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Lisa Sankey, Planner
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West Fargo Planning & Zoning Commission Agenda
Tuesday, January 9, 2024 - 5:30 p.m.

- A. Call to Order
- B. Approval of Order of Agenda
- C. Approval of Minutes- December 12, 2023
- D. Regular Agenda
 - 1. Election of Commission Chair and Vice-Chair
 - 2. Public Hearing – Approval and adoption of the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan
- E. Non-Agenda Items
- F. Adjourn from Regular Agenda



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West Fargo Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 12, 2023 - 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Joe Kolb, Eric Dodds, Mike Thorstad, Kathi Schwan, David Gust, Aleyna Leibfried

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Aaron Nelson, Lisa Sankey, Katie Schmidt, Leslie McGillivray-Rivas, Breanna Siegler

Minutes Submitted by: Breanna Siegler, Office Manager

Meeting was called to order by Chair Kolb at 5:30pm. Commissioner Leibfried motioned to approve the order of the agenda, Commissioner Dodds seconded. No opposition. Motion passed.

Commissioner Gust moved and Commissioner Leibfried seconded a motion to approve the minutes from November 14, 2023. No opposition. Motion passed.

Chair Kolb opened a public hearing on A23-30 Tintes Land Company 15th Addition, request for Conditional Use Permit to install a wireless telecommunications tower in residential district, 1402 & 1420 16th Street East (Lots 1-3, Block 2 of Tintes Land Company 15th Addition), City of West Fargo, North Dakota. Chair Kolb opened the floor for public comment. No public comment brought forth, Chair Kolb closed the public hearing. Commissioner Thorstad asked to confirm where there are similar structures. City Staff mentioned Sheyenne High School (800 40th Ave E) and Flame of Heart Church (1222 6th St E). Commissioner Gust motioned to approve application with conditions as presented, Commissioner Thorstad seconded. No opposition. Motion passed.

Chair Kolb opened the floor for non-agenda items. Planning Director Aaron Nelson announced that a joint Planning & Zoning Commission and City Commission meeting to present the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan will be held on December 18th, 2023 from 3:30-4:30pm in the East training room at City Hall.

Commissioner Gust moved and Commissioner Leibfried seconded to adjourn from regular agenda. No opposition. Motion passed and meeting adjourned at 5:42pm.

MEMORANDUM

TO: West Fargo Planning & Zoning Commission
FROM: Aaron Nelson, Planning Director *AN*
DATE: January 5, 2024
SUBJECT: Public Hearing – Approval & Adoption of the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan

Over the past nine months, the City has undertaken a placemaking planning effort for downtown West Fargo, the results of which were presented at a joint meeting of the City Commission and the Planning & Zoning Commission on Monday, December 18, 2023. A copy of the plan document (minus appendices) is attached. The full document can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/westfargodtmasterplan.

The Downtown Placemaking Master Plan builds on the City's existing vision to establish downtown as a cultural center for West Fargo, as outlined within the West Fargo 2.0 Comprehensive Plan, through examination, findings, and a menu of recommendations organized around four interrelated focus areas:

1. Placemaking
2. Business & Economic Development
3. Pedestrians, Parking, & Access
4. Infill, Density, & Redevelopment

The Downtown Placemaking Master Plan serves as an update to the 2011 Sheyenne St & Main Avenue Framework Study and, together with the West Fargo 2.0 Comprehensive Plan, will be used to guide future direction and decision making for the downtown area.

In follow-up to the commission presentation and discussion on December 18, staff has scheduled a public hearing to take place at the January 9, 2024 Planning & Zoning Commission meeting and is recommending approval and adoption of the plan document.

Once approved, staff intends to undertake the following action steps in support of the plan recommendations:

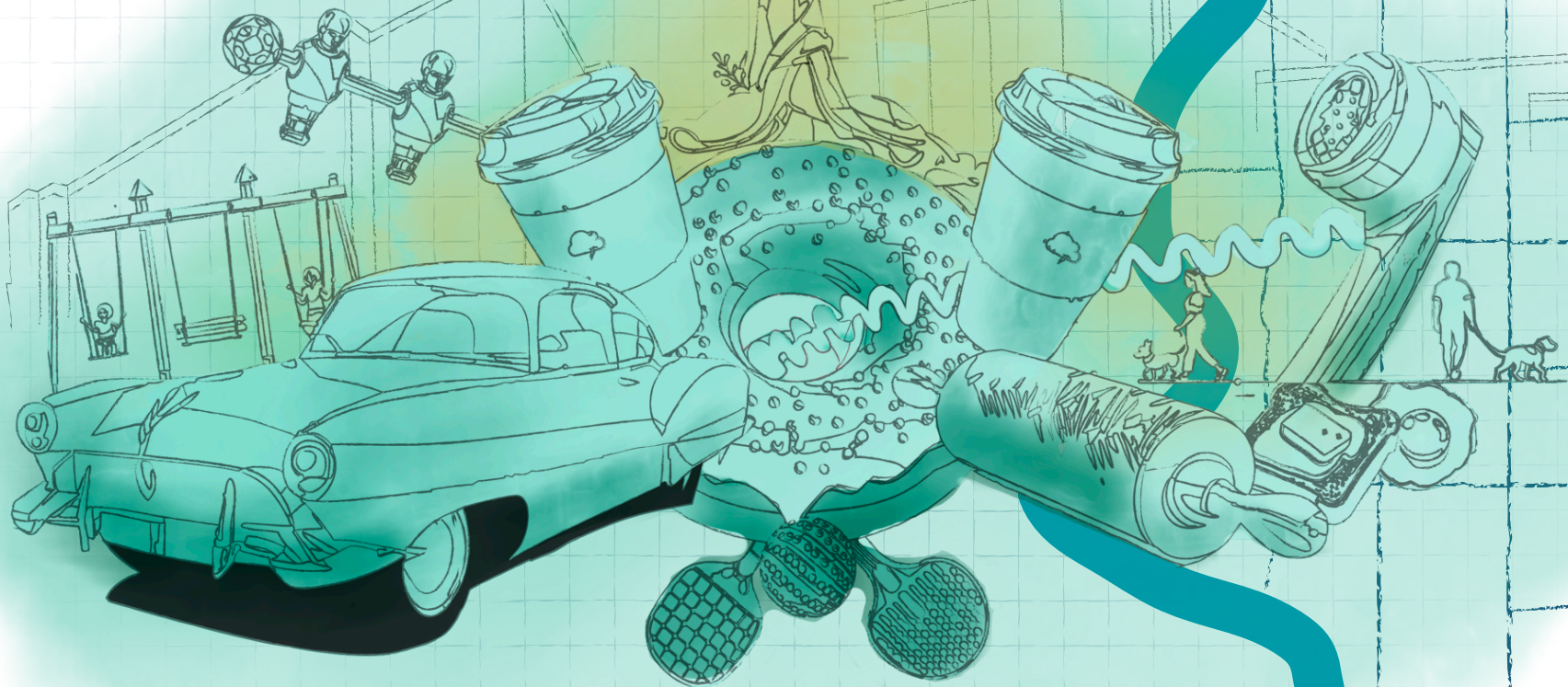
1. **Capacity Building** – Convene a series of coordinating discussions for the purpose of building capacity, communication, and organization amongst downtown stakeholders, including area economic development organizations and event organizers. A healthy and thriving downtown district depends on businesses, citizens, non-profits, and government organizations working together and coordinating efforts.
2. **Integration of the Plan Recommendations into City Work** – Work to update such things as incentive programs, zoning regulations, infrastructure safety improvements, etc. to better align with plan findings and recommendations.
3. **Exploration of New Initiatives** – Further explore the feasibility of establishing new programs or activities recommended in the plan, such as enhanced staff focus on grant writing or the creation of a fee-in-lieu of parking program to help fund future public parking and transportation needs in the downtown area.

Suggested Action: Hold public hearing and recommend the City Commission approve and adopt the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan, for the purpose of guiding City policy in relation to the downtown area.

Attachment



DOWNTOWN PLACEMAKING MASTER PLAN



2023





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan would not have been possible without the contributions and volunteer hours by the following individuals and groups. Their input and guidance together with the feedback from the West Fargo community at large was foundational to the crafting of this plan as a reflection of a shared vision for the future of West Fargo.

Steering Committee

Roben Anderson, City Commission

Joe Kolb, Planning & Zoning Commission

Eddie Sheeley, Economic Development Advisory Committee

Jodee DeVaney, Public Art Advisory Committee

Nicole Dutton, Yards Business Association & owner of Thunder Coffee

Brian Kounavsky, EPIC Companies

Katie Krumwiede, Owner of Cookie Krums

Jessica Rahman, Business Office Manager at Converdia Health

Brittany Taplin, Downtown Resident & Co-Owner of Sisu Moter Sports

Rachel Richter, LordemannCommunications

Casey Sanders-Berglund, Economic Development

Aaron Nelson, Planning

Mike Amundson, West Fargo Events

Levi Bachmeier, West Fargo Public Schools

Barb Erbstoesser, West Fargo Park District

Joe Raso, Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (CGFMEDC)

Community Focus Group

William Krumwiede

Ashley Beaudoin

Randilyn Dombek

Mark Sahli

Nick Hirschert

Joan Bachman

Steve Bagan

Business Focus Group

Tim Gleason

Rick Brandvold

Katherine Grindberg

Dane Ferguson

Ryan Aasheim

A special thank you to the City of West Fargo commissioners and staff for their guidance and commitment to making the City of West Fargo extraordinary.

City Commission

Commission President Bernie Dardis

Commissioner Mark Simmons

Commissioner Roben Anderson

Commissioner Brad Olson

Commissioner Mandy George

Planning and Zoning Commission

Joe Kolb, Chair

Eric Dodds, Vice Chair

David Gust

Aleyna Leibfried

Kathi Schwan

Mike Thorstad

Public Art Advisory Committee

Jessica Matson-Fluto

Lauren Kensok

Lisa Dillum

Jay Thomas

JoDee Devaney

City Staff

Aaron Nelson, Planning Director

Casey Sanders-Berglund, Economic Development Manager

Rachel Richter Lordemann, Communication Manager

Special Thank you to Pioneer Place, West Fargo Public Library and the West Fargo Fire Department for hosting our meetings.

North Dakota Department of Commerce

Melinda Padilla Lynch, EDA Community Engagement Liaison

The North Dakota Department of Commerce has sub awarded funds to communities through the Statewide Public Space Initiative- Placemaking (SPSI) Planning Grant. This new program, made possible through U.S. EDA's Statewide Planning Grant Program, supports local governments in completing the planning phase of placemaking that positively impacts economic resiliency workforce attraction and retention, and Covid-19 recovery efforts.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The West Fargo Downtown Placemaking Master Plan document is aligned and flows from the ground work established in the West Fargo Comprehensive Plan (a city wide plan), while aiming to be more detailed and specific about the downtown's vision. It is intended to be brief and illustrative in its main chapters, while the appendices provide more in-depth detail. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 each develop the final goals which were derived from cumulative public engagement and final voting. These chapters elaborate on the goals with specific action steps.

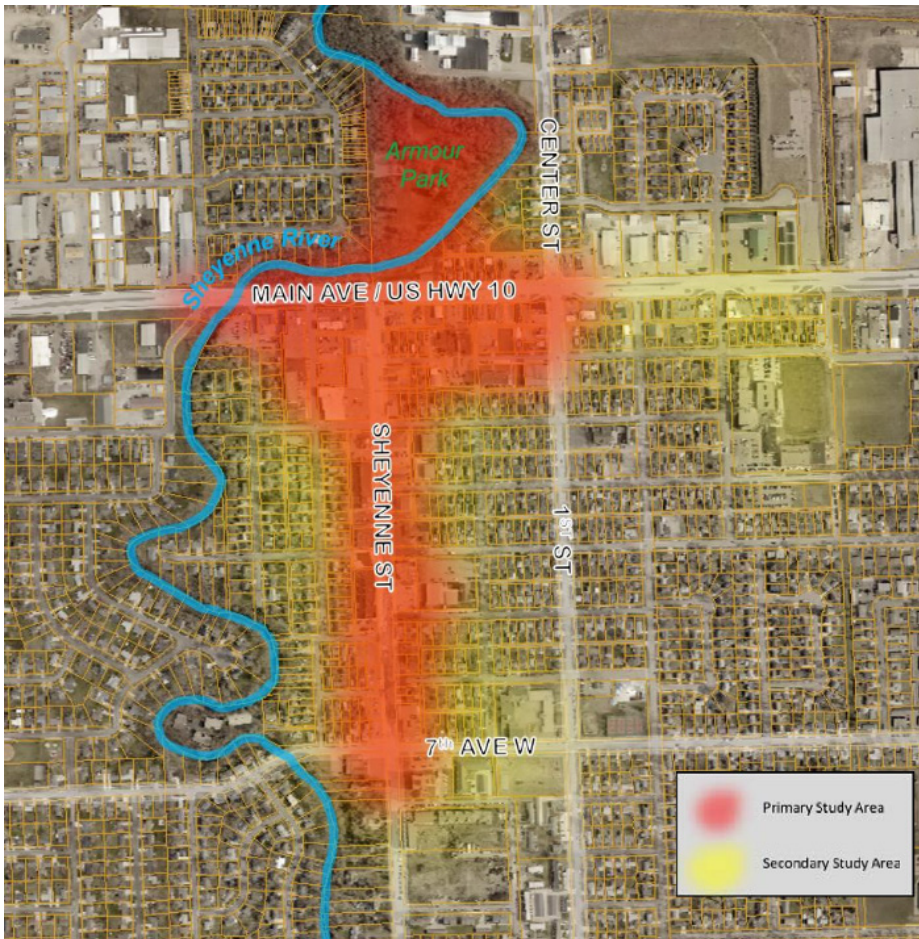
Chapter 7 is the implementation chapter which contains a matrix that summarizes strategies and identifies timelines, priorities, champions and funding resources for each action step. The chapters that are more technical in nature like Chapter 4, Business and Economic Development, Chapter 5, Pedestrians, Parking and Access, as well as Chapter 6, Infill, Density and Redevelopment, contain strategies crafted by the consultant team beyond those derived from community engagement. They are not intended to be more or less important, but are intended to further support the action steps in those chapters. Hyperlinks are offered to abbreviate the length of the plan, and to provide better navigation and accessibility to other [reference documents](#).

Photo of POW/MIA Plaza



INTRODUCTION

Figure 1. Map of Study Area



Study Area

The study area is generally bordered by Armour Park to the north, the Sheyenne river to the west, 7th street to the south and Sukut Street to the east. The study area has been branded as “the Downtown Yards,” and includes both businesses and residences. It encompasses approximately 164 acres.

Background and Scope

The City of West Fargo initiated this project to produce a Downtown Placemaking Master Plan that builds upon the vision and goals of the City’s

Comprehensive Plan; defines and responds to current conditions and issues; enhances downtown’s sense of place; and guides public and private investment over the next five to ten years.

Part of this effort was funded through the North Dakota Department of Commerce placemaking grant award on behalf of the Governor’s office. The Governor’s office is deploying a new initiative, the Statewide Public Space Initiative- Placemaking (SPSI) Planning Grant which was made possible through U.S. EDA’s Statewide Planning Grant Program. This program supports local government in completing the planning phase of placemaking that will positively impact economic resiliency, workforce attraction and retention, and Covid-19 recovery efforts.

Through public involvement, the plan identifies key issues, challenges and opportunities.

Priorities

The city’s intent in developing this master plan was to:

- Build upon the vision and goals of West Fargo 2.0 Comprehensive Plan and other past efforts to establish the downtown as a cultural center
- Engage stakeholders, build consensus and a broadly supported vision
- Define a distinct identity, aesthetic, and sense of place that is uniquely West Fargo
- Address key needs, wants, and issues
- Reinvigorate blighted areas and create a walkable, mixed-use center of urban activity
- Incentivize economic growth, investment, and enterprise to have a downtown in support of the City as a whole

The key issues that the city aimed to address through this master planning process are:

- Parking and Access: Manage parking to provide easy access and support business
- Placemaking: Activate public spaces with art and walkable conditions
- Infill, Redevelopment, and Land Use: Manage growth in a way that balances higher intensity redevelopment with existing lower intensity residential neighborhoods
- Business and Economic Development: Attract tenants that sustain existing businesses

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note: The recommendations put forth in this plan are intended to be supplemental to the vision and recommendations of the West Fargo 2.0 plan.

The Downtown Placemaking Master Plan for West Fargo builds upon the Comprehensive Plan, West Fargo 2.0. The Downtown Placemaking Master Plan identifies a Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, and Goals which prioritize:

- A walkable district that connects existing neighborhoods
- Home to a vibrant mix of uses centered on Sheyenne Street
- A place to create public/private partnerships to foster creative redevelopment, entrepreneurship, the arts, and unique businesses
- A unique district that defines West Fargo's character

The ideation¹ of placemaking involved collecting input from various sources, including online feedback, focus groups, and the steering committee. This input resulted in the generation of 117 placemaking concepts. These concepts were then analyzed and prioritized by the Steering Committee, Focus Groups and the public. This work created the basis for 4 overarching and specific Downtown Goals.

Each Goal has specific Action Steps aimed at implementation. The 4 Downtown Yards Goals are as follows:

GOAL #1: PLACEMAKING

Make the Downtown Yards a vibrant place that displays West Fargo's heritage, and character that offers engaging experiences for all ages and families.

GOAL #2: BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Attract and retain businesses, visitors, and residents that seek innovative enterprise and contribute to the economic vitality.

GOAL #3: PEDESTRIANS, PARKING & ACCESS

Provide accessibility and parking options that foster walkability, pedestrian safety, and enhance the public realm.

GOAL #4: INFILL, DENSITY & REDEVELOPMENT

Connect and strengthen the downtown assets by redeveloping underutilized or vacant spaces and calibrate intensity of development to create a thriving mix of uses.

¹Ideation is a word that means the act of forming or entertaining ideas. It is mostly used as a psychological term and it first appears in 1829 as a combination of the word idea, from the Greek word idea meaning form, and the suffix -ation, used to make a noun out of an action. Ideation is the process by which ideas are created.

Goal 1: Placemaking (Chapter 3)

Make the Downtown Yards a vibrant place that displays West Fargo's unique heritage, and character that offers engaging experiences for all ages and families.

This chapter lays the groundwork for making the Downtown Yards an attractive and vibrant destination by focusing on placemaking strategies aligned with community input and goals. It emphasizes the importance of creating a unique and engaging environment that reflects West Fargo's identity and heritage. The resulting key action steps:

ACTION STEP 3.1

Increase activity and foot traffic

- Infill and reinvent parking areas along Sheyenne with temporary farm stand, coffee — small vendors, etc.
- Infill large front setbacks space

ACTION STEP 3.3

Implement pedestrian play features along Sheyenne

- Use the existing paved half-moon areas and medallion bump outs on Sheyenne Street (stubbed out with electrical power)

Photo of half-moon areas on Sheyenne Street



ACTION STEP 3.4

Connect Points of Interest through Creative Wayfinding

- Provide area map of points of interest and where there are sidewalks or trails people can use to get there; create app or online version for easy access and updating
- Gamify Wayfinding — add digital wayfinding's interactive games connected to signage and wayfinding

ACTION STEP 4.3

Reconnect with the River

- Build fishing platforms and restore the riverbank to encourage people to visit and enjoy the river
- Construct River-swales structures — work in partnership with NDDOT
- Build Fountain/water feature — bring Sheyenne River to Sheyenne street

ACTION STEP 4.4

Create Photo Spots and Memory Maker locations

- Install entrance features and pedestrian play features
- Incentivize retail shop installations, murals, etc. on private property

ACTION STEP 5.1

Develop Family Friendly spaces and programs

- Develop kid-friendly passive programming — hopscotch, sidewalk chalk, bubbles
- Add teen-friendly active programming — game nights at Thunder Coffee, show teen-created videos at the plaza, etc.
- Add teen-friendly passive programming — swings, hammocks, chill spaces, arcades, lawn bowling, fire pits, etc.

ACTION STEP 5.2

Increase event programming

- Incorporate artist elements into existing events i.e., glitterize a car during the Cruise Nights
- Attract smaller or moderate sized events i.e., farmers market
- Encourage passive programming i.e., plaza games, etc.
- Ensure one large event each quarter cruise night , west fest– need 2 more
- Participate in the Chamber marketing programs such as Crafts and Drafts Passport, Paw Crawl, Coffee Crawl, etc.

ACTION STEP 5.3

Develop pet-friendly spaces and programs

- Introduce Pet programs/events — i.e., Halloween dog costume competition

ACTION STEP 5.4

Develop professional event amenities

- Build an amphitheater/stage for performances with professional acoustics, lighting, and seating amenities
- Build celebration spaces that community members can rent out for personal or group events like weddings, birthdays, parties, etc.

ACTION STEP 6.1

Strengthen Neighborhoods and create sense of community

- Infuse neighborhood with creative expressions such as painted sidewalks or poems/art stamped into the sidewalk
- Create a group exercise space:
- Exercise routes
- Tai Chi, Zumba classes
- Marked paths or loops with distance markers
- Keep the neighborhood strong with shared amenity spaces i.e: community, meeting spaces etc.

ACTION STEP 6.5

Create new gems to uncover

- Use artistic surprise elements in facades, pavement, alleys, corners
- Add whimsy, surprise and pedestrian artful engagement along Sheyenne such as swings, merry-go-rounds

Placemaking underscores the importance of community input and alignment with the city's identity and heritage. The key action steps encompass various strategies, including increasing foot traffic, implementing pedestrian-friendly features, creating innovative wayfinding solutions, and reconnecting with the Sheyenne River. They also emphasize the creation of photo-worthy spots and memory-making locations, the development of family-friendly and pet-friendly spaces, and the addition of professional event amenities. Furthermore, this goal encourages the strengthening of neighborhoods and the cultivation of a strong sense of community through creative expressions and shared amenity spaces. It also promotes the infusion of artistic surprise elements and pedestrian artful engagement to add whimsy creating an engaging, and distinctive destination that resonates with the community's vision and values.

Goal 2: Business and Economic Development (Chapter 4)

Attract and retain businesses, visitors and residents that seek innovative enterprise and contribute to economic vitality.

In pursuit of its transformation into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly district, a comprehensive analysis of the local business and retail landscape was undertaken. This evaluation pinpoints areas where businesses are lacking and proposes strategies for their attraction. The analysis took into account two critical facets: the overall shopping experience and the appeal of the merchants.

In the Downtown Yards, a mix of long-established businesses and recent developments serve both adjacent neighborhoods and newer residents. The area is currently dominated by health and professional services, with retail and restaurants accounting for a smaller portion of businesses. However, to better meet the needs of its primary audience—young families and professionals seeking eateries, budget-friendly shopping, and entertainment—the Downtown Yards must foster growth in:

- retail diversity
- attracting young families and professionals
- calibrating residential density to provide on-going support to the local businesses

The resulting key action steps:

ACTION STEP 1.5

Expand Retail and Business Diversity Downtown:

- The goal is to create a more cohesive and branded retail environment to expand the trade area and draw in more visitors.
- Currently, a quarter of the commercial space is designated for retail and restaurants. Promoting temporary leases, especially in vacant stores to activate the space with pop-up stores for different seasons.
- Introducing incubator and maker spaces to foster innovation.
- Arranging Vendor Tuesdays and providing plug-and-play infrastructure for outdoor vendors.
- West Fargo's competitive advantages include its growing population, youthfulness, diversity, incentives, economic development support, and a cost-effective business environment.
- Update regulations to require ground-level storefronts along Sheyenne frontage with less opaque glass that showcase engaging spaces that enhance the street-level experience.

Challenges include lower-income residents, daily out-migration, lack of historic character, uncertain market dynamics, the absence of memorable photo spots, and a need for destination draw.

ACTION STEP 3.5

Leverage and Amplify Existing and Regional Events and Programs:

- Events should play a pivotal role in enhancing retail sales while closely collaborating with local merchants. Events should be designed to draw visitors into stores.
- Connecting marketing and programming to other cultural destinations in downtown Fargo, The Lights, Big Iron Event, Bonanzaville, etc.
- Connecting marketing and programming to existing sports tourism opportunities like athletic fields, the Olympic pool, and the rec center.
- The focus should be on businesses catering to young families, pets and professionals, including food, entertainment, and personal services. This approach will help distinguish and establish the Downtown Yards as a unique destination with its own identity and appeal.
- Events should enhance retail sales and collaborate closely with merchants.

ACTION STEP 5.5

Promote The Downtown Yards:

- Synchronized operating hours among businesses, especially restaurants, can enhance local commerce.
- A cohesive downtown brand and collective marketing platform are needed.
- A blogger or social media influencer could boost the area's online presence.

ACTION STEP 6.2

Develop Champions within Business and City Leadership:

- Consider hiring a "Downtown and Small Business Coordinator" to support downtown businesses.
- Re-establish the Downtown Yards Business Association
 - Restructure PAAC as a Downtown Placemaking and Vibrancy Committee (DPVC) with budget and/or ability to make and implement specific recommendations from the plan.
- Partner with local organizations and institutions to offer entrepreneurship programs and mentorship.
- Collaborate among local government, businesses, residents, and community organizations.

- Initiating a champion program to lead various initiatives, provide resources, and define mission/vision/milestones for each.
- Developing Public Art Policies, creating a review process for the Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC), and identifying funding sources.
- Incentivize programs through Economic Development Advisory Committee to encourage more retail, encourage adaptive reuse, especially business incubator spaces.
- Make select edits to DMU through Planning & Zoning Commission for:
 - Ground-floor business frontage/activity requirements for Sheyenne Street frontage
 - Prohibit non-urban uses (drive-thru's, non-food/drink/retail uses, self-storage, etc.)

These recommendations are strategically designed to elevate the business activity downtown and will require coordination for future sustainability like harmonizing with pre-existing events, executing effective promotional efforts, and nurturing capable leadership and support structures. The plan duly acknowledges the growth potential stemming from population expansion, emphasizing the pivotal role of differentiation, administrative backing, and strategic branding in the realization of a vibrant and enduring downtown district.

Goal 3: Pedestrians, Parking and Access (Chapter 5)

This chapter elaborates Goal #3: Provide accessibility and parking options that foster walkability, pedestrian safety and enhance the public realm.

Crucial issues identified through public input related to traffic and pedestrian safety, parking, and access to businesses in downtown West Fargo. The chapter emphasizes the complexity of these issues and highlights the need for a multifaceted approach for addressing them. The overarching goal in this plan, is to enhance pedestrian safety, walkability, accessibility, and parking solutions to transform Downtown Yards into a pedestrian-friendly hub with a reputation for safety and accessibility. The resulting key action steps:

ACTION STEP 2.1

Address Pedestrian Safety along Sheyenne and Transition from Neighborhoods:

- Prioritize investments to connect Armour Park to Sheyenne Street and the surrounding neighborhoods while ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- Create protected bike lanes separated from vehicular traffic, encouraging safe cycling along Sheyenne and connecting to bike lanes and trails

beyond the study area.

- Develop an area map of points of interest and connected sidewalks/trails for easy access and updating.
- Install safety lighting, sidewalks– see Chapter 5 for more details and recommendations.

ACTION STEP 2.2

Address Pedestrian Safety across Sheyenne and Main:

- Improve street lighting at crosswalks and pedestrian-heavy areas for nighttime visibility.
- Implement traffic-calming measures like speed bumps, raised crosswalks, and curb extensions to reduce vehicle speeds in pedestrian zones.
- Ensure well-maintained sidewalks and clearly marked crosswalks, along with pedestrian-activated traffic signals at crosswalks.
- Install bollards to block off Sheyenne for pedestrianization, explore crosswalk improvements, and create a safety education and awareness program.

