

CITY OF FARGO
COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN
August 28, 1995



City of Fargo
Planning Commission

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN

“Working Spaces”

100

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Mr. Jim Kasper	Republican Party
Mr. Barry Nelson	Refugee Coordinator
Mr. Mark Richman	Coldwell Banker/1st Realty
Mr. Gerald Hartford	Henning, Metz, Hartford
Mr. Jim Buus	Fargo Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Earlyne Hector	Former Planning Commissioner
Ms. Sonja Kosler	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Rolfe Tehven	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Ray Gross	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Mike Beaton	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Lowell Wolff	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Don Puetz	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 101: **Industrial/Economic Development**

BACKGROUND:

Economic development has evolved over time from an emphasis which purely involved industrial development into a planning process with a larger group of concerns. Today, economic development is part of the larger area of community development. Economic development for the City of Fargo is closely tied to the attraction and livability of the community. These endowments are important, but the growth and development of an expanding economy which provides economic opportunities for all of its residents is critical.

Fargo can create a jobs based economy by developing its own capacity for growth that is compatible with its vision as a high quality place to live and work. The community must develop a balanced approach to economic development which encompasses new business start-ups, recruitment of industry, retention of our existing business, and expansion of growing businesses. The challenges facing any entity responsible for defining and administering an economic growth program are formidable. However, even with limited resources, competition from neighboring communities, and mixed feelings of public support, a comprehensive and coordinated economic development program must be developed. With appropriate plans and policies for industrial growth, the City will create employment opportunities, and maintain a healthy standard of living for all residents of Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, in a cooperative effort with State, County, and Local support, should promote an aggressive industrial/economic development program with a defined program of activity, measures to ensure accountability for its actions, and provisions for public evaluation and input, explain the limits and requirements for tax exemptions granted and to make known annually the total amount and duration of all tax exemptions in effect. This information should be made public.

CONCLUSION:

The natural and developed attributes of Fargo will continue to place the City high on a list of communities that are competitive in the industrial land market. While people are moving away from some cities because they are dangerous, frightening, and costly, this is not the situation in Fargo. Some businesses have identified communities with local regulation, growth controls, impact fees, etc., that have been a barrier to development; this is not felt to be an issue in Fargo.

Visionary leadership with foresight to encourage and empower people to make decisions may simply be the solution in guiding the City into future economic growth while still maintaining high standards of living for all citizens.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 102: **General Allocation of Land**

BACKGROUND:

There is within the City, or in close proximity to the City, approximately 2,000 acres of land which is, for a variety of reasons, predisposed to industrial uses. Some of these reasons are that the land is presently zoned for industrial use, or is dominated by industrial uses nearby, or the land is in close proximity to other uses that discourage any other use but industrial. This land is generally to the north and northwest, and the land best suited to residential development is generally to the south and southwest.

Since both residential and industrial land use can have an adverse effect on the value and the usability of the other, it would be best to keep these uses as separate as possible. Doing so will encourage high quality industrial development, reduce the chances for conflicting land uses in residential areas, and in general be conducive to orderly growth and development.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should develop a plan that defines sectors of land that are to be reserved for use as commercial/industrial development areas. All subsequent area plan decisions should be made in a manner that will minimize the amount of space allocated to uses that conflict with and are not mutually supporting of the adjacent land use.

CONCLUSION:

As noted previously, industrial uses have a tendency to be characterized as having an adverse effect or to be distressing when the adjoining use is not similar in character. Guidelines should be established that consider the appropriate means to form a transition between incompatible land uses, and design standards for street scape, scale and massing, spacing and open space, and landscaping may be needed. Adherence to the performance standards in the zoning ordinance will eliminate most of the nuisance characteristics of industrial development, but plans should be adopted that define sectors of incompatible uses.

Area plan decisions should continue to promote protection and preservation of our residential neighborhoods against conflicting land uses. However, as Fargo continues to grow and expand, possibly equal importance must be placed on maintaining the integrity of the industrial areas in allowing for necessary expansion of individual companies to insure a balanced economic base of the community.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 103: **Good Surplus of Commercial/Industrial Land**

BACKGROUND:

As a trend, it appears that the City of Fargo is committing to one degree or another, land to commercial/industrial uses at a faster rate than it is absorbing the land. On an average, the City of Fargo is using 50 acres a year as the absorption rate for commercial/industrial land, and currently it appears that the City has approximately a 90 year supply of land committed to these uses.

A 50 year inventory of commercial/industrial land was suggested as an appropriate supply to meet the needs of developers. Further efforts are needed to break this down into available, potential, commercial and industrial categories and to give these categories any kind of location priority. As the Community continues to develop programs and strategies to promote economic development in Fargo, a detailed commercial and industrial property inventory becomes a key element in guiding developers and in insuring the interests of the community are met.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish a commercial and industrial property inventory that offers developers a wide variety of locations and which would encourage economic development. Periodic review of the communities absorption rate for commercial and industrial land use should be done to ensure that the supply is appropriate and maintained.

CONCLUSION:

Ramifications associated with having too much land committed to commercial and industrial land must be considered. In the balance of identifying how much surplus inventory of land is right for the community, problems may occur when over investment in land is made and that land can not be sold for its intended purpose. Additionally, caution must be taken to avoid premature annexation of land and approval of improvements that may lead to over-extending zoning and promote leapfrog development. Actions should be taken to identify tracts of land zoned commercial and industrial, that might change to residential use, to adjust the current inventory of commercial and industrial land.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 104: **Public Ownership of Land for
Commercial/Industrial Development**

BACKGROUND:

At one point in history, the City of Fargo was, to an extent, giving land away and knocked the bottom out of the industrial land market for private developers. The public ownership and marketing of land for industrial development can act as a deterrent to private interests entering the industrial development market. At the same time, such land can be an asset to a community in its efforts to promote economic and job development.

This counterproductive situation resulting from City held industrial land should be resolved to reduce the unpredictability and non-productivity of the situation. The City will continue to acquire industrial land through tax default or other means, but is searching for the best alternative for rapidly returning this land to the open market. The Fargo-Cass County Economic Development Corporation (F-CCEDC), through a cooperative agreement with the City, may be an organization that can facilitate this return of public industrial land to the private sector with minimal impact on the open land market.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, in the management of land acquired through tax default or other means, should adopt a sale or disposal policy that does not serve to undermine commercial/industrial development held by private interests.

CONCLUSION:

The unpredictability and non-productivity of the situation where the City is caught holding industrial land must be avoided. City policy relating to providing incentives for industrial development or the coordination of public actions through prioritization criteria can strengthen the land market and detour the number of land failures that return in default to the City.

City programs or policies that assist and enhance economic development in Fargo, without competing with private land developers, are appropriate and necessary in bringing predictability into the market place of industrial land development.

* See also policy 105 and 106

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 105: **Coordination of Public Actions Through Prioritization of Commercial/Industrial Space**

BACKGROUND:

As has been a problem in the past, commercial land has been improved at a greater rate than can be absorbed or used. Public actions that generally support and assist in this improvement process are City financed improvements, tax abatements, tax increments, a county loan pool, accelerated permits and other actions. A possible approach to limiting this practice of improving land at a greater rate than can be absorbed may be through establishing priority criteria for determining which commercial/industrial space receives public actions first.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should approve public guidelines for the improvement of commercial/industrial space based on that land's ability to meet criteria established for priority classification*. A balance between the rate of absorption and public assisted improvements of commercial/industrial space should be maintained to maximize the use of appropriate public actions.

Priority I

- * currently designated for commercial/industrial use.
- * within the City limits.
- * improvements existing, adjacent or easily accessible.

Priority II

- * currently designated for commercial/industrial use.
- * outside but adjacent to the City limits.
- * improvements are readily accessible and can be provided simultaneously with the development or project.

Priority III

- * currently designated for commercial/industrial.
- * not adjacent to the City limits.
- * access to services and improvements are remote (1,320 feet).

Priority IV

- * not currently designated for commercial/industrial use.
- * not adjacent to the City limits.
- * more than remote from services and improvements.

CONCLUSION:

The trend of improving commercial/industrial space at a faster rate than can be absorbed should be discouraged and more focus should be placed on coordinated efforts for private and public actions. Measures must be established to keep commercial/industrial space from becoming a tax detriment or inappropriate space.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 106: **Incentives for Commercial/Industrial Development**

BACKGROUND:

As Cities throughout the nation enter the market place in bid for commercial/industrial development projects, competition continues to grow at a rate that will leave behind those communities that wait for something to happen. The City of Fargo can compete successfully because of the community's many qualities, but greater emphasis needs to be placed on the City Government's role in exercising initiative, leadership, cooperation, and support for local and national developers. Commercial/Industrial development that promotes using business logic and principles, and creates long term economic development for the community is the basis behind Incentives for Commercial/Industrial Development.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, in a cooperative effort with State, County, and Local support, should promote and encourage commercial/industrial development by making available incentives and financial assistance to developers provided their development projects will be completed with full services*, or a commitment to accept full services in a specified time.

- *1. Hard surface, dust free roads built to traffic loads necessary to the project, together with a clear understanding as to who will maintain, repair, plow, etc.**
- *2. Full treatment of sewage.**
- *3. Connection to a water supply adequate to the project and to City fire protection.**
- *4. Adequate storm water management.**

Additionally, special consideration should be given to developers that maximize infill development for development into existing buildings and land with full services; and for developers that adopt and follow the City plans and implementation measures for commercial/industrial development that discourage leapfrog development.

CONCLUSION:

Setting reasonable standards can encourage the practice of infill development and discourage the practice of leapfrogging development which tends to over build improvements, over commit land use, and inadvertently damage those who have been careful in planning and improvements. Caution should be exercised to ensure public policy does not establish commercial/industrial development standards that are too restrictive and create a negative impact on development.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 107: **Long Term Water Needs**

BACKGROUND:

In the discussion of increasing manufacturing and industrial development within Fargo, the issue of having an adequate supply or access to a water supply is critical. As industrial developers become more serious about development in the Upper Midwest, the City must insure the water resource assets within their control are adequate and stable. These assets must support the increasing residential demand, plus be able to meet or exceed the projected water requirements for industrial development.

Cooperative arrangements at the Federal, State, County, and Community level are necessary to insure this region of the state can remain competitive in the industrial development market. Conservation and proper management of current ground and surface water resources is key while programs for addressing water resource needs and problems are completed. The assurance of a safe and stable water supply is essential in providing high quality services in the community.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should give priority to industrial development projects that focus on high technology development without intense demands for water resources and with minimal adverse impact on environmental quality.

CONCLUSION:

Indications are that due to the fluctuating levels of surface water within this region, industrial developers may have concern over a lack of a stable water supply within Fargo. Since the water which can be obtained from its current sources is limited, the City should continue aggressive programs to develop alternate back-up water supply sources.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 108: **Downtown Future Use and Development**

BACKGROUND:

In the past, people seemed to more or less give up on the downtown as anything other than a center of government offices and a neighborhood based on service providers such as banks. Similar to other communities nationwide, civic leaders in Fargo realize that downtown redevelopment activity today must be more focused on a diversity of uses that promote retail, housing, entertainment, services, government and hotel/convention activities.

Retail and commercial development in Fargo has currently focused more on the edge of the City or new areas, with public financing of improvements and massive federal dollars put into corridors. This trend of fringe development should be balanced with downtown development by ensuring strong economic forces for the downtown are in place to utilize or take advantage of the already built infrastructure. All kinds of uses are important for future development in the downtown areas and any factors that have a limiting effect on downtown development may have a detrimental effect on the downtown neighborhood in the long term.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage downtown development of all types to include general merchandise retailers, financial institutions, office developments, full range residential housing, and social, cultural, and entertainment facilities. The Central Business District should be the mixed-use center of the City.

CONCLUSION:

For the Central Business District to be an active, diverse and prestigious downtown neighborhood for the community, it should collaborate with the economic development programs to get part of the economic development action downtown. As a vision for future use and development of the downtown area in Fargo develops, diverse and quality development is needed to ensure its success as the mixed-use center of the community.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 109: **Critical Stability**

BACKGROUND:

Critical stability is the character and activity of a vibrant downtown area that draws individuals to what they perceive as a "good destination". Whether people are tourists in Fargo and are only visiting, or they are long time residents in the community, the downtown must have a means for access and a purpose to attend.

