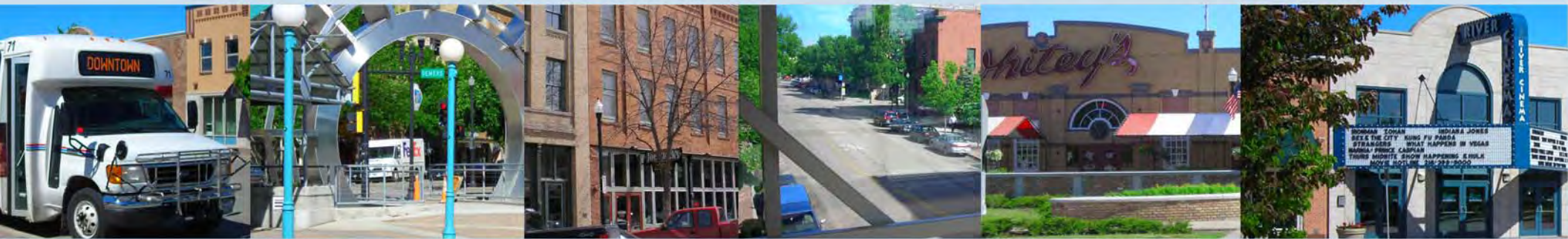


# RIVER FORKS



## DOWNTOWN PLAN UPDATE







# **River Forks Downtown Plan Update**

**March 2009**



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1.



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# 2.



## 2. Preface

### Overview

The Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) undertook this downtown planning process as a significant step for creating a better future for Downtown. With this plan the cities will be in a better position to identify challenges, anticipate change, and capitalize on future opportunities.

This plan anticipates the long-range needs of Downtown based on current information. The plan should be reviewed, evaluated, and updated periodically to reflect changing trends, outlooks, and thinking. In this way, it will remain a relevant guide to future growth and development in the Downtowns of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

### Beneficiaries

This Downtown Plan is designed to benefit the community as a whole, as opposed to any single property owner. As a result, from time to time, implementing this plan will adversely affect a single property owner or small group of property owners. However difficult or controversial, the greater good of the community will be served through the implementation of this plan. No community has ever successfully improved itself without

some controversy, opposition to or adverse affects on small numbers of property owners.

The cities and the MPO have committed to implement, to the extent possible, this plan with the greater good of the community in mind. Each project, goal, or policy that results from this plan should first be evaluated to confirm that the end result will positively move Downtown forward.

### Flexible Working Document

This framework plan illustrates the intent of the urban design principles, goals and objectives of previous studies done by Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, as well as new information from this planning process. This Plan can be looked at almost as an addendum to the previous plans. It is intended to be flexible and serves as a “tool kit” for evaluating redevelopment proposals and for making decisions about public and private improvements throughout both downtowns. Following this plan will ensure that the projects outlined in this document will contribute to the long term vision for Downtown Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

### Public Sector

- This document should be adopted as an addendum to both cities Comprehensive Plans.
- City departments should refer to the project concepts as a basis



Traditional Mainstreet buildings in Downtown Grand Forks.



Downtown East Grand Forks street scene.



New County Office Building located in Downtown Grand Forks.

from which to develop more detailed special area studies and implementation strategies as needed.

- City departments should refer to the objectives and recommendations in this plan to coordinate, design, and budget for capital improvements.
- The planning and engineering departments should refer to the overall framework and design principles when reviewing individual development proposals. Each proposed development or renovation should reinforce the principles and comply with the guidelines.

### Private Sector

- As the first step to any project, developers should refer to this plan and the previous downtown plans in order to understand Grand Forks and East Grand Forks' overall goals and determine how their property fits into the context of the area in which the project is proposed.
- Developers should refer to the plan to understand Grand Forks and East Grand Forks' intent and determine how their project will fit into the context of the downtown and reinforce the goals of the respective city.





# 3.



### 3. Introduction

In 1995, the Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, working together through the Grand Forks - East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization, created the River Forks Plan. The Plan had adopted recommendations regarding the transportation, urban design and redevelopment potential for the two downtowns. Leaders eagerly embraced the Plan and set forth to implement its recommendations. A unified agency was created to spearhead the implementation of the Plan.

Unfortunately, the Flood and fire of 1997 came and things changed dramatically. Due to funding and timing issues the recovery efforts needed to focus on each downtown individually: thereby causing the disbanding of the River Forks Commission, which tried to bring the two downtowns together. Since the flood, many different plans have been developed to aid in recovery from the flood. For Grand Forks' downtown, up to six plans provide separate yet intertwined recommendations. For East Grand Forks' downtown, up to four plans exist.

The time has now come to re-examine and update the recommendations in the River Forks Plan and subsequent plans adopted since the flood. This Plan update will help

the two communities answer how to move forward for the next 10 years.

There have been many successes that have come out of the previous planning studies. The Greenway has been developed and integrated with the flood protection system. The replacement of housing has occurred with roughly 160 units added to downtown. Business recovery continues though vacancies and turnover still exist in both downtowns. Connections between the two downtowns and with the Greenway have improved, however stronger ties are needed. Additionally, a significant segment of downtown Grand Forks has become a National Registered Historic District, which thankfully has been instrumental in preserving historic buildings.

The Cities are now asking themselves, "What should come next?" Recently, the Grand Forks – East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) retained a consulting firm, Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH) to complete an updated Downtown Plan for Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. Additionally, SEH has teamed with Camiros, Ltd., a respected Chicago-based urban planning and design firm, Maxfield Research, a Minneapolis based market analysis firm and EAPC, an architecture firm in Grand Forks. The update will be, in part, a consistency review of the River Forks Plan and the various recovery plans prepared for



Pocket park in Downtown Grand Forks featuring public art.



Whitey's is a popular destination in Downtown East Grand Forks.



the downtown, as well as an opportunity to build on successes realized to date. It also will identify initiatives and projects that should be completed in the next 5 years in order to keep the momentum of downtown revitalization moving forward.

A steering committee has been established to guide the downtown planning process and provide input as the Plan is being drafted. The purpose of the steering committee is to provide local insight to the consultant team, as well as provide feedback as the Plan is drafted.

### Focus of the Plan

Even though Downtown is doing fairly well, there is a recognized need to be progressive and to maintain downtown's place in the regional economy. Downtowns are changing and the ability of the GF-EGF downtown to build on its current success will be critical.

Accordingly, this plan doesn't rely on one big fix. Rather, it looks at several projects that can build upon what is already working in GF/EGF. The communities have been growing and changing for more than a century; there is no reason it should not continue to evolve at a measured pace toward positive change.

The concept of "One Downtown" was discussed early in the planning process and soon became the focus of the plan. The idea is to make the Downtowns of Grand Forks

and East Grand Forks act more like one large downtown with a river running through it instead of being looked at as two separate downtowns. This Plan builds connections/linkages between the two downtowns that are physical and promotional in nature. In the end a mindset change is needed so that people look at the two downtown's as one.

### Plan Components

There are four main components related to this plan update.

- Transportation
- Land Use
- Urban Design
- Organization

### Planning Process

The assembly of the GF/EGF Downtown Plan Update featured a true community planning process. It combined local knowledge of the community with the experience and ideas of a consulting project team comprised of land use planners, urban designers, traffic engineers, market analysts, landscape architects, and architects. Over the course of the 12 month process, both the project consultants and the community capitalized on numerous opportunities to exchange ideas, to challenge established conventions, and to create a plan that truly reflects the wishes and values of the community. There have been many public engagement opportunities including:

- Monthly Committee Meetings



- Focus Group Meetings
- Twenty four interviews with Downtown Stakeholders
- Public Visioning Meeting
- Design Charrette



Project Area

4.



## 4. Overview of Existing Conditions

### Physical Conditions

An assessment of downtown economic and physical conditions helps identify the key issues concerning downtown's growth. Because downtown is seen by many as the center of the community, it is also appropriate to include social and cultural factors as part of the overall evaluation. The influences of all these factors will lead to directions for downtown that are based on its inherent character.

### Land Use

Uses throughout the downtown are typical of many Midwestern cities with a main street. Downtown offers retail, restaurant and entertainment, residential, and other commercial goods and services, along with government uses. As one moves away from the core of downtown uses become less intense, especially in East Grand Forks but still are directed towards the needs of residents and businesses.

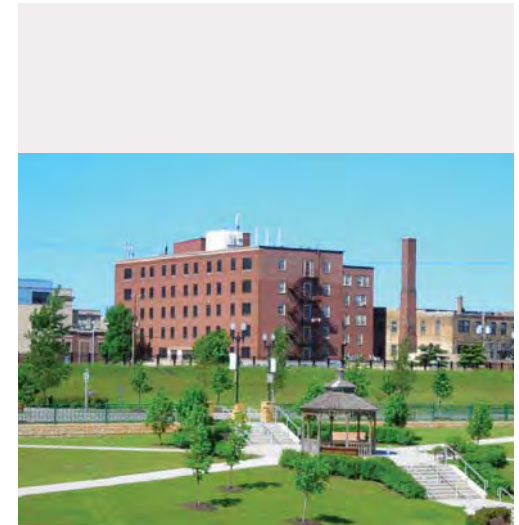
The economy of Downtown relies, in a large part, on a steady flow of people from across the city and region coming to downtown to do their civic business. Because civic uses such as City Hall, County Courthouse, and the Post Office bring people downtown, maintaining its position as the community's

civic center is important to the health of downtown.

The sustainability of this area is dependant on the types and mix of uses that are present there. Both Downtown Grand Forks and East Grand Forks provides opportunities for all individuals and interests. Traditionally downtowns are threatened by disinvestment and blight due to development in other areas of town. Statistical indicators will help identify the existing condition of the downtown.

- Over 91% of the residences in the downtown area are occupied. The national occupancy level is only at 88%.
- Government, retail and health care employ 55% of the regional population. The downtown offers many opportunities in these fields.

Recently, more residents have been calling downtown home. Apartment residences on the upper levels of downtowns are being used for housing. There have also been several residential buildings built downtown in recent years. There are residential neighborhoods surrounding downtown that provide attractive places to live and offer convenience to many downtown features. The health of these surrounding neighborhoods is very important to the vitality of downtown. As enhancements are considered for downtown, both the



View of Greenway.



New housing in Downtown Grand Forks.



Typical Downtown building in Grand Forks.

improvement of these neighborhoods and the public realm connections to and from them should also be considered.

### Downtown Buildings

Many of the downtown buildings are brick and date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. Recent exterior changes may have compromised some of the buildings' original integrity, the historic qualities of these building can be restored. Newer buildings constricted after the Flood also fit into the character of Downtown. The character and prominence of the larger buildings in Downtown clearly identities this area as the center of the community. Beyond the core of downtown, lower scale buildings still convey a sense of downtown by virtue of their density and orientation; many remain closely spaced and are oriented to the streets.

After the Flood much of the Downtown was rebuilt, including new buildings. The City of East Grand Forks built a new City Hall Downtown. Cabela's also built a large big-box sporting goods store and the Pracs Institute built a medical research facility. In Grand Forks several new buildings were constructed including the Corporate Centers. There have also been several new residential condominiums built in downtown Grand Forks.

In addition to significant rebuilding and redevelopment since the Flood, The area

is set apart by many historic structures on the National Register. The area was largely developed between 1890 and 1940, the architectural style of these buildings reflect the building techniques of this time. These architectural styles include:

- Chicago School
- Richardsonian Romanesque
- Early Brick Commercial
- Art Moderne
- Tudor Revival
- Art Deco
- Transitional Brick

In all 68 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places are located in the downtown dating back to as early as 1882.

Particularly significant buildings to Downtown Grand Forks include:

- Grand Forks City Hall
- Lyons Garage
- Masonic Temple
- Post office and Courthouse

The most historically significant buildings in East Grand Forks include:

- The Hamm Brewing Company
- Whitey's Cafe and Wonderbar

In an effort to preserve and enhance the buildings in the downtown, the East Grand Forks City Council in September 2000 voted in favor of establishing three TIF districts identified as Redevelopment District I-I,

Redevelopment District 1-2 and Economic Development District 2. This program is able to encourage redevelopment in these focus areas by using future tax gains to finance current projects.

## Cultural, Entertainment and Recreational Features

Downtown provides a variety of arts, cultural and entertainment venues, all of which add to the diversity of activities in downtown. The movie theatre in East Grand Forks is a large draw regionally. There are several bars and restaurants in each community that offer places to gather and socialize.

Downtown also offers an excellent recreational amenity in the Greenway that is located in the river floodplain. The river itself is also an excellent recreational feature. The Farmers Market located in the Town Square in Grand Forks is a cultural amenity that brings people to downtown and emphasizes the importance of downtown as a community hub.

### Recreational Grand Forks:

- “The Greenway” canoeing/kayaking, fishing and birding
- Biking and Walking Trail along red River
- Community Green Rotary Park
- Town Square
- Music, Theatre, and Sports at Central High

- Various productions at Empire Arts Center

### Recreation East Grand Forks

- Sherlock Park Campground
- Sherlock Park
- River Heights Trail Head
- Griggs Park and Trail
- Boat Launch

## Cultural Features

- Velkommen (Scandinavian clothing and collectibles)

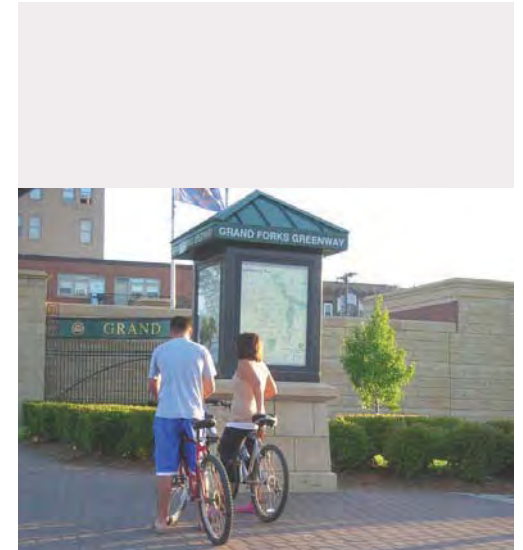
## Entertainment

- Grand Cities Art Festival (160 high-end artisans and quality crafters, tantalizing food concessions, a full day of live entertainment, a Kid’s Corner, Antique Car Shows and more.) – over 35,000 people

### Demographic and Household Information

The downtown area, beyond serving as a commercial and entertainment center also includes a residential component. These residencies provide an important aspect of the downtown’s identity and represent an important dynamic of the area.

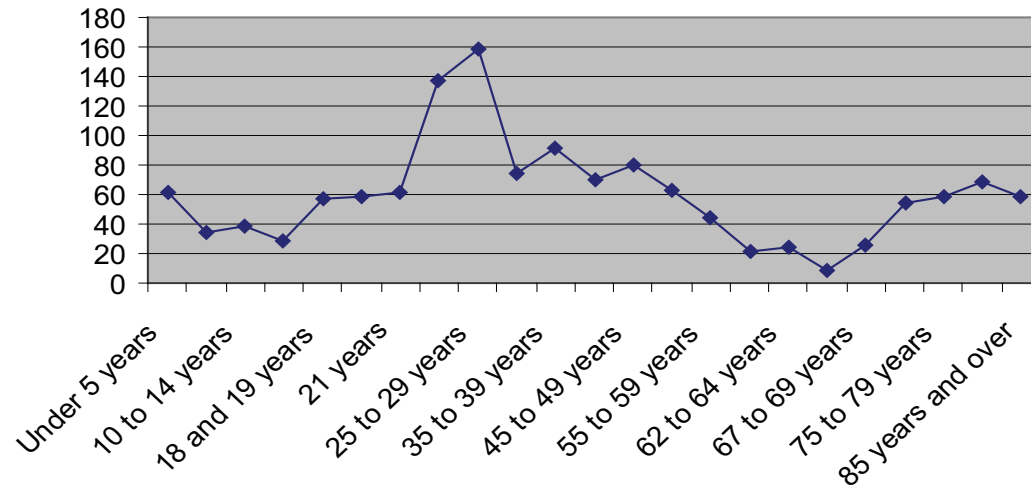
1380 people and 851 housing units are located in downtown Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. Though people of all ages choose to live in this area the area appears to



Grand Forks Greenway Trail.



## Downtown Population Age Distribution



be significantly attractive to those in the 20 – 40 age range as the figure above shows.

The average household size for the area is 1.6 persons/unit. This figure is significantly lower than the national average of 2.6 persons/unit. This statistic is telling of the type of housing options located in this area.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

# 5.



## 5. Issues and Opportunities

Several main themes emerged from the public meeting held at the Grand Forks Herald Building on June 11, 2008. One of the main goals of the Downtown Plan Update is to look at the downtowns of both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks as one downtown. With that goal in mind the following *themes* emerged during the public visioning meeting.

- *Downtown Organization and Promotion* - Participants indicated there needs to be an “umbrella” organization that can organize and promote the virtues of downtown. Existing staff, as well as possible new staff that could work with business owners to organize promotion strategies and downtown events.
- *Downtown Supportive Retail* - Supportive retail uses are very important to the success of downtown. The participants and the public visioning meeting indicated more “niche” retail shopping is needed downtown. It was also noted that a small grocery/convenience store or drug store is needed. The location should be fairly central for both downtowns. These supportive retail uses will help keep downtown vibrant and will allow people that live downtown to shop downtown for basic goods and services.
- *Downtown Living* - It was noted that there have been a lot of new housing units constructed downtown within the past few years. This is very important to the retail success of downtown. Rooftops are needed to support retail uses downtown. More housing should be considered downtown if integrated into mixed-use developments or on the upper levels of buildings. East Grand Forks needs more housing for young professional people.
- *Downtown Character and Quality of Life* - Several participants indicated they enjoy the historic character of downtown, as compared to other areas of the community. However, from a marketing perspective downtown needs to have an identity or theme that people can identify with. Looking at the two central business districts as one downtown may be a way to better market the area.

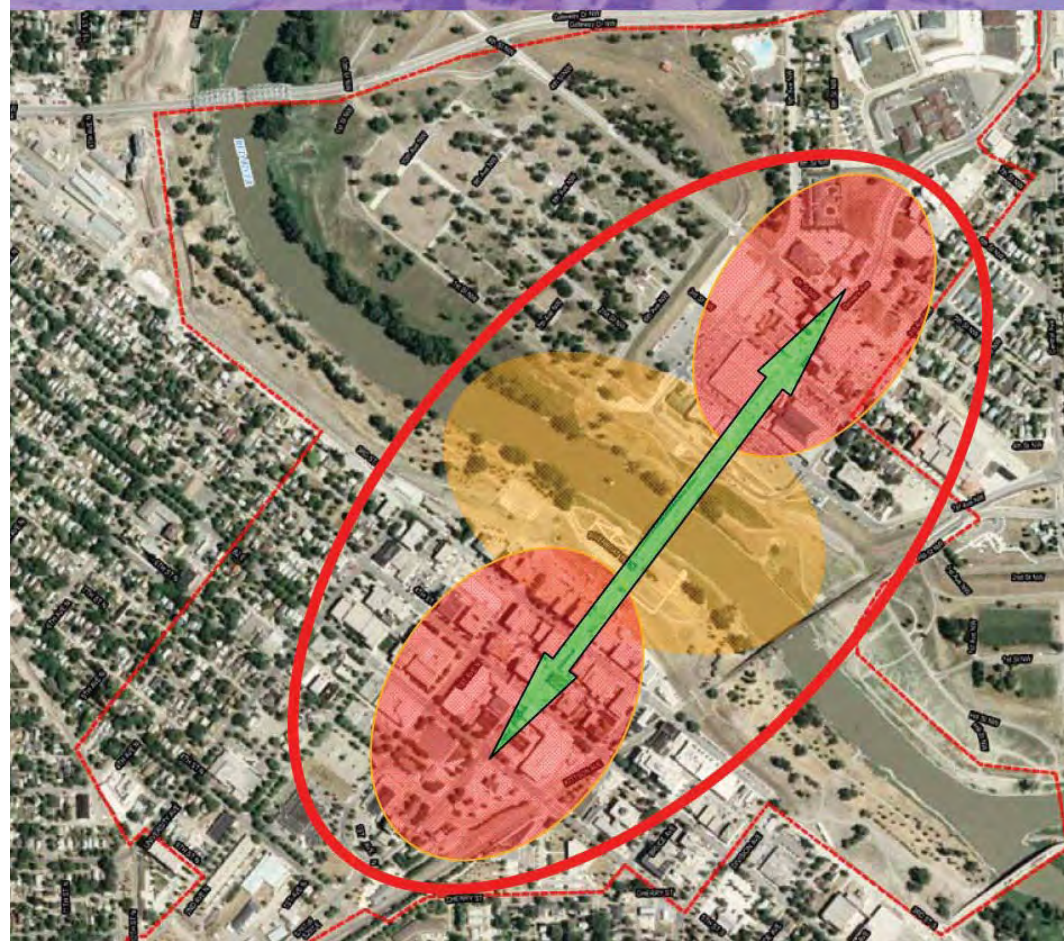
It was also noted that litter has been increasingly problematic in downtown, especially after bars close. The Plan also needs to have a strategy for dealing with this issue in the coming years.
- *Downtown Multi-Modal Transportation* - Transportation emerged as an important theme at the public visioning meeting. Participants indicated they would like to see better connectedness between



Cinema has become a primary entertainment venue for residents in the Forks metro area.



New “Brownstone” townhouses provide a good model of modern multi-family designed to fit in a historic setting.



One Downtown Concept.

the two cities for both pedestrians and bicyclists. Many participants indicated they would like to see a new pedestrian/bike bridge across the river near downtown. Other multi-modal transportation issues included the potential loss of the Central High

School parking lot due to potential Civic Auditorium site redevelopment and what to do to replace those parking spots. Additionally, there is a perception that there is a parking problem downtown. It was noted that many downtown users





Vacant corner site in East Grand Forks with strong development potential.



Obsolete Event Center site offers strong redevelopment potential.

want to be able to park in front of the building they are going to.

## Downtown Strengths and Weaknesses

The Downtowns of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks both have strengths and weaknesses which were identified in stakeholder interviews. The First National Bank building located at 322 DeMers, in the heart of Downtown Grand Forks, has significant space available (approximately 30,000 square feet). The building is a classic revival architectural style building and was built during the 1900-1924 period of significance.

### Grand Forks Strengths

- Historic association with community, urban ambiance
- Great mix of existing retail and office presence
- Town Square and Farmer's Market draw people Downtown
- Cleaned up since flood and has gained momentum with new housing and more people living Downtown.

### Weaknesses

- Perceived parking issues.
- Empty storefronts create feeling of failed retail.
- Cut off from Greenway and Red River by flood wall.
- Lack of single governing body.

The First National Bank building is the largest vacant space in the Downtown with about 30,000 square feet. It is located in the heart of Downtown Grand Forks at the corner of 4th and DeMers and has a historic association with the community. The building has minimal off street parking adjacent to it and has parking ramp access across the street. The first floor has large windows and open space suitable for retail. Its large size is likely to deter smaller users from considering this space viable. We recommend that this building be reserved for office uses. Some small retail uses, a restaurant or convenience items could be incorporated into the main floor of the building, but we do not recommend retail uses for the first floor.

Another potential use of the building would be for higher educational purposes. The University of North Dakota could purchase or lease out the building and locate the law school or other various programs to use the building for classes. Not only would a large vacant space be filled Downtown, additional housing would be needed to house students and faculty wanting to live closer to work and school. With students and faculty coming and going throughout the day, holding classes, Downtown would become a traffic generator, producing movement and people on the streets and throughout Downtown as a whole. The filling of this building could create a UND Downtown campus.

### East Grand Forks Strengths

- Small town atmosphere.
- Draws people Downtown with uses such as Cabela's and Movie Theatre.
- Invisible flood wall allows Downtown to remain connected to the River.
- More than adequate parking for Downtown employees, and customers.
- Strong retail presence with numerous businesses.
- Land availability to build new buildings and structures.

### Weaknesses

- Parking lots create empty, suburban feeling.
- Lack of Downtown housing and residents.
- Needs to find niche to attract additional retail users.
- Lack of infrastructure/existing buildings for new housing, office and retail.

Downtown East Grand Forks should focus on attracting a new major office user interested in construction of a new building. This would enhance the physical ambiance of Downtown and add daytime population. The Riverwalk Centre has vacant spaces that are closed off from the street and are not visible. Opening up the mall to the street to allow daylight in would increase visibility and attractiveness to potential retail uses. Beefing up the remaining vacant spaces Downtown, in the same

manner, would help create a niche market that would build upon existing users. Existing parking lots should be filled in with new construction to develop a more Downtown, urban feel and atmosphere.

### Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Review Board oversees design guidelines for Downtown Grand Forks. Design guidelines in East Grand Forks have not been adopted. In Grand Forks, issues have been raised about the effectiveness of the design guidelines and if they are too stringent. The design review process tries to avoid future issues in the planning process with the Planning Commission and City Council. The stance of the Downtown Review Board is not to be a hurdle to development but to make projects better, not derail them. The Board works with the proposer to refine and revise projects so they fit into Downtown Grand Forks and the design guidelines. SEH has reviewed the current design guidelines and finds them satisfactory and they are working as intended.



Shoppers enjoying Downtown Grand Forks.



East Grand Forks has a good small town feel.

