

*Report*

# **Fargo-Moorhead Downtown Framework Plan Update**

## **Final Document**

Fargo-Moorhead Council of Governments

City of Fargo

City of Moorhead

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# I. Introduction

## Project Background

The Downtown Framework Plan Update for Fargo and Moorhead is an update of the Downtown Fargo Redevelopment Framework Plan of 2002 and the Downtown Moorhead Redevelopment Framework Plan of 2000.

While most of the goals, objectives, and design principles established in the previous plan are still valid, it was important to explore new specific downtown projects that will further enhance both downtowns. Three major planning principles underlying this updated Framework Plan are as follows:

1. Collaborate on a mutually beneficial plan that improves the physical ties between both cities, maximizes the potential for complimentary growth, reinforces connections between both cities, and reestablishes the Red River as a valuable asset and an amenity.
2. Build upon the strength's of both Fargo and Moorhead's history, relation to the Red River, and urban form to foster a genuine identity and sense of place.
3. Focus improvements in strategic areas to foster market synergy, compact growth, and urban vitality.

## Downtown Redevelopment Framework Plan Update

The Downtown Redevelopment Framework Plan Update for Fargo and Moorhead provides a physical framework that illustrates the intent of the vision, goals, and objectives defined in the previous policy documents, particularly the 2000 Moorhead Downtown Redevelopment Plan and Downtown Fargo Redevelopment Framework Plan and the 1999 Fargo Renaissance Zone Development Plan. Rather than redirecting previous planning efforts with a new master plan, the framework plan visualizes and describes new ideas, while reinforcing the objectives from previous studies.

In 2000, the Cities of Moorhead, Minnesota and Fargo, North Dakota retained a team of consultants to complete their respective downtown framework plans. The purpose of those plans was to provide a physical framework that illustrates the intent of the vision, goals, and objectives defined in the previous policy documents. It reaffirmed objectives of previous plans, while providing a flexible “tool kit” of ideas for evaluating redevelopment proposals and for making decisions about public and private improvements throughout the downtowns. It also established and entrenched downtown revitalization as a collaborative effort between the two Cities. Those framework plans identified opportunities for public investment in both Cities that would, in turn, spur private investment and revitalization.

Now, five years later, many of the projects and opportunities identified in the framework plans have been successfully implemented. There is a new Main Avenue Bridge connecting the two downtowns. Moorhead has redeveloped land in the bridgehead area of Main Avenue, as well as rebuilt and streetscaped many of their important transportation links such as Center Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and 5<sup>th</sup> Street between Center Avenue and Main Avenue.



*New Main Avenue Bridge over the Red River provides convenient pedestrian access between downtown Fargo and Moorhead.*

Fargo has rebuilt and streetscaped Broadway, has completed a riverfront development plan, voters have approved funding of a new library, and both commercial and residential space continues to be redeveloped and revitalized. Additionally, the Cities are working towards a train whistle ban that includes the downtown area, and new housing units are being constructed Downtown.

This framework plan is the next step in the progression of Downtown development and redevelopment.

It guides the Downtown redevelopment incremental public and private improvements into a cohesive, comprehensive project. The plan reinforces the goals and objectives defined in previous planning efforts which will be realized over time.

### ***Study Area***

The study area for this update includes downtown Fargo and Moorhead and is depicted on the following aerial photograph.



### ***Flexible Working Document***

An addendum to the previous framework plan, this framework plan illustrates the intent of the urban design principles, goals, and objectives of previous studies done by Fargo and Moorhead. It is intended to be a flexible “tool kit” for evaluating redevelopment proposals and for making decisions about public and private improvements throughout both downtowns. The projects outlined in this document, when accomplished, will contribute to the long term vision for Downtown Fargo and Moorhead.

### **Public Sector**

- This document should be adopted as an addendum to the City of Fargo Comprehensive Plan and the City of Moorhead Comprehensive Plan.
- City departments should refer to the project concepts as a basis from which to develop more detailed special area studies and implementation strategies.
- City departments should refer to the objectives and recommendations in this manual to coordinate, design, and budget for capital improvements.
- The City planning and engineering departments should refer to the overall framework and design principles when reviewing individual development proposals. Proposed development or renovation projects should reinforce the principles and comply with the guidelines.

### Private Sector

- Developers should refer to this plan and the previous Downtown plans in order to understand Fargo and Moorhead's overall goals and determine how their property fits into the context of the area in which the project is proposed.

### The Power of Public-Private Partnerships

The experience of recent years in Downtown has demonstrated the power of partnerships between the public and private sectors. These public-private partnerships have accomplished extraordinary changes such as the 4<sup>th</sup> Street redevelopment area on both sides of Main Avenue in Moorhead, and the NDSU downtown campus in Fargo. This plan shows how to continue to incorporate the goals and objectives that have been developed to guide this collaborative process.

Continued streetscape implementation is a prime opportunity for cooperative efforts. Substantial redevelopment of an area the size of this combined Downtown community is an enormous undertaking that will be accomplished gradually, as opportunities allow. Aggressive public investment in key areas will encourage property owners to include complimentary streetscape designs as part of their improvement and development of their buildings and grounds.

More aggressively, cities and developers can combine their resources to make extraordinary developments (such as buildings) occur. Case-in-point, the Kassenborg block and surrounding area in Moorhead resulted from the combined abilities of the City of Moorhead and the development know-how of the Sterling Companies to transform a downtown neighborhood. In Fargo, the City of Fargo, and the Federal government worked with a private foundation to create the first Downtown campus facility for NDSU.

## II. Issues and Opportunities

An issues and opportunities workshop was held at the Fargo City Hall early on in the planning process. Attendees were broken into small groups and went through a series of exercises that identified issues and opportunities. After reviewing the results of this meeting several themes emerged and are as follows.

### Results from Public Issues and Opportunities Meeting

Several main themes emerged from the public meeting held at the Fargo City Commission Chambers on June 1, 2006. One of the main goals of the Downtown Framework Plan Update is to look at the Downtowns of both Fargo and Moorhead as one Downtown. With that goal in mind the following themes emerged during the public visioning meeting.

- **Connectedness** – Participants at the public meeting indicated that an effort should be made to establish a physical connection between the two downtowns. The river is an amenity that can help the connection between the two cities. Parking is also an issue in regard to connectedness. Participants thought the quantity of the parking wasn't a problem but the location and connectedness of parking to Downtown uses was an issue. The conversion of one-way pairs to two-way streets will facilitate traffic flow and improve access to properties in the Downtown.
- **Downtown Uses** – The group indicated that less emphasis should be placed on office uses and more emphasis is needed on retail uses and mixed-uses, specifically niche retail with local ownership and entertainment and dining venues. Along with the above listed uses, participants wanted to see more public gathering spaces or a "town square" concept.
- **Housing** – Participants want to see an increase in the variety and number of housing options Downtown. More specifically, more moderate income housing is needed Downtown.
- **Historic Buildings** – Participants want to retain, renovate, and reinvent historic buildings, but also realize that old doesn't always equal historic. In addition, new buildings should compliment old buildings but the new buildings don't have to look old to have good design characteristics.
- **Communication** – Participants felt that increasing communication regarding Downtown development is important to the success of Downtown, as is finding financial incentives, creative funding options and tax solutions to fund development and maintain momentum for Downtown. Furthermore, creating unique and innovative ways to ease and clarify the Downtown development process would be helpful to developers.

These themes will be used as a starting point for the Downtown Framework Plan Update.

## III. Market Overview

### *Introduction*

Research of market trends and potential redevelopment opportunities in Downtown included two focus groups with Downtown business owners and managers, interviews with city staff regarding recent development activity, a field analysis of the Downtown, and a brief review of demographic growth trends in the Metro Area and current market conditions in Downtown. The focus groups were conducted to obtain opinions from the business community on the current business climate, trends, and potential actions that would enhance the overall draw to Downtown businesses.

### *Fargo-Moorhead Demographic Growth Trends*

The Fargo-Moorhead Metro Area, which consists of Cass County (North Dakota) and Clay County (Minnesota), had a population of just over 174,000 people in 2000. The Metro Area is a regional employment center and has experienced strong population growth (+13.7% during the 1990s). Projections by McKibben Demographic Research, as well as housing construction data so far this decade (permits were issued for about 9,500 homes in Fargo, West Fargo, and Moorhead between 2000 and 2005), indicate that the Metro Area will grow 18.6% by the end of this decade, and by 2015, the Metro Area to have a population of over 218,000.

Similar growth is projected in Fargo/West Fargo in the 2000s as compared to the 1990s. Moorhead is projected to experience almost 13% population growth this decade compared to a loss of population during the 1990s. Much of the new growth in Moorhead is from an increase in development of single-family homes. But Downtown will also be able to capture some of this projected growth as a result of the recent development of 98 new apartments and owner-occupied condos in the Woodlawn and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street projects near the new Main Avenue Bridge.

The projected strong growth this decade in the Fargo-Moorhead area will create demand for all housing types, particularly as household types diversify. The aging baby boomers will result in a rapidly growing empty-nester population over the next 10 years, and continued influx of younger people to the Metro Area for jobs and schooling is expected.

Both empty-nesters and younger households are primary target markets for multifamily housing, including housing located Downtown. Thus, we project that demand for housing in Downtown on both sides of the river will strengthen in the coming years and into the 2010s, as will demand for goods and services.