Current travel habits have affected the activity of downtown. With greater diversity in the activities available on the fringe of the community, more focus is needed on making downtown more accessible through such things as a shuttle system connected to a transit. To enhance the usability of downtown and also to increase its attractiveness, integration between pedestrian corridors, parking, and shuttles must occur.

Fargo has the foundation needed for critical stability; arts and art related shops, historical and cultural entertainment, financial and professional businesses, and features such as the skyways and the river.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage programs, activities, and systems that enhance the Central Business District and draw visitors and residents.

CONCLUSION:

Perceived barriers such as inaccessibility, deficient parking, and unsafe pedestrian corridors must be removed. The downtown area of Fargo boasts of an expanding cultural activity, and retail and professional services that make it the mix-use center of the community. Through continual public education, private and public promotion ventures, and economic development emphasis and priority, the Fargo downtown will be that "good destination" with both access and a purpose.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 110: **Good Conveniences and Amenities**

BACKGROUND:

The downtown area of Fargo has been very successful in good apartment and high density residential development, but one problem expressed is the absence of basic services. Particularly the need for competitive grocery stores. It was thought that there is a much larger market of people that would be attracted to good downtown high density housing if good conveniences and amenities could be built into such projects.

Downtown living has become more popular for retired and young singles, as well as for low income and vulnerable populations, and amenities are important. Examples throughout Fargo exist where residential up scale apartments were built offering amenities as an attraction to the area. Whether the basic need in the neighborhood is for a grocery store or the need may be for a beauty shop, convenience and amenities should be located downtown to support the increasing demands.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should support the development of neighborhood and convenience commercial areas to serve residential needs. Development projects for high density residential use should include adequate conveniences and amenities.

CONCLUSION:

In the entire Central Business District (CBD) many smaller districts or neighborhoods exist with varying requirements or needs. Not all neighborhoods in the CBD will receive the same level of services, but efforts to ensure that basic services are convenient and within close proximity to residential housing is critical. Development projects should link basic services and residential housing in ways that assist neighborhoods in attracting people from diverse backgrounds into the downtown area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 111: **Downtown Traffic Access and Flow**

BACKGROUND:

The Fargo Chamber of Commerce policy position for transportation improvements states that improving east-west traffic flow with time phased reconstruction, extensions, and widening on the N. P. Avenue/1st Avenue project is the number one downtown transportation priority. Main Avenue is currently the primary east-west access to downtown and is becoming increasingly congested. The N. P. Avenue/1st Avenue project would create another major east-west corridor spreading out traffic which would lessen the burden on Main Avenue as well as simplify the confusing and inadequate intersections of N. P. and 1st Avenue with University Drive.

Problems of congestion may diminish over the next few years if planned reconstruction and widening of Main Avenue occurs. Also, another issue relating to east-west traffic flow into the downtown is a tendency for more drivers to use corridors such as 19th Avenue North and 12th Avenue North to 45th Street West.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should promote and support the transportation improvement strategies for downtown Fargo.

CONCLUSION:

Priorities for corridor reconstruction or widening may shift as Fargo continues to grow and expand but the need for cooperative efforts in planning for future needs is critical. The Downtown Business District is a diverse area with needs that can best be articulated and prioritized by the civic leaders, business people, and citizens living within that area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 112: **Downtown Parking**

BACKGROUND:

Because of the Parking Authority, the City of Fargo does not require parking spaces to be a part of new developments in the downtown area. This is perceived to be a plus for attracting development into the downtown. A second perception that was discussed is that parking downtown is believed to be much worse than it actually is. Certain sections of the downtown, City Hall, the Block 6, the Black Building, and the Federal Building, have deficient parking, but overall parking is provided and accessible.

As businesses are relocating or expanding, a greater demand for more convenient and desirable parking has emerged, and the writing of a Master Parking Plan for the downtown has been requested. Essential to this plan is a Master Skyway Plan to link pedestrian traffic and create the atmosphere needed to promote development in the downtown area.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Public parking should be planned for by a broad based representation of civic and public entities, and provided in the Central Business District (CBD) at strategic locations to ensure the interests of all entities are met. Convenient and desirable parking should be available to persons using the downtown and be linked to the overall pedestrian system of walkways and skyways to attract and accommodate the public.

CONCLUSION:

While plans are developed and relocations continue, much can be done through public education and promotion of the existing parking and skyway system. Fargo has safe and accessible parking that is linked to pedestrian corridors, but is underutilized. Also, other activities such as the transit system or shared riding could reduce the need for spaces. There is a need for other "trophy" buildings like the Radisson to link skyways and expand parking opportunities, but until that develops, plans for parking and pedestrian traffic, and the implementation of those plans, are critical in attracting and promoting downtown development.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 113: **Condition of the Periphery of the Downtown**

BACKGROUND:

The periphery of downtown Fargo, like most cities, consists of the remnants of the original city. Some of it is the original industrial structures, but most of it is what remains of the original housing. Because of its age, proximity to downtown, and varying status of ownership, and varying degree of maintenance, these properties are very vulnerable to adverse pressures.

Generally speaking, it is considered very good to have a wide range of housing choices available in and around the Central Business District. Fargo has been very fortunate that a lot of the older housing near the downtown remains in good physical condition. Also the City has enjoyed some very fine housing related redevelopment and housing conversion projects in around the downtown area. Nevertheless, there does remain sizable areas of older housing whose conditions and future may be in doubt. Because of the effect the future of these areas may have on the downtown, it may be of some value to identify these areas and define what planning policy should be with respect to these areas.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should define redevelopment areas in and around the Central Business District (CBD) and categorize* those areas based on the needs of the neighborhood.

Redevelopment

***areas subject to total redevelopment (commercial uses, higher density housing uses, or a mixture of both).**

Conversion

***areas subject to conversion of structures (standards should apply to assure good integration of function and appearance).**

Preservation

***areas subject to preservation as the primary guideline (preservation would focus on the physical appearance or use or some combination of both).**

CONCLUSION:

By adequately considering the role that each area in and around the CBD plays, the image, acceptability and workability of the downtown can be enhanced. The periphery of the Fargo's downtown area is only one aspect of a very complex district, but if neglected it could stop the downtown area from fully meeting its potential.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 114: **Beautification Standards for Downtown**

BACKGROUND:

The quality of downtown's physical appearance, its streets, buildings, and open spaces, also plays a critical role in establishing a positive identity for the City of Fargo. Fargo's downtown area has qualities of scale and historic character that provide an environment that attracts people and should be preserved and enhanced in the process of development and redevelopment.

Standards for beautification are needed to minimize the negative impacts on aesthetics that occur during development. Exposed open walls or alleys will many times be left unimproved for extended periods of times, and distract from the qualities of adjacent property. Master planning of the downtown area should be encouraged to address issues of landscaping, tree planting and burial of power/telephone lines so that over the next 10 - 20 years they could be addressed gradually. In establishing both the beautification standards and a plan for downtown area development, a vision or image of what aesthetic issues are most important can be identified to guide future public decision making in the downtown area.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should insist upon a positive image both aesthetically and functionally on public and private development and redevelopment in the downtown area through proper design of landscaping, tree planting, parking, architecture, street furniture, and signage. Standards should be adopted in a development plan that is compatible with the historic image of this area.

CONCLUSION:

To become more marketable as a development location, downtown must have a positive identity and be a pleasant setting for people. Possibly the Downtown Business Association (DBA), the Plains Art Gallery, and the Fargo Architects could take a role by talking to their members and maybe doing an evaluation of the aesthetic values of the downtown. Aesthetic standards for the downtown, along with some sort of review process to promote the standards are needed in ensuring the unique and special characteristics of Fargo's downtown area are preserved and enhanced.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 115: **Historic Preservation**

BACKGROUND:

As plans for redevelopment or reutilization of buildings and space throughout the downtown area are drawn, buildings with unique historic, archaeological, or cultural characteristics should be identified for the purpose of preservation. The inventory of all buildings on the National Historic Register is a good starting point. Possibly, with the assistance of the Historic Preservation Committee, that list could be expanded to include a priority listing of buildings to guide future planning decisions and to better protect those building with the highest priority.

POLICY STATEMENT:

A list of historic buildings and structures should be established by the Historic Preservation Commission. Any public project affecting those buildings will be subject to review and comment by the Historic Preservation Commission.

CONCLUSION:

No guarantees can be given in the process of historic preservation of Fargo's downtown area, but measures can be taken to guide future planning decisions. In identifying those buildings or structures with the most unique characteristics, the community can take appropriate actions in preserving the many elements of Fargo's identity.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 116: **19th Avenue North - NDSU Land**

BACKGROUND:

The 19th Avenue North Corridor from Interstate 29 east to the Fargodome should be preserved for commercial development that is more high technology, as opposed to the traditional commercial and retail uses. It is likely a hotel may someday be constructed along this entrance corridor to the northern half of the community, but development should preserve and enhance the image of Fargo as air and highway travellers enter the community.

North Dakota State University (NDSU) has recently developed an institutional land use development plan that reflects similar ideas for future land use along 19th Avenue North. This plan is oriented to protecting the image of NDSU as a land grant institution, and appears to be very compatible with the idea of high technology land use along the 19th Avenue North Corridor.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should preserve and enhance the image of Fargo through planned land use development along the 19th Avenue North Corridor from Interstate 29 east to the Fargodome. This corridor should boast high technology research and industrial uses which are compatible with the mission of the University and limit retail and basic service type use.

CONCLUSION:

The 19th Avenue Corridor has limits or restrictions to its use based on air traffic flow to the north on Hector Airport, and with research and agricultural testing to the south. In the early phases of land use development along this corridor, a vision for use must be communicated to the public and support for the development plans should be solidified. Options for commercial and economic development enterprise on the 19th Avenue Corridor can be greatly enhanced through coordinated efforts between NDSU, the Airport, and the City of Fargo. In preserving this northern entrance corridor of Fargo for high technology use, the community is promoting future economic growth plus creating an entrance way that represents a positive image for the area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 117: **Northport**

BACKGROUND:

The prospect of commercial development adjacent to Broadway north of 25th Avenue North should be limited to a northerly direction. This area referred to as Northport has developed as a commercial or retail center for the north side of Fargo, but has reached maximum development limits to the east, west and south. There may be a temptation in the future to say one more commercial project won't hurt, but at some point, commercial development will de-stabilize the surrounding residential neighborhood.

To protect adjacent residential neighborhoods and to resolve the natural frictions that may occur between mixed use development areas, area plans for Northport should be developed. These plans would guide future development or redevelopment in the area and stabilize the surrounding area in respect to boundaries or limits for commercial development. Commercial development that is compatible and mutually supports the character of the residential neighborhood is encouraged, but development that simply expands this commercial and retail center without limitations must be discouraged.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should develop area plans for the Northport area that recognize the commercial potential of available land to the north, but with minimal disruption or impact on the character of the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

The Northport area is a critical area of development and meets the service needs of residents extending from the river stretching far and wide. Commercial development should continue along this corridor, but with direction and with purpose. The Northport area may be virtually surrounded by residential use, but by developing an area plan, interests of both land uses can be addressed and hardships or burdens that would normally occur can be avoided or resolved.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 118: **13th Avenue South, River to 25th Street**

BACKGROUND:

For more than a decade, 13th Avenue South, from the Red River to the West Fargo City limits, has been Fargo's major east-west corridor south of Main Avenue. It has only been in the past few years that the east to west traffic pressure has been reduced slightly due to the improvement of the 32nd Avenue South Corridor and the six laning of Interstate 94. Traffic volume at intersections along the 13th Avenue South corridor has also remained high due in part to the one way intersections at 10th and 13th Street South.