6.



## 6. Framework Plan

### Principles, Goals & Districts

#### Downtown Framework

The framework is meant to provide general guidance for Downtown Planning and Redevelopment. This general guidance is useful when completing a downtown plan to provide business owners and community leaders with a framework that will assist as a decision making tool when downtown projects are being proposed. This guidance may seem rudimentary, but oftentimes communities need to focus on basic principles and philosophies to have the plan be successful. Without this basic framework it is very difficult to implement a successful downtown revitalization program.

#### Planning Principles

The following planning principles are important to the success of the Plan. These principles should be apparent in the day to day culture of planning for a more successful downtown.

***Sustainability:*** Establish a holistic and integrated framework of policies, plans and projects that meet the needs of current citizens without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

***Regional Context:*** Create a unified downtown that is centered on the riverfront, rather than divided by it, and linked to surrounding

community assets by clear and attractive transportation links.

***Living:*** Attract additional investment in housing in both downtowns that provides a variety of housing models for different household types and income levels with adequate access to parking and green space.

***Connectedness:*** Enhance access into and between the two downtown areas, especially as it relates to train disruptions and walkability over the river corridor.

***Business growth:*** Attract appropriate types of businesses in different parts of the downtown depending on available spaces, feasible building floorplates, and vacant sites that can accommodate a variety of types of commercial/retail businesses and tenants.

***Image:*** Create a coordinated theme among the downtown areas that reinforces the historic character of the area and encourages private maintenance of properties and sidewalk areas.

***Action:*** Create a clear action program for downtown improvement activities that identifies the organization, staff and resources to carry out plan-related projects and on-going downtown promotions and events.



Residents providing input at Downtown Plan public meeting.



Illustrative sketch of potential Downtown housing.



The Farmers' Market in Downtown Grand Forks is an activity generator.

## Goals

One of the major goals of the Downtown Plan Update is to look at both downtowns as one. The following goals should be considered as they relate to Downtown revitalization activities. As individual projects are considered these goals should be reviewed to determine if the project will contribute to these overall goals that will lead to a more successful downtown.

- A. *One downtown.* The downtowns of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks should function like one large downtown with a river running through them rather than two separate districts. This plan tries to strengthen physical connections so that achieving this goal becomes easier.
- B. *Activity Generators.* Develop activity-generating enterprises along major commercial corridors: DeMers, University, 3rd Street, 4th Street, and 5th Street in Grand Forks and along DeMers, 3rd and 4th St. NW in East Grand Forks.
- C. *Walkable Districts.* Create “walkable districts” (10-minute walk from one end to the other) that integrate a wide range of activities and land uses, including cultural attractions, thereby encouraging on-street activity and interaction while discouraging unnecessary auto traffic, parking problems, and congestion. See Planning Districts Map.
- D. *Ground Floor Uses.* Reserve ground floor uses to those that will encourage pedestrian vitality – shops, offices, cafes, restaurants, and other public facilities.
- E. *Safe Streets.* Safe neighborhoods. Encourage safe streets and neighborhoods by relying on and utilizing the natural surveillance of lively and active streets.
- F. *User Needs.* Encourage projects that consider the needs of their users, in addition to the needs of downtown users in general. For example, any uses that will cater to downtown residents, such as a pharmacy, grocery store, etc should be considered good for the downtown.
- G. *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.
- H. *Housing Amenities.* Integrate quality housing with public open space and neighborhood amenities. Require the enhancement of existing amenities in conjunction with the creation of new ones.
- I. *Downtown Entryways.* Enhance auto entry experiences with landscaping improvements to all major corridors,



especially the DeMers Corridor in both communities.

- J. *The Place to Be.* Make downtown the entertainment/cultural/recreation center of the city: “If you are looking for something to do – downtown is the place to be.” Downtown should serve as a key destination for visitors and residents. Downtown is the Heart and Soul of the community and is should be considered everyone’s neighborhood.
- K. *A Place Like No Other.* Highlight the unique historical character of the downtowns by placing a high value on historic preservation and overall awareness of the history of the area.
- L. *Connections and Coordination.* 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.
- M. *Direct Public Investment.* Direct public investment to stimulate and sustain private investment and reinvestment in downtown.

## Planning Districts

Downtown contains a mixture of districts as described in the Downtown Districts Map. The type of development envisioned in each district is described below.

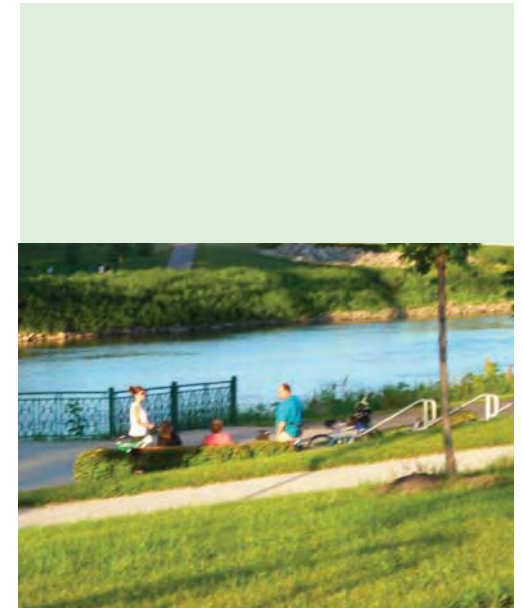
- *Residential Periphery* – This District is the transition area between Downtown and the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The vitality of this area is critical to both Downtown and the neighborhoods beyond.

The land uses in this area should be residential, with some mixed-uses. Its primary purpose is to establish an edge zone between Downtown and residential neighborhoods. This zone channels commercial activity into Downtown and prevents non-residential uses from creeping into neighborhoods.

- *University Avenue Redevelopment District* – This District also serves as a transition area between Downtown and the surrounding residential area, as well as provides a link to the University of North Dakota (UND).

Land uses in this area should be primarily mixed-use or neighborhood oriented commercial that makes the transition from the downtown to the residential areas and establishes a stronger link up University Avenue to UND.

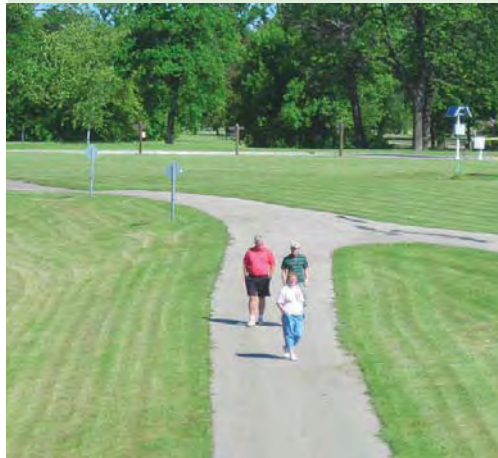
- *Mixed-Use Redevelopment and Enhancement District* – This District features a mix of uses such as several banks, a Hotel, and the YMCA.



People enjoying the riverfront.



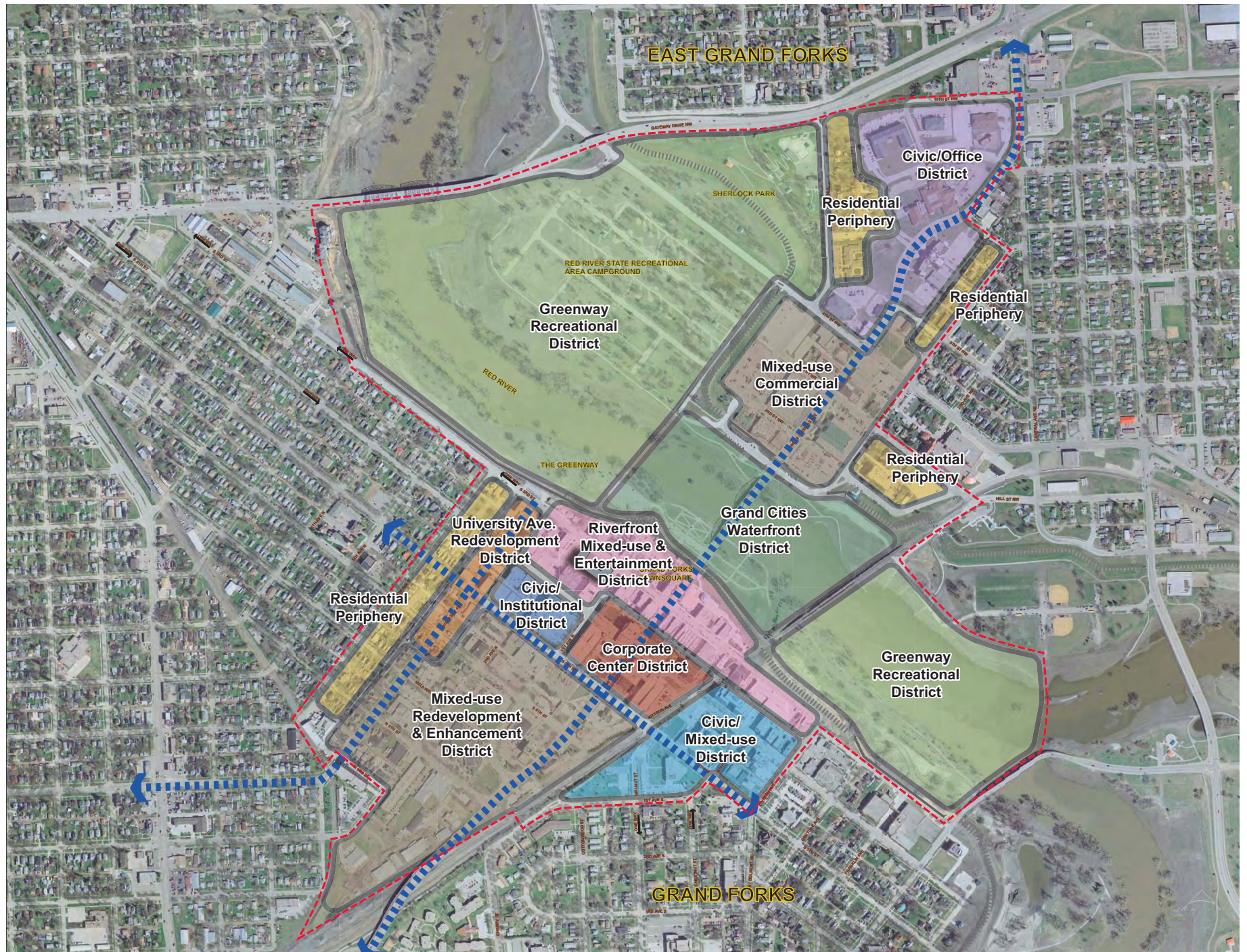
New City Hall built in East Grand Forks after the flood.



Greenway trail system.

Land uses in this area should be mixed-use in nature. The Civic Auditorium site in this area is a prime redevelopment opportunity. As some of the sites in this district reach their useful life, they could be redeveloped.

- *Civic/Institutional District* – This District includes the Grand Forks City Hall, Federal Building and Central High School. These uses should remain in the future.
- *Corporate Center District* – This is the Central Business District of Grand Forks. The focus here should be business and office uses. A major focus should be given to fill the vacant office space in this area.
- *Civic/Mixed-Use District* – This area includes many County Government uses, as well as a mix of commercial and office uses. These uses are encouraged to continue in this area in the future.
- *Riverfront Mixed Use and Entertainment District* – This District basically includes the 3rd Street Corridor, as well as the City Square and Open Space up to the levee. This area should be the central focus for new entertainment and restaurant uses, as well as a mix of commercial and residential uses.
- *Waterfront District* – This shared riverfront area incorporates greenway paths, formal and passive park programming, and enhanced access across the River. This area is very critical to the idea of “one downtown,” as it is the link between the two communities.
- *Greenway Recreational District* – This river corridor area is an amenity to the Downtown area. Downtown should try to capitalize on the users of this space by trying to attract them downtown.
- *Mixed-Use Commercial District* – This area in East Grand Forks (EGF) is the primary commercial district in Downtown EGF. This area should be the focal point for mixed-use and commercial redevelopment in Downtown EGF.
- *Civic/Office District* – City Hall and the library anchor this area. The Pracs Institute is also located here and these types of office/professional services uses should continue in the future.



Downtown Districts Map

# 7.



## 7. Transportation

### Executive Summary

As part of The River Forks Downtown Plan Update, the existing transportation conditions in Downtown Grand Forks and Downtown East Grand Forks were summarized. The following is an executive summary of the Existing Conditions Memorandum included in the appendix.

### Traffic Operations

An evaluation of traffic operations was performed for the AM and PM peak periods with Synchro/SimTraffic Software. Traffic counts obtained in April and May of 2008 and existing geometry and traffic signal timings were incorporated into the model. The analysis showed that all intersections operate at Level of Service (LOS) B or better. Delays for each approach are in the LOS C range or better. Queuing results showed that vehicle queues were contained within the storage provided.

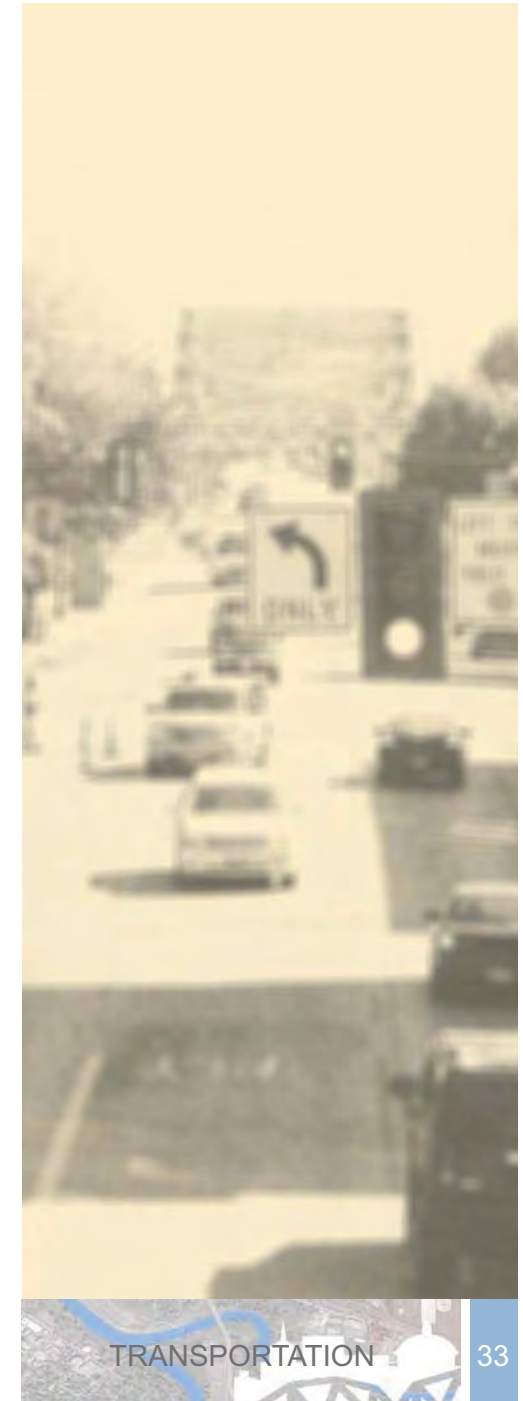
While the existing peak hour operation of DeMers Avenue is acceptable, the 2005 AADT on DeMers Avenue was 16,200. The Highway Capacity Manual suggests AADTs of 15,000 for 2-lane urban arterials as a reasonable threshold for identifying a congested condition (Mn/DOT 2004). Level of Service (LOS) is also suggested as the basic metric for monitoring and measuring congestion. It will be important to consider

opportunities to maintain acceptable operations as traffic volumes increase along DeMers Avenue in the future. The City of Grand Forks has already planned for the installation of new traffic signal controllers in 2012 as well as vehicle video detection and radio-interconnect to allow for communication between traffic signals and improved operation.

### Railroad Crossings

Within the Downtown Plan study area in Grand Forks; there are four Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad crossings, three of which have gate arm and flasher installations. These are each planned for system upgrades beginning in 2009. The fourth crossing has only cross buck signing. Two additional crossings just west of the study area in Grand Forks near North 9th Street have cross buck installations, however, the City has applied to upgrade to a gate arm and flasher installation at one of these. The City of Grand Forks is also requesting that the MPO conduct a Railroad Crossing Consolidation Study for these crossings east of Downtown under the 2009 work program. The train whistles at the Downtown crossings have been identified as a concern for nearby residents and business owners.

In the City of East Grand Forks there is one railroad crossing in the study area located just outside the core of Downtown at 3rd Street Northwest and Hill Street Northwest.





## Geometry - Grand Forks, ND

This crossing has flashing lights and no gates. At this time there are no plans to upgrade this crossing. Two additional railroad crossings are located just outside the study area in East Grand Forks; one of which will have flashing lights and gates installed in 2011 and the other currently has flasher systems and gate arms.

### Heavy Vehicles

There is some concern over the volume of heavy vehicle or truck traffic that uses DeMers Avenue to travel through Downtown Grand Forks and Downtown East Grand Forks. At the time count data were gathered for this study, truck traffic percentages at intersections along DeMers Avenue between 5th Street in Grand Forks and 4th Street Northwest in East Grand Forks ranged from 1.6 to 2.9 percent. Truck percentages are in the range of 3 to 6 percent on DeMers Avenue and up to 19-percent on 4th Street Northwest during the harvesting season in October.

### Mid-Block Pedestrian Crossing

There is a mid-block pedestrian crossing between 2nd Street NW and 3rd Street NW on Business 2/DeMers Avenue in East Grand Forks. The crossing is marked with stamped and colored concrete between the Cabela's store and the River Walk Mall entrance. There are also pedestrian ramps and "No Parking" areas adjacent to the crosswalk location. This is the same pavement treatment used

at crosswalks at intersections on DeMers Avenue through Downtown East Grand Forks. However, there is no signing for the mid-block crosswalk alerting drivers of the crossing location. The City has become increasingly concerned about this mid-block crossing location because it not signed and there have been reports of "close calls" between drivers and pedestrians.

### Transit

Public transit service for Grand Forks/East Grand Forks is provided by Cities Area Transit (CAT). The Metro Transit Center (MTC) is located in Downtown Grand Forks and there are stops at all corners along the routes in Downtown Grand Forks and Downtown East Grand Forks. Bus service between the two downtowns is available between 7:00AM and 6:00PM Monday through Friday. On Saturday CAT service is available from 10:00AM to 6:00PM. Night service throughout the Grand Forks area is available from 6:00PM to 10:00PM on the Night Bus. This night fixed route service does not include East Grand Forks. Discount fares are available through the purchase of a variety of passes and dial-a-ride service/ADA-Para transit service and senior rider is also available during CAT hours. There is limited transit interaction between UND and Downtown with three routes traveling between them (routes 4, 6 and 2). Routes 4 and 6 provide direct service between UND and Downtown twice an hour and route 2



Mid-block crossing at Cabela's



Transit Station in Downtown Grand Forks.

At a November 2008 meeting between Mn/DOT and NDDOT it was proposed to replace the entire Sorlie Bridge in 2018 at an estimated cost of \$40 million. In 2016 it is proposed to remove and replace the deck of the Kennedy Bridge, remove and replace a pier that is starting to tilt, and paint the bridge at an estimated cost of \$10 million. Additional meetings will provide details and also get the local agencies involved so these items can be included the LRTP and TIP.

36 TRANSPORTATION

Kennedy bridge was 83.4 and its deficiency status was adequate. The Sorlie Bridge had a sufficiency rating of 69.5 and was given a functionally obsolete deficiency status. Both bridges were listed as Fracture Critical. A Fracture Critical member lacks redundancy. If the member fails, there is no alternate load path or member to which the failed member can shed its load. Such an occurrence would be expected to result in collapse of the bridge. The 2008 inspection reports had not been released at the time of this report.

The 2005 Average Annual Daily Traffic volume (AADT) on the Sorlie Bridge was 16,200. The Sorlie Bridge is a historic truss bridge with 6-foot and 8-inch sidewalks on the outside of the truss structure. On the Kennedy Bridge, where there are no sidewalks, there have been concerns over the safety of pedestrians which resulted in the installation of signing prohibiting pedestrian traffic. Anecdotal data indicates that pedestrians still utilize the bridge despite the signing and perceived unsafe conditions for pedestrians. The 2006 AADT along the Kennedy Bridge was 20,800.

#### Grand Forks Parking

In December 2006, the MPO completed a Downtown Parking Study. As a result, several recommendations were made, many of which have been implemented. In July 2008 the City completed the installation of striped drive-in angle and parallel parking spaces along

segments of 3rd Street, 4th Street, 1st Avenue and 2nd Avenue increasing the parking supply.

The study found that the overall utilization of parking during the daytime hours was 74% on-street and 51% off-street; however, there were pockets of high demand in the northeast sector of the study area exceeding practical capacity of 85%. During the evening hours the study found that the overall utilization of parking was 51% on-street and 19% off-street, however, there were pockets of higher demand. Improvements have been made at the Central Parking Ramp that included the addition of security cameras, upgraded lighting and outdoor signage. A recent agreement will allow for Central High School to utilize the top two floors of the Central Parking Ramp for student parking. Security cameras were recently installed at the Corporate parking ramp. The County Ramp also has security cameras.

In Fall 2008, the Office of Urban Development received input from the Finance and Development Committee regarding the formulas used for the assessment district and rate schedule for reserved spaces and is in the process of revamping those formulas. Another recent development is that enforcement of parking regulations will be conducted by a community service officer who is employed by the police department.



Sorlie Bridge going into East Grand Forks.



North 3rd St. & North 4th St. One-Way Streets

### East Grand Forks Parking

In September 2008 a parking study was conducted in the City of East Grand Forks during a Saturday evening and a weekday afternoon and evening. There are a total of approximately 258 on-street parking spaces and 782 off-street parking spaces within the study area. At some on-street locations, there are parking restrictions that are typically 1-hour and 2-hour restrictions, however, there is no mechanism for enforcement of these restrictions. All off-street parking in East Grand Forks is owned by the City except for the two Cabela's parking lots.

The study found that the greatest parking demand occurred on Saturday evening with a peak on-street occupancy of 72% and peak off-street occupancy of 49%. The area that experienced the greatest demand was that adjacent to the movie theater and restaurants along River Street. On-street parking along DeMers Avenue was also highly used. Surveyors noted that violations of the on-street parking restrictions were intermittent and appeared to be more employee than customer related. The surface parking lot adjacent to 4th Street Northwest was essentially vacant for each of the three study periods, however, anecdotal data indicates



that this lot does fill on some weekend evenings during which a new movie opens at the theater. Although parking spaces are used by some Whitey's restaurant customers, the Cabela's west lot had surplus capacity of over 100 parking spaces during the peak Saturday evening period.

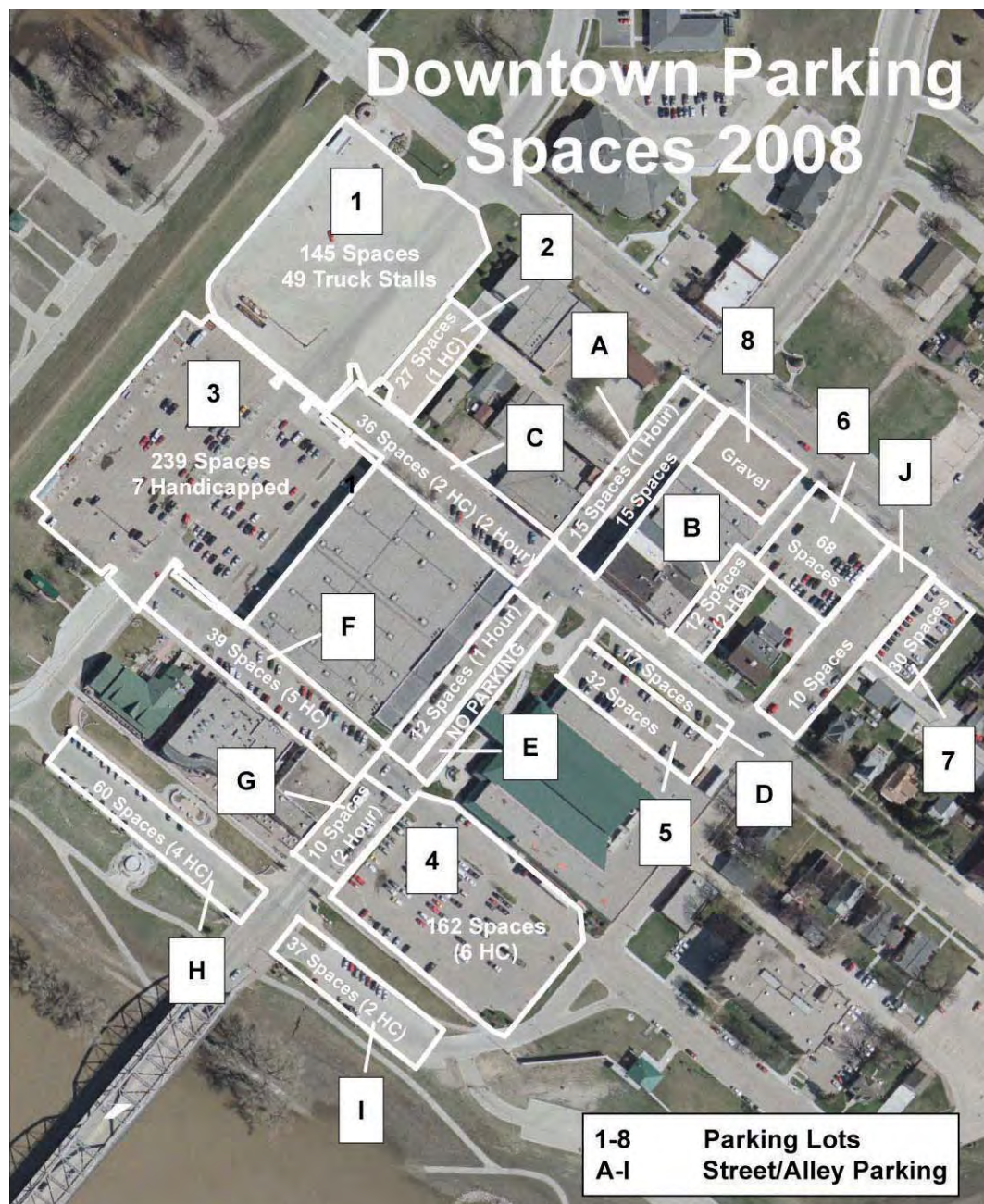
#### North 3rd and 4th Streets

As part of the Downtown Plan Update, the opportunity to convert the existing one-way pair of North 3rd Street and North 4th Street in Grand Forks to two-way operation has been explored. These streets currently operate as one-way streets in the Near North Neighborhood between University Avenue and US 2/Gateway Drive (Kennedy Bridge Corridor).