**TABLE 1  
POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS  
FARGO/MOORHEAD METRO AREA TOTAL (CASS & CLAY COUNTY)  
1990 to 2015**

	U.S. Census		Projections		Change					
	1990	2000	2010	2015	1990 to 2000		2000 to 2010		2010 to 2015	
					No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
<b>Population</b>										
Fargo	74,111	90,599	102,930	108,150	16,488	22.2	12,331	13.6	5,220	5.1
Moorhead	32,295	32,177	36,260	40,020	-118	-0.4	4,083	12.7	3,760	10.4
West Fargo	12,287	14,940	24,825	27,460	2,653	21.6	9,300	62.2	3,220	13.3
<b>Major City Totals</b>	<b>118,693</b>	<b>137,716</b>	<b>163,430</b>	<b>175,630</b>	<b>19,023</b>	<b>16.0</b>	<b>25,714</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>12,200</b>	<b>7.5</b>
Cass County	102,874	123,138	137,938	144,666	20,264	19.7	14,800	12.0	6,728	4.9
Clay County	50,422	51,229	51,485	51,933	807	1.6	265	0.5	448	0.9
<b>Metro Area Total</b>	<b>153,296</b>	<b>174,367</b>	<b>189,423</b>	<b>196,599</b>	<b>21,071</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>15,056</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7,176</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Households</b>										
Fargo	30,149	39,268	44,327	46,236	9,119	30.2	5,059	12.9	1,909	4.3
Moorhead	11,063	11,660	13,262	14,611	597	5.4	1,602	13.7	1,349	10.2
West Fargo	4,430	5,771	9,182	10,561	1,341	30.3	3,411	59.1	1,379	15.0
<b>Major City Totals</b>	<b>45,642</b>	<b>56,699</b>	<b>66,771</b>	<b>71,408</b>	<b>11,057</b>	<b>24.2</b>	<b>10,072</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>4,637</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Cass County	40,281	51,315	60,907	67,909	11,034	27.4	9,592	18.7	7,002	11.5
Clay County	17,490	18,670	19,594	20,706	1,180	6.7	924	4.9	1,112	5.7
<b>Metro Area Total</b>	<b>57,771</b>	<b>69,985</b>	<b>80,501</b>	<b>88,615</b>	<b>12,214</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>10,516</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>8,114</b>	<b>10.1</b>

Sources: U.S. Census (1990 & 2000), McKibben Demographic Research, Maxfield Research Inc.



### **Downtown Housing Trends**

Since 2000 Downtown has experienced a new housing boom. As of May 2007, Fargo has seen eight condominium developments with 81 new owner-occupied units. In addition, there have been 27 new rental units constructed and 180 rental units completely rehabbed. Moorhead has completed four projects with a total of 69 new rentals and nine new condos.

New Downtown residents have been a healthy mix of young professionals, empty-nesters, and others who prefer Downtown living, both owners and renters.

Some new owner-occupied units have been priced under \$200,000, but most of the new units have been priced from the mid-\$200,000s to about \$400,000. In comparison, the median sale price of existing single-family homes in Fargo/Moorhead for 2005 was about \$170,000. Overall, the new housing added in Downtown can be categorized as upper-end.

The new housing projects are listed in Table 2. The condominium projects have experienced strong sales; all units completed have been sold, and the market for owner-occupied units appears to remain strong. Forty-six of the owner occupied units added in Downtown were new construction. All others were conversions of existing buildings.

<b>Table 2</b>				
<b>New Downtown Housing Since 2000 Fargo and Moorhead</b>				
<b>May-07</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Stage</b>	
<b>Fargo</b>				
300 NP Ave	11	condos	completed	
Carlson Condos (2 locations)	24	condos	completed	
Luger Building	13	condos	completed	
Fargoan	16	condos	under construction	
Ford Building	9	condos	under construction	
Porterfield Place	3	condos	under construction	
Sterling Development	6	condos	planned	
Bristol Place	34	rental rehab	under construction	
Alsop Apartments	14	rental	completed	
Rooters	3	rental	completed	
514 to 520 1st Ave N	3	rental	completed	
105 to 107 Broadway	3	rental rehab	completed	
111 Roberts Street	1	rental	completed	
<b>Moorhead</b>				
Bridgeview	30	rental	completed	
East 4th Center	17	rental	completed	
Woodlawn	22	rental	completed	
Riverside	9	condos	under construction	

The residential rental market has been exceptionally strong. All of the nearly 300 new and improved Downtown rental units have been occupied shortly after completion. There has been a good balance of apartments at market and assisted rent levels.

The creation of the Fargo’s Renaissance Zone in 1999 has helped spur sales of condominiums and residential rental property. Individuals who purchase housing and developers of new rental property receive income and property tax exemptions for up to five years. In Moorhead, using the Tax Increment Financing tools, the City acquired and cleared land for redevelopment, then partnered with a private developer for new construction that is currently under various stages of development, from completed to just breaking ground.

### ***Downtown Fargo Retail and Office Market Conditions***

The retail market has improved in Downtown and very little vacant space remains. Almost all retail space that has survived from Downtown’s 60’s and 70’s era has been improved and reoccupied. New construction starts in 2007 include new retail space on and just off Broadway. Most of the new retailers have been independent specialty stores versus national chain/franchise stores. The list of new retail stores is rapidly growing, with shops too numerous to mention in this narrative. These are all stores unique to those typically found at a shopping mall. With the improved retail market, gross lease rates for most spaces have increased to over \$10.00 per square foot. These are still lower however, than the lease rates for most newer shopping center spaces located outside of Downtown.

**TABLE 3  
FARGO CBD OFFICE SPACE SUMMARY  
2006**

Space Type	Square Feet		Vacant Square Feet		Pct. of Total Office Space		Pct. Vacant	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
<b>Class A</b>	393,739	393,739	22,524	35,159	13%	14%	5.7%	8.9%
<b>Class B</b>	797,588	800,653	151,370	208,397	87%	86%	19.0%	26.0%
<b>Total/Avg.</b>	<b>1,191,327</b>	<b>1,194,392</b>	<b>173,894</b>	<b>243,556</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14.6%</b>	<b>20.4%</b>

Sources: Konrad Olson Commercial Real Estate, 2006  
Maxfield Research, Inc.

The office market has not performed as well. The office vacancy rate in downtown Fargo increased from 14.6% in 2005 to 20.4% in 2006. Most of the vacant space is Class B space, which accounts for 86% of Downtown’s total office space. Further analysis is needed, however, to completely understand the impacts of the conversions to residential and institutional uses of space that was formerly categorized as office/commercial space.

Real estate professionals interviewed stated that much of the Class B space was built during the 1970s or earlier and is somewhat outdated or obsolete for many of the potential tenants currently seeking space. Thus, some potential tenants are choosing to locate in newer buildings outside of the Downtown. Table 3 presents a summary of office space conditions in Downtown.

### ***Downtown Fargo Focus Group Summary***

#### **Recent Trends**

The creation of the *Renaissance Zone* in 1999 helped spur redevelopment and new development in Downtown Fargo. Development that occurs in the Renaissance Zone, which encompasses the Downtown, is eligible for a variety of tax exemptions and/or credits. Among others, these include exemptions for income and property taxes for up to five years for individuals who purchase housing and for businesses that purchase, lease, and/or fix-up property.

The value of improvements totals over \$60 million in Downtown Fargo since the inception of the Renaissance Zone. To date, investments have primarily been rehabilitation of existing buildings, including remodeled retail space and conversion of older, historic buildings into condominiums.

So far this decade, the growth of Downtown Fargo has occurred largely because of its appeal for housing and for restaurants, night life, and the unique shopping experience.

The Downtown has attracted several independent specialty stores; thus, very little vacant space remains. While demand in Downtown Fargo has increased for retail space and housing, the office market remains sluggish, with the overall vacancy rate above 10%. One larger tenant has left the Downtown in the past year to an outlying building and another will move by the end of 2006.

## ***Fargo - Key Findings from Focus Groups and Interview***

The following are key findings from focus groups and interviews conducted in August 2006:

- Downtown Fargo has become more vibrant in the last five years and is becoming destination-oriented. Restaurants and entertainment have been among the best performing businesses. People are coming for the nightlife and for the expanded shopping.
- The driving force in the Downtown has been food and the expansion of dining/entertainment opportunities. The restaurants created the buzz, which has led to residential energy, such as the rehab of apartments and the creation of condominiums. The retail component is the next step, as more tenants are attracted to the revitalized environment in the Downtown.
- Special events such as the Street Fair, Cruising Night, and other cultural events are drawing in existing Fargo residents that have lost touch with Downtown. They are starting to rediscover that a Downtown exists.
- Most of Downtown Fargo's retail tenants remain independent stores. The unique character of the Downtown business mix is, in part, what is drawing shoppers to the Downtown.
- The Renaissance Zone has been instrumental in the Downtown attracting new businesses.
- National chains and franchises continue to choose outlying shopping areas.
- Retail sales have increased in Downtown Fargo over the past several years to the point where space is more valuable. Recently, tenant turnover has been very low, as roughly 75% of the stores that existed in 2000 still remain. Gross lease rates have increased to about \$10.50 per square foot.
- There has been a shift in Downtown housing in the last five years, as what started as low-end type "flop houses", have turned into new high-end condominiums. Although these new developments have helped make more "upscale" housing choices Downtown, it is important to keep a balance of all types of housing to maintain the historic value of the Downtown.
- It was mentioned that there needs to be more affordable housing for students in the Downtown. North Dakota State University added a building near the Downtown which has helped draw some students back in. However, there is potential to draw even more students to the Downtown provided there are additional housing options.
- The Downtown should be a place for everyone, of all income levels and backgrounds (students, working class, seniors, etc.) in order to

maintain its vibrancy and uniqueness.

