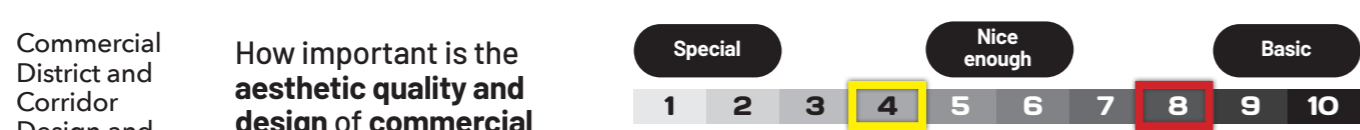
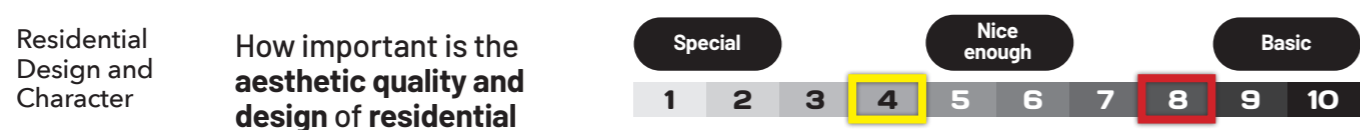
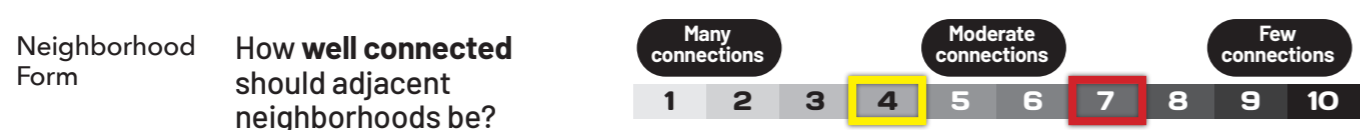
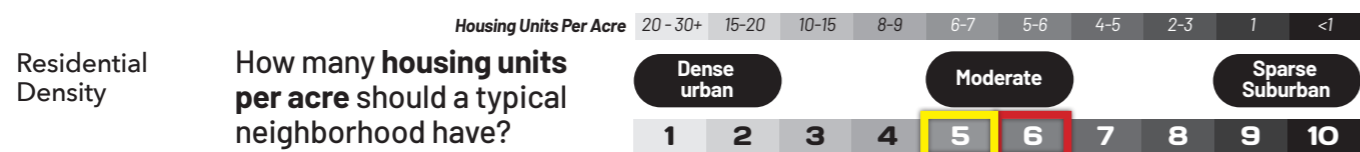
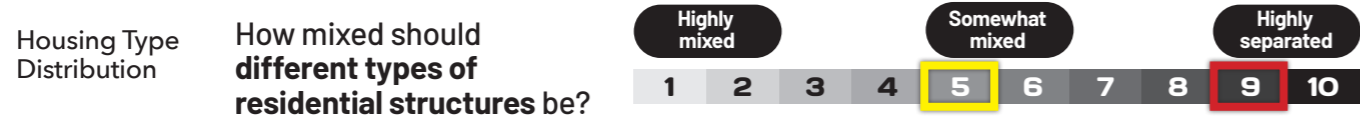
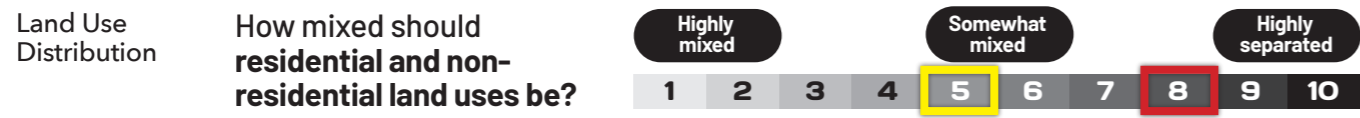
Preferred Growth Scenario

Fargo’s Preferred Growth Scenario, based on preferences expressed during the planning process, has two parts. One is a focus on “How” Fargo should grow, which includes land use, density, design, and other characteristics of land development. The second is a focus on “Where” Fargo should grow, which identifies a preferred balancing of growth between newly developed (greenfield) and redeveloped land.

In both parts—the “How” and the “Where”—Fargo’s growth preferences are described relative to how and where Fargo would continue to grow if it remained on the course described in Part 1. On both fronts, the difference between the Preferred Growth Scenario and Current Trend Scenario is not radically different. But they are different enough to have significant implications on systems and tools that would be needed to shift in the preferred direction.

HOW

Current Trend Scenario **Preferred Growth Scenario**



Current Trend Scenario
How Fargo would keep growing if current trends continue and it does nothing differently

8 land uses beyond downtown tend to remain segregated; while residential and commercial uses continue to be in close proximity to each other, there is a clear sense of separation between them

9 a range of housing types continue to be produced in different parts of Fargo, but different types tend not to be integrated; apartment blocks, small multi-family structures, and single-family homes remain distinctly separated from each other

6 average densities of 6 to 7 units per acre in newly developed areas; denser multi-family redevelopment along established corridors and downtown

7 newly developed neighborhoods tend to have non-gridded street networks that don't connect directly to adjacent subdivisions; residential blocks and commercial blocks along corridors tend to be large with limited intersections

8 good urban form continues to be achieved in downtown residential development but is inconsistent, and generally poor, elsewhere; new residential areas are generally not pleasant or comfortable places to navigate without a car

8 good urban form continues to be achieved in downtown development but is inconsistent, and generally poor, elsewhere; new commercial areas are generally not pleasant or comfortable places to navigate without a car; major corridors continue to look and feel utilitarian

4 Fargo continues to use civic buildings and spaces as an opportunity to demonstrate high standards

Preferred Growth Scenario
How Fargo would grow if it achieves the Fargo Growth Plan 2024 vision for growth

5 moderate levels of land use integration in newly developed areas; strengthening of mixed-use fabric in traditional areas

5 moderate levels of integration of single-family and multi-family housing types within newly developed areas; preservation of integrated residential fabric in traditional areas

5 average densities of 8 to 9 units per acre in newly developed areas; denser multi-family redevelopment along established corridors and in downtown

4 newly developed neighborhoods tend to have gridded, denser street patterns that mirror traditional forms in Fargo's core, including direct connections to adjacent residential and commercial developments; walkability between neighborhoods is high

4 attention paid to getting the basics of good urban form right in the development and redevelopment of areas with residential uses, especially in how private development addresses the public realm; focus on form, but not overly fussy or prescriptive about design details

4 attention paid to getting the basics of good urban form right in the development and redevelopment of commercial areas, mixed-use areas, and major corridors; recently developed or redeveloped commercial spaces have a clear sense of place and are pleasant to navigate by multiple modes

4 Fargo continues to use civic buildings and spaces as an opportunity to demonstrate high standards while requiring higher standards for private development citywide

Key Differences Between the Current Trend and Preferred Growth Scenarios

Greater mixing of land uses

Greater **integration** of housing types

Slightly higher densities, but in more integrated and traditional urban forms

Denser, more gridded neighborhood structure, with more direct connections between adjacent neighborhoods

Substantially better form and design in newly developed or redeveloped residential areas

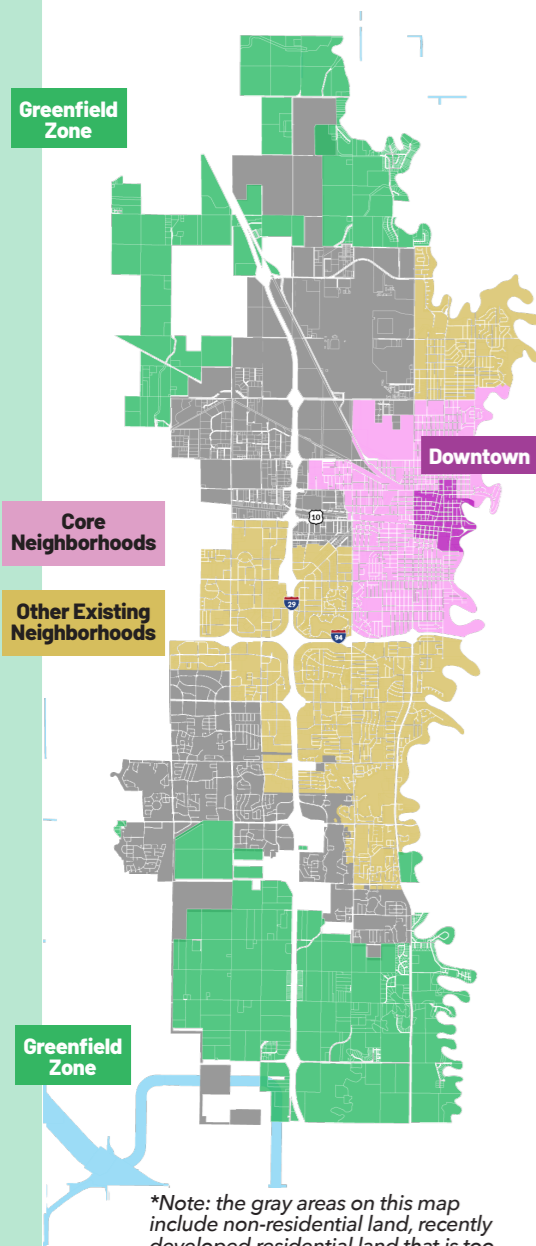
Substantially better form and design in newly developed or redeveloped commercial areas and along major corridors

Maintenance of **current standards for public space design**

Preferred Growth Scenario

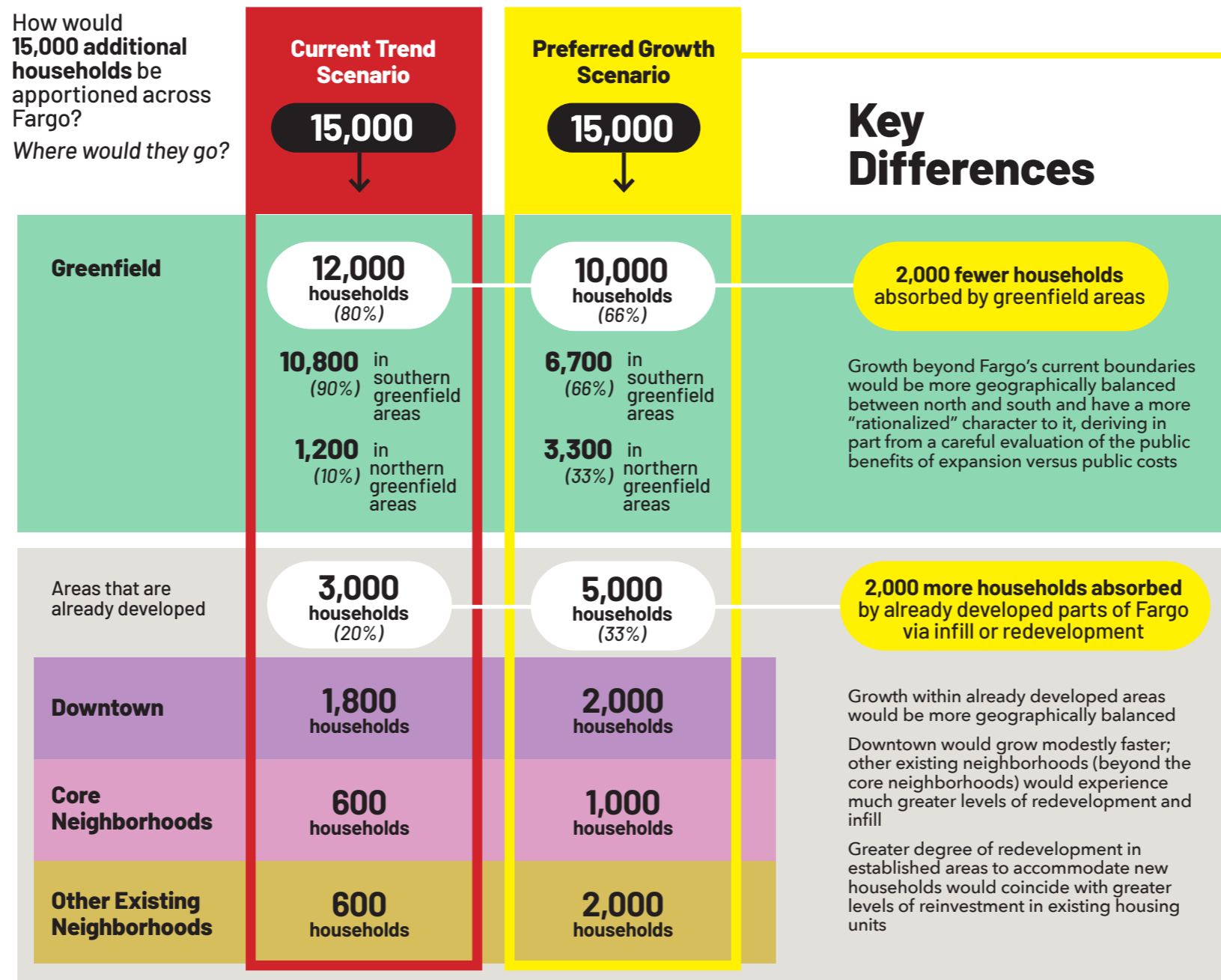
WHERE

Fargo's Potential Growth Zones



*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

How would 15,000 additional households be apportioned across Fargo?
Where would they go?



Projected Impacts

More limited extensions of existing services to greenfield areas and more efficient utilization of existing service infrastructure

Higher degree of fiscal health due to improved revenue generation per acre in areas of infill and redevelopment and higher quality greenfield growth

Alternative modes of travel more feasible and reliable throughout the city; **greater degree of travel choice**

An **expanded collection of high quality places** (including and beyond downtown) make Fargo more competitive for skilled workers and the businesses that need those workers

Greater levels of income integration in both newly built and established areas

Lower consumption of undeveloped land; developed areas (new and existing) are more dense and energy efficient

Implications for Implementation

Development in already established areas is inherently more expensive than greenfield development due to higher land values and redevelopment costs; LDC and incentives would need to put development in established areas on an equal or better cost feasibility footing as greenfield sites

Greenfield developments would only receive incentives if they occur in locations that advance long-term strategic goals

A greater focus on greenfield development at the city's northern end would require greater levels of public investment in amenities to draw the market in a direction that it has not been choosing on its own

Infill in the core neighborhoods is more likely to occur as redevelopment of obsolete (and therefore lower value) commercial sites than in the Other Existing Neighborhoods, where infill is more likely to take shape in strategically prioritized growth nodes and corridors

Stronger incentives for reinvestment in existing housing stock (than currently exist) would be needed



Framework for Practical Growth Management

Steering Fargo fully in the direction of *Practical Growth* and this plan’s Preferred Growth Scenario requires a departure from the assumptions and models—formal and informal—that have shaped Fargo’s growth habits over the past half-century. New or modified ways of framing where and how growth should happen, while continuing to tap into long-held values, are essential to making decisions that consistently align with Fargo’s intentions.

Part 3 presents a Framework for Practical Growth Management that incorporates a series of interconnected models that will help Fargo craft and then use the tools, policies, and processes needed to implement this Growth Plan.

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A Policy Framework to Achieve Fargo's Growth Intentions

The intentions for future growth defined in Part 2 have much in common with the vision statements contained in other plans developed since 2007. There is an emphasis on expanding the share of growth that gets directed inwardly to parts of the community that have already been developed. And, relatedly, there is a clear signal to grow in a more urban manner regardless of where the growth happens.

Despite the consistency of growth intentions expressed over more than a decade, existing policies are unlikely to achieve the outcomes sought by this Growth Plan. As Part 1 describes, Fargo's policy systems have recorded many notable achievements in recent years but have also struggled to keep up with the rapid pace of growth. An updated policy framework is needed to fully align a wide range of systems—land use and development regulations, financial practices, incentives, infrastructure planning—with the community's desired direction.

To effectively guide future development and redevelopment in the direction of this Growth Plan's intentions, a growth management policy framework must provide the following:

Guidrails for "Yes"

Fargo has a cultural aversion to saying "no." In response, a growth management policy framework must emphasize what Fargo says "yes" to and communicate Fargo's growth expectations as clearly as possible.

By providing practical guiderails for "yes" that are clearly understood by all, the framework will provide predictability and transparency to the benefit of land owners, developers, neighbors, and city staff and officials.

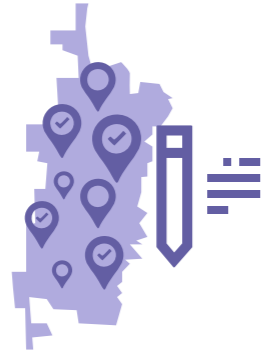
Growth Models for a More Urban Fargo

New development in Fargo has become more dense over the past decade. But becoming more urban is about more than density. It requires a greater mixing of land uses and housing types, and higher levels of connectivity with a range of mobility options. Outside of downtown, Fargo has not consistently nurtured these conditions, even where higher densities have been achieved.

Updated growth models are needed to achieve this Growth Plan's desired balance of outward and inward growth, and to ensure that growth—wherever it happens—is consistently achieving a more urban character that reinforces Fargo's practical approach to growth (far-sighted, fiscally responsible, good stewardship, and entrepreneurial).



Context-Sensitive Expectations



Conveying Fargo’s growth intentions with clarity requires a shared understanding of long-term goals and expectations for the community, which are outlined in Part 2. But it also requires acknowledgment that the contributions of Fargo’s various parts will be different, and that distinctions and differentiation from one area to another are important to communicate with precision.

Of course, differentiation is recognized in Fargo today. Expectations for growth in downtown Fargo are very different than those for growth in the ETJ.

But Fargo’s current systems lack sufficient levels of context sensitivity for the existing range of places within the city—or for the types of places that it aspires to have. While Fargo’s expectations for downtown are clearly articulated by the intent of the InFocus plan and have been translated into context-sensitive rules and regulations (the Downtown Mixed Use zoning district), similar levels of context-sensitivity do not exist for most of the city.

This Framework for Practical Growth Management includes four models to guide future growth with the levels of context-sensitivity required to achieve growth patterns that are more urban and more inwardly-focused.

THE FIRST MODEL



1 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.

THE SECOND MODEL



2 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 of primary and secondary land uses, densities, and infrastructure requirements.

Place types are used in this Growth Plan in place of the more traditional focus on land uses due to Fargo’s urbanizing intentions. This requires a more nuanced approach to defining “what goes where,” and a recognition that the outcomes that matter most are not land uses but the emergence of places that carefully integrate a range of characteristics.

THE THIRD MODEL



3 Growth Grid

It is Fargo’s intention to steer approximately two-thirds of net household growth to its ETJ as greenfield growth—a sharp reduction from the pattern of recent decades. The third model establishes guidelines for organizing growth in the ETJ so that it occurs in a well-organized and practical manner.

The proposed Growth Grid uses the historic township and range system as a basis for organizing and sequencing future areas of growth, where development will be guided by Fargo’s transect and place types.

THE FOURTH MODEL



4 Growth Centers

It is Fargo’s intention to steer approximately one-third of net household growth to areas that have already been developed—a sharp increase from the pattern of recent decades. The fourth model proposes a network of Growth Centers to absorb most of this inwardly-focused growth and to ensure that growth in the ETJ mirrors Fargo’s urbanizing intentions.

Growth Centers represent distinct, multi-faceted place types that exist in the more urban zones of Fargo’s transect. Downtown Fargo is already Fargo’s pre-eminent Growth Center, and the success of its revitalization will serve as a template for cultivating additional, smaller centers.