The one-way pair previously extended through the Downtown Grand Forks Central Business District (CBD) to DeMers Avenue until segments through the Downtown were converted to two-way segments in 1987. The streets were initially made one-way streets because of the downtown being the CBD prior to the exodus of retail to the South Washington and Columbia Mall retail areas. Initially, the purpose of the one-way pairs was to assist in getting traffic between the Downtown CBD and the Kennedy Bridge Corridor. It is because the reasons the streets were converted to one-way no longer exist, that this plan has evaluated converting the streets back to two-way operation.



On-Street Parking, Fall 2008 - Grand Forks, ND



Speed data collected in August 2008 indicate 85th percentile speeds are more than 5-MPH over the posted speed limits of 25-MPH on all roadway segments ranging from 30.5-MPH to 35.5-MPH. It is appropriate to implement strategies to decrease the 85th percentile speeds through this residential area such that it is closer to the posted speed limit.

Combined with a parkway concept on North 3rd Street which would narrow many segments, a conversion to two-way operation is likely to lower the 85th percentile speed. Additional benefits to two-way operation include improved neighborhood access and circulation as well as more typical neighborhood street character and operation. Low attendance and comments generated by an October 2008 neighborhood meeting indicated minimal objection to the conversion to two-way operation from residents. Public Safety officials expressed that lower speeds on North 3rd Street would require a roadway design change (such as the Parkway concept) with or without a two-way conversion.

### Transportation Framework East Grand Forks Parking Policy

The completion of the recent parking study in the City of East Grand Forks indicates that while the Downtown study area currently has a parking supply surplus, there is a need to establish basic parking management practices

to best manage the existing and future parking supply. Such practices will promote use of the Downtown businesses through the provision of user-friendly and customer-conscious parking resources. In addition, the practices will encourage future development in the East Grand Forks Downtown where there is currently a parking surplus. The following recommendations are made to the City:

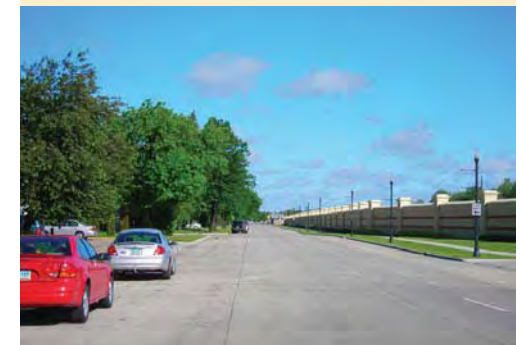
- Prepare a parking map for distribution to Downtown businesses and the City website that can be incorporated with the Grand Forks Parking Map at a future date.
- Install and locate universal parking directional signage to provide consistent information to drivers.
- Use a systems approach to the evaluation of all future development proposals for their impact to the overall parking demand.
- Encourage the shift from surface parking lots to structured parking above or below ground in the Downtown. Surface parking is the lowest land use for Downtown real estate under an urban agenda.
- Encourage businesses to designate employee parking areas that provide prime parking spaces to customers.
- Parking restriction signing should be consistent throughout the Downtown. Sign panels should include the times and

days of restrictions and sign placement should be uniform along restricted streets to avoid confusion.

- Ongoing evaluation of the need for enforcement of parking restrictions. The data suggests that current parking restrictions are followed by most users. If this situation changes, the City should consider working with the City of Grand Forks Office of Urban Development to provide enforcement.
- Maintain parking supply map and update as needed.
- Promote shared parking practices by current and future private lot owners.
- As demands increase consider encouraging the use of a shared valet service for the restaurants along River Street.

#### General Downtown Parking Policy – Grand Forks and East Grand Forks

As elements of this plan are realized and other redevelopment occurs, both Downtowns must use a holistic approach to evaluate parking impacts. The Grand Forks Parking study showed that the City has concentrated pockets of high demand. As new development is proposed, an evaluation of the parking system will be needed to best understand and accommodate the parking demand. For instance, it is realistic for a Downtown hotel to provide parking in one of the ramps or lots 2 to 5 blocks away in conjunction with valet service. However, it



Third Street in Grand Forks is one way.



Fourth Street is another one way street near Downtown.



Sorlie Bridge.



Kennedy Bridge has no bike or pedestrian facilities.



Narrow sidewalk on Sorlie Bridge is difficult for bike traffic.

may not reasonable to expect shoppers at a downtown grocery to park at that distance. Yet the impacts of each to the overall parking supply need to be understood as such projects come to the fore. It is also important to continue the use of structured parking as surface parking is the least valuable use of downtown real estate.

### Sorlie Bridge and Kennedy Bridge

The recent announcement of the programmed replacement of the Sorlie Bridge in 2018 and the rehabilitation of the Kennedy Bridge in 2016 will require the Cities to outline their position on the bridges. This work will impact DeMers Avenue through both downtowns as well as the relationship the downtowns have to one another and the river.

In 2005, SAFETEA-LU legislation promoted the consideration of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) core principles in planning and project development processes. Through this process the Cities are given the ability to deviate from some standards based on context (Flexibility in Highway Design, FHWA 1997). It will be important that the Cities be actively involved in the CSS process throughout the design of the new Sorlie and Kennedy Bridges to ensure a strong connection between the downtowns. This replacement is also an opportunity to provide wider sidewalks and possibly bicycle facilities on the Sorlie Bridge.

The addition of sidewalks to Kennedy Bridge should be explored as part of the 2018 rehabilitation as there are currently no pedestrian accommodations on the facility and signing is installed prohibiting pedestrians.

The cross section of the new Sorlie Bridge is limited to the existing DeMers Avenue cross section. The bridge approaches are limited by flood control projects previously completed. There is currently parking on each side of the street, a lane in each direction and left turn lanes at intersections. Traffic operations under this geometry are acceptable as shown by the recent modeling of 2008 traffic volumes.

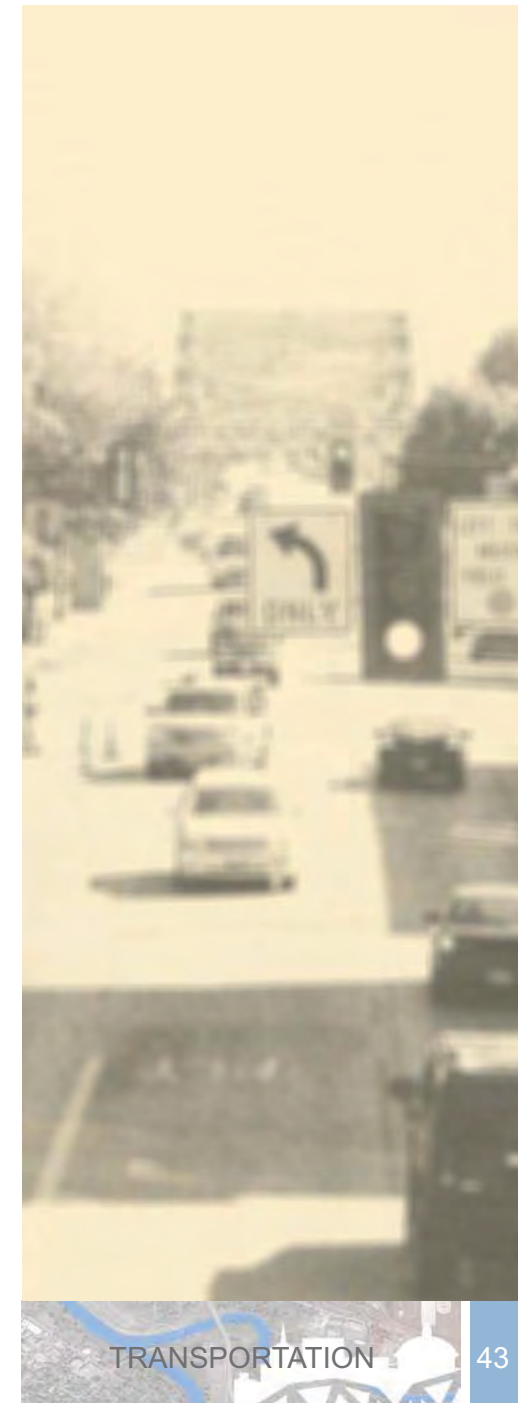
### Future Conditions 2035 Traffic Operations

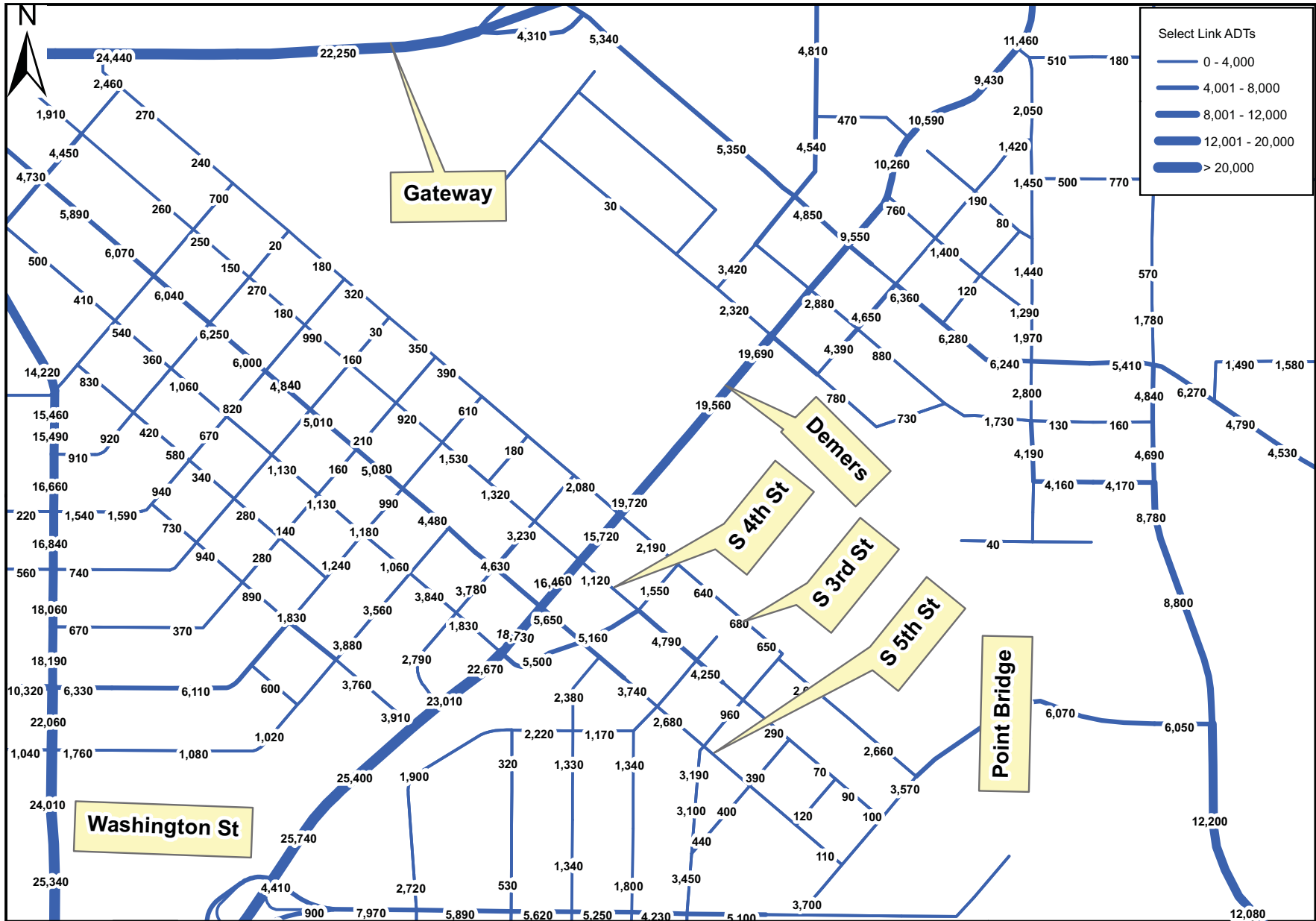
The 2035 traffic forecasts prepared by ATAC on February 12, 2009 were reviewed for the Downtown areas of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. The recently produced forecasts were updated to reflect new volume to capacity ratio (v/c) information for DeMers Avenue based on implemented traffic signal improvements and elements of the Downtown Plan. A comparison of this updated forecast to the forecast used for the 2002 CBD Circulation Study showed the following Average Annual Daily Traffic Volumes (AADTs) for the Sorlie Bridge.

Forecast Year	AADT
2035 ATAC Forecast with 0.8% growth per year	19,430
2025 CBD Study Forecast with 1.0% growth per year	17,441

The 2,000 daily vehicle increase between the 2025 and 2035 forecast is expected to yield approximately 200 more cars during the PM peak period assuming that the PM peak hour volume is 10% of the daily traffic volume (PM peak percent was calculated for 2008 volumes at 9%). The forecast increase in vehicles along DeMers Avenue is not anticipated to create significant operations issues as the existing operations show intersection LOS of B or better at each intersection and the 2025 CBD study analysis for Scenario 7, which had similar traffic signal improvements, showed intersection LOS of C or better.

The critical intersection of DeMers Avenue and North 3rd Street was also reviewed in greater detail as a secondary check of potential future operations. This intersection showed the highest average delay of all intersections in the existing analysis with an average delay per vehicle of 17.2 seconds (LOS B). The growth rate of 0.8% per year was applied to all of the 2008 existing turning movements at the intersection to arrive at 2035 turning movements. The intersection operations analysis showed that the intersection continued to operate at LOS B with only traffic signal timing optimization and



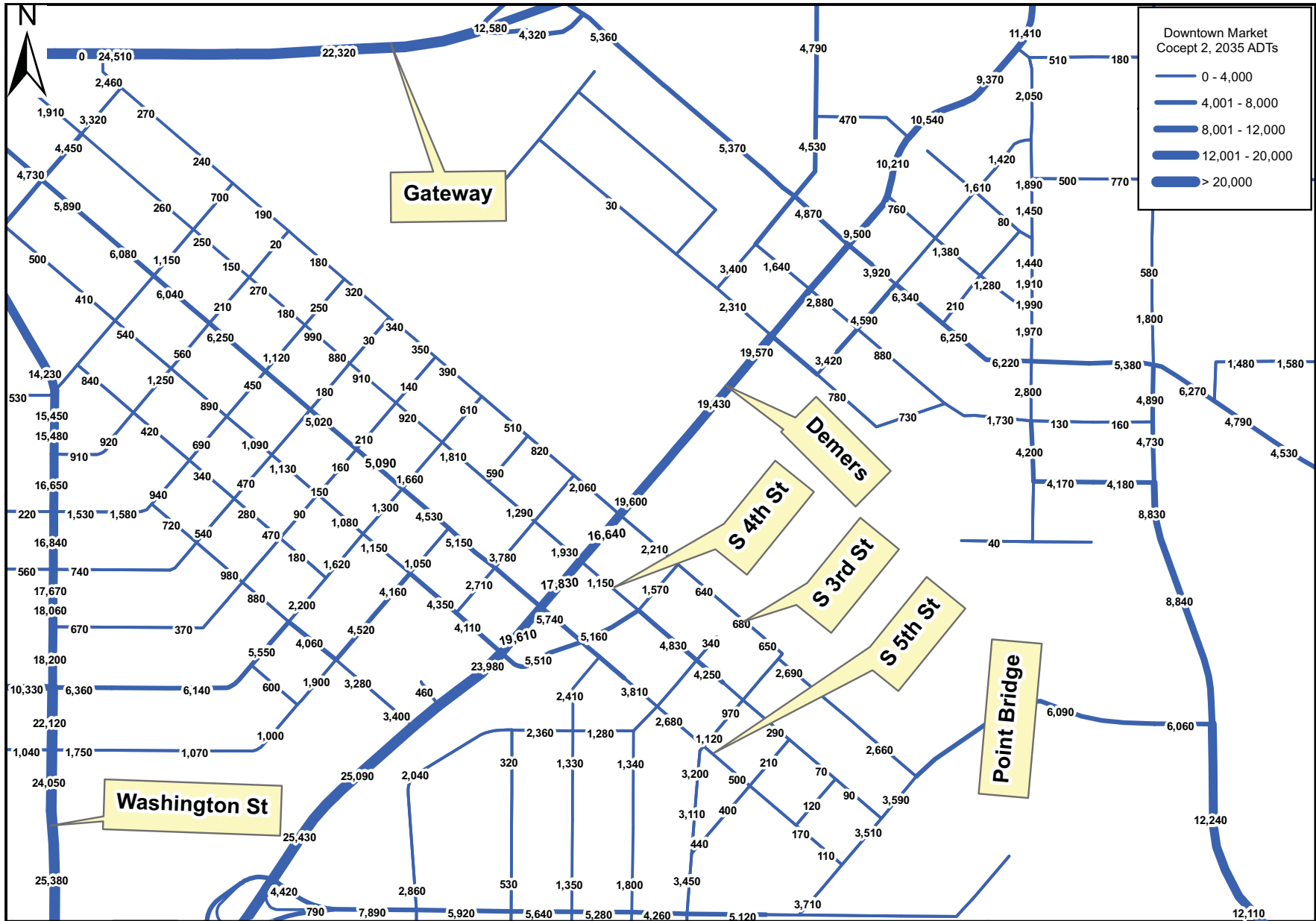


**Updated 2035 Modeled ADTs**

Project Name: TDM Updates to 2035 Network

Date: 2/12/09

Page: 1



## Downtown Market Concept 2, Updated 2035 Modeled ADTs

Project Name: TDM Updates to 2035 Network

Date: 2/12/09

Page: 2



no geometric improvements. Thus indicating that the forecast volumes along DeMers Avenue are not anticipated to require significant geometric improvements. The 2035 ADT forecasts are shown in the map “Updated 2030 Modeled ADTs”.

#### [Downtown Market Concept 2](#)

An evaluation of the impact to traffic forecasts of the closure of 1st Avenue at DeMers Avenue was completed as part of the ATAC update. The concept provides for the closure of 1st Avenue between DeMers Avenue and 6th Street North to accommodate a mixed use development site including a small grocery store as described in the Priority Projects section of the Downtown Plan. The forecast model runs for that scenario indicated that the removal of this segment of 1st Avenue would not significantly impact the level of service on DeMers Avenue. See figure on page 45 for 2035 AADTs under this concept.

#### [Sorlie Bridge](#)

The forecasts indicate a volume on the Sorlie Bridge of 19,430 in the year 2035 with a 0.95 v/c ratio. The volume forecast for the Kennedy Bridge is 22,320 with a 0.39 v/c ratio. A v/c (volume to capacity) ratio of 1.0 is at capacity. This indicates that the two-lane Sorlie Bridge will near capacity while the five-lane Kennedy Bridge would have significant excess capacity. In addition to these two river crossings, the forecast model also included

river crossings at the Point Bridge and at two new locations in the southern area of Grand Forks at 32nd Avenue South and Merrifield Road.

As the City considers the replacement or rehabilitation of the Sorlie Bridge and future design options, it will be critical to update forecasts and the trip assignments within the forecast model to ensure that trip assignment is reasonable for each of the river crossings. Selected link analyses should be performed, model calibration should be reviewed, and any necessary changes to the model should be made.

To promote the core principals of the Downtown Plan, the project development process for bridge replacement or rehabilitation should utilize the Context Sensitive Solutions methodology. In the two downtowns, it is desirable to maintain the existing DeMers Avenue lane assignments which provide for on-street parking on both sides of the street, a lane of traffic in each direction and turn lanes where possible and necessary. It is recommended that the proposed design alternatives for the bridge reflect this desire as well as the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the bridge such as, but not limited to: wider sidewalks, look-out opportunities, on-street bicycle lanes or adjacent bicycle paths that meet current design standards.

### 2002 Central Business District (CBD) Study Follow-up

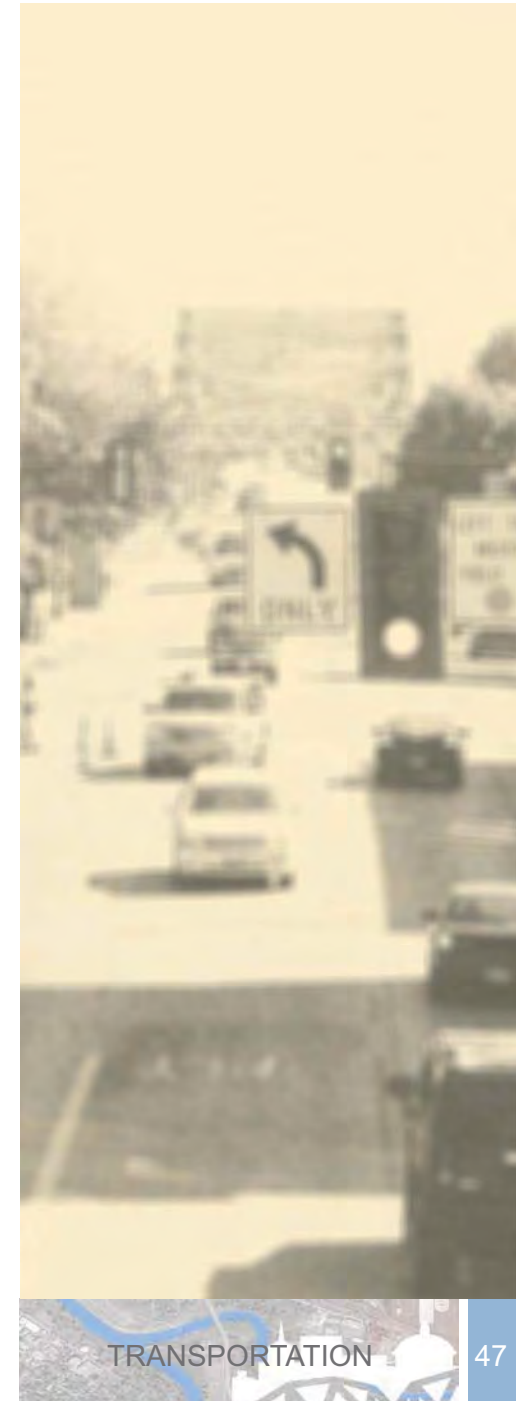
In 2002 the CBD study identified inadequate gaps for pedestrians crossing DeMers Avenue at the west end of the Sorlie Bridge. The study recommended the possibility of installing curb extensions along DeMers Avenue to decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians.

At this time it is recommended not to install the curb extensions along DeMers Avenue for the following reasons:

- The inadequate gaps were identified at the west end of the Sorlie Bridge, not throughout DeMers Avenue. There are signals along DeMers Avenue that will provide pedestrian push buttons and pedestrian count-down timers in 2012. The timers will be required at all new signals by the soon to be released federal MUTCD and will be required at all signals within 10 years of the manuals release date.
- The DeMers Avenue traffic signal controllers are planned for upgrades in 2012 to provide communication between signals and improved coordination. This typically provides improved platoons which would result in more gaps at the unsignalized intersections along DeMers Avenue.

- A follow-up gap study should be conducted after the signal controller upgrades are implemented to determine if the gaps on the west end of the Sorlie Bridge are improved. If gaps are not improved, measures including curb extensions should be evaluated at the west end of the Sorlie Bridge keeping in mind the planned reconstruction in 2018.
- The Sorlie Bridge is planned for reconstruction in 2018 which provides the City with an opportunity to work with both DOTs to design a facility and touch down points that provide enhanced pedestrian and bicycle features.
- If it is thought that inadequate gaps currently present a safety problem, a review of the crossing location in question should be conducted and measures taken to promote crossing at other locations, under the bridge or at signalized intersections.