- The retail market in Downtown is performing better than the office market. There remains considerable vacant office space, while there is little vacant retail space available. In addition, the Downtown will be losing one of its larger office tenants (as an accounting firm consolidates to an outlying location).
- Many of the Downtown office buildings built during the 1970s or earlier are functionally obsolete, which adds, in part, to the high office vacancy rate. These buildings may need updates to increase their competitiveness or may be converted to other uses.
- Converting N.P. Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North from one-way streets to two-way streets would improve retail potential along those streets by enhancing storefront visibility, adding parking, and slowing traffic. Because both N.P. and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue are one-way streets outside of the Downtown area, it is believed that traffic flows will not be harmed within the Downtown if they are made two-way streets there as well. It was also mentioned that the one-way streets can be confusing to visitors, which increases congestion and leads to accidents.
- It was mentioned that if many owners of smaller parcels each develop buildings, the sum of all these developments will significantly enhance the overall appeal of Downtown as a place to live, work and play.
- There was a consensus that Downtown needs a signature development to help continue the revival. Ideas for potential catalyst developments are a movie theater or a hotel/convention center.
- It was mentioned that the Civic Center needs to be rehabilitated to accommodate larger shows and performances. It is perceived as not an athletic center or a performance center. The Civic Center primarily attracts trade shows, craft shows, and holiday performances.
- Community buy-in to a major Downtown redevelopment project is critical to its success.
- Fargo and Moorhead must collaborate in capitalizing on their Riverfront locations. Focus groups agreed the two cities should work together for a collective effort to market the two Downtowns as one.
- Downtown Fargo needs more bicycle lanes and bike racks to promote ridership.

## ***Downtown Fargo Recommendations Identified in Focus Groups and Interviews***

A few recommendations were identified in the focus groups and interviews that many downtown business owners/managers believe would help further stimulate the growth of the Downtown. Below are these recommendations:

- Pursue a signature development that will be a catalyst to further development. This could be a project such as a hotel and convention center, performing arts center, mixed-use building with retail, office, and residential, or other.
- Identify vacant blocks and do in-fill redevelopment. Among others, the site of the Union Storage building would be a good location for a redevelopment project, as would the north side of N.P. Avenue between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street North.
- Convert both N.P. Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue back to two-way streets to enhance the retail viability of businesses along these two streets (see Appendix A for more details).
- Construct a new performance center with more seating to increase the number of visitors to the Downtown. A new performance center could be developed in conjunction with a new City Hall.
- Improve the Riverfront so that it is a greater amenity to the Downtown.

## ***Downtown Moorhead Focus Group Summary***

### **Recent Trends**

New development has rapidly changed the face of Downtown Moorhead. Three new condominium/apartment/street level retail developments have been added in Downtown Moorhead since 2004. Each of these projects has contributed to the density and “street life” of Downtown, making the area an inviting attraction for “lingering” and meeting friends. In addition, a new Walgreen’s store opened at the corner of Main Avenue and 9<sup>th</sup> Street, the legendary Dairy Queen has improved visibility and access, and Scheel’s Sporting Goods has completed an extensive remodeling. Key to Moorhead’s reconnection with the river has been the renovation of the American Legion Building, first as the Red Bear and currently as the Broken Axe.

The retail and office markets in Moorhead have seen little change over the past several years. Other downtowns in the Midwest have a greater supply of historic buildings that have been rehabbed with trendy restaurants and bars that generate nightlife. Much of Moorhead’s older Downtown was removed in the urban renewal efforts of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, so similar adaptive reuse has not been the case in Moorhead.

Downtown Moorhead is somewhat unique in that a good share of its retail is located within the Moorhead Center Mall. This can be positive, as traffic generated from a vibrant mall can benefit other businesses in the Downtown. The Center Avenue side of the mall presents an opportunity for a “reconnection” to that street from several mall spaces.

## ***Moorhead Key Findings from Focus Groups and Interviews***

The following are key findings from focus groups and interviews conducted in August 2006:

- Much of Moorhead's retail inventory is located at the Moorhead Center Mall. Most other uses are office or parking. Thus, Downtown Moorhead has not become as big a destination as Downtown Fargo. The Moorhead Center Mall has generally been stable with only modest turnover.
- A new Wal-Mart supercenter, the West Acres regional shopping center, as well as other new retail located along Highway 10 in Dilworth has drawn some of the retail traffic in Moorhead away from the Downtown.
- The two east-west railroad tracks somewhat deter growth of the Downtown because they disrupt traffic flows.
- Because of its physical characteristics, much of the area known as Downtown Moorhead does not feel like a Downtown.
- People from Fargo will shop at the Moorhead Center Mall, but there is little pedestrian traffic across the River between one downtown and the other.
- Moorhead Center Mall enjoys a very high level of name recognition. An additional major draw would improve shopper traffic to the area, and, in turn, would help support other smaller stores. There is the potential to assemble space in the Moorhead Center Mall and to add big box retailers on one end.
- While the Moorhead Center Mall has several vacant spaces, some of the vacant space is due to store consolidation and/or downsizing versus low sales. There is potential to add new tenants and increase traffic to the Mall and Downtown Moorhead in general because of the Mall's central location in the Metro Area.
- Enhancements should be added to Center Avenue to make it more pedestrian friendly instead of a through highway. If it was enhanced, some of the stores in the Moorhead Center Mall could be oriented to face the street. This would help create more of a traditional Downtown feel.
- Downtown Moorhead could support development that caters to students at the surrounding colleges and universities. This includes adding apartments in the Downtown marketed to the student population.

## ***Downtown Moorhead Recommendations Identified in Focus Groups and Interviews***

A few recommendations were identified in the focus groups and interviews that many downtown business owners/managers believe would help further

stimulate the growth of Downtown Moorhead. Below are these recommendations:

- Revamp some of the streets to give the Downtown more of a “downtown feel.” This could include making Center Avenue into a main street with on-street parking as well as straightening 4<sup>th</sup> Street to create another corner lot.
- If Center Avenue is made into a main street with on-street parking, then some of the stores in the Mall could be opened to Center Avenue. Other new buildings could also be developed in the Downtown that face Center Avenue.
- There was a general consensus to add larger stores to or adjacent to the Mall that have a greater draw within the Fargo-Moorhead area. These could include big-box retail and/or larger tenants in the Mall.
- Those attending were supportive of exploring the development of student-focused apartments in the Downtown to serve students attending Moorhead State University and Concordia College. The new housing, it is believed, would increase the base of retail customers in the Downtown.
- Participants recommended the removal of the railroad tracks between Center and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North by realigning them with the existing tracks between Center and Main Avenue. This would improve traffic flow as well as make land available for additional redevelopment opportunities in the Downtown.
- There was also a general consensus regarding developing a new hotel and a new library in Downtown Moorhead.

### ***Recommendations from Maxfield Research***

Based on the research that was completed for this assignment, Maxfield Research evaluated the conditions and identified the following next steps to consider as Downtown Fargo and Downtown Moorhead move forward with their development planning:

- It is important to take advantage of and build on the current momentum that exists for both Downtowns.
- Strengthen the appeal of the Riverfront as an amenity to attract people to the Downtown.
- Enhance the environment through green space, public art, and beautification.
- Strengthen intermodal connections to encourage bicycling, transit, and pedestrian movement.
- Increase new housing development in the Downtown targeted at both older and younger segments of the market; this could also include development focused specifically for students.
- Identify key redevelopment parcels; these could be developed

privately or through public/private partnerships.

### ***Fargo***

- Dedicate resources to attracting new growing office businesses to the Downtown; focus on small to midsize expanding firms (e.g. technology, financial services, real estate).
- Make a decision regarding the conversion of one-way pairs to two-way streets (see Appendix A for detailed analysis).

### ***Moorhead***

- Focus on attracting new retailers and strengthening the existing retail base centered at the Moorhead Center Mall.
- Increase visibility of retail businesses by moving more storefronts to Center Avenue.
- Better define the Downtown (physical edges) and how the immediate surrounding areas relate to the core Downtown area. Better define the core and focus attention on increasing density and activity in the core.

## IV. Updated Framework, Design Principles, Goals, and Objectives

### Framework

This Downtown Framework is meant to provide general guidance for Downtown Planning and Redevelopment, assisting business owners and community leaders as a decision-making tool for new projects.

### Design Principles

#### *The Pedestrian Realm - Pedestrian scale is important*

A diverse and concentrated mix of uses and activities is key to Downtown's sustained success. Downtown should be built and designed to appeal to the pedestrian's experience first and foremost. The quality of a person's walking experience through Downtown is the measure of its success as a place.