THE FIRST MODEL

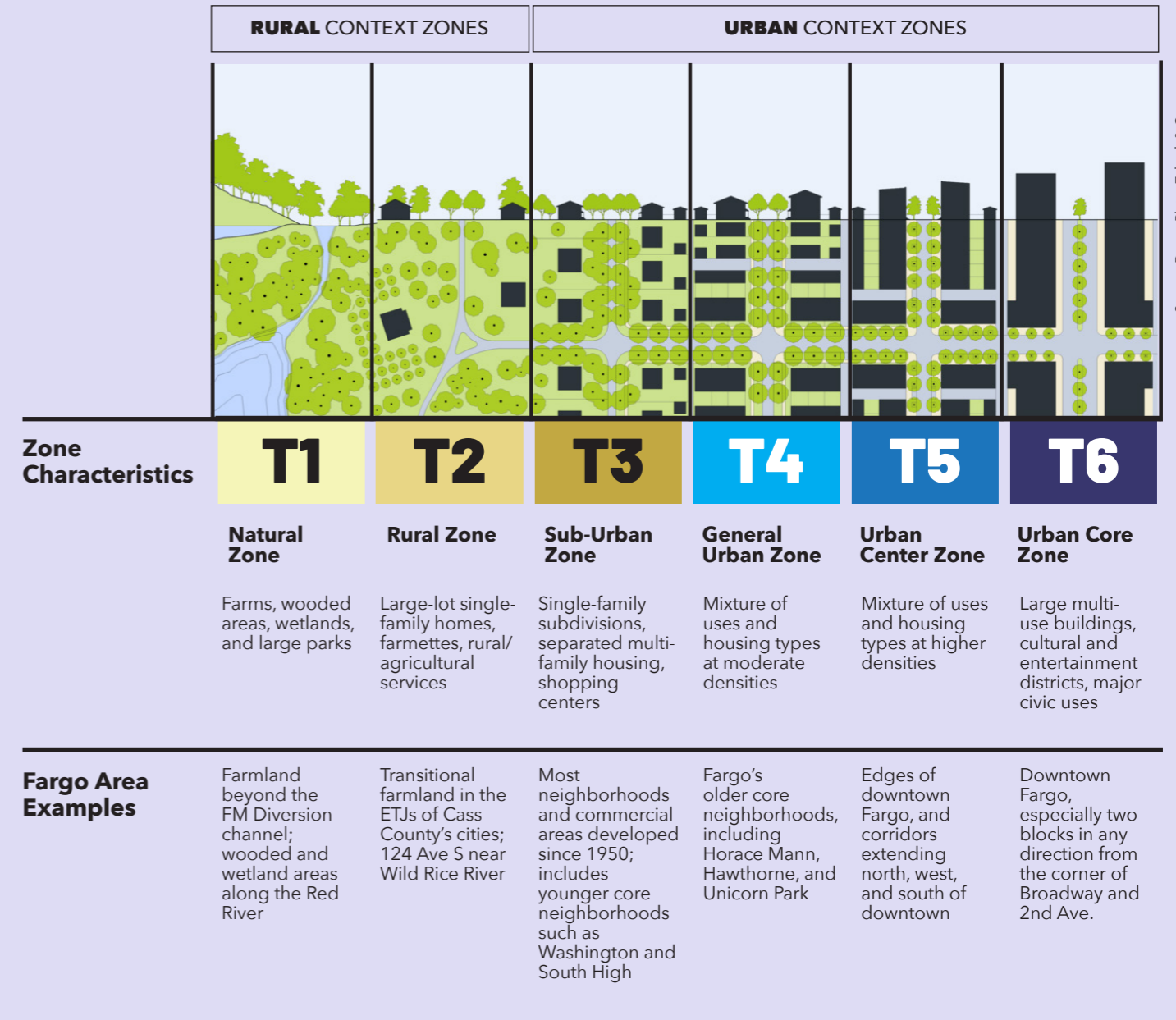
Fargo's Transect

Just like nearly every urban area in North America, Fargo fits the rural-to-urban transect—a model that describes the gradual transition from rural development patterns at the metropolitan periphery to highly urban development patterns in the downtown core. While this transition has been long-established as a way that cities grow, the transect model did not emerge until the 1990s and early 2000s as a way to analyze the transition and consciously plan for the different areas along the transect.

Fargo's transect, as shown on the opposite page, is an adaptation of the six transect zones defined by SmartCode. It begins with T1 and T2, the two zones that have a rural context characterized by large farms and natural areas (T1) that transition to homes on large lots, smaller farms, and the provision of agricultural services (T2). T3, or the Sub-Urban Zone, represents the transition from rural contexts (in T2) to more traditional urban contexts (in T4, T5, and T6), and is characterized by the separated land uses and auto-centric development that was dominant during the second half of the 20th century.

The three most urban zones in Fargo's transect (T4, T5, and T6) are generally confined to the parts of Fargo that were developed prior to 1950 (see Historical Growth Patterns in Part 1). Fargo's intentions for growth, however, call for more urbanized growth patterns going forward, which means an emphasis on new development that fits the characteristics of T4, T5, and T6.

This transect does not suggest that one zone is superior to other zones—each zone has a part to play in a community with diversity and choice. Rather, it provides a way to understand how existing patterns relate to one another and to express general intentions around the “where” and “how” of future development.



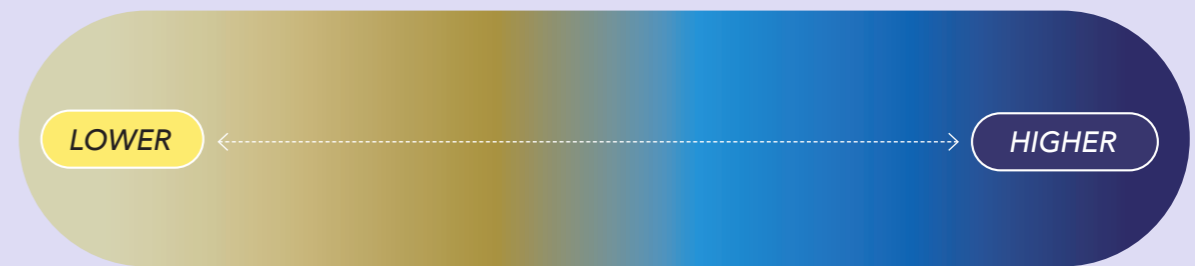
Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

Intensity of Development

Mixing of Uses

Land Value Per Acre

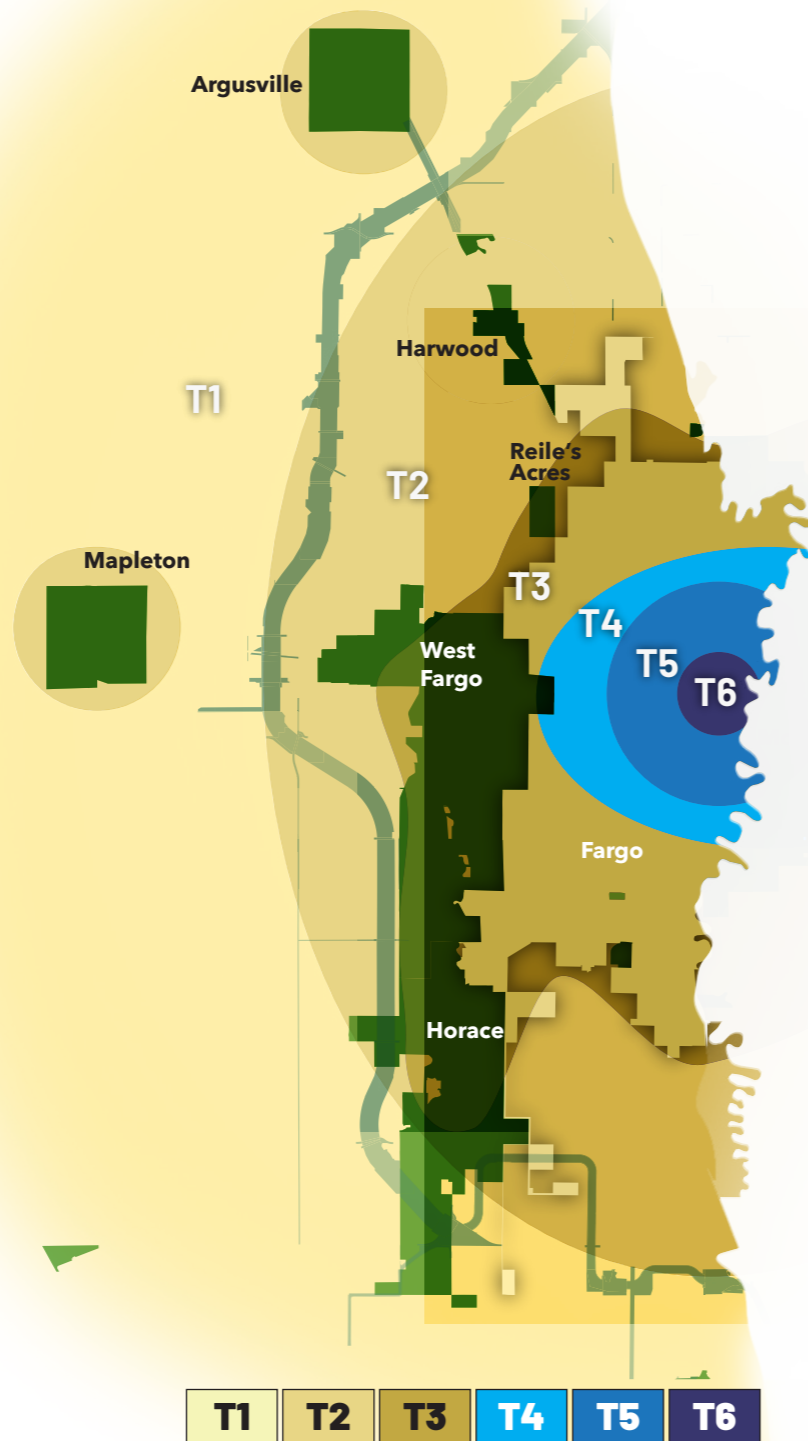
Access to Amenities



Current Transect Map

A current map of Fargo's transect has orderly layers of the six zones and mirror Fargo's development history. T6 is represented by downtown Fargo, where the city got started and which first became a dense urban core in the first decades of the 20th century. T5 and T4 are represented by most of Fargo's core neighborhoods, especially those that developed before 1960.

Most of Fargo and Cass County developed since 1960 is T3, including peripheral areas developed over the past decade with highly separated land uses and housing types.



Future Transect Map

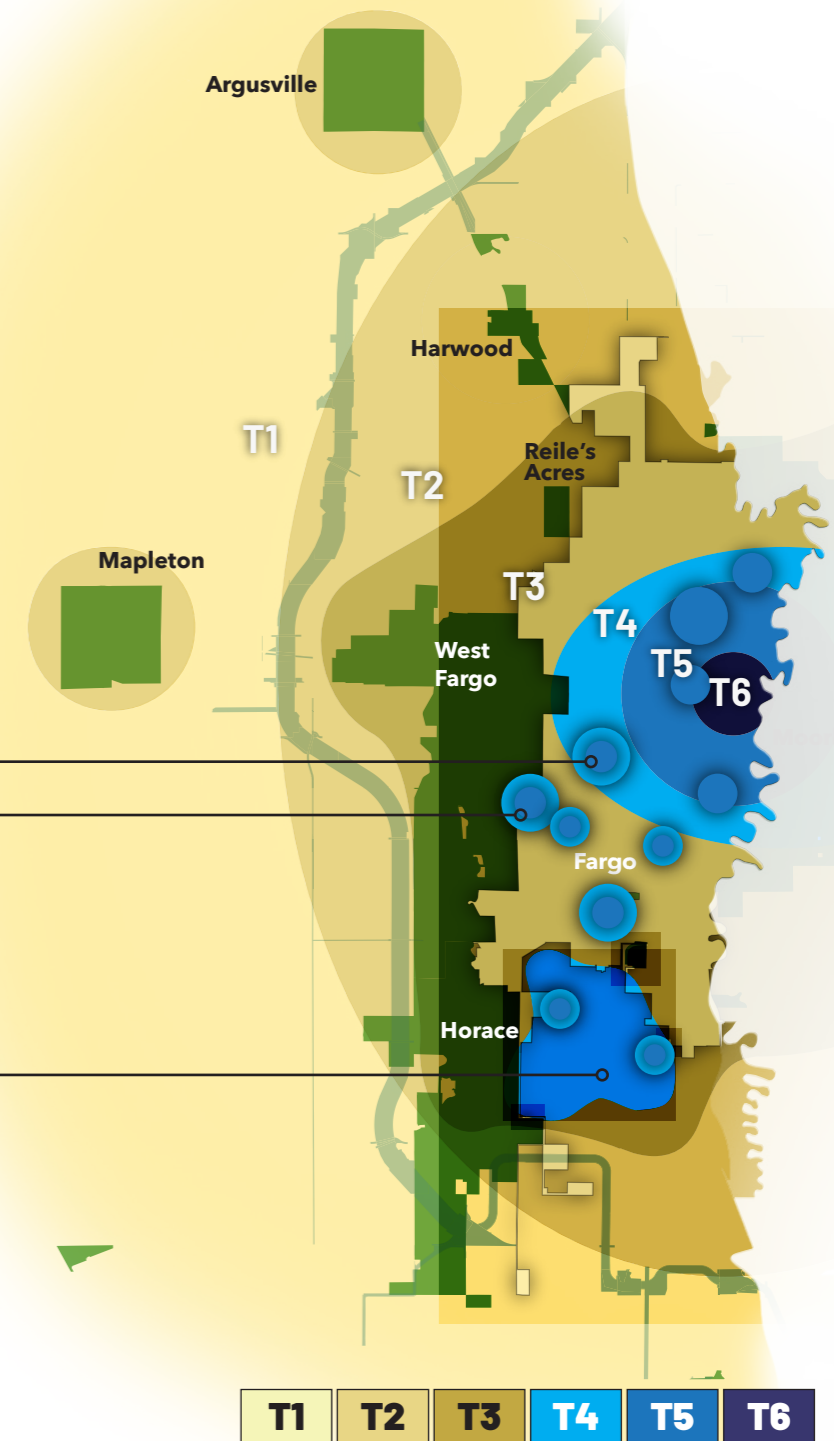
A future map of Fargo's transect demonstrates the community's intentions for growth in the coming decades. While areas covered by T3 will expand around West Fargo and Horace—and most existing T3 areas within Fargo will remain unchanged—Fargo's transect map will become much more complex.

Growth Centers that fit the characteristics of the T5 and T4 zones will emerge in strategic locations to absorb inwardly-focused growth and provide space for additional employment, amenities, and services.



The **southern ETJ will largely reflect T4 characteristics** in addition to its own Growth Centers, with the exception of less intensive development closer to the rivers.

- T4
- T5
- T4





THE SECOND MODEL

Place Types

Fargo's transect provides a way to better understand—at a high altitude—Fargo's prevailing development pattern and how the community's intentions for the future would alter that pattern. Within the scaffolding of the transect, place types provide an additional level of definition and guidance for Fargo's intentions.

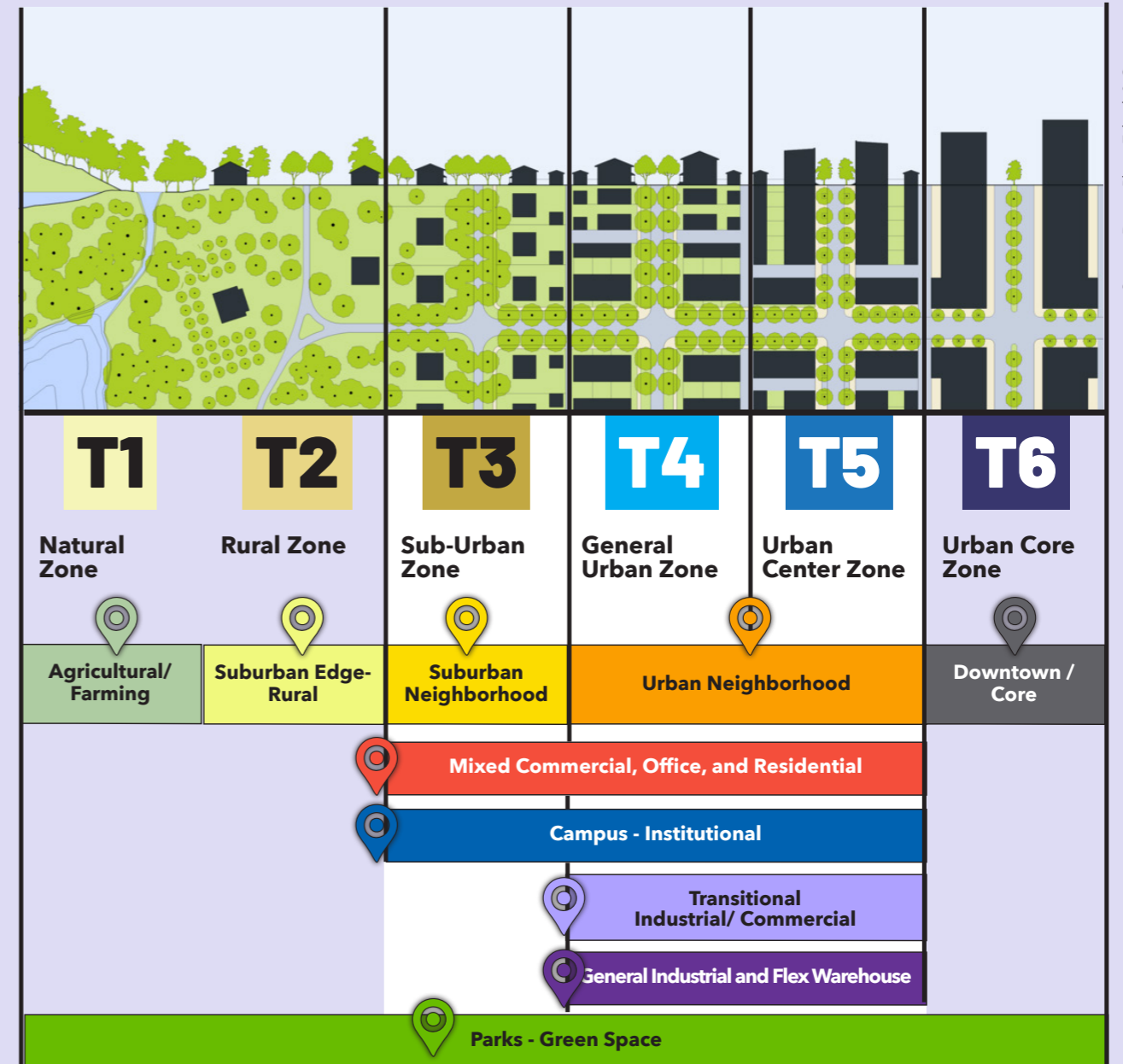
Place types reflect the reality that the future that Fargo wants to achieve is not easily translatable to a land use map—a traditional 20th century planning tool that was ideal for delivering simplified and homogenous development patterns with highly separated uses. Fargo has now consistently indicated for more than a decade that it intends to pivot away from those patterns and towards a more complex and urbanized pattern that delivers denser, more mixed, and more well-connected places.

To move Fargo's policy frameworks into alignment with the community's intentions, this Framework for Practical Growth Management identifies 10 place types that fit within Fargo's transect and that each represent a combination of primary and secondary uses, density characteristics, and transportation and infrastructure requirements. Some exist under a single transect zone and others fall under multiple transect zones.

Presented in detail on the following pages, these place types represent places that exist today and will persist into the future (such as Suburban Neighborhood) and places that Fargo wants to cultivate and expand. As described in Part 4, the proposed place types—and conformance with the place types—should be used to guide updates to the Land Development Code, incentives, and other policies that will shape Fargo's growth.

Place Type	Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Agriculture / Farming	Large farms with crops and/or animals, large barns, grain silos, and associated structures	Residential structures associated with farming
Suburban Edge-Rural	Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure	Small mom/pop farming operations or 'farmettes', scattered cluster or conservation subdivisions, places of worship
Suburban Neighborhood	Small to medium lot single-family detached housing	Townhomes (with limited massing up to four units per building), duplex, triplex, quadplex, ADUs, places of worship, schools, day care centers, home offices
Urban Neighborhood	Small lot single-family detached housing, duplex	Triplex, quadplex, townhomes (with limited massing up to ten units per building), pockets of multi-family structures, places of worship, schools, daycare centers, home offices, neighborhood-scale retail and services
Downtown / Core	Office, service, commercial / retail, entertainment, cultural, government, civic, light manufacturing, and multi-family residential	Those that support the primary uses and do not detract from quality of place and economic vitality of downtown
Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential	Commercial/retail, distribution, warehousing, wholesaling, offices, flex buildings	Flex Warehouse, Multi-family residential
Campus - Institutional	Educational, medical	Retail and food services, multi-family residential
Transitional (or Flex) Industrial/ Commercial	Live-work, light industrial, makerspace	Multi-family residential, mixed commercial/retail uses
General Industrial and Flex Warehouse	Light and general industrial, flex warehouse	Commercial uses specifically related to the primary use
Parks - Green Space	Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure	Support services specifically related to the primary use, cemeteries, environmentally protected areas

Fargo's Future Place Types Within the Transect Zones



T3 T4 T5

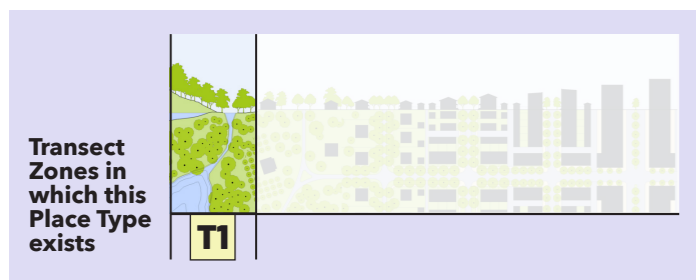
Most of Fargo's current and future growth footprint, and place types, exist within the T3 to T5 zones

Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

Agriculture / Farming

Agriculture generally consists of arable land (or cropland) that is used for crops that are replanted annually. Fallow land and pastures for grazing livestock as well as forested or natural areas are also included in this place type. Farmhouses, farmsteads, barns, livestock facilities, silos and similar structures commonly dot the agricultural landscape.