The 2002 CBD study also recommended that East Grand Forks signals on DeMers Avenue be coordinated with Grand Forks signals. The recommendation was that Mn/DOT replace the existing NEMA controllers with the same 2070 controllers that are being installed in Grand Forks. Since Mn/DOT maintains no 2070 controllers throughout the state of Minnesota, it is unlikely that Mn/DOT would install two at this location. Further, the benefits of coordination between the signals in each downtown are limited due to





Traffic signal timing improvements have resulted in improved operations in both downtowns.



A railroad quiet zone should be considered in Grand Forks.

the spacing of 1,400 feet between the signals east and west of the Sorlie Bridge. However, Mn/DOT should consider coordination of the two signals in East Grand Forks with one another (DeMers Avenue at 2nd and 4th Streets NW).

The current decorative streetscape treatments in downtown Grand Forks and East Grand Forks consist of brick paver and scored concrete sidewalks, litter receptacles, benches, bike racks, street trees and pedestrian scale light fixtures. In general the sidewalks are segmented into two primary zones; a furnishings zone and a pedestrian travelway zone. The furnishings zone includes the first four to five feet between the curb and the inside edge of the street tree pits (usually covered by a cast steel tree grate) it also includes elements such as traffic signals and signal control boxes, street lights, bike racks and litter receptacles. The pedestrian travelway consists of the unobstructed area between the edge of the furnishings zone and the building facades. The overall streetscape designs greatly enhance the downtown environment throughout the seasons and any future extensions to other downtown streets should follow the currently established styles and patterns.

### Railroad Crossings

Many of the current railroad crossings in and near the study area are being addressed through various programmed projects.

System upgrades are planned and a railroad consolidation study is being pursued for some crossings on the west side of Downtown Grand Forks. What remains is the issue of train horn mitigation for the crossings on the south end of Downtown Grand Forks.

The Federal Railroad Association (FRA) outlines requirements for train horn quiet zones in The "Train Horn" Final Rule Summary document.

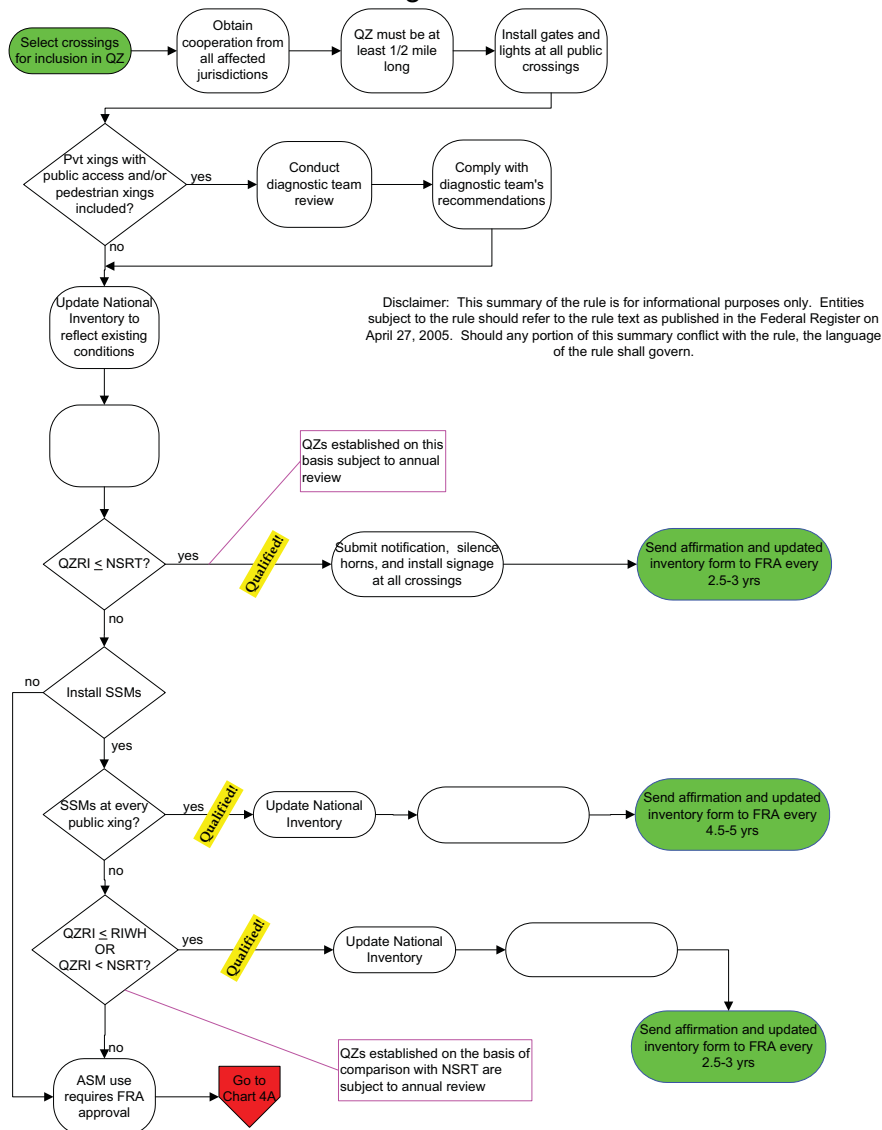
FRA Rules state that new Quiet Zones may be created if all public highway-rail grade crossings are equipped with flashing lights and gates; and either—

- After adjusting for excess risk created by silencing the train horn, the average risk at the crossings is less than the NSRT; or
- Supplemental Safety Measures are present at each public crossing; or
- Safety improvements are made that compensate for loss of the train horn as a warning device (or at least to reduce average risk to below the NSRT).

Detailed instructions for establishing or requesting recognition of a quiet zone are provided in the regulation and the FRA flow chart summarizes this process.

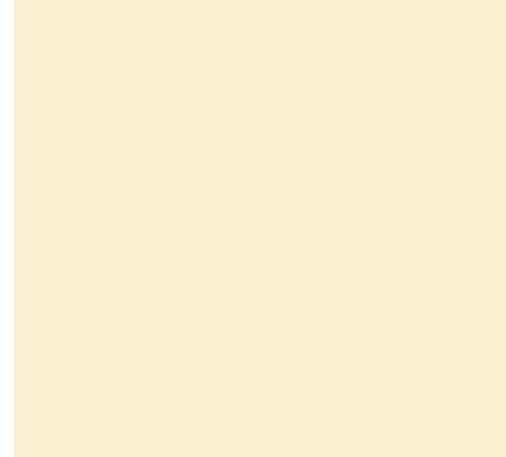
Other items to consider are circuitry requirements for flasher systems that may or may not be met by the existing flasher systems and/or the planned system upgrades

Chart 3 - Creating a New Quiet Zone or New Partial Quiet Zone using SSMS

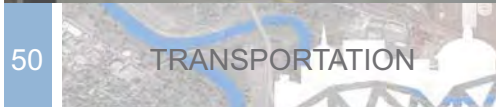




A downtown circulator should be considered.



Improved transit service between downtown and UND is desirable.



in Downtown Grand Forks. If the City/MPO is interested in pursuing a Quiet Zone they should undertake a feasibility study that reviews the FRA requirements as they pertain to each of the these crossings. Due to the planned upgrades in 2009, the City should meet with the railroad to determine if the upgrades will include circuitry as needed for a potential future whistle ban and if possible incorporate it into the installations.

There are several alternatives available to meet the quiet zone criteria. The viability of these alternatives would be evaluated in a quiet zone feasibility study.

#### Circulator

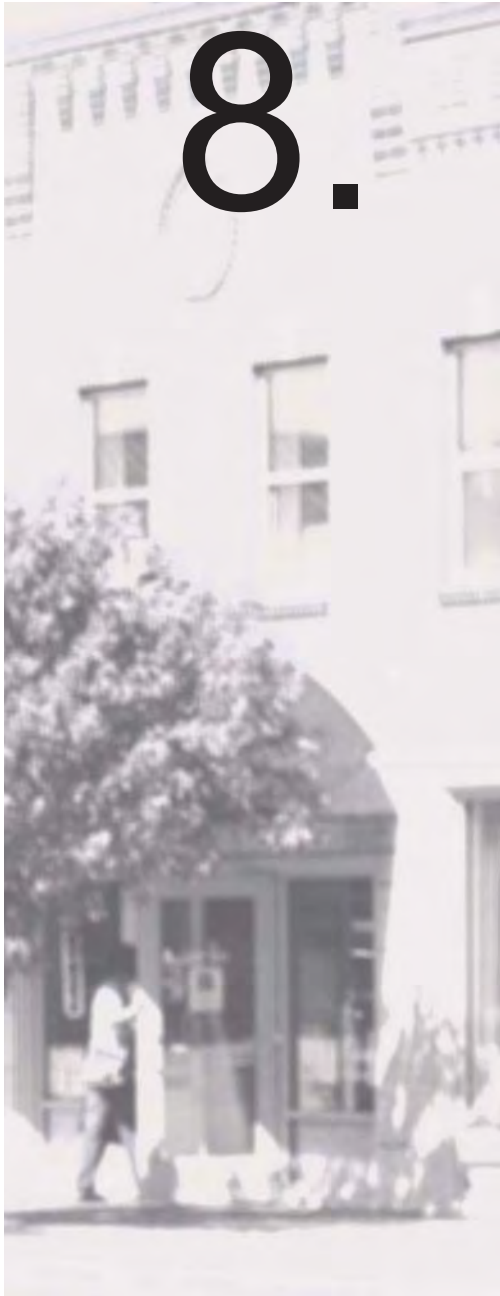
Opportunities to implement a Downtown circulator between Grand Forks and East Grand Forks should be explored utilizing a unique vehicle similar to the CAT-owned trolley vehicle.

A downtown circulator provides the opportunity to park once and easily traverse back and forth across the river further promoting the concept of one downtown. A circulator would be especially desirable for travel around the downtown during inclement weather. Vehicle miles traveled would be reduced by a circulator, improving air quality through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions making the Downtown a more sustainable environment.

In addition, improved service between UND and downtown including more frequent service and possibly late night service should be pursued by the Forks MPO, UND, CAT and the proposed downtown organization.



8.



## 8. Market Assessment

### Introduction

This section of the report outlines our general recommendations and strategies for strengthening and revitalizing the Downtowns of the Grand Cities. We present our recommendations and development potential for the Core Downtowns.

The recommendations provided in this report are intended to guide the Grand Cities in their planning and marketing efforts for each of these areas. Our recommendations are based on the findings from our analysis of demographic trends, the housing, retail, and office market situations, and the projected demand for new commercial space and housing and the ability of the Downtowns to accommodate new development.

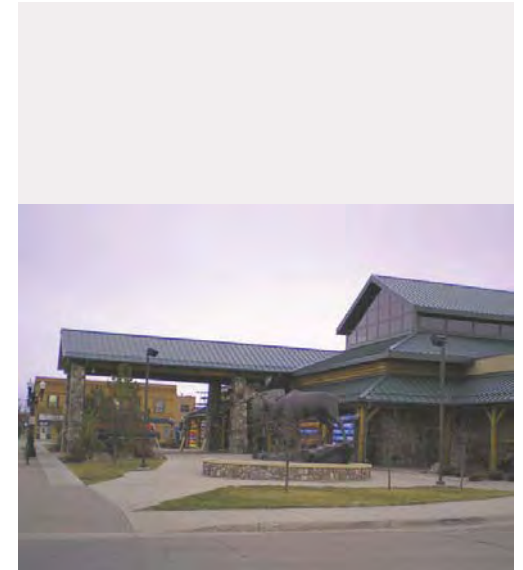
Today, successful redevelopment increasingly requires the cooperation of both private and public efforts. The public is unwilling to bear entirely the significant costs associated with providing for new development and likewise private developers are often unable to undertake these projects on their own while still maintaining an appropriate profit margin. There are however, many cases where strong joint ventures have resulted in redevelopment projects that have been very successful.

### Demand Summary

Based on our demographic and market analysis and our assessment of the Core Downtown and immediate surrounding area, we have calculated the amount of additional retail, office and housing that could be supported over the next 12 years (shown in Table 1). Not all of the demand identified can be accommodated in the short-term. Rather, there are specific focus areas that must be addressed before this level of development could be supported.

### Retail

Our calculations show that the Downtown can support up to 98,000 square feet of additional Neighborhood Goods and Services retail and 41,228 square feet of additional Destination/Specialty Goods and Services retail space through 2020. If possible, efforts should be made to fill vacant spaces before new space is added to the Downtown area. The exception to this would be a grocery/pharmacy complex in the Downtown that would require some dedicated parking. The amount shown for Neighborhood Goods and Services accounts for roughly 40,000 to 50,000 square feet that would be accommodated by a grocery/pharmacy complex. If this type of use is not developed, then the amount of space supportable for neighborhood-oriented goods and services would be much less. Retail uses other than these should be focused in the Core Downtown and in street-level spaces.



Cabela's is a huge market draw for East Grand Forks.



Vacant building in Downtown East Grand Forks.

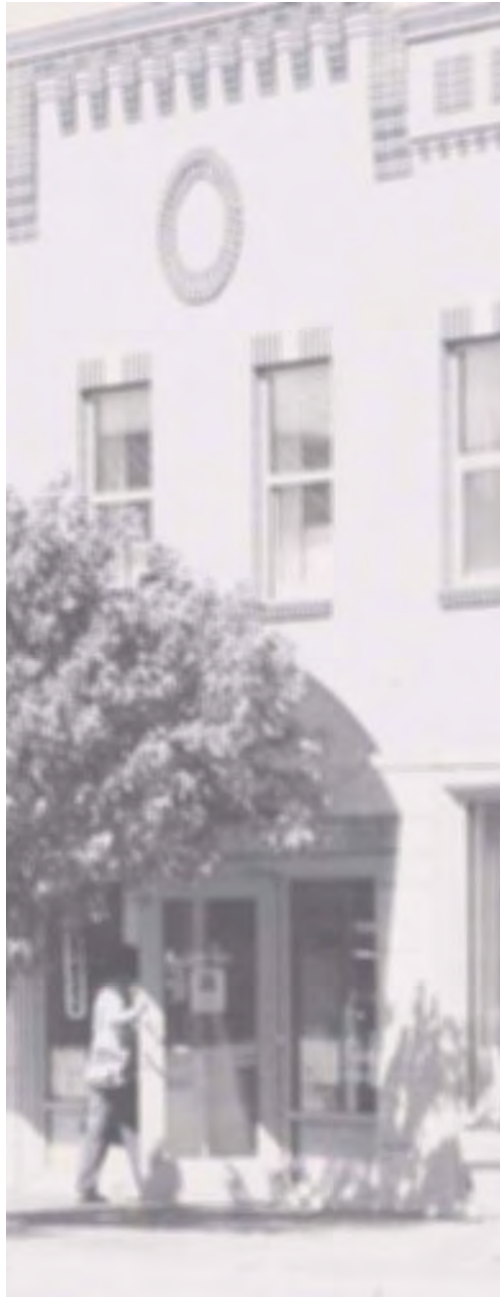


TABLE 1 DEMAND SUMMARY DOWNTOWN GRAND CITIES 2008 to 2020			
Grand Cities Total			
	Full period	Short-term (2-5 years)	Long-term (6-12 Years)
<b>Housing</b>			
For-Sale Multifamily	95 units	20 units	75 units
Market Rate Apartments	223 units	73 units	150 units
For Sale Senior Housing	49 units	49 units	n/a units
Market Rate Senior Housing	79 units	79 units	n/a units
<b>Office</b>			
Total Demand	30,600 to 51,000 sq. ft.	10,000 to 15,000 sq. ft.	20,000 to 35,000 sq. ft.
Absorption of Existing Space	60,000 to 64,000 sq. ft.	20,000 to 25,000 sq. ft.	35,000 to 40,000 sq. ft.
<b>Retail</b>			
Neighborhood Goods and Services	98,000 sq. ft.	15,000 to 20,000 sq. ft.	20,000 to 30,000 sq. ft.
Destination Specialty Services	41,000 sq. ft.	5,000 to 7,000 sq. ft.	10,000 to 15,000 sq. ft.
<b>Grand Forks</b>			
<b>Housing</b>			
For-Sale Multifamily	85 units	20 units	65 units
Market Rate Apartments	183 units	50 units	133 units
For Sale Senior Housing	39 units	39 units	n/a units
Market Rate Senior Housing	54 units	54 units	n/a units
<b>Office</b>			
Total Demand	20,000 to 35,000 sq. ft.	8,000 to 10,000 sq. ft.	18,000 to 25,000 sq. ft.
Absorption of Existing Space	40,000 to 45,000 sq. ft.	15,000 to 20,000 sq. ft.	25,000 to 30,000 sq. ft.
<b>Retail</b>			
Neighborhood Goods and Services	68,000 sq. ft.	48,000 sq. ft.	20,000 sq. ft.
Destination Specialty Services	25,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	15,000 sq. ft.
<b>East Grand Forks</b>			
<b>Housing</b>			
For-Sale Multifamily	10 units	0 units	10 units
Market Rate Apartments	40 units	16 units	24 units
For Sale Senior Housing	10 units	10 units	n/a units
Market Rate Senior Housing	25 units	25 units	n/a units
<b>Office</b>			
Total Demand	10,000 to 16,000 sq. ft.	0 sq. ft.	10,000 to 16,000 sq. ft.
Absorption of Existing Space	20,000 to 25,000 sq. ft.	8,000 to 10,000 sq. ft.	12,000 to 15,000 sq. ft.
<b>Retail</b>			
Neighborhood Goods and Services	30,000 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	20,000 sq. ft.
Destination Specialty Services	16,000 sq. ft.	5,000 sq. ft.	11,000 sq. ft.
Source: Maxfield Research Inc.			

New retail stores will predominantly offer specialty goods and are able to market their unique Downtown location as an experience that cannot be found at shopping centers. New housing located in the Downtown area will increase the demand for Neighborhood Goods and Services.

### Office

Based on our analysis, we concluded that no new office space development shall occur in the Grand Cities through 2020, but strong marketing and different strategies for filling or redeveloping the current 102,000 to 106,000 vacant square feet should take place. The demand table includes 60,000 to 64,000 square feet of vacant office space that could be filled. In order to reuse the Griffith's Building for either residential, hotel or other office/institutional use, a significant amount of window space would have to be added.

Most office tenants Downtown will be smaller businesses (1 to 5 employees needing 200 to about 1,800 square feet, on average) serving the local population and business base, such as attorneys, accountants, insurance agents, financial services, consulting firms, communications, media, technology, health care, etc. The charts in the office section show that the number of smaller businesses is growing and larger businesses are decreasing their numbers. Stronger marketing towards these smaller businesses

should be a focal point in filling the vacant space Downtown. As the employment base in the Grand Cities grows, the Downtown may be able to compete for some mid-size office businesses. These would likely have to locate along DeMers Avenue to be able to satisfy their larger size and near parking lots or structures to satisfy parking requirements.

The Downtowns should look to other uses for office space like higher education uses.

### Housing

Our analysis found that demand should be sufficient over the next 12 years to support up to 95 for-sale multifamily units, 223 rental units and 49 for-sale and 79 market rate senior housing units. We have identified demand that could be supported in the short-term (in the next two to five years) and demand over the long-term (six to 12 years). Sites will need to be made available to meet most of the identified demand.

Aging demographics currently support demand for senior housing, but there is no senior housing currently available in the Downtown area other than one HUD subsidized development and memory care housing. Many North Dakota and Minnesota communities are experiencing demand from independent retirees who want at least a second home if not a permanent retirement home in a central location. The aging baby boom generation will continue to support



Vacant office space in Downtown Grand Forks.



Downtown housing located above rental commercial space.



Attractive multi-family housing located adjacent to Downtown Grand Forks.

demand from this market segment. Many independent seniors prefer a single-level townhome or detached villa as their favored product type.

Our research identified a sizeable base of senior households over age 75 that may require some services but this group would continue to be active and relatively independent. An age-restricted housing development delivered to the market in an apartment-style building could offer activities, optional housekeeping and limited transportation to shopping and medical appointments or could be only age-restricted but not offer any additional services or residents could access needed services from outside agencies.

Townhomes (attached dwelling units) that are owner-occupied are not a product type that has been readily accepted in the Grand Cities to date. Townhomes typically appeal to young to mid-age singles without families or empty-nesters/young seniors who prefer to shed some of the responsibilities for exterior maintenance and to have these handled through an association. The townhome product is rapidly becoming more popular in communities large and small throughout the country. Because this product would be relatively new to the community, we recommend that only a few units be developed near the Downtown area that would be single-level and would primarily

appeal to empty-nesters and independent seniors. We recommend either a twin-home design with only one attached wall or a three-unit building with two end units and one interior unit. Garages would be accessed from the rear of the buildings and may or may not be attached.

## Market Findings

Based on the market analysis, our assessment of the Downtown, and interviews with Downtown managers, property owners, and others familiar with or with a stake in the Downtown area, we discuss strategies for revitalization in the Downtown area.

### Core Downtown

The Core Downtown area is the heart of the community and is cradled by the Red River. Its strengths are its location adjacent to the River, the Greenway and Town Square, its historic character and buildings; it is walkable and largely pedestrian-friendly. The core Downtown area is picturesque and emits an urban ambiance.

While the Red River and Greenway is one of the Downtown's strongest assets, it is also a physical barrier to the expansion of the Downtown and to its visibility. This presents a potential weakness because the Core Downtown of East Grand Forks is very small, making it difficult to create a critical mass of stores that would enable it to become a major draw. Nevertheless, we believe that

there is a potential in the future to utilize the Central Avenue corridor to further expand the Core Downtown and provide for some larger uses in the future that could still connect to the Downtown.

Many of the comments elicited throughout the study found that potential customers and visitors are not aware of what the Downtowns have to offer and that Grand Forks has an attractive Downtown. Because of the significant commercial development in other areas of the City located along Columbia Road, Washington Street and 32nd Avenue South, visitors to the city have no need to go Downtown.

Although DeMers (the main street) currently has vacant storefronts, they tend to be the largest stores. Thus, it appears as though there is greater vacancy in Downtown.

In the short-term, revitalization should be focused on filling vacant spaces on DeMers, 3rd and 4th Street and then expanding to adjacent streets such as University Avenue, 5th Street and Central Avenue. We also recommend working on attracting a grocery/ pharmacy to the Downtown in the short-term, but after additional housing units come on-line.

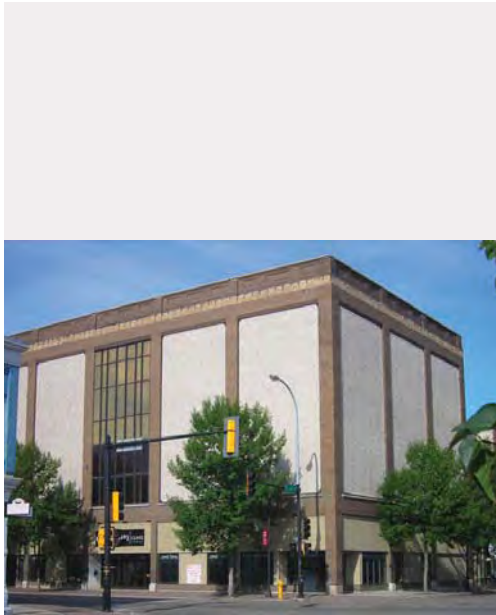
On the periphery of the Downtown at approximately DeMers and 7th Street North, are several parcels that are currently

occupied with surface parking, a vacant office building (formerly occupied by the Social Security Administration) and the vacant Civic Auditorium. This area is situated in close proximity to the Downtown, has good access and visibility from DeMers and other nearby Downtown locations and offers parcel sizes that would accommodate larger size users that would not typically be suitable in the core Downtown. Our analysis identified that Downtown residents and those located in the adjacent neighborhoods do not have convenient access to “the basics” such as groceries, health and beauty items, pharmaceuticals, some personal services. We believe that this area would be appropriate for redevelopment with these types of items and that the parcels situated here would be appropriate for this type of development.

We have toured the Civic Auditorium. It is generally in good condition, but the design concept of today’s entertainment facilities no longer follows that of the existing auditorium. While there may be some opportunity to convert the building to a grocery store, reconfiguring entry access and some of the spaces would undoubtedly make the building’s operations inefficient and potentially unappealing to customers. We recommend that the building be removed and a new use developed in its place. The building has a substantial amount of materials that could be recycled or reused either in a new building on the site or elsewhere. Reusing



Example Downtown market.



Vacant space in Downtown Grand Forks that could be converted to housing or lodging.

and recycling the materials in the building would also add a “green” element to the redevelopment of the property and could help defray the cost of removal in addition to the development of a new structure.

### Office

The most significant vacant spaces in the Core Downtown area are:

Griffith’s Building (308 DeMers)

- 42,000 square ft. (For Lease)

First National Bank (322 DeMers)

- 30,000 square ft. (For Lease)

121 5th Street North

- 29,565 square ft. (For Sale)

Another building that is for sale and will soon be vacated is the Northern Pacific Depot and Freight House situated at 202 North 3rd Street. The building was designed originally as the Railroad Depot, but most recently has been the location for the Chamber of Commerce of the Grand Cities. This structure has had regular upkeep and maintenance work and would need minimal upgrading or renovations of the façade or interior.

202 North 3rd Street

- 7,240 square feet (For Sale)

There are several other spaces in the Core Downtown that are currently for lease or

will be available for lease in the near future.