#### *Share the Road – Downtown is Multi-Modal*

Downtown, more than any place else in the city, relies on multiple modes of transportation; auto, transit, walking, and bicycling. All of these modes are respected and accommodated in a healthy Downtown.

#### *Parking is a tool that is supportive of Downtown's goals*

City center parking is acknowledged to be an essential component of the Downtown environment, but must be designed to improve the quality of the visual environment and to minimize the extent to which it disrupts the continuity of retail uses and pedestrian movement between the core and other activity centers.

#### *Two Great Cities – One Terrific Downtown*

The Downtown of Fargo and Moorhead should function as one place rather than two separate districts. Strong physical connections make this possible. Continue to emphasize and improve “the spine”, the primary corridor on each side of the river. In Moorhead this tends to be Center Avenue by design, though it may be shifting by use and practice. In Fargo, Broadway has been and remains the 100% retail corridor. Provide for attractive pedestrian connectors to additional activity anchors located off the “spine”.

#### *Embrace the Red River*

The Red River provides a common connection and amenity on both banks. This strong physical feature provides a signature opportunity for recreation, development, and place-making. Where possible, it should be readily accessible through the Downtown areas of both communities.

#### *Revitalize neighborhoods surrounding Downtown*

The connections between Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods should be strengthened. A vital Downtown is surrounded by vital neighborhoods and vice versa. Downtown has a mix of residential uses in and surrounding downtown that is a very good compliment to Downtown.

#### *Encourage an aggressive expansion of retail activity Downtown*

Downtown is emerging as an attractive destination for a variety of shopping and entertainment experiences. This trend needs to be

encouraged.

*Provide lifecycle housing choices*

Downtown is a very appealing place to live for many people. A full range of housing choices must be provided that blend with the context of Downtown.

*Program events and “happenings” in public spaces*

Activities should be planned for public spaces that will attract and entertain people downtown on a regular basis.

*Buildings shouldn’t change but uses can*

Downtown buildings should remain a relative constant. The uses within buildings may change as business come and go but the buildings themselves should remain.

*21<sup>st</sup> Century buildings shouldn’t look like old buildings*

A blend of architectural characteristics makes each Downtown unique, and within a Downtown, each block takes on its own personality. New, infill construction should adopt contextual characteristics from surrounding buildings but should not imitate or copy existing structures. Oftentimes new buildings are built to look like older historic buildings. This actually diminishes the importance and impact of the Downtown’s true historic resources. New buildings in Downtown should have their own distinct identities that will mark the contributions they make from their own generation of community builders.

## Goals & Objectives

The goals from previous Downtown planning processes continue to be relevant today, and were reaffirmed through stakeholder involvement, key interviews, and citizen involvement meetings for this plan update. Fargo’s Renaissance Zone Program goals and those of the State of North Dakota focus on the need for renewal, investment, and redevelopment. The Renaissance Zone Authority has successfully encouraged the type of downtown revitalization that is in keeping with these ideas and with the tenets of the vision statement.

Moorhead is re-establishing a dense, vital downtown character through new construction that exhibits the design and investment goals articulated in the 2000 Downtown Moorhead Redevelopment Framework Plan.

The combined goals and objectives express the common purpose and intent of the two communities for one downtown. These goals are:

1. **Economic Vitality** – provide an attractive physical and business environment that will both strengthen current businesses and attract new commercial enterprises that combine to result in a sound economic base that is marked by sustainability and diversity.
  - a. Transportation System. The Downtown transportation system consists of facilities to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, transit vehicles, and automobiles.

This system must be managed to allow for additional commercial development and to will make the entire area more user friendly and environmentally sustainable by ensuring access via multiple modes.

- i. Pedestrian Movement. Continue the development of a system of ADA compliant pedestrian connectors linking major activity anchors to one another. Important considerations in the development of such a system include: a.) safety of the pedestrian, b.) removing obstacles to safe and easy pedestrian movement, c.) wayfinding infrastructure, d.) the psychological certainty of the pedestrian to find and reach their destination, e.) the attractiveness of the pedestrian connections.
  - ii. Bicycles. Encourage and incorporate bicycles as a legitimate transportation mode, thereby moving them from the sidewalk to the street (where practical) and securing the sidewalks as safe corridors of travel for pedestrians. Provide parking facilities that are dedicated for bicyclists and discourage the locking of bicycles to other street furnishings, such as benches and sign posts.
  - iii. Transit. Due in large part of the success of the U-Pass program, transit ridership has grown dramatically in recent years. Downtown employers should be encouraged to follow this example by development of a similar pass system for employees. A shuttle and/or circulator system would increase the attractiveness of such a service.
  - iv. Automobile Parking. Provide sufficient parking for Downtown, which includes utilizing each parking space to its maximum potential with minimum consumption of valuable land. Parking should serve Downtown; not compete with it by consuming prime sites and resources. As new parking is developed, build new parking structures that are mixed-use buildings with retail storefronts and commercial uses at street-level and residential and office spaces on the upper levels. Reserve prime locations for customers and patrons; locate surface parking behind buildings or within structures.
- b. Continue to promote and develop Downtown as a “24-7” place. Design spaces and facilities that will attract and accommodate visitors and residents to the area both day and night, on weekdays and weekends, and

during all seasons.

- c. User Needs. Encourage projects that consider the needs of their users, in addition to the needs of Downtown users in general.
  - d. Encourage Compactness. Continue to design and build for mixed-use projects, incorporating office, residential, retail, services, and cultural uses. Specialty marketplaces, such as outdoor markets during appropriate seasons will provide opportunities for additional commerce as well as being fun new “events” that will attract visitors.
2. **Balanced Housing Choices** – Establish a sustainable Downtown housing market by promoting a full range of housing types and price ranges. Enhance the sense of community and neighborhood in the Downtown area.
- a. Housing Amenities. Integrate quality housing with public open space and neighborhood amenities. Require the enhancement of existing amenities as well as the creation of new ones.
  - b. High Quality Housing. Stimulate the production of unique, high-quality housing that is developed in areas targeted for residential development, or as a component of a mixed-use project.
  - c. Housing for Everyone. Recognize that high quality housing does not equate to high housing costs. Downtown needs a full spectrum of housing choices, including owner-occupied, rental, market-rate, and subsidized.
3. **Vibrant City Center** – Continue to stimulate Downtown’s emergence as a compelling, vital destination that is a hub of activity providing positive experiences for visitors and residents.
- a. Be a Neighborhood Center. Continue to make Broadway in Fargo and Center Avenue in Moorhead “Main Streets” -- pedestrian-oriented, filled with mixed-use magnets that anchor Downtown neighborhoods.
  - b. Protect Ground Floor Uses. Reserve ground floor uses to those that will encourage pedestrian vitality – shops, customer-oriented offices, cafes, restaurants, and other public spaces.
  - c. Execute a Comprehensive Strategy. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy based on market realities to invigorate, manage, maintain, and promote Downtown. Create needed partnerships and establish

clear roles and responsibilities for the Cities, property and business owners, and all other stakeholders.

- d. Make Strategic Public Investments. Direct public investment to stimulate and sustain private investment and reinvestment in Downtown.
  - e. Promote Downtown as the Region’s “Place to Be”. Make Downtown the entertainment / cultural / recreational center of the greater FM region: “If you are looking for something to do, Downtown is the place to be.” Downtown should serve as a key destination for visitors, conventioners, and residents.
  - f. Demand and Ensure Safe Streets, Safe Neighborhoods. Maintain safe streets and neighborhoods by relying on and utilizing the natural surveillance of lively and active streets, and by partnering with all official agencies and social service providers.
  - g. Maintain/Create Activity Generators. Develop activity-generating enterprises along major commercial corridors: Broadway, Roberts Street, Center/NP Avenue, and Main Avenue in Downtown.
  - h. Make All of Downtown a Walkable Place. Create convenient and continuous pedestrian connections (10-minute walk from one end to the other) that integrate Downtown’s wide range of activities and land uses for shopping, housing, entertaining, employment and recreation, thereby encouraging on street activity and interaction while discouraging unnecessary auto traffic, parking problems, and congestion.
4. **Unique Character** – Recognize and capitalize on Downtown’s distinct character and environment – the uniqueness that makes us “ Fargo-Moorhead ” and provides our sense of community, respects our heritage, and provides a quality place for visitors, workers, students, and residents.
- a. Present and Promote Downtown as “A Place Like No Other”. Highlight the unique historical character of Downtown by placing a high value on the preservation of historic assets and by fostering an overall awareness of the areas history.
  - b. Improve and Promote Riverfront Open Space. Recognize and utilize the Red River as one of the Downtown’s greatest assets. Respect it as a powerful and active river, but capitalize on it as a source of enjoyment and recreation.
  - c. Downtown Entryways. Enhance auto entry experiences with landscaping improvements to all major corridors, especially the 10<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in

Fargo and the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Center Avenue, and Main Avenue corridors heading into Downtown Moorhead.

- d. Focal Point. To establish Downtown as a community focal point, an area comprised of a rich and mutually supportive mixture of land uses, including retail, office, entertainment, civic institutional, recreational and residential, complemented and supported by public space that provides opportunities for the community to gather and grow together.
- e. Connections and Coordinations. Coordinate public and private efforts to ensure that projects enhance, rather than detract from the connectivity of the area. Strong connections between people, places, and activities are vital to creating a strong sense of community.