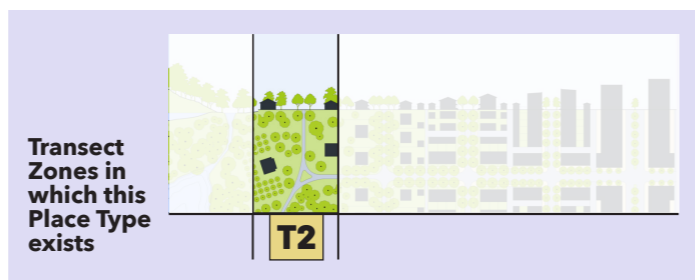
Primary Uses	Large farms with crops and/or animals, large barns, grain silos, and associated structures
Secondary Uses	Residential structures associated with farming
Density	Farm/lot sizes vary but are greater than 50 acres
Transportation and Infrastructure	Limited road network, no access to transit, township and range roads



Suburban Edge-Rural

Suburban Edge / Rural generally consists of single-family homes and small farms on large lots. This place type often includes open fields, shelter belts, woodlands, and streams, as well as accessory buildings, such as barns. Single-family houses may be present on larger estate lots.

Primary Uses	Large lot single-family detached housing, wooded lots, open space and park land
Secondary Uses	Small mom/pop farming operations or 'farmettes', scattered cluster or conservation subdivisions, places of worship
Density	10+ acre lots
Transportation and Infrastructure	Outside of the primary township and range corridors the road network may be curvilinear as it follows topography and/or stream corridors. Trails and greenways may exist. There is limited to no access to transit.



Suburban Neighborhood

Suburban Neighborhood has a predominantly low intensity, single-family, detached, residential development pattern. Some moderate density residential development, such as small lot houses or attached townhomes may exist, but are typically located on a major street. Infill development should generally maintain the existing development fabric.

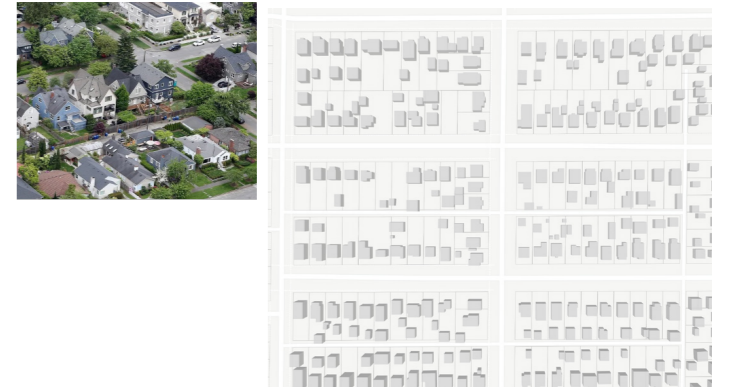
Primary Uses	Small to medium lot single-family detached housing
Secondary Uses	Townhomes (with limited massing up to four units per building), duplex, triplex, quadplex, ADUs, places of worship, schools, day care centers, home offices
Density	3 - 10 units per acre
Transportation and Infrastructure	Often curvilinear, with connections to corridors, limited access to transit, sidewalks generally on both sides of the streets



Urban Neighborhood

Urban Neighborhoods have a traditional development pattern that typically includes a mix of single-story and two-story single-family detached to small to moderate-scale multi-family residential development along a well-connected gridded street network. Lot sizes are typically smaller than in the Suburban Neighborhoods and may vary within blocks. Moderate intensity infill development on sites adjacent to existing residential uses should maintain the existing lot width, setbacks, building massing and height.

Primary Uses	Small lot single-family detached housing, duplex
Secondary Uses	Triplex, quadplex, townhomes (with limited massing up to ten units per building), pockets of multi-family structures, places of worship, schools, daycare centers, home offices, neighborhood-scale retail and services
Density	5 - 30 units per acre
Transportation and Infrastructure	Gridded street patterns and block network, variety of transportation modes - auto, bike, pedestrian, access to transit from adjacent corridors, sidewalks on both sides of the street.



Downtown / Core

Downtown is Fargo's central business district. It is a dense urban area that contains a mix of uses both vertically and horizontally. Compact multimodal streets are the primary public space with trees and amenities to create a quality urban experience for all users. All development is pedestrian-oriented and designed to actively engage streets, parks, plazas, and other public spaces.

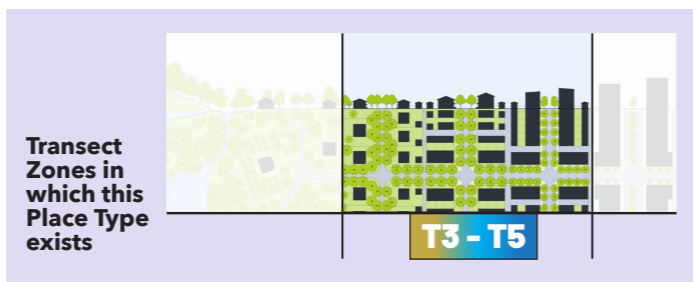
Primary Uses	Office, service, commercial / retail, entertainment, cultural, government, civic, light manufacturing, and multi-family residential
Secondary Uses	Those that support the primary uses and do not detract from quality of place and economic vitality of downtown
Density	Varies, but generally greater than 25 units per acre (residential) and greater than six (6) stories for commercial development
Transportation and Infrastructure	Rectilinear street pattern / walkable blocks, variety of transportation modes - auto, bike, pedestrian, access to transit, sidewalks on both sides of the street, on-street parking



Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential

Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential often consists of sites with large footprint buildings and surface parking lots that accommodate commercial development, office and flex space, and/or residential development (generally multi-family buildings). Commercial development is typically suburban in character and located on highly trafficked corridors. Open space is often dedicated to surface parking, circulation, and storm water management, but landscape screening and buffers, park space and non-motorized access such as trails or linear parks are common.

Primary Uses	Commercial/retail, distribution, warehousing, wholesaling, offices, flex buildings
Secondary Uses	Flex Warehouse, Multi-family residential
Transportation and Infrastructure	Mixed street network, large block pattern, large sites with multiple buildings and often with an internal network of streets, typically located on major corridors, often with access to highways and interstates, and may include internal sidewalks/trails, bikes routes and transit stops



Campus - Institutional

Campus - Institutional is typically characterized by one major activity such as educational or medical. Campuses are often very large sites developed based on a master plan that organizes streets, buildings, pedestrian networks, open spaces, and parking in a unified manner. Campuses often have clearly defined edges – delineated with gateways, which might include signs and landscape treatments – that distinguish them from adjacent place types. Buildings and uses on the edge of a Campus-Institutional step down in height and intensity when adjacent to residential areas. Campuses are major employment and activity centers.

Primary Uses	Educational, medical
Secondary Uses	Retail and food services, multi-family residential
Density	5 - 20 units per acre
Transportation and Infrastructure	Mixed street network and block pattern, large sites with multiple buildings and internal multi-modal facilities for autos, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users that connects to the larger city-wide network



Transitional Industrial/Commercial

Transitional Industrial/Commercial are former active industrial districts that are transitioning to mixed-use. Older industrial structures have been or will be adaptively reused for new purposes. They tend to be live-work districts where housing and workplaces are near each other, providing residents with convenient access to employment. They typically include a mix of makerspace, light manufacturing, assembly, and design-oriented services, along with multi-family residential and commercial uses. Industrial facilities in these areas do not include uses that handle hazardous materials or cause pollution, odors, excessive light, or heavy truck traffic. The Transitional Industrial/Commercial areas typically have smaller buildings than the Mixed Commercial and General Industrial place types. Parks, plazas, and neighborhood-serving retail enhance the character and livability of the area.

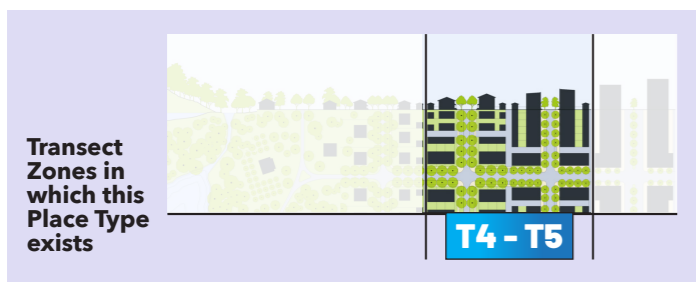
Primary Uses	Live-work, light industrial, makerspace
Secondary Uses	Multi-family residential, mixed commercial/retail uses
Transportation and Infrastructure	Rectilinear street pattern, walkable blocks, variety of transportation modes - auto, bike, pedestrian, access to transit, sidewalks on both sides of the street, access to greenways and trails



General Industrial & Flex Warehouse

General Industrial & Flex Warehouse supports a variety of processing, production, warehousing, and manufacturing uses. Unlike the Mixed Commercial, Office and Residential and Transitional Industrial/Commercial place types, General Industrial & Flex Warehouse includes warehousing, industrial parks, and light manufacturing, as well as general industrial production, as primary uses. The latter are not located near residential areas. Lot sizes are typically greater than two acres and buildings are often larger than those in the Transitional Industrial/Commercial place type.

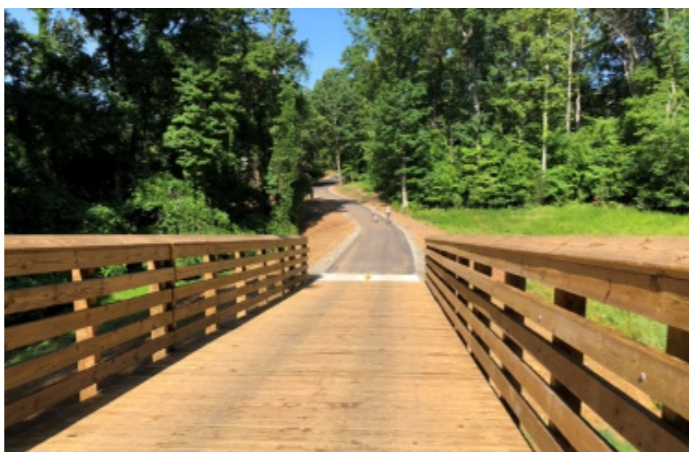
Primary Uses	Light and general industrial, flex warehouse
Secondary Uses	Commercial uses specifically related to the primary use
Transportation and Infrastructure	Mixed street network, large block pattern, access to highways and interstates, may include internal sidewalks/trails, bike routes and transit stops



Parks - Green Space

Parks - Green Space includes areas that are intended to remain as parks or public green space in perpetuity. These places make significant contributions to the quality of life of residents and visitors by providing places to gather and recreate, and further the environmental quality of our city. These include, but are not limited to woodlots, waterways, trails and greenway corridors, watershed protection and wildlife habitats.

Primary Uses	Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure
Secondary Uses	Support services specifically related to the primary use, cemeteries, environmentally protected areas
Transportation and Infrastructure	Trail and greenway systems, large storm water management facilities, watershed protection areas and green infrastructure.



The Place Types proposed by the Framework for Practical Growth are more than land uses, but the right mixture of land uses is a major ingredient of each place type. The table below identifies the land uses (both primary and secondary) that conform with the characteristics and expression of each place type.

PLACE TYPES	LAND USES														Parks - Green Space			
	Large farms; farmhouses	Farmettes	Conservation subdivision	Single-family detached, large/estate lots	Single-family detached, medium lots	Single-family detached, small lots	Single-family attached (townhomes)	Small multi-family structures (2-4 units)	Multi-family complexes	Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)	Office	Commercial services and retail	Education	Medical		Flex warehouse	Light industrial, live-work	General and heavy industrial
Agricultural / Farming	✓																	✓
Suburban Edge - Rural		✓	✓	✓														✓
Suburban Neighborhood					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓								✓
Urban Neighborhood						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓
Downtown Core									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Campus - Institutional									✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Transitional Industrial/Commercial									✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
General Industrial and Flex Warehouse															✓	✓	✓	✓

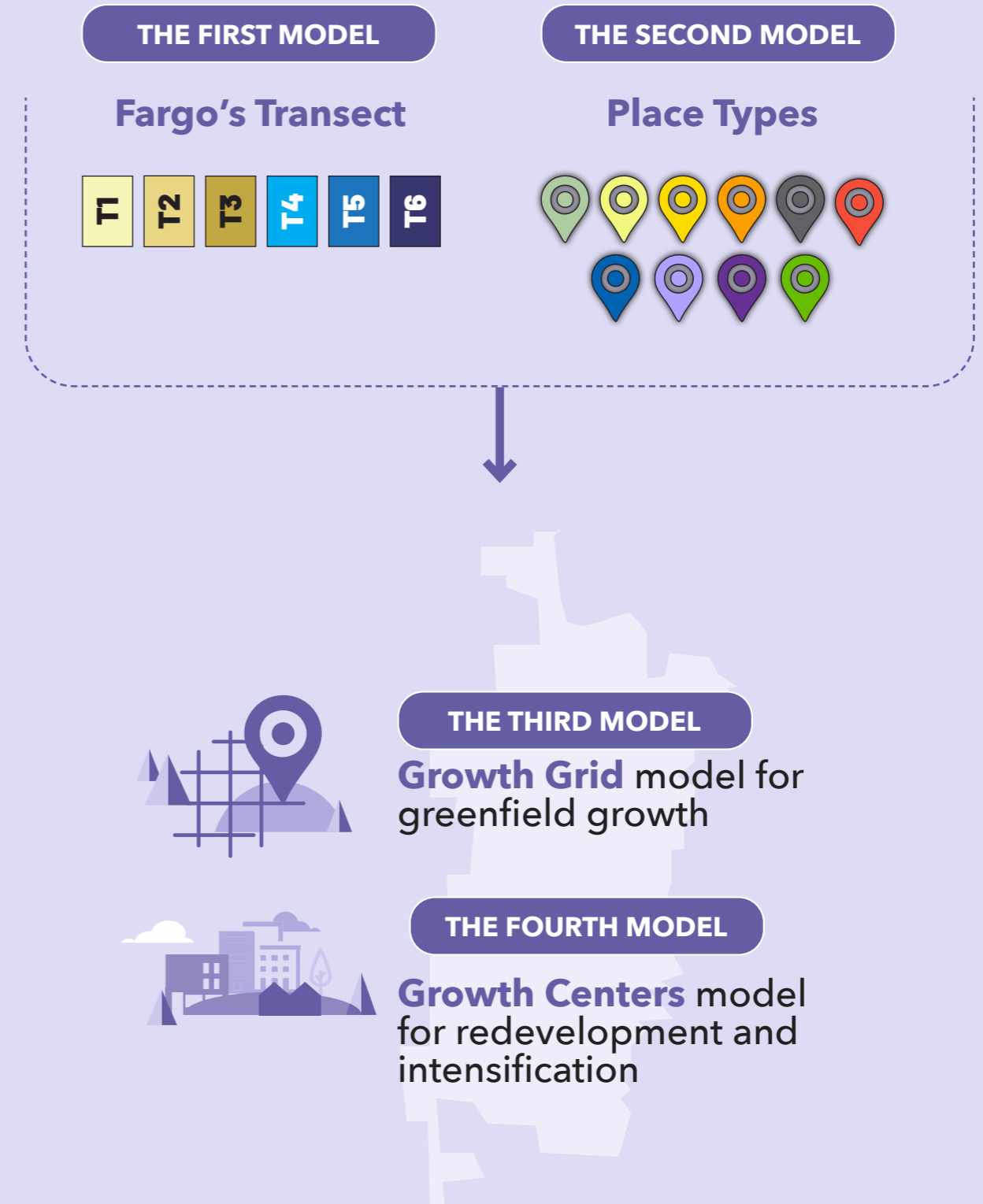


Applying Fargo's Transect and Place Types to Future Growth Locations

Fargo's growth intentions, as presented in Part 2, point to a specific geographic balance of growth going forward, with roughly 66% of growth going to the ETJ (down from 90% or more in recent decades) and 33% going to existing parts of the city. They also point Fargo in a more urbanized direction so that areas of greater development intensity, mixing of uses, and connectivity emerge over time.

Fargo's transect and the proposed system of place types will aid in shifting Fargo in this new, more urban direction. Using those two models to guide growth, however, requires two additional and interrelated models that are specific to the challenges of achieving Fargo's growth intentions in the ETJ and in already developed parts of the city.

The Framework for Practical Growth Management, therefore, includes the following: a **Growth Grid** model for greenfield growth in the ETJ and a **Growth Centers** model for absorbing growth in existing parts of Fargo and creating a network of mixed-use urban nodes throughout the city.





THE THIRD MODEL

Growth Grid

Even as the Framework for Practical Growth Management steers a rising share of growth inward in coming decades, most of Fargo’s growth will continue to be accommodated by an outward expansion of the city’s footprint. To ensure that new development in the ETJ aligns with Fargo’s intentions for growth, special attention has to be paid to where and how growth happens on Fargo’s periphery.

The 2007 Growth Plan and subsequent City policies have been successful in giving a degree of order to Fargo’s greenfield growth. The designation of near-term growth areas (Tier 1) by the 2007 plan and subsequent limits to utility extensions helped to reduce leapfrogging and the more sprawling patterns of earlier decades.

The Framework for Practical Growth builds on those advances by establishing the Growth Grid model to guide the sequencing of future greenfield growth that conforms with Fargo’s urbanizing intentions. It is based on the township and range system that has organized development in North Dakota since territorial times—a system of one mile by one mile sections that continues to shape new neighborhood additions in Fargo to this day.

The Growth Grid goes further, however, to ensure that future growth results in the emergence of high-quality places with the range of amenities that have often been absent from recent development—or that have tended to lag behind or been reduced in scale over the course of multi-year development processes.

A Practical Pattern

The township and range system—the system of 1-mile by 1-mile township sections that crisscrosses the state—is the framework for the Growth Grid and has influenced much of the city’s existing built environment. Most neighborhoods in Fargo encompass an area of approximately 1-mile by 1-mile (640 acres), which is the same size of each of the township sections.

The primary road network follows the grid system that also has 1-mile by 1-mile sections as the defining framework—Main Avenue, 12th Ave N, 13th Ave S, I-94, 25th Street, and I-29 all perfectly align with the township and range grid lines.

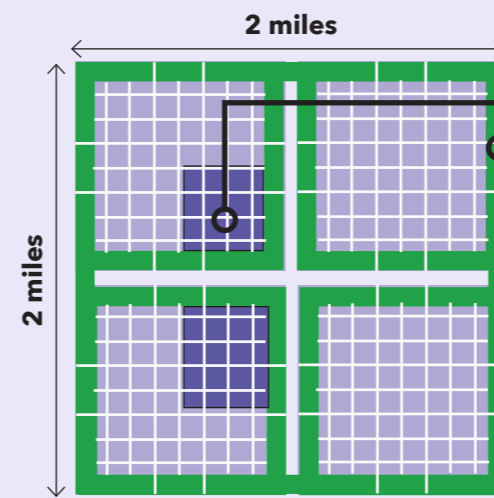
This 1-mile segment also equates to a typical walkshed geography—it takes the average person about 15 minutes to walk this distance. This walkshed is the bedrock for the ubiquitous 15-minute city planning model, which undergrids the Growth Centers model within the Framework for Practical Growth.

Moving beyond the scale of a single Growth Grid, the intersection of four Growth Grids (or Super Grid) supports a center easily accessible to the occupants of all four neighborhoods or sections. This center is ideally located to support cohesive mixed-use developments that provide services and amenities to nearby residents.

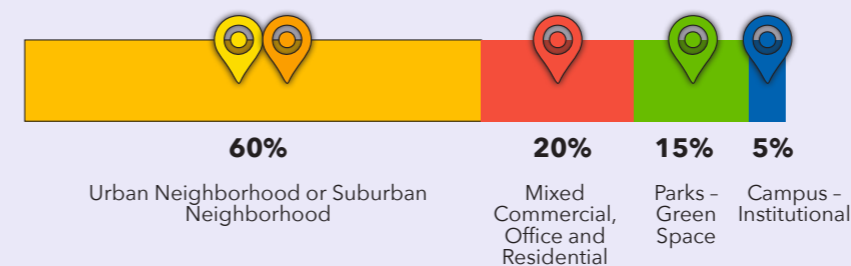
One Growth Grid



One Super Grid



Approximate Place Type Composition of a Super Grid



While Fargo’s recent growth patterns reflect this pattern to some degree—especially with large commercial centers at major intersections that serve surrounding neighborhoods, there are important differences that are key to moving Fargo in a more urbanized direction. These include:

Mixed-Use, Pedestrian-Scaled Centers

Centers that emerge in the middle of Super Grids, which adhere to the Growth Centers model described later in Part 3, reflect a level of intensity and use integration that makes them truly walkable. They will still be accessible to cars to support daily conveniences, but their urban orientation will efficiently use scarce land and offer real mobility choices.



Green Corridors

Commercial uses strung along arterial corridors has been a basic development pattern in Fargo for decades. To move in a more urbanized direction, commercial demand needs to be concentrated. Making most of the corridor frontage in a Super Grid off-limits to commercial development creates an opportunity to use a portion of the land for parks, pedestrian and bike trails, wind rows, or additional green infrastructure, while maintaining their primary function of moving vehicles efficiently.