Several of these spaces are located away from the key Downtown traffic corridors. Although these properties present strong opportunities for redevelopment and are currently being marketed, we believe that initial marketing efforts should be focused on higher traffic areas.

701 DeMers

- 2,000 square feet (For Lease)

321 DeMers

- 672 square feet (For Sale)

600 DeMers

- 826 square feet (For Lease)

12 South 3rd Street

- 495 square feet (For Lease)

100 South 3rd Street

- 660 square feet (For Lease)

300 North 5th Street

- 900-1,800 square feet (For Lease)

414 DeMers

- 2,000 square feet (For Lease)

Former Post Office - Office Suites

Unit 101

- 2,819 square feet (For Lease)

Unit 106

- 1,639 square feet (For Lease)

Unit 113

- 835 square feet (For Lease)

Unit 119

- 1,200 square feet (For Lease)

Unit 201

- 750 square feet (For Lease)

The Griffith's Building, located at 308 DeMers, also has significant vacant space. Approximately 42,000 square feet is vacant or about 10,500 square feet per floor. Including its basement, the building has roughly 52,500 square feet. The consultant team is currently considering this building for potential reuse as a hotel. In addition, the St. John's Block building across 3rd Street from the Griffith's Building could also be considered for redevelopment as a hotel.

### Retail

The most significant vacant spaces in the Core Downtown area:

#### 12 South 3rd Street

- 3,900 square feet (For Lease)

#### Former United Way

- 2,002 square feet (For Lease)

#### 414 DeMers

- 2,000 square feet (For Lease)

#### 108 South 3rd Street

- 2,300 square feet (For Lease)

Despite the presence of numerous vacancies, we believe that the demand for approximately 30,000 to 40,000 square feet of retail space over the next eight to 12 years should be located in the Core CBD or between the Core Downtown and the immediate peripheral area. Areas that should be examined for development and/or redevelopment are: Demers Avenue, 3rd

Street on both sides of DeMers, 4th Street North and West of DeMers, the parcel at the corner of 4th Street and DeMers in the heart of Downtown Grand Forks. The parcel located at the corner of 2nd Street NW and Central Avenue and the parking lots located at 5th Street NW and Central and the lots behind the movie theater in East Grand Forks should be examined for development and/or redevelopment.

We believe that each of these areas offers an opportunity to enhance the Downtown area through targeted redevelopment efforts. The existing historic buildings along DeMers Avenue and 3rd Street would be suitable for additional office space, housing or a mix of housing and office space. Specialty retail could also be suitable for the street level portion of the buildings, but we believe it is better to focus retail initially along DeMers Avenue and in the immediate Core commercial district to increase street presence and retail activity there.

### Traffic Generators

Retail businesses would have a greater potential to succeed if a traffic generator were located Downtown. Traffic generators in many towns include such uses as government agencies, such as city hall, county administrative buildings, small city branch library, and a retail counter for postal service that is non-distribution. Downtown Grand Forks contains City Hall and Grand Forks



Vacant space in East Grand Forks.



Example of new row housing.

County Government. Neither of these is located on the main street. The Grand Forks Post Office relocated near the Columbia Mall off of Columbia Road. Downtown East Grand Forks contains City Hall. Some additional uses that could be incorporated in the Downtown area include a small city branch library, retail postal service (excluding distribution and in Grand Forks only as East Grand Forks retains its post office). Other traffic generators include restaurants, entertainment venues and community centers. These uses can attract a significant number of people to a location, but must do so regularly for the effects of the traffic to have an impact on other smaller businesses.

#### Residential Units

Residential units can also enhance retail business, but again, the number of units must be significant to make a strong impact. Residential apartments located above Downtown commercial space will improve occupancy and cash flow to building owners, thereby increasing the value of their property and allowing a potentially lower initial rent for the commercial space until activity and lease rates increase. The greatest issue associated with residential units in the Downtown is long-term parking. Parking close to the building is likely to be difficult as historic buildings in the Downtown typically have no space or very limited space for vehicles. Off-street or off-site parking is likely necessary to accommodate residential

parking needs. Under-utilized surface parking areas in the Downtown could be shared to allow for weeknight and weekend parking. As activity in the Downtown increases and especially on weekends, resident parking stalls may have to be reserved.

Residential buildings of larger size are usually best located on the periphery of the Downtown where there is more land available to support more units. Residential buildings on the periphery could accommodate independent senior housing, or general occupancy apartments, but more than just a few units. A larger building would need to be ADA compliant and if senior housing, would likely require an elevator. Locating senior housing in the Downtown within walking distance of goods and services has proven very attractive to this market and has been very successful in other communities. Incorporating more residential units near the Downtown can enhance the retail potential for some types of businesses, primarily those that offer services such as hair salon, barber shop, restaurants, entertainment venues, coffee shop. It is unlikely to significantly enhance the potential for antique businesses, gift shops, or other highly specialized businesses.

#### Special Events

Special events such as festivals in the Town Square and the Farmer's Market bring additional traffic into the Downtown and

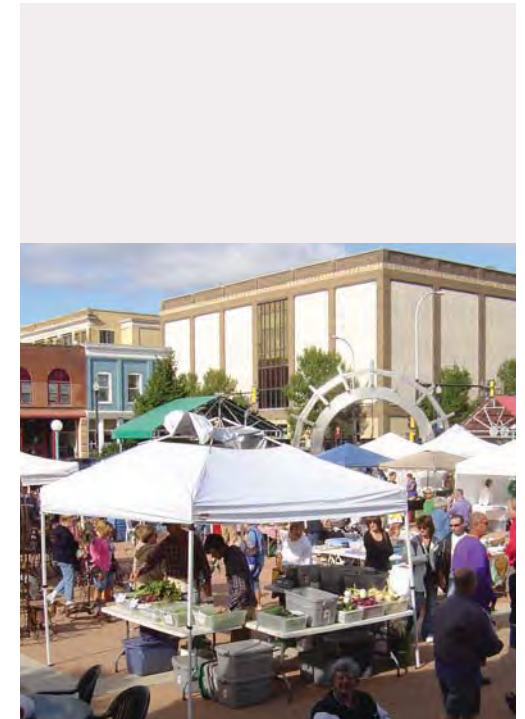
increase potential customer awareness of businesses located there. They do not, however, substitute for daily traffic because of the intermittent activity. A funded third-party agency to coordinate regular activities held in the Downtown would, over time, increase the total traffic to the Downtown regularly as there would always be some activities occurring and different groups of people would be attending different events. A programmed calendar of regular Downtown events that is publicized throughout the community and outside of the community, all focused within the Downtown, would gradually increase trips to the Downtown and would enhance the potential to attract restaurant users who could be assured of a market for their services. The Chamber of Commerce currently maintains a community calendar on their web site. The Farmer's Market and events at the Town Square are highlighted on this calendar.

### Parking

The lack and management of parking have been raised as issues associated with the long-term viability of retail businesses in the Downtown and in attracting new businesses to the Downtown. There is also an issue regarding on-street parking by Downtown residents and . Currently, residents of housing units in the Core Downtown may park on the street. To date, this has not been a significant problem as there were very few housing units in the Downtown.

The overall success of new units developed in the Downtown and interest from other developers in constructing more 2nd story residential units has raised an issue about where to accommodate parking for Downtown residents. Most of the historic buildings are located close together and there are no alleys and few spaces behind buildings for off-street parking. A recent parking inventory conducted by the City identified the existing parking spaces available in the Downtown both public and private, but has not publicized it. It is generally accepted that existing lots set aside for public parking in the Downtown are underutilized. In part, these areas are not clearly identified as municipal parking lots.

We acknowledge that Downtown- employees and residents all prefer to park in close proximity to their business, place of work or home. Retail consumers have long considered the availability of close parking as critical to their patronage of most retail shops. Modern retail formats (large surface parking lots) have firmly fixed in the consumer's mind the perception that parking is located close to the retail outlet. It has also been documented that parking at a large shopping mall and walking to one of the stores is often a greater distance that parking one block away from a shop in a Downtown on a Main Street. Nevertheless, the consumer often perceives otherwise. As consumers, we are conditioned to believe



Town Square serves as seasonal farmer's market in Grand Forks.



Downtown Grand Forks parking ramp.

that “if you can see it, it is closer to you.” This very reason is why enhancing the shopping environment is so important to the Downtown. Customers are more likely to respond to and walk through an environment that is interesting and attractive. It is this factor that can, at times, overcome the perceived challenge of Downtown parking.

Downtown must agree that providing sufficient parking for Downtown customers is a top priority. This means that parking stalls in front of Downtown businesses must be reserved for customers, not monopolized by workers, residents and owners. If these stalls are consistently being taken over by long-term parkers (those parking more than one to two hours to conduct business), then short-term parkers are sure to be left out and may decide to conduct their business elsewhere. Although there may be sufficient parking now to accommodate both short- and long-term parkers, as business in the Downtown increases, the need for short-term parking will increase over long-term parking. In order to avoid future conflicts and turn away customers, a parking management plan must be developed and implemented. The parking management plan should include the following components:

- A. Identification of public and private parking areas in the Downtown;
- B. Identification of parking turnover rates for various blocks in the core Downtown and parking occupancy.

For example, if several contiguous blocks of the Downtown have peak occupancies of 85 to 90 percent, according to an occupancy survey and no surplus parking is available within 300 to 400 feet, then additional, new parking may be needed. A parking occupancy survey can pinpoint blocks of highest usage, which may need to be served by additional parking stalls or lots within a reasonable walking distances. Parking turnover rates are used to identify the length of time a stall is occupied and to set maximum parking limits such as one-hour or two-hour maximum parking limits for various blocks. We note that parking limits should be varied by turnover rates and a mix of parking should be available to accommodate short- and long-term parking.

- C. Identification of short-term parking areas with a mix of designated timeframes (i.e. stalls in front of core Downtown businesses (one to two-hour parking), on-street stalls adjacent to the core Downtown (two- to three hour parking), municipal lots (all day parking and overnight parking for Downtown residents by permit.

The Grand Cities need to set up a parking permits system for Downtown residents to allow them to park in designated areas

overnight. The permitted areas may exclude the high priority parking locations on DeMers, and 3rd and 4th Streets near DeMers, but could include side street stalls farther down these two streets away from DeMers and along other streets Downtown.

- D. Identification of overflow parking areas during peak times (i.e. special Downtown events).
- E. Identification of parking areas outside of the Core Downtown for usage by employees of Downtown businesses that do not have designated off-street parking.
- F. Identification of potential parcels to create additional off-street parking in close proximity to the core Downtown as business expands.
- G. Development of a parking generation model to identify potential future needs based on business types. Currently the Downtown has more professional office uses. These types of businesses have different parking generation rates than retail businesses. Over time and as buildings fill with different uses, parking needs will change. The development of a parking model that accounts for different types of uses can assist in planning for future parking needs and managing an overall parking plan for the Downtown.

The Downtown must agree to support the parking management plan and work together to achieve the desired results. Greater success can be achieved through mutual cooperation than by implementing stringent parking requirements that penalize customers, owners or and/or residents through the use of tagging and towing vehicles or instituting a metering system.

It will be necessary to enforce the parking management plan through some type of fine system for violators. If the parking management plan is not enforced or enforced only intermittently, it will be ineffective. For first-time violators, we recommend a minimal fine of perhaps \$10.00. For consistent repeat offenders and non-payers, fines should double or triple.

Retail rents are currently low in the Downtown. Building owners are likely to see an opportunity to create residential units in 2nd and 3rd stories to enhance building cash flow. Requiring that the building owner also provide and pay for off-street parking for residents may be cost prohibitive. We recommend that the City work with building owners to offer parking stalls leased to Downtown residents where the cost of the parking could be incorporated in the monthly rent. The stalls could be located in municipal or private lots and could be designated as reserved for residents during the evening and





Whitey's is an excellent use in East Grand Forks.

weekend hours but must be used for public parking during weekdays or special events.

We recommend that the City work cooperatively with Downtown building owners that want to create new residential units to develop a win-win situation rather than one that is potentially adversarial. The community should encourage both Downtown retail customers and Downtown residents that are also potential retail customers to increase the tax base in the Downtown through the improvement of Downtown buildings and the creation of new businesses.

### Types of Retail Downtown Core

Types of retail that are missing and are appropriate for the Downtown are listed below, along with a typical square footage range for each store type. We believe that these retailers should remain and the mix enhanced by attracting additional retail goods and services that can complement what is already there and could enhance traffic to spur sales for all Downtown businesses.

Restaurants were repeatedly mentioned by everyone as a use that is desired in the Downtown. Some fine dining restaurants have opened and closed in the Downtown over the past few years. The restaurant business today must be carefully managed to

control costs, labor and food. One reason why many chain restaurants are successful is that they have identified and managed their costs in order to make a profit. Successful, independently-owned restaurants also follow this formula. Space, number of tables, potential seating rounds and turnover must all be factored in. Because of the need to carefully control costs, unusual or oddly configured spaces may result in less revenue and thus, higher overall operating costs. Restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages may be able to make up some of these higher operating costs by serving alcoholic beverages. A restaurant that does not serve alcohol thus must rely more heavily on controlling operating costs.

Restaurants are also expensive to equip due to the need for a commercial kitchen. Thus, a successful restaurant operation relies heavily on experienced management. We believe that a variety of restaurants could be supported in the Downtown, from more convenience-style facilities to a sit-down family-style venue. To appeal to the greatest number of potential customers, the restaurants should offer formats that present broad appeal. A traditional American menu but with some ethnic or vegetarian offerings would appeal both to business customers and families. The format should be casual. A small coffee shop that offers sandwiches for lunch and some bakery items for early morning would also be supportable. The coffee shop could



expand hours to the evening to appeal to the youth crowd with options for additional entertainment. Expanding to evening hours however, would require higher labor costs. Operators should be sought that have experience in restaurant operations and are well capitalized. Because the Grand Cities has a strong student market and a sizeable teenage group, these could be tapped for labor. These groups also will need training and an owner/operator that offers training to its employees will support a high level of service, key to a successful restaurant business.

We identified demand for approximately 57,200 square feet of retail in the Downtown area over the next five years. We also recommend, if possible, that larger space sizes that exist in the Downtown be subdivided to offer spaces that are smaller and better suited to today's retail market. The large sizes of existing vacant retail spaces make them difficult for independent stores to operate profitably. Today's retailers are most often looking for space sizes that range from 1,500 to about 2,000 square feet. Space sizes significantly larger than this require very low rents or very high business volumes to succeed.

Table 2 shows nine potential new retail tenants that could be attracted to the Core Downtown. The combined square footage for these uses, including restaurants, is

from 21,100 to 29,200 square feet. Some of the suggested uses could be combined within one larger space to expand the mix of merchandise and potentially increase revenues. For example, antiques could combine with some arts and crafts items. Beads and beading is especially popular now among young people. Over time, the Downtown could be expected to absorb between 30,000 and 50,000 square feet of space over the next six to 12 years.

As new retailers take hold in the Downtown, the amount of square footage supportable is likely to increase. Thus, demand by 2020 is projected to be about 55,000 square feet for Neighborhood Goods and Services and 28,000 square feet for Destination/Specialty Goods and Services. This takes into account new space that is projected to be added to the market during this period.

Some types of businesses tend to be more successful if there are multiple outlets rather than a single outlet. Antique stores tend to do better if there is a cluster of them located in close proximity to one another. Restaurants also fall into this category, although more so for fast food than for sit-down restaurants which can create a special customer base. Apparel stores also benefit by having several stores located together so that customers can comparison shop. Typically in today's market, it is difficult to operate a traditional apparel store. Some

Potential Retail Tenants	Space Needs (sq. ft.)
Casual Sit-Down Restaurant	
Large	4,000 to 6,000
Small	2,000 to 2,500
Sandwich Shop	1,800 to 2,000
Arts & Crafts	1,500 to 2,000
Bike/Board Shop	1,800 to 2,000
Antiques	1,500 to 2,500
Used Books	1,500 to 2,500
Specialty Apparel	1,500 to 3,000
Optician/Eyewear	1,200 to 1,800
Floral	1,200
Home Furnishings	5,000
Radio, Video, Stereo	2,080
Drug Store	5,000 to 10,000
Grocery Store	35,000 to 45,000

Table 2:



Second and third stories should be converted to office or residential uses, as has been done in this building.

of the types that we have seen as successful include women's and children's consignment clothing, custom-designed clothing, formal/bridal wear. Although we have listed vintage clothing as an option, the success of this type of operation requires a particularly savvy entrepreneur. Particularly in communities with high student populations, an outlet that sells casual clothing at moderate prices can be very successful. This type of business however, would also likely require another outlet for higher volume sales such as T-shirt sales to groups, internet sales or other type of higher volume sales in addition to the retail storefront to succeed.

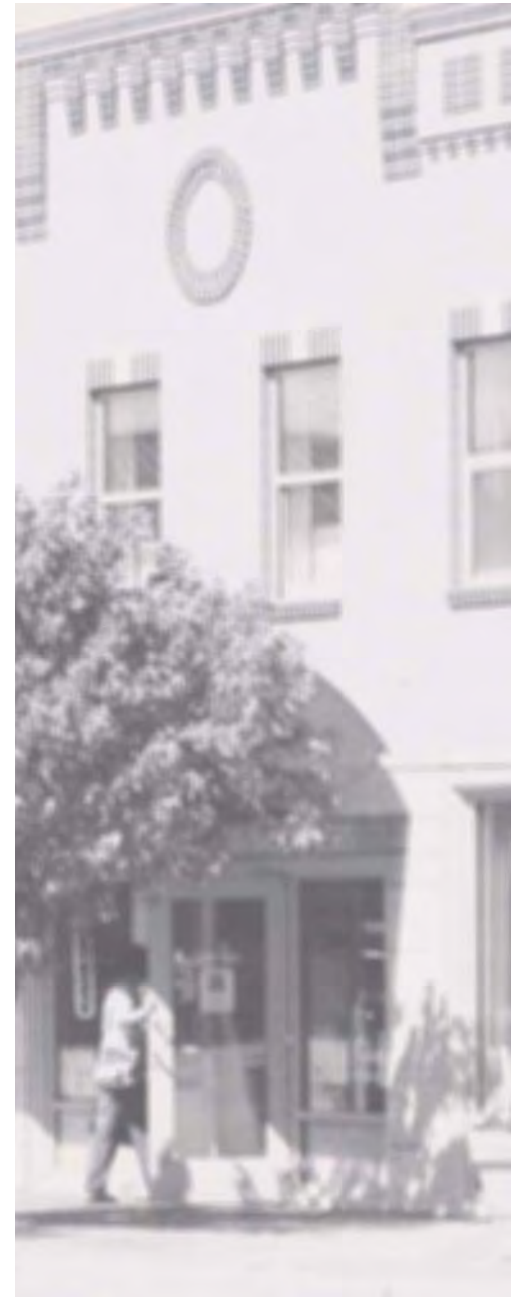
If a vacant building has a second story, it could be leased out for office or apartment units. The Downtown has successfully leased apartment units, often at rents above those for new suburban style units on the periphery of the city. The Grand Cities possesses a strong base of students (through University of North Dakota and Northland Community and Technical College) as well as young working couples and singles. These are the primary market for unique apartment units in the Downtown.

We recommend that street-level spaces in the Core Downtown remain oriented primarily to traditional retail and retail service businesses. The Columbia Road, Washington Street and 32nd Avenue South areas can easily accommodate additional

retail. We recommend however, that retail tenants be sought for vacant street-level spaces on DeMers and 3rd Street, unless there is a larger retail user that could only be accommodated with a larger site outside of the Core Downtown.

The Downtown must strengthen its promotion of its historical district, its connection to the beginnings of the Grand Cities as a community and to the established institutions that exist there today. A Museum is a vital resource in providing much of this information.

Gateways into the Core Downtown need to be strengthened (i.e. stronger signage and physical appearance) to create a greater awareness among residents and visitors that the Downtown exists. We note however, that the strongest efforts should be focused on increasing retail occupancy in the Downtown and promoting the Downtown's strengths and attractions to the community and to outside visitors. Although additional efforts can be expended to enhance the Gateways into the Downtown, we believe that immediate efforts should be focused on marketing and promotion.



9.



## 9. Recommendations

### Recommendations for Downtown Revitalization

The Core Downtown possesses a strong visual appearance and historic character, but its vitality has slowed because of a lack of retail businesses in the Core and the relocation of the Post Office, a substantial traffic generator, out of the Downtown. Downtown professional service businesses remain vital and active and most of the Grand Cities public facilities are located in or very near to the Downtown (City Hall, public library, community building).

I. Focus on filling vacant spaces in the Core Downtown area (beginning with DeMers Avenue); recommend that remaining vacant spaces in the Riverwalk Centre in East Grand Forks be daylighted.

To accomplish this, a leadership organization will have to be established, one that can work proactively with Downtown building owners to assist them in filling vacant spaces in the Downtown. This does not mean that the organization must take full responsibility for leasing or selling the space, but increasing awareness to potential businesses of the spaces that are available in the Downtown

and funds that might be available for renovation or build-out for a prospective tenant would help to get the word out.

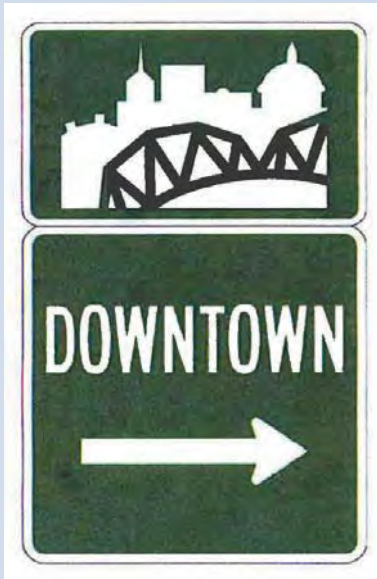
Daylighting the Riverwalk Centre in East Grand Forks will open these spaces to the street, increase the pedestrian orientation of the area and encourage additional customer traffic. We believe that opening these spaces to the street will encourage a synergy of uses based on those that exist there currently.

We also suggest that owners of larger buildings in the Downtown where vacant space is over 3,000 to 3,500 square feet should consider subdividing the space and marketing smaller spaces as many independent retailers or smaller services businesses do not need more than 3,000 square feet and often need less. This could increase interest in the space from specialty users, many of which are looking for smaller square footage.

We recommend that a website link be established to identify these spaces along with contact names and phone numbers. Other communities have used this as an economic development tool in their communities to increase occupancy in commercial buildings or to increase prospect inquiries for buildings and land. Funding for this link could be included in the budget for the Downtown redevelopment organization or businesses that wanted to participate could pay a small



Opening up the sidewall of the mall to storefronts would make this area more inviting.



Downtown wayfinding and promotion is important.

promotional fee to increase advertising for their available space.

2. Develop an ongoing promotional campaign that targets the Downtown area.

This campaign should detail the strengths of Downtowns of the Grand Cities and why it is a good place to shop and do business. Downtown should be promoted both to those that would use its services as well as to those that would locate their business there. The purpose of the campaign is to generate ongoing interest in patronizing the Downtown and to create a tool for soliciting economic development. There will be some business turnover and it is important to establish a method and action plan for keeping the pipeline active. The Downtown promotional campaign has several different components: a) promotion of individual businesses with joint advertising, b) promotion of the Downtown as a whole through an image campaign 3) promotion of special events. Each of these areas requires a different venue/format. For example, the local newspaper can run a joint advertising segment that identifies all of the Downtown businesses. This could be funded through a cooperative advertising fund that Downtown businesses would contribute to. A larger promotional effort for the entire downtown

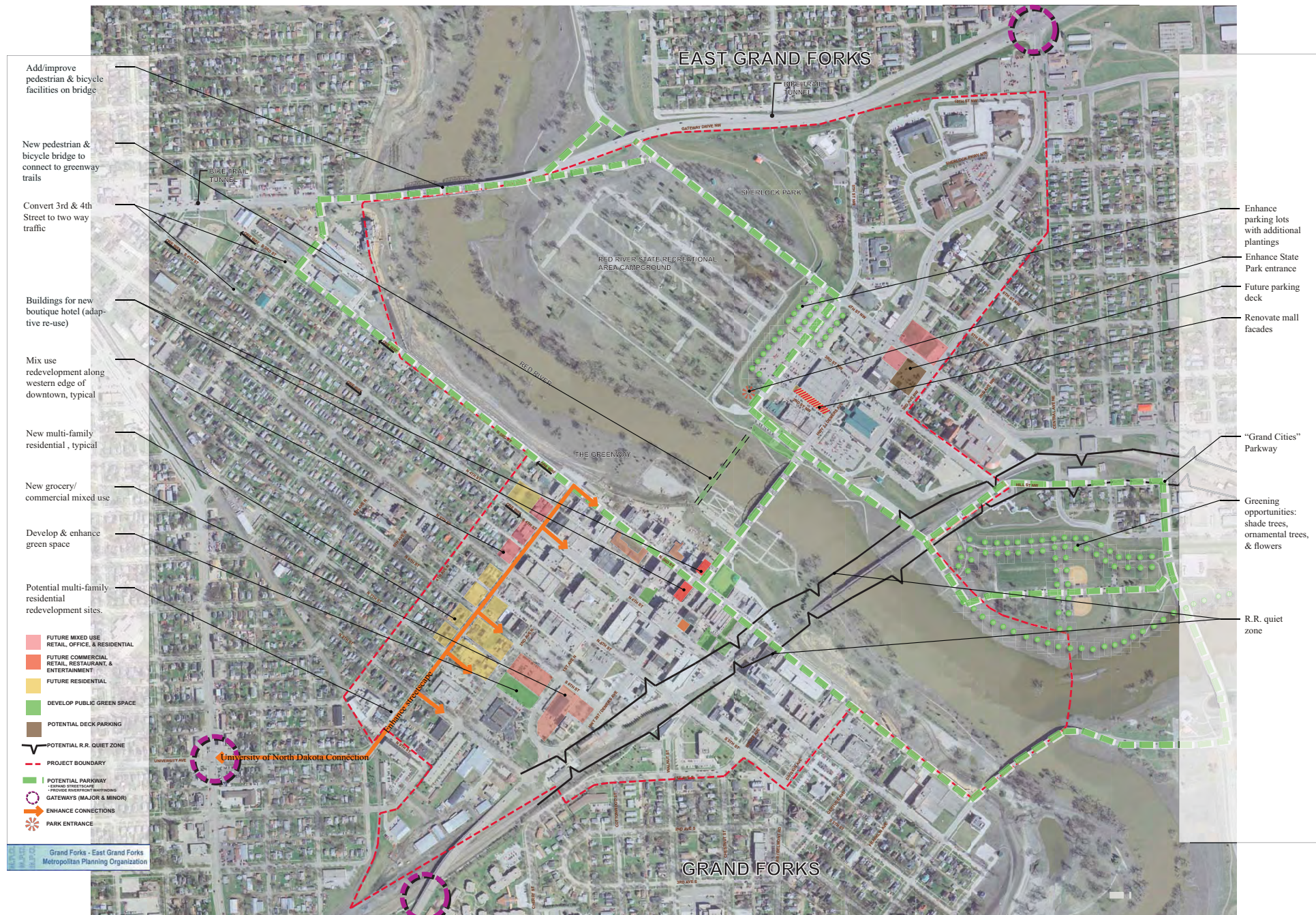
should be the responsibility of the downtown leadership organization and funded through fundraising contributions or city funds.