*Example of new, commercial block building-type using traditional massing and materials. The architecture provides a new look but still supports the existing urban character of midtown Minneapolis.*

## V. Next Steps

### Introduction

Downtown is a more exciting place than it was in 2000, a result of the revitalization generated by the previous downtown plans. These recommended projects build on achievements in the core areas of 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Moorhead and Broadway in Fargo, and success of the Main Avenue Bridge and related enhancements that have begun to recapture the aura of the Red River.

**River-Oriented Development** projects broaden the focus of the Red River as the community's defining feature, an awesome physical force and the community's source of water. These projects reveal its hidden beauty and evoke its rich heritage as a place for recreation and entertainment. Through these projects, the momentum of Downtown development will converge on the river banks.

**Town and Gown Development** projects focus on the population of the several major education institutions within minutes of Downtown. The objective is to create a Downtown community that stimulates scholars and invites other community members to share in their adventure.

**Corridor Development** projects promote improvement of the streets leading to and through the Downtown, giving them a sense of place and making them an integral part of the Downtown experience.

### River-Oriented Development Bridge Enhancements



*Streetscape design elements of each community could form the basis of new Bridge enhancements.*



*Aesthetic bridge enhancements will make the bridges more attractive and pedestrian friendly, increasing pedestrian traffic between the two cities.*

### Project Narrative

Aesthetic enhancements should be incorporated into the existing NP Avenue/Center Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Bridges to strengthen the connection between the two cities. These enhancements could include the addition of new bridgehead structures, decorative railings, decorative lighting, and covered walkways. If the bridges are made more appealing to look at and walk upon, pedestrians and cyclists will use them more frequently to move between the two parts of Downtown.



*View of 1st Avenue Bridge looking towards Moorhead.*

### Goals

- Better connection between the two cities.
- Enhanced pedestrian experience while on bridges.
- Enhance the Red River corridor.

### Action Steps

- Fargo, Moorhead, and the associated Departments of Transportation should agree to work together on bridge enhancements.
- Develop a detailed plan for aesthetic bridge enhancements that will enhance/beautify the bridges and strengthen connections between the two downtowns.

### Timeframe

This project should be completed within the next three to five years.

## ***Moorhead Hjemkomst Center Area Development***

### Project Narrative

This project will provide a new Hotel and a conference center that would connect to the existing meeting and exhibit space at the Hjemkomst Center. The project would also include structured parking and permanent flood control. A strong pedestrian link would be made to the 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue bridge and would provide connectivity to Fargo, particularly the proposed Performing Arts Center located on the Fargo side of the river. The bridge is proposed to be improved as well with a potential covered walkway, improved lighting, decorative railings, and monument treatments that would make the pedestrian experience on the bridge safe and enjoyable.



*The Hjemkomst Center is a cultural attraction in the Fargo-Moorhead Area.*

### Goals

- Provide a high quality hotel and small conference center that would work in conjunction with the existing meeting space at the Hjemkomst Center.
- Better utilize the Hjemkomst Center site.

### Action Steps

- The City of Moorhead and the Hjemkomst Center management should take the lead on this project in partnership with a private developer.
- Study the feasibility of a hotel and small conference center at this site.
- Determine if the management of the Hjemkomst Center is interested in this type of development.

### Timeframe

The feasibility of this project should be studied within two years and if the project is deemed feasible plans should move forward regarding development within five years.



*Illustration of proposed riverfront hotel and conference center addition to the Hjemkomst Center with integrated structured parking, flood control, and pedestrian connection to 1st Avenue Bridge.*

### ***Implement Riverfront Development Plan***

#### Project Narrative

A comprehensive plan for riverfront development in Fargo was presented in the 2001 Riverfront Development Plan. Many of the projects proposed in that plan depend on construction of permanent flood protection. This should be a priority activity to enable further development. The following are priority projects that should be considered upon completion of flood protection:

#### ***Fargo Civic Campus Site Redevelopment***

##### Project Narrative

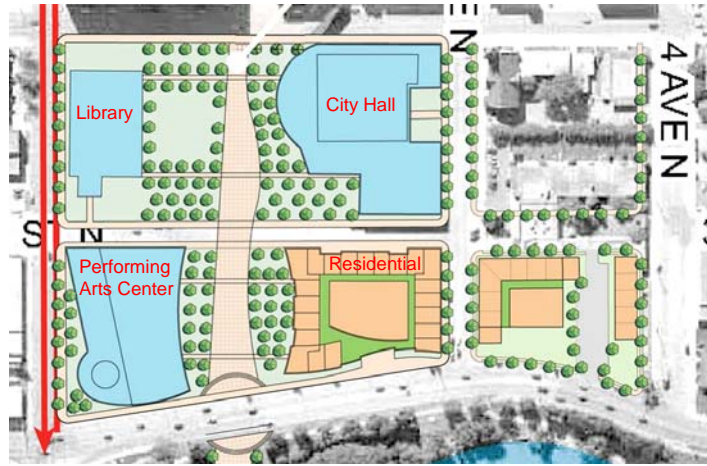
Fargo's downtown riverfront is an enticing development opportunity. The Plan strongly supports a project to bring permanent flood protection to the area through construction of a floodwall along Second Street. Other elements in this project include a performing arts center, a library, a new or renovated City Hall, a new mixed-use building with residential units above and integrated parking, and finally a public riverfront plaza.



*View of existing Fargo City Hall.*



The current parking lot area at the Fargo City Hall could be used for future development.



Plan view illustrating Fargo Civic Center renovated as City Hall, renovated library, new performing arts center, mixed-residential buildings with green roofs, and new civic plaza atop structured parking

Goals

- Better utilize prime real estate that has a view of the river.
- Jumpstart private development in this area.
- Provide a prominent civic space in downtown Fargo.



Evening view of proposed performing arts center, new civic plaza and riverfront residential development over structured parking that provides permanent flood control. Plaza extends across 2nd Street to riverside plaza and boat pier.

Action Steps

- Determine feasibility of locating the Performing Arts Center in this area.

- Develop permanent flood protection integrated with future development.
- Renovate the current City Hall.
- Build new mixed-use buildings with integrated parking.
- The City of Fargo should take the lead on this project along with partners from the private sector.

#### Timeframe

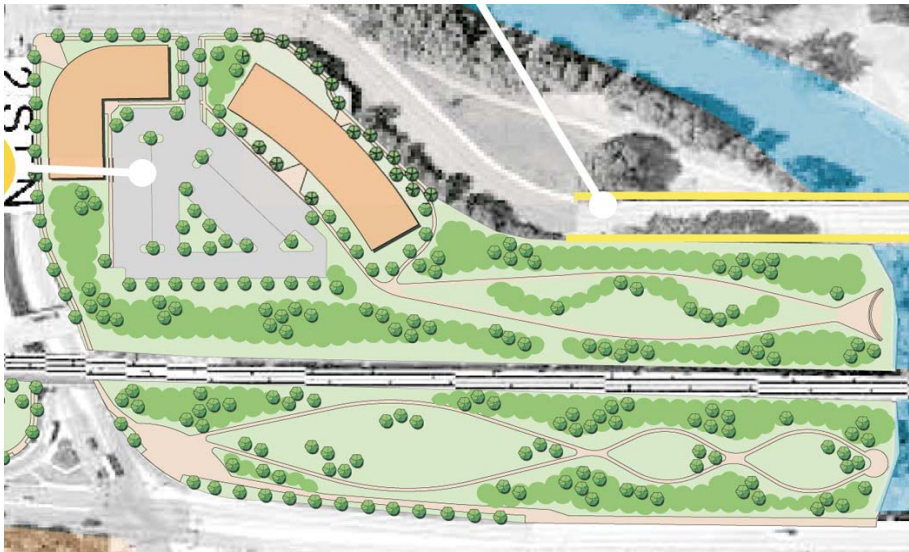
The feasibility of these projects should be determined in one year. If the projects are deemed feasible they should be started within two to five years.

### ***Fargo Mid-America Steel Site***

#### Project Narrative

The Mid-America Steel site is a prime location for river-oriented housing and public green space. In addition to the likelihood of environmental contamination, the site has several major physical

constraints including very limited vehicular access, bifurcation by active rail line and a long narrow shape. These constraints suggest a form and type of redevelopment that is concentrated and intense. The conceptual plan at left illustrates a mid-rise (5-8 story) or high-rise (10-20 story) building type, accessed from NP Avenue with structured parking and highly articulated linear green spaces terminating at the river.



#### Goals

- Create opportunities for higher density, urban housing on the riverfront.
- Strengthen linkages (visual and physical) to the river.
- Provide a gateway (architectural landmark) into downtown Fargo.
- Reclaim industrial Brownfield property.
- Utilize sustainable, “green” site and building design practices to mitigate rail noise and impacts to river.

#### Action Steps

- Steel company and City should begin joint long term planning process for relocation and modernization.
- Perform environmental assessment and remediation as part of end use planning efforts.
- Secure developer/builder for redevelopment.



*The LEED certified Reflections condominiums at the Bloomington Central Station near the Twin Cities International Airport is a good example of high density “green” building and site.*

Timeframe

Within the next seven to ten years.

