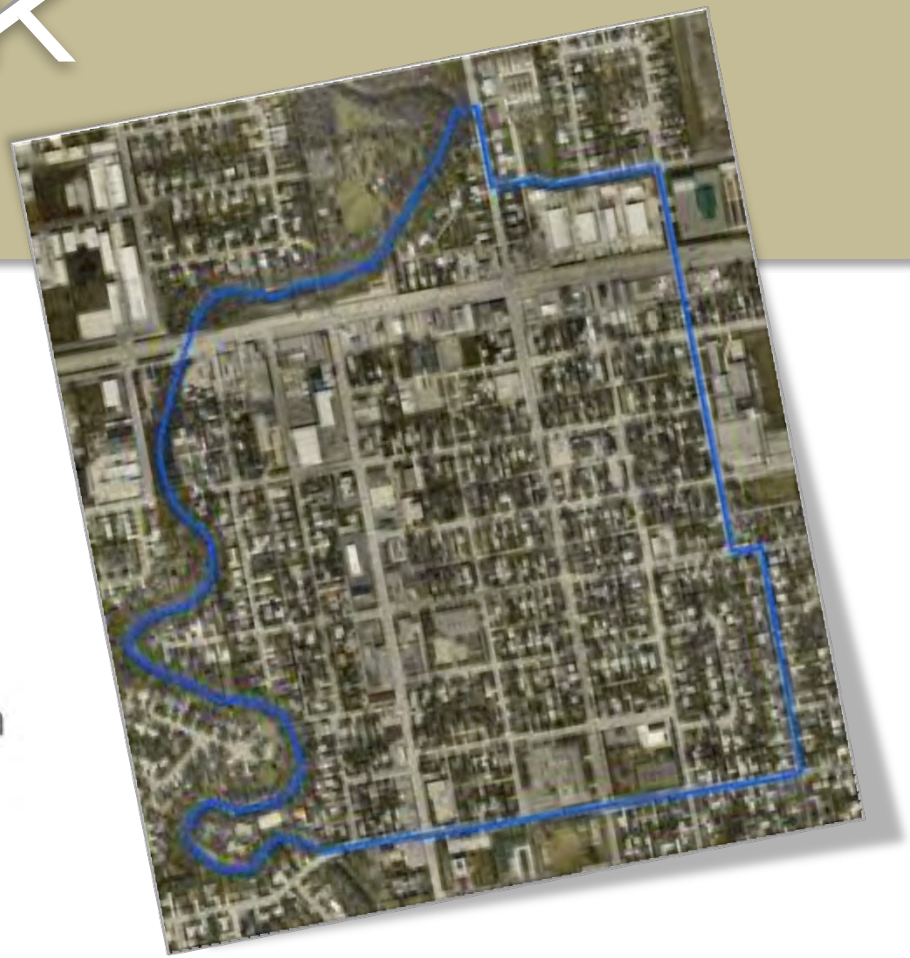
City of West Fargo, North Dakota

Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue

FRAMEWORK STUDY



FINAL REPORT – DECEMBER 2011

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About This Report
The preparation of this document was funded in part by the United States Department of Transportation, with funding administered through the North Dakota and Minnesota Departments of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Additional funding was provided by the Minnesota Department of Transportation and through local contributions from the governments of Fargo, West Fargo, and Cass County in North Dakota; and Moorhead, Dilworth, and Clay County in Minnesota. The United States Government and the States of North Dakota and Minnesota assume no liability for the contents or use thereof. This document does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. The United States Government, the States of North Dakota and Minnesota, and the Metropolitan Council of Governments do not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein only because they are considered essential to the objective of this document.

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INTRODUCTION

The Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue Framework Study for West Fargo, North Dakota, was initiated in November 2010 as a partnership between the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) and the City of West Fargo (City). A consulting team comprised of three specialty firms with diverse experience in community revitalization *(see box, right)* was selected to assist Metro COG and the City in determining the degree to which investment and redevelopment potential exists along, and in areas adjacent to, Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue. The study also aimed to identify what the character of future development might be in order to ensure economic competitiveness and continued vitality and vibrancy for the heart of the West Fargo community.

Led by Centro Inc., the consulting team explored existing economic conditions, transportation and land use capacity, retail market gaps and opportunities, strategic niche positioning and overall area redevelopment potential through extensive market research and stakeholder outreach. This report highlights the key findings and the strategic recommendations for advancing revitalization on the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors in downtown West Fargo.

Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue Framework Study Consulting Team

Centro Inc. – Denver, Colorado
- Downtown, city center and neighborhood revitalization
- Focus on the management, maintenance and marketing of place
- Implementation tools and funding strategies

Winston Associates – Boulder, Colorado
- Comprehensive land planning
- Development planning
- Landscape architecture

Downtown Works – Seattle, Washington
- Retail/commercial demand analysis
- Retail consulting and recruitment

About the Study Area

The study area encompasses much of the original core of the West Fargo community and is generally bounded by (west to east) Sheyenne River to 3rd Street East and (north to south) Pinewood Boulevard to 7th Avenue East *(see map, right)*. This 165-acre area lies at the heart of West Fargo – the fifth largest city in North Dakota and the fastest growing city in the state.

While West Fargo as a whole has experienced strong residential and business growth – and a new demographic mix that provides an impressive economic marketplace – the same cannot be said for the study area itself. As the city has grown outward, physical and economic growth in the original core of the city has suffered. Newer residential markets have sought updated commercial offerings along the burgeoning 13th Avenue and 9th Street corridors, while the available commercial offerings in downtown West Fargo – along Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue at the core of the study area – have remained stagnant, if not declined. Additionally, the physical environment in the study area has seen little inward investment or new development in recent years. West Fargo's original central business district has continued to struggle, even as emerging commercial areas have seen substantial new investment and development by the City and the private sector. Downtown West Fargo, once a busy community-serving marketplace, has lost its heartbeat and relevance in a growing city and region.

SHEYENNE ST / MAIN AVE FRAMEWORK STUDY
Study Area
N

About the Study

The Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue Framework Study establishes a long-term vision for downtown West Fargo and sets out an incremental approach for revitalization and reinvestment in the study area. The plan considers the unique positioning required for Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue individually, while also offering a holistic approach to economically improve the entire study area and return it to a vibrant place. Additionally, this plan considers the distinct and important roles of the public and private sectors in implementing the important strategies required to be successful in this revitalization initiative.

Summary

The data and findings delivered in this report indicate that the elements required for successful revitalization of downtown West Fargo, and the strengthening of the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors, exist. However, the significant change that both public and private stakeholders have signaled they want to achieve will require a long-term commitment, significant resources and investment, and a dedication to remain focused on the vision set forth in this plan. Change and growth will be incremental, as is the nature of revitalization. The result, however, will be the creation of a vibrant community 'heart' that captures West Fargo's past and embraces its present while creating a positive economic impact that will benefit the entire city.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors – located in the heart of the City of West Fargo, North Dakota – sit at the crossroads of the City's original downtown business district. Once a vital, community-serving commercial center, today it is showing its age, and is struggling to compete in the quickly expanding marketplace of the City and region.

Downtown West Fargo faces some common challenges seen in older business districts:

- The quickly growing community of West Fargo doesn't relate to the downtown area in the way the once-small community did;
- The downtown area is seen as a 'pass through' for vehicular traffic, rather than a destination that encourages people to stop;
- The business mix on Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue – within the study area – has become less relevant to the consumers who make up the marketplace today;
- It has been difficult for the aging downtown West Fargo commercial area to compete for new investment dollars in a city that has had so much open, developable land that is cheaper and easier to build on.

The downtown West Fargo study area also possesses one unique challenge – while most older commercial areas have a stock of historic structures that can provide a starting point for redevelopment and revitalization, downtown West Fargo does not.

Together, all of these factors have created a complex revitalization challenge for downtown West Fargo that the community has struggled to overcome.

As this study reveals, however, significant opportunities exist to increase the economic potential of downtown West Fargo:

- Development and investment continues to happen in West Fargo and the region, but the study area has seen little of this. If some of those dollars can be captured and a case for investment in the study area can be made, change could quickly occur;
- The study area is situated among strong, older neighborhoods and an impressive flow of traffic – these existing markets can be tapped to support new development;
- The growth of West Fargo has brought an influx of new residents with powerful spending potential. If the downtown area could establish an identity with offerings unique to what currently exists elsewhere, research shows the market exists to support retail and commercial growth;
- The lack of historic physical structures in the area can be seen as an opportunity for the community to envision the downtown they want, and build it from the bottom-up;
- Every community needs a 'heart' – an established central place to gather and celebrate. This doesn't exist today in West Fargo, but stakeholders see an opportunity for a revitalized downtown to become this place.

While not trying to compete with existing commercial offerings or the unique environment offered in downtown Fargo, West Fargo has an opportunity to create a special experience for the region – a small-town city center that provides an alternative to the miles of suburban retail surrounding it. This report provides the framework for how the City of West Fargo, in partnership with the private sector, can breathe new life into the heart of the community.

Framework Study Goals

This framework for revitalization of the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors aims to align both economic and physical infrastructure realities with the vision for the area set forth by the City of West Fargo, business and property owners in the study area, and community members. As a result of the work conducted by the consulting team, four primary goals have been established which the Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue Framework Study aims to address. These include:

- ***Create a unique community 'heart' for West Fargo***
  Community leaders, investors and residents that participated in this study overwhelmingly expressed a desire to create a true community center for West Fargo – a place that can serve as a gathering place and a 'heart' for the community. As the West Fargo community has quickly grown, investment in and focus on the downtown has given way to a focus on outward growth and new development. This framework study provides strategies to refocus energy and investment in the City's center and reinvigorate Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue for both community and economic reasons.

- ***Improve the economic performance of the downtown area***
  Aging properties, a lack of businesses that serve the communities residents, and minimal commercial development in recent years have created an economically stagnant environment in downtown West Fargo. A deteriorating city center can bring down the economic viability of even a growing city. This plan provides strategies to ensure West Fargo gives its historic core the same level of focus as emerging areas recently have gotten in an effort to bolster the growth of the entire community.

- ***Improve the overall image of the historic core of West Fargo***
  Those participating in providing input for this framework plan noted that the image of the downtown West Fargo area has become increasingly negative over the years. The area has come to be seen as a pass-through and a predominantly service-oriented area – much different from the neighborhood commercial center it once was. Through physical improvements, a revitalized business environment, pedestrian activation and marketing and events, this plan aims to create a new, refreshed image for downtown West Fargo.

- ***Create public and private investment opportunities in the area***
  Investment from – and a partnership between – both the public and private sectors is the only way revitalization of an aging area can occur. This plan aims to provide a clear strategy for how resources can best be leveraged from both sectors and where they can be most strategically invested to encourage redevelopment and revitalization in downtown West Fargo.

This report makes a case for why each of these goals has been established, and provides strategies designed to meet each of the goals set forth.

The Nature of the Challenge

Research conducted during this study demonstrates that key factors for successful revitalization in downtown West Fargo exist. These include:

- A strong market and demographics to support economic growth in the study area;
- Support of the West Fargo community as well as business and property owners in the study area for a revitalized downtown West Fargo;
- Development potential in the study area, and capacity to increase the density of land use and support additional traffic.

Community revitalization requires a much different approach than new development – via policies, programs and financing tools – and necessitates a long-term commitment to the process. Leadership for revitalization efforts tends to be initiated by the public sector, who works to create a fertile ground for investment by the private sector. Successful revitalization in downtown West Fargo must take into consideration the following factors:

- ***The public sector must provide leadership***
  The City of West Fargo – through public space investment, regulation and guidelines to ensure appropriate form, and incentives to encourage growth – must set the foundation for success. Ultimately the public and private sectors must be partners if this framework is to be realized, but private investment takes its cue from the commitment of the public sector in a revitalization area, so the redevelopment of downtown West Fargo must start there.

- ***Function will follow form***
  Without a change in physical form, the 'functions' that are envisioned for downtown West Fargo cannot be realized. To create the form that will accommodate the type of commercial and retail growth desired, the public sector must lead by establishing regulation and guidelines to direct private sector investment and by encouraging redevelopment and reinvestment. Private sector investors must be bought into the vision for the area.

- ***Economic growth must be cultivated***
  Changing guidelines and regulations, and creating new incentive policies and programs, will be critically important to creating a foundation for success – but these things will not inherently ensure that the commercial sector responds. Because revitalization and redevelopment are always more difficult than new development, the City will need to take an active approach to developing private sector relationships and partnerships and to marketing, promoting and supporting the area as it grows.

- ***Downtown West Fargo must be celebrated***
  The results of this study and the revitalization approach presented in this report have the potential to be a catalyst for positive change in downtown West Fargo. The commitment of the City, property and business owners from the study area, and the entire community are documented here, and serve as a foundation to create a new place in the heart of the city that is embraced, supported and celebrated by all.

Strategies provided in this framework document provide opportunities to effectively address these challenges in downtown West Fargo.

The Opportunities for Success

Undertaking successful revitalization efforts in downtown West Fargo will require the public and private sectors to work together to capitalize on what is working, and identify strategies to overcome challenges and leverage existing opportunities in downtown West Fargo. This plan identifies strategies to accomplish this which center around:

- ***Defining a 'niche' and creating a unique offer for downtown West Fargo***

  The downtown West Fargo area competes with national, big box retail on both the 13th Avenue and 9th Street corridors, as well as with a vibrant downtown Fargo-Moorhead environment. To succeed, downtown West Fargo should be a place that offers a unique experience and meets the needs and demands of the market that is in place. The downtown West Fargo area encompasses two distinctive commercial areas. Each can deliver an important offering to the area:

  Sheyenne Street

  The Sheyenne Street corridor aims to be a more pedestrian-oriented, traditional 'main street' area that serves as both community marketplace and gathering spot. The most dramatic changes in form will need to occur here in order to meet this vision. This plan sets forth recommendations to bring development up to the street, increase density and encourage mixed-use development. The business mix will include some existing service-type uses, but will also encourage independent shops and restaurants as well as small office space. Civic uses would round out the offerings.

  Main Avenue

  Main Avenue is a major, highly-trafficked east/west arterial in the Fargo-Moorhead area. With its heavy vehicular traffic, Main has the potential to become an important commercial strip serving far more households in the regional market than it does today. This corridor is well positioned for medium- to big-box retailers and larger employment uses, including offices, and commercial and light industrial centers. The area will retain a primarily vehicular-based physical form, but aesthetic improvements and use restrictions will help create a more consistent feel over time.