Land use east of Interstate 29 along 13th Avenue South is a combination of retail services and single family housing, while west of Interstate 29, land is virtually all commercial use. From the Red River to the intersection of 13th Avenue South and 10th Street South, the single family housing should be preserved and maintained. To the west of 10th Street, land use changes should be allowed to reduce the traffic friction with homes. To the west of Interstate 29, the 13th Avenue South Corridor was described as probably being as good as can be in respect to land use.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Land use decisions on 13th Avenue South between the River and 21st Street should strive to achieve a higher level of compatibility between the land use and traffic characteristics. Three strategies have been identified that would support this goal:

- *Zoning and street construction decisions should attempt to preserve the character of the neighborhood.**
- *Any proposals to change the land use in this area should be very sensitively integrated so that the character of the neighborhood is preserved.**
- *Major changes in land use or street design that cannot be integrated in a way that would preserve the character of the neighborhood should require the acquisition of the continuous and cohesive properties that would be affected by the change.**

CONCLUSION:

By encouraging change to land use adjacent to 13th Avenue South between 10th Street South and approximately 21st Street South much of the friction between traffic flow and houses can be reduced. This strategy along with programming means to reduce the traffic volume on 13th Avenue South, and possibly acquiring properties along the corridor will assist in reducing friction and preserving the residential character of the neighborhood.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 119: West Acres Area

BACKGROUND:

The discussion on West Acres was not focussed on the mall or a building, but rather on all land uses in proximity to the West Acres development. West Acres should be thought of as a regional retail center, serving the commercial and retail needs of the City of Fargo, but also having a role in serving the needs of citizens from a much broader area.

In respect to land use practices and development, two issues were discussed. One is that new development seems to lack integration with the existing development, and secondly that standards for building set back from streets appear to be inconsistent. Both of these issues deal with aesthetic and functional values that can be improved to create a more pleasant area to shop and also to create a more coherent setting between neighboring businesses.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage retail, residential, and commercial development projects to maximize use of open space, landscaping, and pedestrian linkages to enhance the projects aesthetic and functional characteristics.

CONCLUSION:

Business and commercial development in and around the West Acres complex is expanding and should be given the maximum opportunity to proceed. As plans for development are formed, possibly more emphasis can be placed on integrating, or linking one development project to the next. Issues may relate to appearance, how traffic flows, or simply how far the set back is from the edge of the road. By enhancing the characteristics of the land use practices in this center, the City of Fargo is promoting and preserving the atmosphere of small town living and community pride.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 120: South University Drive

BACKGROUND:

University Drive from 19th Avenue North to south of 52nd Avenue South is also known as U.S. 81. The section of this corridor from Main Avenue, south to the City limits, or South University Drive, has adjacent land uses ranging from highly residential to highly commercial in nature. Land use between Main Avenue and 13th Avenue South is predominantly residential along the corridor. Land use south of 32nd Avenue South to the southern City limits and beyond is a mixture of residential, commercial and public/semi-public uses. Finally, land use one mile to the north and to the south of the Interstate 94 interchange is predominantly commercial along the corridor.

U.S. 81 from 13th Avenue South extending south of the City is the East Side north to south arterial corridor of the City and traffic volume and demands have greatly increased. Traffic issues are being addressed through the Fargo-Moorhead Highway Plan Update, the University Drive Corridor Study, and other planning studies. Continual efforts are ongoing to improve public safety, expand traffic lanes, enhance aesthetics and landscaping, and provide functional access and parking to this area. Careful integration with diverse land uses is needed to ensure that access and service is provided to the public along with the preservation of this corridor's traffic potential.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage corridor development and adjacent land use development or redevelopment projects that are highly compatible with the existing land uses and do not limit the traffic capacity or capability of this corridor. Public safety is the priority in motorized and non-motorized movement along the South University Corridor.

CONCLUSION:

As land use development expands to the south, and east - west arterial corridors develop and intersect along South University Drive, development planning must ensure the corridor can grow to its fullest traffic capabilities. Additionally, traffic and land use friction must be avoided and compatibility maintained among these diverse uses. Through evaluation and review of existing development plans, and by enhancing the development process for proposed projects, the City of Fargo can meet the traffic and land use demands placed on the corridor.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 121: **45th Street West Corridor**

BACKGROUND:

As land use development continues within Fargo to the south and southwest it was essential for a new north - south corridor to develop. 45th Street West started years ago as a two lane section line road and is rapidly developing and expanding as a major arterial street, linking all commercial development west of West Acres and serving the entire community as a bypass entrance to the north and to the south.

As a major arterial street, planning for development projects adjacent to it and also for the corridor expansion or improvements is key. Congestion around key intersections such as 32nd Avenue South, 13th Avenue South, and Main Avenue, plus friction between traffic and adjacent commercial and industrial use must be addressed through appropriate traffic planning. Additionally, corridor planning should be sensitive to the residential development south of 32nd Avenue South and north of 19th Avenue North.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should identify the development of the 45th Street corridor as strategically important to the land use planning of the West Side of the City. Planning for this corridor must consider several key objectives* at the same time.

***preservation of its traffic potential by providing adequate right-of-way for avoiding circulation conflicts.**

***careful integration with the residential area north of 19th Avenue North and south of 32nd Avenue South.**

***access and service to the commercial area between 19th Avenue North and 32nd Avenue South.**

CONCLUSION:

Problems or friction that can be avoided or worked around must be identified in the early development of the 45th Street West Corridor. Just as University Drive developed on Fargo's East Side and 25th Street developed as a Center City north - south corridor, the 45th Street West Corridor is serving Fargo's traffic demands on the West Side. The challenge for planners is to balance traffic friction related to the adjacent use on this corridor along with developing this corridor to the fullest potential.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 122: **Other Traffic Corridors**

BACKGROUND:

Traffic corridors throughout the community that serve or function as arterial or collector streets should portray a positive image of the City of Fargo. Functional classifications of street may change, but corridors that serve as major entrances to the City should be designed as boulevards with a central green median. Adjacent land use to these entrance corridors must take into consideration design features for aesthetic standards, development set back, elevation, site lines, and measures to minimize friction between traffic and land use.

All traffic corridors, whether serving as an entrance corridor or functioning in a lesser capacity, must become a critical element of developing area plans. Traffic corridor planning should address the issues impacting the community both at the present time and into the future. By developing design criteria for corridor development and establishing corridor plans in the early development of area plans, the image of Fargo can be well preserved.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should ensure design standards and planning for traffic corridor development address both the aesthetic and functional needs of the community. Entrance corridors should portray a positive image of the City of Fargo. These design standards should be formally structures in the policy of the Planning Commission and/or land use ordinances.

CONCLUSION:

To maintain the integrity of the City's street system and to portray a positive image of Fargo, planning incorporating boulevard landscape treatment, pedestrian/bicycle ways, and transit facilities should be done. Aesthetic standards, along with planning for the functional needs of each traffic corridor throughout Fargo is critical and appropriate to meet the changing needs of the community.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Working Spaces"

Policy Letter 123: **Special Use Permits**

BACKGROUND:

Two trends appear to be causing a loss of commercial activity in the Central Business District. One is the trend towards regional and strip commercial centers and the other is consolidation of businesses, either through acquisition or transfer of functions. The out-migration of businesses from the Central Business District or development of new strip commercial centers may be discouraged by improving the process for granting Special Use Permits.

The Special Use Permit Ordinance specifies that these permits may be issued for petitions based on hardships caused by regulations of existing zoning as they relate to the configuration of the property. In actuality, these permits may not always be based on a hardship. These two trends could be reversed by applying a more critical review of the requests for Special Use Permits and through promoting and encouraging commercial development in the Central Business District.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should evaluate requests for Special Use Permits based on written standards. Requests not meeting these standards should be denied and the applicants should be encouraged to seek space in the Central Business District. The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to replace the hardship requirements and replace with the standard requirements.

CONCLUSION:

Issues such as this need to be addressed and acted on quickly to reduce the vacancy rate of the Central Business District and to reduce the number of commercial centers that are intruding into residential neighborhoods. As increased numbers of requests for Special Use Permits are denied, a system to assist commercial developers in finding space is needed. Proper utilization of the Special Use Permit process is just one example of how existing programs can guide the development of the community with minimal change or disruption to the City's program of land use development.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN

“Living Spaces”

200

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Mr. Don Kilander	FM Association of Realtors
Mr. Eric Dahlgren	Communications Workers of America
Mr. Harry McAllister	Democratic Party
Ms. Dawn Morgan	Fargo Heritage Society
Ms. Mary M. Nelson	Jefferson PTA
Mr. Jim Nelson	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Richard Burns	Planning Commissioner
Ms. Rhonda Loberg	Planning Commissioner
Ms. Phyllis Bancroft	Former Planning Commissioner
Dr. Clarence Samuel	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Randy Naslund	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 201: **Comprehensive Plan**

BACKGROUND:

Policies to guide or direct development or redevelopment in existing residential neighborhoods may be ineffective if they are fragmented from other City policies and are not incorporated into a comprehensive plan. Comprehensive planning must involve and include the representation of information from various entities that may impact the project and ensure the compatibility of each entity's policy and practices. Comprehensive planning must promote patterns of land use, design, traffic circulation, and services that ensure the economic, social, and physical health, safety and welfare of the people who live and work within the neighborhood are met.

Area plans for existing residential neighborhoods that identify focal points and define the boundaries of the neighborhood are critical. A key element in retaining the character of the community is the preservation of the individual character of each neighborhood. A neighborhood must have a focus or a sense of identity that is defined and protected by the elements of the comprehensive plan, for the welfare of both citizens and the community.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt a comprehensive plan to establish the framework within which governmental, public, and private entities can effectively follow established policy in a collective manner. Priority should be given to establishing area plans to design and guide land use development and redevelopment for the neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

Land use practices that fragment established neighborhoods and distract from the areas sense of identity must be discouraged. As development or redevelopment occurs within the neighborhood, officials from the City, the Parks, and the Schools must be alert to opportunities that may enhance the area plan and situations that distract and do not conform to elements of the comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 202: **Residential Growth Sectors**

BACKGROUND:

When the City of Fargo located along the Red River and the boundary of Minnesota, it started the process of limiting what might be considered its natural perimeter or rings of growth under normal circumstances. Following that, West Fargo was established and prospered to the west of Fargo. Still later North Dakota State University, with all of its land holdings, developed to the northwest. Finally, Hector Airport and the Fargo lagoons were established also to the north and northwest.

This development to the west and northwest leaves a couple of rather narrow slivers of land that are relatively free of conflicting land uses and are, barring the inclusion of future land use conflicts, conducive to good residential development. These areas consist of a very narrow sector to the north along the river, and a wider sector of approximately 45 degrees to the south and southwest.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should develop a plan that defines sectors that are to be reserved for use as residential growth areas. All subsequent area plan decisions should be made in a manner that will maximize the amount of space allocated to residential and related uses and minimize the amount of space allocated to uses that conflict with and do not support good neighborhood structure.

CONCLUSION:

There is considerable space in and around the land to the north and northwest that is useable for City development in various ways but is currently less desirable or appropriate for use as a residential growth area. By reserving areas to the south and southwest for residential growth, the City will help assure the development of good neighborhoods and protect pre-existing subdivisions and incorporated communities from conflicting land use. Lastly, it will help guarantee that the City of Fargo will have a natural area to grow into for many years to come.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 203: Area Plan Standards

BACKGROUND:

One of the instruments used by the City of Fargo in the process of granting developers approval for proposed residential development projects is the Area Plan. Many of the land use conflicts that arise over time are relatively easy to recognize and possible to avoid if we were to make better and more aggressive use of this instrument. By reviewing and improving the standards established in the Area Plan guidelines, the City could go a long way towards assuring that residents get a quality living environment, plus the City gets quality development.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish Area Plan standards that encourage and promote the development of residential areas with coherent and fully integrated neighborhood structures, where multiple dwelling areas and single family areas are in close proximity and with reasonable pedestrian access to an elementary school. Area Plan and Planned Unit Development permit approvals should consider and require and be consistent with minimum design standards for density, compatibility, street scape, scale and massing, spacing and open space, traffic and circulation, drainage, and landscaping be met.

CONCLUSION:

By applying Area Plan and Planned Unit Development standards that encourage and promote integrated neighborhood structures, the City should avoid most of the intrusions that do not serve and support good residential development. Uses that tend to dilute the desired student enrollment density, generate traffic in excess of those normally generated by residential uses, and are City wide, metropolitan or regional in scope and purpose must be identified and discouraged. Special consideration and incentives should be given to high quality mixed use development proposals that meet or exceed the plan standards. It should be recognized that an area plan is a general concept. It reflects the general goals of land use, land use relationships, and land use proportions. By the same token, an area plan should not be construed as a literal definition of zoning districts.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 204: **Residential Area Plans**

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of the community planning process is to reflect community values and identity and assure sensible growth and development. The product of that planning is a consolidation of area plans, or the comprehensive plan. As area plans for residential neighborhoods develop, general policies of the comprehensive plan should reflect and give support to area plans as they apply to specific neighborhoods.