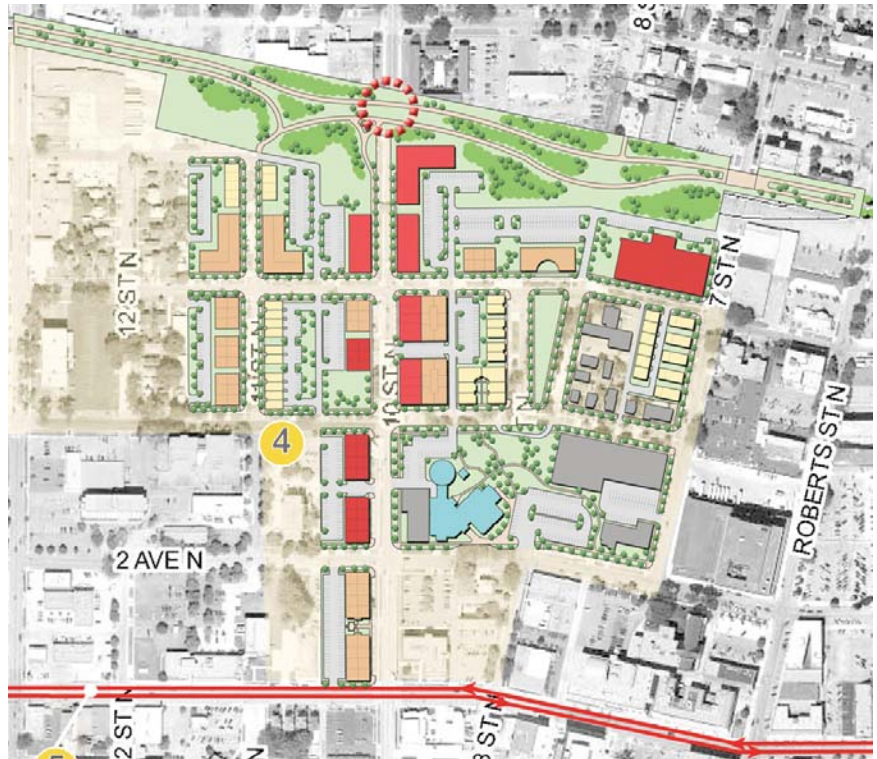
## Town and Gown Development

### **Fargo 10<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Student Housing Area and Mixed-use Retail**

Project Narrative

This component of the plan calls for development of new multi-family residential units on available sites in the vicinity of the college of business and other nearby NDSU facilities. These units are aimed at the student and young professional housing market, and should be mixed-use with new retail space on ground level fronting 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Infill locations between 10<sup>th</sup> Street and University should be targeted for residential development. Further, Fargo should support NDSU’s effort to create a new downtown campus of buildings between 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. As a broad long-range goal, Fargo should redevelop blocks in the general area of 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Street, and the new NDSU campus for student housing.

A good visual connection is needed between the NDSU downtown campus and the Main Campus. Flags, banners and other treatments could accomplish this along 10<sup>th</sup> Street and University. It is also important to note that residential development between 10<sup>th</sup> Street and



*This graphic illustrates some of the development opportunities in the 10th Street and NDSU Downtown Campus expansion areas.*

University will promote commercial/retail development on both corridors.

#### Goals

- Student oriented area.
- Mixed-use development.
- Student Housing.

#### Action Steps

- Work with NDSU and existing property owners on planning for this area.
- Continue to expand on NDSU campus idea.

#### Timeframe

Ongoing, over the next five years.



*Example of student oriented mixed-use development that could be located on 10th Street.*

### ***Moorhead Student Focused Mixed-use Development Area***

#### Project Narrative



*Illustration showing new student focused mixed-use development on Main Ave.*

Student focused and mixed-use development along Main Avenue between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets will bring together students from all F-M college campuses, adding excitement and vitality to the area. The project proposes a new theater and mixed-use development that cater particularly to students and young professionals.

#### Goals

- A student-oriented area that strengthens the linkages among the colleges.
- Improve walkability.
- Expand commercial and entertainment opportunities targeted toward students.

#### Action Steps

- Assemble property for mixed-use redevelopment.
- Market this area to students and young professionals.

#### Timeframe

Extend streetscape within two years and facilitate mixed-use development over five to seven years.

## Corridor Development

### *Infill Development*

#### Project Narrative

Infill development can repair and strengthen the urban fabric by filling the gaps created by vacant lots and surface parking. Infill buildings must be sensitively designed to reinforce the positive characteristics of the existing architecture. The following four projects are important infill development opportunities: 1.) Fargo US Bank Site Redevelopment, 2.) 54 Broadway, 3.) Public and private parking lots in major corridors, and 4.) Underutilized sites.

#### Goals

- Strengthen commercial, main street character.
- Leverage centrally located Downtown site for highest and best uses.
- Infill the block-long building gap to “complete” the street.

#### Action Steps

- Prioritize the recommended infill project sites.
- Work with property owners to explore opportunities for private and public uses.

### *Main Avenue*

#### Project Narrative

Three major projects encompass Main Avenue from 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Moorhead to University Drive in Fargo, and focus on: 1.) Fargo Main Avenue Streetscape and Redevelopment Area, 2.) Moorhead City Hall and Civic Campus, and 3.) Moorhead Main Avenue Enhancements.

### *Fargo Main Avenue Streetscape and Redevelopment Area*

#### Project Narrative

Streetscape treatments along Main Avenue to the Main Avenue Bridge will make it pedestrian friendly and connect from the core of Downtown to the river, capitalizing on the Main Avenue Bridge as an attraction for Downtown. The streetscape treatments have the potential to spur further private investment and redevelopment. This project calls for mixed-use commercial development on the ground floor along the corridor, residential and/or office space above, and parking integrated into the developments below grade. The objective is development to help fill in the holes from the Broadway/Main Avenue area to the river.

The Main Avenue Corridor is already scheduled for study from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to 25<sup>th</sup> Street in 2008 according to Metro COG. The segment between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and University has such different characteristics from the rest of the corridor that it should be studied separately. Emphasis should be placed on consistency and connectivity with Moorhead development, reclaiming sidewalks on the north side of Main Avenue, development of appropriate gateway features, and promotion of adjacent complimentary development.



*View of existing storage facility on Main Avenue in Fargo.*



*Broadway streetscape treatments should be extended along Main Avenue to strengthen identity and enhance the pedestrian experience. Existing properties offer strong potential for multi-use residential and commercial infill redevelopment.*

Goals

- Enhance accessibility, walkability, and economic vitality of Main Avenue corridor.
- Continue gateway image into downtown.
- Leverage and extend the current success of Downtown improvements.

Action Steps

- Discuss redevelopment ideas for sites on both sides of Main Avenue with land owners and civic leaders.
- Develop designs, budget, and timeline for roadway/turn lane modifications, streetscape improvements, and coordinate with private redevelopment efforts.
- Complete a new streetscape design for Main Avenue between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Broadway.

Timeframe

Study in 2008, and begin improvements within the next two to three years.



*Extending Broadway streetscape treatments along Main Avenue will enhance identity, walkability, and encourage private investment.*



*Illustration of new residential development and streetscape along Main Avenue Ave.*

## New Moorhead City Hall and Civic Campus

### Project Narrative

The Plan recommends improving City of Moorhead administrative and civic service facilities by developing a new Civic Campus, including a new City Hall. The campus area would be a creation of civic landmarks in the block bounded by Main Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The Post Office directly across 5<sup>th</sup> Street allows for easy access and coordination between levels of government. The campus would include a new library and City Hall, which could be combined into a joint building or connecting structures. The Rourke Art Museum would be enhanced with a landscaped public plaza. The proposed location on Main Avenue provides prominence in the downtown, and the axis up 5<sup>th</sup> Street links to the current City Hall building, where municipal office space could be retained, and/or the space could be renovated and offered for lease as professional offices. The current City Hall facility could also be converted to residential condominium units offering great views of the river and both downtowns or as a combination of office and residential uses.



*As one of the few landmark buildings in downtown Moorhead, the Rourke Art Museum in the historic Carnegie Library could serve as an anchor for a new Civic Campus.*



*Plan view illustrating Civic Campus area (in blue) and associated Main Avenue redevelopment opportunities.*

### Goals

- A modern civic campus for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that is more customer focused and visitor friendly.
- Strengthen synergy between other levels of government.
- A public investment that will serve as a catalyst for further investment by the private sector.
- Use the renovation/reuse of the City Hall to leverage improvements in the Moorhead Center Mall.

### Action Steps

- Study the feasibility of a new City Hall at the above referenced site.
- Determine the feasibility of converting the current city offices to office space for the private sector and/or housing.

### Timeframe

Feasibility studies should be completed within two years.



*Recent mixed-use infill along the north side of Main Ave. sets the stage for additional redevelopment and extending the streetscape.*

## ***Moorhead Main Avenue Enhancements***

### Project Narrative

Revitalization of downtown Moorhead is currently focused at the foot of the Main Avenue Bridge, with recent construction and rehabilitation encompassing three of the four corners at the intersection of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Main Avenue. Expanding this area with additional new mixed-use construction and private investment is a Plan priority.