- ***Creating a physically inviting environment***
  Physically, downtown West Fargo lacks curb appeal; its aging building stock, scant streetscape and landscaping, and – on Sheyenne Street – lack of pedestrian-oriented development attract neither retail/commercial business operators nor customers. Creating a physical environment that establishes presence of place and makes an impression will require the investment of both the public and private sectors:

Public Sector's Role
The public sector has two primary responsibilities – ensuring public infrastructure creates an environment that supports the type of private sector investment desired; and readying the area for reinvestment and redevelopment via regulatory guidelines and incentives. Their commitment to the area must be tangible and visible.

Private Sector's Role
The private sector carries the responsibility of investing in new development and activating place. Enhancing the area through 'above and beyond' investments in items such as art, banners, flowers, business marketing and special events has proven to be an important responsibility of the private sector in encouraging revitalization as demonstrated in national best practice models.

(ABOVE) *Physically inviting downtown environments create a 'sense of place' and draw desired uses and the customers to support them.*

- ***Establishing a retail presence***
  The trade areas for both Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue include ample numbers of people with healthy average household incomes that can support a revitalized downtown West Fargo. These individuals are seeking quality retail—if it's not available in West Fargo, people shop and dine elsewhere, meaning dollars are leaving the community. Both retailers and consumers are attracted to vibrant districts marked by unique, distinctive storefronts and a welcoming environment.

  Even as West Fargo's other commercial areas are prospering, Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue have not changed with the times and thus have lost opportunities to get the consumer dollar. Once the desired 'form' begins to take hold, an effort to recruit and retain appropriate businesses will be important to activating downtown. In a revitalization area, this requires a retail mix plan, incentives and a proactive approach to recruiting desired business to succeed. Recommendations to eventually expand the retail presence are included in this report, but it's important to note that function will follow form, so creating the appropriate physical environment will be an important first step to establishing a competitive retail presence.

- ***Activation***
  The successful revitalization of downtown West Fargo can't stop at the physical form; activation must be a part of bringing downtown West Fargo to life. Through public space enhancements such as parks, play features, pedestrian and bike trails and a regular calendar of events, mere bricks and mortar can be transformed into a vibrant destination that is welcoming to locals and visitors.

This plan provides strategies to seize these opportunities for downtown West Fargo.

(ABOVE) *Appropriate retail, restaurant and entertainment uses activate a place and bring life to a street.*

Getting There

The implementation section of this report outlines a detailed approach to advancing revitalization efforts in downtown West Fargo. The recommendations and strategies come in the form of the following framework for transforming Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue and the heart of West Fargo:

- ***Vision and Leadership***
  Revitalization is a collaborative process that requires a clear vision and goals, and a public and private sector partnership that provides leadership in advancing change for the area. This plan aims to establish clearly the roles and resources required of each sector and to identify the leadership required from the public and private sectors to advance positive change for downtown West Fargo.

- ***Regulation and Guidelines***
  To create the physical form required to achieve the established vision, clear development guidelines and a strong regulatory framework must be put in place and supported by the City of West Fargo. While it will take time to realize the results of regulation and guidelines (existing properties and businesses will be mostly grandfathered), doing so sets the stage for appropriate development and investment from this point forward.

- ***Incentives and Investment***
  Private sector investment in a revitalization area is catalyzed by public sector investment and commitment. A vision informs the direction of a place, and regulations and guidelines help shape the form (and function), but realizing actual change requires a 'jumpstart.' Generally, this must come through strong incentive programs that ease the financial risk of private sector investment in a regenerating area, and eliminate barriers that typically make it easier to do new development in an outlying area than to invest in an older, already developed one. The public sector must be committed to investing in incentives and to creating a physical environment that welcomes the desired type of development.

- ***Catalysts***
  Success begets success, and ultimately revitalization efforts will pick up steam as incremental change happens. Still, a few catalyst projects are needed to kick-start any revitalization strategy. This plan highlights key projects to help downtown West Fargo begin moving forward.

The following report makes the case for the revitalization effort in downtown West Fargo, frames the vision for the area, establishes roles for the public and private sectors, identifies required resources, and provides a step-by-step approach to establishing the goals set forth.

PLANNING PROCESS

In developing this framework report the consulting team undertook extensive research of the study area, the West Fargo community, and the surrounding region. The following outreach and research methods were utilized in the planning process:

Stakeholder Review Committee (SRC)
To help guide the development of the planning process and the framework report, a stakeholder review committee was assembled comprised of public and private sector stakeholders with an interest in the study area. This committee met throughout the consultancy to provide guidance and feedback as the study was underway, and served as a local resource for the consultant team. A list of steering review committee members is included in the **APPENDIX**.

Stakeholder Meetings
Initial meetings were held with public and private sector stakeholders from the study area early in the consultancy to get insight into on-the-ground issues. More than 30 meetings were conducted with city staff and leaders, study area property and business owners, economic development committee members and other key individuals with knowledge of the area. Summaries of these meetings can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Community/Stakeholder Survey
A broad-reaching community and stakeholder survey was also distributed as part of the development of this framework report. A total of 212 respondents completed the survey, which was distributed via direct mail to stakeholders within the study area as well as to residents throughout West Fargo via both print and online media. Findings from the survey can be found in the **APPENDIX.**

Existing Plans Review
An analysis of existing plans for the study area was conducted, including reviews of:

- 2008 West Fargo Comprehensive Plan
- 2009 Downtown West Fargo Defining/Redefining Plan (Developed by IEDC)

This information was taken into consideration in the development of this report.

Information and Data Analysis
A wealth of information and data was obtained and analyzed during the planning process, including:

- Lot and building inventory of the study area
- Land use and zoning designations
- Property values and characteristics
- Sales tax data
- Market data
- Demographic and psychographic information
- Road and transit capacities and levels of service
- Trail and park opportunities
- Sewer and water capacity
- Water pressure and fire flow
- Soil, floodplain and drainage information

This information was taken into considerations in the development of the report.

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were also conducted as part of the planning process, in order to gather additional feedback and guidance on emerging recommendations to advance the revitalization of downtown West Fargo.

Public Meeting #1

The first public meeting was conducted in April 2011 with the purpose of presenting key findings from stakeholder outreach and the consultant team's data analysis, and to test initial recommendations for the framework study with stakeholders. Approximately 30 individuals were in attendance. The stakeholders were presented with findings, and were asked to provide direction for the plan on a variety of issues via keypad polling and public comment. The complete results from the meeting can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Public Meeting #2

The second public meeting was conducted in September 2011. The purpose of this meeting was to present a series of final recommendations to be included in the framework document and to gather final feedback to be taken into consideration before finalizing the report. About 30 people were in attendance.

The following sections present key findings from this outreach and research.

(ABOVE) *West Fargo residents attend a public forum to give feedback on the framework plan.*

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders have been engaged in determining the outcomes of this study. As with any planning effort, successful implementation requires broad support from both the community and stakeholders within the study area. They must feel invested in the process if they are to support the plan outcomes. The consultant team utilized three different formats to obtain stakeholder feedback during the planning process, including:

- One-to-one and small group stakeholder meetings
- A community and stakeholder survey
- Public meetings to review plan alternatives and the final draft plan

Highlights and key findings from each of these efforts are summarized below.

Stakeholder Meetings

One-to-one and small group stakeholder meetings were held with public and private sector stakeholders from the study area early in the consultancy to get insight into on-the-ground issues as well as priorities for the study. Meetings were held with the following:

- City staff
- 15 property and business owners
- 3 City of West Fargo Commissioners
- Economic Development Commercial Advisory Committee
- Fargo Chamber of Commerce

Each group of stakeholders spent a few hours with the consulting team, talking about their history with downtown West Fargo, the challenges they perceived, the opportunities they felt existed for the area and the items they felt were most critical to address in this study. The key findings heard in nearly all the meetings include:

- There is a need for a unified vision for the area
- The area should serve as a community gathering place for West Fargo that offers both commercial and civic uses
- The overall aesthetics of the area should be enhanced to create a stronger 'sense of place'
- The current land use in the area is inconsistent with a 'downtown' – a more 'main street-type' feel and higher density development is desired
- The retail/commercial mix is confusing and inconsistent – a better mix that serves the neighborhoods and welcomes the community is desired
- Parking challenges need to be considered as the area grows
- Stronger public/private partnerships are needed to make any planning effort a reality – both will need to invest resources and have an active role in the implementation of the plan
- The plan should aim to identify opportunities to increase the economic base of the area and make it a vital and competitive business district

Complete summaries of all the stakeholder meetings held can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Community and Stakeholder Survey

Findings from a community and stakeholder survey throughout West Fargo were also taken into consideration in the development of this report. A total of 212 respondents completed the survey, which was distributed via direct mail to stakeholders within the study area as well as throughout the community utilizing both print and online media. The majority of respondents were residents of West Fargo who resided outside the downtown West Fargo study area. Key information gleaned from the survey responses includes:

- Downtown West Fargo experiences high visitation from residents today – 45% of respondents said they visit downtown once per week, another 20% visit once per month
- Services and food are the primary reasons for visiting downtown West Fargo – 70% of respondents visit for personal activities (e.g. banking, hair salon); 42% visit for lunch/dinner
- There is consensus that the area is stagnant – when asked about various characteristics of downtown, most respondents noted that the area has been operating at status quo; words like *old, boring, outdated, rundown, dirty, empty* and *quiet* were most frequently used in write-in responses
- More commercial development is desired – including restaurants and retail shopping – along with an improved physical environment (e.g. streetscape and landscape). These items ranked as the top improvements/investments respondents would like to see made in the area in the next five years
- Respondents want to see improvements to the area that help it regain, and retain, a small-town community feel, and that create a place that can be the heart of West Fargo

Complete results and a thorough analysis of the survey can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

(RIGHT) *When asked to describe what they liked MOST about downtown West Fargo today, survey respondents were very positive.*

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were conducted as part of the planning process to gather additional feedback and guidance on proposed strategies to improve downtown West Fargo.

Public Meeting #1

The first public meeting was conducted in April 2011 with about 30 individuals in attendance. The workshop consisted of:

- An overview of the 'purpose and need' for the study
- A synopsis of the data collected to date by the consultant team
- An exercise to identify values and priorities in the study area via real-time keypad polling
- An open mic session to share participants' ideas and concerns

Key comments heard at the meeting include:

- A dissatisfaction with downtown West Fargo today
- Agreement on the vision for the study area
- Acknowledgement that dramatic physical change is necessary to create the downtown envisioned
- Support for future development regulations/guidelines that:
  - Encourage new buildings to be built near the sidewalk/street
  - Increase density and the height of development to primarily 2-stories
  - Create a mixed-use environment, mixing residential with commercial
  - Improve the streetscape
  - Reduce parking requirements for commercial uses
  - Discourage some 'inappropriate' uses along both Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue

Public Meeting #2

A second public meeting was held in September 2011 with approximately 30 individuals in attendance to present the draft framework recommendations and to get input and feedback from the community and stakeholders before making final recommendations. Key findings from this meeting include:

- Overall strong support for the recommendations within the plan, including a willingness to support physical change and advocate for new investment
- Desire to clearly identify a unique and distinctive niche that clearly defines the downtown West Fargo offer and differentiates it from what can be experienced elsewhere in the region
- Concerns about how the implementation will occur, who will champion it and how it will be catalyzed
- Need to clearly establish how existing property and business owners will be affected by this plan and its implementation
- The importance of making the recommendations realistic and implementable given limited resources

Comments and input received during this final public meeting have been included in this report.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Understanding the existing conditions of the study area today, in both economic and physical terms, is critical to establishing a foundation upon which the revitalization strategy for downtown West Fargo can be built. The following section highlights key findings from the consultant team's existing conditions analysis of the economic and physical environment in downtown West Fargo.

The Economic Environment

A comprehensive review of the economic environment in West Fargo, and more precisely the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors within the study area, reveals positive opportunities for growth.

West Fargo Overview

West Fargo indicators demonstrate a strong economic environment with ample opportunities for growth. The following section demonstrates highlights from the community and West Fargo's regional marketplace, and explores specific economic characteristics of Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue.

Demographic Trends

While the 2010 census population for the City of West Fargo falls at nearly 26,000, the current metropolitan population is at approximately 175,000 and growing, with Cass County's growth exceeding projections, and Moorhead's Clay County the fastest-growing county in Minnesota outside of the Twin Cities. West Fargo's neighbor, Fargo, is the largest city in the state and West Fargo has been named the fastest growing city in the state. Both have benefitted from a 'rural-to-urban' migration and a 'return of natives.' The region's employment growth rate is double the national average and unemployment is the lowest in the United States, at 3.5% versus 9.2% nationally with median to above median incomes. Taxable sales records indicate strong economic and purchasing activity over the last few years, even during a national recession.

Target Markets

In order to create the appropriate mix of businesses for downtown West Fargo, it's critical to understand the target market of the trade area. To create a target marketing scenario, this study utilizes both demographic information and psychographic data, which considers a population's lifestyles, attitudes, behaviors, preferred activities and spending habits. There are three primary target markets for West Fargo:

- *Up and Coming Families*
  Young, affluent families with young children who are active consumers and family-oriented. Half of West Fargo's population consists of this group.

- *'Milk and Cookies'*
  Comfortable, upper-middle-class families with a large number of small children at home. Their discretionary time is devoted to kids, and they value safe communities, parks and green spaces, and are frequent patrons of downtown retail and restaurants.

- *Enterprising Professionals*
  These are young individuals (early 30s) moving up the economic ladder. They are upwardly mobile meaning frequent relocations, thus they tend to be renters. They are well-traveled and sophisticated and value modern offerings.

West Fargo's target markets share the following attributes:

- Quality is important to these consumers. Shops and restaurants must be well-organized and presented (e.g. branding, design). Offerings should be broad and of good quality, and operations should focus on exemplary customer service
- They are active consumers. They frequently enjoy shopping and dining out
- They are price-aware, not price-driven
- They tend to be trend-followers, not trendsetters
- They are prosperous families with children at home
- Community is important. In particular, creating a stronger 'heart' for West Fargo will resonate with them in that it creates a local gathering place and provides an opportunity to support local businesses

A complete description of the trade area psychographics can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Competition
The larger Metropolitan Area includes a variety of options for consumers, including the common collection of shopping centers and commercial strips. There is an extensive offering of malls and big-box offerings. These retail options include:

- *13th Avenue*
  The 13th Avenue corridor dominates the marketplace. National big-box retail – including Bed Bath and Beyond, Gander Mountain, HOM, Kohl's, Scheel's and Target – and a plethora of national chain restaurants can all be found on 13th Avenue.

- *Downtown Fargo*
  The next largest marketplace is downtown Fargo. With 92 shops, restaurants and consumer services, it is the dominant urban entertainment/retail experience in the region, one with which downtown West Fargo will not directly compete. The area features a traditional urban form with on-street parking, continuous facades and mixed uses.