ACTION STEP 2.5

Address Parking Concerns:

- Address the perception of insufficient parking through a marketing campaign.
- Promote and incentivize shared parking on private lots.
- Design and install standardized parking signage for clear and consistent instructions.
- Launch a public education campaign to inform residents and visitors about available parking options.
- Pilot a campaign to encourage walking in the Downtown Yards and require new developments to include underground parking and space for deliveries.
- Build a public parking deck and establish fee-in-lieu of parking program. Revenue from fees may help offset City's public transit & public parking costs. See Chapter 5 for Future Parking Recommendations.

ACTION STEP 2.6

Provide Pedestrian-Oriented Interactions:

- Enhance pedestrian safety through creative traffic calming and pedestrianization installations.

- Implement various elements, including chicanes with art, interactive crosswalks, speed tables with public art, temporary parklets, play streets, raised pedestrian crossings, decorative bollards, sculptural speed humps, bike lanes with art, colorful crosswalks, and effective wayfinding systems.

These strategies aim to comprehensively address the challenges related to traffic, pedestrian safety, accessibility, and parking in Downtown West Fargo. The goal is to create a safe, welcoming, and accessible downtown environment that attracts residents and visitors. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives, along with collecting accident data and user input, will be essential for continuous improvement. Bridging the gap between perception and reality is crucial for the success and vibrancy of Downtown Yards.

Goal 4: Infill, Density and Redevelopment (Chapter 6)

This Chapter elaborates Goal #4: Connect and strengthen the downtown assets by redeveloping underutilized or vacant spaces and calibrate intensity of development to create a thriving mix-of uses.

Overall, this chapter provides a comprehensive roadmap for infill, density, and redevelopment, addressing the need for diverse housing options, commercial revitalization, and the creation of vibrant, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods within the Downtown Yards area. The resulting key action steps:

ACTION STEP 4.1

Adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings & sites

- Develop policies to support remodeling of unused buildings and sites
- Provide a list of projects the city would like to attract and promote it to potential developers
 - Create a civic campus in exiting underutilize building or vacant site
 - Establishing an employment center with co-working spaces
- Incentives and support property owners and developers to repurpose these buildings for a mix of uses.
- Provide financial assistance:
 - Partner with a local bank to offer low interest construction loans
 - Rescope the existing Renaissance, Revitalization and Enterprise Programs to provide funds for renovating exiting old stock homes and conversion of commercial properties to new uses
 - Provide tax breaks or deferral of tax breaks
 - Provide Zoning flexibility, density bonuses
 - Provide technical assistance adaptive reuse projects such as partnering with business mentors, contractors or designers

- City may need to allocate funds for property acquisition to facilitate redevelopment

ACTION STEP 6.6

Maintain Existing Housing Stock

- Establish and promote Residential Home Renovation Program or incentives for upgrades
- Partner with financial organizations to provide forgivable loans for homeowners if they live in the home for 5 years for upgrades such as kitchens, driveways, etc.
- Offer remodel-to-own programs that do not require typical 30-year mortgage, but allow potential homeowners to remodel old stock home and be able to purchase the home at a discount after certain terms/criteria are met.
- Work with area electric and gas companies for energy efficiency audits and improvements.

ACTION STEP 6.7

Increase Housing Options

- Expand Middle Housing options;
 - Provide a Transitional Areas that offer range of graduated densities
 - Allow a more scaled transition from Sheyenne Multi-family mixed use high rises to single family homes by adding middle identity such as 2-4-6 plexes and townhomes.
 - Allow mixing of housing types within R-1, R-2 and R-3
 - Increase density in residential zoning districts to accommodate growth.
- Consider zoning overlays to provide more zoning flexibility in R-1 to R-3 zoning districts.
- Adjust residential zoning districts to accommodate smaller, higher-density homes, townhomes, and multiplexes.
- Revise regulations to allow for smaller setbacks, lot size and heights to promote infill development.

The success of this plan hinges on collaborative efforts between city officials, property owners, developers, and the community; the revitalization of existing structure, promotion of tax incentives, zoning flexibility that maximizes the use of underutilized assets; the preservation of stable single-family neighborhoods and zoning adjustments to allow for smaller, higher-density homes; increasing housing choices by modifying zoning districts to allow greater density, mixed housing types in same district and flexible development options.



CHAPTER 1

ENGAGEMENT



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: PHASE 1

Purpose and Goal

Public involvement is key in building consensus and creating a broadly supported plan for the future of downtown West Fargo.

The purpose of outreach and engagement was to engage the public in unique ways to meet the project goals.

1. Ensure that project information was available to the public in a clear, and effective manner.
2. Gather meaningful feedback from stakeholders.
3. Ensure that stakeholder questions and concerns were heard and addressed.
4. Document the progress and effectiveness of engagement efforts.

The goal was to collect as many comments as possible through online surveys, online interactive map and in person public meeting. Through August 2023, nearly 300 comments were received and analyzed.

Methods of Engagement

Following is a summary of the engagement strategies used for the West Fargo Downtown Placemaking Master Plan.

COMMISSION, COMMITTEE AND FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

The project team engaged existing city commissions and committees as well as formed a Steering Committee and two focus groups. Following is a summary of those meetings and engagement activities:

- Steering Committee meetings (4)
- Residential and Business Focus Group meetings (3)
- Public Art Advisory Committee meetings (4)

GENERAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The project team engaged the general public through pop-ups, community meetings, and online surveys.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Online engagement is an efficient way to gather information about project concerns and to learn more about the project area and the audience involved. The project team used online forms, surveys, and an interactive comment map. A summary of engagement activities can be found in Appendix #1.

Communications

Communicating events and project updates to the public are essential to engagement success. The project team used the city's branding with consistent messaging to develop materials and distribute information about the project in order to maximize opportunities to provide input.

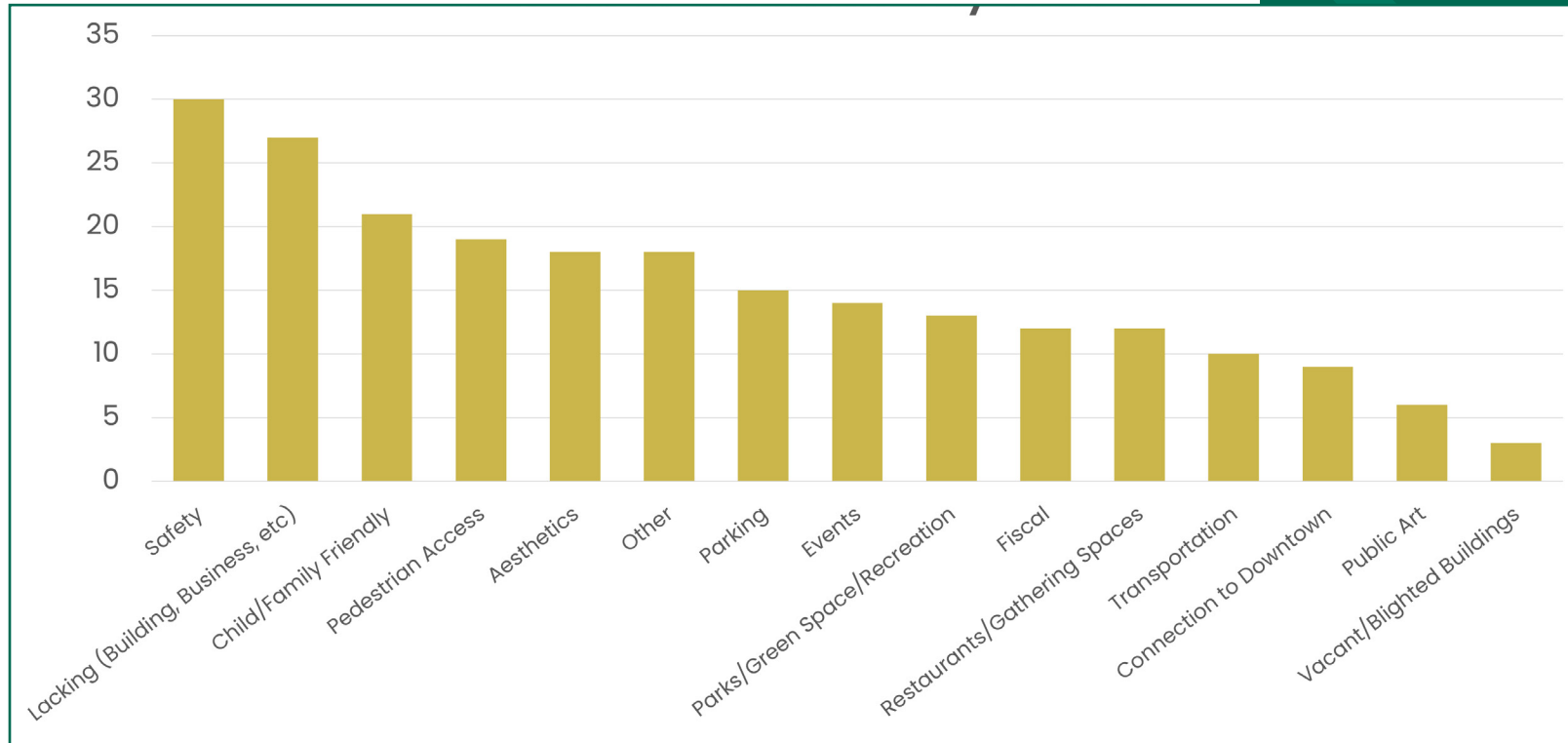
Respondents

We engaged a variety of people in different venues including residents, businesses and city staff, officials and committee members. We received over **237** comments through in person engagement and INPUTiD (interactive survey software). Another 56 people responded to the online survey.

What we heard: Issues & Opportunities

The comments were compiled into a spreadsheet and analyzed. Common themes emerged that allowed grouping the comments for further analysis at a quantitative level. The following chart shows the number of comments by theme.

Figure 2. Number of Comments by Type



Summary of recurring comments:

- Don't try and be like the Lights or rest of West Fargo or even downtown Fargo — be unique
- You have assets like the aquatic center, library, and fairgrounds — but they are not woven together to support each other
- You have history, but it is not showcased — embrace it, tell it
- Hidden gems are too hidden — unhide them (e.g., diner, floral shop)
- Needs to be a destination — neighbors alone not enough to support business district
- Needs more density of people — housing, hotel, restaurants, etc. for foot traffic
- Lacking pet-friendly and kid-friendly spaces

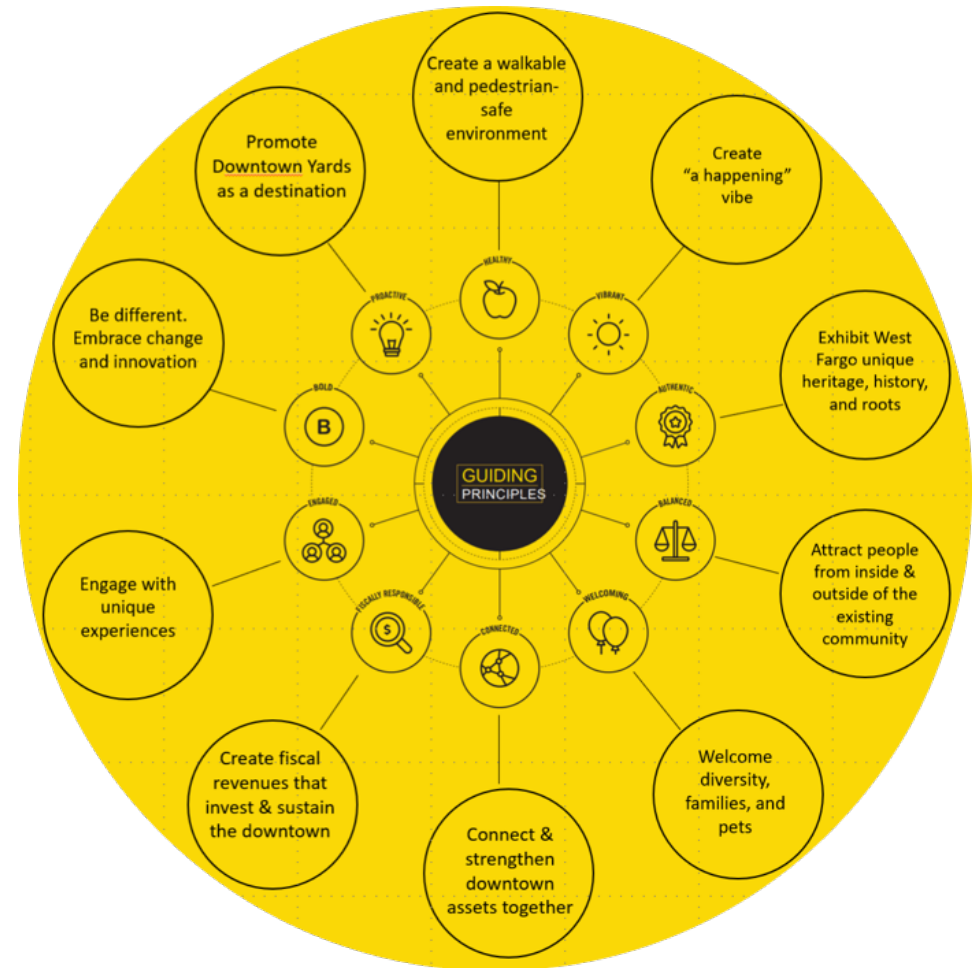
How we are using what we've heard

Public input was used to develop a mission and vision statement for the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan as well as more specific actions.

Based on the Steering Committee and Focus Group input, the following 10 Guiding Principles (outer circle) emerged from the Comprehensive Plan (inner circle) but developed to be specific to the Downtown Yards:

1. Promote the Downtown Yards as a destination
2. Create a walkable and pedestrian safe environment
3. Create a "dynamic" place
4. Exhibit West Fargo unique heritage, history & roots
5. Attract people inside and outside the existing community
6. Welcome diversity, families, and pets
7. Connect & strengthen downtown assets together
8. Create fiscal revenues that invest & sustain the downtown
9. Engage with unique experiences
10. Be different, embrace change and innovation

Figure 3. Guiding Principles



Vision:

The Downtown Yards is a cultural destination surrounded by a vibrant and growing community.

Mission:

We will invest in the Downtown Yards, enhance the pedestrian environment, and cultivate authentic and creative places.

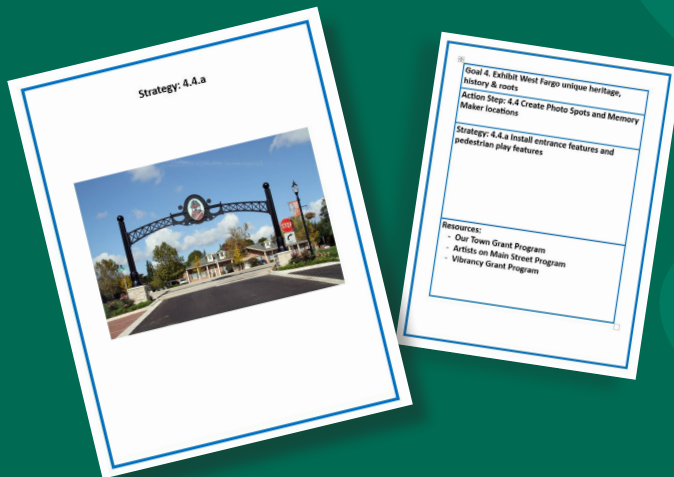
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: PHASE 2

Present ideas and strategies for public feedback

IDENTIFY STRATEGIES

In July and August, a draft mission and vision statement that was prepared based on input from Phase 1 were shared to seek feedback from the committee members. During Steering Committee Workshop #2, minor tweaks to the draft mission and vision statement were proposed.

At workshop #3, the 117 ideas were vetted by the Steering Committee and Focus Group for suitability and viability for the Downtown Yards yielding top action steps for each goal.



At workshop #4, the top placemaking concepts were selected by the Steering Committee. While the location and specifics of ideas may vary slightly depending on implementation constraints, the overriding point is that downtown vibrancy relies on the accomplishment of **these key goals which serve as the community approved checklist** when evaluating any decision for both public and private investment.

They then determined if the idea was implemented, if it would have a high or low level of impact on improving the downtown area and if it would take a high or low level of efforts. Going through this flashcard game identified areas where there was consensus and helped prioritize with the biggest impact. Those with the lowest level of effort could be easily pursued, while those with higher level of effort may take more resources to realize.

This exercise narrowed down the list to around 50 strategies which was used to create a survey for greater public input to further refine the recommendations and strategies included in this master plan.

ARTIST SELECTION AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

In July, the Public Art Advisory Commission met to select nine artists to develop concepts for art at three locations in the downtown area:

- Main & Sheyenne (North) Entrance Feature
- Sheyenne Street Pedestrian Engagement
- 7th & Sheyenne (South) Entrance Feature

The artists had a month to sketch concepts for one of these areas. In August, the Public Art Advisory Commission met twice to receive a presentation by the artists of their ideas and then to decide which three artists would best fit with the mission and vision of the West Fargo Downtown Yards.

Photo of Workshop Attendees



At the August Focus Group, attendees brainstormed fun slogans:

- The "other downtown"
- A Downtown on the Grow
- Not the Lights
- The Backyard
- West Fargo Nice
- West Fargo, Best Fargo
- Keep West Fargo Free
- Do it at the Yards

Present final plan for final review and city approval

In September, the refined and prioritized list of strategies and the proposed artists and art concepts were presented to the Steering Committee, Planning Commission and City Commission. The Steering Committee also confirmed the overall goals for the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan. They were posted on the website and communicated to the general public. The public had an opportunity to provide final comments for the city commissioners consideration prior to adoption.

Figure 4 (right) are the 4 goals containing the top 22 action steps that the public voted as the most impactful and worthwhile pursuing for the downtown.

Top Action Steps by Goal >30%, >40% & >50% Votes

	Goal #1: Placemaking	Goal #2: Business & Economic Development	Goal #3: Pedestrians, Parking, & Access	Goal #4: Infill, Density & Redevelopment
>50%	4.3 Reconnect with the River 4.4 Create Photo Spots and Memory Maker locations 5.1 Develop Family Friendly spaces and programs 5.2 Increase event programming 5.3 Develop pet-friendly spaces and programs 5.4 Develop professional event amenities 6.1 Strengthen Neighborhoods and create sense of community	1.5 Expand retail and types of businesses downtown 3.5: Leverage and amplify existing and regional events and programs	2.1 Address Pedestrian Safety along Sheyenne and transition from neighborhoods 2.5 Address Parking Concerns 2.6 Provide pedestrian-oriented interactions	4.1 Adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and sites 6.6 Maintain existing housing stock
>40%	6.5 Create new gems to uncover	5.5 Promote The Downtown Yards 6.2 Develop champions within business and city leadership	2.2 Address Pedestrian safety across Main	
>30%	3.1 Increase activity and foot traffic 3.3 Implement pedestrian play features along Sheyenne 3.4 Connect Points of Interest through Creative Wayfinding			6.7 Increase Housing Options

Figure 5. Translating Public Input into Goals and Action Steps



Final and Top 4 Goals:

GOAL #1: PLACEMAKING Make the Downtown Yards a vibrant place that displays West Fargo's heritage, and character that offers engaging experiences for all ages and families.	GOAL #2: BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Attract and retain businesses, visitors, and residents that seek innovative enterprise and contribute to the economic vitality.	GOAL #3: PEDESTRIANS, PARKING & ACCESS Provide accessibility and parking options that foster walkability, pedestrian safety, and enhance the public realm.	GOAL #4: INFILL, DENSITY & REDEVELOPMENT Connect and strengthen the downtown assets by redeveloping underutilized or vacant spaces and calibrate intensity of development to create a thriving mix of uses.
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CHAPTER 2

EXISTING CONDITIONS

BACKGROUND

Scope

The City of West Fargo is creating a master plan for the downtown area and nearby neighborhoods. The goal of the master plan is to establish the downtown as a cultural destination with a distinct and unique character that pays homage to its heritage.

The data analysis in this report will be used as a rational basis in formulating and justifying strategies for the Downtown Yards. Each section highlights key facts, a conclusive finding which signals forthcoming strategies for the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan.

City Origin

West Fargo began as a railroad “whistle stop” called Haggart, named after the eventual sheriff and North Dakota senator who traveled from New York to claim the land where the Northern Pacific Railway met the Sheyenne River. It took almost 60 years for today’s West Fargo to emerge. First came the Village of West Fargo incorporated north of what is now Main Avenue in 1930, followed closely by the Village of Southwest Fargo which became the City of West Fargo in 1967. In turn, the original village became the West Fargo Industrial Park, which residents renamed as the City of Riverside. Riverside joined West Fargo in 1989.

- **SETTLEMENT AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT.** The area where West Fargo is now located was originally settled by European immigrants in the late 1870s. These early settlers were primarily of German and Scandinavian descent and were drawn to the fertile land and agricultural opportunities. They established farms and began cultivating the land, primarily focusing on wheat and other cereal crops.
- **RAILROAD HUB.** The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railway in the 1880s played a crucial role in the growth and development of West Fargo. The railroad established a depot in the area, making West Fargo an important transportation hub for the region. This facilitated the transportation of agricultural products and led to increased settlement and economic activity.
- **INCORPORATION AND GROWTH.** West Fargo was officially incorporated as a city on October 31, 1926. By this time, the community had experienced significant growth, with a growing population and expanding businesses. The city’s strategic location along the railroad and its proximity to the larger cities of Fargo and Moorhead contributed to its continued development.

- **WEST FARGO’S HISTORY** is intertwined with the existence of two separate communities. In the 1930s, residents residing on the North side of Main Avenue sought incorporation as the Village of West Fargo. Their incorporation was successful in 1931, but it excluded the residents living to the South of Main Avenue. Consequently, in 1937, those residents formed the Village of Southwest Fargo.
- **POST-WORLD WAR II BOOM.** Following World War II, West Fargo, like many other American cities, experienced a period of rapid growth and expansion. The availability of land for residential development and the increasing demand for housing led to the construction of new neighborhoods and the establishment of modern amenities and services.
- Due to the rapid growth of Southwest Fargo, an agreement was reached in 1967 to rename it the City of West Fargo, while the original village of West Fargo became the City of West Fargo Industrial Park. However, the residents of West Fargo Industrial Park felt that the name did not reflect their community, leading them to choose the name Riverside in 1974.
- **TWO CITIES MERGE** to Form Current Day West Fargo. The unification of West Fargo as it is known today occurred in 1989 when the cities of Riverside and West Fargo merged, bringing together nearly a century of separate entities into one cohesive West Fargo.
- **REDEVELOPMENT AND LEGACY.** The Downtown Yards is the current Downtown Placemaking Master Plan area of study and has undergone redevelopment efforts in recent years. In 2016, the City conducted a parking analysis which ultimately led to the 2021 reconstruction of Sheyenne to a two-lane road with angle parking on each side. The City also created a Mixed-Use Downtown zoning district to promote a walkable downtown. Today, it has transformed into a mixed-use area, featuring a blend of commercial, residential, and recreational spaces.
- **THE YARDS**, also known as the West Fargo Union Stockyards in West Fargo, North Dakota, holds historical significance as a former meatpacking and livestock processing facility. The Yards was established in the early 1900s as a meatpacking plant and livestock market. It was strategically located near the railroad tracks, allowing for efficient transportation of livestock and processed meat products. By the 1970s was the tenth largest livestock market in the United States.

Over time, the meatpacking industry went through changes and faced challenges, including shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancements, and increased competition. In 1999 the packing plant closed its doors. The facility provided auction services and played a vital role in supporting the region's agricultural economy. It also employed many workers who contributed to the local economy and the overall meatpacking industry in the area. The historical significance of the site and its meatpacking heritage are important to recognize, preserve and celebrate. Presently, West Fargo stands as one of the fastest growing cities in North Dakota. From a modest population of 707 residents in 1940, it has experienced remarkable growth, surpassing 30,000 residents by 2016 and 40,000 by 2022. This exponential growth has solidified West Fargo's reputation as a "City on the Grow," reflecting its dynamic and vibrant character.

DEMOGRAPHICS & CONDITIONS

West Fargo has seen incredible growth. Just from **2010 to 2022 the population grew 57.2%** (4.77% /year) (25,830 to 40,601) and from **2020 to 2022 another 5.1%** (2.55%/year) (38,626 to 40,601). The City is forecasted to grow to a population of 43,091 people by 2027. The downtown study area includes 1.4% of the City of West Fargo's population. As of 2022, West Fargo's population is 40,601, however the Downtown Yards study area has a population of 578 residents. In many ways the downtown residents are similar to the rest of the city, but there are some key differentiators such as having a higher rate of disabilities, higher unemployment, lower household income and lower rent and home values.

The City population dips by nearly a quarter during the daytime. There are multiple aspects that can lead to a daily migration like this, but one key reason is people leaving the City for work. **Providing employment opportunities, goods, services and events is one way to retain and attract people, specifically during the daytime and weekdays.**

The population of West Fargo is largely auto oriented. Research shows that 84 % of workers travel to work via car; very few if any walk, bike or take public transit to get to work. There is a notable lack of public transportation utilization in the study area that could be due to limited location and frequency of public transportation service and stops within the area. Considerable investment has been made by the City of West Fargo in the downtown reconstruction of Sheyenne and Main Ave (intersection) to provide better sidewalks and areas for people to bike and walk, however, few people do so **while the investment into multi-modal lanes is still lacking, the interface of cars and pedestrians will need to be addressed and mitigated.**

Figure 6. 2022 Population: West Fargo

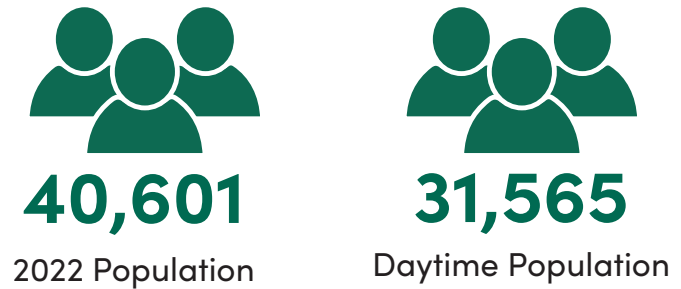


Figure 7. Persons with Disabilities: Study Area



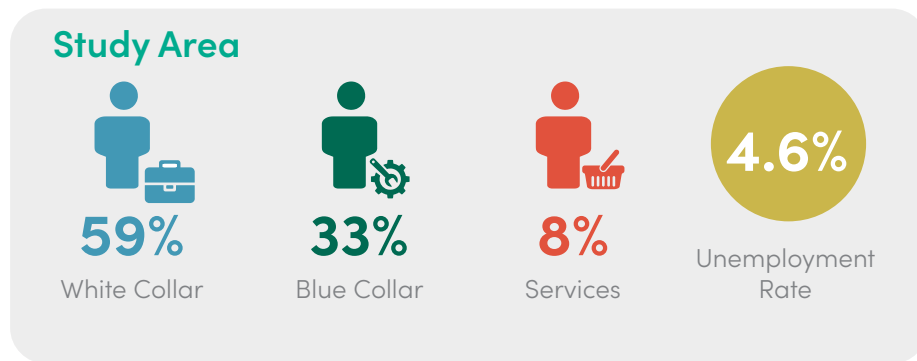
Higher education is lower in the study area than in the rest of the City. Fewer residents have attended college or received a post-secondary degree and generally hold "blue collar" jobs. Unemployment in the area is generally higher than the rest of the City. This may lead to overall lower household salaries and less disposable income for local economic activity.