Growth Grid and Place Type Goals

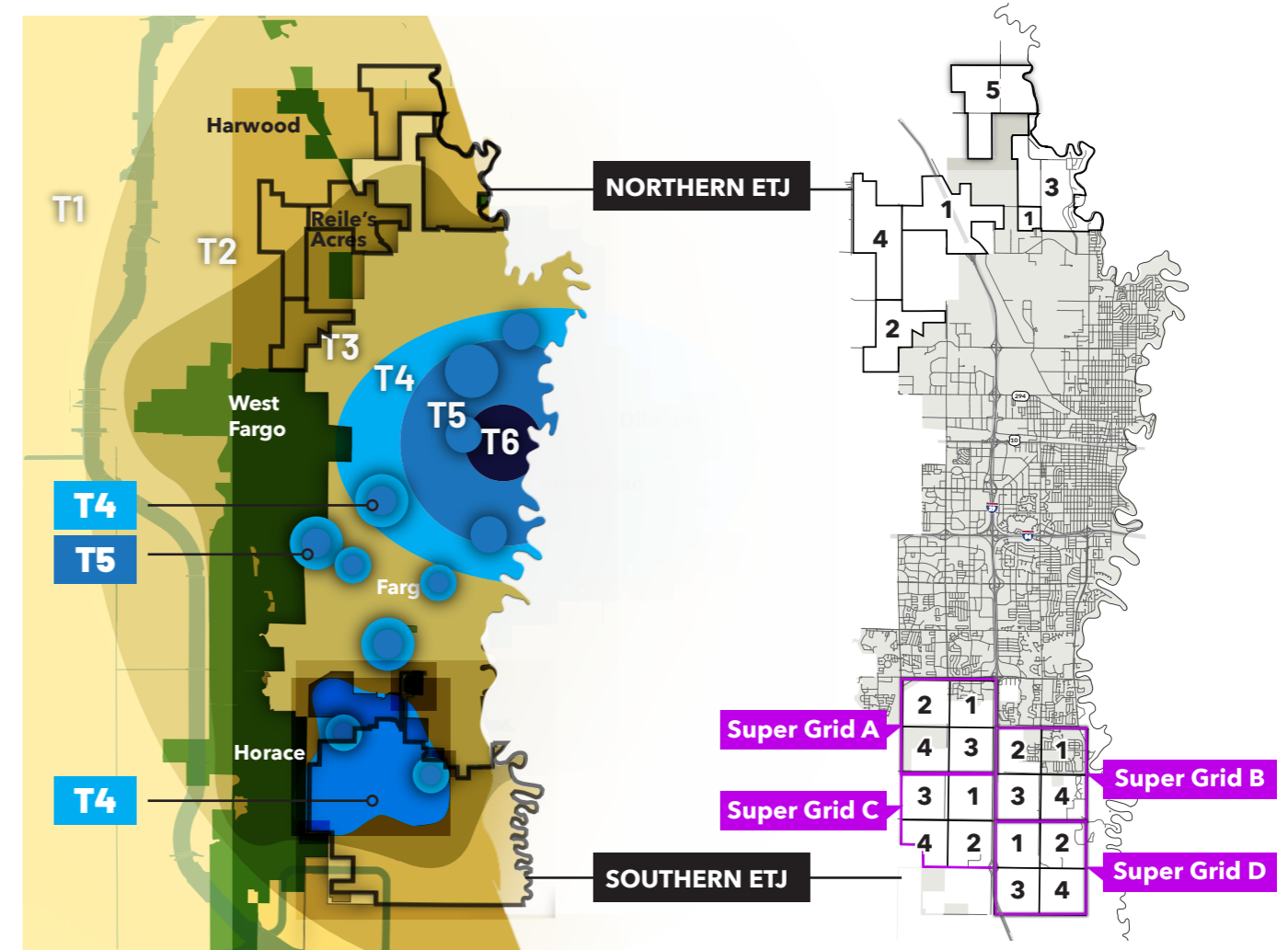
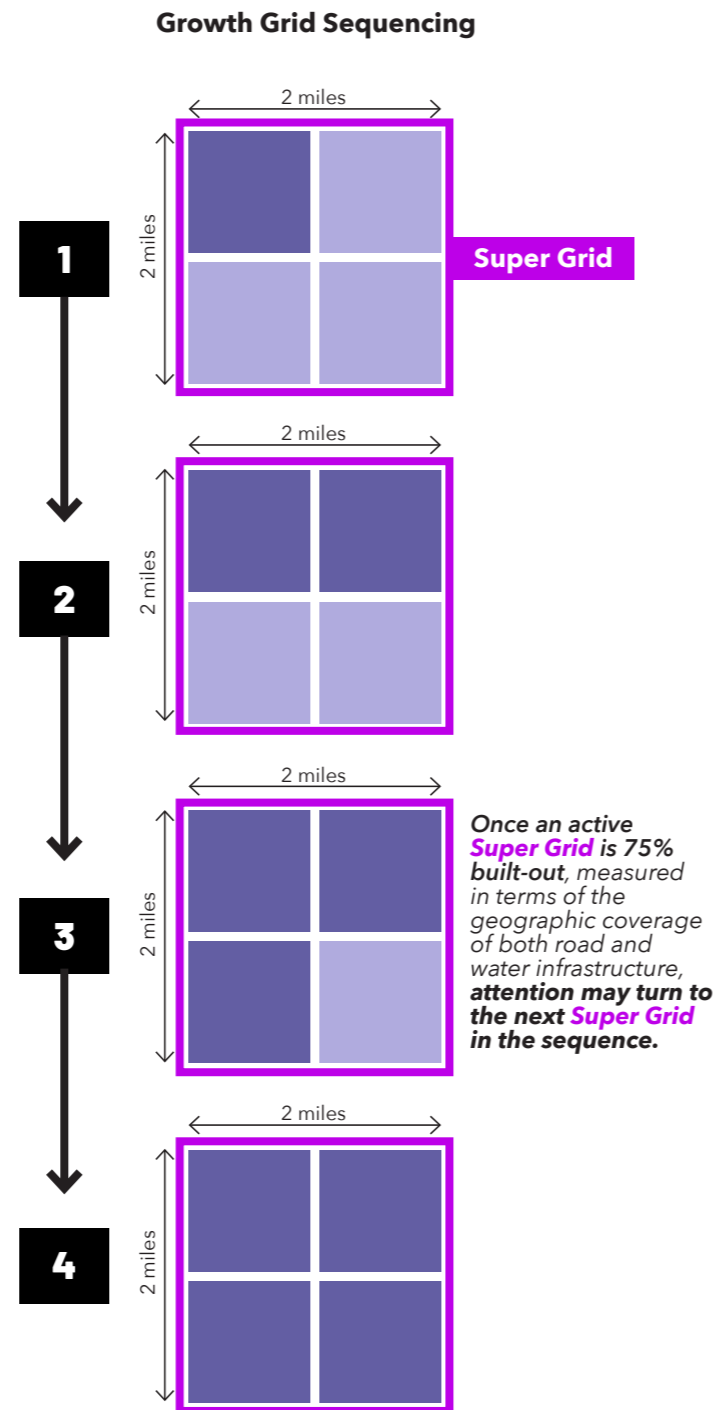
The Growth Grid prototypes presented later in Part 3 demonstrate how the model provides considerable flexibility for development within a set of basic guidelines. Among the guidelines are compositional goals tied to this plan’s place typology.

A Practical Process

Beyond providing guidance on how to build out parts of Fargo’s ETJ—individual sections and Super Grids—the Growth Grid is also a tool to promote orderly growth. By communicating a preferred geographical sequencing of development using the Growth Grid, Fargo can continue to limit leapfrogging, create critical mass in areas undergoing development, and maximize the efficiency of its infrastructure investments.

The overall approach to sequencing is simple: promote development in one Growth Grid or section at a time, and only consider proposals that are in sequence—and that are place type conformant—to be categorized as “optimal growth” eligible for City support or incentives of any kind. Once an active Super Grid is 75% built-out, measured in terms of the geographic coverage of both road and water infrastructure, attention may turn to the next Super Grid in the sequence. The numbered growth grids in the Super Grids represent the recommended pattern of development based on existing infrastructure, access to the interstate system, etc.

All along, the City may receive proposals for development that is out-of-sequence. And if it is place type-conformant, it may be eligible for by-right approval, as described later in Part 3. But it would not be eligible for any form of assistance from the City of Fargo, including complementary infrastructure investments, assistance with financing infrastructure (special assessments), or any other financial incentives.



The application of Growth Grid sequencing to Fargo’s ETJ geography should be guided by a number of factors. These factors may include where infrastructure already exists, or is in development, and where floodplains will exist even after the diversion project is completed.

In the **Southern ETJ**, the Southwest Fargo Pond and its **Super Grid (A)** is an obvious place to start and should be guided by the already-adopted Southwest Pond Area Growth Plan. **Super Grid B**, which encompasses the currently developing area around Davies High School, is also an obvious place to start. Simultaneous development of both Super Grids (A and B) should be guided, internally, by a Growth Grid sequencing such as the one indicated by the numbers in the map above. And as the Future Transect Map suggests, Super Grid A is amenable to more intensive development (T4) while Super Grid B should

demonstrate a tapering of intensity from west-to-east to account for environmental factors closer to the Wild Rice and Red Rivers.

Super Grid C would follow the build-out of **Super Grids A and B** and would mirror the T4 development intensities of Super Grid A. **Super Grid D** would come last in the Southern ETJ and is envisioned to remain a suburban edge and agricultural place type (specifically to the south) with the exception of some land along I-29.

Fargo’s Northern ETJ is more fragmented and presents more challenges, including infrastructure development and remaining floodplains. Rather than Super Grids, development in the north should be sequenced by individual Growth Grids and occur at lower intensities than in the Southern ETJ. The proposed sequencing of the north’s Growth Grids are also shown in the map above.

Growth Grid Prototypes

The following examples illustrate three conceptual development patterns within a prototypical Super Grid.

Each representation incorporates the recommended Place Type distribution for a Super Grid, generally reflecting the suggested percentage of land consumption. These percentages are based on Fargo’s development patterns over the past two decades and are not intended as strict requirements. What matters is not the exact acreage of each Place Type within a Super Grid but rather the balance of each, which is crucial for creating viable, walkable Growth Centers (the fourth model for Context-Sensitive Expectations)—especially the Community Center at the heart of the four intersecting Growth Grids.

It’s crucial to acknowledge that there are countless potential ways for a Super Grid to be developed and settled.

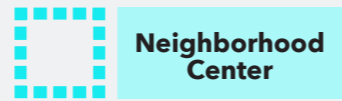
Additionally, each prototype Super Grid shown on the following pages includes a conceptual plan view of a gridded street network and building footprint pattern that could emerge based on the recommended development pattern. There should be no more than four intersections with the arterial roads along each grid edge (one mile length) to preserve the active green corridor. These examples are purely illustrative, providing a visual representation of what the built environment might resemble in a typical Super Grid at full build-out.

Growth Centers



Community Center

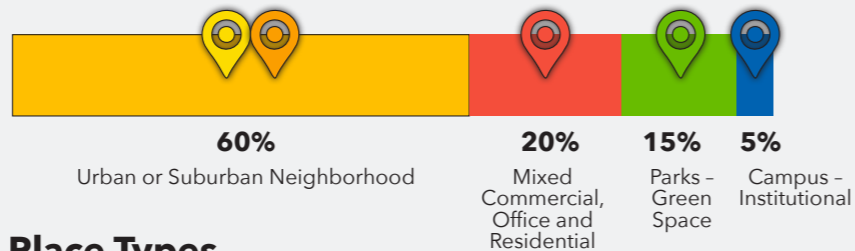
Mixed-uses throughout the district that commonly incorporates a blend of commercial, residential, and employment facilities housed within four- to five-story buildings lining multi-modal streets that prioritize pedestrians and cyclists



Neighborhood Center

A condensed mixed-use district designed primarily to cater to the immediate surrounding neighborhoods and includes buildings that are typically one- to three-stories in height

Approximate Place Type Composition of a Super Grid



Place Types



Urban and Suburban Neighborhood

Primary Uses: Small lot single-family detached housing, duplex units
Secondary Uses: Triplex units, quadplex units, townhomes (with limited massing up to ten units per building), pockets of multi-family structures, places of worship, schools, day care centers, home offices



Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential

Primary Uses: Mixed Commercial, Office and Residential
Secondary Uses: Flex Warehouse, Multi-family residential



Campus - Institutional

Primary Uses: Educational, medical uses
Secondary Uses: Retail and food services, multi-family residential

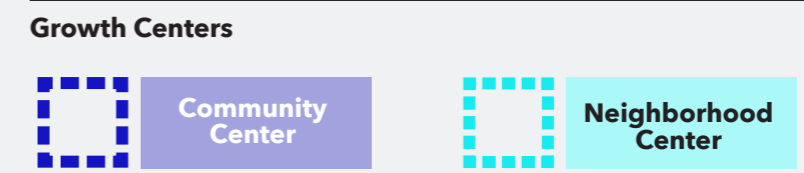
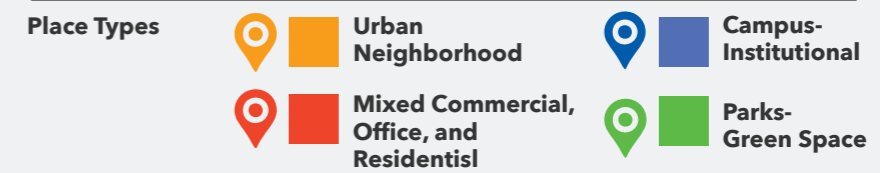
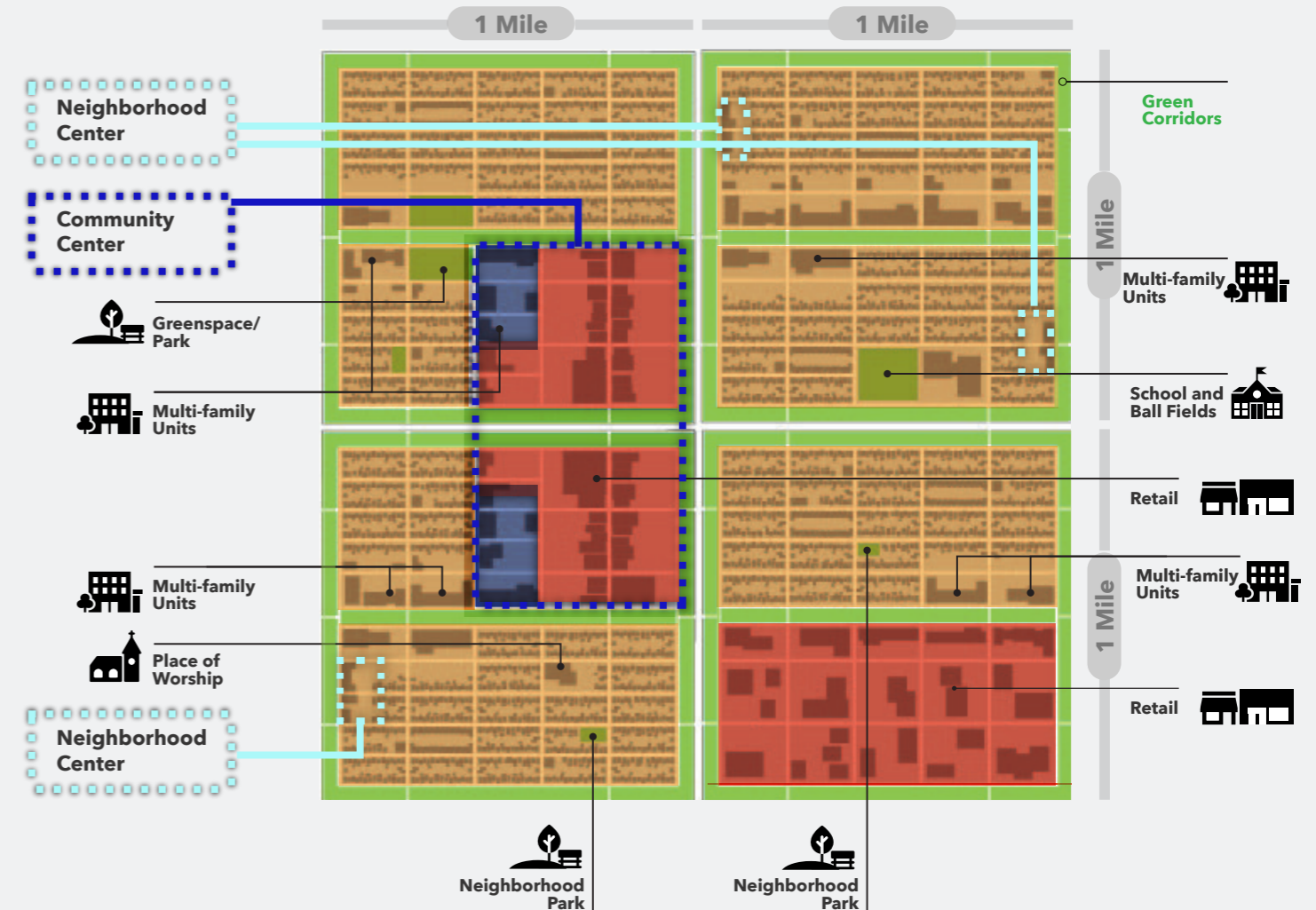


Parks - Green Space

Primary Uses: Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure
Secondary Uses: Support services specifically related to the primary use, cemeteries, environmentally protected areas

Prototype 1

One Super Grid (Four Contiguous Growth Grids)



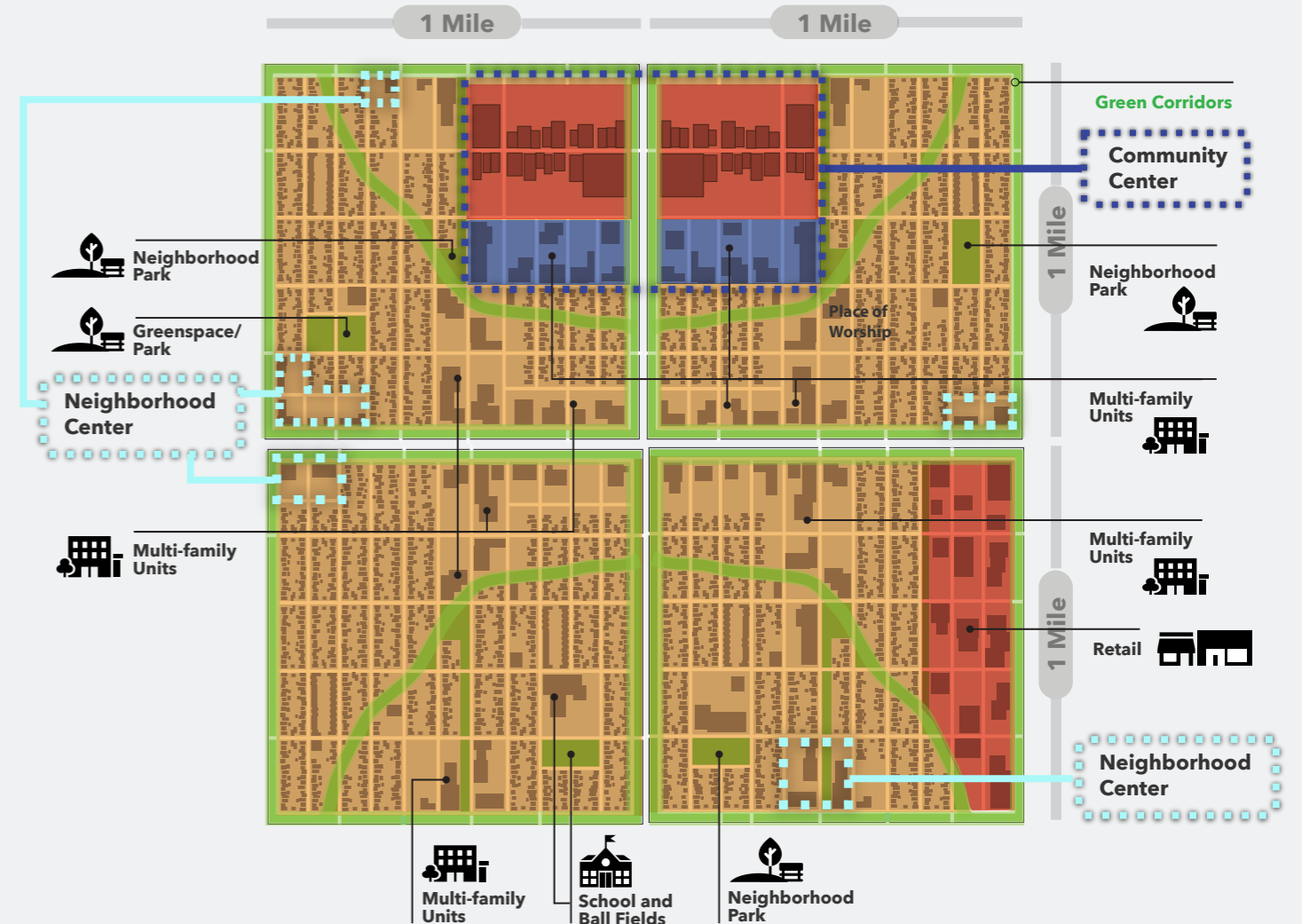
Prototype 2

One Super Grid
(Four Contiguous Growth Grids)