- *Community Shopping Centers*
  Several community shopping centers serve the market as do conventional neighborhood centers, including:
  - Several attractive clusters on 32nd Avenue South
  - University Drive including Kmart between 13th Avenue South to 35th Avenue South
  - 45th Street South

- *Malls*
  Two area malls provide diverse retail offerings:

  West Acres Mall
  A regional mall with 860,000 square feet of space, West Acres is centrally located at the I-29/14th Avenue interchange. It has a strong conventional mix of tenants including Chico's Coldwater Creek and Talbots, and is anchored by Macy's, Herberger's, JCPenney, Sears and Forever 21. The mall stores generate $480 per square foot, well above the industry average of $325/foot.

  Moorhead Center Mall
  A smaller mall, with fewer offerings, located in downtown Moorhead. This development is currently struggling.

  These malls don't directly compete with downtown West Fargo but do provide an economic competitor for consumer dollars.

As downtown West Fargo develops, the area must seek to be distinct from these other commercial offerings, providing a unique and therefore competitive offering. Downtown West Fargo has the opportunity to serve the market in a new and different way, providing a small-town commercial neighborhood environment that is welcoming for both locals and visitors.

Sheyenne Street Overview

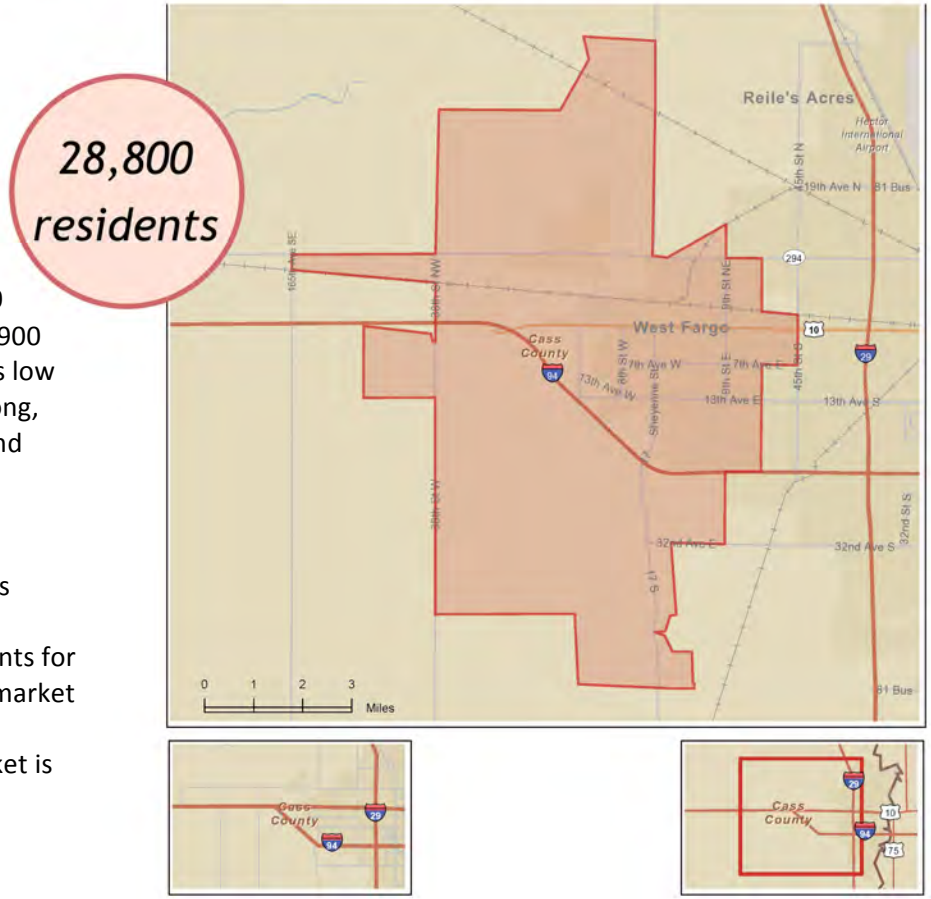
Sheyenne Street's competitive niche positions it as a mixed-use community-serving retail node with supporting uses. The following provides details on the economic opportunity that exists to develop that niche:

Sheyenne Street Trade Area Demographics

A trade area encompasses areas whose residents regularly patronize the businesses in a district (or would, given the right offerings). Sheyenne Street's trade area is made up of the 28,800 West Fargo residents in zip code 58078; this means business along Sheyenne Street must be able to succeed on market support from this area alone. The good news? The population is quickly growing:

- The Sheyenne Street trade area has grown 81.6% since 2000
- The 2015 population of the trade area is projected to be 32,900

The median age of residents in the Sheyenne Street trade area is low at 32.4 years, and household incomes for the trade area are strong, averaging $67,900. Overall, this is a community of prosperous and upwardly mobile middle and upper-middle-income families.



Sheyenne Street Trade Area Target Market

Sheyenne Street has a fairly compact market, and one that is less diverse than Main Avenue:

- The psychographic group of 'Up and Coming Families' accounts for just over half of all households meaning the primary target market is young, affluent, family-oriented, active and hip
- Another significant portion of Sheyenne Street's target market is made up of blue-collar families in small owned or rented, single-family homes clustered near the corridor

Sheyenne Street Retail Demand/Supportable Square Footage
This study assessed the expenditure potential from the Sheyenne Street trade area – by business type – to determine the supportable retail/commercial square footage for Sheyenne Street today, and to demonstrate how that demand will grow by 2015. The detailed results from the analysis are demonstrated in the table ***(RIGHT)***. Key findings from the analysis include:

- Today, the total annual retail expenditure by consumers in Sheyenne Street's trade area is $324 million; this means Sheyenne Street could feasibly support a total of 140,000 square feet of retail/commercial space.

- There is only 89,000 square feet of retail/commercial space in place today, demonstrating a ***SHORTAGE*** of 51,000 square feet of supportable retail/commercial space.

- With increases in population and per capita income, by 2015 the total supportable square footage will increase, up to 143,000 supportable square feet.

As these numbers demonstrate, there is fairly significant capacity for *appropriate* commercial space to house *appropriate* uses along Sheyenne Street. A more thorough analysis of the Sheyenne Street retail model can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Sheyenne Street Retail/Commercial Demand Analysis		
	Today	**2015**
Annual Expenditure Potential *(in Sheyenne Street trade area)*	**$324 million**	**N/A**
Existing Retail/ Commercial Space *(on Sheyenne Street, from Main Ave to 7th Ave W)*	**89,000 square feet**	**N/A**
	55,003 SF Shoppers Goods	
	19,898 SF Commercial Goods	
	6,323 SF Food & Beverage	
	7,321 SF Automotive	
Supportable Retail/ Commercial Space *(on Sheyenne Street, from Main Ave to 7th Ave W)*	**~140,000 square feet**	**~143,000 square feet**
	37,700 Additional SF Shoppers Goods	*40,000 Additional SF Shoppers goods*
	5,200 Additional SF Consumer Goods	*5,900 Additional SF Consumer Goods*
	3,300 Additional SF Food & Beverage	*3,600 Additional SF Food & Beverage*
	5,600 Additional SF Automotive	*5,900 Additional SF Automotive*
Additional Supportable Space	**~51,000 SQUARE FEET**	**~54,000 SQUARE FEET**

Main Avenue Overview

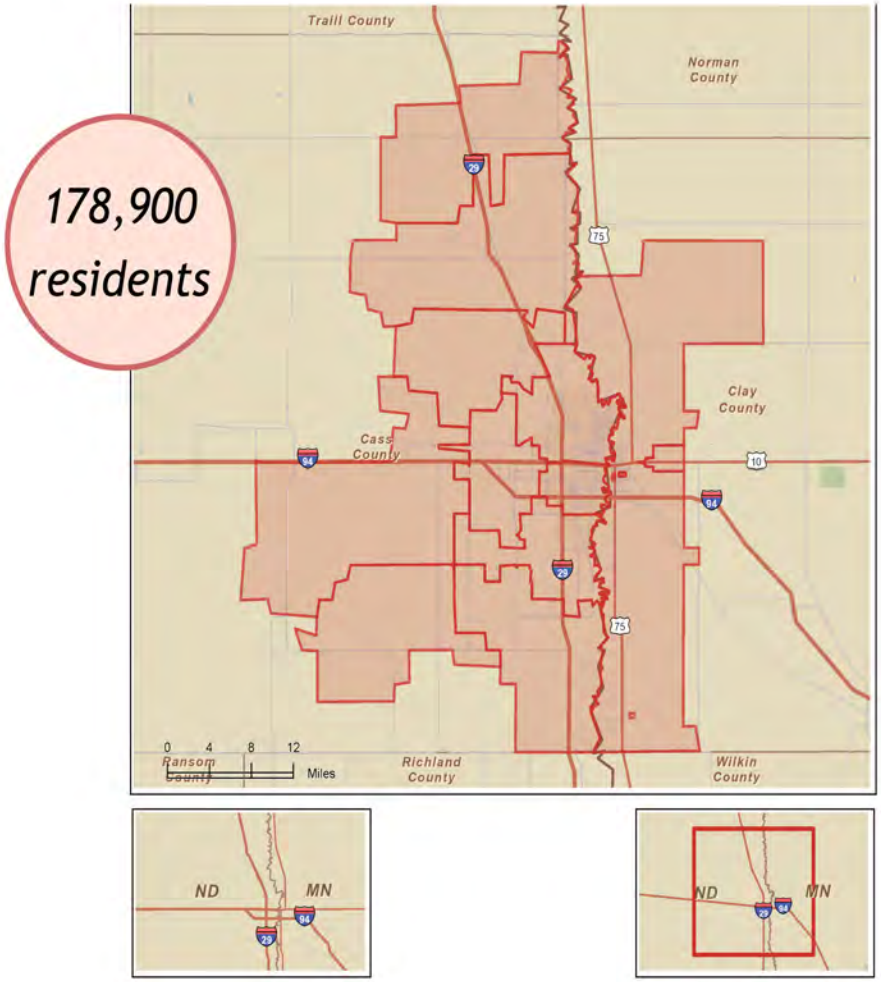
A major regional thoroughfare with high traffic counts, the Main Avenue corridor can serve a larger, regional market. The corridor is also a major employment hub and has the potential to add new jobs to the study area. These attributes combine to demonstrate a strong market for the Main Avenue corridor. The following provides details on the economic opportunity that exists:

Main Avenue Trade Area Demographics

Main Avenue's trade area is far larger than that of Sheyenne Street, encompassing 178,900 residents as demonstrated by the map ***(RIGHT)***. This trade area has seen an extraordinary increase of 17.5 percent since 2000 (10-12 percent is considered healthy), and it is expected to continue growing with the 2015 population projected to be 193,000. Household incomes are above average and the cost of living is low. The trade area is largely made up of middle- and upper-middle-income singles, couples and families. 53% of the housing units are owner-occupied.

Main Avenue Trade Area Target Market

The Main Avenue trade area is fairly diverse. Overall, the population is informed, adaptable and aspirational, but practical when it comes to shopping. The population is not made up of trendsetters (those on the leading edge of culture/fashion) though many will adopt newly-established trends.



Main Avenue Retail Demand/Supportable Square Footage
This study also assessed the expenditure potential from the Main Avenue trade area – by business type – to determine the supportable retail/commercial square footage today and in the future. The detailed results from the analysis are demonstrated in the table ***(RIGHT)***. Key findings from the analysis include:

- Today, the total annual retail expenditure from Main Avenue's trade area is just under $2 billion; this translates into the ability to support a total of 530,000 square feet of retail/restaurant space on Main Avenue from the Sheyenne River to 3rd Street East.

- Today there is only 78,000 square feet of space in place on Main Avenue demonstrating a ***SHORTAGE*** of 452,200 square feet of supportable business space.

- With increases in population and per capita income, by 2015 the total supportable square feet will continue to grow, up to 464,800 supportable square feet.

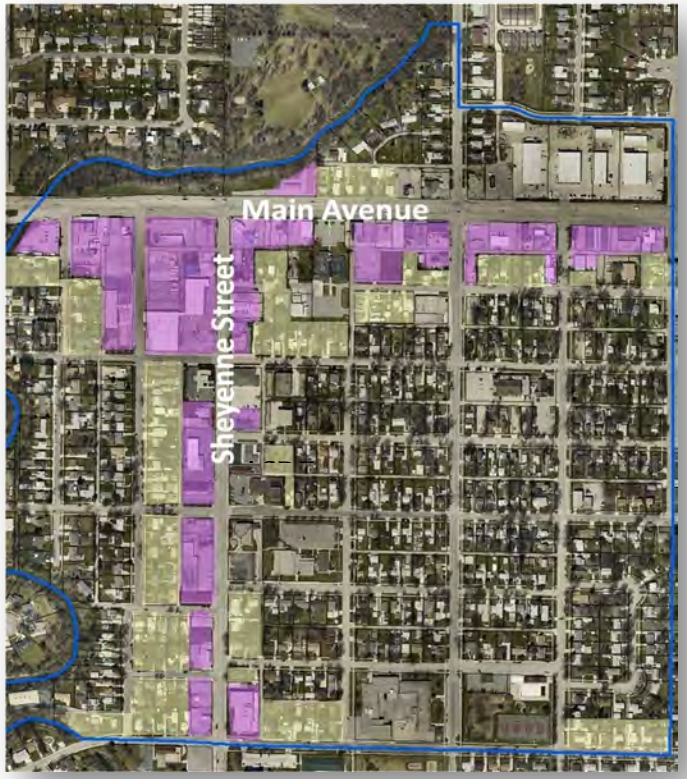
As these numbers demonstrate, there is significant capacity for commercial space to house appropriate uses along Main Avenue in the study area. A complete analysis of the Main Avenue retail model can be found in the **APPENDIX**.

Main Avenue Retail/Commercial Demand Analysis		
	Today	**2015**
Annual Expenditure Potential *(in Main Avenue trade area)*	**Just under $2 billion**	**N/A**
Existing Retail/ Commercial Space *(on Main Avenue, from the Sheyenne River to 3rd St E)*	**78,000 square feet**	**N/A**
	7,123 SF Shoppers Goods	
	31,150 SF Convenience Goods	
	18,875 SF Food & Beverage	
	21,125 SF Automotive	
Supportable Retail/ Commercial Space *(on Main Avenue, from the Sheyenne River to 3rd St E)*	**~510,000 square feet**	**~522,000 square feet**
	370,500 Additional SF Shoppers Goods	*379,400 Additional SF Shoppers Goods*
	40,200 Additional SF Convenience Goods	*41,900 Additional SF Convenience Goods*
	11,600 Additional SF Food & Beverage	*12,300 Additional SF Food & Beverage*
	29,900 Additional SF Automotive	*31,100 Additional SF Automotive*
Additional Supportable Space	**~452,200 SQUARE FEET**	**~464,800 SQUARE FEET**

The Physical Environment

The important economic statistics demonstrated in the previous section help inform not only the type of supportable retail and commercial offerings for the study area, but the scale of development that can be supported in the study area. In order to leverage on the economic potential – including the potential for new development and the ability to tap strong consumer spending if the offering is right – this study also explored the opportunities and limitations presented by the existing physical environment within the study area.