It will be important to attract businesses that provide goods and services as well as jobs that the downtown residents can use and support, in addition to those catering to visitors outside the study area.

The study area has a significantly higher level of poverty and households receiving food stamps than the rest of the City. While the commercial areas of the downtown have shown growth in the last decade, new development that caters to higher-end retail and services focused on disposable income, rather than basic goods and services, does not serve the existing downtown area population. For example, the downtown is considered a food desert for its lack of grocery stores and fresh food outlets.

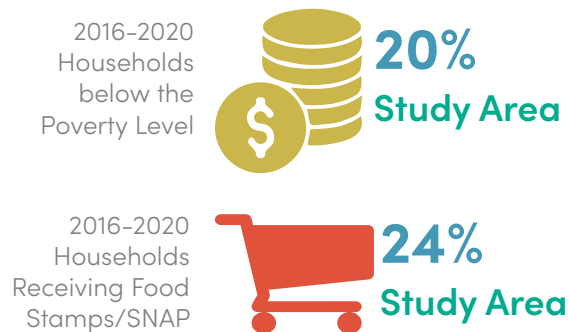
There is a local need for reasonably priced grocery store. It will be important to refocus services and good to better align with local incomes.¹

Figure 8. Study Area Employment



¹ A food desert area has a poverty rate of at least 20%. In urban areas, at least 33% of the population lives more than 1 mile from the nearest grocery store. Tract 38017010203 in Cass County, North Dakota includes part of the study area and is considered low income. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas>

Figure 9. Poverty Level: West Fargo versus Study Area



The study area has 499 households, of which 193 (38.7%) are rentals. The average rent in the study area is lower than that of the City as a whole. While the recently built apartment buildings have rents (closer to \$1,000 to \$1,550 per month commensurate with the rest of the city) may attract new residents, it may not provide a housing option for existing downtown residents.

As the City looks at adding housing to the downtown area, it will be important to provide a range of housing options and consider remodel and rental incentives to sustain the rental population, and rehabilitation of older stock properties.

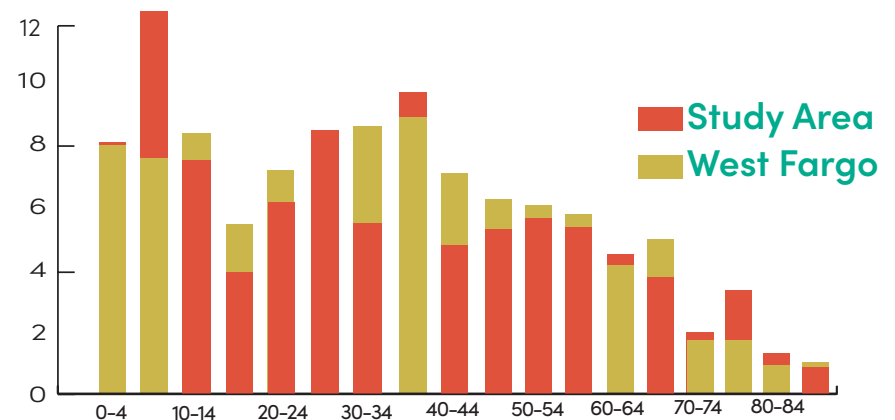
The median home value in the downtown area is two-thirds that of the median value of the rest of the City. This can be appealing to younger families looking for affordable, starter homes with disposable incomes that can renovate and update the homes.

Median Household Income for West Fargo: \$83,083
Median Household Income for Study Area: \$56,787

The overall study area age group is young. The largest age groups are in the 25-29 and 35-39 age range with a surging cohort is under 9 years old. This presents a need for more family focused uses in the short term and more young adult needs in the long term. The study area has a large concentrations of young families as can be seen by the high number of those in the 5-9 age group and the higher percentage of those in the 35-39 group. There is a emerging cohort of children under 5 years old within or adjacent to the study area with **four (4) early education schools** with a collective enrollment of 925 students for the 2022-23 academic year.

Creating a welcoming, safe, family and pet-friendly environment with appropriate activities that meet the local needs of the downtown will be valuable.

Figure 10. Age Distributions: West Fargo versus Study Area



Race and ethnicity is largely white within both the City and the study area, with slightly higher numbers of Black, Native American and Asian residents the study area.

Downtown could benefit from attracting people from beyond its boundaries by becoming a welcoming and inclusive destination.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The City and its surroundings offer noteworthy environmental features and resources that contribute to the overall quality of life in the area including the Sheyenne River, Red River Valley and several wildlife management areas and North Dakota's larger state natural resources.

West Fargo's downtown area does not have extensive natural resources; however, it does have several small open spaces and a mature tree cover. One of the concerns the City has is the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer on many of the ash trees that line the streets and sidewalks in the residential area surrounding downtown.

Additionally, West Fargo is situated in the Red River Valley, which is known for its fertile soils. Agriculture plays a significant role in the region's economy, and the rich soil supports the growth of various crops, including wheat, corn, soybeans, and sugar beets. The agricultural resources in the area contribute to the local food production, and farmers markets often showcase the fresh produce and products from the surrounding rural areas.

At a smaller scale, the local neighborhood parks are a great asset to downtown. Other smaller parks in the area include Riverside Park north of Main Avenue and Veterans Memorial Pool and Tintes Park which are just over a quarter mile from the study area.

Sheyenne River

One of the main natural resources in the West Fargo downtown area is the Sheyenne River; however, it is not very prominent or featured within the downtown area. The Sheyenne River is a tributary of the Red River and flows throughout a large part of West Fargo. In fact, it is the largest surface water resource in the City. The river provides opportunities for recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and kayaking, allowing residents and visitors to connect with nature and enjoy the scenic beauty of the river.

The river is closest to the study area at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue, but the downtown area is largely disconnected from the Sheyenne River with the only visible part running along Main Avenue. The North Dakota Department of Transportation has plans to fix the riverbank between Main Avenue and the river; this would be a good opportunity for natural restoration or artistic swales as potential activation of the Main Avenue frontage to Armour Park.



Photo of Sheyenne River

Armour Park

Armour Park is a passive recreational area located on the north side of the study area that is only accessible through a neighborhood to the west of the park. The park is not maintained during the winter for outdoor snow or ice related activities. There is a lack of connection from downtown to Armour Park and the river as well as from the residential neighborhoods to the north. The park lacks lighting and covered shelters for use outside daytime hours and poor weather.



Photo of Armour Park – source West Fargo Park District

The Wind

In downtown West Fargo as through much of North Dakota, wind is a notable natural feature that influences the local environment and everyday life. The wind in downtown West Fargo is primarily influenced by the region's geographical features and climate patterns. The city is situated on a relatively flat terrain, which allows the wind to flow across the area without significant obstructions. Furthermore, the absence of tall buildings in the downtown area means there are fewer barriers impeding the movement of the wind. The prevailing wind direction in the region is from the northwest, driven by weather systems and atmospheric conditions. This wind flow pattern is often referred to as the "North Dakota wind," and it can be quite strong at times. The consistent presence of wind in West Fargo contributes to the area's unique climate, characterized by dry conditions and fluctuating temperatures throughout the year.

The wind in downtown West Fargo has both positive and negative impacts on the local community. On the positive side, the strong winds help to keep the air clean and fresh, aiding in the dispersal of pollutants and enhancing overall air quality. The wind can also provide natural ventilation, making outdoor activities more enjoyable during warm summer months.

However, the wind's strength and consistency can also present challenges. It can cause dust storms and reduce visibility, especially during periods of dry weather or when agricultural fields are being tilled. The wind can make outdoor activities more challenging, such as biking or walking, as it may create resistance and affect comfort levels. Additionally, the wind can contribute to a higher rate of evaporation, which can impact gardening, agriculture, and water usage.

The wind can be capitalized as an asset. Various kinetic and acoustical (sound pies) sculptural elements can be installed. The use of windbreaks structures and strategically placed trees can minimize the wind's impact on public spaces and personal comfort. The wind is a significant natural element downtown and should be celebrated while providing safety and comfort.

PLANNING AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Past Plans

The City of West Fargo has performed past studies, assembled plans, and created programs to better guide the City. These plans have been analyzed and key themes have been identified. See Appendix 3: Audit Matrix.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- The Comprehensive Plan notes industrial village in the northwest section of the City, which is essentially where downtown is
- Downtown noted as G-4A Core - Retrofit Growth Sector with an illustrated plan for the Downtown Area
- Suggestion and recommendations in Comp Plan for establishing the downtown area as a cultural center with a unique sense of place
- Average daily car trips are lower on Sheyenne than on Main Street
- Comprehensive Plan notes Public Transport does not go downtown

Furthermore, the Comp Plan identifies the future of downtown as:

- A walkable district that connects existing neighborhoods. Home to a vibrant mix of uses centered on Sheyenne Street
- A place to create public/private partnerships to foster creative redevelopment, entrepreneurship, the arts, and unique businesses.
- A unique district that defines West Fargo's character.
- Several principles of good planning & design, especially targeted towards identified urban mixed
- Use nodes, such as downtown:
 - Walkability
 - Connectivity
 - Mixed-Use
 - Scale
 - Intensity
 - Hidden Parking

IMPROVEMENTS

- Original design of radial bump-outs envisioned a cultural identifier at the center, branding outside this and then a safety area on outer circle

FARGO/WEST FARGO PARKING & ACCESS STUDY

- Study made recommendations for Sheyenne street as a "Mixed Use Neighborhood" street which prioritizes pedestrian safety and comfort over the mobility of cars; recommendations for reduced marking minimums; and parking alternatives, such a fee-in-lieu of parking.

FARGO-MOORHEAD METRO BIKEWAYS GAP ANALYSIS

- Spurred thought about bike transit and circulation in the area
- Previous street diet won't allow for addition of bike lanes
- This analysis looked at specific areas that had issues that needed to be addressed rather than offering solutions to problems

GENERAL PLAN URBAN RENEWAL DEVELOPMENT

This plan identifies the downtown study area as an urban renewal/urban development area for purposes of eligibility for urban renewal in accordance with State urban renewal statutes, such as tax increment financing.

Zoning

The study area consists of a mixture of residential, commercial and public uses. Most of the Sheyenne Street frontage is zoned mixed use (Downtown Mixed Use, DMU) with Light Commercial and Public Use zoning along Main Avenue. The Downtown Mixed Use zoning district identifies the essence of the "placemaking" intent for the Downtown Yards and is described well in this quote (below) from the zoning code, Title IV, 4-434.

[Interactive Zoning Map link](#)

"....New development....should be encouraged to better meet the local goal of achieving more walkable and bikeable corridors and a better connected village core. should create and/or contribute to the character of a district that supports the City's goal of providing a cultural core of the community that creates a place residents come to gather and a place that is exciting to visit. ... should encourage civic pride, social and economic activity, and provide for a neighborhood that exemplifies the identity of West Fargo."

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The West Fargo Downtown Yards has unique assets that include physical, natural, cultural, social and economic features. The following discussion highlights assets that are relevant to the placemaking scope of this plan and identify qualities that will form the basis for recommendations.

Land Uses

Many uses in the study area are zoned general commercial compared to traditional retail uses that are found on a typical “Main Street”. General commercial is a broader land use category that includes retail, services, medical and dental offices, and offices as well as storage units, large equipment sales, and automotive repair shops, which are less compatible with a downtown vision that preferences a pedestrian-oriented boutique experience. Retail, which is more narrowly defined for the sale or rental of good and services for consumption, accounts for a small portion of the uses. Parcels along Main Avenue include Restaurant/Food service, Mixed use, Automotive, Place of Worship, Retail, and Industrial. The types of parcels that are on Sheyenne Street include Restaurant/Food service, Retail, Professional Services, Mixed use, City owned, Funeral services, medical office, Place of Worship, and Automotive.

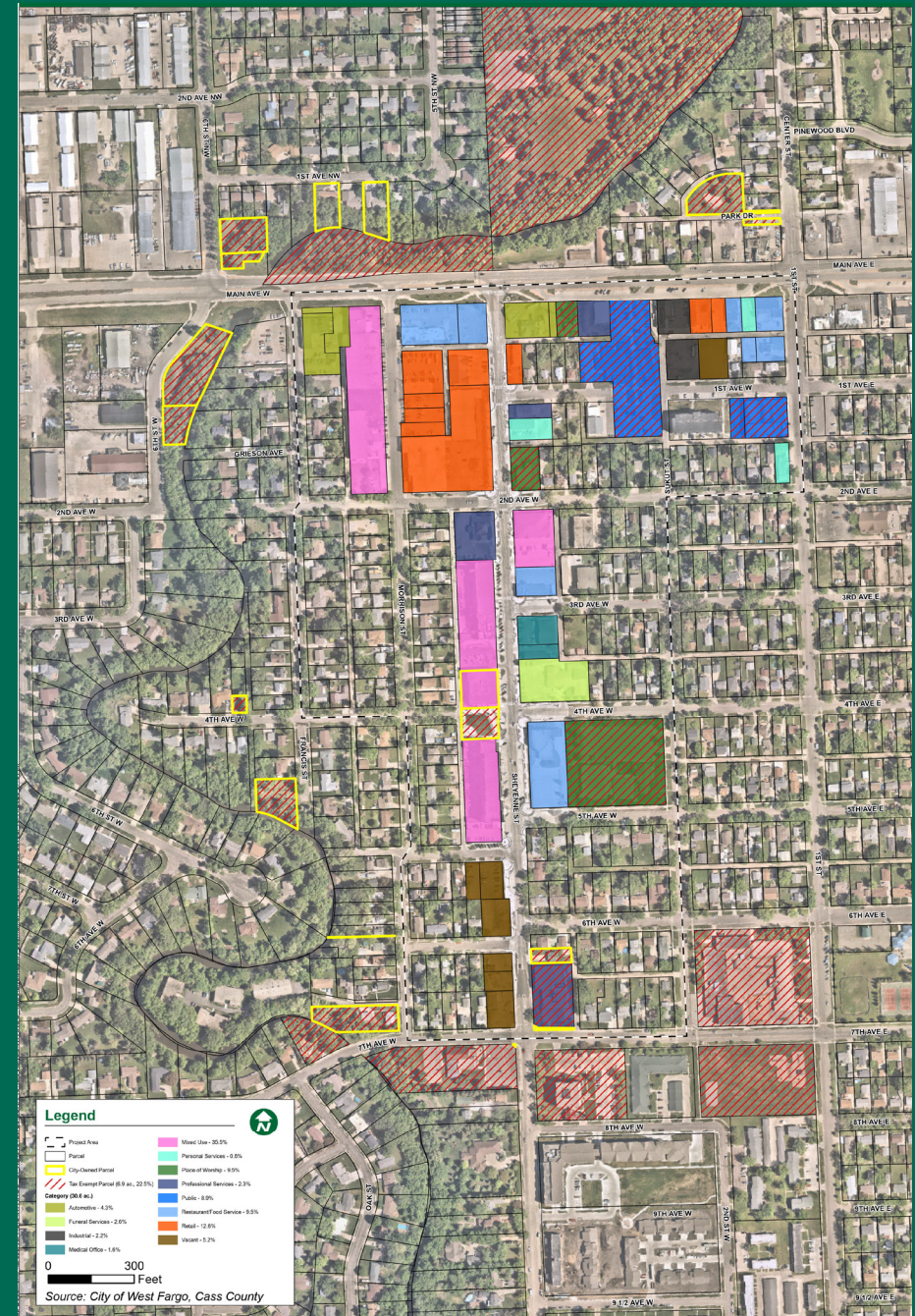
Businesses

Along Sheyenne and Main Avenue within the study area, businesses are made up of the following:

The Downtown has almost 100 businesses generating \$78,195,000 in sales revenues and employing close to 480 people¹.

Per **Figure 11. Existing Downtown Inventory** focuses on non-single family residential uses and shows 38% is Mixed Use, while the second largest percentage is at 13% for vacant land. In addition, 22.5% of the land in the study area is tax exempt and does not generate tax revenues.

Figure 11. Existing Downtown Inventory



¹Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Architecture and Aesthetics

Most of the businesses and developments in downtown West Fargo were built before 2010 and are of differing architectural styles.

Along the east side of Sheyenne, there are older buildings that are well maintained, such as the Flying Pig. There are other buildings that could improve the downtown aesthetic and sense of place with exterior maintenance to address poor conditions of parking lots, facades, awnings and little to no windows. There are also several vacant and blighted buildings at key locations in the downtown that are not inviting and may even create a sense of threat or danger.



Photo of Flying Pig Bar & Grill

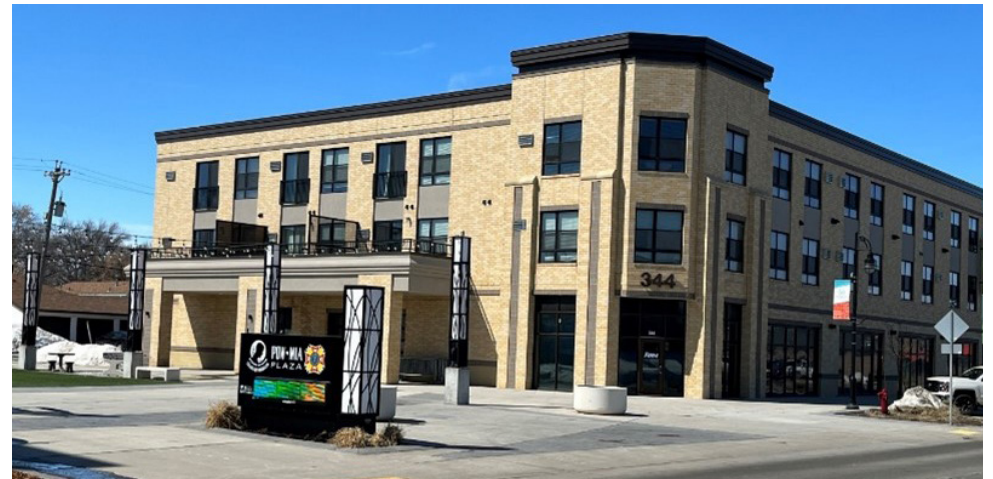


Photo of West Funeral Homes (left) & ConVerdia Health Staffing (right)



Photo of old Sooper Stop (vacant) at 7th and Sheyenne Streets

Three new buildings located along the west side of Sheyenne make up the heart of The Downtown Yards redevelopment. All of these buildings are mixed-use (DMU) and have been developed with commercial uses on the bottom floor. While most of the apartments are occupied, each of these buildings have vacant commercial space with blank windows which has a negative impact on the sense of vitality of the downtown area. The Firm has unleased commercial spaces despite the city offering a \$100,000 “fit up incentive.”



Example of predominant contemporary architecture of newer buildings on West side of Sheyenne



Photo of POW/MIA Plaza



Photo of Pioneer Place

Housing

The study area is home to a population of 578 that represents 299 households and live in 499 housing units (all types: apartments, mobile home, single-family, twin homes and two-family duplexes) of which 193 are rental units¹.

The secondary study area has a variety of residential zoning with homes that are largely from the mid-twentieth century. Zoning in the study area allows mostly Multiple Dwelling (R-3: more than 8 units), Limited Multiple Dwellings (R-2: no more than 8 units, (R-1: one- and two-family dwellings), R-1A (detached single-family dwelling and a small portion dedicated to Planned Unit Development zoning (PUD). Single-family homes on lots that are less than half an acre makes up a large portion of the dwelling types. Duplexes

and small apartment buildings are scattered but closer to Sheyenne Street or Main Avenue.

Public Investments

Sheyenne was reconstructed in 2021, updating the roadway from a three-lane configuration (one lane in each direction with a center turn lane) plus a lane of parking on the west side to a two-lane configuration with angle parking on both sides.

Photo of Sheyenne Street looking north, landscaping at intersection of Main and Sheyenne and typical concrete medallion



¹Source: City GIS provided County Assessor Data

POW/MIA PLAZA

POW/MIA Plaza is located in the heart of The Yards and is well situated for the area. Public restrooms are available nearby and the area is well lit. The plaza feels lively with a mural painted on a wall in the southwest corner of the park and permanent game fixtures on the north side.



Photo of POW/MIA Plaza at night



Photo of POW/MIA Plaza Mural

RED RIVER VALLEY FAIRGROUNDS

The Red River Valley Fairgrounds are located approximately a mile west on Main Avenue from the study area. The fairgrounds host events throughout the year and have multiple facilities within the complex including the Red River Valley Speedway. Currently there is no consistent connection to the study area and the fairgrounds, however, the potential for connecting the Downtown Yards to the fairgrounds was identified as an important cultural, social and economic asset.



Photo of Red River Valley Fairgrounds

Traffic and Parking

Parking was a key issue during the existing conditions analysis. In 2021, Sheyenne Street was reconfigured to one lane in each direction and angled on-street parking on both sides. This, in addition to other planning changes, led to the redevelopment of the downtown area. However, the improvements did not eliminate the perception of a lack of parking.

Large amounts of surface parking still exist along Sheyenne and side streets in the study area as well as large parking areas that serve older buildings in the area. The multi-family units have dedicated parking underground and the more recent developments in The Yards have more parking spaces behind the buildings.

In addition to car parking, other traffic-related issues were identified. Larger trucks that deliver to businesses in the new Yards buildings have limited or no space to park and deliver goods. These trucks were seen parking between the lanes of traffic on Sheyenne Street and the on-street parking on Sheyenne. This activity both slowed and blocked traffic while blocking parking spaces.

Sidewalks in the area are generally in good condition and the inclusion of bump outs at intersections and crosswalks improves visibility for pedestrians. Moving as a pedestrian through the downtown area is easy as the area is laid out in a grid.

One of the main issues the project team heard from the public was pedestrian safety. People did not feel safe crossing the Sheyenne or Main Avenue and the pedestrian environment didn't feel friendly or welcoming. Crossing the street is a challenge due to the infrequent marked crossings. During peak traffic times it becomes more difficult and dangerous. Automobile traffic did not observe the speed limit along Sheyenne street and rarely stop for pedestrians waiting at crosswalks. This poses a safety concern that hinders the walkability of downtown.

CURRENT ZONING CODE REQUIREMENTS (Title IV Chapter)

Zoning, Title IV Chapter requirements include building and performance standards such as street dimensions, building setbacks, density, lot coverage, and parking requirements. These aspects have yielded the current physical condition of the Downtown Yards and will need to be updated as the vision for changes to the Downtown Yards.

In 2016, the Sheyenne Street Corridor Study Phase II: Downtown Sheyenne Street report included an analysis of public parking in the downtown area. This study noted that while having too little parking would deter the patronization of area businesses, having too much parking has detrimental environmental effects and fiscal impacts to the city budget. A parking demand analysis of the on-street and off-street parking in the study area was completed, which included six observations on a weekday and four observations on a Saturday. The parking study found:

- There is ample parking provided along the corridor, with a total of 1,050 parking spaces available within the study area (230 on-street parking spaces, 820 off-street spaces).
- On average, during the observations there were 800 parking spaces available in the morning, 775 available in the afternoon, and 850 available in the evening.
- Peak demand was seen during the weekday noon hour.
- There were a few lots that approached capacity (between 75% and 90% full), but generally there were many parking spots available.
- Direct quote from the study: "At any point of the day, whether weekday or weekend, drivers are likely to find a parking surplus at any location along the corridor. Even during the noon hour, the study hour with the heaviest parking demand, 760 spaces were still available. This suggests that current parking requirements may be too high."

2021 IMPROVEMENTS

Since the 2016 study was completed, the corridor has seen some big changes. The roadway was reconstructed in 2021, updating the layout from the existing three lane configuration (one lane in each direction with a center turn lane) plus a lane of parking on the west side to a two-lane configuration with angle parking on both sides. Bumpouts were built at each corner, shrinking the crossing distance, and increasing pedestrian safety and visibility. Additionally, three new mixed-use developments, Pioneer Place, The Firm, and 444 Sheyenne Plaza, were built on the west side of Sheyenne Street between 2nd Ave W and 5th Ave W. With all these changes, the on-street parking supply in the corridor increased 30%, going from 233 to 303 spaces, while the number of public off-street parking spaces decreased 9.6% from 820 to 741 spaces. Overall, there was a 0.85% decrease in the number of available parking spaces between on street and off-street parking supplies. While both the on-street and off-street numbers have changed significantly, the total amount of public parking in the area has remained about the same, changing from 1,053 spaces in 2016 to 1,044 spaces in 2023.

The current availability of parking along the corridor was compared to what was available in 2016 and can be seen in Figure 12 and Figure 13- *Sheyenne Street Corridor Study- Parking Inventory*. The Map shows the publicly available parking on-street and off street (on private lots that do not require special permits.) The 2023 numbers consider the new number of parking spots and use the 2016 data for peak parking demand. Using the ITEParkGen web-based app, the parking demands for the three new mixed-use developments, 444 Sheyenne Plaza, The Firm, and Pioneer Place was added onto the observed demand from the 2016 study. Private garage parking, which is restricted and built underground for residents of 444 Sheyenne Plaza and Pioneer Place was not included in the demand. In the following table, all increased demand for parking was added to the off-street parking demand column.

Figure 12. *Parking Availability Changes Chart, 2016-2023*

Year	On-Street Parking Spaces Available	Off-Street Parking Spaces Available	Total Parking Spaces Available	Peak On-Street Percent Full
2016	233	820	1053	21.6%
2023	303	741	1044	21.6%

Year	Peak Off-Street Percent Full	Peak On-Street Spaces Full	Peak Off-Street Spaces Full	Peak Total Percent Full	Peak Total Spaces Full
2016	31.6%	50	259	29.4%	309
2023	75.9%	65	562	60.1%	628

As noted in the 2016 study, the noon hour saw the highest demand for parking, where approximately 29% of the combined on-street and off-street parking spaces are occupied. In 2023 and per Table 1 above only 61% of total peak hour parking are full when including both on-street and off-street parking.

An important consideration is the large amount of surface area that all the parking spaces take up along the corridor. Between on-street and off-street parking spaces, there is about 275,000 square feet dedicated to parking. This

is an area equal to almost **five football fields dedicated to parking or 6.32 acres**. Even during peak times, there are nearly 100,000 sq ft of empty parking spaces, **equivalent to almost 2 football fields**. While Cruise Night and West Fest events and other parades attract up to 10,000 people at each event, and existing parking was not designed to accommodate these non-ordinary events, the data seems to indicate that for ordinary events there is sufficient parking supply for the demand and that parking requirements continue to still be too high.

A lot of input received was centered on Parking. The analysis indicates that parking is a perception deficiency instead of a physical parking space issue defined by drivers' expectation to find parking in front of the businesses they are visiting, instead of walking short distance. Also, it appears that the existing parking is not being found easily by drivers. Placemaking strategies can assist in changing perceptions as people feel safer and more engaged with their surroundings, thereby making it more comfortable and acceptable to walk a block or more to get to your destination. Wayfinding and hi-tech tools can help with locating parking available.