Residential neighborhood area plans should identify public focal points that are accessible and safe gathering places for the neighborhood young and old that are accessible. The school setting should be centrally located, with allowance for pick-up and controlled linkage to planned recreation facilities. Land purchases for school and park land should be preplanned and done as a cooperative purchase. In defining where a new neighborhood will be, what it will have as a focus, and by identifying roads, density and size, the area plan clearly articulates its statement of purpose to the public.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should enhance the role an area plan has in guiding overall land use development or redevelopment and strengthen the process involved in establishing and administering area plans. Proposed changes or modifications of an area plan should be subject to a formal review prior to approval.

CONCLUSION:

A mechanism or process is needed to reserve space for future development and to assist developers in identifying potential land use practices. By directing all agencies or developers to include their institutional plans or long range ideas into an area plan, elements of the City Comprehensive Plan are pulled together and the process of orderly development is strengthened.

**See also School Siting Policy adopted by the Public Facilities Planning Committee on October 19, 1994.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 205: **Discourage Leapfrog Development**

BACKGROUND:

Leapfrog development means development that occurs beyond the existing limits of urban development and thus leaves intervening vacant land behind. This bypassing of the next-in-line lands at the urban fringe results in the shotgun pattern of urbanization known as "sprawl". Urban sprawl is the result of haphazard growth that spreads out in a straggling and disordered manner. Leapfrog development can be costly to the City and many times limits orderly development and creates adjacent land uses that are not compatible.

Coordination for providing public facilities and services to public or private entities is key in the process of discouraging leapfrog development. Developments with requirements beyond existing levels of facilities and services should not be allowed to develop until such services can be provided and maintained. The City of Fargo should site and schedule essential public facilities as required, but enforcement of the comprehensive plan policies and development regulations is needed to ensure reasonable compatibility with other land uses.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage new development or redevelopment in established areas where vacant land is appropriate for facilities and services, and where protection of an existing neighborhood can be ensured. Public facilities and utilities should be located to maximize the efficiency of services provided; minimize the costs; and minimize their impacts upon the natural environment.

CONCLUSION:

Leapfrog development is evidenced by patchy development on the outskirts of the community and numerous overlooked vacant parcels within Fargo. One of the most strategic ways to limit leapfrog development is to identify and utilize existing vacant land with full services. Establishing an inventory of vacant land with information on key parameters such as allowable uses, ownership, and public facilities would be instrumental in the success of efforts to prohibit leapfrog development.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 206: Neighborhood Structure/School Enrollment Areas

BACKGROUND:

The actions taken on the policy of Neighborhood Structure and Elementary School Enrollment Areas may have a critical impact on the efforts taken by the City to preserve and foster the small community atmosphere and the idea that a school is a neighborhood focal point. In the decision making process for new development of public elementary schools, the choice of whether the optimal school enrollment size should be from 800 to 1,600 students or whether that number should be no more than 800 students is in question.

It is good for the educational process and family support of students and schools, for students to live close to schools. The City of Fargo has several very successful models or examples of neighborhoods with elementary schools at an enrollment of 300 to 400 students. The enrollment area of these models are generally within walking distance from the school and the atmosphere of the neighborhoods relay a sense of community within it.

In considering the best interest of students and the community, there are factors that support the idea that bigger is better and factors that support the idea that bigger is not better. In fairness to citizens with different views on this issue, a formal presentation of the facts and philosophies should be given prior to the City adopting this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt residential development plans that improve the probability that children can live within walking distance of an elementary school with an enrollment goal to be established in conjunction with the School Board, Planning Commission, and City Commission.

CONCLUSION:

In bringing the issue of Neighborhood Structure and Elementary School Enrollment Areas forward through the Living Spaces Committee, we invite the public to voice their opinion. The character and community role of existing elementary schools with less than 800 students should be preserved. The overall recommendation of this committee is for the City to adopt this policy.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 207: **Strengthen Focal Points**

BACKGROUND:

A neighborhood focal point may be a school, park, lake, or other natural or man-made feature, but it is whatever makes the families of that neighborhood turn to as a central gathering point. Normally the limits of a focal point's ability to attract people is to where the distance is perceived as being too great, or a major arterial street or feature causes a blockage for pedestrian access.

Each neighborhood has an identified focal point of some scale or magnitude and these focal points should be preserved and enhanced as the center of neighborhood cohesion. Public accessibility must be designated and land use planning must include provisions for reasonably extending access to the focal points through an open space network of parks and non-motorized pedestrian walkways.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should identify focal points in existing residential neighborhood area plans and neighborhoods, and establish guidelines to preserve and enhance these centers of neighborhood cohesion. As developers or owners come before the Planning Commission with development or redevelopment projects, these projects must reflect means for connecting and integrating the neighborhood focal point in new and existing neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

Preservation and means for enhancing the atmosphere of small town living in our existing residential neighborhoods can be obtained through supporting and promoting neighborhood focal points. The focal points are many times the center of the character or individuality of that neighborhood, and also a part of the character of the City of Fargo. Continued efforts must be made to promote the sense of community pride over old focal points in each existing residential neighborhoods and also into integrating focal points for each new and developing neighborhood.

* See also Policy 206

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 208: **Linkage**

BACKGROUND:

Safe passages for bicyclers, walkers, and people using other forms of non-motorized transportation are important. One critical aspect of non-motorized transportation is the need for passage or linkage to be expanded between residential neighborhoods and the public or private schools throughout the community. The ability to use or acquire land that connects schools to parks, and parks to residential neighborhoods may not always be an easy task but it must be the shared responsibility of all citizens to meet this need.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should require that developers provide safe and convenient facilities for linkages between schools, parks, and residential neighborhoods. Also, the City and developers should adopt facility design standards and capacity levels which reflect the needs of the local neighborhood and the community.

CONCLUSION:

The Metropolitan Bikeway Plan represents the development of an alternate transportation network within the area, but much of it shares roadway with motorized vehicles. Additionally, this plan is also concerned with serving the community needs for passages into business and shopping areas, rather than only residential areas. Coordination and the sharing of assets must continue between local departments and boards to effectively meet the non-motorized transportation needs of the area and to promote the development of safe and convenient passage among the residential neighborhoods.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 209: Multi-Use

BACKGROUND:

The role that the Fargo Public School District schools play in the summer to provide neighborhood programs to youth may be changing.

The type and quality of facilities available for youth during the summer months are still outstanding. To ensure full utilization and sharing of the school and park facilities, entities must continue to coordinate openly and creatively plan for needed programs. Whether the schools are used by community organizations, for adult education classes, or for neighborhood youth or adult programs, much can be done to share in the facilities operational costs.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should promote programs that support the maintenance of the community's existing public schools and parks, and encourage cooperative funding arrangements of the facilities. Shared use of the community's public facilities should be a key element in the planning of new public facilities to minimize the negative impact of development costs and to enhance learning and development opportunities for youth.

CONCLUSION:

Concerns over rising development and operational costs of public facilities may be addressed through the special Public Facilities Review Committee. The community needs school and park facilities that are fully utilized during the entire year and property that sits idle for parts of the day may serve other programming needs of the community. Communication and coordination of the various entities is again critical in ensuring public facilities are part of the linkage that brings our neighborhoods together in an effective manner.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 210: **Improve Housing (Building) Stock**

BACKGROUND:

In order to maintain the structural integrity, safety, and appearance of existing residential structures in the city, we must recognize that proactive programs to regulate and control use, occupancy, location and maintenance may be required. The type of systems or programs best suited for improving housing (building) stock should be established by home owners, but the actual policing or enforcing of these improvement standards must be done by the City.

Three areas critical to this process of improving housing (building) stock are: 1) Building Codes; 2) Limiting Conversions to Multifamily Residence; and 3) Neighborhood Upgrade. Possibly the best approach to enforcing building codes, in respect to rental property, is through inspecting dwellings at the time of sale or change of occupancy, and through voluntary cooperation by multifamily property owners. In limiting conversions to multifamily residence, guidelines must be provided that identify the maximum allowable density for people, square footage for parking and green space, design standards and also what conversions might be inappropriate based on the predominant use of single and multifamily dwellings in the neighborhood. Lastly, neighborhood upgrade has prohibitive costs that need to be addressed through the creative use of reutilization or rehabilitation funds.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should identify areas of diminishing condition and target those areas with more aggressive programs in building code enforcement, standards limiting multifamily residence conversions, and neighborhood upgrades. If necessary, the City should acquire the property either for City or for private redevelopment to encourage protection of established residential neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

Having adequate shelter, a home of one's own, rental or owned, is probably the largest contributor of a family's self-respect and community identity. By regulating use or care of a home, the owner may perceive this as a negative impact. It is not the intent of this policy to cause financial hardship for the owners of property or to cause the rental price of homes in Fargo to rise and become less affordable. The key to protecting the housing stock in established residential neighborhoods is to get owners involved in discussing their concerns over regulated uses and to invite their participation from the beginning.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 211: **Compatibility Standards**

BACKGROUND:

Compatibility Standards are not meant to describe how our neighbor acts or behaves, but rather are rules or standards for designing and maintaining safe and quality neighborhoods. When you introduce design standards into the zoning ordinance you are introducing the concept of Compatibility Standards. Compatibility Standards are set on a density level, with guidelines as to space use, setbacks, landscaping, style, scale, traffic generation, and visual impacts. As mentioned before, style and scale in neighborhoods should be maintained in new construction or remodeling as integration of businesses and multi-dwelling homes are planned into residential areas.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish Compatibility Standards that are responsive to the character of the existing neighborhood and provide owners and developers with the criteria for design standards and performance zoning.

CONCLUSION:

As the community plans for integrating multi-dwelling homes into existing neighborhoods, Compatibility Standards should be established to promote a better quality of life. Compatibility Standards allow the marketplace to decide how to meet the specified standards that the community sets. Compatibility Standards provide the basis for compromise and flexible criteria for development while attempting to protect the interest of all parties involved.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 212: **Integration and Standards**

BACKGROUND:

New residential development in Fargo should integrate a variety of housing types and an appropriate mix of residential and commercial uses to form neighborhoods that take the activity and residential preference patterns of various categories of households into account. Design criteria, compatibility standards, requirements for pedestrian linkages of schools and parks, focal points, how commercial use blends into living spaces, berm and landscaping, configurations of sidewalks and parking, and performance standards are all factors in this process of integration in new residential development.

The types of mixes of land uses permitted in a residential neighborhood should be based on meeting performance standards for development, as opposed to land use development being limited based on application of existing ridged zoning regulations. A process for residential land use development based on meeting performance standards is critical in encouraging quality neighborhood design and strengthening the role the City plays in promoting community character and identity.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should consider adopting a process in zoning where design and performance standards set the criteria for authorized uses in a zoning district, and allows those authorized uses, if the standards are met.

CONCLUSION:

The conditional use approach to residential land use development is meant to ease the restrictive and prescriptive language of current zoning regulations and to encourage residential development that allows for community dynamics, rather than segregated, separately zoned sites. Performance standards providing specific criteria as to space use, set backs, landscaping, style, scale, traffic generation, and visual impacts are needed for each zoning district. By setting realistic standards, innovative design techniques can be applied to residential development that will benefit the developer, integrate well into the feeling or atmosphere of the neighborhood, and contribute to the quality of the community's neighborhoods. A strong enforcement system should be identified through an appropriate program to ensure the performance standards are followed.

* See also Policy 211

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 213: **Policy Coordination**

BACKGROUND:

Policy for guiding orderly and planned residential development will not be productive unless it is closely coordinated with the policy directions of other aspects of the Comprehensive Policy Plan. One example may be where a certain type of commercial development is inappropriate in a residential development area, but rather than discouraging that development, it can be promoted through the commercial development policy of infill development (infill development is generally the utilization of existing vacant land within areas already developed and served with adequate roads and public facilities).

The overall policy direction for residential development must be compatible with and support various land use planning procedures and practices that guide policy towards accomplishing the best overall results. The role residential development plays in the orderly development of Fargo is closely related to its ability to work through policy coordination with the various other aspects of the plan.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should direct commercial and industrial development away from areas that are not operationally a part of neighborhood services and are not supportive of the nearby residential and school enrollment areas. It is preferable that such development be encouraged to go into areas that are planned commercial and industrial areas.