Overall, the physical environment within the study area is underdeveloped. The development that does exist poses some challenges to achieving the vision set forth for the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors, and to capturing the potential market and revenue that exists. The following section highlights what's working, and what challenges successful revitalization must overcome.



(LEFT)
The areas denoted in PURPLE on the map are commercial areas in the study area LIKELY TO CHANGE, as identified by the physical environment analysis.

(RIGHT)
Areas in the study area NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE are shown on the map to the right. Commercial areas are in red; residential areas are in blue.

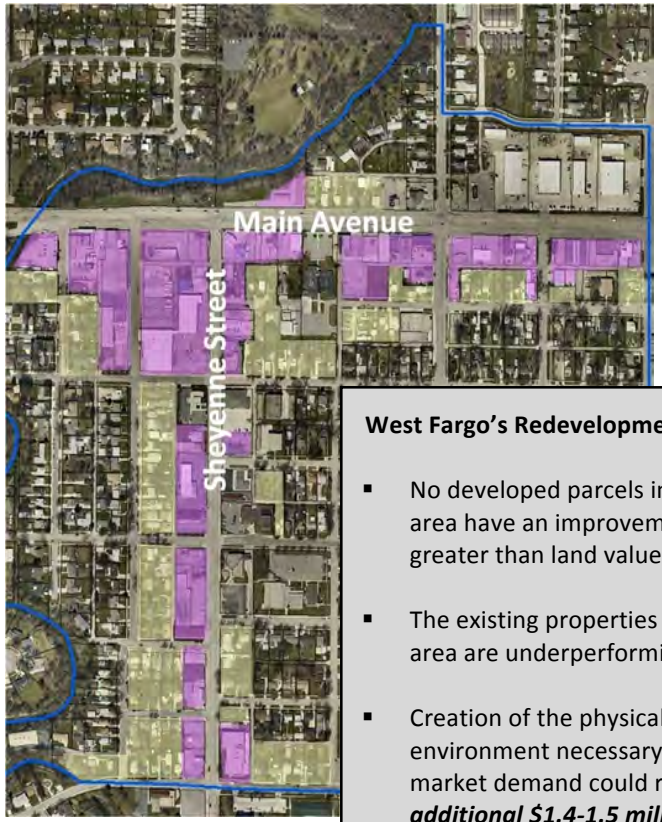
Positive Attributes of the Physical Environment

The physical environment of the study area offers many positive attributes for redevelopment. As a non-traditional downtown, the study area is in many ways a 'blank slate.' Here's what's working today:

Redevelopment Potential = Economic Impact

Overall the study area can support increased intensity of development; spurring revitalization and redevelopment that increases density, refines use, and maximizes land area while meeting market demand will all equal a strong economic return that will benefit the entire West Fargo community. **Research shows that if West Fargo were to create the physical environment to support the market demand (as referenced in the previous section) the result could be an additional $1.4-1.5 million in sales tax generated for the City of West Fargo, per calendar year.**

As part of this study, the consulting team conducted a basic areas-subject-to-change analysis to review the potential for redevelopment of properties located within the study area. A simplified analysis compares the assessed value of land to the assessed value of improvements on the land. If land value is greater than improvement value, this is an indication that the existing improvements are ripe for redevelopment. **In the study area, no developed parcels had an improvement value greater than land value.** Translation? The existing properties in the study area are significantly underperforming. Gradually encouraging newer, denser development stabilizes this situation and ultimately provides a solid return to the City in the form of property and sales taxes. This statistic alone makes a case for encouraging new development in the study area.



West Fargo's Redevelopment Potential

- No developed parcels in the study area have an improvement value greater than land value
- The existing properties in the study area are underperforming
- Creation of the physical environment necessary to support market demand could result in an ***additional $1.4-1.5 million in sales tax per year, as well as significant additional property tax***

Current Zoning Accommodates the Vision
The majority of the properties flanking Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue have a Light Commercial zoning designation. This zoning allows for an array of commercial uses, including mixed uses (first floor commercial and second floor residential) through a Conditional Use Permit. The Conditional Use Permit is applied only to provide another level of review for mixed-use proposals – it is not intended to be a deterrent to mixed-use development.

As for residential, multiple dwellings including condominiums are also a Conditional Use in the Light Commercial District. Zoning in the residential areas adjacent to Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue (either R-2 Limited Multiple Dwelling to the west, or R-3 Multiple Dwelling to the east) do allow for pockets of higher density infill development near Sheyenne Street.

The current zoning is broad enough to allow for the type of development needed to accommodate the vision, though not necessarily restrictive enough to stop non-desirable development. Many older, revitalizing areas adopt overlay-zoning districts to place special requirements on the types of development and uses that are allowed. This has not, to date, been explored in West Fargo but is a tool that is recommended to help guide appropriate redevelopment in the study area.

Infrastructure is Adequate
The physical infrastructure in place in the study area (including roads, sewer, water, electricity, etc.) does not pose any constraints and appears to be adequate to support additional development.

Water pressure and fire flow are considered adequate in the study area. A relatively new water tank has been installed that stands approximately 130 feet tall. Pumps may be installed in new construction, if required, to maintain adequate fire flow and/or water pressure. However, structures of three or four stories in the study area would likely not require equipment to maintain adequate flows and pressure due to proximity to the tower and associated elevations.

Roads in the commercial areas also appear adequate to support redevelopment. The Main Avenue corridor has recently been reconstructed to accommodate four lanes of traffic and turn lanes. Currently Sheyenne consists of one lane of traffic in each direction and a parking lane on the west side of the right-of-way. West Fargo's Comprehensive Plan recommends a three-lane section on Sheyenne Street from Main Avenue to 13th Avenue. However, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) plan calls for a mid-range project for Sheyenne Street that would result in a four-lane road section with turning lanes. This may not be in line with the planned revitalization strategy.

Finally – and importantly – the Sheyenne Diversion of the Sheyenne River has removed the study are from the floodplain. Therefore, new development will not be burdened by floodplain regulation or threat of flooding.

From Cars to People

The study area, to date, has been accommodating primarily to vehicular traffic. From the development of land and buildings, to the design of streets, sidewalks and pedestrian connections (or lack thereof) the area has favored the needs of cars to the needs of people.

The existing physical environment in the study area offers several opportunities for improvement related to pedestrians and even bicyclists, particularly (but not exclusively) on Sheyenne Street. Specifically:

- The current width of the Sheyenne Street's right-of-way can accommodate sidewalks and parking lanes on both sides and one travel lane in each direction. This configuration is ideal for a pedestrian-oriented area – it would accommodate traffic and parking but would not feel as unsafe to cross as it does today. Additionally, the parking lanes on both sides of the street also provide a buffer between the sidewalk, where pedestrians are, and the travel lanes. The MPO plan calling for a four-lane road section with turning lanes conflicts with desires for a pedestrian-friendly roadway on Sheyenne Street, but an opportunity exists to change the plans toward a more pedestrian-friendly section. The City should work to align MPO's plans with the vision in this framework will be required.
- Truck traffic on Sheyenne Street has also been identified as an issue to address, particularly if it compromises a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. There may be an opportunity to designate an alternate truck route/restrict trucks from driving on Sheyenne.

(ABOVE) *The images demonstrate how a revitalization area can transition over time. Source: Galina Tachieva Sprawl Repair Manual*

Trails and Bicycle Connections

Beyond roadways and streetscape, there are also opportunities to create improved pedestrian and bicycle trails. Two potential trails/connections have been identified:

- The City's Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown West Fargo Defining/Redefining Plan call for a pedestrian/bicycle connection between Armour Park and Sheyenne Street crossing at the Main Avenue intersection and via a trail and bridge to the park.
- Additional connections can be made to the neighborhood directly west of the study area, likely using a footbridge over the Sheyenne River near Second Avenue.

All of these proposed improvements greatly improve the accessibility of the area – an important element to achieving the vision set forth.

(ABOVE) *Increasing bicycle/pedestrian connections is an opportunity improving the downtown West Fargo environment.*

Physical Environment Challenges

Because the physical environment in the study area has seen little new investment in recent years, and much of the development that exists isn't aligned with the 'place' stakeholders want to create, some challenges must be overcome to encourage redevelopment, including:

Land Constraints

There are three key constraints on the land within the study area that need to be considered:

- *Small Lots:* Most of the parcels in the study area are less than an acre in size, limiting development potential and requiring assistance with lot consolidation. Larger lots tend to have a higher potential for redevelopment, so efforts to acquire and consolidate land will equal a more developable downtown.
- *Parcel Assembly:* Individual, independent owners have claim over most of the parcels within the study area, making assembly of one area large enough to accommodate new development very difficult, time consuming and expensive. Most developers will avoid this unnecessary hassle if the possibility of simply developing on an available, open lot exists elsewhere. To succeed in encouraging physical change, this plan needs to address strategies to assist with land acquisition and the financial burden that comes with that.
- *Soil Constrains Density:* The subsistence of soils is a constraint for development beyond two stories. The soil conditions within the study area have traditionally been unfavorable for construction due to shifting. This will need to be considered, particularly for structures three stories or taller. Heavier construction will likely require pylon support (though adequate bedrock for pylons is rare in the area) and engineered foundations.

(ABOVE) *There are few sites in the study area that are larger than one acre in size. The limited size of the lot is seen as a constraint to redevelopment.*

Regulations and Guidelines: Too Flexible?
Zoning is noted as an opportunity area, in that it is general enough to allow the type of development set forth in this study. However, that flexibility also allows entry for development types that work against the desired image. Some areas where the – perhaps – too-flexible zoning creates challenges to the vision for the study area include:

- *Setback Allowance*
  The setbacks established for the Light Commercial Zone that encompasses both Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue allow buildings to be constructed to the back of a lot – frequently with parking in front. This building placement causes a separation between the sidewalk and the storefront and the distance becomes a deterrent for pedestrians to visit the store. It also, visually, fails to create a welcoming, pedestrian friendly 'Main Street' type atmosphere, as is desired for Sheyenne Street.

- *Parking Is Taking Precedence*
  Current development standards require much of a site to be dedicated to parking. The zoning code requires, on average, 5 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial. For one-story structures, this tends to mean the parking area takes up more of the site than the footprint of the building. The requirement of 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space is reflective of requirements used for shopping malls. The standard recommended parking requirement for downtown retail/commercial areas is 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

- *No Design Guidelines*
  Development in the study area has a disconnected feel. There's no unity between the types or styles of design, materials used, or the type and size of signage allowed. Most communities address these issues by developing area-specific design guidelines. While not always necessarily regulatory in nature, these guidelines can be incentivized with grants, loans, etc. to encourage developers and new businesses to follow suit.

(ABOVE) *Many buildings in downtown West Fargo are set back from the sidewalk and street, as seen in the photo above. This creates a disconnect between patrons and businesses.*

Uses Allowed Aren't Consistent with Vision
The study area consists of a mixture of residential, commercial and public uses.

Service and convenience commercial is predominant along Sheyenne Street: hardware store, banks, funeral services, non-chain restaurants, VFW, bowling alley, liquor stores, and gas stations. A furniture store and some professional offices also exist. Public facilities include schools, school district administration, fire station and churches.

Similar commercial uses are located along Main Avenue. Equipment sales and storage facilities are also found. Retail uses account for a small portion of the uses overall.

The future land uses outlined in this study are appropriate to achieve the vision set forth, however they aren't necessarily aligned with what currently exists. Some of these inconsistent uses include storage units and outdoor storage, large equipment sales, automotive repair shops and gas stations – none of which contribute to a vital downtown. These less than ideal uses may be targeted for replacement and a more defined, detailed future land use may be applied to the study area to better facilitate realizing the vision.

A complete existing conditions analysis is included in the **APPENDIX**.

(ABOVE) *Gas stations and service-based uses in buildings set back from the street abound today in downtown West Fargo. These are inconsistent with the vision for the area.*

DOWNTOWN WEST FARGO FRAMEWORK

The existing conditions analysis provides a foundation for the future development and revitalization of the study area. The framework establishes a clear vision for the study – as well as unique recommendations for Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue – and provides recommendations to shape the form and function of downtown West Fargo in the future.

Vision

The stakeholder and community-supported vision for downtown West Fargo is to create a community 'heart.' This destination should be a community-support marketplace and gathering spot. Efforts to develop a uniquely West Fargo downtown should take into consideration physical form, retail mix and activation that complements, not competes with, other areas of West Fargo. This vision is consistent with previous planning efforts.

Stakeholders involved in this study have indicated that the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors today neither look nor function as desired. This plan proposes a framework within which to align reality and expectation through strategies that encourage a realized vision. The vision for each of the corridors includes:

Sheyenne Street

The Sheyenne Street corridor aims to be a more pedestrian-oriented, traditional 'Main Street' area that serves as both community marketplace and gathering spot. The most dramatic changes in form will need to occur here in order to meet this vision. This plan sets forth recommendations to bring development up to the street, increase density and encourage mixed-use development. The business mix will include some existing service-type uses, but will also encourage independent shops and restaurants as well as small office space. Civic uses would round out the offerings.

Main Avenue

Main Avenue is a major, highly-trafficked east/west arterial in the Fargo-Moorhead area. With its heavy vehicular traffic, Main has the potential to become an important commercial strip serving far more households in the regional market than it does today. This corridor is well positioned for medium-to-big box retailers and larger employment uses, including offices, commercial and light industrial centers. The area will retain a vehicular-based physical form, but aesthetic improvements and use restrictions will help create a more consistent feel over time.

Form and Function

The Downtown West Fargo Defining/Redefining Plan provides the following description of the study area:

> *"There is a mix of land uses throughout the study area, with residential, industrial, and retail sometimes located in the same block. A number of structures have deteriorated over the years, and there are many vacant buildings. While the study area is considered West Fargo's "downtown", it is not a functional downtown. It lacks a central gathering place – a hub of the community with higher density retail and a pedestrian-friendly design."*

A majority of stakeholders and community members who participated in the development of this framework report reflected this sentiment. They identify two key challenges – form and function – as contributors to the current lack of a 'downtown' or 'Main Street' feel. Creation of a successful business district occurs when both the form – the physical presence – and the function – the use, operation and product – are aligned.