Extending the streetscape improvements along Main Avenue from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to 8<sup>th</sup> Street needs to be a priority. Creation of a streetscape with a wide sidewalk, street trees, and decorative lighting will smooth transitions between Main Avenue's pedestrian focused shopping areas and open highway commercial type site development to the east. Redevelopment projects will provide an opportunity to increase building setbacks, where necessary, to provide the needed space (5 to 10 feet) for the streetscape. Street trees are especially important to softening the look of Main Avenue. A gateway feature at 8<sup>th</sup> Street is recommended.

### Goals

- Beautify the corridor and improve walkability with wider sidewalks, street trees, and decorative lighting.

### Action Steps

- Complete streetscape improvements.
- Assemble property for mixed-use redevelopment.

### Timeframe

Improve streetscape within two years and facilitate mixed-use development within five to seven years.

## ***Rail Consolidation***

### Project Narrative

Eliminating the use of the Prosper Subdivision track southeast of the Fargo rail yard and through the Downtown as described in the 2004 Fargo-Moorhead Rail Consolidation Feasibility Study will provide significant benefits to both communities, including:

- Increased safety and improved traffic operations due to decreased railroad crossings.
- Increase of developable land (primarily in Moorhead) due to track removal.
- Conversion of rail corridor west of 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Moorhead into a greenway trail linking both downtowns and NDSU.



*A greenway or trail could be constructed on the old rail line which would provide another link between Fargo and Moorhead.*

#### Project Goals

- Assemble larger tracts of land for commercial development.
- A new community amenity.
- Better traffic movement within Downtown.

#### Action Steps

- Continue to study this option including the financial feasibility of rail consolidation.
- Involve federal government officials, both Minnesota and North Dakota state governments, Clay and Cass counties, as well as the cities of Fargo and Moorhead to obtain funding.

#### Timeframe

The financial feasibility portion of this study should be done in the next two years.

### ***Fargo One-Way Conversion Project***

#### Project Narrative

The one-way-pair operation of NP Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North moves traffic efficiently, but there is more to consider than only traffic operations. Directness of travel, safety, bicycle and pedestrian movement, and economic vitality are also part of the equation. There appears to be substantial public support, including many Downtown business owners, for converting these corridors to two-way operation. It is important for Fargo planning and engineering staff to continue working with the public and with the City of Moorhead on this issue. The Fargo Commission needs to make a decision about the potential conversion project.

#### Goals

- Improve directness-of-travel and wayfinding in Downtown.



*Current Prosper Subdivision RR track in Moorhead.*

- Create safer streets that are better suited to all modes of travel.
- Enhance the economic vitality of Downtown.

#### Action Steps

- Complete a traffic impact study which compares potential conversion scenarios.
- Work with Moorhead staff to determine impacts of the potential conversion scenarios to Moorhead traffic operations.
- The City of Fargo should identify a preferred conversion scenario.
- Identify funding for the conversion project.

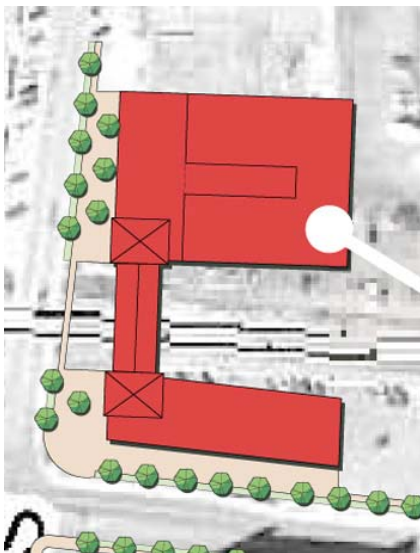
#### Timeframe

The traffic impact study should be completed within one year. If the conversion project is deemed technically feasible and publicly acceptable, project funding should be immediately identified. Final conversion should occur within three to five years.

### ***Fargo Broadway/Main Avenue – Skybridge Redevelopment***

#### Project Narrative

In order to enhance walkability and connectivity, a pedestrian connection should be constructed over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline at Broadway. This connection should be integrated into a new mixed-use parking building as a skyway over the railroad tracks. The new structure should be used as a venue for ground level and skyway level storefront space facing Broadway and lining the street facing areas of the parking garage.



*Providing a weatherproof pedestrian connection over the railroad tracks at Broadway and Main Avenue will improve safety and strengthen linkages between downtown districts.*



*View of existing railroad crossing at Broadway near Main Avenue. A pedestrian connection would allow easier connection from the core of downtown to Main Avenue.*

### Goals

- Improve pedestrian safety and walkability during winter season.
- Improve connectivity between Broadway and Island Park area.
- Foster high quality infill development at Broadway and Main Avenue.
- Integrate parking within new development.

### Action Steps

- Continue refining concept of mixed-use parking building with skyway over tracks.
- Determine amount of commercial space and parking needs.
- Sponsor developer solicitation for public-private development partnership.

### Timeframe

Within three to five years.



*Center Avenue in the downtown core was streetscaped following completion of the previous plan.*

## ***Moorhead Center Avenue Project***

### Project Narrative

Center Avenue west of 8<sup>th</sup> Street is a local road not Highway 10, which turns south at 8<sup>th</sup> Street, which allows the design of Center Avenue to favor slower traffic, parking, and pedestrians. Streetscape elements installed after the previous study hint at the potential for creating a pedestrian shopping street along Center Avenue all the way to the Red River Bridge.

The most important recommendations are parallel parking lanes on both sides of the street and creation of more window shopping opportunities. Center Avenue's two lanes in each direction and a center turn lane west of 6<sup>th</sup> Street are more than enough to serve traffic levels, which are significantly lower than on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue or Main Avenue. Allowing parallel parking on the street will signify that the street is a place of business and a civic space, not a thoroughfare. Parallel parking also buffers the sidewalk from moving vehicles creating a more pleasant environment for pedestrians and offering parking spaces directly in front of shops, which are convenient for shoppers.

Building walls along the sidewalk should meet a minimum standard of 50 percent glazing for windows and glass, to enhance the visual interest along the street for pedestrians and allow shop owners to show their wares. The zoning ordinance should be amended as necessary to address glazing.

### Goals

- Create an attractive, pedestrian supportive shopping corridor for Moorhead.
- Improve accessibility to street front businesses.
- Expand the commercial mix with unique restaurants, art galleries, and shops.



*Introducing parallel parking for portions of Center Avenue will enhance the pedestrian oriented “main street” character.*



*Prairie, MN rebranded itself with a new logo, decorative entrance gateways, and additional outside-oriented liner shops to become more accessible and viable.*

### Action Steps

- Existing design guidelines should be adopted and implemented.
- Re-stripe Center Avenue to reduce through-lanes and add parallel parking.
- Amend zoning if necessary to require windows and entrances onto Center Avenue in all new development.
- Implement curb extensions to protect on-street parking and support pedestrian crossing movements.
- Actively market façade improvement grants to current business to renovate their facades with street front windows.
- Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation on this project.

### Timeframe

Adding parallel parking to Center Avenue should be done as soon as possible. Design guidelines, zoning amendments, and façade grant programs should be started within one to two years.

## **Moorhead Center Mall Façade Enhancements**

### Project Narrative

The Moorhead Center Mall is a key shopping destination in Moorhead and contributes to the economic vitality of the downtown. While stores within the mall offer constantly changing merchandise and interior design makeovers, the exterior of the mall is due for an upgrade and fresh look. Retailing is the most dynamic part of the urban scene and many malls of the age of the Moorhead Center have been repositioned more than once.

The Plan proposes that the façade of the exterior be renovated. A number of different architectural approaches can be taken to the façade enhancement, including the addition of a more prominent cornice line, creating new storefront window displays along Center Avenue and facing 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and other design features, such as building signage and accent lighting.

### Goals

- Create a more appealing exterior appearance, especially from Center Avenue.
- Strengthen connection and synergy between the mall and Downtown.
- Create more window shopping opportunities at the mall.
- Enhance the visibility of the mall from the street.

### Action Steps

- The City and mall management should explore options for improving the façade and orientation to outside.
- Develop an updated design for the façade.
- Create more storefront displays.
- Convert surface parking to new liner shops, restaurants, or attractions such as an indoor garden/sunroom.

### Timeframe

Design for façade improvements should be completed in one year, and implemented as soon as possible.



*The Southdale Center in Edina, MN is another example of a mall that turned itself inside out by adding liner shops with exterior oriented entrances.*

### **Moorhead – East Downtown Gateways**

Three major corridors convey traffic towards the Downtown from the east: Main Avenue, Highway 10, and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. This effort to make these gateways distinctive and inviting would be strengthened by the rail consolidation project previously described. It would allow for creation of a greenway along the abandoned rail corridor that would improve the aesthetics and provide green space or parkland for the City. Although the green space would not be on the tax roles, the value created by the green space would be transferred to the adjacent private property. The property adjoining the rail line is in need of investment, which the greenway would encourage.



*Redevelopment along 1<sup>st</sup>, Center, and Main Avenue is important to the success of downtown Moorhead.*

Because railroad consolidation is not likely to happen in the immediate future, this project also identifies interim measures for improving the function and appearance of the corridors as gateways to Downtown.

### **Planning Principles for the East Downtown Area**

1. Share the road and tame the traffic: provide a hierarchy of interconnected facilities for pedestrians, bikes, cars, buses, and trucks.
2. Create a strong sense of place:
  - a. Establish stringent landscape and urban design enhancements and maintenance requirements.
  - b. Improve the public streetscape with trees and/or other plantings, lighting, banners, and artwork.
3. Diversify the character of the corridors through increased density and intensity within distinct use districts that accommodate a range of retail and non-retail uses, characterized by quality building and site design standards.

