

MEETING SUMMARY

Grand Forks Land Use Plan Steering Committee Group Meeting #3

Land Use Subcommittee

August 4, 2021 Meeting

Scott Harmstead with SRF Consulting Group, Inc, (SRF) began the meeting at 10 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, Brandon Bochenski, Mandy Burbank, Wayne Zacher, and Kristen Sperry were present. Supporting staff members Ryan Brooks, Stephanie Halford, Andrea Edwardson, Dave Kuharenko, Dawson Dutchak, Brandon Boespflug, and Earl Haugen were present. SRF Consulting Group team members present included Scott Harmstead, David Sweeney, Samantha Matuke, and Mark Schill (Praxis Strategy Group).

Overview of Survey Results and Focus Group Input

- Scott Harmstead provided a brief presentation of key takeaways from both the survey and focus group results. Information pertaining to existing land use capacity was also provided (what is currently undeveloped and planned to be developed in the existing future land use plan). Refer to meeting presentation for detail.
- Mayor Bochenski asked about the survey response showing some appetite for city involvement to increase with respect to economic development—was this more so the opinion of younger people who were overrepresented in the survey? Consultant Mark Schill responded that age groups older than college age also showed support for increased city involvement in economic development.
- Mayor Bochenski asked if more outreach could be done around the subject of housing needs and how can Grand Forks Air Base be more involved in the process with respect to housing need? Mayor Bochenski will provide Air Base contact information to Mark Schill to follow up with them directly pertaining to housing needs on and off base.
- The committee noted the need to include the Grand Sky facility in conversations pertaining to economic development, housing, and related needs.
- Commissioner Reichert asked about the Tier 1 projections, noted that the capacity of the tier shows the ability to accommodate less employees vs. population. He noted the need to see the capacity shown in Tier 3, which has greater employee capacity vs. population. David Sweeney noted the need to balance employment and housing, especially in Tier 1 as an area of more immediate development. Scott Harmstead noted that it is also important to be generous in designating the land use the city wants to promote. For example, if the need is for industrial, it may be acceptable to provide an overabundance of industrial land use to provide a variety of options for interested developers.
- Scott Harmstead noted that the land use capacity shows that no additional future land use needs to be designated in the city’s area of planning jurisdiction. The focus on this planning effort should be on how to shift land use around to best accommodate existing and projected needs.

Presentation of Land Use Development Opportunities and Constraints

- David Sweeney provided an overview of various mapping pertaining to infill development opportunities and challenges and opportunities to development on the fringe of the community.



- Earl Haugen noted another area of consideration within the city are areas of chronic poverty as identified by the federal government. Specific maps of these areas are forthcoming, but generally include Downtown, UND, and the Grand Cities mall area. The reasoning for these areas is to target additional federal funding toward these areas. With respect to transportation, this means a greater focus on funding multimodal transportation infrastructure.
- Ryan Brooks noted that an opportunity zone on the south side of Downtown may be missing from the maps.
- The LUS appreciated the map showing a composite of access to various development opportunities. Another similar map should be created with a focus on employment-based future land use needs.

Discussion of Future Land Use Changes - Infill

- Ryan Brooks noted a large undeveloped area south of 32nd Avenue and east of Washinton Street, referred to as the Desoto property. The area was annexed in the 1970s and is still taxed as farmland because of its annexation date—this is an allowance in state law.
- Scott Harmstead noted that the 42nd Street corridor was discussed with city staff previously as a unique opportunity area with a number of county islands, some of which are planned for near-term development. Mr. Harmstead asked if this area should be a priority for plan implementation? The consensus of the committee was that it should be a priority.
- Ryan Brooks noted that the Planning Department is already seeing changes moving away from just stand-alone commercial development. This type of development is reserved for high-traffic locations. Staff is seeing lots of areas designated for commercial going to multifamily and/or mixed use.
- Ryan Brooks also noted that several areas are “over-parked” (excess of off-street parking provided). Form example, the code formerly required 7 spaces per 1,000 square feet for retail development, now that requirement is 4.5 spaced per 1,000 square feet. He noted the current requirement may still be too high. There is still a significant opportunity in several areas to develop within parking lots.
- Ryan Brooks noted that undeveloped areas in the city designated for future commercial use are excessive. This may not be the highest and best use of many areas. Crary Real Estate is a good example of successful smaller-scale commercial/neighborhood commercial development.
- Scott Harmstead asked if it would be beneficial to modify the current future land use plan to provide a more granular approach to large commercial areas, perhaps suggesting high density residential and mixed use in addition to commercial. The consensus of the committee was in support of this concept.
- Scott Harmstead noted Gateway Drive as a development opportunity area, currently with some vacant buildings and sites. Other committee members noted some examples of this.
- Scott Harmstead asked the committee if the “urban residential” land use category was sufficient to encourage a greater variety of housing types? The current land use model is based on a handful of basic land use categories and for the zoning districts to provide for additional detail and variety across land use types (e.ge. residential, commercial, industrial, etc.). Andrea Edwardson noted that if the plan starts to force areas with different housing variety, this would be a drastic political change from the current approach and would be a difficult uphill battle.
- Ryan Brooks did note that recent development and proposals on the fringe of the city have included higher residential density than earlier growth. Mr. Brooks also noted density would be beneficial from the perspective of infrastructure planning. Scott Harmstead noted that the Fargo Comprehensive Plan identifies locations for “mixed use activity centers” as areas to concentrate more density and community activity. This could allow keeping land use designations the way they are but adds enhanced direction for certain areas.