Desired Form of the Study Area

Stakeholders conveyed several concerns over the form of the study area, noting that the appearance of Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue today and the existing physical form of the developments on both are holding back the area's potential. Attractive settings attract people and businesses; areas that lack curb appeal detract investment and fail to draw consumer dollars. To achieve the vision set forth for downtown West Fargo and to generate the types of uses desired and supported by the market, change in the physical form will need to occur.

Because there are different factors influencing Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue (e.g. street width, existence of sidewalks, traffic levels, speed limit, etc.), the framework recommends a unique form for each corridor.

Desired Function of the Study Area

Just as the form will require unique approaches on each corridor, the function for each would need to suit. Sheyenne Street will have a more traditional 'Main Street' atmosphere and will ideally house local and destination retail as well as entertainment uses. Main Avenue will be a place for regional retail, medium-box retail, and employment uses. In both areas, active uses such as retail and restaurants should be on the ground floor and less active uses such as offices and residences should be located on upper stories.

Sheyenne Street

The creation of a pedestrian-friendly area with a 'Main Street' feel and a mix of smaller, community-oriented retail and civic spaces that serve those who live within the trade area, as well as visitors, is supported for Sheyenne Street. Recommended changes to the form must come first – these will provide a more consistent street edge, enhancing the character and accessibility of new development and increasing the relationship between new development and public streets to promote pedestrian activity and establish a sense of place. Creating this environment on Sheyenne Street will take time. Regulatory frameworks must provide a structure for how the corridor develops over time; incentives will be required to spur development. Challenges in acquiring and assembling enough land to spur development will also need to be overcome.

Sheyenne Street Physical Environment

A more well-defined future land use plan should be applied to Sheyenne Street to facilitate the vision. For the Sheyenne Street physical environment, the intent is to give more attention to the pedestrian-orientation of the street and provide a human-scale in buildings. Considerations should include:

- *Encourage a mix of uses*
  Establishing a mix of uses adds multiple reasons for someone to visit Sheyenne Street and adds a convenience factor to the trip. In addition, adding residential uses near commercial provides a captive audience.

- *Place active uses on first story*
  Uses with a good deal of foot traffic – such as retail and restaurants – should be located on the first story of the building. Less active uses – such as services, office, and residences – should be located on the upper stories. Gaps of residential and commercial uses between retail ones should be avoided. Uses such as shops and restaurants are most successful when they are clustered together.

(LEFT) *Mixed-use refers to a building or property having more than one use – typically the first floor contains active retail uses while the upper floors maybe be office or residential.*

- *Bring buildings up to the sidewalk and create 'anchors'*
  Buildings along Sheyenne Street should sit at the front lot line, and the first floor should be at street level (not sub-grade or raised). The buildings should line up to create a continuous façade of retail uses. 'Anchor buildings' should be developed at corners (prominent buildings, typically taller than others along the street frontage) that define and frame the streetscape.

  Buildings set back from the front lot line may be considered, but they should be within the first 10 feet of the lot and the area in front of the building should be used for pedestrian purposes, such as outdoor seating areas, patios and garden walls/outdoor areas.

  Overall, unique designs should be encouraged over prototype design.

(ABOVE, LEFT) *Buildings should ideally sit at the front lot line. Buildings set back from the front line may be considered but the area in front of the building should be used for pedestrian uses.*

- *Create 'transparent' facades*
  There should be a significant amount of transparency on the ground floor level of the buildings along Sheyenne Street. Buildings should have windows and doors on the facades facing streets, allowing better interaction between patrons and businesses. Windows should allow passers-by to see into the shop (and not be blacked out or obstructed by display pieces). Entry doors should be along Sheyenne Street; secondary doors may be located in the rear if a functional door is also in employment on the Sheyenne Street frontage. Signage should be attractive and scaled to the building. Tinted windows should be banned.

(LEFT) *Signage should be attractive and scaled to the building.*

(RIGHT, ABOVE) *Buildings should line up to create a continuous façade of retail uses.*

(RIGHT, BELOW) *There should be a significant amount of transparency on the ground floor level.*

- *Increase density and building height*
  Physically, second stories also help frame, or define, a place. Buildings on Sheyenne Street should be encouraged to be two-stories in height, especially at the corners of a block to anchor the corner. If soils allow, three stories may be considered. For three-story buildings along Sheyenne Street, building heights should transition to meet heights of housing in adjacent residential areas as much as possible.

(RIGHT) *Buildings are encouraged to be two stories in height, especially at the corners of a block to anchor a corner.*

- *Locate parking behind buildings*
  Parking requirements should be revised to minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, and eliminate barriers between pedestrians and businesses. Parking should be located on the rear-half of the lot behind the building. Parking to one side of the lot may be considered if the design includes elements that will help retain the building line along the street. Parallel on-street parking should be maintained on both sides of Sheyenne Street to allow for a buffer between the sidewalk and vehicle travel lanes.

  Shared parking and designated consolidated parking areas are encouraged to reduce the amount of parking on every lot. To reduce potential conflicts with pedestrians, curb cuts directly onto Sheyenne Street should be minimized.

- *Create a welcoming streetscape*
  Street furniture, street trees and other amenities should be incorporated in the streetscape to create an attractive public realm and add variety and identity to the street. Street trees help to spatially define the overall streetscape and also provide shade and comfort for pedestrians, as well as establish a buffer from automobile traffic. There should be a clear and adequately wide pedestrian walking zone on both sides of the street. Places where people can gather should also be considered as part of the overall streetscape design. Trees must be properly limbed so as not to block sight-lines to storefronts.

(ABOVE) *There should be clear and adequately wide pedestrian walking zones on both sides of the street.*

(RIGHT) *Street furniture, street trees and other amenities should be incorporated in the streetscape.*

- *Encourage traffic flows and signage that benefit both vehicles and pedestrians*
  Currently Sheyenne Streets consists of one lane of traffic in each direction and a parking lane on the west side of the right-of-way. The West Fargo Comprehensive Plan recommends a three-lane section on Sheyenne Street from Main Avenue to 13th Avenue. However, the MPO plan calls for a mid-range project for Sheyenne Street that would result in a four-lane road section with turning lanes. This concept conflicts with desires for a pedestrian-friendly roadway on Sheyenne. Opportunities to modify the MPO plans to fit with the study area vision should be explored.

  Recommendations include:
  - Create two travel lanes and two parking lanes on Sheyenne Street
  - Retain a 25 – 30 mph speed zone along Sheyenne Street to better ensure pedestrian safety and comfort
  - Clearly marked crossing areas should be included in the design of Sheyenne Street - the crossings could be a contrasting color from the street pavement and should be announced with signage to alert vehicles to them
  - Gateway signage should be added to announce to the community where the downtown is - gateway signs at the Main Avenue and Sheyenne Street intersection and at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and 7th Avenue will help frame the area intended for redevelopment

(ABOVE) *An ideal street section for a pedestrian-oriented downtown is two travel lanes with parallel parking on each side. The parking lanes provide a buffer from the sidewalk. The limited travel lanes slow vehicles down and reduce the length needed to cross the street.*

(RIGHT) *Clearly marked crossing areas should be included in the design of Sheyenne Street.*

Sheyenne Street Appropriate Uses

Early in the revitalization process, the focus must be on developing the proper environment – the form – that will attract both operators and pedestrians. Once the environment is developing, if not fully in place, it will be critical to create a focused retail strategy and specific merchandise mix plan for Sheyenne Street. Many current uses along Sheyenne Street are more general commercial compared to traditional 'Main Street' types. Service and convenience commercial is predominant along the corridor: hardware store, banks, funeral services, non-chain restaurants, VFW, bowling alley, liquor stores, and gas stations. A furniture store, some professional offices and a few churches also exist. Retail accounts for a small portion of the overall uses. Certainly, much must be done before Sheyenne Street is ready for new operators; today, the following general uses are recommended for Sheyenne Street based upon the established vision, the changes to the physical environment, and the market analysis conducted for the study area.

First floor uses should include:

- Small, unique, independent retail operators meeting basic needs
- Neighborhood-serving uses such as:
  - Pack/ship
  - Dry cleaners
  - Casual restaurants
  - Coffee shop
  - Barber, hair salon
  - Florist
  - Optical
  - Hardware/variety store
- Entertainment/activity uses (anchor projects such as community centers, visual arts/performing arts centers, etc. – destinations that help drive activity)
- A civic campus (to bring City offices into the downtown core and pair them with complementary civic uses)

Second floor and side street uses should include:

- Professional services – offices, office service establishments, personal service establishment (hair salon, fitness rooms, spas, etc.)
- Residential (above commercial and in residential area abutting Sheyenne Street commercial strip)

Uses to discourage:

- Less desirable uses – such as storage units, auto repair, adult uses, pawnshops, and outdoor storage, or other non-traffic generating uses – should be discouraged from locating along Sheyenne Street
- Drive-thru venues may be considered if drive-thru is not along the outside of a corner lot and access points do not dominate the site or reduce pedestrian safety

In the early stages of its transformation, the focus should be on encouraging uses for Sheyenne Street that serve residents of the immediate trade area. Over time, if the environment is carefully developed, the street may evolve to one that draws in consumers from a wider area through more specialized shop and restaurant offerings that provide an experience unique to the region.

Main Avenue

The focus for Main Avenue should be on creating a regional draw. A large community center filled with mostly medium-sized regionals and nationals not currently present in the market would be appropriate for the market. Specifically, the corridor could include a grocer, discount department stores, home-related stores and quick-casual dining operators. With careful planning, Main Avenue would be an alternative to the busy 13th Avenue corridor.

Main Avenue Physical Environment

Improvements to the physical environment on Main Avenue should give more attention to the pedestrian-orientation of the street, provide connections between businesses along Main Avenue and areas south of the roadway, provide a human-scale in buildings and provide an attractive setting through landscaping and building materials.

- *Stand-alone buildings*
  The built environment will generally consist of stand-alone buildings. Location of the building on the lot is flexible, however the site design should include safe travel paths for pedestrians from both the road and the parking areas. Existing structures on the south side of Main Avenue that are built to the lot line should be retained.

- *Encourage unique building designs over prototypes*
  Unique buildings that reflect the character of the study area should be developed along Main. Metal buildings should be discouraged.

- *Increase building height*
  Buildings are encouraged to be two-stories in height, especially at the corners of a block. If soils allow, three stories may be considered. For three-story buildings along Main Avenue, transition building heights to meet heights of housing in adjacent residential areas when possible.

(ABOVE) *Retain existing structures on the south side of the street that are built to the lot line.*

(RIGHT) *Encourage unique designs over prototypes.*

- *Visible, accessible parking with landscaping*
  Ideally parking should be located on the rear half of the lot, behind the building, but should be easily accessible. Parking lots are to be landscaped. A landscape buffer should be planted on the perimeter of the parking area – especially if the parking is adjacent to a sidewalk. Landscaping should be included around the building and in islands to break up the pavement in the parking areas.

(ABOVE AND RIGHT) *A landscape buffer should be planted on the perimeter of the parking area – especially if the parking is adjacent to a sidewalk.*

- *Improve pedestrian environment and signage*
  Clearly marked pedestrian crossing areas should be used for the crossing at Main Avenue and Sheyenne Street. The crossings could be a contrasting color from the street pavement and should be announced with signage to alert vehicles of them. Gateway signage announces to the community where the downtown is. Gateways signs should be located at the Main Avenue and Sheyenne Street intersection.

- *Traffic and transportation is adequate for growth*
  Main Avenue has recently been improved and the road network appears to have adequate capacity and connections to support the additional development recommended to achieve the redevelopment vision for the downtown.

Main Avenue Appropriate Uses

Similar to the situation along Sheyenne Street, many of the uses currently along Main Avenue may not support the vision established in this framework. Service and convenience commercial is predominant: office supplies, auto repair, chain restaurants, liquor stores, and gas stations. Some professional offices also exist including the school district administration building. Equipment sales and storage facilities are also found. There is an opportunity to organize the land uses to create better overall synergy and add services that compliment the employment uses.

Recommended uses for Main Avenue:

- Employment center – offices, commercial and light industrial centers
- Regional commercial retail uses – medium to big box retail

A retail void analysis shows ample tenant candidates, for example:

- Bally Fitness/Gold's Gym/LA Fitness
- Books a Million
- Costco
- Marshalls
- Off Broadway Shoes/Rack Room Shoes
- Ross Dress for Less
- Shopko
- Staples
- Stein Mart
- Office supplies, mailing centers, and other employment support services

Uses to be discouraged:

- Less desirable uses – such as storage units, auto repair, adult uses, pawnshops, and outdoor storage – should be discouraged from locating along this stretch of Main Avenue
- Drive-thru venues may be considered but are not necessarily recommended

(ABOVE) *Regional commercial – medium to big box retail – is appropriate for Main Avenue.*

Other Study Area Considerations

Residential Areas in the Study Area

The majority of the residential uses in the study area are stable and are encouraged to remain as is or similar in character.

The residential zones adjacent to Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue are encouraged to be developed according to the zoning – preferably at the higher densities - to bring more people living in and near the downtown. The residential areas adjacent to the Sheyenne Street Light Commercial District are either zoned R-2 Limited Multiple Dwelling (to the west) or R-3 Multiple Dwelling (to the east). The zones allow for pockets of higher density infill development near Sheyenne Street. Height limits are 35 feet.

When developing higher density projects, design becomes an important aspect to ensure quality and appeal. The goal is to build attractive and functional areas for the community that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood - places where residents feel safe, comfortable and enjoy living. This requires adherence to design principles that are not necessarily the same as might apply in traditional single-family developments—such as scaling small apartment/ condominium/ townhouse units to blend comfortably with adjacent single family homes and townhomes; mixing and matching home types on lots that have the same depth; achieving 'just enough' variety, avoiding too many driveways over sidewalks, etc. The higher density buildings should be similar in scale and character with the single-family ones.

Some means to accomplish this objective include:

- Apartment and townhome units can be creatively designed to resemble a single, large home
- Consistent materials should be used on different unit types (some stucco on both single family homes and townhomes)
- Simple architectural features (such as wide window trim, bay windows, dormers, porches, etc.) can be added to the exterior of buildings to create a unique identity and add character
- Parking for townhouses, apartments and condominiums should be located behind the structure on the rear half of the property

(LEFT) *The majority of residential uses in the study area are stable (shown in blue) and are encouraged to remain as or similar in character.*

Trails and Connections for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

The West Fargo Comprehensive Plan indicates stakeholders' desires to increase bicycle and pedestrian connections in the downtown. There is not an existing trail system within the study area and there are no plans for separated trails within the area.

