

MEETING SUMMARY

Grand Forks 2050 Land Use Plan

Land Use Subcommittee

March 8, 2021 Meeting

Scott Harmstead with SRF Consulting Group, Inc, (SRF) began the meeting at 10:00 AM. The meeting was conducted in person at Grand Forks City Hall room A102 Conference Room and virtually via Zoom. Committee members Jamie Lunski, Alex Reichert, Steven Wasvick, Ken Vein, Brandon Bochenski, Wayne Zacher, and Kristen Sperry were present. Supporting staff members Ryan Brooks, Stephanie Halford, Andrea Edwardson, Al Grasser, Dave Korenko, Dawson Dutchak, Allen Anderson, John Bernstrom, Brandon Boespflug, Earl Haugen, and Teri Kouba were present. SRF Consulting Group team members present included Scott Harmstead, Stephanie Falkers, and Mark Schill (Praxis Strategies).

Introductions

Stephanie Halford welcomed all attendees. Earl Haugen noted that every five years they are allowed the opportunity to update the land use plan. He noted that previous planning supports the purpose of this process, and it is important to take the time and care to lead Grand Forks for the next 5 years and beyond. Scott Harmstead provided an overview of the meeting agenda. He then asked for each meeting participant to introduce themselves, favorite and least favorite things about Grand Forks, and their favorite COVID-19 hobby.

2045 Land Use Plan

Scott Harmstead presented that the land use plan is technically part of the City's Comprehensive Plan by ordinance, but the land use plan looks a lot like most city's comprehensive plans. This process feeds into the MPO's transportation plan update. This plan includes, at a minimum, the two-mile extraterritorial area of the City. The previous/2045 identified growth rate was 1.2%. The 2045 Plan relied upon a growth tier system. However, this Plan includes redevelopment and infill, not just fringe growth.

Roles and Responsibilities

Stephanie Falkers discussed that this Committee is responsible to ensure there is broad input. Five meetings are in the schedule. We will meet about every 2 months. The role of this committee is to inform the Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as the City Council.

Public Participation Plan

Stephanie Falkers provided an overview of the Public Participation Plan. A breakdown was provided on the Land Use Subcommittee make-up. Involvement of internal and external working groups was explained, and the involvement of related focus groups. There will be two series of focus group meetings. There will be three public workshops and a community survey. Gf2050plan.com is the one stop shop for information and materials related to the project.

Ken Vein asked what is the MPO's role pertaining to public involvement? Scott Harmstead responded that the Project Management Team includes Earl Haugen, MPO Executive Director. Earl Haugen also emphasized that



the project is substantially funded with federal funds that includes federal requirements. The MPO will ensure the project follows all applicable federal funding requirements.

Brandon Bochenski asked how we can achieve successful public input? Stephanie Falkers responded that a wide range of demographics will be targeted for representation. It will be important to leverage community stakeholders and their networks of contacts.

Kevin Vein reiterated Brandon Bochenski's concerns and wondered how representative the people are who show up to the meetings. Striving to get statistically valid feedback is also important. Stephanie Falkers noted that one benefit is that the move to digital has helped broaden the scope and make it easier to participate.

Al Grasser commented that it is important that the Plan's vision is scaled against the reality/cost of what is proposed in the Plan. Prioritization will be important. Stephanie Falkers commented on the need for grand ideas and then prioritize those. Prioritization exercises will be used, helps get meaningful input.

City Profile

Stephanie Falkers provided an overview of the Draft City Profile document. The document will be updated as data is received from the 2020 US Census. Earl Haugen commented that the numbers may never align the same, but trend lines are the same or similar between federal and MPO sources.

2045 Goals

Scott Harmstead introduced the 2045 Plan goal and objective structure and then led discussion about each goal in the 2045 Plan.

Current Goal Structure

Ryan Brooks commented that in general most people on the committee have not dealt with the specific goals and objectives. There are probably a couple new goals that have arisen. A key topic coming up is hopping 62nd Avenue and where to place a lift station. Staff has not weighed in on how that reads in the land use plan.

Scott Harmstead asked how easy it is for staff to rely upon the goals and objectives, based on their structure? Brandon Bochenski commented that we have not really been using strategic goals at all, that must happen and more can be done. Some major things are jumping 62nd Avenue, the interstate, and the 47th Avenue interchange. Need to consider incentives to not let properties get blighted, need to have strategy to set policies towards that. Ryan Brooks noted that a lot has been going on with a new mayor, not enough time to get aligned on the goals and objectives. Ryan Brooks also commented on the need to look at redevelopment policies and how it impacts tax base. How do land use decisions change neighborhoods and impact where people are moving?

John Bernstrom suggested that the farther you get from previous plan, harder it is to use it, just like census estimates.

Brandon Bochenski asked what we are doing well and what can be improved. Mixed use is good. Look at larger plots of land, piecemeal development has driven up infrastructure costs. This is great conversation that needs to be had. There may not have been a strong connection from strategy to policy in the past.

Ken Vein noted that we do not know what is in the current Plan. There may also be a difference of opinion on infill vs greenfield. The city has done some strategic growth planning in recent years. Wants to see long term



master plan for the city in general and sees a lot of work to do by the city to support what Brandon Bochenski has said.

Brandon Bochenski noted that the approach seems to be ad hoc recently, supports Ken Vein on need for a solid plan, and then following that plan.