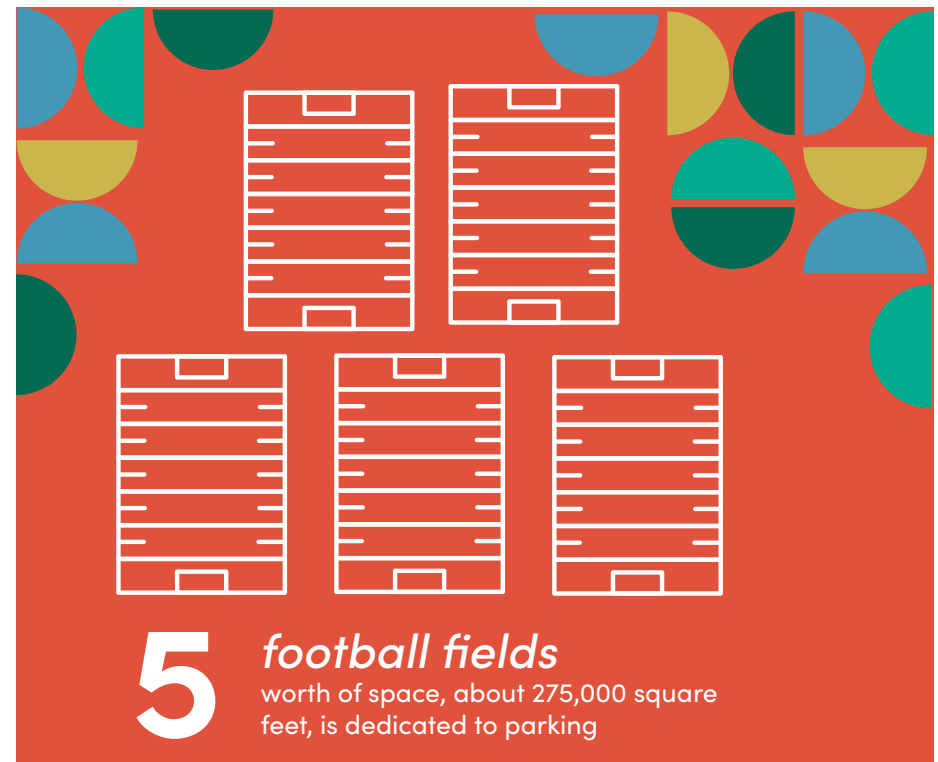
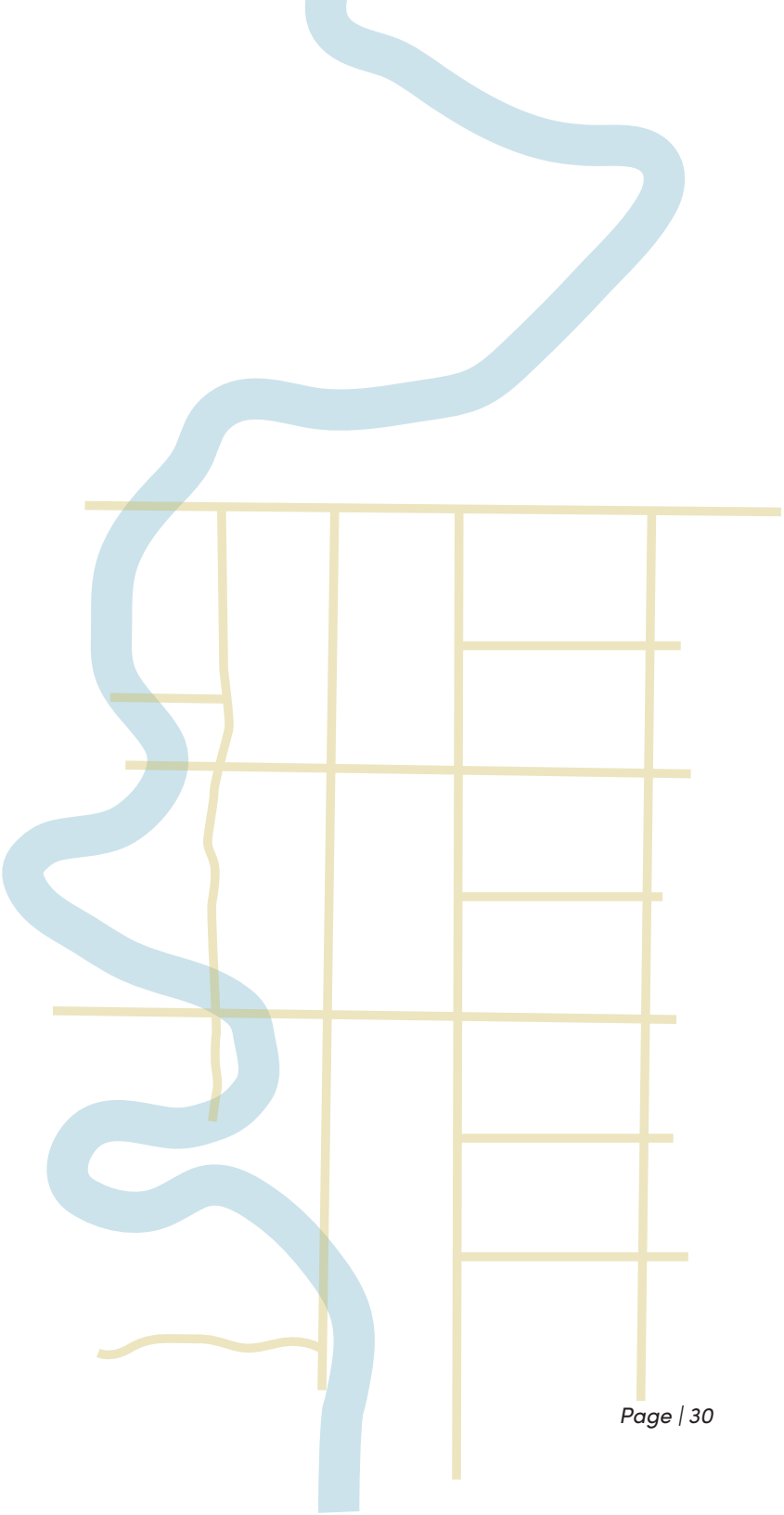
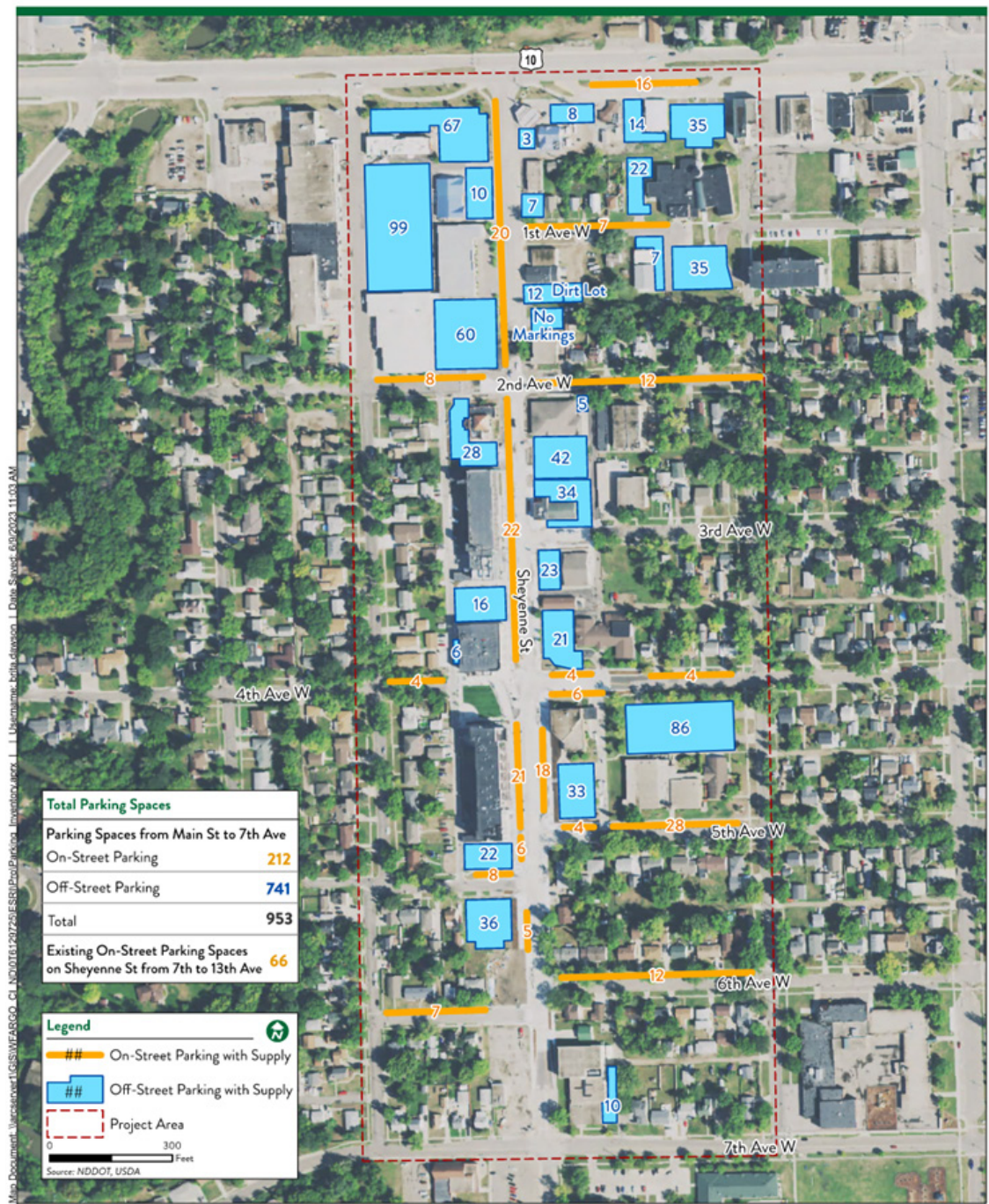


Figure 13. Sheyenne Street Corridor Study - Parking Inventory



Pedestrians and Bikes

Bicycle infrastructure is not present in the downtown area. There are no designated bike lanes in the streets and very limited bicycle parking areas. Bicyclists either need to use the sidewalk or the roadway designed for vehicle traffic. There are a few bike trails in the area that people use for recreational biking.

Transit

Transit is minimal in the area and one bus route serves the study area with a single stop at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and 7th Avenue (west). Demographic data indicates that transit is virtually unused by residents within the study area.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The businesses on the east and west sides of Sheyenne Street have a different feel and customer base. It was observed that people don't often cross the street to visit businesses on the other side. Businesses like the Flying Pig and the VFW attract repeat customers and are predominantly locals who reside in West Fargo. Thunder Coffee and the businesses within Pioneer Place attract a younger demographic and more people from further away in the City as well as outside of West Fargo.

At night, parts of the area come to life, specifically the Flying Pig and the VFW. These areas are more bar orientated and tend to have larger crowds at night, while shops within Pioneer Place are closed. Notably, in the evening there isn't a restaurant or bar that hosts similar clientele to Thunder Coffee (under 30 working professionals). The area is well lit, but the vacant store fronts, large parking lots, and sparse number of pedestrians in the area as well as the lack of soft landscaping, do not make the area feel welcoming.

Along Main Avenue, the feeling is less vibrant, with higher speed traffic, more vehicle lanes and the absence of pedestrian presence. The intersection of Sheyenne Street and Main Ave is marked with street signs but does not have signage marking the entryway into the Downtown Yards.



Photo of intersection at Main and Sheyenne Streets

KEY ISSUES

The engagement chapter provides more in-depth detail on the input received from the focus groups, steering committee, city staff and community surveys. In essence the top 4 issues identified for the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan to address are as follows:

- 1. Poor Safety:** An important clarification is that “safety” in this context is meant as pedestrian safety with traffic and not crime-related safety. There is a general sense of a lack of safe navigation downtown for pedestrians, but more specifically at crosswalks, and access points to Amour Park, triggered mainly by speeding of vehicles, parking of cars and delivery trucks. There is an evident disregard for speed, yield and stop signs and a lack of pedestrian awareness which makes this an urgent issue.
- 2. Lacking Vibrancy:** the level of activity or “buzz” is perceived as weak or low in the Downtown Yards. It is not seen as a destination in itself (except annual events), nor a place that has its own unique identity or that exhibits its distinctive local history and assets. Although there are singular places or events to visit, the downtown feels fragmented and not woven together as one destination.
- 3. Weak Aesthetics:** the downtown buildings have a mixture of uses, building standards and architectural styles. This contributes to the east and west side being dissonant with each other and the open spaces are not integrated with cohesive thematic intents or design. The design and architecture of downtown communicates the identity of the place.
- 4. Not Welcoming:** The downtown is not perceived as an inviting and welcoming place. Although it has a younger cohort of residents, it is not considered child, pet or family friendly. It does not offer the activities, events and places conducive to families, children and pets.

Figure 14. Key issues identification chart

Theme/Key Issue	Count of Theme/Key Issue
Safety	15.08%
Lacking (Building, Business, etc.)	11.56%
Aesthetics	9.05%
Child/Family Friendly	8.54%
Pedestrian Access	8.04%
Parking	7.04%
Events	6.53%
Other	6.03%
Restaurants/Gathering Spaces	6.03%
Transportation	4.52%
Connection to Downtown	3.52%
Parks/Green Space/Recreation	3.52%
Public Art	3.02%
Vacant/Blighted Buildings	1.51%
Grand Total	100.00%

ASSET MAPPING

In May and June of 2023, input was sought from the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan Steering Committee, community focus group, business focus group, city commissioners and the general public regarding assets in the downtown study area. See Appendix 4: Asset Mapping. Assets were categorized into groups, including:

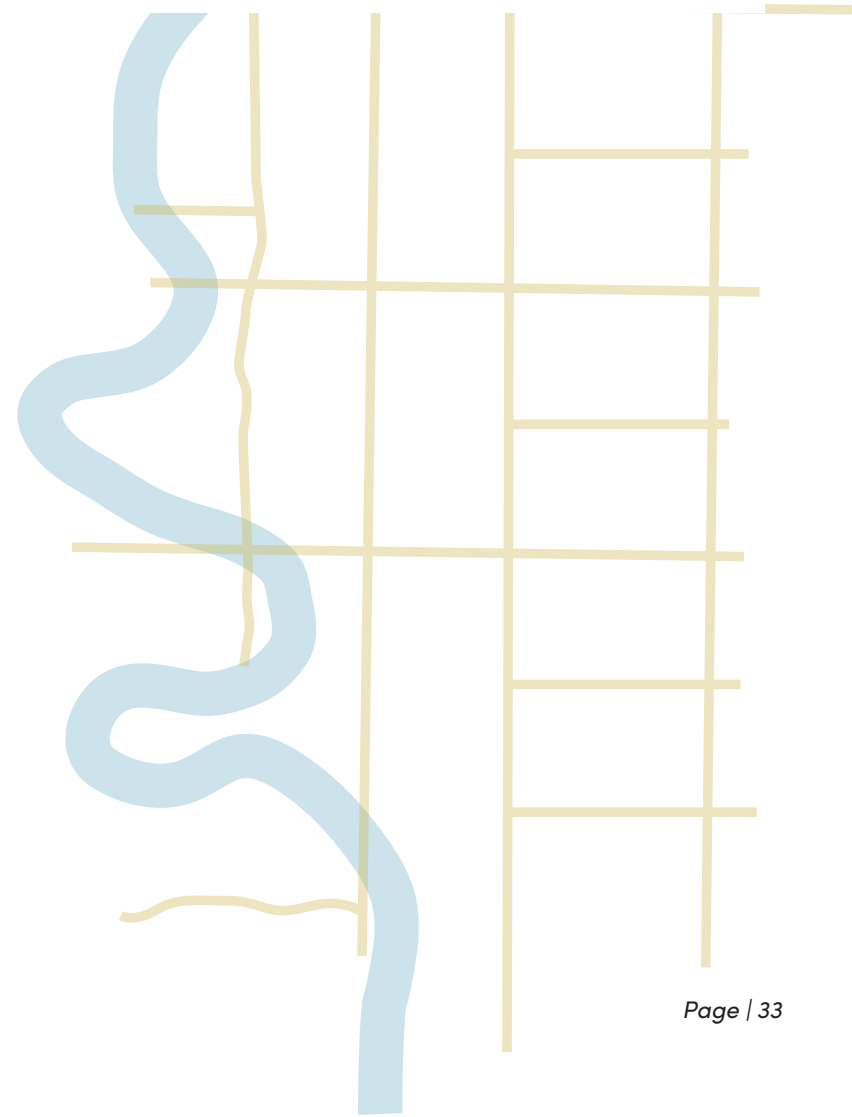
- Events and traditions
- Creative cultural industry
- Arts and cultural resources
- Cultural heritage
- Historic resources
- Organizations and institutions
- Cultural hubs

Some of the events or places that were identified included the following and then were mapped (location number on map) as shown in Appendix 4: Asset Mapping

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Christmas Tree Lighting (4A) | • Blighted Building (36G) |
| • West Fest Parade (5A) | • Nature/mature trees (36J) |
| • POW MIA (1A) | • Underutilized parking lots |
| • Street Dance (13A) | • Access to Elmwood (38A) |
| • Heritage Walk (15) | • Pool/Tennis (38C) |
| • Library does not feel connected (19J, doesn't feel connected) | • Armour Park (38D) |
| • Olympic pool and athletic center (doesn't feel connected) | • Recreation along the river |
| • Event Spaces (1A) | • Walking trail |
| • Local hero Wally Tinters – Local Businessman (27) | • Orchard (38A) |
| • The River (29S) | • Armour Park (38B) |
| • A – Packing Plant/Packer's history | • School District Office (40RG4) |
| • Town Hall Bar – Building (31) | • Fire Station (41A) |
| • Flagship Sandy's Location (35J) | • Walking Safely, crosswalks (41J) |
| • Grocery Store (36A) | • Blue Collar Bars (44A) |
| • Gas station (36RGA) | • VFW |
| • Inconsistent aesthetic (36C) | • Flying Pig (47A) |
| • Thunder (36E) | • Silver\$ (47A) |
| • Junkyard (36F) | • Deaner's Diner |
| | • Sandy's (45A) |
| | • Thunder Coffee (45B) |
| | • POW/MIA Plaza (45X) |
| | • Food trucks |

CONCLUSION

It will be important to amplify the natural, social and cultural assets to yield a vibrant local economy in the downtown. Part of post-plan effort should include an update to the zoning code to allow more urban frontage uses that align with the identified priorities (such as retail, goods and services) along Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue at the ground level; this includes implementing design standards for commercial properties, modifying standards to include the elimination of front setbacks, reduction of yard setbacks, elimination of minimum requirements or consolidation of parking, and locating parking behind buildings. Please see Chapter 5 for further discussion on Pedestrians, Parking, and Access.





CHAPTER 3

PLACEMAKING

PLACEMAKING

The Guiding Principles for the Downtown Yards establish the core philosophy and values used to direct the exploratory discussion about placemaking.

The ideation of placemaking was drawn from the collective input gathered (from online, focus groups and the steering committee,) and was guided by the specific Downtown Yards guiding principles which yielded 117 placemaking concepts. See Appendix 5 for the full 117 placemaking ideas. After these ideas were formulated, the guiding principles were analyzed and established 4 overarching Goals for the Downtown Yards. Figure 5 shows how the original guiding principles were merged and combined into goals.

Ideation is a word that means the act of forming or entertaining ideas. It is mostly used as a psychological term and it first appears in 1829 as a combination of the word idea, from the Greek word idea meaning form, and the suffix -ation, used to make a noun out of an action. Ideation is the process by which ideas are created.

10

guiding principles

117

strategies

4

goals

30+

funding/resources

Placemaking Art Selection Process: Site Specific, Mission Centric Art Concepts

The West Fargo Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) was guided through a selection process by introducing the committee to the work of highly qualified artists relevant to this plan from which 3 artists were commissioned to develop detailed project proposals. Group Creative Services worked with the committee to develop a request for proposals (RFP) for each of the three selected sites and was based on the goals and needs for the project. This RFP was provided to the selected artists. PAAC then reviewed the submissions and recommended one concept per site

to move forward to the Steering Committee. This transparent selection process supports community project goals and builds public enthusiasm. The ideas and visuals the artists created for their proposals provide site specific concepts that can also be an excellent foundation for additional fundraising. To advance any of the West Fargo concepts, a mix of private and public funds will be necessary.

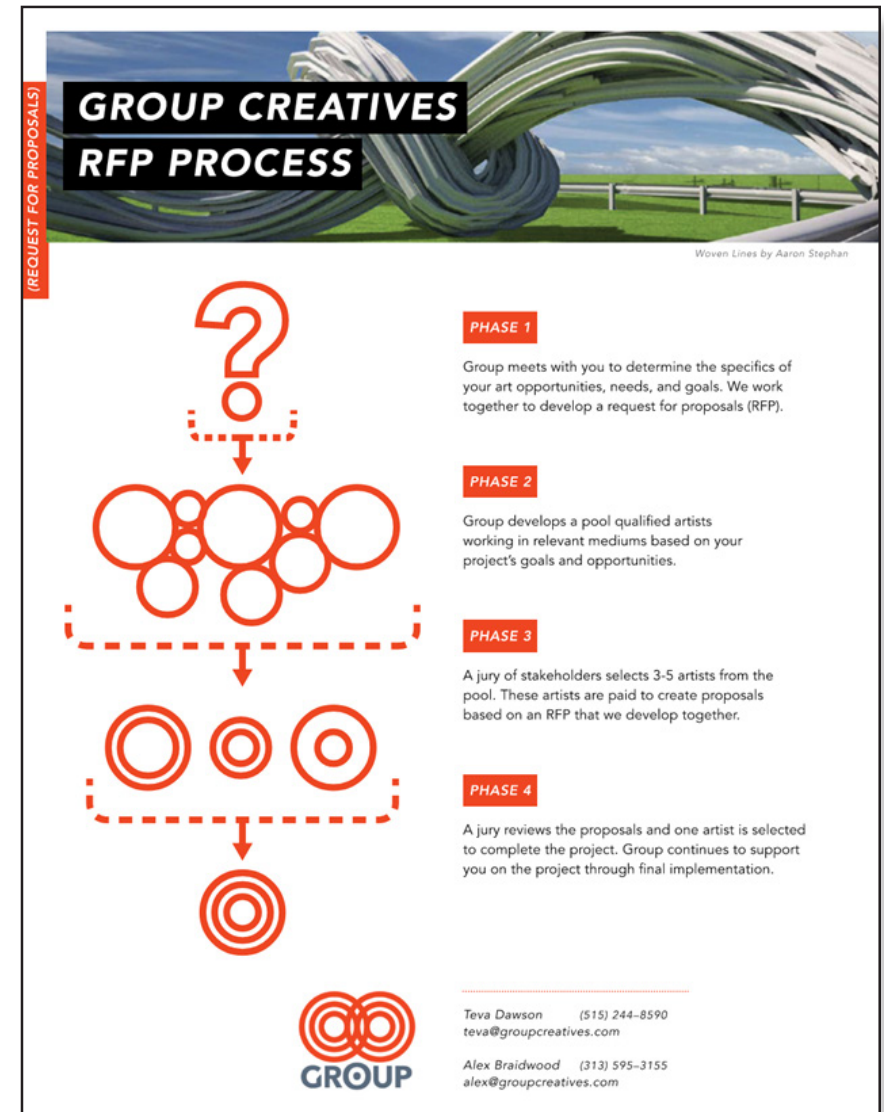


Photo of Group Creatives RFP Process



In the purest sense, the definition of placemaking is: the process of turning a space into a place that people want to live, work, or explore. It's a process because it involves multiple steps that consider history, location, infrastructure, service, and, above all, the vision of the people the place is for!

Goal #1:

Placemaking: Make the Downtown Yards a vibrant place that displays West Fargo's unique heritage, and character that offers engaging experiences for all ages and families



Action Step 3.1 INCREASE ACTIVITY AND FOOT TRAFFIC

In most Main Street business districts, buildings nestle right up against the sidewalk and each other. It encourages window shopping, and keeps eyes on the street. It's a traditional form globally, making productive use of the land while creating a sense of enclosure – an environment that most people find instinctively comforting. Density maximizes potential; infill can contribute to unmet economic, social and civic needs. The form is recognized and encouraged in [City code](#) (esp. CO-S zoning and section 4-530).



[Blank Street Coffee in Brooklyn](#)

3.1.b Infill and reinvent parking areas along Sheyenne with temporary, small-footprint retail, such as a farm stand or coffee stand.

Parking lots are often built to accommodate the busiest times, leaving them partially empty for certain seasons or days. Temporary retail installations are a great way to activate these open spaces and liven up street life. A coffee stand could even have temporary seating areas during fair weather months, like in the example photo. Ordinances allow pop-ups to obtain short-term permits and restrictions could be loosened that would apply to permanent establishments. Beyond adaptation of City code, the work lies with private businesses to activate underutilized space.



[Cody's Farm stand](#)

3.1.c Infill set-backs

Today, every block's large, empty setbacks have potential for temporary markets, cafe seating, parklets or other uses already permitted by existing code. Keeping a consistent form that hugs the street may require parking areas behind commercial space and the encouragement to use it.



Sidewalk cafe in Minneapolis

Action Step 3.3

USE THE EXISTING PAVED HALF-MOON areas and medallion bump outs on Sheyenne Street (studded out with electrical power)

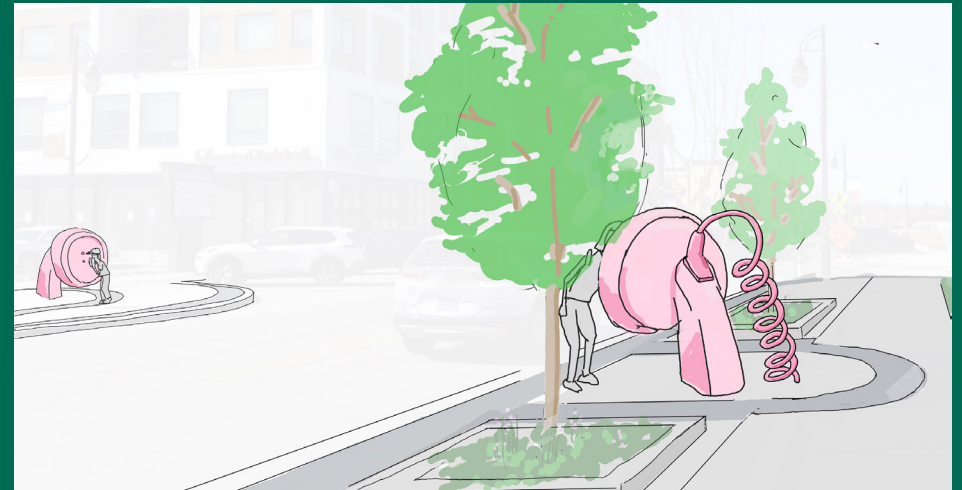
West Fargo requested proposals to develop a series of public art activations framing the seven-block business district on Sheyenne Avenue, from the north entry at Main to the south end at 7th. Spaces for intervention include the 12 feature areas along Sheyenne. As proposed, the installations create a remarkable corridor for year-round exploration.



Photo of half-moon downtown Sheyenne Street

3.3.a Use 1/2 moons and medallions

The bump out 'medallions' at Sheyenne's intersections remain available for temporary programming led by citizens or the City. Even street furniture can create a platform for public performance or other forms of pedestrian play. Iterating on forms will find favorites among event-based and passive activations.