Downtown must be implanted in the consumer's mind as a shopping place, much like a traditional shopping center. Fundamentally unique characteristics of the Downtown are its historic character (location, buildings), and its location along the Red River

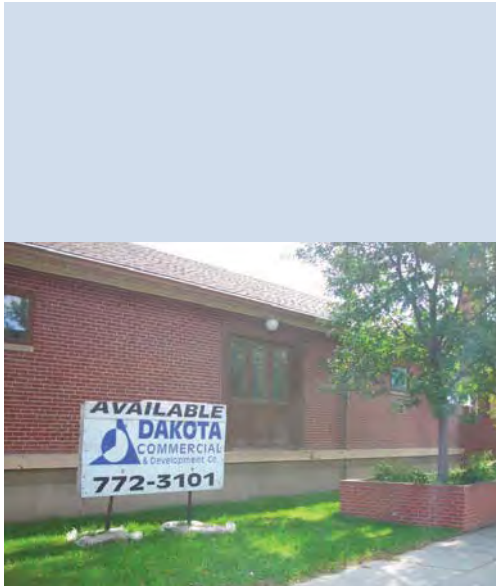
Do not neglect to promote the Downtowns to non-locals through advertising at the local hotels, tourist information centers and other local recreation areas. This will attract tourists and travelers to businesses Downtown for shopping and other events and services.

3. Solicit ongoing input from Downtown businesses

Downtown can provide important input to a Downtown leadership organization and assist the organization in keeping its pulse on what is happening, positive and negative. Many of the Downtown are committed to the Downtown and committed to enhancing the commercial mix in the area on both sides of the River. Part of the Downtown leadership organization's responsibilities however, could be to regularly meet with Downtown to



Priority Projects



Historic depot is currently available for lease.

discuss Downtown issues and encourage participation from a broad cross-section of businesses. Not all will want to participate in a group meeting because of time constraints, etc. We recommend that at the very least all are kept informed of key issues and initiatives through email, a newsletter or other ongoing letter or communication.

This may be very difficult initially for the Grand Cities as professional service businesses do not typically have the same issues as traditional retailers. Strengthening Downtown will benefit all businesses and the community as a whole over time.

#### 4. Identify and Target Specific Users for Available Spaces

Based on the size of the space available and its attributes, market the space to users that will find its attributes desirable. Currently, the building located at 322 DeMers has 30,000 square feet vacant and is the largest vacant space in the Downtown. We discuss options for the building separately in a following section.

The vacant first floor space at the corner of 3rd and DeMers in the Griffith's Building previously housed a furniture store. Rather than a traditional furniture store to fill this vacant space, we believe that a home

furnishings store that primarily offers soft goods (accessories, lamps, towels, glassware, tableware, etc.) with unique offerings could attract customers to the Downtown and to the venue. We believe that this use is appropriate for this space or a similar unique retailer. The space would also be appropriate for a small restaurant operation. We also believe this building could be considered for reuse as a small hotel.

If there is a specific store type or specific retailer that is desired in the community and in Downtown, they should be identified and contacted by the Downtown management organization or the individual in charge of retail recruitment. The Downtown organization should work with potential retailers to determine their "fit" within the mix of the Downtown.

#### 5. Identify key locations/ areas for future development.

The historic Northern Pacific Depot and Freight House is currently available for sale. This property presents a potential renovation opportunity for additional commercial office or retail space. Currently, the building lacks curb appeal. Because of its historic character, improvements to the exterior façade may be limited by the need for historic preservation.

Alternate uses could include a collection of retail outlets or institutional use.

We believe that some of the larger vacant office spaces offer an opportunity to create a UND Downtown Campus, similar to the NDSU Downtown Campus in Fargo. Parking will be an important element of this type of use, but with the existing parking available, we believe any parking challenges may be overcome.

Various other buildings in the Downtown offer opportunities for new housing, lodging, retail and institutional uses. These potential opportunities will be discussed further in the master plan.

Housing will support and enhance the retail and commercial base within the Downtown. Efforts to create housing in and near Downtown will have the strongest impact on sustaining Downtown's viability over the long-term.

### Other Sites

In identifying other sites for potential redevelopment, we recommend the following criteria be used for site evaluation:

- A. Location in the Downtown core  
Properties within the core Downtown or immediately adjacent should be considered for rehabilitation first;

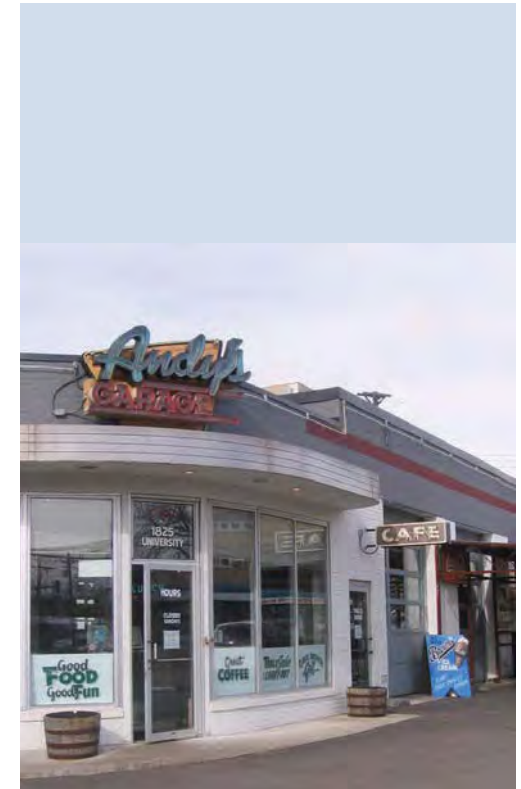
- B. Historic designation

Historic properties that either have a historic designation or could be designated as historic should be considered first to maintain the historic character of the Downtown and as a resource for obtaining funding for rehabilitation. We caution that the property's current condition must be evaluated for the economic value of rehabilitation for reuse.

- C. Buildings that have unique qualities or characteristics

Buildings that have design or architecture that is striking, unique or historic should be considered for reuse. This must be carefully considered as some uses are not appropriate for some buildings and some structures may have deteriorated beyond reasonable efforts to rehabilitate them. There are however, many examples of creative adaptation. For example, a former vintage gas station in St. Paul, Minnesota was converted to a hamburger/malt shop. The garage door was replaced with a glass door and during the summer months, it is opened to the outside. Chairs are placed outdoors for an extended eating area.

- D. Vacant Sites or Incompatible Uses  
Sites in close proximity to the core Downtown may be appropriate for



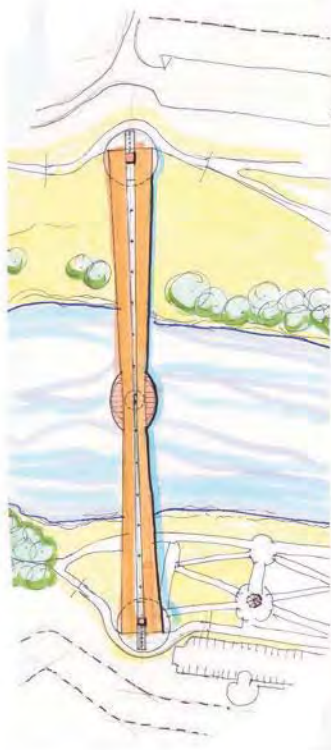
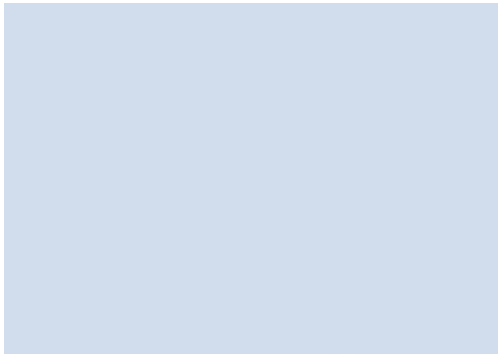
In St. Paul, this former gas station was converted into a hamburger/malt shop.



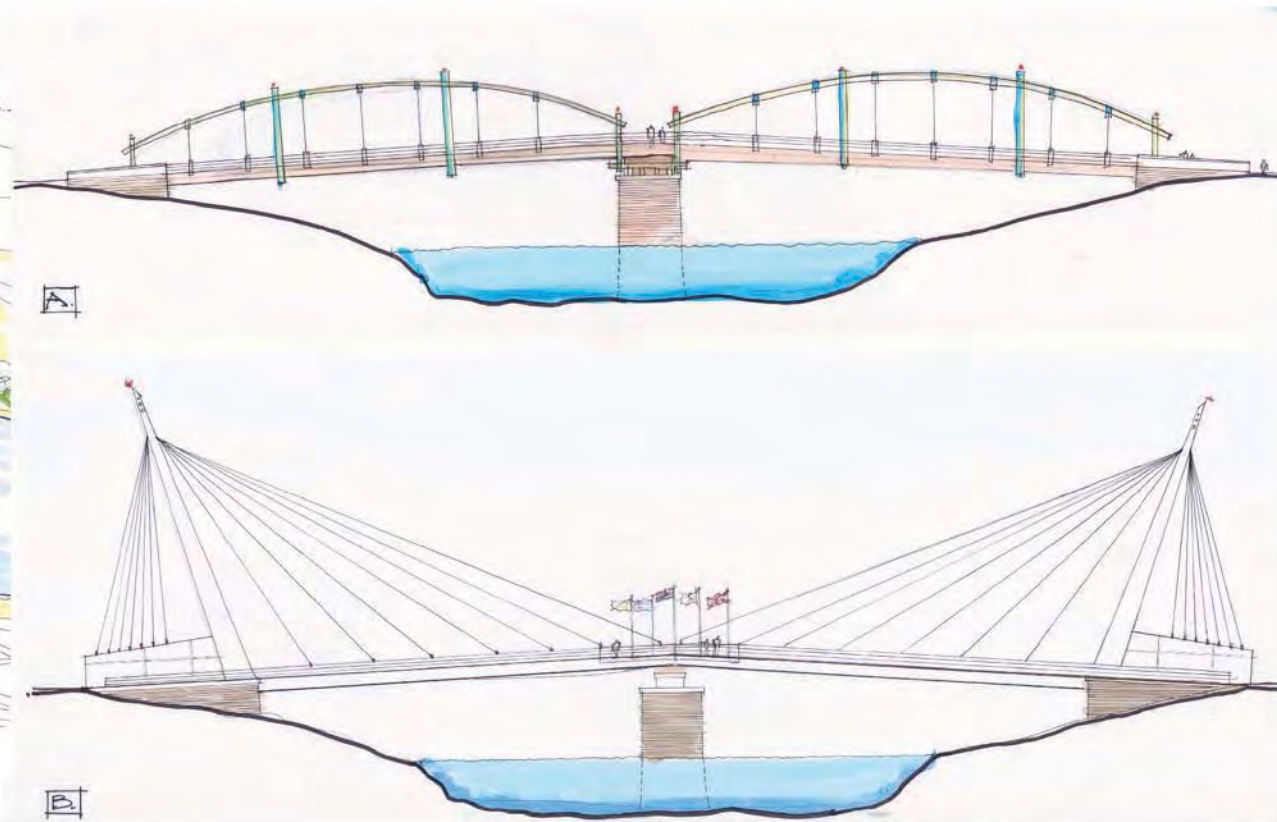
new structures, either housing or new commercial buildings that would provide a synergy with existing uses in the Downtown. If businesses relocate, their vacated facilities may offer opportunities for new uses that would bring new market segments to the Downtown (i.e. hospital site, lumber yard). We do not suggest that these uses be driven out of the Downtown, but if sites become available, they can present an opportunity to effect positive change and incorporate new uses.







Plan view



Red River multi-purpose trail bridge

## Recommendations for Priority Projects

### New Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge Project Description

This bridge would provide much needed pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the downtowns of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. Presently pedestrians and bicyclists can cross on the Sorlie Bridge which has a sidewalk width of just under 7-feet and 40-foot roadway width. Crossing the Kennedy Bridge is difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists and recent signing installed prohibiting pedestrians. A new bridge would make crossing the river much easier for non-motorized traffic. The design concepts drawn at the Charrette incorporated river, pier and bridge elevation information from a 2001 study (Non-Motorized Traffic Bridge Facilities Study).

### Goals

- Improve the connectivity between the two downtowns.
- Enhanced pedestrian/bicycle experience.
- Safer environment for pedestrians/ bicyclists.
- Enhanced connection to Greenway and the River.

### Action Steps

- Grand Forks and East Grand Forks should agree to work together on the pedestrian bridge.
- Determine the appropriate location and landing area for the bridge.
- Develop a detailed plan for the bridge that strengthening connections between the two downtowns.

### Timeframe

- This project should be completed within the next 5 to 10 years.





Example urban market in Minneapolis.

## Grand Forks – DeMers Ave./ S.6th Downtown Market – Civic Auditorium Site Redevelopment

### Project Description

Throughout the public involvement process it was noted that a Downtown Market with a grocery and a pharmacy was needed. This project would provide both a grocery and a pharmacy to downtown, as well as provide more housing units to support the vitality of

downtown. Two concepts were developed with a Downtown Market as the main theme.

### Concept 1

This concept calls for approximately 16,800 square feet of commercial space for the Downtown Market. Other key elements of this plan are that the U.S. Bank Building is integrated into the site design for the market. Also included is 119 parking spaces for the market, as well as integrated stormwater management in the form of a holding pond.

### Concept 2

This concept calls for approximately 18,000 square feet of convenience market use with 24 condominiums above. This concept also would add approximately 9,000 square feet of commercial uses and approximately 20 row houses.

### Goals

- Provide downtown users a grocery store and pharmacy.
- Provide more housing downtown.
- Provide additional commercial space downtown.

### Action Steps

- Solicit developer to complete this project.
- Determine the appropriate size of the grocery store/pharmacy.



Concept 1

- Determine how many housing units are appropriate based on the size of the grocery store and other commercial uses.

Timeframe

- This project should be completed within the next 3 to 5 years.



Concept 2



The Griffith's Building could be converted into a boutique hotel and restaurant.



The building on the NE corner of 3rd Street and DeMers is another potential site for a boutique hotel.

## Grand Forks – Boutique Hotel Concept – 3rd Street and DeMers Avenue

### Project Description

This concept would convert the Griffith's Building into a Boutique Hotel. Several cities across the Country have successfully created downtown boutique hotels that are very successful. The most relevant example is the Hotel Donaldson in Fargo.

### Goals

- Offer another hotel option downtown.
- Reuse an old building with a legitimate use.
- Provide visitors of downtown an alternative to the typical hotel.

### Action Steps

- Solicit developer to complete this project.
- Determine the appropriate size of the hotel and other support uses (such as a restaurant, barber shop, etc.) that could locate in the same building.

### Timeframe

This project should be completed within the next 5 to 10 years.



Boutique Hotel, Fargo ND



Boutique Hotel, Phoenix AZ



Griffith's Building - Grand Forks (72 rooms and 4k sf Restaurant)  
3rd Street & Demers Avenue

## East Grand Forks – Commercial/ Residential Concepts – DeMers Ave./S. 4th Street

### Project Description

This idea for this concept is to create another destination in downtown East Grand Forks. Currently, most of the activity in EGF is centered around Cabela's and the Riverwalk



Concept 2

Centre Mall area. There are two concepts for this project.

### Concept 1

This concept involves commercial/residential mixed-uses. The southeast quadrant of De Mers Avenue and 4th Street NW would include approximately 9,000 square feet of commercial uses, as well as 18 units of apartments. The northeast quadrant would include a commercial/residential mixed use building that would be 2 to 3 stories high. It would include 10,500 square feet of commercial space plus 14 condo units with roof top decks. Directly south of this on the adjacent block would be 5 row houses that would front on 3rd Avenue NW.

### Concept 2

This concept also attempts to create a mixed-use area at the corner of DeMers and 4th Street. On the northeast corner of the intersection a destination commercial use is planned that would feature “signature” architecture, which would help make it a destination. This building would be approximately 19,000 square feet and would feature and integrated parking ramp that would have 106 parking spaces.

The other side of 4th Street would feature a mixed-use building with commercial and residential uses. There would be approximately 18 dwelling units and 9,000



27,800 SF Commercial, 18 Dwelling Units, 130 Pkg. Spaces

square feet of commercial space. The building could feature a green roof with roof top decks.

### Goals

- Create another activity generator in downtown EGF.
- Create another destination commercial use in EGF that draws visitors.
- Develop an urban style building with a mix of uses that would compliment existing downtown uses.

### Action Steps

- Solicit developer to complete this project.
- Discuss redevelopment ideas for these sites with land owners and civic leaders.

### Timeframe

- This project should be completed within the next 3 to 5 years.



Concept 1

## Grand Forks – East Grand Forks Grand Cities Parkway

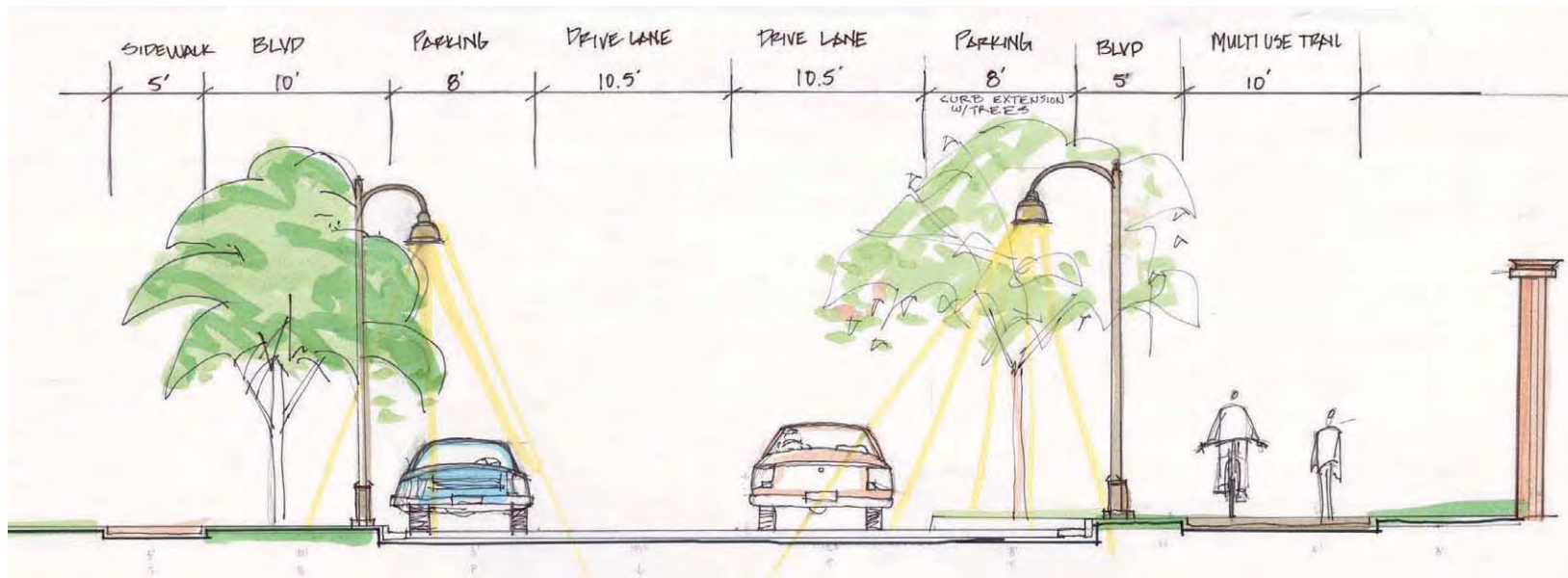
### Project Description

The Grand Cities Parkway would be a broad thoroughfare, with a dividing strip or side strips planted with grass, trees, etc connecting both cities. The concept is to take advantage of the greenway and create a parkway that would allow residents and visitors an opportunity to experience the greenway and river from their cars. Right now there several streets that can be upgraded to create a parkway feel.

### North 3rd and 4th Streets

The Grand Cities Parkway concept provides an opportunity to convert the existing one-way pair of North 3rd Street and North 4th Street in Grand Forks to two-way operation, an idea which has been discussed in previous Downtown planning studies. These streets currently operate as one-way streets in the Near North Neighborhood between University Avenue and US 2/Gateway Drive (Kennedy Bridge Corridor).

Recent speed data indicate 85th percentile speeds are more than 5-MPH over the posted speed limits of 25-MPH on all roadway segments ranging from 30.5-MPH



'Grand Cities' Parkway (two-way or one-way)

to 35.5-MPH. Combined with the Grand Cities Parkway concept on North 3rd Street, a conversion to two-way operation is likely to lower the 85th percentile speed. Additional benefits to two-way operation include improved neighborhood access and circulation as well as more typical neighborhood street character and operation.

### Goals

- Improve the connectivity between the two downtowns and the river.
- Enhanced river experience.
- Enhanced connection to Greenway.
- Speed reduction on North 3rd and North 4th Streets
- Improved neighborhood connectivity for the Near North Neighborhood.

### Action Steps

- Grand Forks and East Grand Forks should agree to work together on the Grand Cities Parkway.
- Grand Forks should review the North 3rd and North 4th Street One-way/Two-way Conversion Memo and the Downtown Plan Existing Conditions Memo and decide how to proceed.

### Timeframe

- This project should be completed within the next 5 to 10 years.

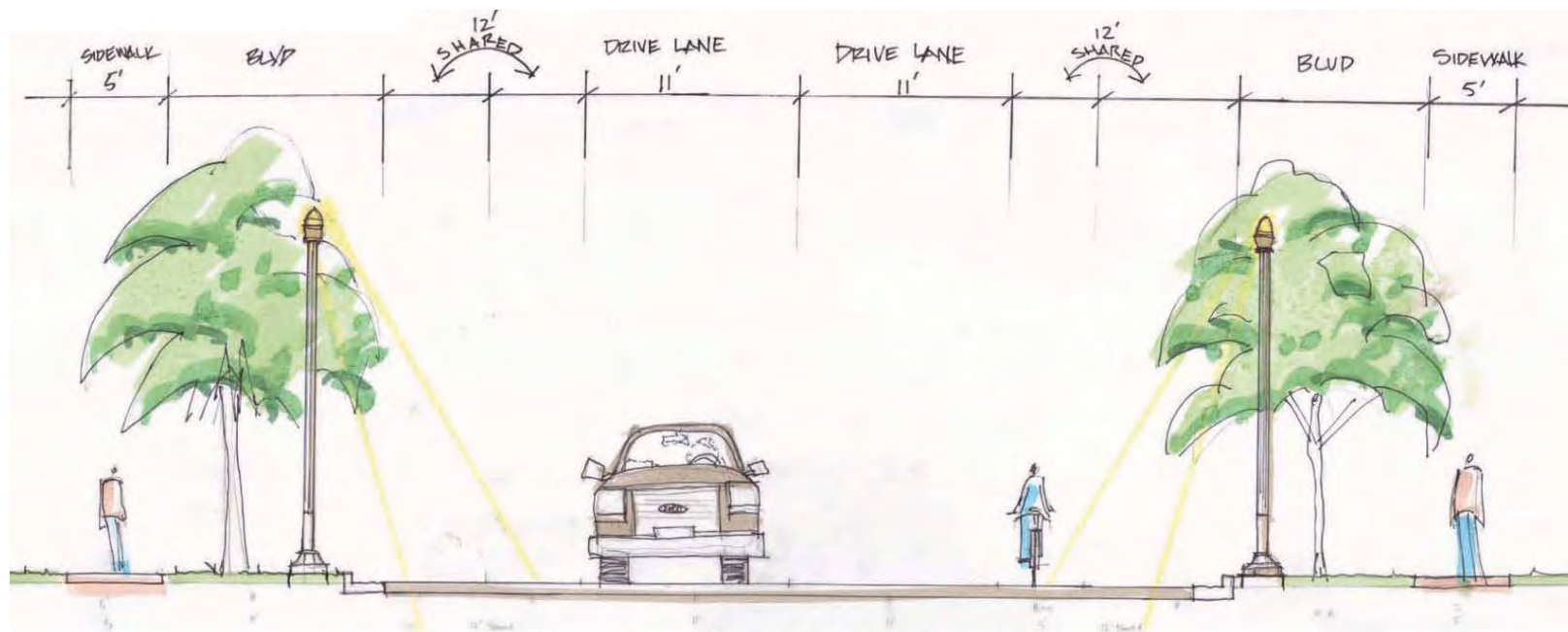


## University Avenue Bike Route and Streetscape

### Project Description

University Avenue connects the University of North Dakota to Downtown. This roadway is currently a two-lane roadway with on-street parking at many locations. Presently bicyclists use the traffic lanes on this roadway and tend to avoid the roadway during the PM peak hours due to the volume of traffic and lack of an identified bike route. A designated bike route will make travel between UND and Downtown much easier for bicycle traffic.