On-road bicycle routes would fill the demand for bicycle access. Signage to indicate sharing of the road between vehicles and bicycles is identified as an MPO short-range project but more extensive construction of bicycle lanes is unlikely according to the 2035 plan due to funding availability compared to other priorities of the regional system.

Armour Park is located just north of the study area but is separated physically from the downtown by the Sheyenne River. The Comprehensive Plan identifies a pedestrian/bicycle connection between Sheyenne Street and Armour Park consisting of an on-grade crossing at the Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue traffic light, a path to the Sheyenne River, then a bridge crossing to the park.

An opportunity also exists to provide additional pedestrian and bicycle access over the Sheyenne River at Second Avenue.

It is recommended that trail connections are developed as part of the public space improvement plans recommended in this framework.

At-Grade Pedestrian Crossings

Pedestrian crossings are recommended for the study area, and they should be a contrasting color from the street pavement and should be announced with signage. Ideally, crossings would be at every corner. Initial crossings could begin at Second, Fourth, and Sixth Avenues. Additionally, no traffic lights currently exist along Sheyenne Street between Main Avenue and 7th Avenue. As development occurs, four-way stop or lighted intersections will need to be considered.

Truck Route

Truck traffic was identified as a problematic issue for Sheyenne Street between Main Avenue and 7th Avenue. Heavy truck traffic impedes the vision set forth for the study area, and the City and MPO should consider requiring trucks to take an alternate route (trucks delivering directly to Sheyenne Street businesses would be exempt).

Transit

The Metropolitan Area Transit (MATBUS) bus has limited routes through the study area and existing demand is low. The Comprehensive Plan notes that it is generally recognized that an increased level of transit service is needed in West Fargo and redevelopment in the downtown may trigger higher demand for the service. The City should monitor the demand for transit as development occurs.

This 'framework' for guiding appropriate development and uses in downtown West Fargo provides context for the form and function that would help achieve the vision set forth. The following sections provide implementation recommendations

ACHIEVING THE VISION

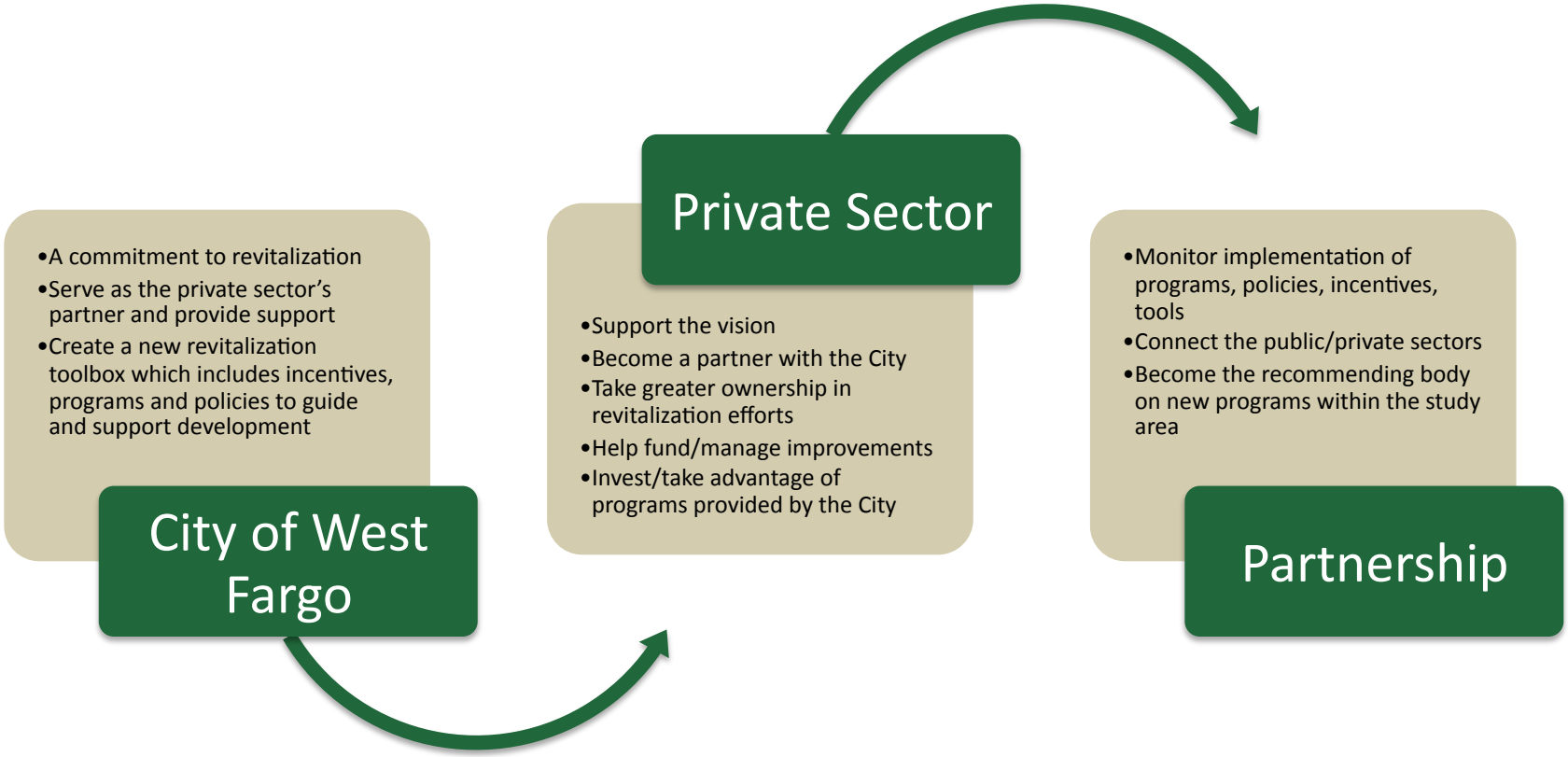
Advancing revitalization efforts to achieve the vision established for downtown West Fargo in this framework report will require action in the following four key categories:

- Vision and Leadership
- Regulation and Guidelines
- Incentives and Investment
- Catalysts

Undertaking revitalization work in any area requires both 'carrots' and 'sticks' to be successful, and generally entails a strong upfront investment and demonstration of support from the public sector. Over time, private sector investment increases in both new development and management of the public space, and as this occurs the public sector investment levels out and begins to show a return. With this in mind, the following section details recommended steps to help the City of West Fargo work with stakeholders to achieve the vision set forth in this framework plan.

Vision and Leadership

Revitalization is a conscious process that requires a clear vision for an area and strong public and private sector leadership. Each sector must be committed to the revitalization strategy and be willing to invest time and resources in meeting the vision. To successfully implement the vision for downtown West Fargo, it is recommended that – in addition to the specific responsibilities of each sector individually – the two come together to work closely on implementation of this framework report. The following illustrates the roles of the public sector, the private sector, and a recommended partnership for revitalizing downtown West Fargo in providing leadership to meeting the established vision:



Regulation and Guidelines

To create the form required to achieve the vision, a strong regulatory framework and clear guidelines for development must be put in place and supported by the City of West Fargo. The following section provides specific recommendations on the regulation and guidelines that should be imposed in the study area.

Regulation

Regulation creates mandatory development parameters that can dramatically affect the form and function of a place. While sometimes controversial in the control they place over private sector development, regulatory mandates are an important tool in shaping the functionality of a district, particularly in revitalization areas. To achieve the vision set forth in this framework document, the following important regulatory modifications are recommended to the existing zoning code to create two overlay zones in the study area:

Sheyenne Street Overlay District

An overlay-zoning district should be created for the Sheyenne Street corridor that mandates the following:

- Mixed-use development
- Zero-front setback (modifications to this should require a special review)
- Mandatory two-story building height (three-story buildings considered with special review of soils and foundation)
- Transparent windows and doors along Sheyenne Street
- Development at sidewalk level – no raised or dropped development
- Parking to be on the rear half of the lot at 2 to 3 spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial (also, allocate and encourage shared parking and the creation of a parking district)
- Signage should be in scale with the building façade and uniform in location on the facades
- Limit allowed uses - the City will need to determine which uses, but it is recommended that adult uses, pawn shops, churches, storage units, and auto repair not be allowed in the overlay zone

Once the Sheyenne Street Overlay District is in place, all new development will need to meet the overlay regulations. Additions, renovations or alterations of more than 20% of existing floor area would also require compliance with the overlay zone parameters. Existing buildings would otherwise be grandfathered and would not be required to make any modifications unless major renovations take place.

Main Avenue Overlay District

A unique overlay district should also be created for Main Avenue. The Main Avenue Overlay District should require the following:

- Landscape requirements should be added to the overlay district. Landscaping strips of at least five feet in width should be required between parking areas and adjacent sidewalks. Landscape buffers should also be required at common lot lines of commercial uses that are adjacent to residential uses
- The City should consider including signage regulations along this stretch of Main Avenue
- Certain uses - including adult uses, pawn shops and storage areas – should be restricted

The City of West Fargo would be responsible for enforcing mandated regulation.

Guidelines

The City should also create design guidelines to give investors an idea of the type of development and the style of signage that is allowed in downtown West Fargo. It is recommended that unique design guidelines for each corridor be developed.

To oversee voluntary design guidelines, it's recommended that a joint public/private sector Design Review Committee be appointed. Committee members should include those conversant with commercial and retail design. This committee would be responsible for vetting every new design that requires permitting in the study area, from building and façade design to signage and lighting. They would make recommendations to the investor and the City, and while these would not be mandated requirements their role would be to help provide suggestions and ideas for improvement that would improve the overall aesthetic environment of the study area.

While these guidelines should keep a fixed eye upon the vision, they should also be flexible and encourage design creativity. They should not mandate particular architectural styles or building materials. Instead, the guidelines should promote a cohesive development pattern that reflects the vision while allowing for variety.

Incentives and Investment

Actually realizing the vision established for the Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue study area will require committed public sector investment early on, and strong incentive programs that catalyze private sector investment later.

The public sector's investment will come primarily in two forms:

- ***Infrastructure Investment:*** To ready the area for redevelopment, revitalization and new investment, the public sector will need to make cash investments in public space enhancements that create a suitable development environment. These may include items such as:
  - Streetscape/infrastructure planning and investment
  - Lighting plans and investment
  - Wayfinding signage and gateway planning and investment
- ***Incentives:*** Incentives are a critically important part of revitalization success in any community. When delivered effectively, they create a competitive environment for investors and developers by decreasing their up-front costs (which are almost always more in a revitalization area then in a new development area) and by lowering their risk (which is higher in an emerging area than in a well-established one).

Existing Incentives in the Study Area

There are two primary incentive tools currently being utilized in the study area:

Renaissance Zone: A large portion of the study area is currently encompassed within a Renaissance Zone (RZ). The RZ is a tool that has been effectively utilized in other locations around the region and state to spur development. In fact, it has been utilized in the study area as well to encourage the development of facilities including the bank and funeral home. However, the RZ is not among the most effective tools that could be utilized in the area because the return/reward for investing comes on the back-end of the investor's financial commitment to the project by eliminating property taxes and state income taxes for 5 years. Unfortunately, most investors who are likely to take a chance developing in West Fargo are unlikely to have the up front capital to even make the investment in the first place. Thus, other incentives that offer more motivation on the front of the investment are recommended.

Tax Exemptions: The City of West Fargo currently offers property tax exemptions and income tax exemptions for new or expanding businesses. While good, these incentives are business-oriented only. Development-oriented property tax exemptions should be explored going forward.

Recommended New Incentives for the Study Area

- *Land Assembly Assistance, Site Preparation and/or Infrastructure Costs:* One of the biggest challenges working against new development in the study area is the ability to acquire and assemble land and prepare a site for redevelopment. Working in partnership with a private sector partner, the City should explore opportunities to help acquire and assemble land, and to reduce up front development costs by providing funds for site preparation and/or infrastructure.

- *Tax Abatements:* Two additional tax abatements, in particular, should be explored for the downtown West Fargo study area:
  - *Long-Term Property Tax Abatements for Commercial Development:* Many communities going through revitalization establish longer-term property tax abatements benefitting developers, as an incentive to build. Terms of 10 years are standard for such incentives; some communities push this to 15.
  - *Sales Tax Abatements:* Another standard tax abatement frequently comes in the form of sales tax abatements. These are typically shorter-term incentives, established for businesses.

- *Waived Development Fees:* For new development within the study area that meets the vision for the area, the City could explore waiving any development or permitting fees.

- *Revolving Loan/Grant Fund:* Establishing a pool of funds that can be utilized by investors in the study area to meet the goals defined in the plan would be a relatively quick and effective method of generating new investment in downtown West Fargo. Many communities set aside a pool of funds for independent businesses and property owners to utilize for projects on which they may not otherwise be able to get a bank loan (and may not have the capital on hand to do themselves). Allowable items to qualify for funding might include:
  - Façade/shopfront improvements including paint, windows, lighting
  - Signage improvements
  - Additions or enhancements to a property
  - Necessary interior improvements, such as upgrading old buildings

  Typically, these are small loans/grants (e.g. under $50,000) and the projects must go through formal approvals and design review before the funds are awarded. Grants are usually awarded only on some matching basis (i.e. for a $25,000 project the owner must front half the cost, and the fund would grant the match) while loans are usually given at low-interest with longer-term repayment options. Some communities establish forgivable loans for business that, for example stay in business in the location for 3-5 years.

- *Expedited Review and Permitting:* To incentivize development designs that meet the intended vision for Sheyenne Street, and Main Avenue, the development review process could be expedited. To reduce the review time, the Director of Planning can be granted the flexibility to review and determine if a project proposal meets the intention of the overlay district and the ability to approve the project if some elements do not meet code but do meet the intention of the overlay zone. The process could also be expedited for development proposals in the R-2 and R-3 zones. Including need for additional review like Conditional Use Permit for the mixed use.

- *Retail Incentives:* Incentives are useful tools for attracting tenants to a retail district—they can particularly catalyze the earliest deals. Cities can provide forgivable loans and building/facade improvement grants, and incentives (in the form of interior fit-out, low initial rents, and tenant allowances) also can and should come from landlords. Over time there will be less need for incentives, and rent levels will rise as shop and restaurant operators seek out the area.

- *Relocation Packages:* To facilitate land acquisition, parcel consolidation and new development, some businesses currently in the study area may need to be relocated. To prepare for this, the City should explore development of a relocation incentive package that considers:
  - Costs to the property owner (if the business leases space) to complete the lease terms
  - Costs to the business owner for things like fixtures, signage, etc. to set up in a new location
  - Services to identify potential relocation areas and spaces
  - Short-term gap financing if lease costs are higher

- *Visualization of Downtown:* The help investors better identify with the vision this plan and the City of West Fargo are trying to achieve for the study area, consider developing a 2D or 3D image of what is wanted in the downtown that can be used to market the area to potential investors.