Artwork courtesy of Studio F Minus – proposed to be located on the half-moons on Sheyenne



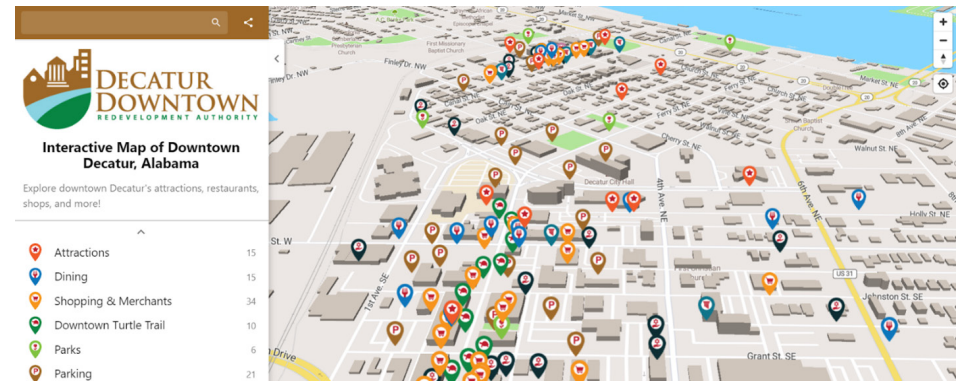
Agora Maximus, beyond tactical urbanism in Montreal

Action Step 3.4 CONNECT POINTS OF INTEREST THROUGH CREATIVE WAYFINDING

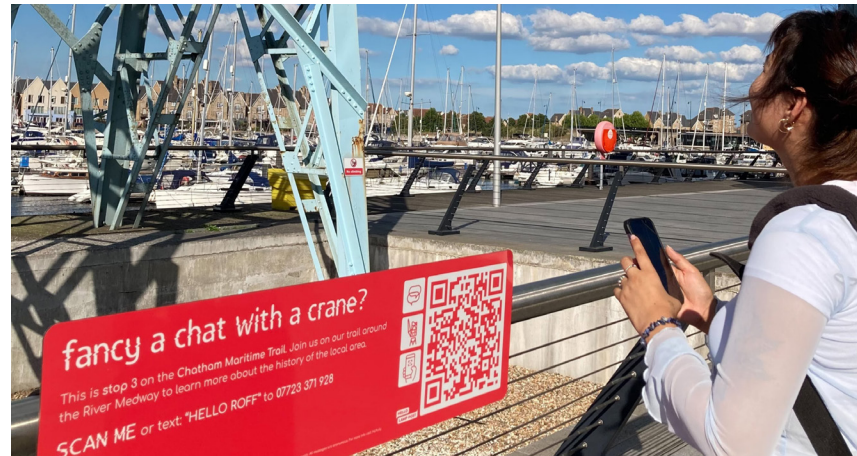
3.4.f Provide area map of points of interest, sidewalks and trails.

Create an online map that shows points of interest downtown and in the surrounding area. The map should include sidewalks and trails so that it's easy to see how to access places on foot. QR codes that connect to the map could be placed at registers and in windows downtown.

Example: Downtown Decatur, Alabama



3.4.g Gamify Wayfinding – add digital wayfinding's interactive games connected to signage and wayfinding.



Sydney Harbour Trust Federation's Hello Lamp Post Campaign

Platforms like Hello Lamp Post make it easy to inform, entertain and serve people in West Fargo. Mobile phone ubiquity can be leveraged toward multiple ends simultaneously, including offers from local businesses. Points of entry can be QR codes or something clever to be discovered at the aquatic center, library, Bonanzaville and beyond.

In this digital economy, it is critical to keep the Downtown Yards Business Association (DYBA) website updated. While the DYBA is re-grouping, reach out to West Fargo Events and Fargo Downtown Community Partnership to assist in promoting the downtown.

Action Step 4.3 RECONNECT WITH THE RIVER

4.3.a Build fishing platforms and restore the riverbank to encourage people to visit and enjoy the river.

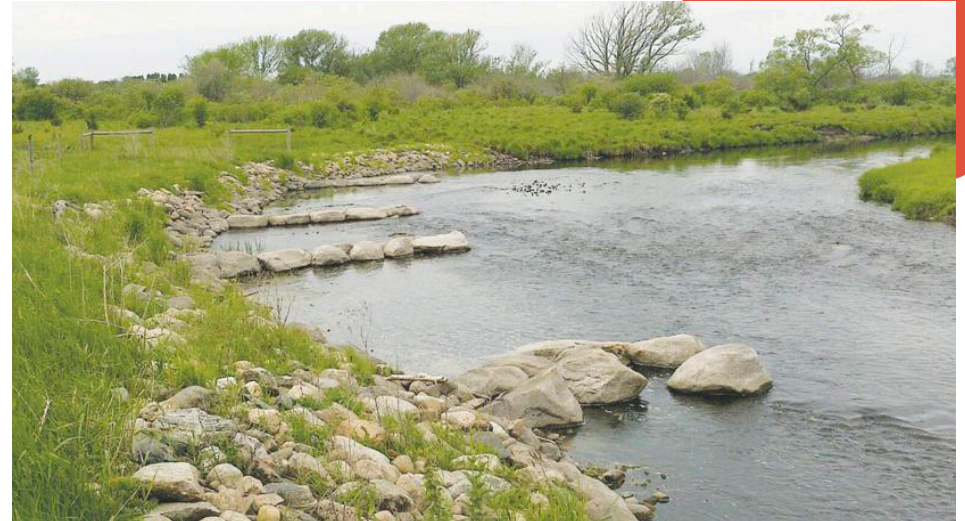
Sheyenne is a perched river; that is, most banks have a considerable drop to the water. Limited bank access detracts from enjoyment of the resource. Building platforms on the public riverbanks in places like Armour park and elsewhere will help anglers access the 53 known species in that water, reconnecting people to the resource and drawing visitors to places that encourage access.



Accessible fishing pier in Grand Forks

4.3.c Construct River-swales structures- DOT.

While the Sheyenne Diversion greatly reduces flooding risks, vegetated river swales are a functionally beautiful method for handling localized storm water. Employing them along the surface of public and private property directs water in a manner that brings attention to the river. Building rock weirs in the channel is another way to encourage contact with the river, creating shallow eddies for recreation while protecting bank stability.



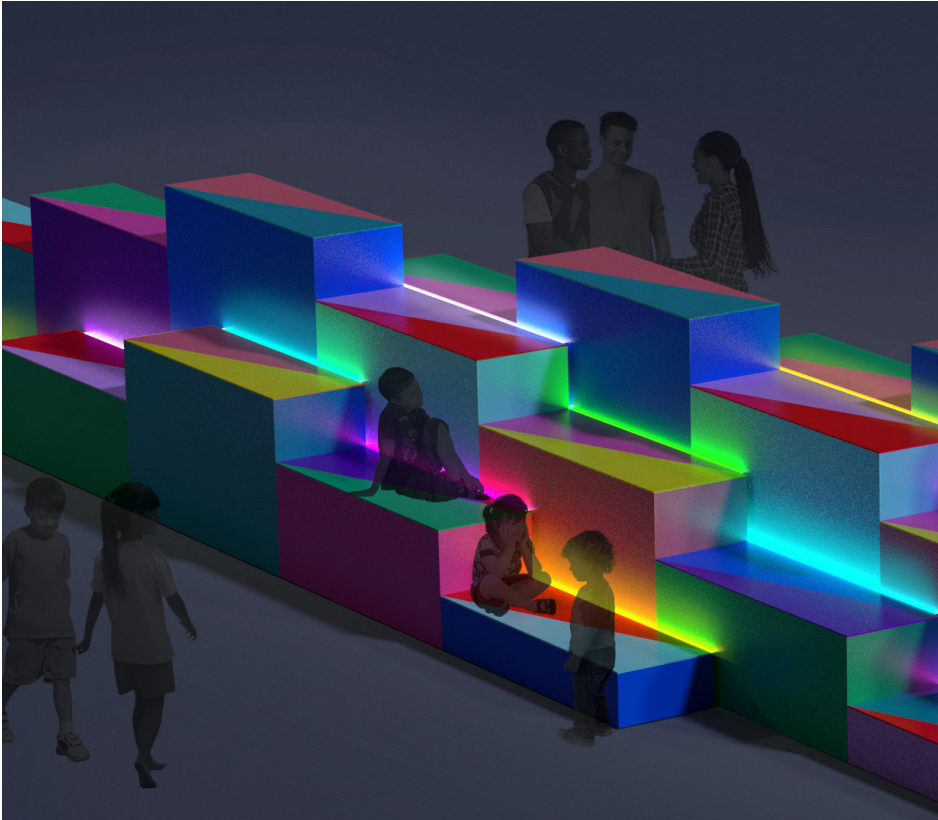
A rock weir protects the banks of the Crow River from erosion

4.3.d Build Fountain/water feature-bring Sheyenne River to Sheyenne street.

Introducing water on Sheyenne Street can reference the river literally and figuratively. While Kansas City and elsewhere have built identity around fountains, a single installation can make the point. Even a public drinking fountain can reference the relationship to the river.



The Muse of the Missouri fountain in downtown Kansas City.



Artwork courtesy of Cheryl Wing-Zi Wong



Artwork courtesy of Good Space

Action Step 4.4 CREATE PHOTO SPOTS AND MEMORY MAKER LOCATIONS

Remarkable experiences get shared, and prompting the sharing often needs only the photo opportunity. West Fargo's selected artist proposals for the top and bottom of Sheyenne will have a lasting benefit for businesses, neighbor

4.4.a Install entrance features and pedestrian play features.

Cheryl Wing-Zi Wong's Aurora works hard day and night as a vehicular-scale welcome from the north. Community co-creation with Good Space Murals attaches participants to their place as they travel daily from the south.

4.4.b Incentivize retail shop installations, murals, etc. on private property.

An additional opportunity lies with private property along Sheyenne. As a seasonal contest and/or direct assistance, commercial owners and tenants can bring remarkable energy to the visitor experience with their window displays and other 'curb appeal' treatments, including murals. Communities have offered grants, sales tax rebates and other direct incentives to encourage this work.



Downtown Franklin holiday store window display



Bubble Machine in BRNO

Action Step 5.1

DEVELOP FAMILY FRIENDLY SPACES AND PROGRAMS.

Attract diverse people inside and outside the existing community with a unique focus on families and pets and “together spaces.”

5.1.e Develop kid-friendly passive programming - hopscotch, sidewalk chalk, bubbles.

The traffic medallions at Sheyenne intersections are high-visibility places to encourage a moment of play. Light touches like a box of sidewalk chalk or a bubble machine can occupy time in this district.

5.1.f Add teen-friendly active programming - game nights at Thunder Coffee, show teen-created videos at the plaza, etc.

Private businesses may find additional revenue in explicitly marketing to younger people and/or families. The opportunity for other organizations, including the City, is to make specific program investments for children and youth. Public programs can be simple, like a peer-led walking tour; people mostly want to find comfort and community. Giving young people (if not their parents and grandparents) a reason to visit can have delightful benefits. Helping them interpret and lead can be transformative.



Teen Docent Program in Cary, NC



5.1.g Add teen-friendly passive programming - hang-out spaces.

Teens need unstructured spaces where they can just “be,” without cost, time limit or adult interference. Hammocks or other fun seating, arcades, lawn bowling, fire pits - these are all examples of passive programming, where the space is provided, but the activity is not prescribed. Affordable food options are also an important teen attractor for downtowns.



(Top) Hammocks on Paprocony Lake promenade, Poland
Photograph: Tomasz Zakrzewski

(Bottom) Saskatchewan



Local mimes perform at a West Des Moines event

Action Step 5.2 INCREASE EVENT PROGRAMMING

5.2.a Incorporate artist elements into existing events.

Develop a tradition of offering unexpected artistic engagement with pop-up activations at community events – such as festivals, markets or ribbon cuttings. For example, have a local artist “glitterize” a car at Cruise Night! Artists can bring interactive art, performance art, storytelling and more. Artistic activations make events more memorable and engaging and can help make them more profitable by attracting visitors, encouraging people to stay longer, and increasing the likelihood that visitors will come back year after year.



Event go-ers get a 5-minute portrait by a professional artist



Temporary installations can give people new reasons to return to long-standing and recurring events.

Tunnel of Glam by Yonge & St. Clair



Shilin Night Market in Taipei, Taiwan

5.2.c Encourage passive programming i.e., plaza games, etc.

POW/MIA Plaza and other public spaces can activate using existing forms – scavenger hunts for social or cultural details, temporary displays of local interest and prompted walking routes all require minimal investment and are always ‘on’. A ‘question of the week’ shared via display among local businesses can encourage dialogue and circulation. Refined concepts can emerge from community ideation; make a contest to gather the best ideas to activate, coupled with the attention and buy-in that comes from the public process.

5.2.d Ensure one large event each quarter – cruise night, west fest- need 2 more.

Signature events are missing from the calendar during harsher weather. Public gatherings and performance may not work in winter as they do for Cruise Nights and WestFest. Events can instead disperse across the Downtown Yards or spread across a bit of time to accommodate conditions.



Bloomington, MN Winter Fete Participant

5.2.f Participate in the Chamber marketing programs such as Crafts and Drafts Passport, Paw Crawl, Coffee Crawl, etc.

Some existing local marketing programs from the Fargo-Moorhead Convention and Visitors Bureau do not touch The Downtown Yards today. While the Crafts and Drafts Passport will likely arrive with the opening of Junkyard Brewing, others may need a suitable host or amenities among the business owners and tenants.

Action Step 5.3

DEVELOP PET-FRIENDLY SPACES AND PROGRAMS

5.3.b Introduce Pet programs and events.

West Fargoans love their pets! The Downtown Yards can attract the pet crowd with events like a Halloween dog costume parade or a [“dog jog” 5k](#). Simple everyday amenities – like waste stations, communal dog water bowls on the sidewalk and dog-friendly outdoor patios – make it easier for pet owners to visit downtown.

[Model ordinance for pets on patios and other pet-friendly tools](#)



[Halloween Dog Parade](#)

Action Step 5.4

DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL EVENT AMENITIES

West Fargo Events, Jade Presents or a similar organization may respond to the community’s call for event space by investing in production equipment to augment existing venues. Noting there aren’t many events at POW/MIA Plaza today, it may be useful to develop an additional venue dedicated to performance and celebration – likely an indoor/outdoor space to provide year-round service to residents and visitors, perhaps in Armour Park. A feasibility study can guide decisions about capacity and features for public rental and private events in the context of The Lights and other existing venues.



[Park Samanese, Ecuador](#)



[Lauridsen Amphitheater in Des Moines, IA](#)

5.4.a Build an amphitheater/stage for performances with professional acoustical, lighting, seating amenities.

5.4.b Build celebration spaces that community members can rent out for personal or group events like weddings, birthdays, parties...etc.



Action Step 6.1 STRENGTHEN NEIGHBORHOODS AND CREATE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

6.1.a Infuse neighborhood with creative expressions such as painted or stamped sidewalks.

Sidewalks can be painted with murals, imprinted with poetry, or made into comic book frames, with a story developing as you stroll. The downtown could work with a single artist to create a cohesive story and look throughout or make it a collaborative effort and engage artists from the community and beyond. Pavement murals, while less durable than other murals, can last for several years with the proper materials and maintenance. Their temporary nature allows for more experimentation and the ability to renew the space every few years.



Color the Curb Street Murals in Washington D.C. by Carly Rounds



Stamped sidewalks in Barry, South Wales

6.1.b Create a group exercise space.

Exercise routes:
Tai Chi, Zumba classes
Marked paths or loops
with distance markers.



100 Miles in 100 Days campaign in Milwaukee, WI

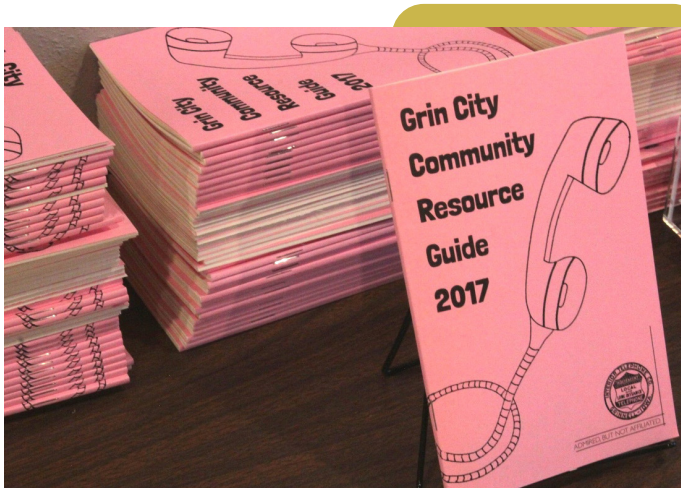
The desire for group exercise may require adapting existing space at a place like Rustad Recreation Center or incorporation in a new event venue. Group exercise programs do not require shared space if they are pursued as online challenges or completion of marked routes.



Maplewood Park Activity Center

6.1.c Keep the neighborhood strong with shared amenity spaces i.e.: community, meeting spaces etc.

Social isolation is detrimental to individual and collective health. Social capital can be built by bringing people together for support. A venue in a public park may be most accessible and appropriate for collective identity, but, even without a space, simple programs can support stronger ties. Ideally, the solutions are built by the residents, building on existing park assets.



Grin City (Grinnell, IA) Community Resource Guide



Here There and Everywhere plaque in Springfield, IL



Artwork courtesy of Nate Page

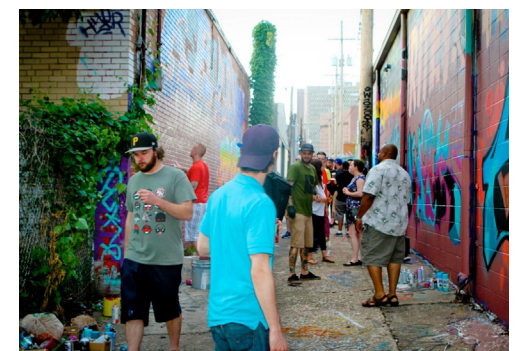
Action Step 6.5 CREATE NEW GEMS TO UNCOVER

In queuing a decade of work and continuing the transformation of the Downtown Yards into an iconic mixed-use center of activity and economic growth, an early intervention lies in the creativity of residents and artists. Beyond significant commissions for the central business district, the City and private landowners can introduce a lot of texture to the lived experience. Indeed, shifting perceptions must include visual refinements, and these actions can reward attention. From wayfinding to street furniture to the walls of every building, there is opportunity for surprise and delight – a signal that this place is changing for the better.

6.5.a Use artistic surprise elements in facades, pavement, alleys, corners.

6.5.b Add whimsy, surprise, and pedestrian artful engagement along Sheyenne such as swings, merry-go rounds.

As West Fargo continues to grow and develop, this placemaking chapter can become a key guide in shaping its future as a thriving and connected community.



Art Alley, Kansas City, MO



CHAPTER 4

BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Longtime downtown businesses and more recent development in the Downtown Yards have served families in the adjacent neighborhoods as well as newer residents. Currently, retail stores and restaurants make up a quarter of the business in Downtown Yards. The most substantial sector includes health services, such as chiropractic clinics, dental offices, and counseling services followed by professional services such as financial institutions, insurance agencies, and legal services. While these businesses remain integral to Downtown Yards community, there is a need to foster growth in areas that resonate with the city's primary audience: young families and professionals seeking eateries, budget-friendly shopping, and entertainment. An increase in rental apartments, places to shop, and trendy restaurants attracts young families and young professionals to the Downtown Yards. One significant business missing from the Downtown Yards is a grocery store; the downtown area qualifies as a food desert because it lacks easy access to fresh produce and healthy foods within one mile. Recent developments started to build momentum, but it stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goal #2

focuses on an analysis of business and economic development conditions and recommendations to strengthen the mix of businesses and better attract people to the area to work, eat, receive services, shop and play. Following are specific Action Steps that were identified and prioritized based on public feedback¹:

- **1.5 EXPAND RETAIL AND TYPES OF BUSINESSES DOWNTOWN**
- **3.5 LEVERAGE AND AMPLIFY EXISTING AND REGIONAL EVENTS AND PROGRAMS**
- **5.5 PROMOTE THE DOWNTOWN YARDS**
- **6.2 DEVELOP CHAMPIONS WITHIN BUSINESS AND CITY LEADERSHIP**

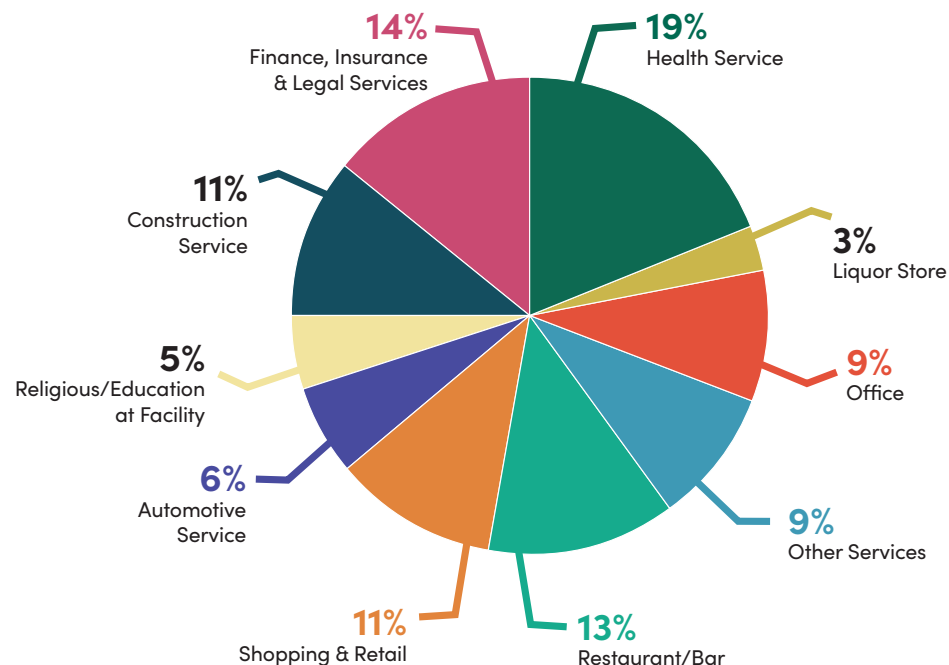
Following is a high-level discussion of the issue and detailed recommendations to support business growth and economic development within downtown West Fargo.

Action Step 1.5

EXPAND NUMBER AND TYPES OF BUSINESSES DOWNTOWN

The current amount of commercial space in Downtown Yards is 430,000 square feet. Retail and restaurants occupy approximately 103,000 square feet or just under a quarter of the space, resulting in designation as a "Neighborhood Center. The International Council of Shopping Centers' (ICSC) classification of retail districts, "Neighborhood Centers" are defined

Figure 15. Chart of Business Types by Percentage



as areas with an average, 30,000-125,000 square feet of retail, focus on convenience goods and services, and have a small, local trade area of approximately three miles (Primary and Secondary). They attract nearby residents, but they do not have the amount of retail necessary to draw in visitors from a wider area.

¹numbers indicate original Action Steps number – see Appendix 5 (117 ideas)

The existing retail at Downtown Yards fails to create a cohesive feeling in the overall district. By creating a more cohesive retail environment in Downtown Yards, West Fargo has the opportunity to improve market penetration and grow the size of the current trade area. People will travel further if they know they have more things to experience and do.

West Fargo has a competitive advantage in attracting businesses because it:

- Is a growing community which will increase demand for services, places to shop and eat
- Is becoming younger which increases demand for products and services for children
- Is becoming more ethnically and racially diverse which provides opportunities for cultural events and broader range of retail stores

- Is able to provide customized incentive packages for potential businesses.
- Has economic development staff that assist businesses with customized business services and removing barriers to development
- Offers Corporate Income Tax Exemption Sales Tax Exemption Property Tax Exemption and many other incentives [Incentives | West Fargo, ND \(westfargond.gov\)](https://westfargond.gov)
- Has an average cost of doing business that is 15% less than the national average
- Has a well-educated population which provides a qualified workforce and higher household incomes and consequently more disposable income

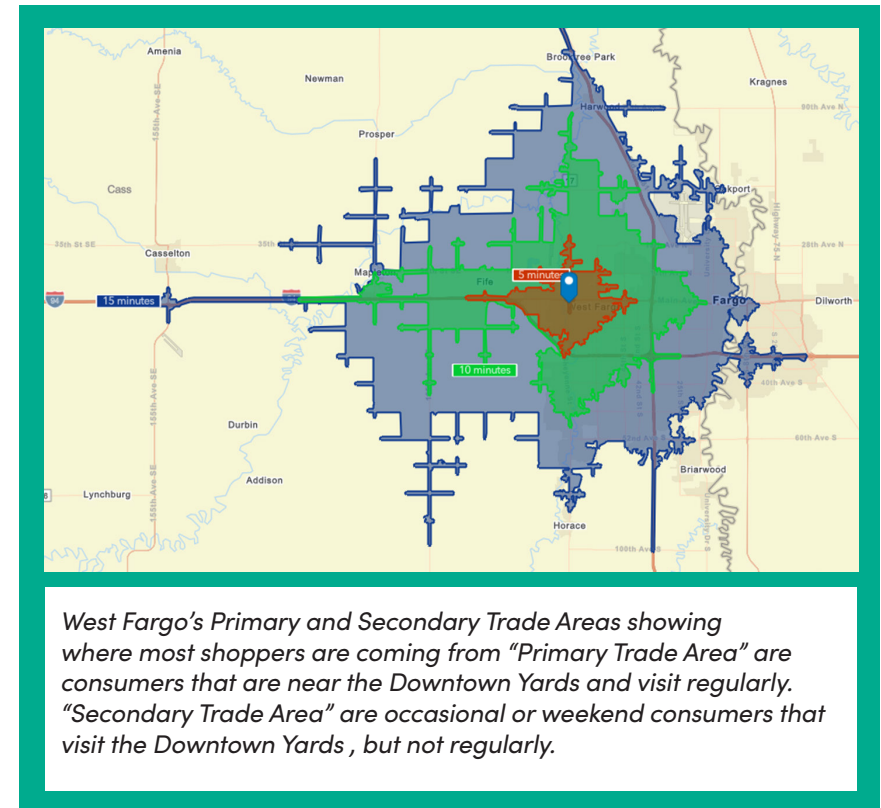
Downtown West Fargo also has a few challenges or disadvantages to economic growth:

- The study area residents have lower average household incomes, a higher incidence of poverty, and a significant portion receiving food assistance, than the West Fargo overall average household income
- The study area sees a daily migration out of the area as residents go to other areas of the metropolitan area
- The historic downtown does not historic buildings or have a cohesive aesthetic which offers the opportunity to create a unique identity
- Uncertain market demand and dynamics results in businesses wanting shorter term contracts but property managers desire to have long term leases
- The Downtown Yards is missing memorable or Instagramable photo opportunities
- Downtown does not currently have a destination to draw people in; the Junk Yard taproom opening in late 2023 will provide a regional draw
- Within 2 miles of downtown, there are several destinations that draw people to the area but there isn't a clear connection between those destinations and the Downtown Yards
- Lacking signage directing people from the freeway to downtown West Fargo
- Limited transit service means most people must drive and find a place to park to get to downtown West Fargo
- Traffic and parking

Retail Market Analysis

In order to transform the Downtown Yards into a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented culture, an evaluation of its business and retail landscape was done to identify