An upgraded streetscape and striping of the street to provide narrower through lanes as well as shared lanes for parking and bicycle traffic would provide much needed bicycle connectivity between Downtown and UND. However, there are concerns that the amount of turnover of on-street parking is significant, which could adversely impact the safety of bicycle operations in the shared lane. Thus it is recommended that a study of on-street parking turnover be conducted prior to any implementation of the shared bicycle and parking lane.



University Avenue with bike lane

### Goals

- Improve the connectivity between UND and Downtown.
- Enhanced bicycle experience.
- Safer environment for bicyclists.

### Action Steps

- The City of Grand Forks should conduct a study of the corridor which includes, on-street parking turnover as part of the criteria to determine if a striped on-street bike lane is warranted. There are many other factors to be considered.
- Grand Forks and East Grand Forks should each develop bicycle route plans.
- Develop a detailed plan for University Avenue that provides for streetscape, roadway and utility improvements that enhance the corridor as a connection for vehicular and non-motorized traffic between Downtown and UND.

### Timeframe

- The parking turnover data should be collected in the near term and if supportive of the project, it should be completed within the next 3 to 5 years.





## DeMers Avenue Mid-Block Pedestrian Crossing

### Project Narrative

The mid-block pedestrian crossing between 2nd Street NW and 3rd Street NW on Business 2/DeMers Avenue in East Grand Forks is marked with stamped and colored concrete between the Cabela's store entrance and the River Walk Mall entrance. This pavement treatment is used for all crosswalks at nearby DeMers Avenue intersections thereby indicating to the pedestrian that this is indeed a crossing location. However, since the crossing is located mid-block and not currently signed, the crossing goes against the driver's expectation. Thus the crossing should be signed with appropriate pedestrian crossing signing per the MMUTCD. In addition, existing parking restrictions should be reviewed for adequate site distance and an in-street pedestrian crossing sign (R1-6b) should be used during non-winter months.

### Goals

- Provide pedestrians at this location with MMUTCD signing for non-intersection pedestrian crossings.
- Improve pedestrian visibility and driver expectation.

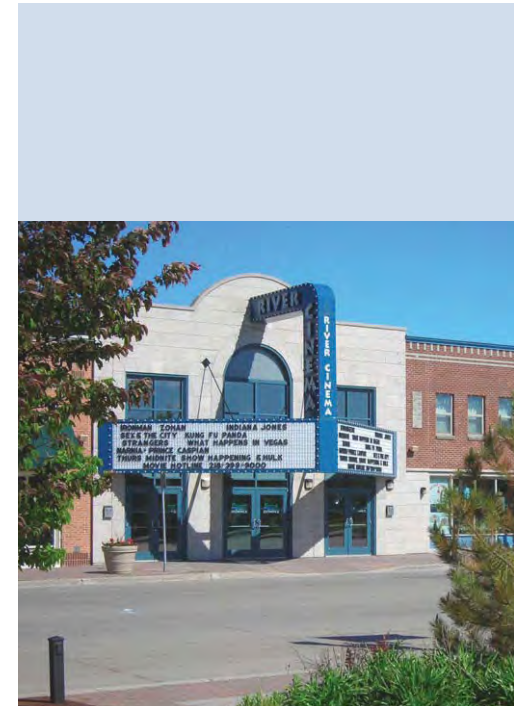
### Action Steps

- East Grand Forks should contact the Mn/DOT District 2 Traffic Engineer

to determine the schedule for implementation of this improvement.

### Timeframe

- This project should be completed within the near term.



“Close calls” between motorists and pedestrians have been reported at this pedestrian crossing.





Long Range Projects

## Long Range Projects

The following projects and concepts are intended to be long range projects. That isn't to say they shouldn't be a priority. It simply means they should be considered after the priority projects in the previous section. Many of the long range projects more simply could be considered land use concepts and should fit within the framework this plan sets forth. The following long range projects should be implemented within the next 5 to 10 years.

### *Kennedy Bridge Bike and Pedestrian Enhancement*

Bike and pedestrian facilities should be added to the Kennedy Bridge when future improvements are made to this bridge. These facilities will make it easier for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross this bridge and will also strengthen the bike and pedestrian link to the Greenway, thereby creating a more vibrant downtown area.

### *Grand Forks Future Commercial Mixed-Use*

Future commercial mixed-use redevelopment should occur on the current parking lots bounded by South 5th and 6th Streets and 2nd Avenue North and DeMers Avenue. These areas can be better utilized by having active commercial mixed uses on them.

### *Grand Forks DeMers Avenue Gateway Area*

The concept for this area is to redevelop the existing industrial area into future residential uses that feature a public greenspace. There has already been several buildings in this area that have been converted over to multi-family residential uses. This concept will provide greenspace for this end of downtown Grand Forks, as well as provide an opportunity to create an improved Gateway into downtown Grand Forks.

### *East Grand Forks Future Residential Development Area*

The area directly to the east of Sherlock Park on the outer fringes of downtown East Grand Forks provides an excellent opportunity to add more single-family homes into downtown East Grand Forks. This area has been previously planned for residential development after the flood but only a small amount of homes have been built. These homes should be more urban in nature with small lots and oriented to the street, similar to the original plans for this area.

### *Pracs Expansion*

Pracs is a very important component of downtown East Grand Forks and future expansion should be accommodated as necessary. This Plan has identified the area



Residential development in East Grand Forks.



Concept sketch of example urban housing situated close to sidewalk and street.



directly to the east of the existing Pracs facility as a future expansion area.

#### *East Grand Forks Future Commercial – Mixed Use*

The Plan identifies two large areas in downtown East Grand Forks for future commercial – mixed use development. The largest parcel is located almost directly across the street from City Hall. This is an ideal location for a commercial location being across the street from a high traffic generator in City Hall. The other parcel identified for commercial – mixed use in EGF is located at 4th Street NW and DeMers Avenue. The existing building is a drive through bank but it's currently vacant. The existing use probably isn't feasible over the long term and it's difficult to reuse this building as anything but a drive through bank. Therefore, the recommendation is to redevelop this parcel as commercial – mixed use.

#### *Coordination with University of North Dakota (UND)*

The proposed Downtown Organization, as well as City officials from Grand Forks should coordinate with UND regarding possible expansion to Downtown Grand Forks. It has been noted the UND President Robert Kelley is interested in UND having a stronger connection to Downtown. Some of the larger vacant office spaces in Downtown Grand Forks offer an opportunity to create

a presence for UND Downtown, similar to what NDSU has done in Fargo.

#### *Entertainment/Commercial Complex*

This area is located in the Cabela's parking lot. The parking lot is a very underutilized use for this site. The site would be an excellent location for more entertainment uses or for commercial development. The loss of parking for Cabela's would need to be made up elsewhere. Cabela's should be involved in discussions regarding future uses in their parking lot.

#### *Multi-Story Building connected to dike*

A new multi-story urban building should be considered on the dike near the Town Square in Grand Forks. This building would provide unique views of the river because of its location on top of the dike. It should be noted that this is a preliminary concept only. The Army Corps of Engineers will need to be consulted before anything can be built.

#### *Downtown Stormwater Management Techniques*

Urban areas often involve the utilization of low impact development (LID) techniques to manage and treat stormwater runoff due to high imperviousness and space limitations. Stormwater management for the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks downtown areas also are limited by physical conditions such as low permeability native clay soils and flat terrain. As site redevelopment and

capitol improvement projects are planned, LID techniques should be evaluated and incorporated into the design. The following LID techniques are recommended, however, the list is by no means conclusive.

- Promote perviousness
- Street sweeping
- Routine maintenance
- Underground storage
- Underground treatment devices
- Bioretention cells
- Bioretention swales
- Cisterns/Rainbarrels
- Planter boxes
- Tree box filters
- Green roofs

Most of the techniques listed require small footprints and can be retrofitted into existing site conditions with proper planning and engineering. Fact sheets with more detail on many of aforementioned techniques are attached. There are a number of different locations and layouts where each of these techniques maybe applied in the downtown areas. A few more specific recommendations are summarized in the following paragraphs.

- A. Based on an aerial photograph of downtown Grand Forks, it is shown that much of the impervious area is from building rooftops. Green roofs are a potential technique that could be employed in some cases to reduce the impervious area. Extensive green roofs

are lightweight and low profile and therefore are an attractive option for retrofits where the existing structure may not be sufficient enough to support an intensive green roof.

- B. Both downtown areas consist of a large portion of impervious surfaces associated with roadways. Downtown roadways and sidewalks may be ideal areas to utilize planter boxes and tree box filters. Depending upon the locations of utilities tree box filters can be located within the sidewalk or in 'bump-outs' in parking lanes. Besides providing stormwater treatment, planter boxes and tree box filters, provide aesthetic value to an urban landscape as well.
- C. In East Grand Forks there are a number of parking lots which are large expanses of impervious surface that could be retrofitted with bioretention cells. Bioretention cells (a.k.a. rain gardens) should be designed with underdrains when installed over low permeability soils which are prevalent in the area.





Aerial view of proposed new development along University Avenue and existing Civic Auditorium area in Grand Forks.



Aerial view of proposed pedestrian bridge and mixed-use development in East Grand Forks.

# 10.



## 10. Implementation

Just as the challenges or “barriers” to investment are multifaceted, so too must the solutions be. The national trend of stagnating and declining downtowns is evident not just in Grand Forks/East Grand Forks, but throughout the U.S. Facing increasing competition from development on the “fringe”, the Downtown Study Area, will experience a heightened decline in commercial property values and market share unless specific actions are taken. Before moving forward, the community of GF/EGF must accept that its competitive position will continue to be eroded unless there is -- repositioning of its role in the market, restructuring of its physical layout, recognition of the economic challenges inherent in infill and redevelopment, and, aggressive recruitment of niche opportunities. The community of GF/EGF and its leadership must further accept that the Study Area is at a distinct economic, social and market disadvantage compared to vacant “Greenfield” sites. To that end, it is their responsibility to level the investment and regulatory playing fields. Private investment alone will not fill the financial “gap,” rather, it will move elsewhere. There are several opportunity areas in the Downtown Study Area where investments can be made to leverage private interest. A description of these “catalyst investment areas” and their

potential locations are described in the previous section.

### Implementation Framework

Following identification and analyses of priority projects in a downtown plan, comes the challenge of outlining an implementable strategy for promoting investment. Webster’s Dictionary defines implementation as “a means for accomplishing an end” or “an action to put into effect.”

### GF/EGF Implementation Framework

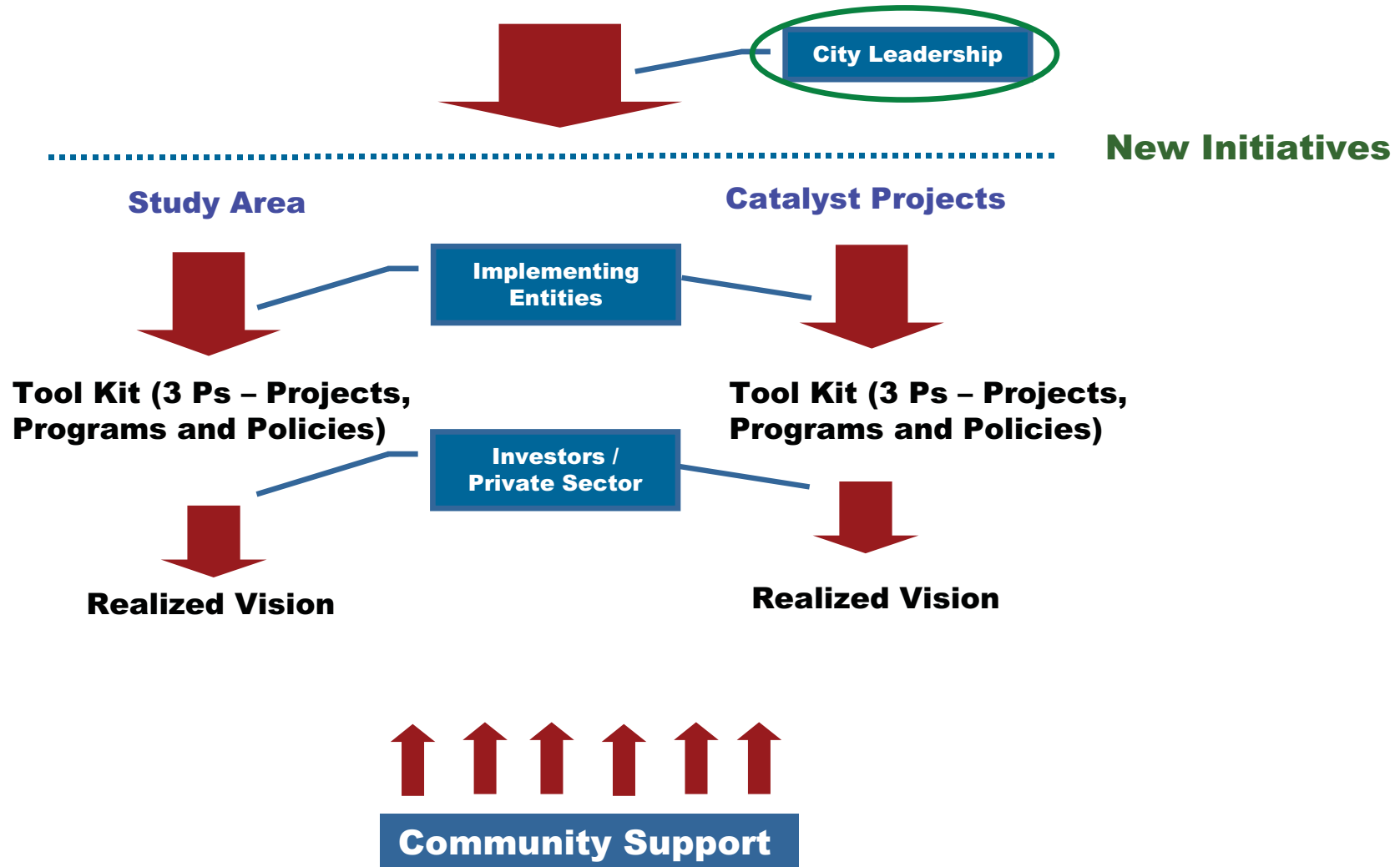
As explained during the planning process, just as no one project will revitalize the downtown, no single action will advance the larger vision. Rather, revitalization and repositioning of this area will be dependent on a series of actions designed to capitalize on market opportunities and overcome barriers - effectively readying the environment for investment. Key to the successful implementation of this downtown plan will be the continued identification and implementation of actions tailored to the unique issues of the downtown and potential investment areas within it. This approach has been proven to build community goodwill; enhance quality-of-life; provide opportunities for on-going public participation; allow special-interest groups to have a role in the revitalization effort; send a message that the area is successful and making positive strides; and, create an increasingly attractive environment for investment and development.



# Implementation Framework

## Strategy Layers

**Guiding Principles**



Investors, developers and lenders seek out environments with market opportunity and prospects for success, devoid of obstacles and sound in sustainability.

### Revitalization Challenges

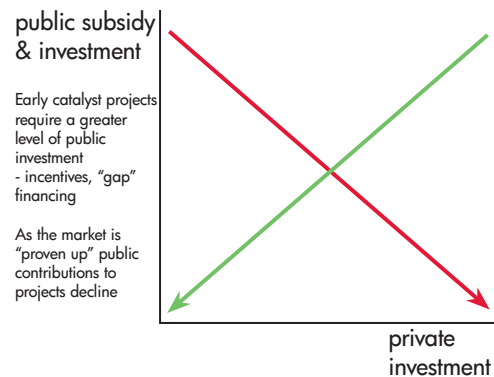
Challenges to revitalization in a downtown or infill area are varied and numerous. To effectively ready the environment for private investment, the following challenges must be overcome:

- Difficulty in assembling land
- Comparatively high land costs
- Increased regulation & review
- Limited examples of creatively-financed projects
- Parking costs
- Perceived greater risk in serving perceived narrow markets
- Construction staging opportunities limited

The model for revitalization is summarized in the exhibits below. As shown, in successful revitalization efforts, early priority or catalyst projects will require a higher level of public investment, however, as the market is “proven up”, required public investments should decline.

### Implementation Principles

The range of actions presented and identified to move the Plan forward were selected based on a foundation of implementation principles. These principles, while general in nature, were considered responsive to





market opportunities, catalyst concepts and development programs, and stakeholder input. They include:

- Public-private partnerships are essential.
- The approach to revitalization will be holistic (3 p's – projects, programs, policies).
- There will be higher standards with off-setting incentives.
- There will be active marketing and promotion.
- The Cities will participate in acquisition, disposition, and repositioning of key properties.
- Open and community space planning will be an important component of revitalization.
- The Cities will exercise regulatory flexibility in attracting private investment.
- The Cities will exercise financial creativity in attracting private investment.

### Public and Private Sector Roles

As the entity with the largest and longest-term interest and responsibility, the public sector must have strong involvement and a visible presence, as well as offer continuing leadership, incentives and capital to future projects. The private sector will bring experience, access to private funding, and a willingness to balance risk and return. The roadmap for moving the downtown vision towards reality is based on the assumption that the Cities of GF/EGF will move forward in partnership with the private sector.

Through this approach, the Cities are in a much stronger position to ensure that development is accomplished in a way that balances private investment objectives with community sustainability. To this end, the Cities and/or the Downtown Management Organization should:

- Acquire, assemble and position strategic parcels which will advance the vision;
- Establish policies in support of tools which allow for acquisition and disposition including land write-downs, land swaps, etc.;
- Commit to participating in the cost of infrastructure; and
- Be strategic about public investment, utilizing it to leverage private investment.

As priority projects come forward, expectations on the part of both public and private sector entities will arise. These include the following:

### *What the Public Sector Seeks From the Private Sector*

- A. Developers who have done mixed-use infill/downtown projects
  - Who know the public scrutiny and won't back out
  - Who understand public process and microscope view of a public project
  - Who have experience in the project type desired
  - Who have a successful track record
- B. Developers who are financially strong
  - Equity or an equity source in place

- Debt sources as well

#### *What the Private Sector Seeks From the Public Sector*

- A. Political will
  - Stable City Council/Planning Commission
  - Community support
  - Community and business alignment
  - Favorable (or at least neutral) media
- B. Financial means
  - Renaissance Zone
  - Bonding capacity
  - Land control
  - Other needed incentives and mechanisms

#### *Holistic Approach to Economic Development*

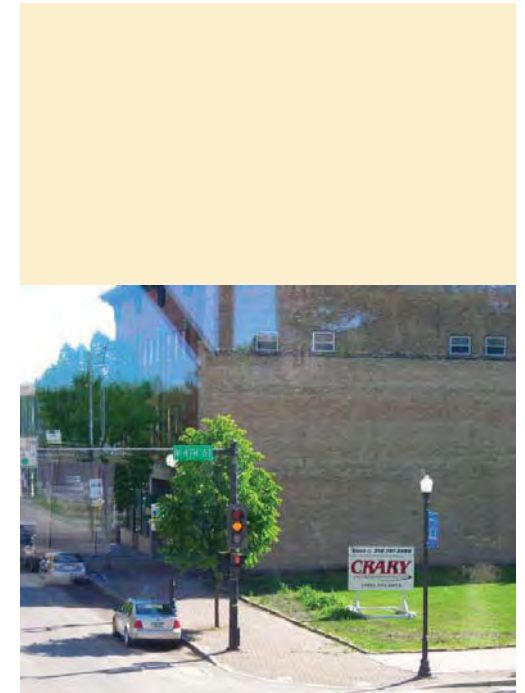
Accept that no one effort will create or sustain a community, but rather a series of projects, programs and policies which occur simultaneously and serve to attract the interest of potential economic development partners. Many of these efforts are identified here and described in the discussion which follows. The method by which the City chooses to address these actions will be determined by its elected and appointed officials. Regardless, the approach must be comprehensive, fluid and continually updated. Economic development “infrastructure” includes physical features (parks, open space, public improvements), service organizations (churches, schools, government offices), mix

of employers (retail, service government – large and small users), community perceptions and attitudes. These are the assets which provide the impetus for investment, therefore, the City needs to direct equal levels of resources to attraction, expansion, retention, preservation and enhancement initiatives. To this end, the City should:

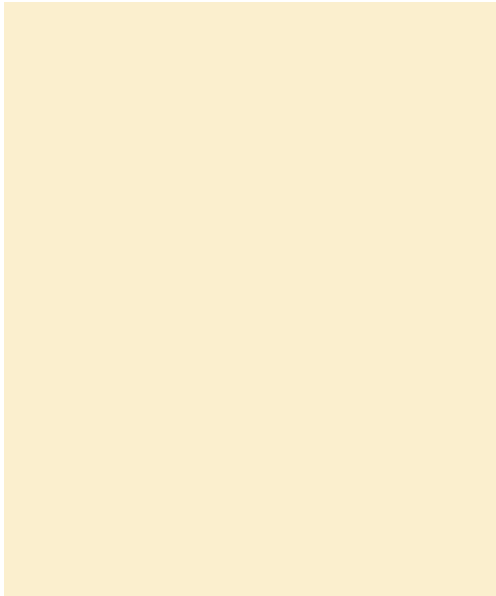
- Identify and set aside open space and / or places for public amenities, particularly in the vicinity of the catalyst investment areas;
- Promote and reward these features;
- Establish programs to encourage participation by other community stakeholders (schools, churches, employers, etc.) in economic development and downtown redevelopment.

#### *Higher Standards with Off-Setting Incentives*

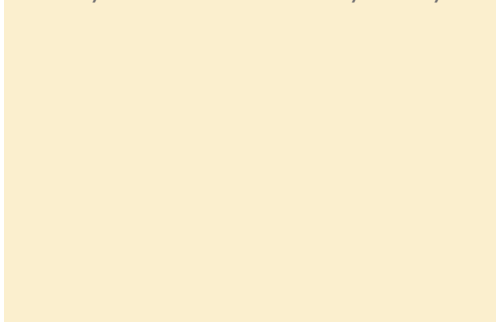
Higher standards as a component of place-making come with a price. Development costs are consistently higher in infill and downtown redevelopment projects, while project revenues (in early years) are often lower. Placing additional financial burdens associated with design standards on these pioneering initiatives can create a scenario whereby development economics render the project financially infeasible and prevent it from moving forward. Conversely, a declining downtown area without minimum standards for development is a highly risky environment



Available lot for Commercial/Mixed Use development.



Greenway is an excellent community amenity.



where new investment is largely unprotected. The City must establish standards, but also recognize the financial challenges of the private sector and make available off-setting financial solutions. To this end, the Cities should:

- Prepare a list of tools or incentives to offset impacts of higher standards and promote their availability; and
- Support the long-term vision through the Cities' policies and regulations and recognize the downtown as one component of the larger community with a unique set of hurdles to overcome.

### Acquisition and Disposition

Site control is the single greatest advantage a community can have when initiating a redevelopment effort. Through site control, a community can exercise options related to assemblage, consolidation and disposition in order to position properties for private investment. Once acquired, disposition can be implemented by several methods. The City needs to reflect on community interests, long-term goals, limitations and mandates when considering these methods and their application. To this end, the Cities should:

- Define the role of the City;
- Evaluate effectiveness of acquisition and disposition efforts to-date (if any) as forward actions need to be guided by accepted criteria; and
- Research and understand the range of disposition strategies and applications

including land leases, land banking, quick sale, bulk sale, etc., and declare the City's willingness to apply these strategies to select instances.