For any and all investments and incentives, the City should determine a 'return on investment' ratio (i.e. each time a grant or tax abatement is given, the City and the investor must be able to demonstrate a return on investment within perhaps 7-10 years via new property or sales tax generation or other).

Private Sector Investment Tools

Private sector investment must also be realized as part of the revitalization strategy. There are several demonstrated tools that have been used nationally and even internationally to create stronger partnerships between the public and private sector, which in turn provide more resources and a stronger approach to successful revitalization. Important tools recommended for West Fargo include:

- *Tax Increment Financing District/Urban Renewal:* Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a commonly used tool in areas that are considered 'blighted' by a test determined via state law. In utilizing TIF in North Dakota, a TIF area is created and a baseline tax is established. The new development occurs, and the incremental taxes generated by it are 'ringfenced' to pay back the developer for infrastructure costs incurred in developing the building. This incentive – much like the Renaissance Zone – works for developers that have cash or access to capital at the beginning of the project to make the investments in infrastructure in the first place, but utilizing TIF in this way doesn't necessarily incentivize smaller, entrepreneurial developers that need the capital first before they can even begin the project.

  Other states across the U.S. utilize TIF in a way that does help these smaller developers on the 'front end.' Rather than just establishing a TIF zone around one single development, the City can create a large district that encompasses the entire revitalization area, and collect the increment from that area to be reinvested in any project in that area. In this way, the City can utilize TIF funds to incentivize projects 'on the front end' of the project rather than on the backend, and in doing so this opens up the possibility that more developers may be able to invest in the revitalizing area. Use of TIF in this format should be explored by the City of West Fargo.

- *Business Improvement District:* Business Improvement Districts are a special-district, private sector financing tool that is commonly used in downtowns and revitalizing business districts throughout the US and around the world. More than 1,200 such special assessment districts exist in the United States in cities large and small. These districts are created at the municipal level utilizing state legislation.

  While North Dakota has long had BID legislation, use of the tool has not been widespread. That is expected to change due to recent amendments to the legislation. In January 2011, the state of North Dakota amended its special assessment legislation. Until this amendment took place, creation of these special assessment districts was limited to cities with a population of 10,000 or less.

  BIDs are private-sector self-assessment tools. They put the power of district creation into the hands of the stakeholders themselves. The process to create a district includes the following steps:

  - A group of private sector stakeholders in a defined area, usually in partnership with local government, determines to establish a district
  - A business plan is developed outlining the services to be provided (generally these might include small aesthetic improvements, marketing, events, maintenance, etc.), a budget is developed, and a method of assessment is established (typically this is based on property value or some characteristic of the property). The business plan also includes a term (or life) of the district, describes governance (in North Dakota, a city commission of public and private sector individuals must be created) and sets for an operational plan for the BID
  - The plan is vetted with stakeholders and approval is sought
  - The plan goes to the City for approval, but first must go through a public hearing process
  - If there are no protests to the business plan, the BID can be established via City Commission. However, if 1/3 of the total number of owners in the district protest, creation of the district cannot move forward
  - Once created, the funds are collected via property tax bills (the assessment becomes mandatory for everyone in the district, even if they didn't support its creation) and put in a special fund for the BID entity to manage and invest. Stakeholders paying the assessment get 100% input in how the funds are spent

  BIDs have emerged as superior models to standard membership organizations because they get rid of the 'freeloader' issue (a handful of the same stakeholders always contributing, while everyone else benefits without contributing) and because they provide a consistent source of revenue. A BID is highly recommended for downtown West Fargo after initial development begins to occur as a method of managing, maintaining and marketing the revitalized area.

- ***Community Development Corporation (CDC):*** CDC's are increasingly important tools in the arena of redevelopment and revitalization, and many downtown organizations are adding a CDC to their organizational arsenal. CDC's are non-profit organizational and funding tools that focus their resources on:
  - Tackling development or redevelopment projects that are too difficult or costly for the private sector to undertake alone
  - Providing incentives for businesses and retailers/restaurants to locate in the business district
  - Developing residential projects that are otherwise difficult to do

  Among the benefits of CDCs is their 501c3 tax-exempt organizational status, meaning the public sector can easily contribute and that grant dollars are easier to access. They can be funded in a variety of ways, but generally get their resources from:
  - Business/corporate donations, so those companies may get the write-off
  - Banks that are required to give a portion of their revenues back to the community
  - Investors looking for a write-off and a community benefit from their work
  - Donors who are interested in the needs of the community
  - The City, County and other governmental entities, through actual cash infusions or incentives to assist with redevelopment
  - Local, national and federal grants

  CDC's work very effectively and nimbly in managing tough redevelopment projects in downtowns, often by acquiring land or property, assembling key parcels, cleaning them up, adding incentives, and marketing the land or building back to the private sector for redevelopment. In this way, the CDC gets a return on the investment that can then be reinvested in other projects. Interestingly, North Dakota state legislation allows for creation of CDC's, but only by banks. This is worth exploring further, but it appears from review of the legislation it may be more restrictive than an independent non-profit CDC. A Real Estate Investment Trust – as set out by North Dakota legislation – may also be a beneficial CDC
  type tool.

- *City Lodging, Car Rental and Restaurant Tax and Visitors Promotion Fund:* State legislation also allows for an additional assessment or tax to be charged to tourism-based uses (hotels and cars are standard, restaurants may also be considered) and for this money to be collected in a promotion fund. West Fargo already has a City Lodging tax that is utilized for a variety of marketing uses. It is recommended that the City explore expanding use of this tool in the following way:
  - In addition to assessing lodging, the law allows for an additional tax on car rentals, restaurants, and any businesses considered to fall into the realm of 'tourism.' The City currently only assesses the additional tax on lodging. Expanding the assessment to other uses will add more revenue to the fund that could be utilized in helping promote the developing downtown West Fargo area as well.
  - Currently, the funds that the City does collect are being utilized in a very limited way. Many of the recommendations in this plan are eligible uses for this fund. The City should explore dedicating some of this fund towards the downtown revitalization strategy

  This fund could serve as an immediate source of income for implementing this framework strategy.

- *City Pedestrian Mall Improvements:* The state has a legislative tool allowing for designation of a street deemed appropriate for pedestrian-intense uses to become a 'pedestrian mall.' This does not mean the street would be closed to traffic but rather it would be designated as a high-intensity pedestrian area. This designation brings with it the allowance to do pedestrian enhancements and improvements along the street and equally assess the cost of the improvements to property owners. In lieu of (or prior to creation of) a BID, this may be a tool to jumpstart streetscape improvements.

- *Downtown West Fargo Membership Organization:* One of the common tools typically utilized in the start-up of revitalization efforts in a downtown area includes the creation of a membership organization, where a downtown-specific non-profit organization is created to bring private sector stakeholders together to champion the redevelopment of an area. These stakeholders contribute an annual membership fee to the organization that helps fund a variety of initiatives, most notably marketing, communications, events, and small projects in the area. These organizations are commonly precursors to more formal entities such as BIDs, but they are frequently used successfully to unite private sector stakeholders in working together towards revitalization area goals.

Catalysts

Success begets success, and to jumpstart revitalization catalyst projects are required. The following section highlights important first steps that must be taken to catalyze implementation of this framework plan, as well as key catalyst projects that will be likely to spur additional development in the study area.

The Next Steps

The following next steps should occur in order to help catalyze implementation of this framework report. In the immediate term, these next steps will need to be championed and led by the public sector. In time, the private sector will become partner.

- *Approval/Adoption of the Framework Plan:* The City Commissioners must approve and adopt the framework plan as a formal show of support for the recommendations contained within.

- *Assembly of Public/Private Sector Task Force:* The City should identify key public and private sector stakeholders to serve together on a formalized plan implementation task force. This public/private sector group should be given the responsibility of advancing implementation of the plan and making recommendations to the City and Commissioners.

- *Create a Formal Budget and Work Plan for Year One Implementation:* Based upon the recommendations provided for in this plan and the budget available, the Task Force should establish a year one work plan outlining the specific tasks to be accomplished, timeline for accomplishing them, and a budget. This work plan should be publicly distributed so that stakeholders in the study area – as well as investors from outside the study area – understand how implementation will take place.

- *Develop a Downtown Revitalization Marketing Piece:* A marketing piece based upon this framework document and the one-year work plan should be created to inform both stakeholders and potential investors about changes happening in downtown West Fargo and opportunities that will occur as part of it.

These steps will help move this report forward towards implementation and will help to ensure that implementation is supported by both the public and private sectors and that there are no 'surprises' in implementation.

Catalyst Projects

In addition to taking these next steps, a few key catalyst projects will likely need to be 'fast-tracked' in order to encourage development to occur. These catalyst projects include:

- *Determine a Location for the Civic Campus:* The City of West Fargo has indicated that within the next few years they will need to expand to new facilities. The City should commit to relocating to the study area and should explore additional civic uses that could accompany them in a new development. The development of the civic campus should include considerations for a public 'green space' and other community gathering space uses in an effort to create a town center/town green environment.

- *Establish a Community Development Corporation (CDC):* Work can begin immediately on establishing a CDC to help incentivize and facilitate development in the study area, as outlined in this report. The development of the CDC should be guided by the implementation task group, who should focus on establishing the best way to organize and fund the CDC, creating the new non-profit entity that will house the CDC, and identifying initial sources of funds.

- *Develop a 2D/3D Visualization of the Study Area:* Developing a visual representation of the realized vision for the study area can help stakeholders and potential developers see the potential for Main Avenue and Sheyenne Street. The implementation task group should agree upon a strategy for best representing the vision for the study area and invest in the visualization as a way to better market the plan.

- *Explore Development of a TIF District for the Revitalization Area:* TIF is one the key redevelopment tools used in cities around the country. The City of West Fargo should explore the potential to develop a TIF 'district' for the revitalization area (as opposed to project-specific TIF) so that once new development does occur the 'increment' can be captured and reinvested in the district.

IMPLEMENTATION

The framework document establishes a long-term vision and revitalization strategy for downtown West Fargo. Realizing the strategies set forth in this plan will require a 10-20 year planning horizon. Phased implementation is key to ensure that:

- An effective foundation has been laid to ready the study area for investment
- Regulations, guidelines and policies are developed to appropriately 'shape' the form and function of the area as it is revitalized
- Appropriate incentives and public/private sector investment strategies are established to catalyze investment
- The commitment, support and attention required to see the plan through is maintained
- There are tools in place that allow the revitalized area to continue growing, maturing and improving

To achieve this, the implementation approach is presented in short-term, mid-term and long-term phases with the specific task, identification of responsibility, and estimate of cost included. The implementation phases include:

Short Term Implementation: Ready the Environment (0-3 Years)

The following recommended actions lay the groundwork for a successful revitalization initiative and create opportunity to deliver quick-win catalyst projects that will eventually lead to bigger changes in the study area. Recommendations include

Short Term Implementation: Vision and Leadership			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Approve/Adopt Framework Report	The City of West Fargo must demonstrate their support for the vision set forth in this framework report by: ▪ Having the commission approve/adopt the report and implementation strategy ▪ Committing publicly to advance the strategy ▪ Identifying the appropriate staff to help implement the strategy ▪ Appointing the Implementation Task Force ▪ Identifying resources to begin implementation	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None
Establish Implementation Task Force	This public/private sector working group should be established and given the authority to advance implementation of the framework plan. The Task Force should: ▪ Be comprised of City staff and leadership committed to implementing the framework strategy ▪ Commit to regular, monthly meetings focused on advancing recommendations in the strategy ▪ Work to immediately establish a year one work plan, goals and budget ▪ Be the 'face' of the framework study and the implementation strategy	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners, Study Review Committee	None

Short Term Implementation: Regulation and Guidelines			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Create Overlay Districts	Utilizing recommendations contained within this report, and using the guidance of the Implementation Task Force, the City of West Fargo should initiate a process early in the implementation of the plan to create the two overlay districts recommended in the report – one for Sheyenne Street and one for Main Avenue. These overlay districts will help ensure that any new development that occurs as the framework is implemented will be done in a way that is consistent with the vision established. Steps to create the overlay district include: ▪ A review of the existing zoning in the area ▪ Consensus on the recommendations for the overlay districts, as identified in this plan, by the City of West Fargo and the Implementation Task Force ▪ It is recommended that the proposed overlay districts be vetted once more with stakeholders to get input before adoption ▪ Overlay districts to be formally adopted by the City of West Fargo, and staff to begin enforcement of overlay districts	Implementation Task Force, City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None
Create Design and Signage Guidelines	Once the overlay districts are established, the Implementation Task Force – along with the City of West Fargo – should begin the development of Design and Signage Guidelines for the study area. These guidelines should consider: ▪ The character desired in each area, and how to achieve that character through building materials, landscaping, colors, etc. ▪ Signage types that are allowable (size, materials, lighting, etc.) A formal design and signage guidelines publication should be created for developers who are interested in building or renovating in the study area. Also to be considered in this guideline development process is how the guidelines will be reviewed, e.g. will a design review committee be established, who will sit on the committee, what expertise should committee members have (e.g. retail design, architectural), etc.	Implementation Task Force, City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None

Short Term Implementation: Incentives and Investment			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Implement Waived Development Fees	The City of West Fargo should agree to waive any development fees in the study area for developers who have projects that meet the regulations design requirements. Waiving the fees will be a small but important incentive to encourage developers. The City should market this waived fees so developers are aware.	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None, but loss of future revenues should be considered
Establish Expedited Review Process	City of West Fargo staff should determine how review and permitting for projects that meet both regulations and guidelines in the study area can be fast-tracked, and this should be marketed to developers are well.	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None
City Lodging Fund Changes	The City of West Fargo and the Implementation Task Force together should review the current policies around the City Lodging Fund. Two changes should be explored: ▪ Expanding the scope of who is assessed to include more than just lodging. This will include a review of state law to see who can legally be assessed and how this is done. ▪ Shifting some existing funds OR utilizing new funds generated by expanding the assessment to fund some of the framework priorities	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners, with Assistance of Implementation Task Force	None, but some existing funds may be redirected
Establish Revolving Loan/Grant Fund	As a tool to begin incentivizing enhancements to existing businesses and properties, the City should work to identify a pot of funds that could be dedicated to a revolving loan fund/grant program, per the recommendations in this framework. The Implementation Task Group should provide recommendations on requirements to obtain funds, what the funds can be used for, and the terms of the loan or grant.	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners, with assistance of Implementation Task Force	Minimum fund of $50,000 to 100,000 should be established
Streetscape/Pedestrian Lighting Enhancement Plan	The City of West Fargo should hire a design consultant to develop a streetscape and pedestrian lighting enhancement plan for the Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue corridors in order to help create the overall vision for the study area and more accurately understand the costs associated with implementation. The Implementation Task Force should be appointed to work with the consultant on development of this plan.	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners, Implementation Task Force	$50,000 to $100,000 (some cost for Sheyenne could be tied into MPO Plan)