Figure 16. Map of Trade Areas surrounding West Fargo



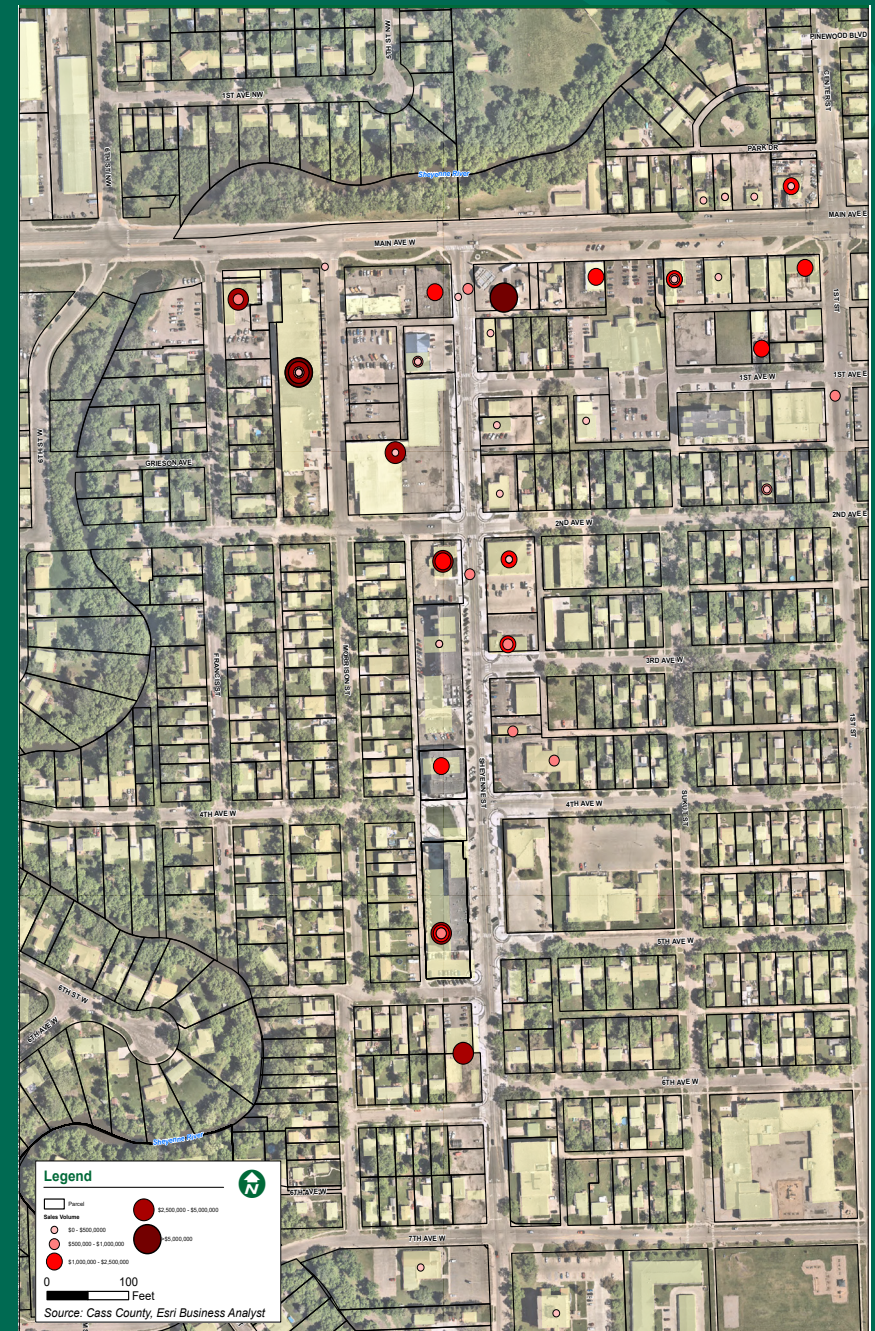
types of businesses that are missing and recommend strategies to attract them. The retail analysis explored two aspects:

- Shopping Experience: What is the overall shopping experience like for individuals frequenting downtown West Fargo? Are businesses easily accessible, and do they beckon potential customers to linger in the area?
 - Merchant Appeal: Which merchants are drawing visitors to downtown West Fargo, and what alternate retail choices are available once they arrive? Does the existing marketplace offer sufficient retail variety?
- The retail market analysis resulted in several key findings: The Downtown Yards is highly accessible by vehicle through Interstate 94, and Highway 10, so the "Secondary Trade Area" (blue) extends approximately 10 miles in each direction and up to 15 miles to the west and provides access to over 162,660 population
- It is recommended that the downtown initiative programs be updated through Economic Development Advisory Committee to:
 - o Encourage more retail

- o Encourage adaptive reuse
 - o Establish a business incubator space
- The most impactful customers within the Primary Trade Area profile falls into two categories:
 - o Young Families
 - o Bright Young Professionals
 - o Family-oriented
 - o Thrifty or budget conscious
 - o American made products
 - o Tech and mobile device friendly
 - o DIY home improvements
 - o Products and clothes for children
 - o Child friendly dining and entertainment
 - o Technology supplies and support
 - o Social and networking gathering spots
 - o Rental housing
- To best attract these younger consumers, focus businesses with these characteristics:
 - o 6,000 daytime workers within 2 miles of the Downtown Yards (Primary Trade Area) create demand for cost-effective, fast-service dining options; offering affordable and prompt lunch and after-work get together options choices could capture these workers and their considerable spending power
 - o Visitors typically expect to spend four minutes of destination activity for every one minute of travel. Consequently, a traveler investing 15 minutes in commuting expects to find at least an hour's worth of activities and attractions at their destination. By marketing a 2- to 3-hour experience or encouraging people to perceive their visit as a 2- to 3-hour outing, the town enhances its capacity to draw visitors from a trade area located 10 to 15 minutes away.

See Appendix 6 for more detail on the Retail Market Analysis

Figure 17. Retail Sales Volume



Business Environment

DOWNTOWN YARDS ANCHORS

The Downtown Yards is characterized by a variety of small and local businesses that provide mainly office space, health services, and daily retail needs (such as Banks and Hair Salons). In recent years, the Downtown Yards has grown its business community, adding more retail and restaurants but is still lacking large anchors which are needed to attract residents and visitors into Downtown Yards. Armor Park and POW/MIA Plaza have the capacity to act as attractors to the Downtown Yards with events, however this requires the city to invest in administrative resources and programming. The arrival of Junkyard Brewing in the old bank building is a great example of an anchor. While the Yards is more suited to develop into a smaller, human-scaled retail environment, and focus on specialty goods and family-pet-friendly eating and drinking places, a large anchor amenity or business is needed to sustain existing business.

Commercial anchors work well with civic anchors should a civic campus as suggested in the West Fargo 2.0 Comprehensive plan be developed. The School District, Library, Government Services would provide for services for residents during daytime, while contributing community member's convenience as well as public identity. See Figure 18 (right).

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The City of West Fargo is clearly open for business. It's existing Renaissance Zone program offers tax incentives to qualifying residents and business owners who reinvest in the existing commercial and residential districts developing residential units and industrial developments. Approved zone projects are eligible for a five-year property tax exemption and state income tax exemptions.

Figure 18. Current Economic Initiatives

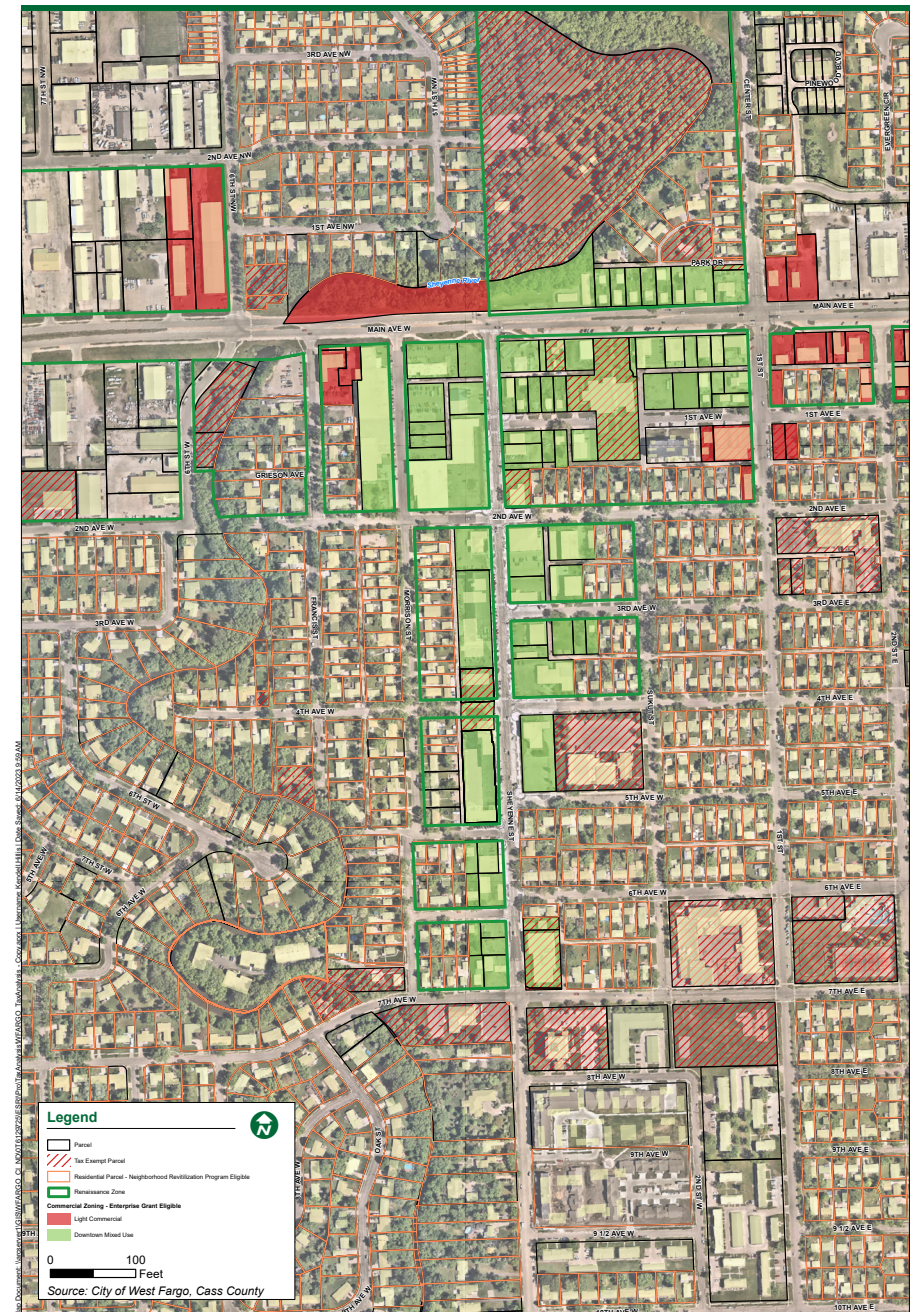


Figure 19 (right) shows the estimated market value per acre within the Downtown Yards area as well as which properties are eligible for tax incentives through the Renaissance Zone program. There is currently a large gap between the value of buildings in West Fargo and the Downtown Yards (lower). The city is encouraged to further promote the Renaissance Zone program to close this gap in property values.

Many of the high market value areas benefited from the City's Renaissance Incentives, which after 5 years of exemptions start generating tax revenues. The city should also consider attracting higher market value developments instead of those that are exempt from paying taxes in perpetuity.

Figure 19. *Downtown Property Taxes*



BUSINESS COMPETITION

The Downtown Yards faces competition from similar districts in the surrounding area, such as the West Fargo Lights District and Downtown Fargo. During busy event days and weekends, the Downtown Yards businesses compete for demand with neighboring districts, each offering unique destinations. To succeed, the Downtown Yards must create a distinctive environment to attract residents and visitors from both primary and secondary trade areas.

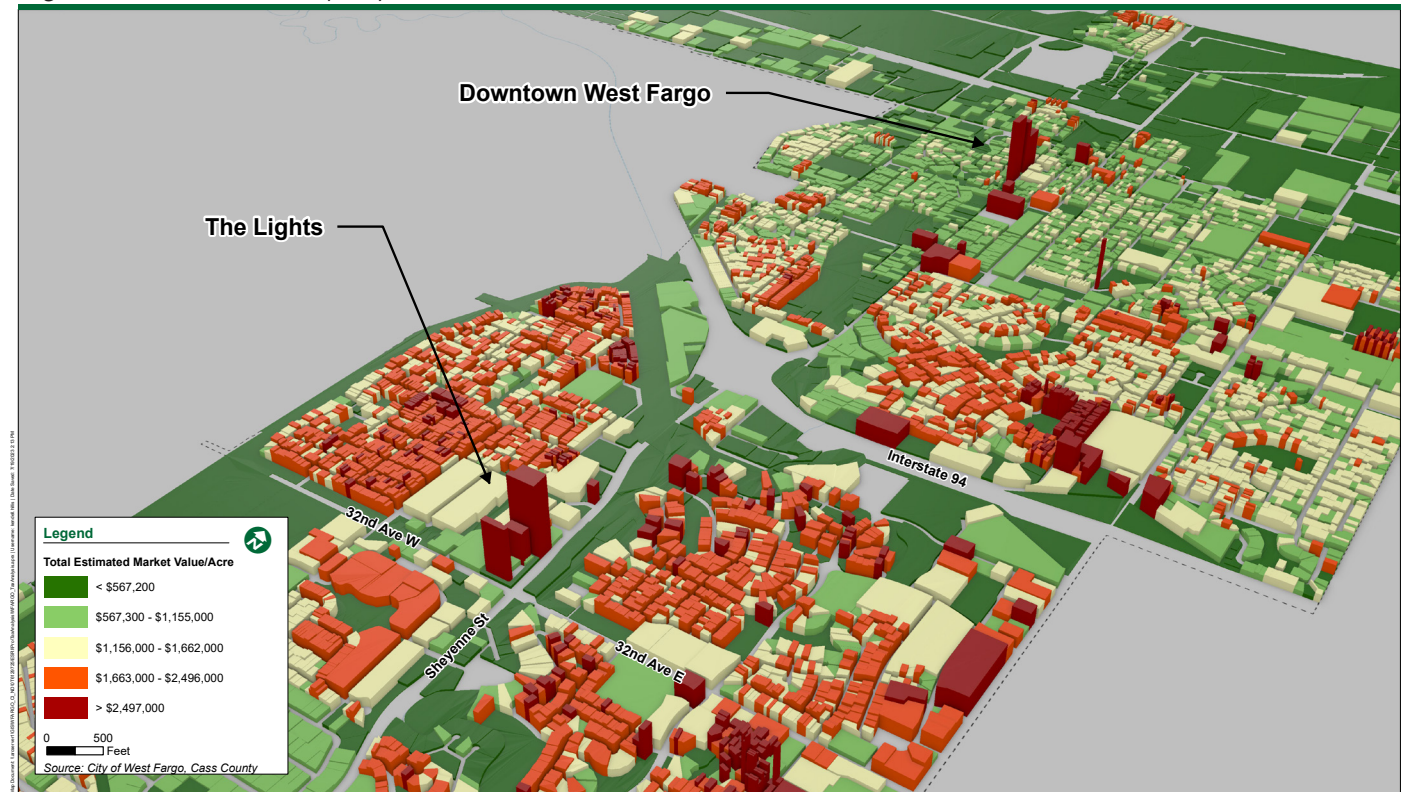
- Focus on catering to the two largest categories of residents: Young Families and Bright Young Professionals.
- Encourage the development of family-pet-friendly restaurants and promote programming aimed at children to attract young families.
- Create a safe streetscape for play to further appeal to young families.
- By investing in these areas and advertising them effectively, West Fargo can differentiate the Downtown Yards and fill a market gap not covered by nearby districts.

Figure 20 (right) shows the scale of market value between the Yards and the Lights. The Downtown Yards can gain more market value properties per acre by attracting and investing in higher density as well as higher quality developments.

RETAIL SALES PER CAPITA

- Retail Sales per Capital is commonly used as a metric to estimate the retail needs or demand of a community. It calculates the total retail sales in an area and divides it by the population.
- Total sales in the study area: \$78.2 million / 578 population = \$135,285 retail sales per capita.
- Median household income in the study area: \$56,787, providing a discretionary income of \$45,287.
- The difference between per capita sales and actual discretionary local income is approximately \$90,000, indicating a significant influx of shoppers from outside the study area.
- Strong demand for retail goods and services is evident due to the high retail sales per capita.
- However, this demand may not be sustained solely by local residents, as outside patrons, such as visitors or shoppers from neighboring areas, are needed to sustain retail activity.
- Retail sales per capita indicates potential growth opportunities for retail businesses in the greater region deriving from shoppers outside the downtown.
- By comparison, the primary trade area (2-mile buffer) has total retail sales of \$3,298,131,000 / 14,672 population = \$224,791 retail sales per capita, showing 60% more purchasing activity than Downtown Yards.
- Current local residents alone cannot sustain the Downtown Yards businesses.

Figure 20. Downtown Property Taxes – 32nd Ave



REVENUE INCREASE DUE TO POPULATION GROWTH

Assuming an annual population growth rate of 2.55% in the Downtown Yards trade area, potential business demand is projected to increase from \$78.2 million to \$88.7 million by 2028.

- This represents a \$10.5 million increase, assuming no inflation or deflation, which is a 13.3% growth from the current sales volume of \$78.2 million.
- There are currently 99 businesses in the Downtown Yards study area.
- It's important to recognize that businesses differ, and sales are not evenly distributed. For planning purposes, the average annual revenue for a business in the study area is estimated at \$790,000.
- Assuming no inflation, deflation, or growth in sales at existing businesses, the projected \$10.5 million in new sales resulting from 2.55% population growth could support the addition of 13 new businesses with an average annual revenue of \$790,000.

- Thirteen new businesses would fill existing vacant spaces, but additional businesses would be required to create a more vibrant and self-sustaining business district.
- To sustain the Downtown Yards' businesses beyond the potential 13 additional businesses with projected population growth, it is crucial to increase the density of housing in the downtown area and attract more visiting patrons from outside the study area.
- More residents with median to above average household incomes are needed in the downtown yards to financially support the downtown businesses

DOWNTOWN YARDS' RESIDENT DEMAND

The Downtown Yards has 20% of households that are below the poverty rate, 24% of household receive food stamps and 26% have one or more persons with disabilities in the household. Data analysis of resident's in the study area indicate that the highest demand for retail, goods and services include:

- Take out, delivery and fast food
- Casual dining
- Bakery
- Grocery store
- Convenience store
- Pet store, veterinary clinic, groomer
- Athletic store
- Shoe store

See Appendix 7: Study Area Residential Business Trend Analysis

DIVERSIFY BUSINESSES TO ATTRACT CONSUMERS FROM SECONDARY TRADE AREA

As shown above, the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Downtown Yards cannot support the businesses. To draw in consumers from outside the study area, the business mix needs to diversify to provide goods and services that appeal to both local residents and visitors looking for a unique experience. Once visitors are in the area for unique stores or businesses, they are likely to visit more basic or routine places such as the coffee shop, restaurants, etc. Examples of businesses that would appeal to a variety of people include:

- Businesses that provide classes such as swim school, cooking, music, arts and crafts, etc...
- Salon and spas (hair, nail, message, etc...)

- Bridal store
- Games such as bowling, ax-throwing, board games, video games
- Boutique clothing
- Ice cream or yogurt café
- Gift or souvenir shop
- Home decor
- Bicycle/running and ski/skate store
- Health food or supplements store

See Appendix 7 for more detailed analysis of the types of businesses that would appeal to the local residents as well as attract visitors.

Action Step 3.5 LEVERAGE AND AMPLIFY EXISTING AND REGIONAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS

A "Theme/Festival" districts, has been a recurring concept in discussion about the Downtown Yards. According to ICSC (International Council of Shopping Centers), typically range from 80,000 to 250,000 square feet of retail space. Downtown Yards falls on the lower end of this range and has some characteristics of a "Theme/Festival" district but lacks sufficient size to attract significant visitor traffic from the wider region. Notable events like West Fest and Cruise Night draw crowds, but Downtown Yards remains relatively unknown to many in the surrounding areas during non-event periods.

- To solidify the Downtown Yards as a "Theme/Festival" district, additional square footage (60,000-70,000 square feet) is needed. Such districts often have larger trade areas, reaching as far as 25-75 miles, attracting people for various events and trips.
- "Theme/Festival" districts align with evolving retail trends, particularly in the face of declines in certain retail categories due to online shopping. Resilient retail categories include food (specialty food, restaurants), entertainment (sporting, hobby, etc.), and services (personal care), all of which cater to the predominant customer profile in the Downtown Yards.

Action Step 5.5 PROMOTE THE DOWNTOWN YARDS

Visitors play a substantial role in the area's economic dynamics, often driven by events. Currently, there are mixed responses from business owners

regarding the impact of events on sales. It is crucial to strategize events that bolster retail sales and collaborate closely with merchants. Events that draw people into stores rather than diverting them away should be prioritized in event planning efforts.

PRIVATE REALM

Some of the Downtown Yards businesses in ground floor spaces of new mixed-use buildings, such as Grateful Cratefulls, Thunder Coffee, and the VFW, have creatively used their storefronts as marketing tools to draw in shoppers. Businesses have slowly started to implement branded signage and awnings, transparent windows, painted facades, and outdoor merchandise displays. To encourage potential customers to spend more time in the Downtown Yards, West Fargo should encourage the use of these techniques more widely by promoting parklets, outdoor seating, sidewalk sales, and painted sidewalks/concrete drives. The average pedestrian is willing to walk up to one-quarter of a mile (1320 feet) or roughly five minutes to a specific destination. Sheyenne street (from Main to 7th) has over 29,000 linear feet of which only 10% have storefronts. It would be important to increase active spaces and ground level storefronts to more than 30% of linear feet on Sheyenne. Creative uses are proposed for both the private and public realm in the Placemaking Chapter by enhancing the user experience in the Downtown Yards.

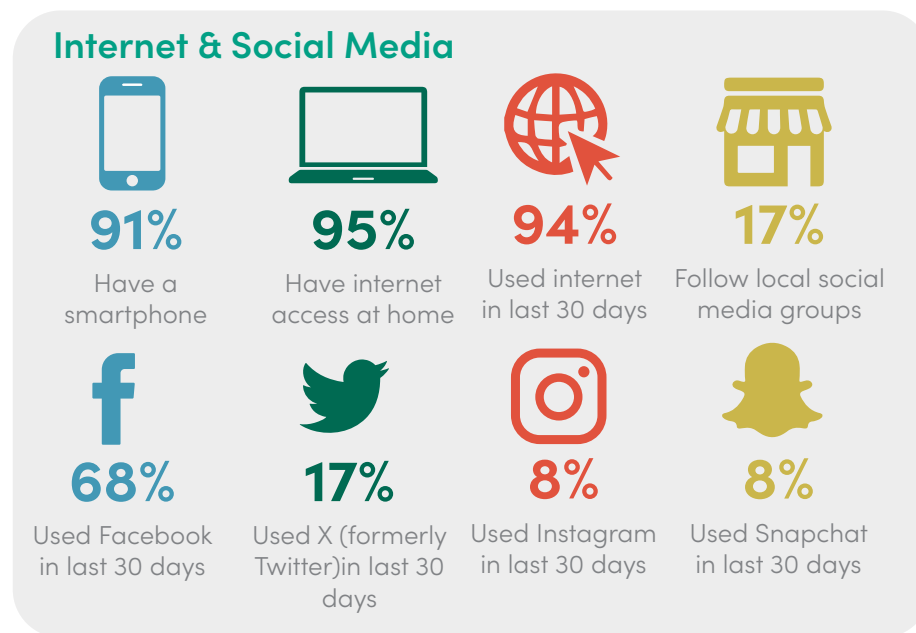
DOING BUSINESS IN DOWNTOWN YARDS

Restaurants in the downtown area are proactively promoting their businesses through social media and online review platforms. These initiatives have been independently financed and launched by individual businesses. The city could consider hiring a blogger to boost social media presence and local economic activity.

Currently, the Downtown Yards does not have a cohesive brand or comprehensive, collective marketing platform. In the absence of a strong downtown brand, each individual business must navigate its marketing independently. Establishing a downtown brand can effectively convey a cohesive set of offerings, attracting more visitors.

Another issue to address is the disparity in operating hours between retailers and restaurants and different operating hours all together. Having the same retail hours among different business owners that align with the restaurants' crowds related to breakfast-lunch and dinner would enhance local commerce.

Figure 21. Study Area: Internet & Social Media Usage



Action Step 6.2

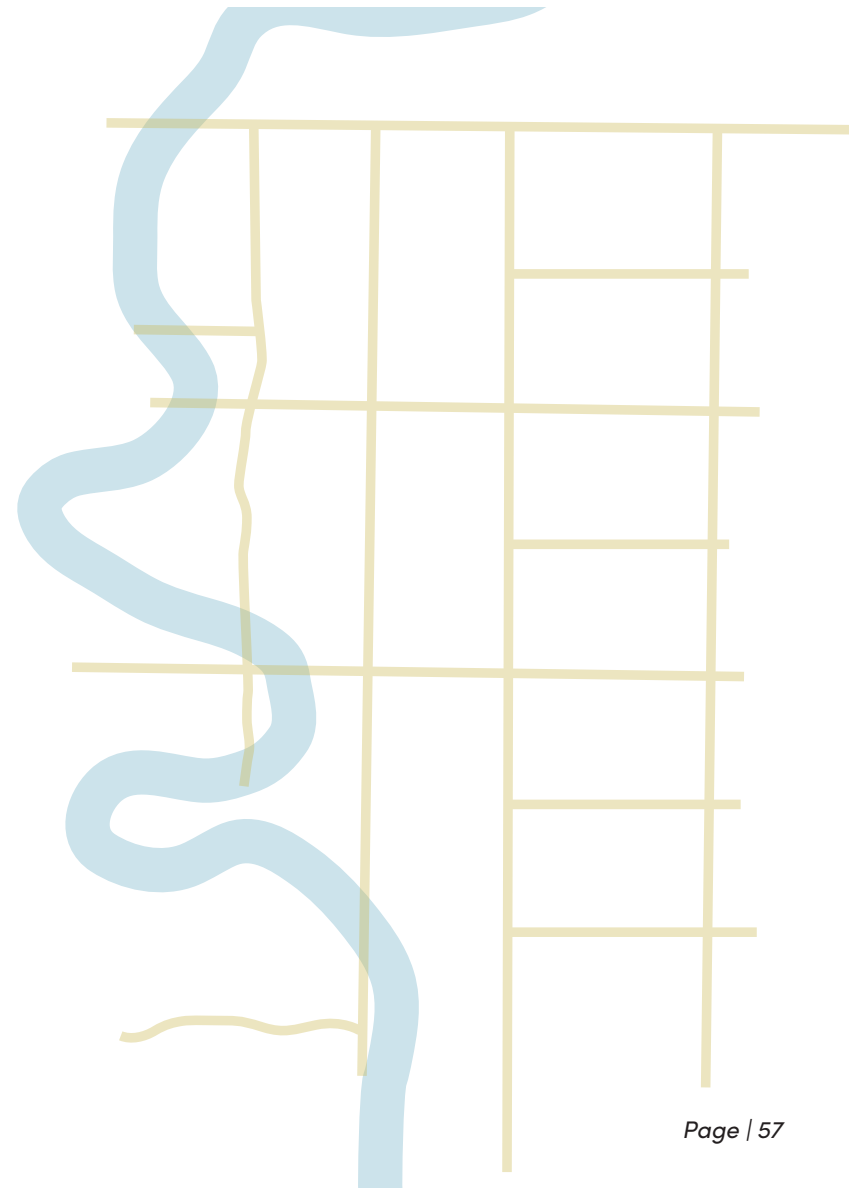
DEVELOP CHAMPIONS WITHIN BUSINESS AND CITY LEADERSHIP

For the success of these initiatives, it's crucial to secure support for administrative support as well as from organizations outside of government entities. The City of Fargo cannot be the only entity supporting this effort. Success will require both public and private participation. Consider the following key points:

- Hiring a “Downtown and Small Business Coordinator” to advocate for and liaise with downtown businesses. Starting as a part-time staff member to manage co-working and incubator spaces and identify passionate champions is essential.
- The role of a “Downtown and Small Business Coordinator” helps bridge resource and staff capacity gaps in managing and promoting downtown.
- Re-establish an active Business Association dedicated to the downtown made up of business, community, and government members.
- Partnering with local organizations and educational institutions to offer entrepreneurship training programs, workshops, and mentorship opportunities can establish the Downtown Yards as an attractive location for startups.
- Successful downtown retail strategies require collaboration with economic development partners from all sectors, including public sector, non-profits, and civic organizations.
- Implementing good downtown zoning and signage regulations that support vibrant environments is essential.
- Restructure PAAC as a Downtown Placemaking and Vibrancy Committee (DPVC) or formalize their mission, provide them a budget and/or ability to make budget recommendations. Task them with implementing specific recommendations from the Downtown Placemaking Master Plan.
- Collaboration among local government, businesses, residents, and community organizations is key to the successful implementation of these economic development ideas and revitalization efforts in downtown West Fargo.
- Public input highlights the desire for family-pet-friendly restaurants, experiential retail, parklets, and ambient entertainment, aligning with national trends to enhance the retail environment.