### Open and Community Space Planning

The recommended priority and long range projects for the downtown include combinations of mixed-use commercial, office, residential and civic spaces, supported by formal and informal open and community spaces, most importantly the Greenway. As evidenced by other successful redevelopment initiatives, amenities and open spaces are critical as they communicate the identity of the place and enhance property values. The challenge is successfully encouraging private property owners to set aside otherwise income-producing land for non-income generating uses. To this end, the Cities should:

- Identify open space sites and corridors in the downtown;
- Work with property owners and other stakeholders to define a program for public spaces;
- Prepare / amend public and open space master plans, if necessary; and
- Promote open space and park amenities as economic development benefits and financially incent their development.



## Financial Creativity

The experience of redevelopment projects in other markets suggests project gaps of 20 to 30 percent can be the norm, and that the best strategy to address these deficiencies is through the application of multiple resources, thereby spreading risk and return among the partner entities. As potential redevelopment projects are identified for the downtown it will be important to prepare preliminary pro formas to ascertain the potential gap. Each solution and implementation strategy will be as unique as the project being implemented. The most important quality among these projects will be a willingness on the part of both the public and private sectors to be creative and flexible in their approach. To this end, the Cities should:

- Review the range of financing mechanisms identified and presented herein;
- Identify those the City is most comfortable making available; and
- Promote their availability to the private sector and test their effectiveness through project monitoring (benchmarking).

The implementation “tool kit” can include mechanisms that provide both direct and indirect assistance to the private sector. Examples of these mechanisms include:

### Direct Financial Assistance

- A. Land Assembly
  - Acquisition

- Demolition
- Relocation
- Writedowns
- B. Capital Improvements
  - Infrastructure
  - Parking garages
  - Open space and public amenities
  - Programmatic facilities
- C. Grant Assistance
  - Cost sharing of private improvements
  - Payment for predevelopment studies, such as traffic impact and signal studies
- D. Debt Financing
  - Direct loans
  - Below-market interest rates
  - Loan guarantees
  - Credit enhancements

### Indirect Assistance

- Zoning or density bonuses
- Transfers of development rights
- Transfers of air rights
- Regulatory relief from zoning and building codes
- Reduced processing time for project approvals
- Quick take by eminent domain
- Design coordination in public/private projects
- Below-cost utilities, if publicly owned
- Arbitration of disputes that might arise
- Government commitments to rent space





Establishing a Downtown leadership organization is critical to the success of this plan.

#### Financing Strategies

- A. Intergovernmental Grants
  - Community Development Block Grants
  - Section 108 guaranteed loans
  - State economic development grants/loans
- B. Local Debt Financing
  - General obligation bonds
  - Revenue bonds
  - Industrial development bonds
- C. Off-Budget Financing
  - Lease-purchase agreements
  - Ground leases
  - Land/building swaps
  - Property tax abatements
- D. Dedicated Sources of Local Funds
  - Special district assessments
  - Tax increment financing
  - Earmarked sales or special-purpose taxes

#### Grand Forks Downtown Organization

The establishment of a joint Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Downtown Management Group was one area of focus during a charrette held in October 2008. Several key stakeholders, including city staff for each municipality, economic development representatives, business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, and others, engaged in a discussion that led to the formation of several principles that should serve as the guiding compass for the new downtown organization. These

principles state that the organization's mission should focus on:

- Attaining buy-in and local stewardship of the concept of a joint downtown organization to ensure its vitality and sustainability,
- Marketing of the downtown and organization to both the community and outside investment entities,
- Branding of the joint downtown area,
- Recognizing community self-interests in the carrying out of joint initiatives,
- Acting as a single entity representing the established program shared and supported by both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, and
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the organization through a benchmarked program.

In order to implement these principles, stakeholders developed a conceptual vision for the Downtown Management Group. The vision addresses the realities of the necessary financing strategies, political relationships and financial partnerships that would be required to make the organization a successful and sustainable entity.

#### How should the Downtown Management Group be structured?

The first challenge in establishing a Downtown Management Group is identifying the mission, expertise and resources that will drive the vision forward. Based on the



existing commitments of the most prominent players in the community, it is not feasible to anticipate that one group will support the establishment and operating needs of the Downtown Management Group. Instead, these needs will have to be met from several places. The Downtown Management Group Concept, illustrates this notion.

This diagram illustrates the idea that, rather than a single entity funding the operating and overhead costs, capital improvement program, and strategic marketing plan for the Downtown Management Group, it will be necessary to draw upon the resources of several entities in the community who share an interest in having a vibrant and active downtown area. The diagram identifies nine such entities who have been involved in the development of this Downtown Plan. Others may be added to the diagram as the Downtown Management Group's structure or mission evolves.

The outer bubbles represent the entities who may be asked to provide some level of support for the Downtown Management Group. They include various municipal departments, not-for-profits, and downtown business owners. Support from these contributing entities may be in the form of:

- Financial support,
- Administrative staffing support,

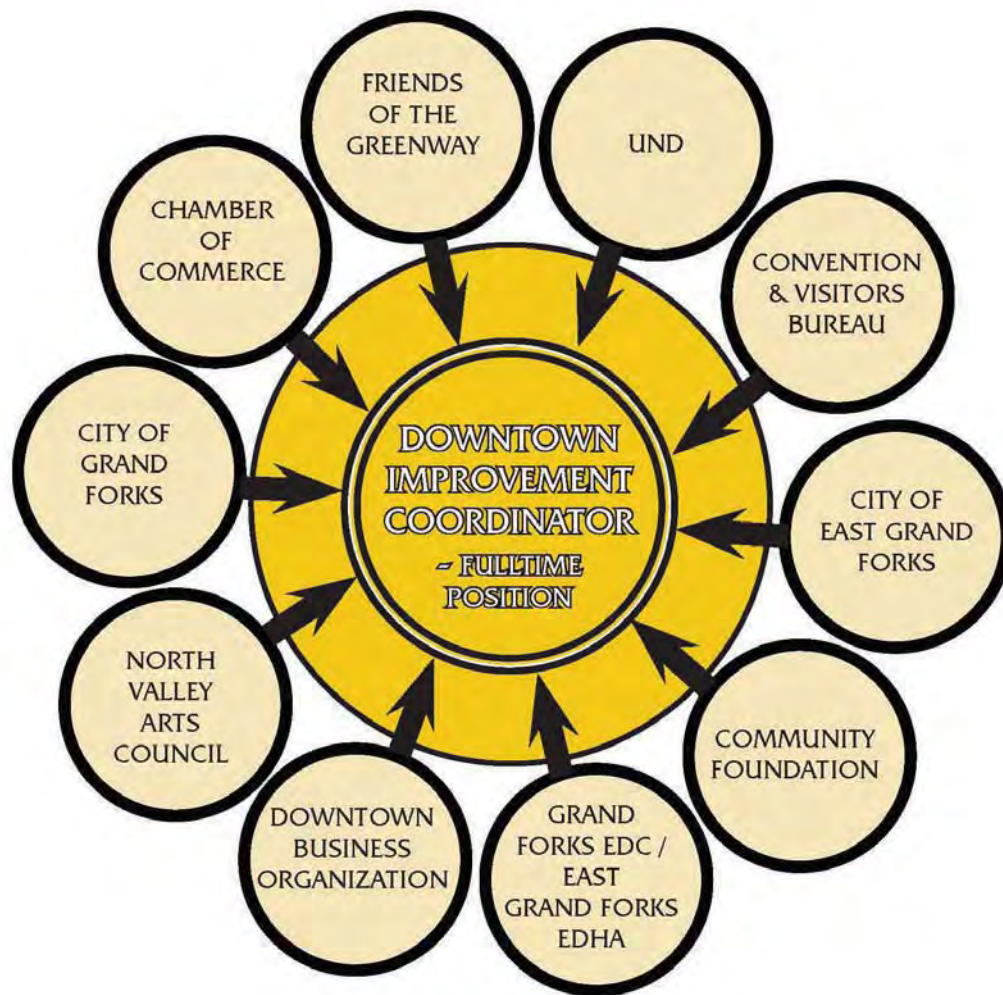
- Office space,
- Marketing and production resources,
- Etc.

In addition, each entity will be asked to identify internal staff to act as a liaison to the Downtown Management Group. This staff will be responsible for attending periodic coordination meetings and provide information to the Downtown Improvement Coordinator regarding their agency's vision for and initiatives in the downtown area.

The center of the diagram identifies a Downtown Improvement Coordinator. This position would be a newly created full-time position responsible for gathering information from the contributing entities and moving forward the joint vision for the downtown area. Surrounding the Downtown Improvement Coordinator is a circle representing the pool of resources provided by the contributing entities. In this way, they contributing entities have a direct stake in the success of the Downtown Improvement Coordinator in implementing the vision for the downtown area.

Overseeing the Downtown Improvement Coordinator will be a Board of Directors. This board may include one member from each of the major implementation entities, including the planning departments of each municipality, the economic development entities of each municipality, and the joint





Downtown Management Group Concept Graphic

Chamber of Commerce. Additional positions may be filled by other not-for-profit or business representatives.

#### How will the Downtown Management Group operate?

The Downtown Management Group will adopt several primary responsibilities, including: coordinating information from contributing entities, developing marketing and branding programs, recruiting new business investment, and managing downtown improvements, among others. However, this plan recognizes that there are some key entities that will be instrumental in facilitating the success of the Downtown Management Group. The [Operating Concept Diagram](#), at right illustrates the key implementation relationships that must be established.

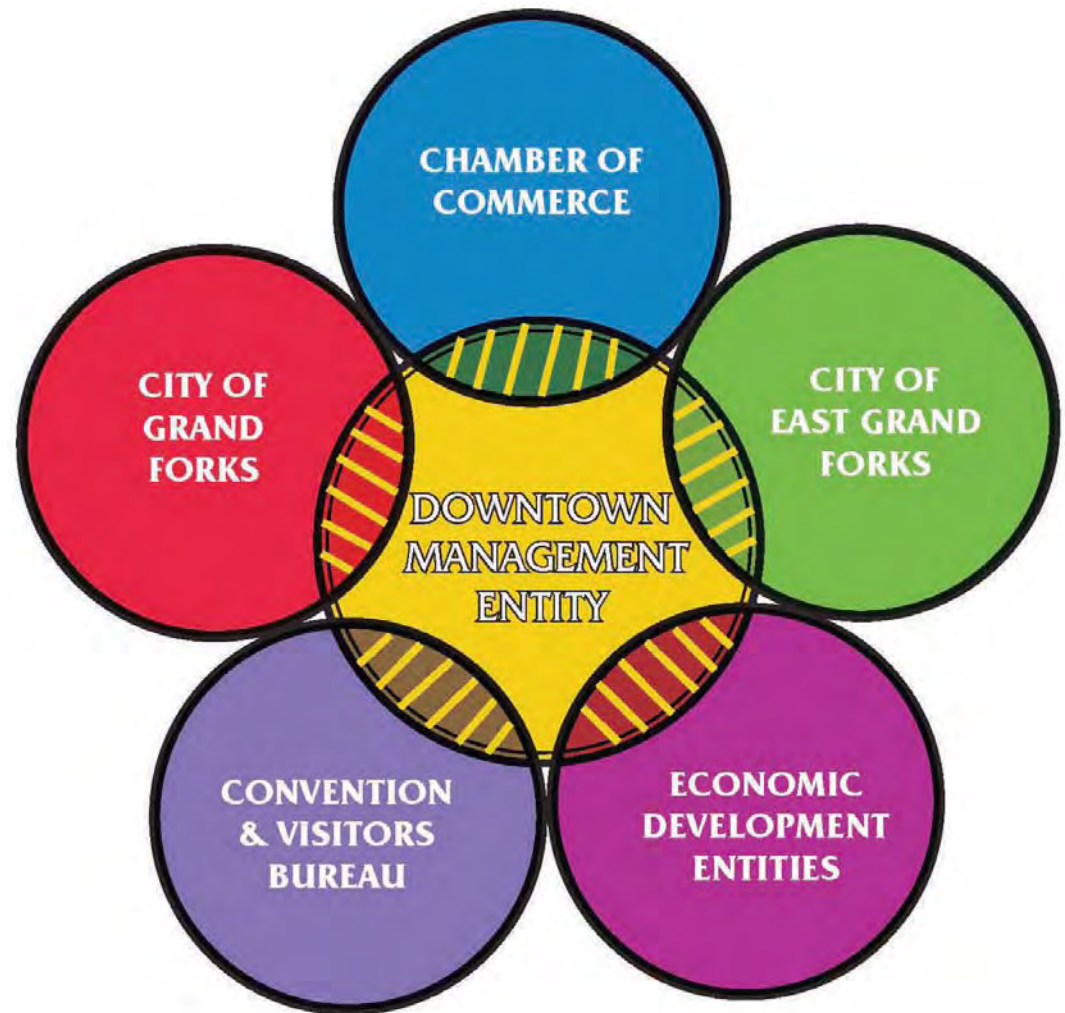
While the mission of the Downtown Management Group will reflect all of its stakeholders and contributors, the operating concept must focus on those entities that have the most direct influence on implementation and success. The Downtown Management Group must work closely with the Cities of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks City Councils planning, and economic development staff, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to address initiatives in a comprehensive manner, from public policy to financing authority. In this way, the joint



mission of the Group can be most effectively implemented.

Aside from the information coordination and staff liaison resources to which all entities will contribute, the Downtown Improvement Coordinator should maintain a day-to-day relationship with these key implementation partners in order to advocate for the interests of the downtown area in terms of marketing, business recruitment, public policy, maintenance and physical improvements, capital projects, programming, and taxing authority. Additionally, each of these key entities is big enough to potentially contribute dedicated funds to downtown management operations and capital projects. Where possible, set-asides should be included in their annual budgets for downtown initiatives under the purview of the Downtown Management Group.

It is anticipated that a start-up annual budget for the Downtown Management Group will be approximately \$500,000. This budget includes one full-time Downtown Improvement Coordinator, required administrative support, related overhead costs such as office space, utilities, etc., and funding to undertake initial promotional and project initiatives. However, depending on the level of in-kind services offered by contributing entities in lieu of financial support, some of the required fiscal budget may be offset. In seeking resources, it is



Operating Concept Diagram



The Downtown leadership organization will promote an active and vibrant downtown.

imperative to capture 3-5 year commitments from contributing entities for various types of support. This will mitigate the year-to-year risk of the Downtown Management Group, and allow for more effective long-range planning of programs and improvements.

Funding for the Downtown leadership organization can be provided through private contributions, City funds, a special tax or assessment, or a combination of all of these. Private citizens may be encouraged to also support Downtown initiatives through contests or fund-raising efforts. A portion of proceeds from regularly held special events may be earmarked for the Downtown organization. Specific redevelopment projects that would be undertaken by the community could be funded through bond financing or other municipal financing tools. The Downtown Management Group diagram, as previously illustrated, describes the relationship between the Downtown Improvement Coordinator and the contributing entities. Contact between these parties should happen as needed to maintain an updated databank of on-going initiatives, available assets, and future opportunities to promote the mission of the management group. More regularly, the Downtown Improvement Coordinator should facilitate a quarterly meeting with the dedicated staff from the contributing entities. This will encourage group dialogue about the issues being faced in the downtown area, and fine

tune the vision of the key stakeholders whose resources are being used.

### What will the Downtown Management Group do?

There are several factors that will influence the ability of the Downtown Management Group to implement the mission that it adopts, including:

- The types of functions with which it is charged,
- The geographic area that it addresses, and
- Legal and policy nuances between cities and states.

### Downtown Management Group Functions

There are several roles that a downtown organization can play. Based on the needs of the joint downtown area and the activities already managed by supporting entities, two functions; branding and marketing, and business recruitment and retention; have been identified as the primary focus of the Downtown Management Group. Branding and marketing of the downtown area has value that is recognized by both downtown communities. There is also consensus that marketing the joint downtown area as one asset is essential for capturing imported market wealth from surrounding populations. Therefore, the Downtown Management Group should be charged with managing the marketing of the downtown area through published materials, website

development, and attendance at professional conferences and forums. Additionally, any physical improvements that can be done to create a consistent image of the downtown area can be managed by the Group. Such improvements may be funded by the Group's improvement budget, or financed by each municipality according to a funding agreement and managed by the Group as the primary contractor and coordinator.

Business recruitment and retention is another function that benefits from pooled resources and marketing the downtown area as a single entity. Potential business owners, developers or investors may have little concern about which municipality they should invest in. Instead, having a central resource for available properties, market and demographic characteristics, and downtown management and promotion can remove barriers and help attract services and growth from which the region as a whole can benefit. Within this structure, each municipality may still utilize its individual incentives and subsidies to facilitate development. But the primary mission of the Downtown Management Group should focus on marketing the joint downtown area and facilitating the conversations with each municipality.

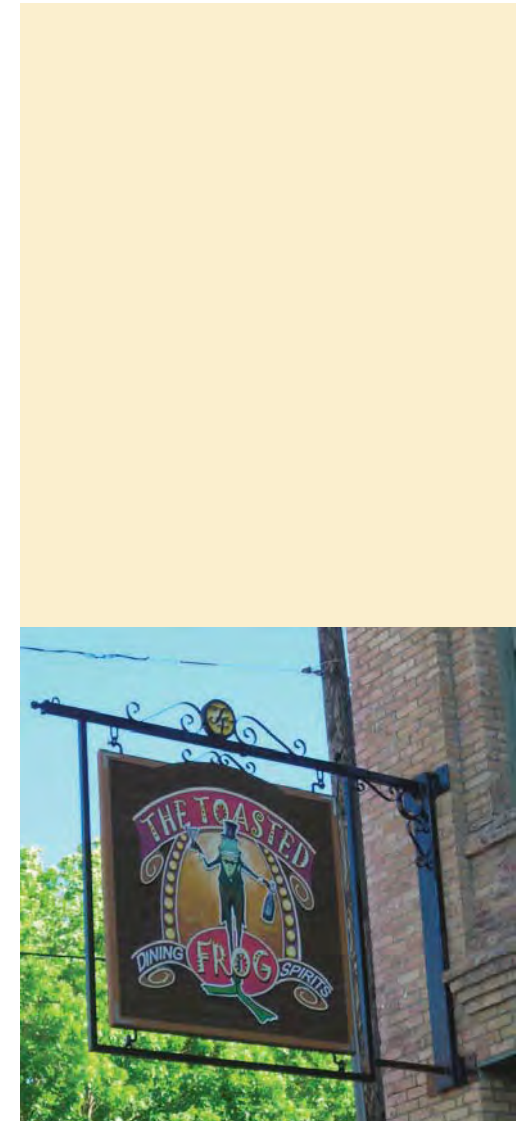
In addition to these central functions, the Downtown Management Group may serve as a coordinator between the municipalities for improvements or services they may

otherwise undertake autonomously. For example, if the joint downtown stakeholders express a need for downtown trash collection and cleaning, the Downtown Management Group may work with one municipality to purchase the equipment, and outline a rental agreement for the other municipality to use it. In this way, capital resources may be pooled for the joint benefit of both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks downtown businesses and residents.

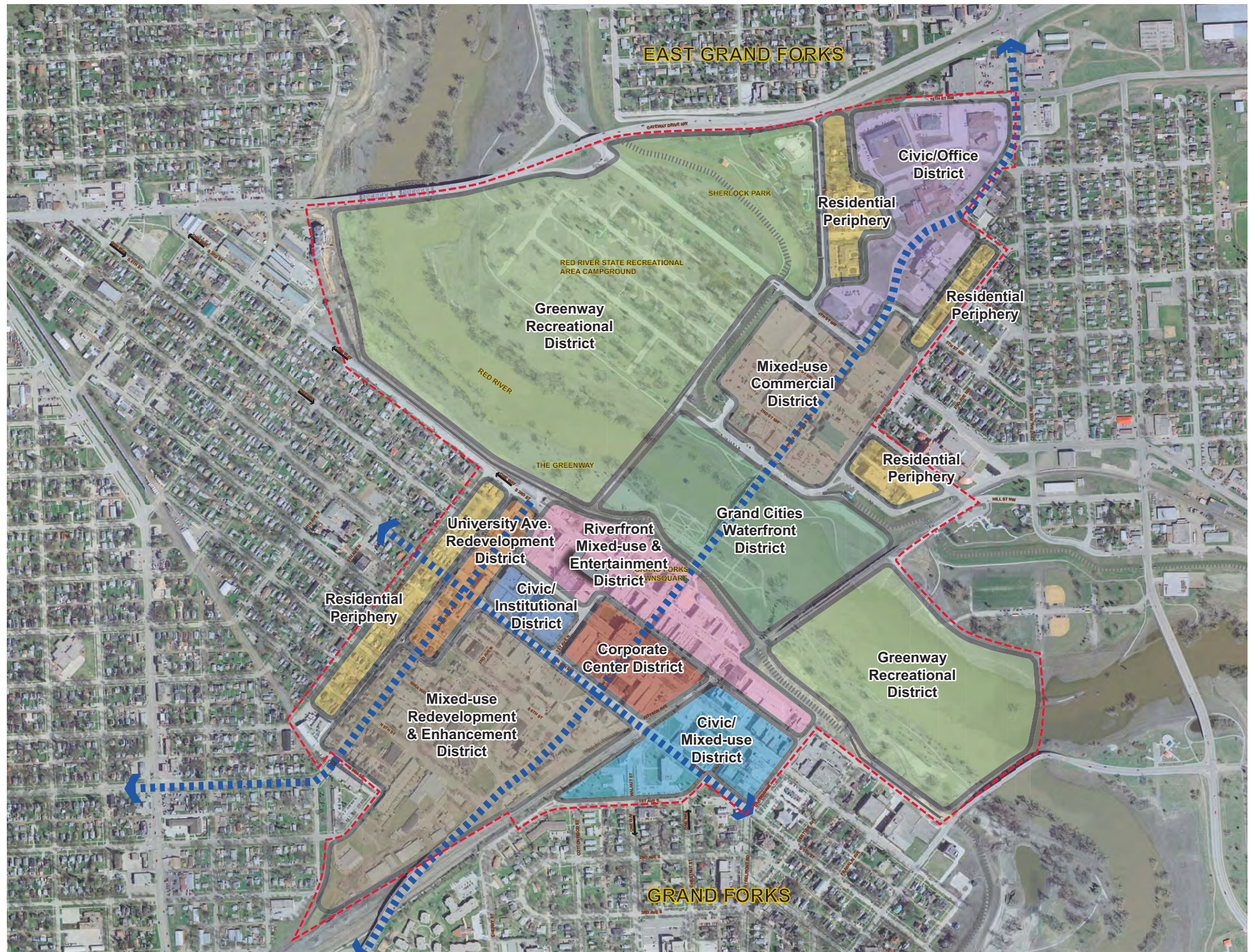
The final role of the Downtown Management Group will be to monitor its success in attaining the vision for the downtown area. This can be done in several ways, including:

- Analyzing statistics that quantify downtown growth, such as commercial or residential occupancy, number of new businesses, increased tax revenue, increased active square footage, etc.,
- Monitoring the interest in downtown from developers, investors, and potential business owners, and
- Surveying local and regional populations to assess how the image of downtown is changing over time, among others.

The results of these analyses will be important in assessing the effectiveness of the Group, instilling confidence in the contributing entities that their resources are providing local benefit, and identifying specific initiatives or programs that should be



Existing businesses will benefit from improved leadership in the Downtown.



Downtown Districts Map

strengthened or dropped from the Group's mission.

### Geographic Area

There are portions of each Grand Forks and East Grand Forks downtowns area that are viewed as critical to the success of a regional joint downtown, and the Downtown Management Group will not have the resources to address every need in the entire study area addressed by this plan. For these reasons, the Downtown Management Group should focus on the key areas that impact that impact the success of the joint downtown as a whole.

This plan identifies a number of subdistricts within the planning area based on existing uses and potential for growth over time. In order for the Downtown Management Group to most directly respond to the objectives of this plan, the Group's geographic purview should relate to the extents of the subdistricts that have the most influence on both downtown areas as a whole. These subdistricts include the:

- East Grand Forks Mixed-use Commercial District,
- Grand Cities Waterfront District,
- Grand Forks Riverfront Mixed-use & Entertainment District,
- Grand Forks Corporate Center District,
- Grand Forks Mixed-use Redevelopment & Enhancement District, and

- Grand Forks University Avenue Redevelopment District.

These districts, shown in the Downtown Districts Map, have been identified as part of the Group's implementation area because they include important regional entry corridors, provide local access and visibility that can benefit both downtown areas, and/or provide opportunity for redevelopment that can bring new services that benefit the joint downtown area as a whole.

### Legal and Regulatory Influences

The stakeholders and members of the community involved in making this plan have expressed a commitment to marketing and promoting the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks downtowns as a single entity. This represents a critical step in the conceptualization of the downtown area. However, those responsible for implementing the plan will have to face the reality that the two downtown areas are in two different cities and two different states. Local groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, have shown that this barrier can be overcome. Nonetheless, the Downtown Management Group will have to face a series of issues in representing and marketing the joint downtown area, including:





- The use of the Group's improvement funds for capital investments on one side of the river,
- Local competition for economic development and the resulting tax revenue, and
- State or federal finance policies, such as Tax Increment Financing, that will not allow for the pooling of certain types of resources across municipal or state lines, among others.

In some cases, the Downtown Management Group may serve the role of a holding company for funds to be used for various types of improvements with revenues redistributed according to agreements between Grand Forks and East Grand Forks reached at the time of the Group's inception, or as various funding mechanisms become available.