Prototype 3

One Super Grid
(Four Contiguous Growth Grids)





THE FOURTH MODEL

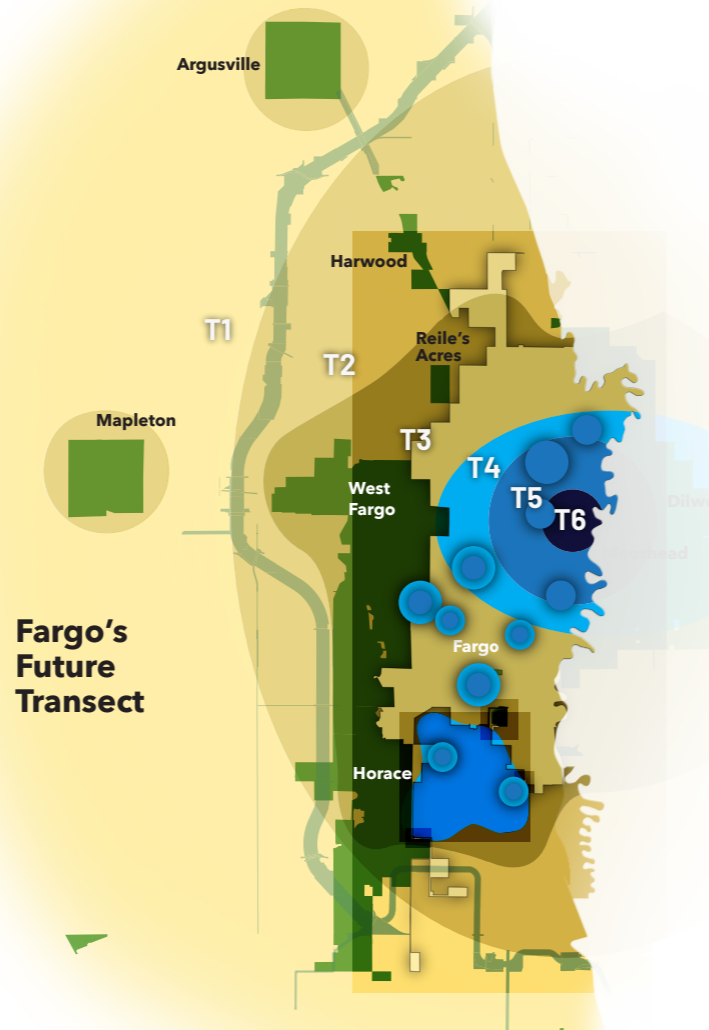
Growth Centers



No matter how much Fargo grows in the years ahead, or how much it expands into its ETJ, a core element of Fargo’s growth intentions—communicated by multiple plans over more than a decade—is to grow in a more urban manner. Doing so is about more than simply having denser development patterns. It is about having great places that successfully combine density, the mixing of uses, and mobility options so that residential, economic, civic, and recreational activities can all take place in a vibrant and sought-after setting.

The Growth Centers model in the Framework for Practical Growth Management recognizes that these great places cannot emerge without intention. Indeed, downtown Fargo has re-emerged as a critical growth center for Fargo because of conscious efforts to cultivate a high intensity mix of uses and great public spaces.

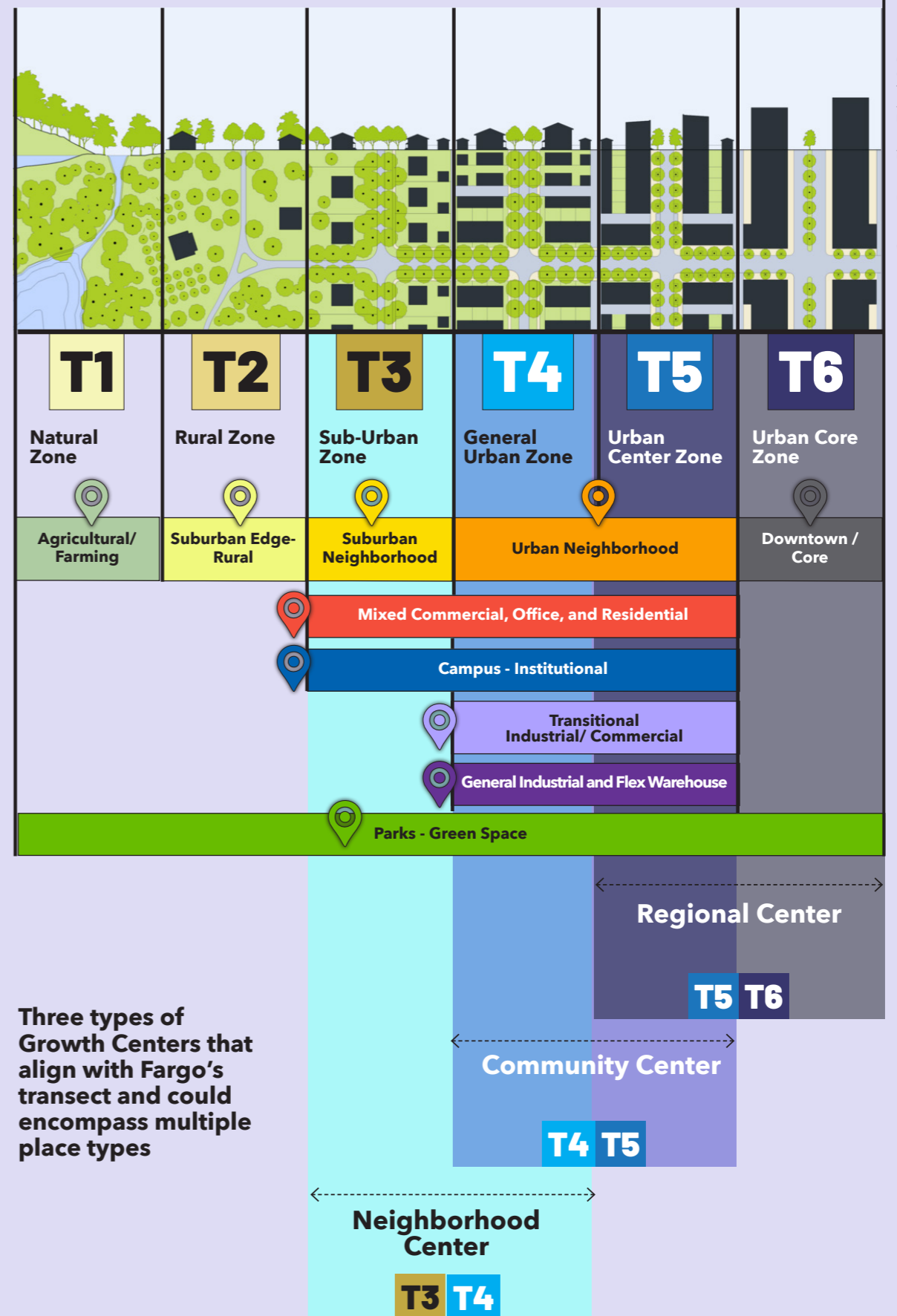
Taking the success of downtown Fargo as an example to learn and build from, the Growth Centers model proposes a network of centers to help absorb growth, provide space for future economic and civic activity, and to efficiently leverage existing institutional, economic, and infrastructure assets.



T1 T2 T3 T4 T5 T6

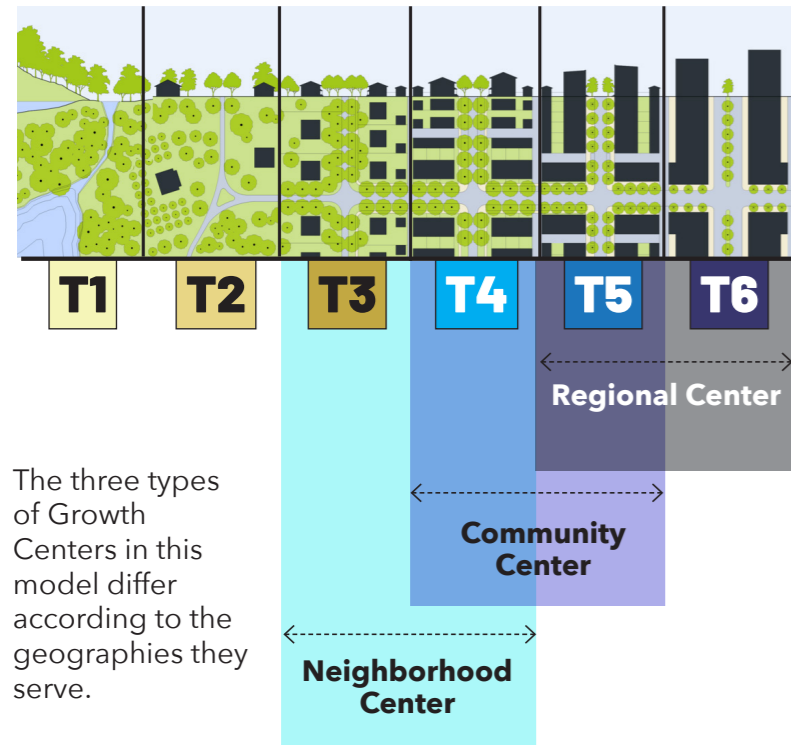
Fargo’s future transect expresses this model as distinct nodes that would largely reflect the characteristics of the T4 and T5 zones, as well as the T6 zone in the case of downtown Fargo.

The Growth Centers model includes a hierarchy of three types of centers—**Regional, Community, and Neighborhood**—with each serving different functions and existing as overlays on Fargo’s place types.



Three types of Growth Centers that align with Fargo’s transect and could encompass multiple place types

Source: Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company



Neighborhood Center T3 T4

A neighborhood center is a condensed mixed-use district designed primarily to cater to the immediate surrounding neighborhoods, reachable within a 5- to 10-minute walk. The district typically includes one to three story buildings with a mix of restaurant/retail, small office, and residential uses. Transit stops and small plazas or pocket parks are also common.

Neighborhood centers vary in size depending on the surrounding context. A neighborhood center that includes a couple of small local restaurants and possibly a plaza for community gathering may be less than ten acres. A neighborhood center configured along a main street might include a greater number of restaurants, boutique retailers, maybe a branch library or post office, a park, etc. and could be up to 25 or more acres.



Community Center T4 T5

A community center is a mixed-use district serving households within a half-mile to a mile radius or up to a 20 -minute walk. It commonly incorporates a blend of commercial, residential, and employment facilities housed within four- to five-story buildings lining multi-modal streets that prioritize pedestrians and cyclists. Ensuring an ample supply of housing and services is vital to sustain efficient public transit. Essential features for a thriving community center include parks, public squares, and trail connections.

Community centers commonly span an area ranging from 50 to approximately 100 acres, occasionally surpassing the size of regional centers, but with distinctive character and urban design components. While regional centers cater to a broader geographic customer base, community centers deliberately focus on a smaller and well-defined clientele within convenient driving distance or walking/biking proximity. The design of a community center is notably denser, embracing an urban character that integrates with surrounding neighborhoods through interconnected sidewalks and bike paths.



Regional Center T5 T6

Regional centers are expansive mixed-use or commercial districts catering to the needs of the entire city and its surroundings. Typically, the structures within these centers vary in height, ranging from two to six stories, and house a diverse array of facilities including big box retail outlets, cinemas, entertainment venues, office spaces, restaurants, and more. These centers typically cover an area surpassing 100 acres and have direct access to a major arterial road within the city.



Regional Centers as Focal Points for Growth

Within the hierarchy of the Growth Centers model, Regional Centers would play the most significant growth-absorption role in terms of both residential and employment growth. They would absorb a substantial share of net new households within existing parts of Fargo, and they would be the focus for major new employment anchors. In so doing, they would take growth pressure off of existing neighborhoods and limit “job sprawl” into the ETJ and the traffic congestion that comes with job dispersion to the urban fringe.

Five Regional Centers have been identified that could receive—in different combinations—more residents, employment anchors, and more amenities to support highly walkable and well-designed urban environments. They would not be treated as equals, however. Downtown Fargo, under this model, would be recognized as the premier Regional Center and would not have its unique functions undermined by other Regional Centers. Context Sensitivity is key, and careful planning to protect the strengths of each center—while putting it in a position to absorb more residents and employment—will be needed on an ongoing basis.



Downtown Fargo

Downtown is an obvious place to focus future growth. It is already a mixed-use, high-density employment hub that has received major investments in public amenities and over a thousand new residential units in recent years. And there are still plenty of underutilized spaces to redevelop or adaptively reuse. Analysis for the Growth Plan suggests that downtown could accommodate as many as 6,000 new households if fully built-out at prevailing densities (on vacant or parking lots).

Continuing to push downtown as a location for future employment anchors and additional housing will only reinforce the significant progress of the past two decades.



NDSU

Commercial and residential activity has been on the rise in recent years around NDSU, which itself is a major employment center. Development around NDSU, however, has tended to feel less planned and more ad hoc than growth in downtown, creating tensions with surrounding neighborhoods about the long-term intentions for this area.

While enrollment declines nationwide may disrupt NDSU’s growth in the coming years, this area will remain a key employment and residential hub. Careful planning would be needed to ensure that it develops in a more cohesive way.



Sanford Medical Center

The hospital anchor for this Regional Center is less than 10 years old and has already helped to spur substantial commercial and residential investments nearby. More employment anchors and residential developments can still be accommodated near the hospital, and there are still opportunities—though not yet seized to any degree—to create mixed-use areas with high-quality public amenities. On its current course, this Center exemplifies the type of growth that Fargo intends to move away from, so any change will need to be deliberate and driven by a master plan with public amenity commitments.



Microsoft-Woodhaven

Fargo has gradually grown around the site of the Microsoft campus, which started in 1999 and was subject to a major expansion in 2015. While the Microsoft campus itself represents a throwback to late 20th century office-in-the-park planning, the real estate and infrastructure within and surrounding the campus represent an opportunity for a unique Regional Center that includes mixed-use development to serve and support a cluster of technology-focused businesses.



West Acres

West Acres has been the region’s dominant retail center since the mall opened in 1972, as Fargo joined the national trend of general household retail shifting from downtowns to suburban locations. Its status strengthened in the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of ‘Power Centers’ anchored by big box stores. The infrastructure in place to serve this area, vast acreages of surface parking lots, and the national pivot towards introducing mixed-use and experience-driven development into aging retail centers makes West Acres an area that could be nurtured to become a dynamic Regional Center.

All of these recommended Regional Centers are connected to the rest of the city, the region, and each other, by Fargo’s extensive and high-capacity system of arterial roads. These corridors will require careful treatment going forward to support the emergence of the intended place types within and surrounding the Regional Centers—as well as the Community Centers and Neighborhood Centers. The Fargo Transportation Plan’s recommendations for corridor planning and reconstruction should guide the improvement of these connective corridors—and future transportation planning should be informed by the formalization of Fargo’s place typology.

Growth Center Emergence



Cultivating a hierarchical network of Growth Centers that work together to absorb growth in a more intense and urban fashion will be a long-term process. Fargo’s largest and most important growth center—its downtown—already exists, has a master plan, and has a suite of policies and incentives to support its development. Other centers will require similar levels of intention and support.

While the emergence of Growth Centers as areas to absorb future growth in an urban manner is the basic intent of this Growth Plan, exactly how this happens must be determined by thoughtful, context-sensitive planning in the years ahead that hews to this intent. **In general, the following five steps describe the sequence of work that will be necessary to activate the Growth Centers model beyond downtown Fargo.**

1 Select

This Framework for Practical Growth Management identifies potential Growth Centers that reflect a rational distribution of the three types of centers and the creation of activity nodes to serve both existing areas of development and the emergence of growth areas in the ETJ (as shown in the Growth Grid model).

Formal designation of a list of general Growth Center locations is the first step in signaling that Fargo intends to pursue a long-term intensification of development in those areas.

2 Phase

Not all Growth Centers can or should be developed at the same time. Some locations identified by this Growth Plan are in a position to emerge faster than others—especially the Regional Centers with significant infrastructure in place and contiguous areas of underutilized land.

In addition to formally designating general Growth Center locations, Fargo will need to solidify a phased approach to Growth Center development that identifies centers that should be under development by 2030, 2035, and 2040.

3 Plan

One important way to manage the phasing of Growth Centers is through a planning

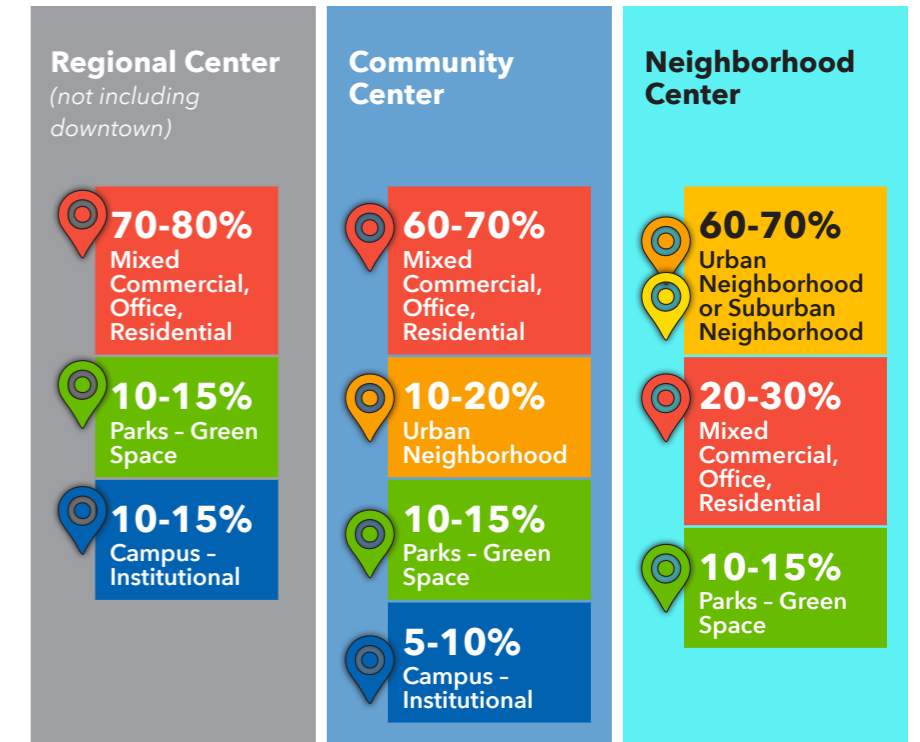
process to guide the development of centers where the market and the City are ready to invest. Growth Centers should be shaped by basic small area plans that confirm their boundaries, **identify the appropriate distribution of Place Types within the center,** and provide guidance on the physical development of the center—including investments in streets, parks and other urban amenities.

The development of plans should be phased to occur in the order established in Step 2, so that the completion of a plan is followed in short order by the start of plan implementation.

While downtown Fargo’s development as a center is shaped by an extensive master plan, other Growth Center plans need not require a planning effort on a similar scale.

Approximate Place Type Distribution of a Growth Center

The following place type distributions by type of Growth Center are for general guidance. Actual distributions should be context-sensitive and carefully integrated. It should be noted that these Place Type distributions for centers are independent of the distributions recommended for Growth Grids and SuperGrids on pp. 82 - 85.



4 Codify

Plan implementation for each Growth Center will begin with the translation of the plan into any necessary amendments to the Land Development Code and updates to other City policies or capital investment plans to support the center’s development.

Public support for major infrastructure upgrades and economic development incentives will be key parts of plan implementation for Growth Centers, which underscores the importance of careful phasing to distribute major investments wisely over time.

5 Develop

After regulations and policies have been updated, and supportive public investments have been defined and committed, a development process that follows the center’s plan will begin.

The revitalization of downtown Fargo over the past two decades holds a lesson in patience for Fargo’s other Growth Centers. Their emergence will be incremental and take years, if not decades, just like any mature urban neighborhood. And if growth slows down, fewer Growth Centers should enter the formal planning stage to ensure that available demand gets funneled to those that are actively under development.