CONCLUSION:

Residential development policy promotes proposals that have a planned sequence of development. By active policy coordination with all aspects of the Comprehensive Policy Plan the City can avoid inappropriate and premature development pressures on intervening or abutting land not involved in the development proposal under consideration. Additionally, more equitable improvement districts can be achieved and the City will avoid the necessity to negotiate and administrate "bridge deals" and contracts to make a development viable.

* See also policy 106

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 214: **Planning Coordination**

BACKGROUND:

A critical link in effectively promoting a small community atmosphere and the idea that a school is a neighborhood focal point is to integrate the various governmental and civic entities into planning coordination. In respect to residential neighborhoods and their development, the City Planning Department, the Fargo Parks and Recreation Department, and the Fargo Public School System greatly impact the community by their individual land use policy or practices. The perception of this committee is that not all three entities are collectively sharing information and assets, and a certain amount of counterproductive independent institutional thinking and acting is hindering orderly development.

What may be missing is some kind of common cooperative planning process that focuses on identifying the citizen needs and desires for development in residential areas, and strives to meet them in a more collective manner. The system of accountability for each entities actions is already in place through the individual elected boards, but to a certain degree, public awareness, understanding, and involvement in defining land use policy needs to be improved.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should stage and guide development and redevelopment of residential neighborhoods by promoting open and regular communication related to planning and development issues. Coordination between representatives at different levels of various government and civic entities must occur to ensure the community's interests are best met.

CONCLUSION:

Staff from the City of Fargo Planning Department may serve as the "vehicle" to ensure proper communications will develop to promote and continue cooperative efforts associated with the park-school-city concept of orderly development in residential neighborhoods. All three parties involved, the Parks, Schools, and the City sincerely believe they are doing the right thing from their point of view and this policy is not meant to offend anyone. By effectively sharing information and assets related to land use policy, planning, and development of our residential neighborhoods, the City of Fargo can move in the direction most desired by the citizens.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 215: **Public Land or Facility Development**

BACKGROUND:

Public agencies should be more communicative and more cooperative in the process of developing land on or adjacent to residential neighborhoods. With the magnitude of certain public land development, great caution must be exercised to better influence the actions of private development decisions. In the entire process of developing public land or facilities, public agencies should be the leaders in quality projects. Public facilities should be expected to pass the same rigorous review that private developers experience and achieve at least the same levels of conformity to development standards.

A process should be established to hold the City of Fargo, the Fargo Parks and Recreation Department, the Fargo Public School System, and other governmental and public entities to high standards of orderly land use development. By setting the example in proper land use planning and residential neighborhood development, the stewards of our public lands and facilities reconfirm their support of the City land use policies and practices.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should require governmental and public entities to uphold similar standards and practices in the process for public land and public facilities development or redevelopment. Special consideration may be given to projects of limited scale and public impact to best serve the public interests.

CONCLUSION:

It was generally agreed that the immediate need was to create a special committee of the Planning Commission to undertake the core of Public Building Review work. It was felt that the structure of the process should involve the subcommittee early on in the planning of the facility or land use development, and area plans or long range plans for the institution or function must be brought forward for review.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 216: **Minimum Green Space Standards**

BACKGROUND:

The perception of residents in Fargo is that current land use development standards for lot size in high density residential areas is not appropriate. R-3 zoning is the zoning district which allows residential development of buildings with more than eight units per building. R-3 zoning has minimum standards for the required size of the side yard, rear yard, front yard depth, lot area, lot width, and the lot coverage by the building. Even with these zoning standards, apartment buildings can be developed to standard and still not provide a significant amount of green space for its tenants.

Factors other than just the square footage of green space must be considered in the attempt to establish minimum standards. Not all green space should be identified as usable green space. Front or side lots with plantings or structures would not typically be used by the tenants. Another example could be low-lying terrain that may be consistently moist; or rough, uneven terrain that is difficult to walk on. Also, in fairness to developers, they should receive development credit for usable space when they provide courts, pools or other usable public spaces. Efforts by the developers to be responsive to the needs of the tenants is important, but more consideration for providing an appropriate standard for usable green space is a priority.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish appropriate standards for land use development as it relates to usable green space for all residential zoned properties and residential Planned Unit Developments.

CONCLUSION:

Affordable housing in Fargo is important to everyone involved in the land use development process. But the perception is that standards must be raised for the well being of residents in Fargo. The solution to addressing an appropriate standard is possible through coordinated efforts of land speculators, developers, builders and owners or managers. Citizens of Fargo should continue to have a high quality place to live, with reasonable amenities, and at an affordable price.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 217: **Neighborhood Participation**

BACKGROUND:

Throughout the community, residents from time to time experience conflicts with neighbors or public and private entities over land use and traffic development issues. One way for neighbors to voice their concerns in a collective effort is through Neighborhood Associations. Currently, the activity level of any neighborhood association in Fargo is minimal, and certain areas or neighborhoods in Fargo may possibly need assistance in bringing neighbors together over specific issues.

Keeping a "small town feeling" in Fargo has been identified through past public meetings as a goal or focus in directing land use development. The community overall has several positive examples of how neighborhood associations in Fargo have brought neighbors together to work through concerns as the neighborhood was impacted. It appears that the key to any neighborhood association is the need for a local building for meeting (many times this has been an elementary school) and a leader to guide neighbors through the meetings and other activities.

Whether the neighborhood is defined by elementary school enrollment areas or by the City of Fargo Area Plans, it is critical the neighbors are communicating with each other. Fargo can maintain the "small town feeling" with increased assistance and involvement from citizens in the process of land use development.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage citizen participation in the land use development and redevelopment process within their neighborhoods. More interaction is needed with citizens acting individually or as groups to identify the type of assistance the City should provide to neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

Not all neighborhoods may share the same interest in the activities a neighborhood association can create. The downtown neighborhood was identified as an area with a need to address concerns between the local residential community and the business community. As Fargo continues to develop, the complex issues of land use should be addressed with a clear voice of citizen input.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 218: **Balancing of Housing Needs**

BACKGROUND:

Special needs residents, including college students, senior citizens, families with young children, developmentally disabled persons, and homeless people, should be provided adequate housing in the community. Special needs housing in some aspects is sufficient for the special needs residents of the community, but overall the special needs housing seems to be concentrating in specific neighborhoods.

Concentration of population groups can contribute to the physical deterioration of neighborhoods when the City over builds a neighborhood for population groups that are poverty residents. The downtown area, and the fringe of the downtown, are two areas of the community with concentration of almost ten times the number of special needs residents in poverty. Along with the physical deterioration that this concentration may cause, neighborhood businesses and schools have been impacted.

Special needs housing should be addressed in the Area Plan, land use development process to ensure both the needs of the residents are met, plus the needs of the neighborhood are considered.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, through coordinated interjurisdictional efforts, should ensure a fair, equitable, and rational distribution of housing to meet the needs of several population groups. Siting of special needs housing should be consistent throughout the community.

CONCLUSION:

Over building a neighborhood for poverty residents or concentrating population groups can invite future problems or conflicts for the City. The Area Plan can guide future siting of special needs housing, but programs must continue to promote renovation of sites that have considered all aspects of the resident, plus that of the neighborhood.

* See also Policy 212

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 219: **Mixed Use Design Standards**

BACKGROUND:

Mixed use development in Fargo occurs when two or more different land uses are in close proximity to each other. This accidental, or by chance, mixed use development can occur in subdivision developments, planned unit developments, or zoning districts, when adjacent properties are not of similar land use. Mixed use development can enhance the quality of life in neighborhoods, but most often it is intrusive and creates neighborhood frictions due to a lack of design standards.

Mixed use development is more than residential use adjacent to commercial use. As Fargo's residential areas expand, mixing or integrating transitional and entry level housing into residential neighborhoods is necessary. Typically, transitional and entry level housing is an apartment building. Housing statistics for Fargo show that more than 50% of residents currently live in multiple family dwellings and that two thirds of the new residential development is multiple family dwellings.

As the demand for transitional and entry level housing grows in Fargo, public awareness for the need of good mixed use design standards has grown. By developing design standards to guide integration of varying land uses in residential neighborhoods, the City can ensure a high quality of neighborhood design.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should achieve a higher degree of integration of various housing types in residential areas through mixed use design standards.

CONCLUSION:

In conjunction with the City and the housing industry developing mixed use design standards, a community education program for the general public is needed. This program should be presented to generate an awareness of the universal need to accommodate housing for all residents within all neighborhoods.

Mixed use design standards are an additional tool to use in the process of the City upholding its responsibility to provide a framework that development can follow, while still addressing the daily human needs of Fargo residents.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 220: Apartment Complex Scale

BACKGROUND:

Multiple family dwelling units, which include apartments, duplexes, and condominiums, are the answer to affordable housing for many local residents. In the effort to keep development costs low, buildings, and specifically apartments, have grown in scale to typically 200 feet or more in length and three stories high. The zoning regulations for multiple family dwellings (R-3) have no height limitations, and only minimal requirements for lot area required and side, rear, and front yards.

Apartments built into neighborhoods, or developed on R-3 zoned land when no adjacent structures exist, should be designed to scale, or the anticipated scale of future development. Equally important in design as the height and width of the apartments is the concentration of buildings on relatively minimal land areas. An example of large scale apartment complexes that are perceived to be out of scale, are the multiple family dwellings that are adjacent to single family dwellings on the West Fargo side of the Fargo City limits.

As discussed earlier in the Comprehensive Policy Plan, Living Spaces Committee, Good Neighbor Rules, or design standards and performance zoning, are needed to protect the interest of all parties, both the developers and the residents.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt design and performance standards in the zoning ordinance to ensure that housing developments of different scale and type will be compatible with adjacent land uses and the overall character of the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION:

It is difficult to define, but the concentrating of large scale, high density apartment buildings is a means to invite potential land use problems in the future. Design standards that allow appropriate distance between structures, require substantial tree plantings and incorporate design features that create a neighborhood atmosphere are critical. The idea of Good Neighbor Rules must play an equal role in multiple family dwellings as well as in other residential areas of Fargo.

* See also Policy 211

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN
“Circulation”
300

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Ms. Alice Hauan	League of Women Voters
Mr. Lewis Lubka	Clara Barton PTA
Ms. Pamela Schaeffer	Nurses Association/MeritCare Hospital
Mr. Mike Beaton	Planning Commissioner
Ms. Sonja Kosler	Planning Commissioner
Dr. Clarence Samuel	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 301: Access to Arterial Streets

BACKGROUND:

The City of Fargo has a substantial investment in an arterial street system intended to move through traffic to and from major facilities. The term "arterial street" shall also include routes which carry traffic between communities or which provide an entrance or an exit from neighborhoods.

Access, or the entering or the exiting of the arterial street system throughout Fargo, diminishes the traffic capacity and capabilities of the arterial when access is too frequent or unregulated. Curb cuts on arterials that allow traffic flow from neighborhoods without going through collector streets, or curb cuts on arterials that disrupt the functional area of turn lanes at an intersection, will lead to traffic conflict and congestion.

Actions should be taken to preserve the investment in the City's arterial street system and ensure future arterial street development includes appropriate traffic management techniques for access control. By better utilization of collector streets and controlled access, the issues of diminishing traffic capacity and capabilities on arterials can be properly addressed.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish development guidelines to ensure that all local streets have access to arterial streets through a system of collector streets and controlled access.

CONCLUSION:

Certain areas of the City have very poor or unregulated access that has led to traffic conflict or congestion. Citizen requests for additional stop signs or stoplights are not always the appropriate technique to manage access control. It is better to control access to arterial streets through collector streets and proper placement of controlled access points.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 302: **City-wide Transit**

BACKGROUND:

Fargo runs a regular, fixed route transit service with a goal to get as many people as possible where they need to go, when they need to be there and safely. Over the last couple years the service went from one downtown transfer location to transfer points at West Acres, the South High School area, and the North Broadway area.

Fargo Transit is working with the Planning Commission and Metro COG to coordinate meeting the transit requirements for developing subdivisions. Planning for bus turnouts and bus stops, plus building public parking lots to a standard that support the weight of the buses are two critical elements that need to be addressed. Additionally, a worksheet for developers to help evaluate the compatibility of their development to accommodate the City transit system has also been drafted with assistance from the Metro COG. To ensure City-wide Transit service is provided to residents, coordinated efforts must continue that plan for future development needs, plus evaluate and enhance the existing transit services.