- Some committee members asked if South Washington Street should be added as “underutilized” area where a focus on providing additional density should be provided? The committee supported such a designation from Demers Avenue to 47th Avenue.
- Ryan Brooks noted the recent demand for smaller residential lots. It seems that younger adults have less of a desire for larger lots with more landscaping to tend. Younger adults are generally looking for indoor and outside amenities apart from their place of residence. Andrea Edwardson noted the design difficulties in designing neighborhood with narrow lots. It is therefore important to have language in the Plan about practical neighborhood design to spark more conversation with developers about how to make small-lot neighborhoods attractive while still accounting for needed infrastructure and utilities.
- The committee indicated support for language in the Plan that provides guidance on new development form/aesthetics.
- David Kuharenko commented with respect to two proposed infill opportunity nodes—Demers Avenue and 42nd St, and Gateway Drive and 42nd St. He mentioned plans for a future railroad underpass at Demers Avenue and the potential for the same at Gateway Drive. Due to land acquisition needs at both locations it would wise to remove these areas as development opportunities.
- The committee indicated support for offering two new future land use alternatives for undeveloped and underutilized areas within the city.

Discussion of Future Land use Changes – Fringe Areas

- Scott Harmstead noted the planned interchange on I-29 at the 47th Avenue alignment and the need to adjust future land use appropriately around the interchange area. Ryan Brooks suggested providing commercial land use within each quadrant of the interchange. He also suggested that Tier 1 be extended ½ mile south of the future interchange on the west side of I-29. Other than commercial adjacent to the interchange within this new area, that residential land use be provided. Mr. Brooks suggested that more residential needs to be provided on the west side of I-29 due to long-term limitation on the south side of the city. Mr. Harmstead responded in agreement but that the city will need to work with partners to promote the expansion of community services to the west side of I-29. However, housing west of I-29 will provide for the need of housing off the air base.
- Ryan Brooks noted the opportunity to provide for non-retail commercial near the new interchange.
- Davide Kuharenko noted that the interchange timeline is roughly ten years. The environmental document and preliminary design alone will take two years. Due to some constraints at the current 47th Avenue alignment location (primarily RV campground on the west side of I-29), the interchange may be located approximately ¼ mile south.
- Ryan Brooks noted that multifamily may need to be promoted first on the west side of I-29 and then single family residential would come later—this was the pattern in Fargo.
- Scott Harmstead asked if the area of existing and future residential on the west side of I-29 south of Gateway Drive cannot be expanded due to surrounding constraints, namely the airport and industrial land use. City staff confirmed that this is the case and the existing residential future land use in the area should remain as-is. Mr. Brooks noted that this area is likely to developed within about five years.
- Scott Harmstead asked if a school is planned to be located on the west side of I-29? Whether a school is located in the area or not will likely dictate the type of housing that is developed in the area.
- Scott Harmstead asked if future residential beyond flood protected areas could be shifted to other areas with flood protection? The committee was in agreement with the suggestion.
- Mandy Burbank noted a potential concern with the look of new neighborhood commercial as being a main reason neighbors have been in opposition to such development.



- Scott Harmstead suggested converting areas of mixed use designation west of 48th St and north 32nd Ave to industrial to account for the demand for industrial and potential access to rail spurs. Staff indicated support for such changes and that the mixed use designations do not make sense.
- The committee recommended that mixed use not be shown as light purple on the future land use map but should be changed to a different color to show its uniqueness.

MEETING SUMMARY

Grand Forks Land Use Plan Steering Committee Group Meeting #3 – Follow up with Ken Vein

Land Use Subcommittee (LUS)

August 19, 2021

Scott Harmstead with SRF Consulting Group, Inc, (SRF) met with LUS member Ken Vein. The meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom.

Overview of Survey Results and Focus Group Input

- Scott Harmstead provided a brief presentation of key takeaways from both the survey and focus group results. Information pertaining to existing land use capacity was also provided (what is currently undeveloped and planned to be developed in the existing future land use plan).

Presentation of Land Use Development Opportunities and Constraints

- Scott Harmstead provided an overview of various mapping pertaining to infill development opportunities and challenges and opportunities to development on the fringe of the community. Other LUS comment pertaining to 2045 future land use was also provided for Mr. Vein’s benefit.
- Mr. Vein noted that the development at 42nd St and Demers Ave is questionable not only due to potential railroad underpass, but any impacts to the golf course may involve Section 4(f) issues.
- Mr. Vein asked how the plan will respond to the current Bridge Study.
- Mr. Vein noted that the rural water issue with respect to growth to the south of the community cannot be ignored. This issue should be taken into account as part of the planning process.
- Mr. Vein favored additional industrial land use to the northwest of the city, roughly between the airport and US Highway 81. There is good opportunity to connect to wastewater and potable water supply in this area, and rail connections can be made.
- Mr. Vein said that industrial future land use makes sense west of I-29 and north of Demers due to rail access there. South of Demers Ave residential makes sense.
- He said there needs to be more coordination with the school district, as the location of an elementary school will drive residential development.
- He noted that the Plan needs to call attention to redevelopment opportunities along University Ave., especially given the recent plan for the corridor. Related to this are redevelopment opportunities around UND.