In conclusion, the retail market analysis for the Downtown Yards provides valuable insights into the area's current status and potential for transformation. Several key findings emerged from this analysis, highlighting the importance of attracting specific customer profiles, diversifying businesses, and creating a distinctive environment to compete effectively with neighboring districts.

Information in this chapter is sourced from ESRI GIS Business Analyst and GIS Aggregated data from County Assessor.





CHAPTER 5

PEDESTRIANS, PARKING & ACCESS

The top issues based on public input related to traffic and pedestrian safety, parking and access to businesses. This is a very complex issue; addressing it is imperative to the success of downtown West Fargo and will require a multifaceted approach.

Goal #3

focuses on enhancing pedestrian safety, walkability, and accessibility while optimizing parking solutions. This goal aims to transform the Downtown Yards into a pedestrian-friendly hub with a strong reputation for safety and accessibility as well as appropriate parking (Chapter 2 provides detailed insights into the current parking conditions in the Downtown Yards).

The following action steps were developed with public input and aim to address accessibility and parking issues and foster walkability, pedestrian safety and enhance the public realm.

- **2.1 ADDRESS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ALONG SHEYENNE AND TRANSITION FROM NEIGHBORHOODS**
- **2.2 ADDRESS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ACROSS MAIN**
- **2.5 ADDRESS PARKING CONCERNS**
- **2.6 PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED INTERACTIONS**

In addition to the above actions, improving transit service and providing for micro-transit facilities such as shared bike or scooter for people to use to get around downtown quickly can reduce parking demand, improve access and increase foot traffic in the Downtown Yards.

● Action Step 2.1 ADDRESS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ALONG SHEYENNE AND TRANSITION FROM NEIGHBORHOODS

Prioritize making accessibility investments to connect Armour Park to Sheyenne street as well as the neighborhoods north, east, west and south of study area, making sidewalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian crossings compliant for individuals with disabilities.

- Design protected bike lanes separated from vehicular traffic to encourage safe cycling along Sheyenne and into the neighborhoods. Connect to bike lanes and trails beyond the study area.
- Develop an area map of points of interest and where there are sidewalks or trails connected to the Downtown Yards. This can be done with an app or online version for easy access and updating.

● Action Step 2.2

ADDRESS PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ACROSS MAIN

In this section, “safety” refers to sense of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury due to accident, rather than concerns over individual well-being or personal security. The Downtown Yards aspires to be recognized as a safe and welcoming destination for pedestrians, distinct from the high-speed, car-oriented atmosphere of Main Street. This reputation centers on traffic safety for all road users, including cars, bikes, and pedestrians and pets.



Crosswalk design by Graham Coreil-Allen in Baltimore, MD

- Improve street lighting at crosswalks and pedestrian-heavy areas, enhancing nighttime visibility.
- Implement traffic-calming measures like speed bumps, raised crosswalks, and curb extensions to reduce vehicle speeds in pedestrian zones.
- Ensure well-maintained sidewalks and clearly marked crosswalks near schools, parks, and transit stops. Even though the curb and pedestrian islands are installed, the crosswalk at Main and Sheyenne (at the light in front of Sandy’s Donuts) is unmarked and missing. Consider providing a pathway from north side of Main to Armour Park. Deploy pedestrian-activated traffic signals at crosswalks, providing dedicated crossing times. Install pedestrian islands at wider road sections to offer safe resting points during crossings. Implement visually appealing crosswalks with vibrant designs along Sheyenne and extending into the neighborhoods.



Rapid Flashing Beacons and enhancing street lighting could add illumination and increase sense of safety. Using programmable LED street lights could create unique attraction and augment the Downtown Yards experience.

RRFB crossing example

- Install bollards to block off Sheyenne to pedestrianize the "Festival Themed" Street concept.
- Work with North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) to implement crosswalk improvements such as adding striping at the Main and Sheyenne stoplight and explore feasibility and funding for a pedestrian bridge or tunnel and trail to Armour Park.
- Create safety education and awareness program
 - Conduct public awareness campaigns targeting pedestrians and drivers, emphasizing the significance of pedestrian safety
 - Conduct public safety awareness campaign to remind drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists of traffic rules and shared responsibility of create safe movement through the area; incorporate campaign in the Downtown Yards events and activities
 - Establish community task force dedicated to pedestrian safety to gather public input, discuss issues and vet solutions
 - Collaborate with local schools to educate students on safe crossing practices and establish "Safe Routes to School" program that encourages walking and biking



Bollard design example

- Organize community walks to raise awareness of pedestrian safety issues and identify specific concerns within different neighborhoods.
- Do targeted traffic and pedestrian rule enforcement in the study area to discourage unsafe behavior
 - Enforce traffic laws related to pedestrian safety, emphasizing yielding the right-of-way at crosswalks and obeying speed limits on Main and Sheyenne and in school zones
 - Adopt a Complete Streets policy that prioritizes the safety and convenience of all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

To understand if these strategies are working, it will be important to collect and monitor accident data in the study area. The city should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these safety initiatives and make necessary adjustments.

Set priorities for recommendations above based on city budget and urgency, then integrate into CIP.

Action Step 2.5

ADDRESS PARKING CONCERNS

The public identified parking as a top issue within the downtown area. This study focused on digging more into understanding this issue. As noted in Chapter 2: Existing Conditions, there are over 1000 parking spaces within the study area; which is similar to the number of spaces in 2016. Since 2016, the city has redesigned and reconstructed Sheyenne and several new mixed-use buildings have been built. As a result, there has been a nearly 100% increase in parking space usage during peak business hours between 2016 and 2023. On the one hand, this shows that there is an increase in economic activity and interest in being in the Downtown Yards. However, this also means there have been changes to people habits and expectations on how they get to their destination.

Based on conversations with businesses and area residents, there are several issues:

- The primary way people get to the Downtown Yards is via private vehicle
- There is limited transit service to provide an alternative way to get to and from the area
- Visitors and even some residents may not be aware of where they can park, when and for how long
- Parking signage is missing, inconsistent, or confusing; it can be challenging for drivers to locate available public parking
- Navigating the downtown area to find parking can be complicated, especially for newcomers

- Many off-street parking lots are privately owned; some lots note unauthorized people may be towed which creates a fear of being towed and may deter people from parking in lots; even those that are open to the public
- People want the ability to park in front of the business they want to visit and often can't because the on-street parking is occupied



Parking sign example

It should be noted, through public engagement and observation at several larger special events, there isn't an issue with parking. Event attendees park in private lots that are opened to the public for those events or park in the surrounding neighborhoods and walk a few blocks.

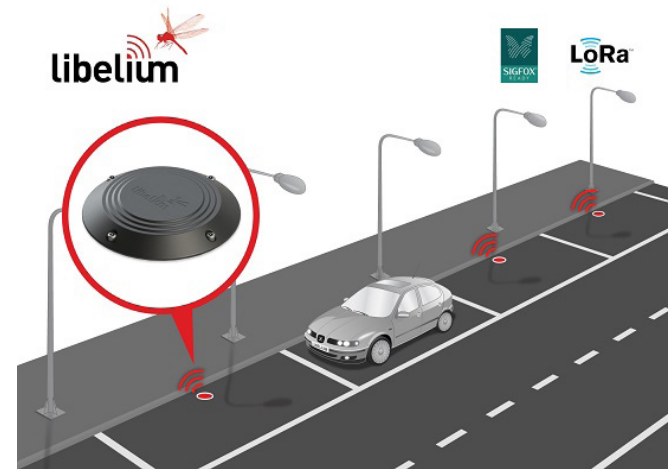
Four-fifths of on-street parking spaces on Sheyenne or within one block of Sheyenne on the cross streets remain unused during peak usage, underscores the need for improved management. The analysis suggests that there is sufficient parking to support the businesses, residents and events; the issue is how the parking spaces are allocated, used and marked (signage). To address these issues and bridge the gap between perception and reality, the city should consider implementing the following strategies:



30 minute parking sign example

- Design and install a standardized parking signage system that provides clear, consistent, and visible instruction to drivers. This would include:
 - Blue "P" signs to note public parking lots
 - Designating angled parking in front of businesses as short term parking for quick trips and support turnover instead of all day parking
 - Work with private lot owners to implement consistent signage to indicate which lots are reserved for their employees and customers and when the lots may be used by the public
 - Brand the parking with the city logo or brand

- Launch a public education campaign to inform residents and visitors about the actual parking inventory, where they can park and the steps being taken to improve parking management and signage.



Parking app platform system example

- Pilot a campaign to encourage walking in the Downtown Yards and promoting the benefits such as increasing foot traffic by businesses, building community, improving health and enjoying new streetscape improvements
- Require new developments to include underground parking for residents and employees and provide space for deliveries and parking on the back or side of the building
- Parking Apps: Develop a parking app that provides real-time information about available parking spaces. This app can help drivers easily locate and navigate to parking options, alleviating concerns about finding a spot. The tech-savvy demographic can benefit from a parking app that identifies available parking spaces in real-time.

See Appendix 9 for more details.

By addressing these factors and implementing proactive measures, the city can improve the parking experience and ensure that the downtown area thrives as a welcoming and accessible destination for all. Bridging the gap between perception and reality is essential for the success and vibrancy of the Downtown Yards. Active Parking Management, utilizing real-time data for parking occupancy, wayfinding, artful enhancements of mundane parking elements driven by a more welcoming tone can optimize parking availability and enhance the parking experience. See Appendix 9 for more detailed analysis.

Future Parking Recommendations

In order to prepare the downtown for future growth and calibrate parking spaces to the future parking needs it will be important to right size parking requirements. Calibrating future parking needs with future growth is a complex and dynamic challenge that requires considering various factors, such as population growth, urbanization, mobility trends, land use, environmental impact, and consumer preferences. To adapt to new trends, parking providers may need to rethink their business models, strategies, and capabilities.

The following are recommendations for future of parking needs:

Parking Deck: Although current data and public opinion do not necessitate a parking deck, planning for future needs remains crucial. A feasibility study is recommended to assess constraints and cost estimates to consider the viability of a downtown parking deck. If this is to actualize, we recommend requesting that exterior of the deck align with the art installations selected and that facade be enhanced with artful installations.

Welcome New Trends: Accommodate and be ready for the shared ride trend by providing dedicated parking/drop off for shared driving or automated driving cars.

Reciprocal Parking Agreements: Reciprocal parking agreements are contracts between two or more parties that grant each other the right to use their respective parking spaces for a specified purpose and duration. For example, two neighboring businesses may agree to share their parking lots during peak hours or special events, or a school or church may allow the city to use its parking garage during an event. Reciprocal parking agreements can benefit both parties by increasing the availability and efficiency of parking, reducing costs and congestion, and fostering cooperation and goodwill.

Activating empty spaces in the community for temporary or permanent parking purposes. For example, some cities may allow residents to use vacant lots, alleys, sidewalks, or lawns for parking during certain hours or days. Alternatively, some cities may turn empty spaces into public spaces that can be used for various activities such as art, recreation, or socializing. This can make use of underutilized land, improve the livability and vibrancy of the community, and promote alternative modes of transportation.

Hidden parking: Large setbacks create greater distances between buildings and people, providing a less urban experience. Placing parking underground and behind a building is recommended for downtown West Fargo, rather than in the front. Placing parking in the rear of the building provides an opportunity to activate the pathway between the rear parking and the front building entrances

with features like lighting, artistic enclosures, or elements that transform parking into a more engaging experience. Underground parking also offers several compelling advantages such as enhanced aesthetics which preserves the visual appeal of the building's front, creating a more attractive and inviting streetscape.

Improved Safety: Underground parking provides added security and reduces vehicle-related risks on the street, enhancing safety for pedestrians and drivers. It also reduces noise pollution and uses land more efficiently by maximizing valuable space. This requirement could be well implemented when properties are redeveloped or for new construction in tandem with requiring zero front setbacks with parking access from the alleys. This is similar to traditional core neighborhoods where parking in the rear from alleys is commonplace.

Fee in lieu of parking: Often removing parking minimums is seen as a great incentive to developers, however, if this is too drastic of a consideration for West Fargo, it may be more appropriate to consider allowing developer to pay instead of providing parking. This may help build the funds for a city parking deck. Establish fee-in-lieu of parking program. The revenue from fees could offset the City's public transit and public parking costs.

Action Step 2.6

PROVIDE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED INTERACTIONS

Pedestrian-Friendly Infrastructure: Enhancing pedestrian safety in West Fargo requires a multifaceted approach encompassing infrastructure, education, and enforcement. Pedestrianization is not just a top priority identified by public input, but the art installations selected for the Downtown Yards will require enhanced pedestrian safety due to the fact that it is highly interactive. Careful safety considerations will be needed based on the nature of the interaction when locating the art in the public realm. Improving pedestrian safety in West Fargo is a complex undertaking that necessitates a holistic strategy encompassing various elements, including infrastructure enhancements, educational initiatives, and rigorous enforcement measures. These measures have been prioritized not only in response to valuable public input but also due to the unique and interactive nature of the art installations chosen for the Downtown Yards.

Some creative traffic calming and pedestrianization installation are:

- **Chicanes with Art:** Chicanes are designed to slow down traffic by introducing a zigzag pattern in the roadway. These can be enhanced with colorful pavement markings or artistic designs that make the driving experience more engaging.
- **Interactive Crosswalks:** Crosswalks with interactive elements like musical tiles that produce sounds when stepped on or LED lights that

change colors as pedestrians cross can add an element of fun to road crossings.

- **Speed Tables with Public Art:** Speed tables are similar to speed bumps but wider. They can be paired with public art installations or colorful mosaics to make them visually appealing.



Interactive crosswalk example



Parklet example



Street art example

- **Temporary Parklets:** Converting parking spaces into temporary parklets with seating, greenery, and public art can slow down traffic and create vibrant community spaces.
- **Play Streets:** Temporarily closing streets to traffic and transforming them into play areas with games like hopscotch, giant chess, or basketball hoops can create safe and enjoyable spaces for pedestrians.
- **Raised Pedestrian Crossings:** These raised platforms for pedestrians not only make road crossings safer but can also be painted with colorful designs or murals.
- **Decorative Bollards:** Installing decorative bollards at pedestrian crossings or along sidewalks can serve as both safety measures and art installations. Bollards can be painted, sculpted, or designed to reflect the character of the community.
- **Sculptural Speed Humps:** Speed humps can be creatively designed as sculptural elements that align with the city's theme or culture, making them more appealing to the eye.
- **Bike Lanes with Art:** Bike lanes can be adorned with colorful pavement markings or murals that not only delineate the space but also make cycling more enjoyable.
- **Colorful Crosswalks:** Vibrantly colored crosswalks, often referred to as "rainbow crosswalks," not only enhance safety but also celebrate diversity and inclusivity in the community.

- **Wayfinding:** Implementing a comprehensive wayfinding system throughout West Fargo is essential. This includes installing directional signs, maps, and landmarks that guide pedestrians to popular destinations, including art installations, parks, and other points of interest. Effective wayfinding signage should be clear, easy to understand, and strategically placed at key decision points.



Beacon Park, Irving, CA Park

See Appendix 9 for more detailed analysis.

By integrating these elements into a comprehensive pedestrian safety strategy, West Fargo can create an environment where residents and visitors feel secure while walking and interacting with their surroundings. Remember that while these installations can add an element of fun and visual interest to roadways, their primary purpose is to improve road safety. They should be designed and implemented with safety considerations as a top priority.





CHAPTER 6

INFILL, DENSITY & REDEVELOPMENT

INFILL, DENSITY & REDEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Placemaking Master Plan builds on West Fargo's Comprehensive Plan, known as [West Fargo 2.0](#), which categorizes the downtown area as the G-4A Core - Retrofit Growth Sector. This classification promotes a growth strategy centered around pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, fostering a connected urban environment. Map 1: [Deferred Development and Growth Map](#) identifies the key growth areas in city and downtown (located in the "Around the plan" section of the Comp Plan).

The Comprehensive Plan also provides guidance for the revitalization and urban infill of the Downtown Yards area. While many of the strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan remain relevant and have been put into action, some buildings in the Downtown Yards have stagnated. Commercial spaces in this area have faced extended periods of vacancy, exceeding one year. Furthermore, there has been limited to no new construction, refurbishment, or expansion in areas beyond Sheyenne Street. Epic's development, however, has successfully created and leased residential spaces, with minimal to no vacancies in rental units within the study area. This demonstrates a strong demand for multi-family housing, particularly from young professionals and families. Nonetheless, the limited supply hinders efforts to attract residents to the Downtown Yards. Therefore, the implementation of policies and incentives to promote redevelopment and urban infill is essential for increasing density along the Sheyenne corridor.

Goal 4

West Fargo is projected to experience city-wide population growth of 2.55% annually until 2027. If the Downtown Yards study area were to experience similar growth, it would add 15 new residents each year. However, population growth in the downtown area is constrained to the existing homes unless new housing is added. To support both population growth, jobs and economic development, the city could promote infill development, increasing intensity and scale of development and redevelopment of vacant or underutilized property. The following action steps are intended to achieve this goal:

- ***4.1 ADAPTIVE REUSE OF UNDERUTILIZED BUILDINGS AND SITES**
- ***6.6 MAINTAIN EXISTING HOUSING STOCK**
- ***6.7 INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS**

As discussed in Chapter 4 - Business & Economic Development, increasing the number of people downtown is key to increasing economic development in the Downtown Yards. The following strategies are recommended to support

G-4A Core - Retrofit Growth Sector The Core - Retrofit Growth Sectors are areas that are mostly developed but still contain underutilized parcels. They were developed in a conventional, auto-oriented suburban pattern. New development, redevelopment, or the reuse of existing land and buildings could be encouraged to better meet the local goal of achieving more walkable and bikeable corridors and a better-connected village core. Additional growth and development within West Fargo is most desirable within these areas due to the presence of existing infrastructure and proximity of services. The plan envisions that most mixed-use development in the next decades will occur in this growth sector.

higher intensity uses, increase employees downtown, and increase foot traffic for visitors and consumers.

** numbers indicate original Action Steps number - see Appendix 5*

- Update West Fargo's [existing zoning ordinance](#) Downtown Mixed Use (DMU) zoning district, which is predominantly used along Sheyenne Street, (the only district that supports mixed-use developments) to better implement the City's vision for the Downtown Yards. The zoning ordinance could be updated to include:
- Revise the uses of the Downtown Mixed-Use District to remove items that don't fit with the vision and focusing family-friendly uses on retail and, food establishments at the ground level, while placing maker spaced in back of ground levels and residential at upper floors. See Chapters 3, 4, and 5 for more details. Consider prohibiting non-urban uses (drive thru's, non-food/drink/retail uses, self-service storage, etc.)
- It is important to correct the misconception that in mixed-use zoning, retail must occupy ground-level in new constructions. However, the zoning code doesn't mandate retail but requires that 50% of a building's ground-level facade facing a street consists of clear glass. Consider establishing ground-floor business frontage/activity requirements for Sheyenne St frontage.
- Reduce all setbacks from Sheyenne and Main to allow buildings to hug the road
- Create a civic campus with public agency offices and services in downtown, which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, is allowed in the DMU zoning district and would draw people to the area
- Establish an employment center, collaborative/co-working spaces in the Downtown Yards to retain workers and lessen the daily migration of workforce out of the downtown area

- Although the city provides incentives to infill existing commercial properties with the Enterprise Grants, it could draw greater interest by providing financial support for
- Update the C-Light Commercial District language to ensure that new developments in the downtown area support the vision for a vibrant, walkable area by requiring parking behind the building and reducing the front or street set back. Since changes to the C zoning district would apply city-wide, consider making this an overlay requirement in the Downtown Yards or a new zoning district only applicable to these areas.
- Create a Land Trust to make economic and business startups more affordable. See Appendix 12.

See Appendix 9 for more detailed description and discussion about recommended strategies.

● **Action Step 4.1** **ADAPTIVE REUSE OF UNDERUTILIZED BUILDINGS AND SITES**

Some existing commercial structures in the area are not fully utilized for their originally intended purposes. To make the most of these underutilized assets, there is an opportunity to repurpose them for mixed uses. Incentives and support can be offered to encourage property owners and developers to undertake this transformation. This approach not only maximizes the use of existing structures but also contributes to the community's housing/commercial options and overall revitalization efforts. Incentivize the adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and sites can be achieved through various strategies and policies:

- **TAX INCENTIVES:** Offer property tax abatements or credits for property owners who convert commercial buildings into residential units. These incentives can be structured to gradually decrease over time to encourage prompt redevelopment.
- **ZONING AND REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY:** Streamline zoning and permitting processes to make it easier for property owners to convert underutilized property into new residential, commercial, or mixed-use so that no land entitlement permits (public hearings like condition use permit) are needed if the use change falls within the same land use category or is considered by the planning director to not create more impacts than the original use. This might involve adjusting zoning regulations, parking requirements, or building codes.

- **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** Provide low-interest loans, grants, or subsidies to property owners or developers to help cover the costs of conversion. These funds can be used for building renovations, infrastructure improvements, or other necessary changes.
- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION CREDITS:** Offer tax credits for the restoration and conversion of historically significant commercial buildings into residential properties. This encourages the preservation of local heritage.
- **BUILD A BETTER TAX-BASE:** Along Sheyenne intensify mixed-uses with variety of housing types, office settings, retail, entertainment, and dining options. These create a higher tax base because the "stacked uses" allow for denser development and have a "built in" customer base for the uses on the ground floor.
- **MARKETING AND PROMOTION:** Promote the benefits of adaptive reuse to property owners and developers. Highlight the potential cost savings, environmental benefits, and positive community impact.
- **ATTAINABLE/AFFORDABLE HOUSING REQUIREMENTS:** Tie incentives to the inclusion of affordable housing units within the converted spaces to address housing affordability concerns.
- **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** Provide property owners with access to experts or consultants who can offer guidance on the conversion process, including architectural, engineering, or financial aspects.

Combining several of these strategies can create a more comprehensive and attractive package for property owners and developers considering the adaptive reuse of underutilized lots and structures.

● **Action Steps 6.6 & 6.7** **MAINTAIN EXISTING HOUSING STOCK (6.6) AND INCREASE HOUSING OPTIONS (6.7)**

City-wide, West Fargo is experiencing a population growth of 2.55% per year. Increasing the population of the Downtown Yards will support economic development, increase tax base and accommodate growth. In order to support population growth, the city could help maintain and improve the existing single-family neighborhoods surrounding the downtown area. Most of these homes are well maintained and provide affordable housing options for young families and moderate income residents.

The residential districts within the study area currently adhere to traditional residential zoning regulations. These districts typically feature front setbacks of 25 feet and allow for maximum lot coverage ranging from 30% to 40%. Specifically, the R-3 district adjacent to Sheyenne Street may find these front setbacks restrictive. Reduced setbacks and increasing lot coverage allowances could provide a more efficient use of land and kick start renewed interest in development. Given the recommendations outlined in this plan, it may be necessary to revisit and revise the zoning regulations for these districts. Alternatively, the creation of a new district could be advantageous, facilitating the redevelopment and infill development of residential areas within the study area.

Land Use Changes and Transitional Areas

In order to effectively oversee the growth of the Downtown Yards area, it is essential for the City to provide a strategic framework that guides development systematically, preventing haphazard or disproportionate growth. The establishment of a transitional development framework can set clear standards, ensuring a well-organized and deliberate approach to development.

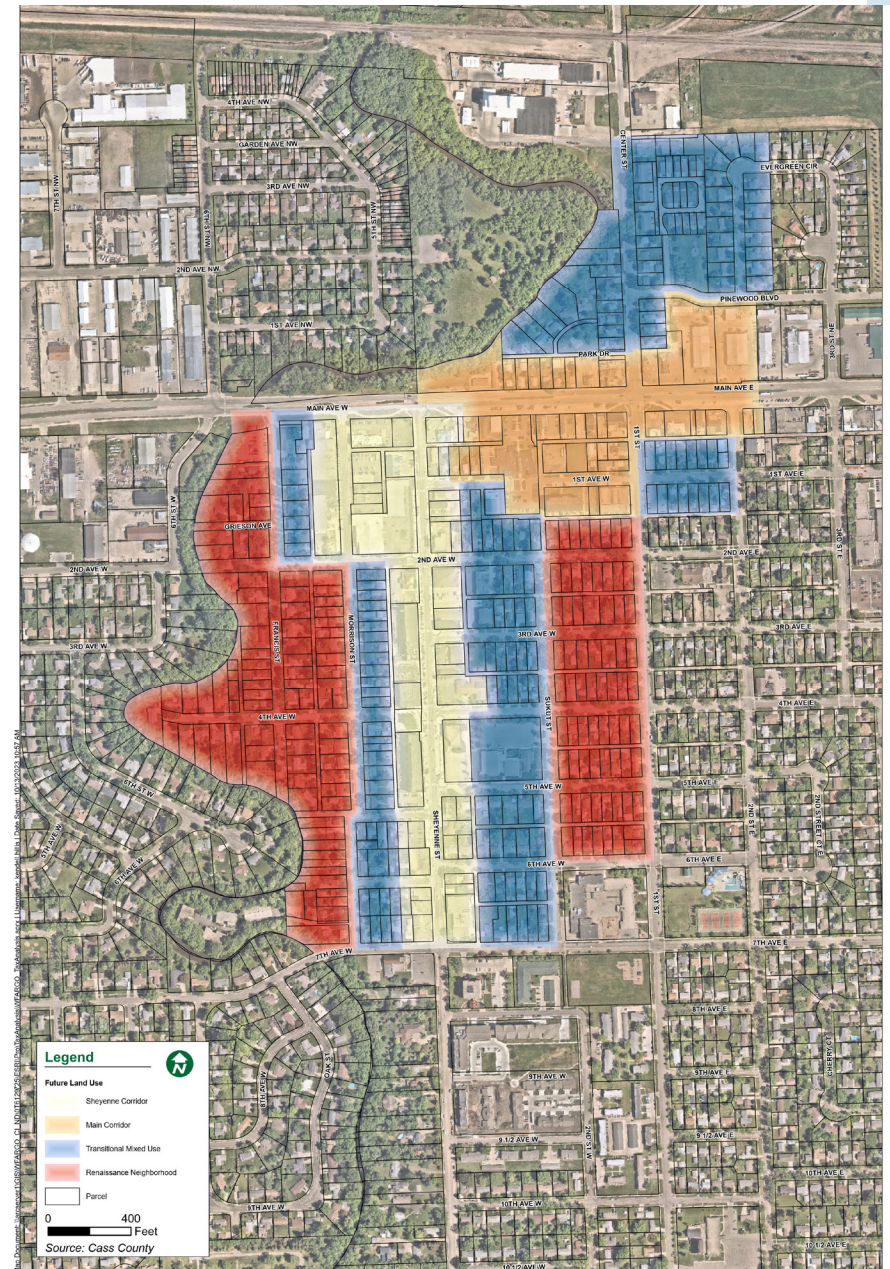
The Future Land Use Map (**Figure 22**) identifies 4 major districts: Sheyenne Corridor, Transitional Mixed-Use, Renaissance Neighborhood and Main Corridor. These districts foster specific uses and functions that amplify housing and commercial options with a graduated transition that can develop a better scaled form and function for the downtown.