City-wide Transit is important to the transit-dependent population in Fargo, as well as for residents seeking an alternate means of transportation. Public transportation must remain available and be offered throughout the City to ensure the opportunity to participate in all community functions and services.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Fargo Transit Department should establish a process for evaluating service boundaries and service extensions which includes criteria to determine the feasibility of providing service to new areas. Transit planning must include the evaluation of ridership, promotion and marketing.

CONCLUSION:

The transit system in Fargo must continue to be easy to access, be comfortable, affordable and take residents where they want to go. A lack of funding for Transit Department operations has caused shortfalls in the evaluation and tracking of ridership, plus the promotion and marketing of transit services needs to be emphasized. A recommendation is for the Metro COG to play an active role in Fargo's transit planning and evaluation as it relates to Land Use Development in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 303: **Bikeway Facilities/Planning**

BACKGROUND:

Perhaps since the late 1970's, bikeways in the City of Fargo have evolved from a single six-foot wide recreational trail along certain parts of the Red River into a more sophisticated bikeway system that is growing faster than the growth of the City. Demands placed on the bikeway system are not only directed toward facility expansion but also include requirements to design bikeways that are appropriate for the transportation and recreational needs of bicyclists at various skill levels. As we approach the 21st Century, more coordinated planning efforts between the City, the park district, the public schools, the metro COG, adjacent communities, and various public and private interest groups is needed to accommodate the many people we have in the community.

Critical to future bikeway development is the ongoing program to install improvements and ensure maintenance and replacement occurs at the appropriate locations. Design for bikeways will possibly be determined on a case by case basis for individual road and subdivision development projects. Enhanced coordination is necessary to ensure bikeway continuity and siting of paths along the river. Also, an aggressive maintenance program is needed to address the bikeway needs of the community.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should continue to work with other jurisdictions to develop an integrated area-wide plan for bicycling. The plan should ensure appropriate facility maintenance and continuity of bikeways for bicycle transportation and recreation with other jurisdictions, communities and specific bicycle interest groups.

CONCLUSION:

Planning for development of bikeways must continue to be part of the developer's land use plan, institutional plans, and the City Area Plans. The Metro COG is the local planning agency with the overall responsibility for the metropolitan bikeway planning. Coordination must continue to focus through the Metro COG. The bikeway system design analysis and review for safety features and the public safety awareness program for bicyclists cannot be overemphasized. This non-motorized mode of transportation and recreation will continue to expand in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 304: **Balanced Circulation Grid**

BACKGROUND:

The circulation backbone for the City of Fargo dates back to the days when the railroad and the Red River moved virtually all goods and materials. As time progressed, the Interstate Highway System enhanced the circulation of goods and materials, plus gave greater mobility to people moving throughout the City, and also entering and exiting Fargo. To accommodate the intercity movement of people, goods, and services, development of section line roads (one mile apart) rapidly became the standard to build around. The City of Fargo relies heavily on this section line grid. Along with this improved mobility for personal travel, barriers existed or were created that had to be bypassed to support provisions of a safe, efficient, and cost effective road system for the future.

Crossing these natural or man-made barriers has been consistent, systematic, and with few deficiencies in Fargo. The Red River has bridges at the City's north and south boundaries or limits, but lacks bridges between 12th Avenue North and County Road 20, and also between Main Avenue and 52nd Avenue South. The Interstate System of I-29 and I-94 within the Fargo City limits has a crossing every mile with only two exceptions; 1) the 7th Avenue North crossing was built over I-29 to support traffic flow to the City Landfill; and 2) 32nd Avenue North and I-29 is adjacent to the Hector International Airport runways.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should continue to develop section line road corridors for a potential capacity of 20,000 plus vehicle trips per day, and with continuity that bypasses natural or man-made barriers when reasonably possible. Barriers should be crossed at a minimum of every two miles and at one-mile intervals where feasible.

CONCLUSION:

To maintain a balanced circulation grid, arterial roads should continue to cross the Red River and the Interstate Highways at one mile intervals. If barriers or interruptions are allowed along these high traffic volume corridors, traffic problems will compound. By ensuring adherence to design standards established through City regulations and City policy, adjacent land uses will experience high levels of compatibility with traffic. Fargo must be encouraged to grow and expand to its fullest potential, and a balanced circulation grid is just one critical element.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 305: **Transportation Systems Management (TSM)**

BACKGROUND:

Transportation systems management (TSM) in Fargo involves the coordination of automobiles, trucks, public transit, taxis, pedestrians, and bicycles through policies to achieve maximum efficiency for the existing transportation facilities as a whole. Along with the TSM mobility objectives, City traffic engineers focus on improving public safety, energy conservation, air quality, economic efficiency, and environmental and community quality objectives.

TSM strategies place direct emphasis on practical and low-cost methods for implementing transportation improvements. TSM strategies along high traffic volume corridors, with either residential or high impact land uses may vary slightly, but it is critical that land use development includes the criteria of the "Traffic/Land Use Matrix" (see Policy 307). By ensuring appropriate roadway and right-of-way widths, controlled access, and lanes required criteria, TSM strategies can be practical and allow for increasing capacity along these corridors to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes. On low traffic volume roads along residential areas of the community, TSM strategies may be less critical, but development criteria for use of collector streets around local streets, restricted continuity on local streets, and setback standards become key factors in ensuring community quality objectives are met. Long range land use development planning must continue to accommodate the transportation short range Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should continue land use development practices that allow Transportation Systems Management (TSM) strategies that are practical and low cost, plus enhance the overall quality of the community's transportation system.

CONCLUSION:

Access control for major arterials to minimize disruption in traffic flow; turn lanes to allow turning vehicles to move out of through traffic lanes; and signal interconnect systems to facilitate smooth traffic flow; are but a few TSM strategies. Through continual long range land use planning and short range TSM planning, Fargo can improve personal mobility while improving public safety and enhancing environmental and community quality of life.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 306: **Pedestrian Plan**

BACKGROUND:

Non-motorized methods of travel in Fargo continue to become more popular for various interest and age groups of citizens. Balancing the provisions, and accommodating the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians in the City is done in part by the Metro COG, the City of Fargo, the Fargo Park District, the Fargo School District, and various other interest groups. The goal of any entity is to encourage the provisions of facilities for non-motorized movement, including sidewalks, where it is appropriate to provide safe and convenient access between properties and facilities.

The citywide plan for pedestrian walkways, skyways, or crossings will overlap with bikeway planning due to funding and practicality, but greater emphasis must be placed on identifying the Fargo pedestrian system for the future. Additionally, the minimum standard of 8-foot wide bike paths must be maintained along all arterial and collector streets, and a 10-foot width should be encouraged when feasible. In coordinated efforts between entities represented in the Fargo-Moorhead Bikeway/Pedestrian Committee, committee members currently monitor and recommend changes to the Metro COG Pedestrian Plan. As the committee identifies the range of pedestrian needs, the overall pedestrian plan for Fargo continues to develop with the continuity and diversity of features that the citizens of Fargo desire.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should ensure proposed subdivision plats serve the pedestrian needs of the community in coordination with the recommendations of the Fargo-Moorhead Bikeway/Pedestrian Committee as it relates to the Fargo Pedestrian Plan.

CONCLUSION:

A complete design of the future pedestrian system in Fargo should be identified that includes trails to show the public what the City is doing for the next 20 years. A single entity is not able to address the complex issues of this plan without enhanced citizen involvement and support. Portions of the plan have been implemented, but Fargo's pedestrian trails have the potential to reach all areas and interest groups of the community more expeditiously by utilizing the City's existing land use development processes.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Circulation"

Policy Letter 307: **Traffic/Land Use Matrix**

BACKGROUND:

All land use development in the City of Fargo, whether it is low to high density residential use, or low impact commercial to high impact industrial use, must be accommodated or supported by a safe and functional motorized transportation system. The City builds local roads to allow residents personal access and services for their homes and certain businesses. Next, collector roads are built around local roads to gather traffic from more private areas, and moves that traffic to our arterial roads. Arterial roads or corridors are the high traffic volume (20,000-30,000 vehicle trips per day) streets throughout the community, and are built on a one-mile grid or what are called section line roads.

Each land use has varying sensitivity to the impact that traffic can create. Equally, traffic corridors or roads can have their capacity and efficiency greatly restricted when adjacent land uses are not designed to allow compatibility. To compliment the City's system of local, collector, and arterial streets, City of Fargo subdivision and zoning regulations guide and require land use and design standards. The Traffic/Land Use Matrix is a group of policies and development design criteria meant to give both builders and public decision makers supplemental guidelines in ensuring traffic and land use compatibility in Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt supplemental land use design criteria and traffic corridor controls and policies as required to ensure compatibility between current and future land use development and the motorized transportation system.

CONCLUSION:

Policies, regulations, and design criteria are for the benefit of the landowners, users of our public transportation system, and the entire community. The metro COG will continue through a coordinated effort with the City to plan and address the long and short range traffic needs of the community. But by developing the Traffic/Land Use Matrix to supplement existing guidelines, future transportation and land use decisions can produce development or redevelopment projects with fewer negative impacts on the public. Additionally, the matrix provides a basis to evaluate new corridor development with specific design standards that may be applied if mitigation is requested.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN
“Special Issues”
400

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Ms. Martha DiCicco	Jefferson PTA
Ms. Pat Nugent	FM Human Resource Association
Ms. Linda Boyd Coates	Lake Agassiz Arts Council
Mr. Ron Erickson	Neuropsychiatric Research Institute
Ms. Susan Hunke	Former Planning Commissioner
Ms. Jeannette Stanton	Former Planning Commissioner
Mr. Randy Naslund	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Ray Gross	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Lowell Wolff	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Special Issues"

Policy Letter 401: Use of Assets

BACKGROUND:

Two key statements covering street repair and maintenance and renovation were made:

1. Poor street maintenance and renovation may be a contributing factor to the deterioration of neighborhoods.
2. The City should strengthen the street maintenance and renovation program.

The overall condition of a City's infrastructure is a contributing factor to the residents' quality of life. The diminishing quality of the surface of roads throughout Fargo, at a minimum, gives residents the perception that their tax money is not being used efficiently. Various factors play a role in the apparent decline, or the lack of sufficient funding that is being programmed for City-wide street repair and maintenance and renovation. It does appear that a long-range street maintenance and renovation plan would be needed to address the street maintenance and renovation needs of Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should evaluate the City-wide street maintenance and renovation program, and develop strategies to improve operating systems to ensure that street conditions are not a contributing factor to the deterioration of existing neighborhoods.

CONCLUSION:

Quality of life and the preservation of existing neighborhoods are the base issues related to the appropriate Use of Assets. Financial mechanisms must focus on the maintenance and renovation of the inner City, and specifically on the repair and restoration of the enormous investment the City has in the existing transportation system. The citizens of Fargo should have a clear understanding on how priorities for funding street projects and maintenance and renovation is established, and how the street maintenance program will address their concerns.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Special Issues"

Policy Letter 402: **Public Information Aid**

BACKGROUND:

A Public Information Aid is needed to assist citizens in identifying and understanding the various resources that they may access for housing. This aid could be described as a "do you know" of information that would combine information in one place, allowing citizens to see the complete range of housing resources that are available through the City. The goal of this aid is to access information to empower people.

The League of Women Voters provide residents in Fargo with a free calendar each year. The calendar identifies the city services, and briefly describes the role each department plays in providing those services. This public information aid is a great example of the type of information aid that is needed to address housing programs established to assist both homeowners and renters alike.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should produce an informational device that provides residents of the community with an all-inclusive listing of housing resources available through the City.

CONCLUSION:

Housing programs, services, and assistance information is available to the public, but the communication gap for the average resident appears to be on how to access that information. One possible example of this can be seen in the fact that a number of eligible seniors in Fargo are not participating in the senior citizen tax abatement program.

The marketing and promotion of this proposed public information aid is key. The desired effect of this aid is to empower people. This can be a positive step forward and lead to an increased quality of life for those citizens who are eligible.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Special Issues"

Policy Letter 403: **Downtown Plan**

BACKGROUND:

A focus group with members from the Fargo Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association is currently looking at the needs for downtown Fargo. The goal of this group is to design an aesthetic setting in the downtown. The review of a 2nd Avenue Corridor Study done a few years ago was suggested as a starting point if new energy would be identified to put ideas to work. A possible entity to address the need for an aesthetic downtown plan could be a downtown neighborhood association. The association could figure out the dynamics of the downtown and put together a program.