Scott Harmstead asked if the goals and objectives are hard to follow, are there too many layers?

Ryan Brooks noted that drilling down too many levels is difficult. Simplification would be helpful for everyone, simpler the better. Not having four layers would be helpful.

Scott Harmstead asked what goals have worked well with current plan? No response was provided.

Scott Harmstead moved to discussion of each 2045 Plan goal. SRF has filtered the themes of each of the goals, to understand what each goal is talking about.

Growth Management

Scott noted that growth management is a primary issue and asked what are some growth management policies that city could benefit from?

John Bernstrom commented that balance seems good in terms of greenfield vs redevelopment growth.

Ken Vein agreed with the need for a balanced approach. Not everyone wants to live downtown, but a variety is needed.

Jamie Lunski asks about the word “preservation”. What does that mean? Preservation seems to mean keep it the way it is. Consider changing this term because it might thwart needed change.

Ryan Brooks noted that there is a thought that preservation should not get in the way of something new and better.

Jamie Lunski advocated for removing preservation, that it is a “heavy word”.

Residential Development

Ryan Brooks commented that the residential goal looks good. It allows for change as the market dictates, advocates flexibility. Recently the city has been seeing demand for apartments and senior living.

Mixed Use

Ken Vein commented that the mixed use goal is in line with what we are doing, University area for instance, seems appropriate.

Ryan Brooks agreed, and noted he is seeing less and less pure commercial developments, many are including a layer vertically of housing. Ryan Brooks noted he is skeptical about new big box and sees redevelopment of big box as mixed use. It is hard to make economics work on a new stand-alone commercial, the balance that mixed-use brings is attractive to developers.

Andrea Edwardson noted that most of what we are seeing is use of residential with commercial and not as much industrial/commercial mix. However, we are seeing some contractor shops blending into commercial areas, which might be a conflict of policy. Wondering whether there should be a distinction between residential/commercial vs industrial/commercial as we talk about “mixed use”.



Scott Harmstead commented that this mixed use goal is very general and could mean a lot of things. The City could us another layer to be specific about what types of mixed use we are talking about.

Jamie Lunski suggested to get rid of words about “horizontally and vertically” to simplify the goal.

Brandon Boesplug commented that the second part of mixed use statement should really be an objective.

Commercial Development

Ryan Brooks is still good with the “commercial development” goal, but the associated policies could change. Due to different commercial types of shopping we could change definition of “regional shopping center”. Policies could be a further discussion off this statement.

John Bernstrom mentioned the language could be “regional hub” instead of just “shopping center”.

Stephanie Halford noted shopping is moving online more than before, maybe the language should not reference physical space as much.

John Bernstrom advocated for “regional hub” as the term shopping is too narrow. He noted that commercial is more than shopping. Want to enhance Grand Forks region not just Grand Forks.

Al Grasser agreed with comments and noted the demand commercial services, supported the “regional hub” change.

Industrial Development

Jamie Lunski commented that the goal is general enough. Ryan Brooks stated that the goal does not exclude specific targeted industries.

Urban Design and Land Use Planning

Ryan Brooks commented that we have design standards on major corridors and for Downtown.

Al Grasser noted a tension between attractive landscapes and costs involved, including operational and maintenance.

Parks and Open Space

Scott Harmstead noted that the Park District will be part of the external working group.

Ryan Brooks noted he is satisfied with the current goal.

Al Grasser noted ongoing MS4 permits for storm water and working with the Park District in new growth areas. Ponds have been cost effective solution for runoff, wondering if there should be official comingling or sharing of park and open space and storm water retention facilities.

Ken Vein asked how do we maximize the collaborative use of spaces to get multi-purpose benefits? Al Grasser noted agreement. Ken Vein added that there is a difference between smaller and regional ponds. Some could become amenities.

Transportation

Dave Korenko commented on the need to keep in mind that we are seeing remote work with COVID and we will see that further in the future. Also autonomous vehicles, ride share, and delivery services will increase in importance. How do these shifts impact land use?



Stephanie Falkers noted the need to make sure we look at all transportation choices including walking, biking, and transit not just cars. Dave Korenko noted agreement.

Jamie Lunski commented that he hates seeing plans with no sidewalks leading up to buildings.

Natural Resource

Jamie Lunski noted the goal is OK. Alex Riechert commented we have the opportunity in the next 25 years to take the greenway to the next level, noting it is one of largest in region if not the country.

Sustainable Development

Scott Harmstead commented that this goal could include cost issues related to multi-use efficiencies referenced earlier by Al Grasser.

Brandon Boespflug requested to cut the word “especially”.

Jamie Lunski agreed to incorporate Al Grassers earlier comment about creating mixed use resources (shared use pond/park/school for example).

Planning Process

Scott referenced the desire for more usable and actionable plan from the RFP issued for the Plan.

Ryan Brooks commented that the goal’s wording is weird.

Jamie Lunski suggested using the phrase “diverse slice of citizens”. Stephanie Halford agreed, but suggested the phrase “all ages and abilities”.

Andrea Edwardson commented that there are a lot of things in planning process (such as code update or staff reports) that are guided by the land use plan where we need this emphasis on inclusivity. She suggested that the second part of the goal is too specific or limited.

Next Steps

Scott Harmstead noted that the next Land Use Subcommittee is targeted for the week of May 3. More information is to come.

Ken Vein noted that the City Council will meet May 3rd, and that the Council could receive an update on the project at that time.