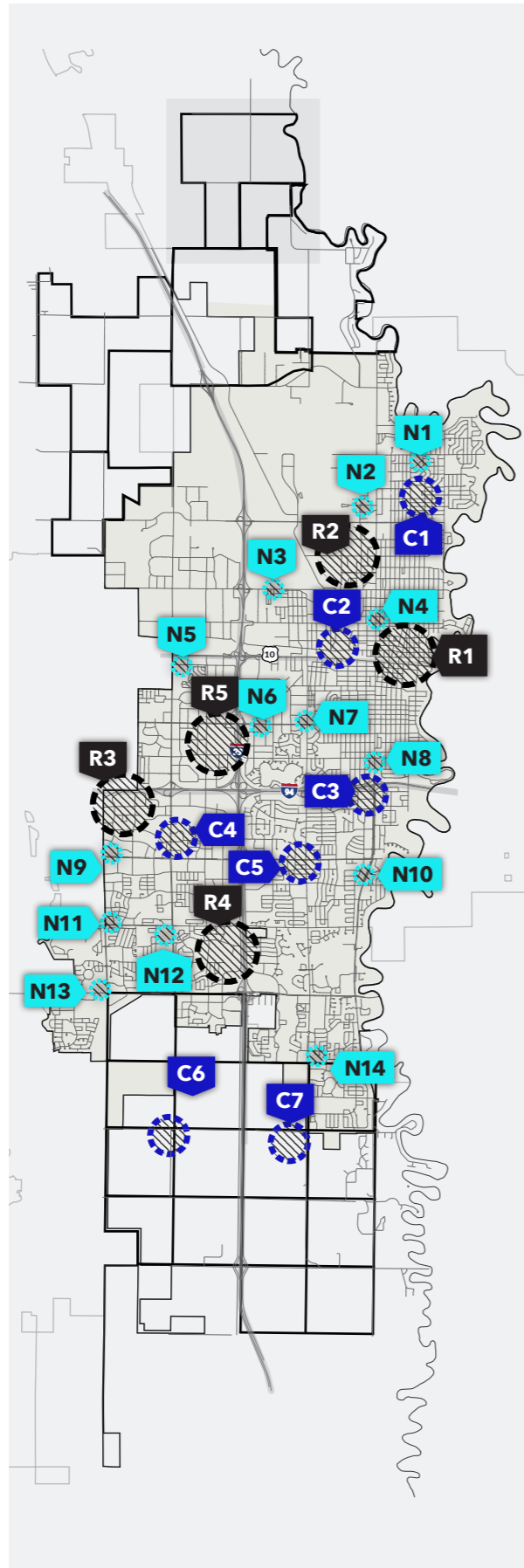


Potential Locations of Growth Centers

The five Regional Centers identified by this Framework for Practical Growth Management have a rationale based on their existing status as locations of institutional or economic anchors and the presence of high-capacity infrastructure. Even with Fargo's growth expectations, it is unlikely to support the emergence of more than five Regional Centers, and those identified in this plan will need to be carefully phased.

The locations of potential Community Centers and Neighborhood Centers, however, require deeper interpretation of localized assets and opportunities. The potential locations identified on the adjoining map (which have been integrated into the future transect map) reflect a combination of emerging market energies, land supplies, and geographic balancing to provide wide access to mixed-use centers. The Warehouse District Community Center (C2), for example, would leverage the presence of an already activated area of adaptively reused industrial buildings and land on the western edge of downtown. And the University & I-94 Community Center (C3) pinpoints the potential for mixed-use redevelopment of older commercial sites in close proximity to a major employment center and denser core neighborhoods.

Fourteen (14) Neighborhood Centers are identified on the adjoining map and additional centers at this scale are encouraged throughout Fargo to provide walkable neighborhood commercial opportunities to nearby residents. As the smallest and most flexible type of center, they are likely to be exercised in response to opportunities that emerge on small redevelopment sites within a residential context.



Regional Centers

Focus for major employment anchors and highest-density mixed use development

- R1** Downtown Fargo
- R2** NDSU
- R3** Sanford Medical Center
- R4** Microsoft-Woodhaven
- R5** West Acres

Community Centers

Focus for moderate-density mixed-use development with user radius of 1/2 to 1 mile

- C1** Northport - Broadway N & 28th Ave N
- C2** Warehouse District, Main/1st Avenues
- C3** S University Dr & I-94
- C4** EOLA / Anderson Park
- C5** 25th St S & 32nd Ave S
- C6** 45th St S & 64th Ave S
- C7** 25th St S & 76th Ave S

Neighborhood Centers

Focus for compact mixed-use development with a user radius of under 1/2 mile

- N1** Broadway N & 32nd Ave N
- N2** 19th Ave N & N University Dr
- N3** 35th St N & 12th Ave N
- N4** N University Dr and 7th Ave N
- N5** 45th St S & Main Ave
- N6** 33rd St S & 13th Ave S
- N7** 25th St S & 13th Ave S
- N8** S University Dr & 17th Ave S
- N9** Veterans Blvd & 32nd Ave S
- N10** S University Dr & Harwood Dr S
- N11** Veterans Blvd & 40th Ave S
- N12** 45th St S & 40th Ave S
- N13** Veterans Blvd & 52nd Ave S
- N14** S University Dr & 64th Ave S

Context Sensitivity Beyond Grids and Centers

Most of Fargo exists outside of the growth areas that will be guided by the Growth Grid and Growth Centers models. And much of that Fargo exists within the T3 transect zone, with land use and infrastructure characteristics that do not resemble Fargo's intentions for future growth. What does the Framework for Practical Growth Management have to say, if anything, for those parts of Fargo, and how would plan implementation effect them?



Incremental Upgrades to Urban Fabric

In most of Fargo, any changes wrought by implementation of this four-model framework will be slow and incremental. As buildings and infrastructure age and opportunities for redevelopment or reconstruction emerge, **work would be regulated by an updated Land Development Code centered around Fargo's place types**—allowing and promoting greater mixing of uses and better urban form. It would also be guided by mobility goals and the street hierarchy embedded in the Fargo Transportation Plan.



Opportunities for Neighborhood Connections

Across Fargo's existing T3 transect zones—primarily neighborhoods developed after 1960—opportunities will emerge to **reimagine a parcel or a cluster of parcels in centralized areas as small Neighborhood Centers**. Making use of existing sidewalk networks and other improvements to pedestrian safety, these centers—with space for coffee shops, small restaurants, and other services—could enhance quality of life and mobility options within T3 neighborhoods that remain largely the same in most other respects.



Greater Access to Urbanizing Amenities

Residents of neighborhoods that remain largely unchanged would, of course, benefit from the continued emergence of **downtown Fargo as the premier Regional Center** and the emergence of a broader network of mixed-use centers. This **network of centers would be connected to each other**—and to every neighborhood—by an increasingly multi-modal street network that provides a greater range of safe mobility options.

By-Right Approval



Context-Sensitive Expectations

THE FIRST MODEL



Fargo's Transect

THE SECOND MODEL



Place Types

THE THIRD MODEL



Growth Grid

THE FOURTH MODEL



Growth Centers

The four models that express Context Sensitive Expectations

collectively signal Fargo's intentions to grow in a more geographically balanced way that emphasizes greater mixing of land uses, greater development intensities, and a more urban form.

This signaling of expectations is a critical pre-condition of By-Right Approval, which occurs when development meets all of the requirements of a community's development ordinances and receives automatic administrative approval—thus removing the need for discretionary approvals by boards and commissions. It is a predictable, transparent, and efficient way to govern growth and one of the three legs of this Framework for Practical Growth Management.

Altogether, the following conditions tend to be in place when By-Right Approval is the route taken by the overwhelming majority of development proposals:

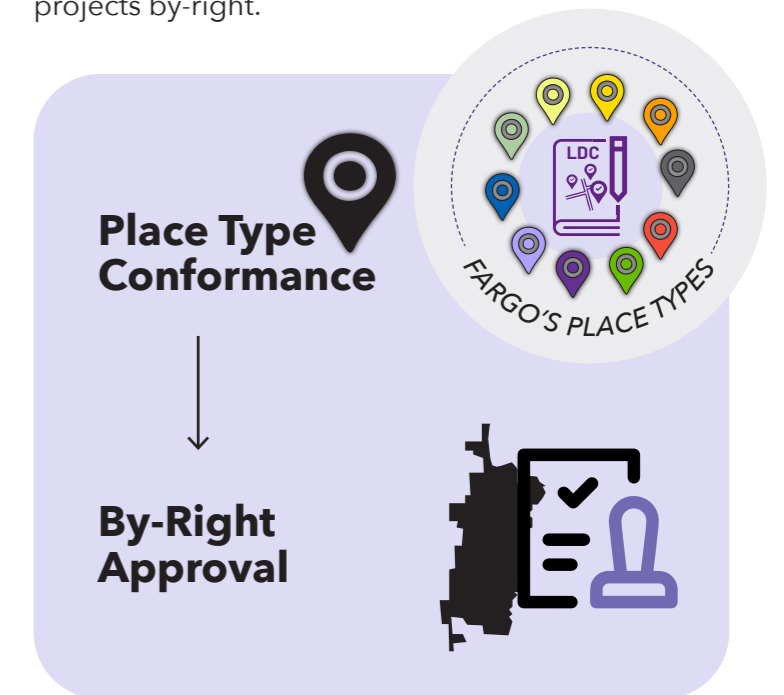
- A community's intentions—what it wants to say “yes” to—are clearly communicated by plans and development ordinances, and they are well understood by property owners and developers.
- Development ordinances properly reflect expectations of the market, aligning what can be done with property (vested rights) with what the market is realistically able to do with property.
- “Conforming” development is articulated well enough by plans and development ordinances to facilitate consistent interpretation by developers and the City.

When these conditions are achieved and then maintained over time, development becomes a highly predictable process that helps to achieve a community's long-term goals while supporting successful outputs by developers who make a good business out of helping to achieve those goals.

While the intentions of previous plans have been consistent about Fargo's interest in seeing more infill, better design, and more mixed-use and walkable developments, current regulatory systems have not been well enough aligned with those intentions to consistently provide the conditions for By-Right Approval. As a workaround to the outdated LDC, Fargo has had to rely on negotiated approvals, especially planned unit developments and conditional overlays, to achieve better form and design. But this comes with lower levels of predictability and may be guided by different goals and pressures from project to project.

An important exception is downtown, where the Downtown InFocus plan, the Downtown Mixed-Use zone (DMU), and the right incentives have created a predictable by-right environment that delivers on Fargo's growth intentions. And the DMU represents the type of flexible, form-based zoning that would allow Fargo to promote better urban form citywide.

At its simplest, and as a core feature of the Framework for Practical Growth Management, By-Right Approval is conditioned on place type conformance. An updated LDC that codifies Fargo's place types at the parcel level with performance standards that reflect the characteristics and goals of a given place type would allow conforming projects by-right.



Optimal Growth



Conformance with Fargo's place types will be a critical test for development and redevelopment under the Framework for Practical Growth Management. Indeed, it will represent the clearly drawn line between proposals that are acceptable and deserving of By-Right Approval and those that are unacceptable because they are at odds with Fargo's growth intentions.

Being "acceptable," however, will not make a proposed development or redevelopment "optimal." And "optimal" is what a project has to be under the Framework for Practical Growth Management to be eligible for anything more than By-Right Approval.

To be considered "optimal" a project must be strategically located: If it is a redevelopment or infill project, it must be within a designated Growth Center. If it is a greenfield project, it must be in the proper Growth Grid sequence. **An "optimal" project must also provide a tangible, location-specific public benefit.** Depending on the location, that could be the provision of mixed-income housing units, a contribution toward open space preservation, a public space or recreational amenity, exceptional urban design, or any other well-articulated public benefit tied to a given place type or neighborhood.

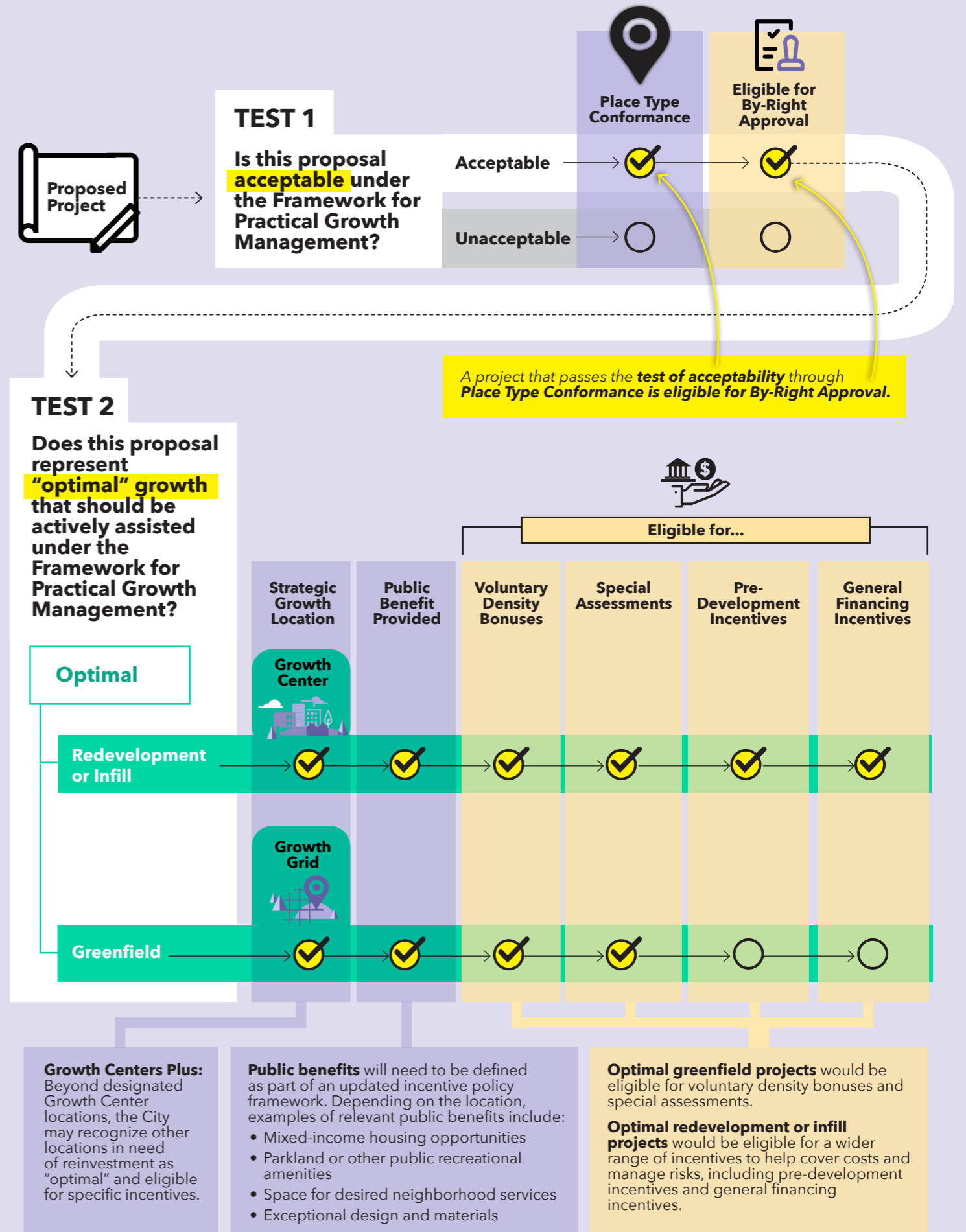
- Redevelopment or Infill**
- Growth Center**
- Greenfield**
- Growth Grid**

If a project passes the **first test of being acceptable** and the **second test of being optimal**, it is eligible for both By-Right Approval and incentives to actively promote optimal forms of growth.

An **optimal greenfield project** would be eligible for voluntary density bonuses and special assessments to help developers of optimal greenfield growth cover their development costs.

An **optimal redevelopment or infill project** would be eligible for voluntary density bonuses and special assessments, too. But they would also be eligible for two other broad categories of incentives (pre-development and general financing incentives) to overcome the higher costs of redevelopment and in recognition of the long-term practical value of reinvestment.

- **Voluntary Density Bonuses:** An incentive that allows a development to exceed the maximum size permitted by the LDC in exchange for providing a specified public benefit.
- **Special Assessments:** An incentive that lowers a developer's costs and risks by (1) having the City borrow to cover the cost of infrastructure and (2) paying off the debt over time through special assessments on property owners.
- **Pre-Development Incentives:** These include discounts on City-owned land and expedited review processes.
- **General Financing Incentives:** These include payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs), tax increment financing (TIF), property tax abatements that lower development and operating costs, and the City providing bridge lending and/or acting as a loan guarantor.





Implementation Steps

Implementing the Framework for Practical Growth Management presented in Part 3, and achieving the growth intentions outlined in Part 2, will require new tools, policies, and processes to formalize a different set of growth habits. This Implementation Plan identifies the essential changes that will be needed to Fargo’s growth systems, describes the potential sequencing of the changes over the coming decade, and offers guidance on how to both deal with near-term ambiguities and monitor long-term outcomes.

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Implementation Essentials

Tools, Policies, and Practices

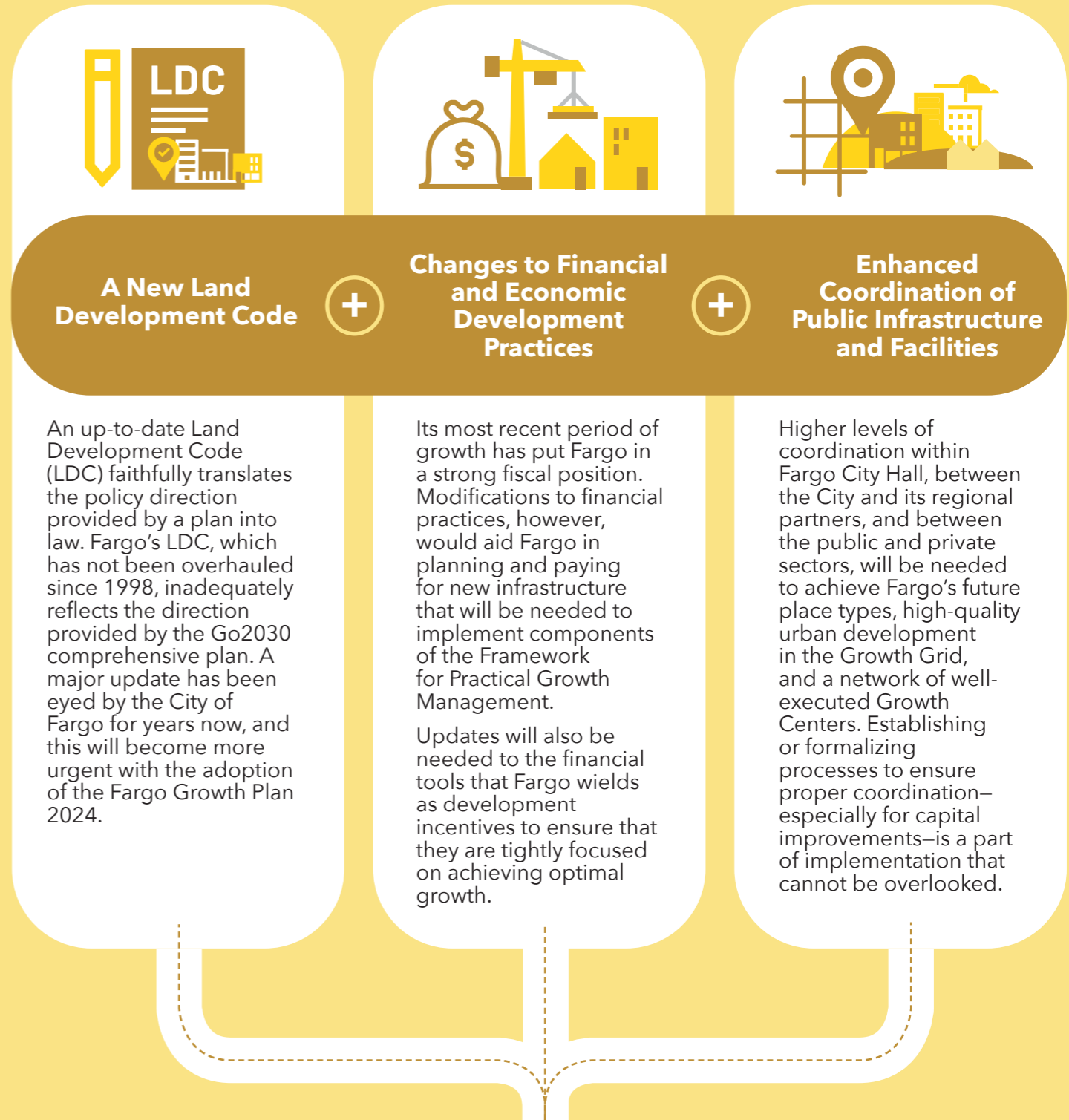
The intentions for future growth described in Part 2 do not represent a seismic change from the intentions of Go2030 or other Fargo plans since the mid-2000s. Nor are some elements of the Framework for Practical Growth Management radically different from current practices—the Growth Grid, for example, is the next generation of the two-tier system featured in the 2007 Growth Plan.

But bringing Fargo’s governance systems into full alignment with its long-stated intentions will require important pivots from business-as-usual—pivots that are not easy, or else they would have been made already. And the implementation of the Framework for Practical Growth Management has enough components that are substantially different from current policies and practices—such as a de-emphasis on land use, the promotion of truly urban forms outside of downtown, and a more strategic use of incentives—that no one should mistake it as a superficial adjustment.