A downtown plan would have many complex issues to consider in housing, commercial, transportation, and public activities. A plan that is used throughout neighborhoods in Fargo and could be the basis for the downtown plan is the Area Plan. An Area Plan guides land use development decisions and considers issues of:

- 1) parking and circulation
- 2) compatible land use
- 3) stimulation of commercial enterprises
- 4) residential neighborhoods

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should facilitate an Area Plan which draws on the many plans in existence for the downtown. The Area Plan will include appropriate details and information necessary to guide the Planning Commission in land use development decisions.

CONCLUSION:

By the City of Fargo taking the lead in developing a Downtown Area Plan, a basis can be established for sustained planning in the land use activities of the downtown. Information that may be specific to a downtown area plan could be incorporated with the current area plan criteria.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Special Issues"

Policy Letter 404: **Maintenance of the City Core**

BACKGROUND:

Relative to many other cities our size and age, the overall condition of the downtown area is very good. This can be traced to many private investment projects in the downtown, particularly the financial institutions. Also, there has been a long and almost continuous series of redevelopment decisions and investments made from the public. Because of the above activities and the continuing work of interest groups like the Downtown Business Association (DBA) and the Fargo Chamber of Commerce, the image of downtown remains strong.

What is the public expectation for and hope for the downtown? Incentives should be programmed to protect and reinforce downtown activities, and to bring development cost in the downtown area in line with the development cost on the edge of town. In the final analysis, the underlying question relating to the downtown is what role does the downtown play in the image and identification of the City of Fargo? The answers to these questions will guide public decisions that are made which have a bearing on the future of the maintenance of the City Core.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should target the City Core with incentives to ensure that development of this area is economically feasible. A balanced targeting of incentives is required between the City Core and the fringe areas of Fargo.

CONCLUSION:

Failure to maintain the electrical, mechanical, and circulation systems of aging structures may render a building almost without value or use. Additionally, some properties in the downtown area can have elements of obsolescence. This obsolescence can be a liability to itself, and sometimes to adjoining properties, as a result of the visual image relationship that results.

The justification to support the maintenance of the City Core can be further magnified. Most of the benefit of public financing of infrastructure and federal funds to corridor development usually goes to the fringe or growth areas of the City, causing further deterioration to the City Core.

* See also Policy 210

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN

“Utilities”

500

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Mr. Scott Handy	Cass County Electric Coop.
Ms. Lois Wenger	FM Apartment Association
Mr. Ron Pederson	Northern States Power Company
Mr. John Postovit	US West Communications
Ms. Sue Braun	Downtown Business Association
Mr. Richard Burns	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Rolfe Tehven	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 501: **Joint Utility Trenching**

BACKGROUND:

Public comments suggest that local residents are interested in underground gas, electric, telephone and cable television lines. Utility providers in Fargo place distribution lines underground when feasible. Public right-of-ways serve two primary purposes: to move traffic and as a location for utilities. Competition for space in this public right-of-way has grown to include space for wider roads, sidewalks, tree plantings, and space for piling snow. This competition for space has virtually forced private utility providers out of the boulevard or the public right-of-way.

Proposed easements for the siting of private utility lines and facilities should be included on the final plat. A method to coordinate and better utilize the space within this easement is through a process called joint utility trenching. Joint utility trenching is when two or more utility lines are placed in the same trench or ditch. In the process of joint utility trenching, public safety may be improved and customers may also experience service benefits.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should ensure that private utility easements are included on the final plat of all development proposals. Joint utility trenching of gas, electricity, cable television, and telephone lines should be encouraged to enhance public safety and customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION:

Joint trenching, in new development as well as in restoration projects, can assist in minimizing the costs associated with the installation of private utilities. Additionally, joint trenching may reduce the number of citizen complaints over unnecessary cuts made through streets or established yards.

Two critical factors appear to be associated with joint utility trenching. One is the ability of utility providers to communicate among themselves over proposed work schedules, and second is the willingness for one of the entities to take a lead as the point of contact for developers. Joint trenching may not work in all situations, but overall it can reduce some of the land use and utility frictions that occur in the land use development process.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 502: **Storm Water Retention Standards**

BACKGROUND:

The collection, transport, and disposal of storm water is normally handled by a system of storm sewers. Storm sewers can convey storm water by a closed system of interconnected pipes, open systems of drainage, or as in Fargo, a combination of the two. As more development occurs, trees and vegetation are removed and the ground surface is covered with buildings, pavement and other surfaces, storm water increases. So, as growth occurs, storm drainage systems become more important.

No storm water utility fee is charged in the City of Fargo. Depending on the type of development, land uses vary in the amount of storm water that is absorbed into the ground or runs off. As a general rule of thumb, agricultural land has a 20% runoff, residential land has a 40% runoff, commercial or industrial land has a 60% runoff, and of course, paved areas have 100% runoff.

City engineers are developing storm water regulations and are looking at a storm water utility. Development throughout Fargo utilizes retention ponds. These retention ponds may be parks, natural areas, lakes, or other land uses. Retention ponds hold or retain the storm water until the storm sewers can move the storm water to the Red River or until the water is absorbed into the ground.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt storm water regulations that identify allowable discharge levels and storm water retention standards as they relate to the various land uses.

CONCLUSION:

Storm water management must include standards for retention plus deal with new federal storm water regulations. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a process to file a Storm Water Management Plan. This plan has standards to evaluate the quality of storm water runoff, and through the guidelines of the plan may direct the City to manage pollutants in the water.

The City of Fargo will continue to design storm sewers and storm water retention ponds that are able to accommodate 100% of the development with discharges very similar to zero development. But equally, developers should share some of the storm water management responsibilities as these responsibilities develop.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 503: **Metropolitan Water Authority**

BACKGROUND:

Residents throughout the metropolitan area rely on both groundwater and surface water to provide adequate potable water for drinking, washing, and watering. At least two factors are important to consider when addressing water management. First, residents must have the assurance that an adequate source of water is available and can be provided. And secondly, residents must have access to potable water to meet their needs and the overall needs of the Metropolitan Area.

A finite, or limited amount of water is available from the Red River, Sheyenne River, and the aquifers of this region. Additionally, surface and groundwater drastically fluctuates in water volume and are at constant risk to contaminants.

Growth in the metropolitan area has placed greater demands on our water resources. Water requirements for the commercial and residential areas have the potential to double or triple in demand. Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo, Dilworth, and the many other communities and residential developments in the rural area should be involved in meeting the community water needs. Actions should be taken to ensure the water resources of this area are managed in a manner that is fair and equitable for all metropolitan residents.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, in coordinated effort with entities represented through the Metropolitan Council of Governments, should ensure a professional investigation is conducted as to the feasibility of a Metropolitan Water Authority.

CONCLUSION:

Residents of this area want low taxes and adequate services. The fair and equitable use and conservation of our natural resources are the responsibilities of all residents, whether urban or rural, Minnesotan or North Dakotan. Mayors from each community and representatives from rural areas should meet to ensure agreements over the management of the region's water resources are made. The Water Authority must serve the base infrastructure and ensure equity. A balance of costs and benefits of all services provided to each community is needed. The water resources of this area can be managed best through the collective voice of all residents in the metropolitan area.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 504: **Floodplain Management**

BACKGROUND:

The flat nature of the terrain and slow permeability of the soil in Fargo make it susceptible to flooding. Equally, the Red River Valley area is susceptible to long and extensive flooding during the spring snow melt and after periods of heavy rain.

The floodplain is described as the land area that could be covered by a flood on an average of once every 100 years. As you move closer to the Red River and the elevation of the land decreases, you may now be talking about a 10-year floodplain or even the floodway. Management of the floodplain is a land use development function. As Fargo develops, some of the new developments are built into the 100-year floodplain which subsequently modifies the floodplain. Typically, this development in the floodplain contains habitable basements. The federal government's willingness to insure such space appears to be changing.

Drainage and storm water runoff patterns have also been modified in the floodplain, due in many cases to the current land use development practices. As land use development continues to modify the 100-year floodplain, a critical review and analysis of the floodplain is needed to ensure public health and safety.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo, in cooperation with other governmental entities, should conduct a review of drainage, flooding, and storm water runoff in Fargo and nearby jurisdictions. Floodplain management guidance should be provided for any corrective actions required.

CONCLUSION:

Even if this review of drainage, flooding, and storm water runoff reveals that there is no threat to public health or safety, the residents of Fargo should have an understanding of any potential for loss or damage of public and private property due to development in the floodplain.

Citizens of Fargo have experienced increased storm water flooding. Storm water runoff appears to have increased to a level that may require a utility fee for land use development when retention standards are not achievable. The concern of residents is that floodplain management needs to be reviewed and any corrective actions that may be required are implemented.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 505: **Home Storm Water Crossover**

BACKGROUND:

Recent storm water runoff flooding throughout Fargo has raised the level of concern in citizens over current floodplain management policy. Development regulations require Fargo residents to ensure that sump pumps discharge storm water into the yard, and not into the sanitary sewer. The discharge of water from the home sump pumps may appear insignificant to residents, but the sanitary sewers are not designed to receive that storm water flow.

Complicating the issue of floodplain management is the possibility that future federal regulations may require storm water runoff to be treated similar to sanitary sewer discharge. The storm sewers and the sanitary sewers are designed to accommodate the transport of storm water runoff and sanitary waste respectively, but not safely when the two are combined in the sanitary sewer.

Residents of Fargo can assist the City in the overall floodplain management process by being in compliance with the home storm water crossover regulations. Loss or damage of public and private property may not be totally avoidable, but much can be accomplished through simple compliance with regulations intended to support storm water design features.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish a process to ensure 100% compliance with home storm water crossover regulations, especially new construction and renovation.

CONCLUSIONS:

The future of how storm water runoff may be treated or handled is unknown, but current regulations must be followed. A storm water utility fee may be necessary to offset the cost of changes required by federal regulations in the future.

The City of Fargo manages the 100-year floodplain, but each resident plays a role in the responsibility. No management plan can succeed when involved parties abuse the process rather than support the plan.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 506: **Volume-Based Garbage Fees**

BACKGROUND:

One of the few public services that are offered to citizens of Fargo at a rate that is not volume-based is the disposal of solid waste. The City requires local residents to dispose of yard waste at centrally located recycle sites, but generally speaking, there is no limit to the amount of solid waste a resident can deposit on the curb.

The estimated life of the Fargo Landfill is approximately 35 years. Federal regulations have placed restrictions on the use and care of landfills that restrict small communities from having a local landfill. Because of this, Fargo has evolved into a regional landfill, serving numerous communities and private solid waste haulers. Based on continuous changes in the solid waste management program, forecasting for the future siting of a Fargo landfill is difficult. All efforts should be made to reduce the volume of solid waste arriving at the landfill, and the fees charged to dispose of the waste should be balanced for all citizens.

POLICY STATEMENT:

A strong enforcement system must supplement the Solid Waste Management Plan to discourage illegal dumping and encourage waste reduction and recycling programs.

CONCLUSION:

The City of Fargo provides a reliable and cost-effective service that is essential to the residents of Fargo. This solid waste disposal service should have utility rates that reward those who recycle and reduce solid waste, and charge accordingly those residents with higher solid waste volumes.

One concern in managing this program will be in the consideration of charging residents who deposit solid waste in dumpsters at apartments. No program can be flawless, but the current policy for solid waste disposal rates are not in line with the volume-based policies established with other utility service rates.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 507: Cost-Effective Utility Services

BACKGROUND:

Gas, electricity, cable television, and telephone service providers throughout Fargo respond to requests for service in the most direct and feasible manner possible. Land use development in Fargo is diverse and ever changing, but methods or practices that enhance the siting of cost-effective utility services are needed:

- 1) New residential, commercial, and industrial development should only be allowed when required public facilities and services are available or are provided through other mechanisms prior to or concurrent with development.
- 2) Joint use utility corridors should be encouraged, provided that such joint use is consistent with limitations prescribed by applicable law and prudent utility practice.
- 3) Jurisdictional coordination should be encouraged to continue to resolve any potential conflicts between public facility providers with established utility service within the City limits and newly-annexed areas.

Additional cost-effective methods may be identified through continued coordination between utility providers, the customers, and the City of Fargo. The highest levels of services can be achieved from utility providers while still providing these services at the lowest possible rates.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt land use development methods or practices that maximize the cost-effectiveness of providing utility services while still maintaining the highest possible levels of service and safety.