Short Term Implementation: Catalysts			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Identify Key Sites for Redevelopment	The Implementation Task Force should work to begin identifying key parcels/sites that would be ideal for development in the short term, and then conduct a feasibility analysis on each parcel/site to determine costs of acquisition, site preparation and relocation of existing businesses. This process will help the City understand where development can best be incentivized in the short-term.	Implementation Task Force	None
Initiate Development of CDC	The Implementation Task Force should also conduct work to initiate the development of the Community Development Corporation that will be focused on encouraging development in the study area. Key issues that need to be resolved will include: ▪ Define the specific role of the CDC (e.g. will it be development focused only, or will the CDC also get involved in administering incentives, helping with business recruitment and retention, etc.) ▪ Establish the 501c3 structure of the CDC ▪ Determine how the CDC will be funded ▪ Determine who will sit on the board of the CDC ▪ Establish bylaws and operating procedures for the CDC The Task Force should work to set up the CDC and then allow the CDC board to focus on the fundraising and fund development.	Implementation Task Force	$5,000 to $10,000 to establish, CDC funding goals will be set by Task Force
Explore Possibility of Utilizing District-wide TIF	Currently, TIF is only being utilized on a project-specific basis. The City of West Fargo, along with the Implementation Task Force, should explore legally what can be done in terms of establishing a district-wide TIF that would cover the entire downtown West Fargo study area. If approved, the City should begin work to establish the TIF as quickly as possible to ensure that increment from any new development resulting from this plan can be captured.	City of West Fargo Staff and Implementation Task Force	None, though some loss of revenues to general fund will occur if TIF is established

Short Term Implementation: Catalysts (CONTINUED)			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Conduct Feasibility Study for Civic Campus	The City of West Fargo should initiate a feasibility and planning study to determine whether the Sheyenne Street/Main Avenue study area could serve home to a new Civic Campus. This study would help identify space needs (for both the City and other potential public sector/non-profit groups that may want to co-locate), best locations, costs involved, and how the building needs could also incorporate a mix of other uses including potential retail/commercial uses (e.g. a café, retail shop fronts, etc.) and public space (e.g. a town green, splash fountains or play areas for children, etc.)	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	$50,000 to $100,000
Create 2D/3D Visualization and Marketing Package	Building on this framework report and the preliminary work completed as part of the short-term implementation, the Implementation Task Force should work with the City of West Fargo to develop a visualization of how the downtown area could look fully developed. This should also be accompanied by a marketing package that clearly explains the vision, the regulations and guidelines, and the incentives and planned public sector investments for the area. This information can then be used to help market the area to developers and businesses.	Implementation Task Force	$10,000 to $30,000

Mid-Term Implementation: Secure Investment/Begin Development (3-8 Years)

The mid-term implementation strategies are some of the most critical to advancing the vision established for downtown West Fargo. They build off the early momentum created by the short-term Implementation strategies and set the stage for new development and growth over the long-term.

Mid-Term Implementation: Vision and Leadership			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Create Downtown Membership Organization	During the implementation of the short-term recommendations, the Implementation Task Force should begin work to create a non-profit downtown membership organization. This organization – likely to be a 501c6 organization – would be funded from voluntary contributions from stakeholders in the area (e.g. property and business owners) as well as sponsors and supporters, and would be governed by stakeholders within the district. The organization would take responsibility for marketing, communications, events and outreach in the district, to start. Over time, the work of the organization could grow, and eventually this organization could manage a BID or other funds.	Implementation Task Force	$2,500 to $5,000

Mid-Term Implementation: Regulation and Guidelines			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Alternate Truck Route	Truck traffic was noted as a major deterrent to pedestrianization of – in particular – Sheyenne Street. As the study area begins to develop, the City should identify alternate truck routes to ensure pedestrians aren't competing with trucks and semis.	City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners	None
Explore Pedestrian Mall Assessment Tool	To bring stakeholders in to the fray in terms of helping to fund some of the pedestrian-scale improvements to the study area, the City, and Downtown Membership Organization should explore opportunities to utilize the pedestrian mall assessment tool allowed by state statute. These funds could be used against a city match.	City of West Fargo, Implementation Task Group and Downtown Membership Organization	None

Mid-Term Implementation: Incentives and Investment			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Establish Developer/Property Owner Tax Abatements	The City of West Fargo should explore the opportunity to provide tax abatements that incentivize developers and encourage property owners to invest in new development in the study area, as outlined in the plan recommendations.	City of West Fargo, with help from Implementation Task Group	No up front cost, but lost of revenue from abatements
Establish Retail Strategy, Retail Incentives and Relocation Assistance Package	As the form begins to develop and new development projects are underway, the Implementation Task Force, with the help of the City of West Fargo and – if deemed appropriate – the CDC, should hire professional retail consultants to develop a retail strategy for the study area and identify key businesses to be recruited to the area.	Implementation Task Force with the help of the City of West Fargo Staff and Commissioners OR CDC	$40,000 to $60,000 for study, plus a pool of funds for relocation and incentives
Implement Streetscape and Lighting Plan	As funds are identified, implementation of the Streetscape and Lighting Plan developed earlier should begin to be implemented. The project may be phased over a period of years, as funds are allocated, and some resources for 'enhancements' should be sought from the private sector, through perhaps the CDC or assessment tools.	City of West Fargo, with possible funds coming from the private sector	Dependent on the level of design, likely $500,000 to $1 million. Some of the cost for Sheyenne Street may be tied into the MPO plan.
Wayfinding and Gateway Signage Plan and Implementation	Along with streetscape construction, a wayfinding signage and gateway plan should also be created for the study area and implementation should be coordinated with the streetscape improvements. The study should ideally be funded by the City with implementation costs coming from a variety of sources including the private sector.	City of West Fargo	$30,000 to $60,000 for study and design, implementation costs determined by design

Mid-Term Implementation: Catalysts			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Property Acquisition/ Preparation	As funds become available, the CDC with the help of the City of West Fargo should begin acquisition of key parcels/sites within the study area and should begin preparing them for redevelopment. The sites to be acquired first will be determined by the feasibility analysis conducted in the short-term, and will occur as monies are acquired and potential developers are identified.	CDC and the City of West Fargo	To be determined by review of key sites for redevelopment
Complete Trail Connections	The City should begin planning and implementation to complete trail connections from Armour Park to the south corners of Main Avenue. These trail connections will help in the pedestrianization of the study area.	City of West Fargo	To be determined by extent of the development
Establish Downtown Marketing/PR Strategy	As the downtown West Fargo area begins to redevelop and changes begin to occur, the Downtown Membership Organization in concert with the City of West Fargo should implement a marketing and public relations strategy for the downtown to educate the public and visitors about changes happening, what is in the area, and what they can expect to see happening in the future. This strategy should encourage patronage of the businesses.	Downtown Membership Organization, with assistance of City of West Fargo	$50,000 to $75,000 per year
Establish Downtown Activation/Events Strategy	In addition to the downtown marketing strategy, the Downtown Membership Organization should also begin developing an activation and events strategy and a calendar of events to bring people to the area, promote the businesses and activate the downtown.	Downtown Membership Organization, with assistance of City of West Fargo	$50,000 to $100,000 per year

Long Term Implementation: Realizing the Vision and Planning Ahead (8+ Years)

The following strategies will take longer to implement, primarily because they require significant funds and/or substantial environmental changes to precede them. Long term implementation strategies are likely to change as time passes, depending on the success of implementing the short and mid-term strategies.

Vision and Leadership			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Monitor the Needs of the Downtown Area	As the downtown West Fargo area changes and develops, the City needs to be vigilant about monitoring the needs of the area and must continue to act nimbly to ensure revitalization continues to grow. In particular, the City should be monitoring: ▪ The work of the Implementation Task Force, the Downtown Membership Organization and the CDC ▪ The impact of the programs, incentives, and investments that have been made ▪ The effectiveness of the regulations and guidelines ▪ Transportation needs ▪ Other key performance indicators	City of West Fargo	None
Establish a BID	To manage the improving area, focus heavily on activation	Downtown Membership Organization, Implementation Task Group, City of West Fargo	$50,000 to $75,000

Regulation and Guidelines			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Adjust Regulation and Guidelines	Adjustments to the regulation and guidelines put in place will likely be needed as development occurs. These adjustments should not be significant changes that move allow for development outside of the vision, but rather tweaks that ensure that development isn't stifled.	City of West Fargo	None

Incentives and Investment			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Monitor and Adjust Incentives	The City and the Implementation Task Group should also continue to monitor growth needs and adjust incentives as needed. As development begins to occur, the Task Group may find that some incentives are more effective than others, and that new incentives are needed to bring developers, or businesses or even residents to the area to invest.	Implementation Task Group, City of West Fargo	None, unless new incentive programs need funding
Complete Pedestrian Bridge	The complete the recommended pedestrian improvements for the study area, the City should finish the pedestrian bridge over the Sheyenne River at 2nd Avenue. This improvement would create a strong pedestrian network linking the riverfront, neighborhoods and downtown.	City of West Fargo	Dependent on design, form of bridge

Catalysts			
Action	***Task(s)***	***Lead Responsibility***	***Cost***
Advance Difficult Property Acquisition	Easier to develop sites are most likely to be tackled first in the revitalization process. As those sites are developed, undoubtedly there will be a handful of difficult redevelopment sites that slow the process. The CDC and the City of West Fargo should monitor growth needs and adjust incentives as needed to continue opening up land for development.	CDC, City of West Fargo	To be determined by review of key sites
Active Retail Recruitment	Active retail recruitment will be required to fill the new retail and commercial space available in the district. Recruitment will require a dedicated staff (recruiter) and incentives to encourage businesses to the revitalizing area.	CDC, BID, City of West Fargo, Implementation Tax Group	To be determined by type of retail incentives

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Successfully implementing community revitalization requires the establishment of good benchmarks and key performance indicators. Because significant public sector investment will be required in the early stages of implementation, and significant private sector investment will follow, establishing a baseline for how the area is performing today, and from year-to-year, is important for making a case about return on investment.

Here are recommended key performance indicators to track as the this framework plan is implemented:

Key Performance Indicator	Purpose/Goals
Property Values/Property Tax Generated	Ideally, through improvements and increased demand for property in the downtown, property values (as measured by the assessor) in the study area will increase over time. How much property values increase or decrease can indicate successful – and not successful – strategies, and can also inform the City on which tools are best to use to further redevelopment.
Land Value Versus Improvement Value	The comparison of land value versus improvement value (both being pieces of the assessor's data on a property) can indicate a property's potential for redevelopment. If land value is significantly greater than the value of the improvements, it tends to indicate a property prime for development or redevelopment.
Sales Tax Generated	An increase in sales tax indicates that people are spending more money in the downtown and thus choosing to spend time there instead of somewhere else. The sales tax pattern (the rises and falls of sales tax collected over time) can also inform the City on times to focus increased efforts to get people to the downtown. For example, if the amount of sales tax collected in October tends to be much less than collected at other times of the year, the community can plan for special events in the downtown that month to attract more people and dollars.
Number of Businesses and Type of Use	Tracking the number and types of businesses allows the City to understand if the downtown retail mix matches the market goal outlined in this plan. The City can also set an optimum mix use. This tracking will indicate whether that goal is met and will inform the City on what types of mixes should be encouraged and/or solicited to locate in the downtown area.
Total Square Footage of Businesses/Commercial Properties	These factors relate to the market analysis figures used for this plan and can be used to determine if the areas reflect the prescribed numbers from the study.

Key Performance Indicator	Purpose/Goals
New Business Openings/Closures	The City can track the opening and closing of businesses in the downtown. The City should want to see openings for businesses that meet the vision for the area and closures of those that are less desirable. This data can also inform the City if desired businesses are closing or turnover rates are high.
Building Permits Issued by Type (i.e. mixed-use, residential, commercial, new development vs. redevelopment, etc.)	The intention with this performance indicator is to see an increase in building permits in the downtown and also for the type of development desired in the downtown.
Number of Redeveloped Properties and Location	The goal of this plan is to see redevelopment occur in the downtown. This indicator lets the City know the number of properties in the downtown that have redeveloped. It can also express areas where redevelopment is not occurring in the downtown and where the blocks are where parcels might be consolidated.
Image (tested via perception surveys)	The City should periodically ask the residents and visitors of the downtown what the perceived image of the downtown area is. Ideally, the image of the downtown will improve over time as the area redevelops and reinvents itself.
Traffic Counts/Volume	Traffic counts can indicate the number of people who frequent the downtown. Increased traffic counts indicate increased trips made to the downtown.
Pedestrian Counts/Street Activity	The vision for the downtown includes more people on the street and therefore more consumers for the businesses and more interaction of people. During the study conducted to develop this report, the amount of pedestrian activity was low. The City can use a description of today's pedestrian activity as a baseline and then describe what the ideal pedestrian activity would be. As redevelopment occurs over time, the City can periodically describe the current situation and compare it to the desired description and the baseline to evaluate this activity.
Vacancy Rate/Occupancy Rate	Over time as the downtown is revitalized and people and businesses want to be there, the vacancy rate will decrease and the occupancy rate will increase. Tracking this statistic helps demonstrate successful implementation of the plan.

Key Performance Indicator	Purpose/Goals
Diversity of Uses	The City can keep record of the uses in the downtown. The desire is to see a diversity of uses – not all restaurants, not all book stores, but rather a mix of restaurants, book stores, clothing stores, gift shops, etc. Tracking the uses also informs the City of what they have and what they do not have but might want there. From there, the City can recruit those missing desired uses.
Public vs. Private Sector Investment	It is understood that the City will need to invest in the downtown, particularly in the initial years of redevelopment. Ideally, over time, the preference is much more investment coming from the private sector. Measuring the ratio of public to private sector dollars invested helps ensure this occurs.
Number of Plan Objectives Completed	The City's existing comprehensive plan, the downtown area plan, and this strategic plan have several goals and objectives outlined. As the downtown redevelops and evolves, the City should note which goals and objectives have been achieved. This validates the efforts behind the plans and ties the funding of the City with the desired future expressed by the community.

These key performance indicators should be measured and benchmarked every year to create trend lines for the study area. Data should be made public and available to stakeholders and the community.