In short, Fargo will need to both update and upgrade specific tools, policies, and processes to put the 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.

This Implementation Plan outlines three areas for proposed changes, as well as basic action steps and a timeline for making the changes.

The three areas are:



Action Steps and Timeline



Implementation will occur over the course of decades. But a lot will be determined by the tone set in the first few years, which will require a rapid but careful sequencing of actions to move the three areas of proposed changes forward. It will also require the navigation of the period in between the adoption of this plan and the build-out of new implementation systems, such as the new LDC.

A New Land Development Code



The City of Fargo has long acknowledged the need to update its LDC, and its LDC Diagnostic Report from 2020 continues to provide sound recommendations for modernizing the LDC and bringing it into closer alignment with Go2030.

An updated audit of the LDC for the Fargo Growth Plan 2024—with an eye on Growth Plan implementation—underscored critical updates that will be needed for the LDC to reflect Fargo’s growth intentions and to adequately serve the Framework for Practical Growth Management. Key updates and considerations from this audit include:

1	Focus on implementation of place types and the promotion of good urban form	<p>Policy changes to the LDC should aim to solidify the Place Typology recommended by this Growth Plan.</p> <p>Ensuring good urban form—how buildings are proportioned, how they address the public realm—throughout Fargo and in every place type will require basic design and development standards that reflect Fargo’s growth intentions. This does not require architectural standards (too prescriptive) nor should it rely on design guidelines (too toothless).</p>
2	Use zoning incentives to help rebalance housing development	<p>The Growth Plan calls for a lower share of greenfield development and greater infill and redevelopment within the existing built-up area. In order to achieve this goal, new incentives related to making infill opportunities easier and more financially appealing to developers will be needed. The LDC, using process, bonus systems, and by-right approval should support this goal.</p>
3	Update zoning districts and map to reflect intended development patterns	<p>New development patterns to achieve the Growth Plan’s proposed place types will require new zoning districts, or more flexibility in existing zoning districts. This may include greater mixing of uses, and more types of housing.</p>
4	Integrate alternative residential options into the base zoning	<p>The current LDC contains additional standards for alternative types of residential development that are not found in the base zoning districts. The revised LDC should endeavor to integrate all of the options with the existing standards, to the extent possible, so that applicants are aware of the range of possibilities for their land.</p>

5	Add height limits or floor area controls	<p>Fargo has a wide variety of non-residential zoning districts that do not set a limit on total height. While the community has been growing, soil issues and market demand have not been high enough to create any out-of-scale tall buildings. However, as options for additional height due to new construction technology become available, there is a risk of getting a “signature” building or two on the skyline, instead of applying that same demand over a wider area. Even if height is not a community issue, the total volume of a building should be. There are tools such as floor area ratio (FAR) that can be used to allow taller height without increasing the total volume of the building.</p>
6	Improve the quality and design of signs	<p>The City has the ability to manage both the size and quality of signs to ensure enhanced design quality applies across all of the businesses in the community. Improving signs does not have to mean they are more expensive to create or install, but rather that they follow common approaches that enhance the legibility and effectiveness of all signs.</p>
7	Promote visual interest in greenfield development	<p>Shaping development patterns in greenfield subdivisions is a design challenge. Fargo is mostly flat and treeless on its fringes, so new tools may be needed to help developers create visual interest. Creating places with mixed incomes and mixed housing types requires greater creativity than simply chopping up acreage into lots. The quality of public spaces such as streets, parks and trails will be critical to the vitality of these places as they age.</p>
8	Draw a sharper separation between the LDC and the companion engineering manuals	<p>To the extent possible, any standards related to engineering (such as utility and storm water specifications) should be relocated from the LDC to the City’s engineering manuals. This allows the discretion about the application of those standards to be applied by engineers, not planners. It will also reduce confusion for regular applicants who use the code (and may not understand how to meet engineering requirements).</p>

A New Land Development Code

<p>9</p>	<p>Consider elimination of minimum parking standards</p>	<p>Cities across the US are changing their approach to the requirements for off-street parking. Many have eliminated minimum parking requirements altogether. Fargo has already eliminated parking minimums in the DMU zoning district, and expansion of this concept elsewhere in the community will enhance the ability of the development community to provide higher quality designs due to greater flexibility over the provision of on-site parking. This doesn't mean no parking is ever provided, just that the developer chooses how much—after which the City's design standards apply to ensure the quality of the parking, its storm water management, and its landscaping.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Refine format for accessibility and legibility</p>	<p>The LDC's format should be updated to appear more contemporary, and to improve usability for those not familiar with zoning.</p> <p>Additional graphics will enhance both the staff's ability to enforce the code, and the public's ability to understand it. Remember—many of the LDC's users are very visual (architects, urban designers, landscape architects).</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Plan to update the LDC at regular intervals</p>	<p>The City should commit to tune up the LDC at least every other year. Such a bi-annual clean-up allows for more effective code administration and ensures the LDC will remain relevant far into the future. Regular, incremental modifications also help ease the transition from the existing set of rules to a new one by reducing the number of changes that are considered as part of any given cycle of revision.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Consider updates to Fargo's extraterritorial jurisdiction boundaries</p>	<p>Regular updates to the LDC would eventually include full zoning and development regulations for parts of Fargo's ETJ as they near annexation—a process that will be guided by the Framework for Practical Growth Management's place types and the Growth Grid model.</p> <p>The exact shape of Fargo's ETJ boundaries, which are regulated by state statute, should be reconsidered as growth pushes to the south and the north.</p>

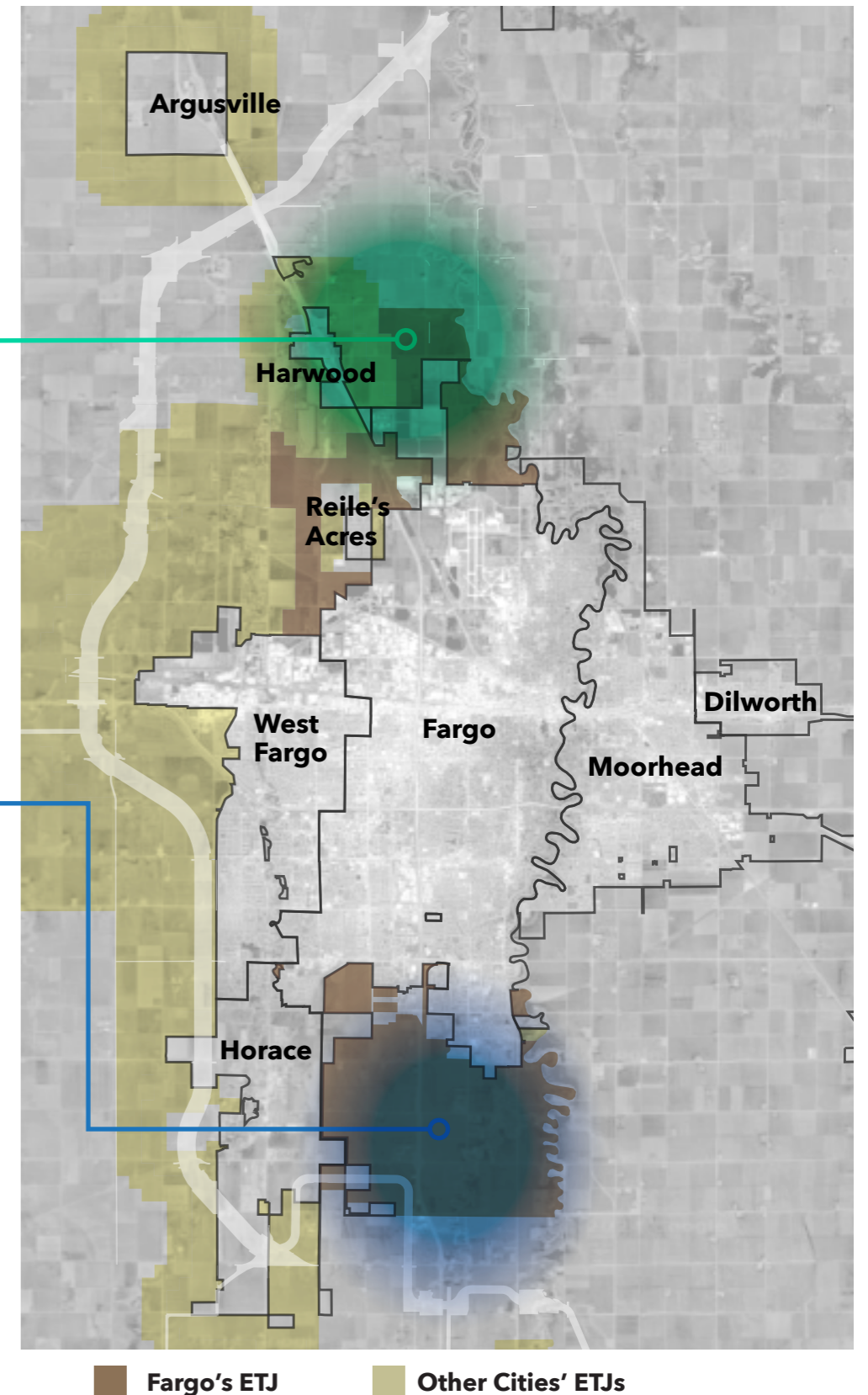
Note: More detailed recommendations to guide LDC updates will be included in a Growth Plan Appendix

NORTHERN ETJ

Consider boundary changes, in collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions, to reduce the fragmentation of boundaries and aid planning for Northern Growth Grids.

SOUTHERN ETJ

Consider extending the boundaries southward to the diversion to allow Fargo to oversee the future of this area and ensure that it is consistent with the intentions of this growth plan.



A New Land Development Code

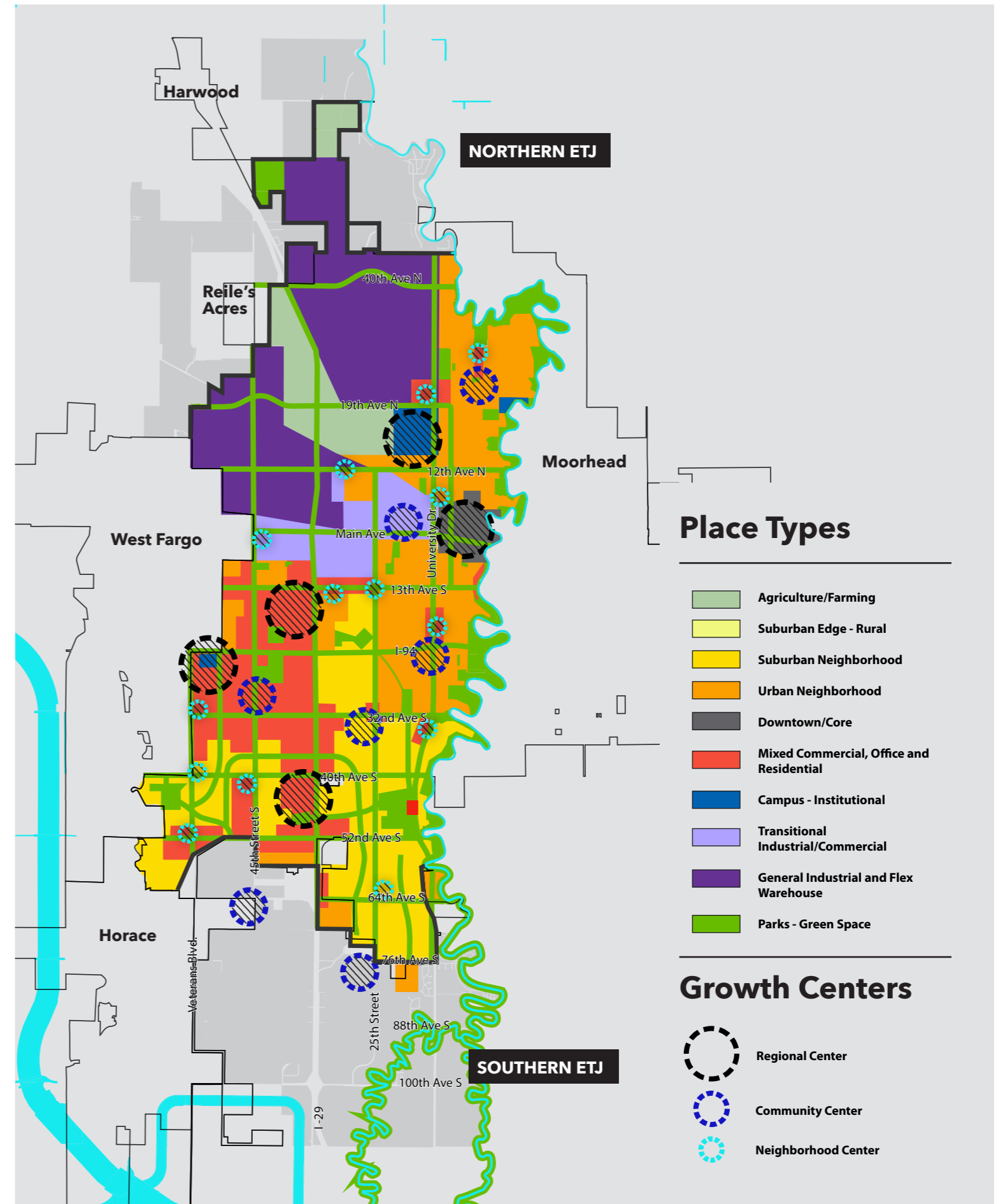
Place Types Within the Existing City Boundary

Incorporation of place types into a new LDC will be a critical part of activating the Framework for Practical Growth Management. As a guide for that process, this Place Types Map of Fargo's current boundaries illustrates potential place type designations based on existing built fabric as well as the prospective character of areas where opportunities for redevelopment or infill development exist. An assessment of surrounding conditions, infrastructure capacity, geographic/environmental factors, and assessed market viability guided the development of this map.

This map is not a zoning map or a proposed zoning map, nor does it serve the function of a traditional future land use map. It is presented, rather, to illustrate the application of the place type model to existing parts of the city.

The Growth Centers shown on this map are the same as those shown on the future transect map and the list of potential Growth Centers in Part 3. As noted in Part 3, the designation of Growth Centers and subsequent planning for Growth Centers would inform the selection of place types within those areas.

Place Type	Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
 Agriculture / Farming	Large farms with crops and/or animals, large barns, grain silos, and associated structures	Residential structures associated with farming
 Suburban Edge-Rural	Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure	Small mom/pop farming operations or 'farmettes', scattered cluster or conservation subdivisions, places of worship
 Suburban Neighborhood	Small to medium lot single-family detached housing	Townhomes (with limited massing up to four units per building), duplex, triplex, quadplex, ADUs, places of worship, schools, day care centers, home offices
 Urban Neighborhood	Small lot single-family detached housing, duplex	Triplex, quadplex, townhomes (with limited massing up to ten units per building), pockets of multi-family structures, places of worship, schools, daycare centers, home offices, neighborhood-scale retail and services
 Downtown / Core	Office, service, commercial / retail, entertainment, cultural, government, civic, light manufacturing, and multi-family residential	Those that support the primary uses and do not detract from quality of place and economic vitality of downtown
 Mixed Commercial, Office, and Residential	Commercial/retail, distribution, warehousing, wholesaling, offices, flex buildings	Flex Warehouse, Multi-family residential
 Campus - Institutional	Educational, medical	Retail and food services, multi-family residential
 Transitional (or Flex) Industrial/Commercial	Live-work, light industrial, makerspace	Multi-family residential, mixed commercial/retail uses
 General Industrial and Flex Warehouse	Light and general industrial, flex warehouse	Commercial uses specifically related to the primary use
 Parks - Green Space	Parks, plazas, open spaces, greenways, trails, flood plains, green infrastructure	Support services specifically related to the primary use, cemeteries, environmentally protected areas



A New Land Development Code

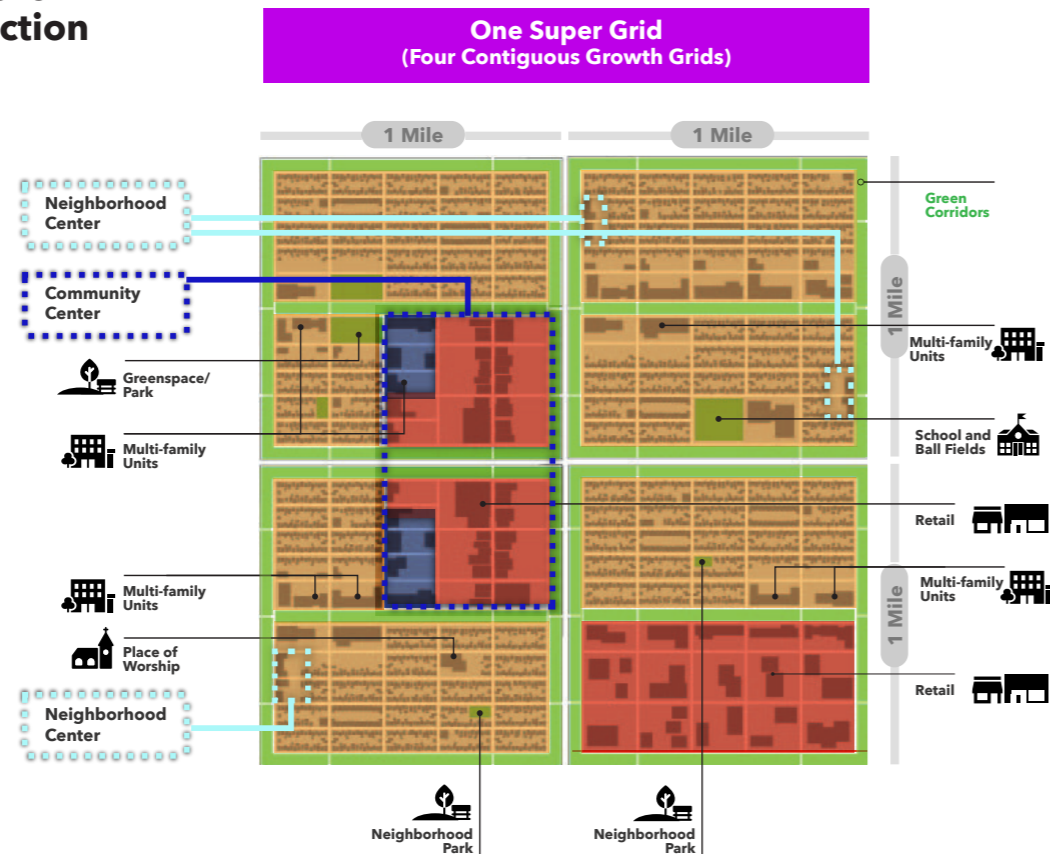
Future Place Types in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) Area

As of 2024, the City of Fargo spans 31,677 acres and is largely developed in terms of horizontal infrastructure (roads and utilities) and anticipated vertical infrastructure (buildings and structures). It is important to note that while the term 'built-out' is used, it does not imply that there are no opportunities for significant infill development or the redevelopment of large areas within the city. Many areas exhibit underdevelopment and are identified on the map on the preceding page as growth centers, where much of the new growth over the next decade or two should be concentrated.

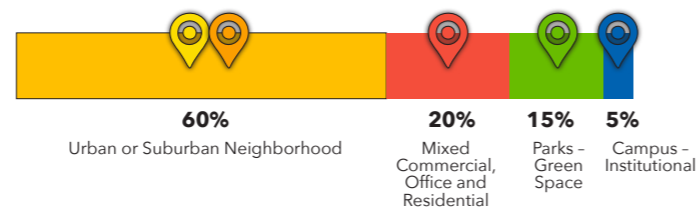
This plan recognizes that although the prevailing recommendation is to redirect growth into these centers, demand for new residential development, in particular, will continue to drive growth into the ETJ area.

The ETJ area encompasses 16,344 acres, providing enough land for Fargo to potentially expand its geographical footprint by 50% of its current size. These acres represent the city's final opportunity to manage growth outside of the existing boundary. The FM Diversion project and the ongoing growth in surrounding cities such as West Fargo, Horace, and Harwood (and their respective ETJs) create a barrier to additional greenfield growth opportunities to the north, west, and south.