4. Eliminate the ugliness by burying overhead utilities, replacing excessive or poorly maintained concrete, asphalt, gravel, and dirt surfaces, and by screening outdoor storage.

### Project Goals

- Enhances property values.
- Support development of multi-use, commercial, and residential facilities.
- Improve the quality and character of new commercial development.
- Increase the mix of medium (30-50,000 SF) and larger (75-100,000 SF) box retailers.

### Action Steps

- Establish realistic, market responsive quantities of commercially zoned land.
  - Determine how much commercial, multi-use, and residential development can be supported (targeted market study).
  - Identify land to preserve as open space.
  - Limit retail-zoned land to reflect size and strength of the market, and establish identifiable “nodes” of intensified commercial development at key intersections.
  - Encourage office and residential uses between major commercial nodes.
  - Continue to assemble land where necessary for redevelopment.
- Stimulate infill and redevelopment with targeted marketing of this area to private developers. Support plans and projects with financial incentives and public improvement projects.
- Develop detailed plans for the right-of-way, based on the the recommended land uses, including:
  - Eliminating unnecessary accesses, landscaping parkways, and installing sidewalks as needed.
  - Designing attractive medians and locating for effective traffic movement.
  - Burying overhead utilities.
- Continue to update and enforce land development codes, including:
  - Landscaping, screening of outdoor storage, and buffering between uses.
  - Paving and/or repaving, where necessary, parking lots and storage areas.
- Explore the feasibility of a rail corridor greenway in greater detail.



*Streetscape improvements are needed along all three corridors east of downtown Moorhead to improve visual quality and strengthen identity.*



### Timeframe

This project should be started immediately. The City has already acquired land in this area and it should be marketed to developers as soon as possible.



Prototypical  
Site Development  
Concepts



- RESIDENTIAL:**  
S.F.D. Homes  
Double Homes  
Town Homes
- MULTI-USE**  
(horizontally combined)  
Commercial  
Office  
Residential
- GREEN SPACE:**  
Linear Park  
Trails  
Trees  
Gardens
- CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL:**  
Small-Medium  
Box Retail  
Service



Downtown  
Framework  
Plan Update



Land Use





*Example of a “lifestyle” retail center that would be an appropriate use for the eastern end of Main Avenue in Moorhead.*



*Example of well designed new commercial development suitable for the east Moorhead corridors of Main and Center Avenue and 1st Street.*

## VI. Implementation Matrix

<u>Project</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
<b>Bridge Enhancements</b>	Agree to collaborate on bridge enhancements.	Fargo, Moorhead, MNDOT, and NDDOT	1-3 years
	Develop detailed plan for aesthetic bridge enhancements that will strengthen connections across the river.	Fargo, Moorhead, MNDOT, and NDDOT	3-5 years
<b>Moorhead Hjemkomst Center Area Development</b>	Develop public/private partnership.	Moorhead, Hjemkomst Center Management, Downtown Community Partnership	1-2 years
	Study feasibility of hotel and small conference center or other uses to increase visibility and use.	Moorhead, Hjemkomst Center Management, Downtown Community Partnership	3-5 years

<u><i>Project</i></u>	<u><i>Action</i></u>	<u><i>Responsible Party</i></u>	<u><i>Timeframe</i></u>
<b>Fargo Civic Campus Re-development</b>	Develop public/private partnership.	Fargo	Immediately
	Determine feasibility of locating a Performing Arts Center in this area.	Fargo	1 year
	Develop permanent flood protection integrated with future development.	Fargo	On-going
	Renovate current City Hall.	Fargo	1-2 years
	Build new mixed-use building with integrated parking.	Fargo	2-5 years
<b>Fargo Mid-America Steel Site Re-Development</b>	Begin joint long-term planning process for relocating and modernizing plant.	Fargo, Mid-America Steel Management, Downtown Community Partnership	Immediately
	Perform environmental assessment and remediation as part of end use planning efforts.	Fargo, Mid-America Steel Management, Downtown Community Partnership	5-7 years

<u><i>Project</i></u>	<u><i>Action</i></u>	<u><i>Responsible Party</i></u>	<u><i>Timeframe</i></u>
<b>Fargo Mid-America steel Site Re-Development (Continued)</b>	Secure developer/builder for redevelopment.	Fargo, Mid-America Steel Management, Downtown Community Partnership	7-10 years
<b>Fargo 10<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Student Housing Area and Mixed-Use Retail</b>	Develop a more detailed plan for the area.	Fargo, NDSU, MSUM, MSCTC, Metro COG	1 year
	Continue to expand on NDSU's presence in Downtown.	Fargo, NDSU	2-10 years
<b>Moorhead Student Focused Mixed-Use Development Area</b>	Assemble properties for mixed-use redevelopment.	Moorhead, NDSU, MSUM, Concordia, MSCTC	1-5 years
	Market this area to students and young professionals.	Moorhead, NDSU, MSUM, Concordia, MSCTC	5-10 years
<b>Fargo Main Avenue Streetscape and Redevelopment Area</b>	Discuss redevelopment ideas for sites on both sides of Main Avenue with land owners and civic leaders.	Fargo, Builders, Developers, Downtown Community Partnership	1-2 years
	Develop designs, budget, and timeline for roadway modifications; coordinate with private redevelopment efforts.	Fargo, Builders, Developers, Downtown Community Partnership	2-3 years

<u><i>Project</i></u>	<u><i>Action</i></u>	<u><i>Responsible Party</i></u>	<u><i>Timeframe</i></u>
<b>Fargo Main Avenue Streetscape and Re-Development Area (Continued)</b>	Complete new streetscape design.	Fargo, Builders, Developers, Downtown Community Partnership	2-3 years
<b>Moorhead City Hall and Civic Campus</b>	Study feasibility of a new City Hall at the referenced site.	Moorhead	1-2 years
	Determine feasibility of converting current city offices to private sector office space and/or housing.	Moorhead	1-2 years
<b>Moorhead Main Avenue Enhancements</b>	Complete streetscape improvements.	Moorhead, Downtown Community Partnership	1-2 years
	Assemble properties for mixed-use redevelopment.	Moorhead, Downtown Community Partnership	5-7 years
<b>Rail Consolidation</b>	Continue to study this option including the financial feasibility.	Fargo, Moorhead, Metro COG	1-2 years

<u>Project</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
<b>Rail Consolidation (Continued)</b>	Government bodies, including Fargo, Moorhead, Cass County, Clay County, NDDOT, MNDOT, and Federal officials should work together to obtain funding.	Fargo, Moorhead, MNDOT, NDDOT, Federal officials	2-4 years
<b>Fargo One-Way Street Conversion</b>	Complete the traffic impact study which compares potential conversion scenarios.	Fargo, Downtown Community Partnership, Metro COG	1-2 years
	Work with Moorhead to determine impacts of potential conversion scenarios on Moorhead traffic operations.	Fargo, Moorhead, Metro COG	1-2 years
	Identify preferred conversion scenarios.	Fargo, Downtown Community Partnership, Metro COG	1-2 years
	Identify funding for conversion project.	Fargo, Downtown Community Partnership, Metro COG	1-2 years

<u>Project</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Party</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
<b>Fargo Broadway/Main Avenue</b>	Continue refining concept of mixed-use parking building with skyway over tracks.	Fargo, Downtown Community Partnership	1-2 years
	Determine amount of commercial space and parking needs.	Fargo, Downtown Community Partnership	2-3 years
	Sponsor developer solicitation for public-private development partnership.	Fargo, Builders, Developers, Downtown Community Partnership	3-5 years
<b>Moorhead Center Avenue Project</b>	Adopt and implement existing design guidelines.	Moorhead, MNDOT	1-3 years
	Re-stripe Center Avenue to reduce through-lanes and add parallel parking.	Moorhead, MNDOT	Immediately
	Amend zoning if necessary to require windows and entrances onto Center Avenue in all new development.	Moorhead	Immediately
	Implement curb extensions to protect on-street parking and support pedestrian crossing movements.	Moorhead, MNDOT	1 year

<u><i>Project</i></u>	<u><i>Action</i></u>	<u><i>Responsible Party</i></u>	<u><i>Timeframe</i></u>
<b>Moorhead Center Avenue Project (Continued)</b>	Actively market façade improvement grants for current businesses to add street front windows.	Moorhead, Downtown Community Partnership	1 year
<b>Moorhead Center Mall Façade Enhancements</b>	Explore options for improving façade and orientation to outside.	Moorhead, Mall Management	1 year
	Develop an updated design for the façade.	Moorhead, Mall Management	1 year
	Create more storefront displays.	Mall Management	1 year
	Convert surface parking to new liner shops, restaurants, or attractions.	Mall Management	1-2 years
<b>Moorhead East Downtown Land Use Scenarios</b>	Explore the feasibility of rail corridor greenway in greater detail.	Moorhead, BNSF	Immediately
	Determine how much commercial, multi-use, and residential development can be supported.	Moorhead	Immediately
	Rezone corridors and begin marketing this area to private developers.	Moorhead	Immediately