The distribution of residential density should be a deliberate and thoughtfully planned endeavor. Presently, there is an evident shortfall of available residential units in the study area, as evidenced by a vacancy rate of 6.7%. While the construction of five-story buildings with ground-floor commercial or retail spaces and residential units above is a common practice in city centers and downtown areas, as it optimizes land usage and accommodates a greater population in a compact space, it is essential to also consider alternative methods for achieving density that can cultivate more dynamic and active communities.

For future residential land use considerations, the proposed uses correlate with existing zoning. The density standards are proposed to achieve the goal of providing housing options and supply: Based on the limited amount of land still available for development, new housing development should be concentrated around mixed-use areas downtown.

- Total Study Area Acres: 164 acres
- Total # of Residential parcels: 313
- Total Housing Units: 499
- Total Residential Acres: 146.9 acres which is 89.5% of Study Area
- Existing Density: unity/acre: 3.39 housing units/acre

Figure 22. Future Land Use



Zoning District	Future Land Use	Primary Residential Structure	Proposed Density within Downtown Yards
R-1	Renaissance Neighborhood	Single Family Dwelling Townhomes/ Twin Homes	5-7 units/acre 1-3 units/lot
R-2	Transitional Mixed Use	Townhomes/Twin Homes Mutliplexes	8-16 units/acre 2-6 units/lot
R-3	Sheyenne Corridor	Multifamily Apartments	16+ units/acre 8+ units/lot

The densities proposed attempt to fill the need for middle-housing densities and types, while bridging the scale with incremental densities from high-rise to single family. These are not intended as prescriptive densities for zoning amendments, but as examples and recommendations for future consideration during upcoming code updates.

The study area encompasses two distinct zones: the Sheyenne Corridor with its surrounding neighborhoods, and the Main Corridor with its adjacent neighborhoods. In considering the revitalization of the entire study area, we propose the following enhancements in a step-by-step manner for both commercial and residential purposes: See Appendix 10 — Housing Density.

ALLOW APPROPRIATE SCALE MIXED-USE IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

A more encompassing approach to integrate mixed-use properties into the existing residential zones of the study area could entail the creation of a new zoning or overlay districts specifically tailored to encompass R-2 and R-3 zoned properties within a quarter mile of Sheyenne Street, typical distance people are willing to walk or travel to access goods/services. There's potential to extend this concept to include R-1 zoned parcels as well. It's important to note that many R-1 zoned parcels are situated beyond a quarter-mile radius from Sheyenne.

Sheyenne Corridor

The Sheyenne Corridor is envisioned as an ideal location for intensive development featuring tall buildings, making it suitable for high-density residential and mixed uses, including businesses on the ground or second levels. As a significant portion of the Sheyenne Corridor is already developed, infill strategies will be crucial. Establishing strategic partnerships with private landowners and developers may be necessary to bring improvements to various segments of the corridor.

To facilitate infill development, the City may need to allocate funds for property

acquisition. While the City may not seek direct involvement in real estate, focused efforts on specific parcels through acquisition may become useful towards housing revitalization. Some communities have achieved success by acquiring properties and subsequently soliciting design and development proposals through a competitive, public process. (Fargo FHRA, Bismarck BHA, Grand Forks GFHA).

Blighted or deteriorating properties are scattered throughout the study area, with the Sheyenne Corridor being particularly affected. The City could explore a program to acquire and then resell these blighted properties. Such a program would require substantial development time and extensive public input. Ideally, it would involve acquiring blighted properties and then selling them through a competitive, public bidding process, subject to review by a public entity, such as the Economic Development Advisory Committee or Planning and Zoning Commission, and approval by the City Commission.

The City could also establish more precise criteria for defining “blight” to better guide these efforts. In urban planning and redevelopment, “blight” typically includes conditions such as physical deterioration (visible or hidden), economic distress, social problems, environmental issues, obsolescence, vacancy, inadequate infrastructure, and public health and safety concerns.

MIXED-USE AND PROPERTY IMPROVEMENT

Traditionally, the ground floor has been considered ideal for commercial uses; however, the high commercial vacancy rates in Downtown Yards area necessitate a reevaluation. There is a demand for additional residential units, particularly along the Sheyenne Corridor, driven by market demand. Encouraging development based on market demand and exploring pseudo-residential-commercial uses, such as work/live hybrid units, could be advantageous.

Beyond retail, the area could foster innovative street-level office spaces, including open-concept spaces suitable for co-working and incubator purposes.

Neglected or stagnant properties along the Sheyenne Corridor diminish the area's aesthetics and appeal. Redeveloping these properties should be a priority to enhance the overall attractiveness of the corridor.

Given its status as a major thoroughfare, the Sheyenne Corridor could be targeted for additional Metro Transit Bus locations. These locations should align with the goal of a quarter to half-mile walk to transit stops. The current transit stop at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and 7th Avenue might be repositioned off Sheyenne Street, and additional stops could be considered to improve accessibility.

The Comprehensive Plan's Economy chapter indicates that a higher number of businesses to residents (mixed use) will build a well-balanced micro-economy downtown.

Transitional Mixed Use **(Morrison Street and Sukuts Street)** **Enhancements**

This area boasts substantial developments that span the entire block of Sheyenne from west to east.

Introducing light commercial uses in this area, either independently or alongside residential purposes, provides an alternative to the primary commercial corridor on Sheyenne. These uses typically have a lower intensity and can be accommodated with on-street parking or limited off-street parking for employees. Potential businesses could include co-working spaces, start-ups, incubator facilities, biomedical offices, and technology-oriented enterprises.

To prevent uniform or monotonous development and promote an eclectic architectural style that complements existing neighborhoods, the City may consider establishing aesthetic guidelines. Creating Design Standards or Architectural Guidelines could help guide the redevelopment of this area and the broader the Downtown Yards region. These guidelines would be essential in ensuring architectural and design diversity among neighboring properties.

Renaissance Neighborhood **(1-3 Dwelling Units with a 2-Story Minimum)**

This type of development is already actively encouraged and permitted under the existing zoning ordinance however, it must be encouraged further in order to supply the missing and much needed middle housing (townhomes, twinhomes, duplex, triples and quadplex) density and typology in the downtown. While density often exceeds what townhouses or multiplexes can offer, addressing the missing middle density remains a key recommendation for improving the downtown scale. Multiplexes can serve various residential and limited commercial purposes.

Encouraging property owners to enhance the visual and aesthetic appeal of their current properties, especially older housing stock, is a common challenge for many cities. Even though the city offers the renaissance grants for both

"C" DISTRICT OR LIGHT COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

4-427.1. Statement of intent: The provisions of the C are intended to provide areas of commercial establishments to which the public requires direct and frequent access, but which are not characterized either by constant heavy trucking other than stocking and delivery of light retail goods, or by any other nuisance factor than the incidental noise of the congregation of people and passenger vehicles.

commercial and residential projects and provides a five-year property tax exemption and state income tax exemptions, a targeted home program that provides funds and labor for home renovation both interior and exterior is recommended. As the area undergoes improvements, it's crucial to ensure that existing property owners are not only incentivized to stay but also to reinvest in their properties.

Allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a by-right provision can be instrumental in creating additional density. To facilitate these developments while preserving the area's character, certain requirements should be considered. These may include ensuring size of the ADU is smaller than the main dwelling and implementing restrictive covenants that prevent the two uses (main dwelling and ADU) from being sold separately. Paying close attention to architectural and aesthetic considerations is vital to maintaining the neighborhood's distinctive character, ensuring ADUs designed to harmonize with existing structures.

West Fargo median HH income

(\$83,083) can afford a home costing up to \$248,477 (@ \$200/sf) which yields a home up to: 1,300 sf max. While Study Area HH income (\$56,787) can afford a home costing up to \$169,361 which is an even smaller home up to 850 sf. Smaller and denser home units are most suitable for the land and incomes present in the downtown.



Twinhome example



Townhome example



1-3 Plex example

Main Corridor Enhancements

The Main Corridor, characterized by buildings ranging from 2 to 4 stories, is designated for high-density land use with commercial activities, especially ground-floor or second-level walk-in businesses. Main Street is more conducive to auto-oriented businesses even as far as a few blocks east of the Main and Sheyenne intersection. The south side of Main Ave along the frontage road offers opportunities for short-stop establishments, such as food services, which could be without seating or feature limited seating options. Enhancing transit services on Main Avenue should be considered, as it is currently underutilized despite its importance as a major transportation corridor. The abundance of underutilized parking lots in this area, some of which exceed current requirements, indicates an opportunity to reinvent the use of these areas in a creative way such as with temporary uses. Evaluating reduced off-street parking regulations and increased lot coverage standards may be necessary to reduce square footage used by parking. Likely, infill development in this area will be initiated from existing property owners. To comprehensively assess underutilization and identify enhancement opportunities, establishing a collaborative steering committee with local business owners and residents could provide valuable insights for revitalization efforts.

Furthermore, the strategic modification of zoning regulations to encourage mixed land uses on both the northern and southern sides of Main Avenue can catalyze multifamily development in close proximity to the Main thoroughfare. Such an approach not only enriches transportation options but also amplifies accessibility to employment opportunities.

Investing in a comprehensive transportation network, including multi-modal lanes and pedestrian-friendly trails is supportive of the downtown. This investment aims to create a safer and more walkable district that seamlessly integrates existing neighborhoods both within and extending beyond the Downtown Yards area. This aligns directly with the valuable input received from the public, which has emphasized the need for a more interconnected and pedestrian-friendly community.

This approach involves connecting and harmonizing the area's assets with those in its vicinity. A collaborative environment, fostering unity and synergy, is far more likely to succeed than isolated efforts. It enhances the overall vibrancy and success of the Downtown Yards and its surrounding neighborhoods.

An exciting opportunity, given the significant investments in the Hulbert Aquatic Center by both the City and the School District would be to focus on enhancing pedestrian and cyclist access to the Downtown Yards area via either 4th Ave E or 7th Ave E could be a valuable initiative.

It's essential to address the family-friendly ambiance in the Downtown Yards area, which is currently lacking. Creating a dedicated corridor that leverages sports tourism and facilitates movement from the aquatic center has the potential to rejuvenate the area significantly. To achieve this vision, the City should activate its existing infrastructure and implement effective wayfinding strategies to pique people's curiosity about the destinations these pathways connect to, enhancing their overall appeal.

Temporary Uses

Considering that the development of Downtown Yards will occur over time, exploring options for activating the current space and areas is crucial. A comprehensive review of the City Code could identify opportunities for temporary uses that inject vitality into underutilized properties, such as pop-up shops, vendors, coffee/lemonade/food stands..etc. The approach to implementing temporary uses will vary between Sheyenne and Main. Sheyenne is expected to see increased pedestrian activity as it develops, while Main is likely to remain oriented toward automobile traffic. Activating these areas can be achieved through the placemaking strategies detailed in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these planning considerations underscore the imperative need for the introduction of a planning tool that offers multiple zoning options within the same residential district and allowing middle housing typologies and densities within all residential districts. An example for implementing this is showcased in the Future Land Use Map as an overlay on the existing zoning. This overlay will provide the essential flexibility required to harness growth opportunities while aligning with the distinctive character and goals of the Downtown Yards area.

See Appendix 13 for more specifics about the benefits of implementing a zoning district/overlay over the Downtown Yards as well as recommendations.



CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION

Note: The recommendations put forth in this plan are intended to be supplemental to the vision and recommendations of the West Fargo 2.0 plan.

The previous chapters provide a contextual overview explaining the basis for the resulting action steps included in the following matrix which summarizes chapter strategies, and identifies priority levels, champions/partnership, as well as potential funding resources. The ideas were ranked based on cumulative selections and voting by the steering committee, both focus groups and the public at large. The final ranking includes all **High Impact - Low Effort** and **High Impact - High Effort** ideas that received a minimum of 30% votes and considered to be best suited to transform the Downtown Yards. The **Low Impact - Low Effort** and the **Low Impact - High Effort** ideas were not included or developed for resources, champions or timeline; however they are recorded in Appendix 5.

The matrix can undergo further refinement as the city chooses an action step. To establish more precise scopes, it becomes crucial to pinpoint suitable locations for each project under consideration. This, in turn, will enable the creation of more accurate designs and bid specifications.



Photo of flash cards being prioritized in Impact-Effort Quadrant at Workshop #3

Figure 23. Quadrant showing final ranking of placemaking Ideas¹

LOW IMPACT- HIGH EFFORT	HIGH IMPACT- HIGH EFFORT			
2.6.A 3.4.B 3.4.D 4.1.A 6.4.A	2.2.C 3.2.G 3.3.A 3.4.F 4.1.B 4.2.A 4.3.A	4.3.C 4.3.D 4.4.A 5.1.G 5.2.D 5.3.B 5.4.A	5.4.B 5.5.B 6.6.B 6.6.D 6.7.A	
LOW IMPACT- LOW EFFORT	HIGH IMPACT- LOW EFFORT			
1.5.C 3.2.D 3.4.C 5.3.A 5.5.E	1.5.B 1.5.F 1.5.G 2.1.A 2.2.A 2.5.A 2.5.D 2.6.B 3.1.B	3.1.C 3.2.B 3.2.C 3.4.G 3.5.A 3.5.C 4.4.B 5.1.E 5.1.F	5.2.A 5.2.B 5.2.C 5.2.F 5.5.C 5.5.F 6.1.A 6.1.B 6.1.C	6.2.A 6.2.B 6.3.A 6.5.A 6.5.B 6.6.C
DISCARDED IDEAS	2.5.B – 2.5.E – 3.5.D – 4.3.B – 5.5.G			

¹Numbers indicate original Action Steps numbering see Appendix 5

While the **High Impact - Low Effort** ideas are more easily implemented in the short term as they require fewer resources, (less than 5 years), the **High - Impact - High Effort** ideas will require more resources to execute and are deemed to be longer term, (5 to 10 years).

FINAL TOP IDEAS

Please note: links to grants may lead to grants that are off cycle, however, the landing page is the website to visit to get grant updates.

Goal #1. Placemaking: Make the Downtown Yards a vibrant place that displays West Fargo's unique heritage, and character that offers engaging experiences for all ages and families.

Action Steps	Strategies	Priority	Champions/Partners	Resources
3.1 Increase activity and foot traffic <i>See Chapter 3</i>	3.1.b Infill parking areas along Sheyenne (temporary farm stand, vendors with small footprint)	Short Term	All Downtown Yards businesses and establishments that have a parking in the study area, including Churches City of West Fargo- Planning and Zoning Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce EPIC Companies The Yards Association	AARP Community Challenge Grants FY2023 HOPE VI Main Street Grant Program North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program
3.3 Implement pedestrian play features along Sheyenne <i>See Chapter 3</i>	3.3.a Use the existing paved half-moon areas and medallion bump outs on Sheyenne Street (stubbed out with electrical power)	Short Term	City of West Fargo-Public Works Selected West Fargo Downtown Placemaking Master Plan Artists	Statewide Public Space Initiative- Placemaking (SPSI) Planning Grant Vibrancy Grant Program Our Town Grant Program Artists on Main Street Program

3.4 Connect Points of Interest through Creative Wayfinding <i>See Chapter 3</i>	3.4.f Provide area map of points of interest and where there are sidewalks or trails people can use to get there; create app or online version for easy access and updating	Long Term	<u>City of West Fargo</u> All Downtown Yards businesses and establishments <u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>MAGIC Grant MidAmerica GIS Consortium – GRANTS (magicgis.org)</u> <u>Destination Development Grant</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u> <u>Mainstreet Tourism Outdoor Recreation Grants</u>
	3.4.g Gamify Wayfinding – add digital wayfinding’s interactive games connected to signage and wayfinding While, the Downtown Yards Business Association is re-grouping, reach out to West Fargo Events and Fargo Downtown Community Partnership to assist in promoting the downtown.	Short Term	<u>EPIC Companies</u> <u>The Yards Association</u> <u>Downtown Community Partnership</u>	<u>Artists on Main Street Program</u> <u>Vibrancy Grant Program</u> <u>Main Street Community Action Plan</u> <u>Open Street Map</u>
4.3 Reconnect with the River <i>See Chapter 3</i>	4.3.a Build fishing platforms and restore the riverbank to encourage people to visit and enjoy the river 4.3.c Construct River-swales structures- DOT 4.3.d Build Fountain/ water feature-bring Sheyenne River to Sheyenne street	Long Term	<u>NDDOT – Contact Us</u> <u>City of West Fargo</u> <u>Cass County</u> <u>EDAK Bass Club</u>	<u>America Walks</u> <u>Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u> <u>Mainstreet Tourism Outdoor Recreation Grants</u> <u>Fish Brain App</u>

4.4 Create Photo Spots and Memory Maker locations <i>See Chapter 3</i>	4.4.a Install entrance features and pedestrian play features	Long Term	<u>City of West Fargo</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u>	<u>Our Town Grant Program</u> <u>Artists on Main Street Program</u>
	4.4.b Incentivize retail shop installations, murals, etc. on private property	Short Term	<u>The Yards Association</u> <u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u>	<u>Vibrancy Grant Program</u>
5.1 Develop Family Friendly spaces and programs <i>See Chapter 3</i>	5.1.e Develop kid-friendly passive programming - hopscotch, sidewalk chalk, bubbles 5.1.f Add teen-friendly active programming - game nights at Thunder Coffee, show teen-created videos at the plaza, etc. 5.1.g Add teen-friendly passive programming - swings, hammocks, chill spaces, arcades, lawn bowling, fire pits, etc.	Short Term	<u>Youthworks</u> <u>Red River Youth for Christ</u> <u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u> <u>West Fargo Public School District</u> <u>Boys and Girls Club of Red River Valley</u>	<u>AARP Community Challenge Grants</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u> <u>Youth Gardening Grants</u>

5.2 Increase event programming <i>See Chapter 3</i>	5.2.a Incorporate artist elements into existing events i.e., glitterize a car during the Cruise Nights	Short Term	Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce EPIC Companies The Yards Association West Fargo Events City of West Fargo	Otto Bremer Trust Grant Destination Development Grant Our Town Grant Program Artists on Main Street Program Vibrancy Grant Program
	5.2.b Attract smaller or moderate sized events i.e., farmers market			
	5.2.c Encourage passive programming i.e., plaza games, etc.			
	5.2.d Ensure one large event each quarter	Long Term		
	5.2.f Participate in the Chamber marketing programs such as Crafts and Drafts Passport, Paw Crawl, Coffee Crawl, etc.	Short Term		
5.3 Develop pet-friendly spaces and programs <i>See Chapter 3</i>	5.3.b Introduce Pet programs/events - i.e., Halloween dog costume competition 5.3.c Install pop stations (posts with baggies and mini garbage cans for people to pick up and dispose of dog poop)	Long Term	Homeward Animal Shelter Center for Avian Adoption, Rescue, and Education For Luv of Dog Rescue City of West Fargo Fargo Humane Society	Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program Mainstreet Tourism Outdoor Recreation Grants

5.4 Develop professional event amenities <i>See Chapter 3</i>	5.4.a Build an amphitheater/stage for performances with professional acoustical, lighting, seating amenities 5.4.b Build celebration spaces that community members can rent out for personal or group events like weddings, birthdays, parties...etc.	Long Term	<u>NDSU Performing Arts</u> <u>Trollwood Performing Arts School</u> <u>Stage West</u> <u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u> <u>The Yards Association</u> <u>West Fargo Events</u> <u>City of West Fargo</u>	<u>Destination Development Grant</u> <u>Statewide Public Space Initiative-Placemaking (SPSI) Planning Grant</u>
6.1 Strengthen Neighborhoods and create sense of community <i>See Chapter 3</i>	6.1.a Infuse neighborhood with creative expressions such as painted sidewalks or poems/ art stamped into the sidewalk 6.1.b Create a group exercise space: • Exercise routes • tai chi, Zumba classes • Marked paths or loops with distance markers 6.1.c Keep the neighborhood strong with shared amenity spaces i.e: community, meeting spaces etc.	Short Term	<u>National Association for Health and Fitness</u> <u>Robert Wood Johnson Foundation</u> <u>Sheyenne River Crossfit</u>	<u>Our Town Grant Program</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u> <u>Youth Gardening Grants</u>

6.5 Create new gems to uncover <i>See Chapter 3</i>	6.5.a Use artistic surprise elements in facades, pavement, alleys, corners 6.5.b Add whimsy, surprise and pedestrian artful engagement along Sheyenne such as swings, merry-go rounds	Short Term	<u>West Fargo Events</u> Local residents	<u>America Walks</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u> <u>Artists on Main Street Program</u>
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Goal #2: Business & Economic Development: Attract and retain businesses, visitors and residents that seek innovative enterprise and contribute to economic vitality.

Action Steps	Strategies	Priority	Champions/Partners	Resources
1.5 Expand retail and types of businesses downtown <i>See Chapter 4</i>	1.5.b Promote temporary leases, especially in vacant stores to activate the space and allow for pop up stores: etsy store: crocs in summer, boots in winter 1.5.f Introduce an Incubator, maker spaces 1.5.g Arrange Vendor Tuesdays, plug and play wall (electricity) for outdoor vendors	Short Term	<u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u> <u>The Yards Association</u> <u>City of West Fargo</u>	<u>Economic Development RNTA</u> <u>Partners in Planning Grant Program</u> <u>North Dakota Small Business Grants</u> <u>Vibrancy Grant Program</u> <u>North Dakota Women's Business Center Funding Opportunities</u>
3.5 Leverage and amplify existing and regional events and programs <i>See Chapter 4</i>	3.5.a Connect marketing and programming to other cultural destinations downtown Fargo, The Lights, Big Iron Event, Bonanzaville, etc. 3.5.c Connect marketing and programming to existing sports tourism such as the athletic fields, Olympic pool, rec center	Short Term	<u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u> <u>The Yards Association</u> <u>West Fargo Events</u> <u>City of West Fargo</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u>	<u>Destination Development Grant</u> <u>Partners in Planning Grant Program</u>https://www.nd.gov/living-nd/main-street-nd/main-street-community-action-plan <u>Major Events Visit Fargo-Moorhead (fargo-moorhead.org)</u>

Goal #3: Pedestrians, Parking, & Access: Provide accessibility and parking options that foster walkability, pedestrian safety and enhance the public realm.

Action Steps	Strategies	Priority	Champions/Partners	Resources
2.1 Address Pedestrian Safety along Sheyenne and transition from neighborhoods <i>See Chapter 5</i>	2.1.a Bollard to block off Sheyenne for festivals	Short Term	City of West Fargo	America Walks North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program North Dakota DOT Transportation Alternatives Program Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program
2.2 Address Pedestrian safety across Main <i>See Chapter 5</i>	2.2.a Add Crosswalk striping on Main and pathway to Armour Park	Short Term	City of West Fargo The Yards Association NDDOT - Contact Us	America Walks North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program North Dakota DOT Transportation Alternatives Program Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program

2.5 Address Parking Concerns <i>See Chapter 5</i>	2.5.a Address the perception that there isn't enough parking. Consider a marketing campaign of "it's ok to stroll"; [Provide infographic of 5 football field of parking and peak demand using 61% equivalent to + than 2 football fields of available parking 2.5.d Promote/incentivize shared parking on private lots- see churches, provide best practice Build a public parking deck and establish fee-in-lieu of parking program. Revenue from fees may help offset City's public transit & public parking costs -see chapter 5 for Future Parking Recommendations.	Short Term	<u>Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce</u> <u>The Yards Association</u> <u>West Fargo Events</u> <u>City of West Fargo</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u>	<u>Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program</u> <u>MAGIC Grant MidAmerica GIS Consortium – GRANTS (magicgis.org)</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u>
2.6 Provide pedestrian-oriented interactions <i>See Chapter 5</i>	2.6.b Public restrooms and (fun) water filling stations	Short Term	<u>City of West Fargo</u> <u>EPIC Companies</u>	<u>AARP Community Challenge Grants</u> <u>Youth Gardening Grants</u> <u>Statewide Public Space Initiative- Placemaking (SPSI) Planning Grant</u> <u>North Dakota DOT Urban Grant Program</u>

Goal #4: Infill, Density & Redevelopment: Connect and strengthen the downtown assets by redeveloping underutilized or vacant spaces and calibrate intensity of development to create a thriving mix-of uses.

Action Steps	Strategies	Priority	Champions/Partners	Resources
4.1 Adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings and sites	4.1.b Develop policies to support remodeling of unused buildings and sites	Long Term	City of West Fargo	Partners in Planning Grant Program Vibrancy Grant Program North Dakota Brown Fields Program
6.6 Maintain existing housing stock	6.6.b Establish and promote Residential Home Renovation Program or incentives for upgrades, such as forgivable loans for homeowners if they live in the home for 5 years for upgrades such as kitchens, driveways, etc.	Long Term	City of West Fargo Xcel Energy	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) North Dakota Help for Homeowners North Dakota Housing and Finance Agency Homeowner and Rental Assistance Rehab Accessibility Program https://investdsm.org/programs/#Block-Challenge-Grant-Program
	6.6.c Work we area electric and gas companies for energy efficiency audits and improvements	Short Term		
6.7 Increase Housing Options	6.7.a Expand Middle Housing options; Infill densities that are gradient transitions from Sheyenne Multi-family mixed use high rise & single family homes such as 2-4-6 plex's and townhomes	Long Term	City of West Fargo EPIC Companies Enclave Companies	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) North Dakota Housing Finance Agency Homeowners and Rental Assistance Housing Incentive Fund, Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and Rural Housing Development Loan Housing for Elderly, persons with Disabilities, and Assisted Living Conversion Program

The implementation of a Downtown Placemaking Master Plan is essential for driving economic growth, enhancing the quality of life, fostering community development, and achieving a sustainable, thriving, and culturally rich urban center. It transforms the vision into concrete actions that benefit both residents and the broader community. Yet the plan requires both public and private involvement and often relies on volunteer-ism. The City of West Fargo alone cannot successfully implement this plan. This is a **call for action** for the community at large.

Implementation will require resources such as time, funds, equipment and human capital. Collaborative efforts among champions and partner will be essential for successful implementation of these placemaking ideas. This plan serves as a guide for future decisions and provides backup data, and explanations, but most importantly confirms public consensus for what is needed and wanted in downtown West Fargo. This is not the final chapter, but rather the beginning of putting the placemaking ideas into action.

Photo of POW/MIA Plaza