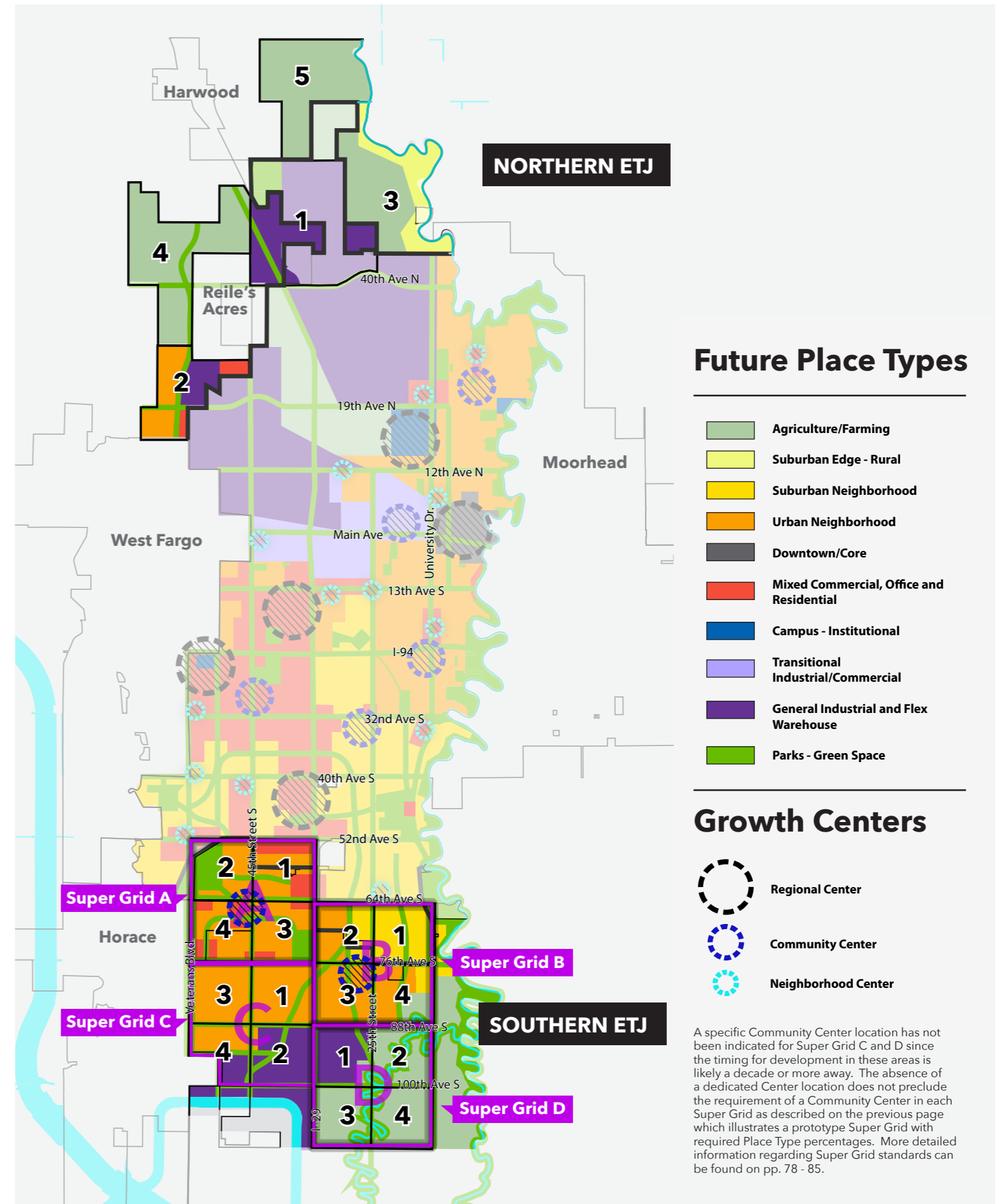
The Preferred Growth Scenario anticipates that 66% of the city's overall growth will occur in the ETJ. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the



Approximate Place Type Composition of a Super Grid



recommended pattern of development in the ETJ—introduced as sequenced growth grids in Part 3—is guided by a Future Place Types Map. This map is not meant to precisely dictate which place type belongs on each parcel but rather to indicate which place types are appropriate for each growth grid and approximately how much of each grid's area should be allocated to a specific place type.



Future Place Types

- Agriculture/Farming
- Suburban Edge - Rural
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Urban Neighborhood
- Downtown/Core
- Mixed Commercial, Office and Residential
- Campus - Institutional
- Transitional Industrial/Commercial
- General Industrial and Flex Warehouse
- Parks - Green Space

Growth Centers

- Regional Center
- Community Center
- Neighborhood Center

A specific Community Center location has not been indicated for Super Grid C and D since the timing for development in these areas is likely a decade or more away. The absence of a dedicated Center location does not preclude the requirement of a Community Center in each Super Grid as described on the previous page which illustrates a prototype Super Grid with required Place Type percentages. More detailed information regarding Super Grid standards can be found on pp. 78 - 85.

Changes to Financial and Economic Development Practices



The funding sources Fargo currently uses to pay for services and infrastructure match Fargo's values by being practical, fiscally responsible, and enabling asset stewardship. Service and system users, for the most part, pay only for the specific government functions that they use. This is especially true for infrastructure funding where user rates, utility fees, and special assessment levies are all set in response to costs that are apportioned to specific user groups.

However, this funding system is not far-sighted. The City lacks a long-range funding strategy that holistically considers future infrastructure projects necessary to improve the quality of life for Fargo's existing residents or to accommodate expanding household and economic growth. And the City lacks explicit policies around phasing growth, development form, and infrastructure design—all of which can decrease future costs through increased efficiency.

The following recommended tasks are all intended to create policy and spending consistency with the central thrusts of the Framework for Practical Growth Management:

- Discourage leapfrog development
- Incentivize high-quality development
- Invest in high-quality public infrastructure and services

1

Take fiscal costs and benefits into consideration when making land use decisions

Land uses and land use patterns have major implications for the City's long term fiscal health. Consequently, some type of fiscal assessment system should be established to ensure that each major development project is a use and development form that meets the City's long-term goals. These goals should be broader than the project's fiscal benefits and should encompass a project's conformance with the place type of its location. But at the same time, the project should be able to demonstrate that it will contribute to the City's overall assessed valuation over the long run, and that the project meets general market demand or community objectives.

This assessment process should also address a process for assessing the benefits of land use proposals from large institutional users who are exempt from paying property taxes. While these uses may be important to the community, the proposed location may require extensive infrastructure investment and an increase in public safety costs that are not adequately addressed by the fees the user will pay. If the location appears inappropriate, this may present an opportunity to identify a more productive or fiscally sound location.

2

Prepare a 10-year financial plan consistent with the Growth Plan

A long-range financial plan for the City of Fargo should be an integrated document that considers 10-year revenues and costs for ongoing City operations—including both general services and capital improvements—but also anticipates major new infrastructure projects that could be required to support future growth where there are no current sources of offsetting revenues. These new infrastructure costs could include major upgrades to arterial streets and new interchanges.

Some of these costs, such as new interchanges, may be paid for by other governmental entities, such as NDDOT, but the City may still need to contribute to build out local "betterments" such as bicycle facilities, that the state will not fund.

Public safety expansions in relation to future growth also needs to be studied as part of this effort. This analysis should establish performance standards for both police and fire responses and then plan any necessary capital improvements needed to meet response time standards in response to future growth patterns.

3

Prepare four-year capital improvement plans consistent with the Growth Plan

Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) are currently completed annually. However, many projects included in the CIP require multi-year funding. Having a longer term for CIPs allows for greater certainty and efficiency in planning and executing projects, as well as creating greater consistency for any property owners subject to special assessments required to fund these projects.

As part of this process, assessments could also be tied to an inflation index so that rates are increased some amount each year just to reflect inflation.

Changes to Financial and Economic Development Practices

4

Align economic development incentives with the Growth Plan's optimal growth outcomes

The Framework for Practical Growth Management provides a basis for targeting public assistance to projects recognized as "optimal" forms of growth and should serve as the foundation for a revised set of policies and guidelines for economic development incentives. Some of these incentives should be imbedded in the new LDC as density bonuses. Other incentives should be provided in the form of special assessments, predevelopment incentives, or general financing incentives that lower a project's development or eventual operating costs.

Owing to the cost and complexity of redevelopment and infill, proper incentives to promote development in the Growth Centers will require the most attention. The City has been very effective in targeting an entire suite of incentives to downtown Fargo through the Renaissance Zone program. Unless and until the State of North Dakota expands that program dramatically, its utility beyond downtown will be very limited, requiring the use of other tools (property tax exemptions, PILOTs, and TIFs, for example) that will be applicable to the outcomes sought in different types of centers.

5

Reauthorize the sales tax to support the Growth Plan

Sales tax revenues are such a powerful tool because they capture value from people who come to Fargo to shop and the overall volume of revenue is higher than what can generally be raised through a utility fee.

In 2028, the ¼ cent sales tax that is currently being used to pay for the FM Area Diversion Project could be reapportioned (if authorized by voters) for street and trail improvements, and as matching funds to leverage regional, state, and federal funding sources. Such a reauthorization and reapportionment would provide vital resources to realize the higher quality urban environments that are at the core of the Framework for Practical Growth Management.

6

Evaluate the creation of a street improvement utility

The new Fargo Transportation Plan lacks a dedicated or consistent funding source to help pay for the Plan's priorities, which include improved bike and pedestrian networks and increased street maintenance. Although increased street maintenance could be paid for through special assessments, improved capital facilities are typically funded through regional, state and federal grants, all of which require local matching funds.

Today, Fargo's only revenue source to pay the required local match are sales tax revenues, which are in high demand for other projects. A new street improvement utility could be used as a local match to leverage these other grant sources more consistently. In addition, investing in improving the basic appearance of streets also helps boost surrounding property values, demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between capital improvement investments and General Fund revenues.

This utility fee would also be levied against non-profit entities that own property but do not pay property taxes. These property owners would be contributing more to the city's overall quality of life and helping to sustain property values.

7

Consider increases to franchise fees and/or create a new utility to support public safety

Franchise fees are another option for generating more revenue to offset costs associated with non-revenue generating infrastructure. As with the potential street improvement utility, this mechanism provides another opportunity to collect revenues from tax-exempt property owners in Fargo.

A public safety utility could support any necessary increases in fire stations or police facilities required to serve future growth.

Enhanced Coordination of Public Infrastructure and Facilities



Updates to the land development code, the City’s financial practices (including CIP budgeting), and the City’s economic development practices will all require coordination throughout City Hall to ensure that policies—and how they are ultimately applied—are consistent with the intentions outlined in Fargo Growth Plan 2024. The plan should be used to guide the work of individual departments, and it should be used by commissions and committees to guide their policy-setting, oversight, and advisory functions.

Deeper levels of coordination are also needed to ensure that the expertise and perspectives within relevant departments are brought to bear to decisions that directly or indirectly impact Fargo’s growth—and that no department is left scratching its head from the outside when key decisions are made.

Growth Planning and Process Collaborations Across Departments and Divisions

Administration

Planning & Zoning

Engineering

Water, Wastewater Reclamation, and Solid Waste

Public Works

Police and Fire

Coordination within Fargo City Hall

Consolidated Planning Review

A formalized process should be put in place that ensures that all relevant departments (using a broad interpretation of relevant) are included when development proposals and major infrastructure decisions are being made. Staff already recognize the value of such a consolidated approach and its potential to avoid costly oversights and add value and buy-in on major decisions.

Neighborhood Improvement Plans

Planning reviews can be one part of a broader process that includes consolidated, cross-departmental planning for improvements in specific areas where multiple forms of public and private investment are anticipated. Such an approach would allow complementary projects to be well-integrated, resulting in greater long-term benefits than if there were completed as isolated, standalone projects. This will be especially important when it comes to execution of the Growth Center model.

Annexation Planning

For the same reasons that consolidated planning review and neighborhood improvement plans would result in more well-informed decision-making and work planning, all relevant departments should be involved when annexations are being planned and in the decisions that will guide the execution of the Growth Grid model.

Integrated and coordinated investments from multiple public agencies are one of the most effective ways to ensure orderly greenfield growth and to help maintain the quality and character of older neighborhoods. In the Fargo-Moorhead region multiple entities based outside of Fargo City Hall will play pivotal roles in the implementation of this growth plan and will need to be engaged early and often to make sure that their individual policies and investment are consistent with—and will not undermine—Fargo’s growth intentions.

Growth Planning and Process Collaborations Across Agencies and Authorities

Fargo Public Schools and West Fargo Public Schools

Fargo Park District

Cass County

Fargo-Moorhead Metro COG

MATBUS

Metro Flood Diversion Authority

State of North Dakota

NDSU

Fargo and neighboring municipalities

Coordination within the Region

Public School Facilities Planning

Fargo Public School underwent a long-range facility planning process simultaneous to Fargo’s growth planning process, providing an opportunity for both efforts to inform each other. FPS’s final plan, with its focus on reinvestment in existing assets, especially in Central and North areas, reflects an overall alignment with Fargo’s growth intentions.

Going forward, the Growth Plan has the potential to shape decisions made by FPS at facilities it chooses to close or reposition, helping to ensure that its decisions conform with Future Place Types surrounding those properties

Park and Open Space Planning

Parks and other public amenities will play a critical role in achieving the Future Place Types outlined by this Growth Plan. Upgrades to existing parks, inserting multi-use trails into existing neighborhoods, utilizing open spaces in areas along the rivers and diversion channel, and maximizing the recreational potential of school grounds should all be part of this process and will require carefully integrated planning and resource-identification across agencies.

Growth Center and Corridors Planning

Planning within the growth centers identified by this Growth Plan will require collaboration with anchor businesses and institutions—such as NDSU—and with the full range of agencies that will help to guide the development of high-quality infrastructure. This includes careful attention to the corridors that will connect growth centers and the types of multi-modal corridor investments recommended by Metro COG and the Fargo Transportation Plan.



Action Steps

Activating the Framework for Practical Growth Management by making the changes outlined in this Implementation Plan will require a near-term focus on policy modifications and systems-building. The first 12 months after the adoption of this Growth Plan will, as this timeline shows, be a period of initiating regulatory overhauls and instituting new or more formalized processes—work that will continue into the second and third years of implementation.

The capacity and resourcing of City departments to undertake the patient work of the first three years—and to take true ownership of plan interpretation—will be the key to consistent, plan-aligned decision-making in the years that follow.

	WHAT	First 12 months	Months 13-36	Year 4-6	Years 7-10	WHO
Regulatory and Policy Steps	LDC Update	Initiate LDC update; start process with small area planning to test recommendations and refine place types	Complete LDC update, including updates to administrative procedures	Begin bi-annual LDC tune-ups	Continue bi-annual LDC tune-ups	Planning & Development
	Growth Grid Activation	Confirm or revise Growth Grid sequencing in the northern and southern ETJ to inform LDC update process	Finalize and confirm Growth Grid procedures; activate Growth Grid model	Apply Growth Grid model; confirm build-out percentages of current Growth Grids on an annual basis; make preparations for next-in-sequence Growth Grids as needed	Confirm build-out percentages of current Growth Grids on an annual basis; make preparations for next-in-sequence Growth Grids as needed	Planning & Development, with Engineering and Public Works
	Growth Centers Activation	Initiate Growth Center selection and phasing to inform preparations for Growth Center small area plans	Confirm selection and phasing of Growth Centers; initiate first group of Growth Center small area plans	Amend LDC and other policies, as needed, to reflect first group of Growth Center plans; initiate infrastructure projects outlined in plans; confirm Growth Center selections/phasing and begin second round of plans if needed	Monitor Growth Center development; make additional LDC and other policy changes as needed; continue infrastructure improvements outlined in plans; initiate additional rounds of Growth Center plans as needed	Planning & Development, with Engineering and Public Works
	Economic Development Policy Updates	Initiate update to development incentive policies to support the Growth Plan and inform LDC updates; confirm definition of Optimal Growth and select context-sensitive public benefits as a basis for "optimal" designation	Finalize incentive policy updates to support optimal growth; put new policies into practice	Perform bi-annual review of development incentive policies and the degree to which they are promoting optimal growth outcomes; use review to inform amendments	Continue bi-annual review of development incentive policies	City Administration
Internal Planning and Review Steps	Financial Planning	Develop 10-year financial plan for City of Fargo	Maintain and update 10-year financial plan	Maintain and update 10-year financial plan	Maintain and update 10-year financial plan	Finance Office
	Capital Improvement Planning	Begin transition to four-year capital improvement plans (CIPs)	Complete and maintain the transition to four-year capital improvement plans (CIPs)	Maintain four-year capital improvement plans (CIPs)	Maintain four-year capital improvement plans (CIPs)	Engineering
	Consolidated Plan Review	Formalize consolidated planning review within Fargo City Hall	Continue consolidated planning review within Fargo City Hall; assess process to identify potential improvements	Continue consolidated planning review	Continue consolidated planning review	City Administration
	Neighborhood Improvement Plans	Begin development of model for internal Neighborhood Improvement Plans to guide investments and activities across departments in targeted areas	Expand and refine model for internal Neighborhood Improvement Plans	Continue development and maintenance of Neighborhood Improvement Plans	Continue development and maintenance of Neighborhood Improvement Plans	Engineering
	Growth Plan Review	Identify process for annual review of Growth Plan implementation progress and preview of upcoming work	Maintain annual review/preview process	Maintain annual review/preview process; during Year 5, conduct a full evaluation to identify and make any necessary updates	Maintain annual review/preview process; during Year 10, conduct a full evaluation to identify and make any necessary updates	Planning & Development
Regional Planning Steps	Coordination of Regional Growth Planning	Convene Regional Growth Planning Task Force to clarify growth intentions across municipalities and coordinate infrastructure and facilities planning; include Fargo-specific sub-group of relevant agencies and authorities for multi-agency coordination	Maintain Regional Growth Planning Task Force	Maintain Regional Growth Planning Task Force	Maintain Regional Growth Planning Task Force	Planning & Development, with Cass County Planning Office and Metro COG

Considerations for the Immediate Post-Adoption Period

A notable gap will exist in between the adoption of the Fargo Growth Plan 2024 and the completion of recommended regulatory and policy updates—most notably, the development of a new Land Development Code. This can be a period of ambiguity or confusion in any community where a newly adopted comprehensive plan or growth plan is out of step with the regulatory infrastructure.

The following are considerations for navigating this immediate post-adoption period in a manner that builds support and understanding for Fargo’s growth intentions while communicating clear answers to property owners and developers:



- 1 Embark on the LDC update as soon as possible:**

The key to keeping the period of dissonance between the adoption of a new plan and the adoption of updated regulations as short as possible is to begin regulatory updates shortly after the plan is adopted. This ensures that momentum from the planning process is carried over and signals that the City is serious about tackling the hardest part of implementation.
- 2 In the meantime, continue to work under the existing LDC:**

It can be tempting to consider a development moratorium while a new code is being developed, but doing so can add unnecessary pressure to the development of the new code while exposing the City to litigation as land owners seek to exercise their vested rights under the current code. Instead, continue to adhere as closely as possible to the letter of the existing LDC, using this period to begin the movement away from negotiated approvals unless it clearly serves Fargo’s future growth intentions to do otherwise.
- 3 Continue to work under existing policies for economic development incentives while formulating a new framework:**

While property owners will continue to have vested rights under the current LDC as a new code is being developed, no property owners have a right to receive development incentives. But rather than place a moratorium on the use of all or some incentives while economic development policies are re-engineered to promote optimal growth outcomes, a more practical course is to maintain existing policies until both a new LDC and new economic development policies are ready to be launched in tandem.

Outcomes to Measure and Monitor

How many households or people Fargo grows by in the coming years is a subject for educated speculation. Whether it ends up being close to the 15,000 additional households projected through 2045 by Metro COG, or some number above or below that, the most important outcomes to track for the purposes of Growth Plan implementation should not be about the total number of households and people in Fargo. They should be about **where and how Fargo grows** and **whether those qualities align with the community’s growth intentions**.

Recommended outcomes to measure and monitor over time, which may inform modifications to specific models in the Framework for Practical Growth Management, or to specific implementation tools and processes, include the following:

<p>Up to 66% of growth in greenfield areas or ETJ</p> <p>At least 33% of growth in existing areas of Fargo</p> <p>This central feature of the Preferred Growth Scenario in Part 2 is something that can be tracked by looking at where building permits for new residential units are being issued.</p> <p>If the greenfield share of growth is consistently at 70-75% or higher through year seven of implementation, incentive and regulatory systems should be reviewed for potential modifications to more aggressively promote infill and redevelopment.</p>	<p>At least 95% of projects approved by City of Fargo receive by-right approval under new LDC</p> <p>An indication that the Framework for Practical Growth Management is undergirded by a predictable and transparent regulatory system will be that at least 95 out of 100 projects being approved by the City of Fargo are receiving by-right approval for place type conformance under the updated LDC.</p> <p>If the share of projects receiving by-right approval is below this level—and especially if it falls below 90%—a diagnosis of issues that may need to be addressed through amendments should be part of the bi-annual LDC tune-ups.</p>	<p>Full market value of real estate in the City of Fargo is outpacing inflation by an average of 10% or more per year</p> <p>Steady growth of the City of Fargo’s full market value has been an important outcome of improvements to Fargo’s growth patterns over the past decade, as well as a contributor to the City’s solid fiscal position.</p> <p>Going forward, consistent growth in full market value well above inflation will be the most reliable indicator that the “where” and “how” of future growth is generating durable value that can be translated into public resources to invest in Fargo’s priorities.</p>
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FARGO GROWTH PLAN 2024



Planning
Consultants