CONCLUSION:

Various diverse and complex land use development plans are frequently proposed. Solutions for allowing these proposals are at times delayed due to financial limitations. By the City taking the lead in encouraging methods or practices to provide cost-effective utility services, cost can be less of a restricting factor in land use development.

Methods to provide cost-effective utility services play a key role in the direction of land use development in Fargo. Utility providers will continue to respond to all service requests, but with further assistance from the City, these services may be provided at a lower cost for all parties.

*See also Policy 601 & 205

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 508: Utility Coordination

BACKGROUND:

Coordination and communication among utility providers may vastly be improved through Policy 501 of the Comprehensive Policy Plan, "Joint Utility Trenching". The coordination and communication between utility providers and staff from the City Planning or the City Engineering Department may require other means.

The City of Fargo provides land use growth plans to utility providers in the form of a land use plat, zoning map, or an area plan. The utility providers can provide the City with plans that identify utility projects and major infrastructure. Currently, much of the private utilities development has been reactive to construction and has been following land use development. Utility providers meet with staff from the City Engineering or Planning Departments, but these meetings are typically project oriented rather than long range and comprehensive.

More coordination is needed to ensure utility services and facilities are consistent with the land use development plans of Fargo. Both utility providers and the general public can benefit by the City taking a more active role in ensuring the communication between utility providers and the City of Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should hold periodic coordination meetings for utility providers. The meetings are to enhance consistency between the comprehensive system plans of each utility provider and the growth plans for the City.

CONCLUSION:

In addition to the current coordination that takes place, perhaps there could be a biennial or more frequent meeting with City representatives and private utility providers. This meeting would be to talk about long-range proposals or ideas, both from the perspective of the utility provider and from the City.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 509: **Site Runoff**

BACKGROUND:

The City of Fargo has two major land portions with respect to storm water drainage. The first area is that portion of the City close to the Red River. The second major portion of the City is that area of the City, and the extraterritorial area, generally west of University Drive on the north side and west of 25th Street South on the south side.

Storm water drainage from a neighborhood site is accomplished through a combination of storm sewer inlets, ditches, and holding ponds. The storm sewer inlets are placed in appropriate locations, both along the streets and in the backyards of low density residential areas. Also, a system of ditches follows the terrain in a way that moves storm water from the rear or side yards to a storm sewer inlet. And in some cases, holding ponds are designed to aid in the drainage system.

Not all land use development proposals properly address the control of storm water drainage as it relates to the adjacent land uses. Additionally, modifications or changes by builders or home owners to an existing drainage system may impact the neighborhood. The City recommends the rear yard grades, but not all builders develop the land to those elevation standards. Also, fencing or placement of obstacles in the drainage system can alter the flow of runoff and cause a negative impact on the adjacent land uses.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should require that land use development and redevelopment proposals include a site runoff control plan which has been approved by the City Engineer prior to final plat approval by the City Commission. Site runoff controls should manage the runoff of each lot without causing a negative impact on the adjacent land uses or the character of the areas's drainage system.

CONCLUSION:

The provisions of a site runoff control plan should address the necessary requirements for new development and an equitable way to handle existing runoff situations. Building permits should be withheld on lots in a plat with inadequate runoff controls. Lots that were not developed to the City's recommended rear yard grade should be identified. Perhaps a fee could be established as part of a storm water utility. This fee could pay for runoff engineering or construction to correct existing runoff situations where site runoff controls are inadequate.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Utilities"

Policy Letter 510: **Infrastructure Funding**

BACKGROUND:

The community works very hard to coordinate its planning objectives, with real development decisions and with real engineering requirements. However, very often these efforts are frustrated or driven by the amount, method and mechanics of financing the construction, improvement or maintenance of streets, sewer, water and all of the other municipal hardware that is necessary to make development work. The system, as it is, can frustrate good decision-making. Pressures to make improvements can cause inequities between those who must pay and those who benefit. Maintenance budgets must compete with new construction. Either deferred maintenance or deferred construction can raise ultimate cost substantially. In the end, attempts at orderly decision-making can run aground on disjointed financing systems.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish a process to study existing infrastructure funding in order to determine if the current mix of special assessments, sales tax, state, and federal revenues are sufficient to allow for planned future growth and maintenance of the existing infrastructure.

CONCLUSION:

The Capital Improvement Program, developed by the Public Works Department has been a great first step in rationalizing the City's public works financing. What seems to be needed to strengthen this is an outside consultant working with key personnel of the City. The consultant should evaluate the existing financing system which would include engineering and administrative fees as well as the method of allocating those costs to the property. The study could evaluate alternative financing mechanisms such as impact fees, other tax sources, and possibilities for savings. Finally, this study should examine the impacts of economic development incentives, as well as other development incentives.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN

“Public Spaces”

600

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Name	Organization Represented
Ms. Kathleen O’Neel	Landscape Design
Mr. Durk Cressey	Fargo Senior Commission
Mr. Calvin Schaible	Lincoln PTA
Ms. Laura Carney	Fargo School Board
Ms. Deb Rohrich	Centennial PTA
Ms. Arlene Kensok	Centennial PTA
Ms. Rhonda Loberg	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Jim Nelson	Planning Commissioner
Mr. Don Puetz	Planning Commissioner

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 601: **Park Land Acquisition Guidelines**

BACKGROUND:

New parks and recreation facilities will be required to adequately serve the needs of Fargo's residents in both the growing neighborhoods and the established neighborhoods. In addition to providing recreational opportunities, a well planned park system can contribute to aesthetic character and the environmental preservation of the City.

The City of Fargo has approximately 20,000 acres of developed land, and about 10% or 2,000 acres is park land. Land use developers in Fargo are not required by ordinance or any mandatory restriction on development to provide land for park use. Also, not all land use developers dedicated land for park use at the same levels or percentage.

Guidelines to ensure land use developers equally share the responsibility of providing new parks and recreation facilities are needed. Coordination between the Park Planners, City Planners, and developers for park land dedication has been successful. Additionally, developers now have the ability to special assess the development of park land and ensure the park land is fully operational in conjunction with families moving into the homes.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish park land acquisition guidelines to ensure the needs of residents are met, in both developing and established neighborhoods throughout Fargo.

CONCLUSION:

Mandatory park land dedication or money in lieu of land is a method that many cities use in park planning. The City of Fargo has developed a broad range of parks and recreational facilities throughout the community even in the absence of mandatory park land dedication. Guidelines should be established to provide for adequate City-wide park and recreational facilities. The current park land to developed land ratio of 10 to 1 acres appears to offer the community a high level of recreation services. The concern is that not all land use developers share equally in their responsibility to provide the citizens of Fargo with adequate park land throughout the community.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 602: **Park Deficient Areas**

BACKGROUND:

Parks are essential for the well being of the City. They provide opportunities for recreation, areas for storm water runoff, and development breaks and scenic views. All residents of Fargo desire a variety of parks for active and passive recreational opportunities, organized sports, picnics, and environmental enjoyment.

The City area plans are a land use planning tool that maps the intended land use throughout each neighborhood of Fargo. Not all area plans have an equal distribution of pocket parks, neighborhood parks, neighborhood play fields, community parks, special purpose parks, and linear parks. The City's older or established neighborhoods have numerous examples of what appear to be park deficient areas. Land around NDSU for children to play appears to be lacking; the North Fargo High School area has limited park land; and bike paths and pedestrian ways have limited continuity along the river in North Fargo. Along with the park deficient areas, there may be deficiencies in the necessary linkage or passage between park areas. The park needs of Fargo are not limited to older neighborhoods and a periodic comprehensive evaluation of park needs could answer the questions on where residents face park land deficiencies.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should conduct a City-wide park and recreation facilities needs assessment. The findings of the park needs assessment should be related to the service standards and expectations of residents in the community.

CONCLUSION:

The development of new parks within established older neighborhoods presents a formidable challenge because of the difficulty and expense of acquiring suitable land. Residents may resist more taxes or assessments but each resident shares in the responsibility and can contribute equally, based on their ability to pay. All possible financial mechanisms should be explored to fund the required development or redevelopment needed for park deficient areas. Community development grants, special assessments, and general funds from the Park District budget are but a few options in addressing these park needs. No area plan in the City will have neighborhoods with similar park needs, nor will residents of those neighborhoods establish standards with the same criteria. However, the task is to ensure the well being of the Fargo residents citywide.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 603: **Parks**

BACKGROUND:

The distribution of parks and recreation facilities in Fargo 20 years ago was predominantly close to the Red River and east of 25th Street. More recently, parks and playfields are typically built adjacent to elementary, junior high, and senior high schools citywide. Overall, park land and playfield development covers a citywide service area and focuses less on providing neighborhood recreational services.

The City park system should balance the needs of residents for local or neighborhood parks with the need for regional parks. Residents' proximity to a park and the function of a park are key to residents, and supportive of the character of a neighborhood. Whether the park activity is active or passive in nature, the park plays a major role in addressing residents' broad-ranging needs. It is difficult to establish City-wide park and playfield standards for proximity, population levels per facility, and park size. But for the purpose of comprehensive land use planning, minimum standards for siting parks and playfields are required to balance residents' needs for local, neighborhood, community, linear, and regional recreation services.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish minimum land use development standards for the siting of City parks and playfields. The parks' strategic location and the services offered should be the basis for evaluating and balancing the need for local or neighborhood parks and playfields with the need for community or regional parks and playfields.

CONCLUSION:

A continuous evaluation and assessment of the recreation services offered to Fargo residents is important. Land use development is diverse and ever changing. As residential development of multiple family dwellings increases in density, siting land use reserved for recreational purposes must increase in proportion. Equally, the increases in recreational land use should be directed at meeting both the local or neighborhood needs, plus the larger needs of the community. The most appropriate solution for identifying land use development standards for recreational purposes may best be resolved by establishing guidelines for the minimum standards in the siting of City parks and playfields.*

* See the attached CITY PARKS AND PLAYFIELDS table

* See also Policy 601

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 604: **Amenities Plan**

BACKGROUND:

Almost all new subdivision proposals include special features or amenities. While these features are assets to the development, the decision about the design, financing, and construction are usually left till very late in the land use development process. Occasionally, this can result in unresolved issues and problems. The amenities plan is a constructive way to identify and solve these problems early and at the same time provide long-term answers to financing and maintenance of amenities.

Early identification of details relating to features such as structures in the right-of-way, sidewalks, signs, and trees are critical in the process of orderly development. The City of Fargo administers a citywide tree planting program that is designed to plant or maintain tree plantings along the City's corridors and boulevards. Currently, tree planting on boulevards is left as an option to developers and many times boulevards go without trees or with little consistency to adjacent plantings.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should require land use developers to submit an Amenities Plan at the same time the plat is submitted for approval. This plan would lay out the intentions of the developer with respect to features and details relating to trees, sidewalks, bikeways, medians, fences, signs, structures in the right-of-way, and addressing.

CONCLUSION:

The amenities plan should outline the location, species, and any other details relevant to tree planting. The City of Fargo Forestry Department should review this plan with respect to tree planting, and ensure the appropriate spacing and tree species are planned. If builders, developers, or owners desire to plant trees before the City does, the resulting work and special assessment would be directed at the unfinished lots.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 605: **Landscape Requirements for a City of Trees**

BACKGROUND:

There is an interest and an important benefit in establishing a City tree planting design framework. Plantings are needed to revitalize community pride and community image. This framework should provide direction and identify opportunities to improve Fargo's design and aesthetic character.

The older city was built along the Red River and along streets with broad boulevards. The newer city is building away from the river and it is building along street corridors that must meet much higher capacity requirements. Most of this new growth, whether in residential areas or commercial corridors, has progressed without any design or tree planting requirements. In some cases, the space may be available but the building public is not well informed as to what would constitute good and desirable tree planting solutions. There is an inadequate regulatory or at least plan structure to guide decisions. In some cases, the underlying financial foundations are inadequate to a good tree planting program.

POLICY STATEMENT:

There should be a three pronged approach to improving tree planting in the City.

- 1. A public information program to improve citizen awareness.**
- 2. A coordinated set of policies and regulations with respect to planting of trees.**
- 3. Strengthen the Forestry Department's ability to achieve the City's tree planting objectives.**

CONCLUSION:

The foundation of a "City of Trees" rests in the values and attitudes of an informed citizenry. All that follows will rest on this base. Citizen groups should work with the Forestry Department to design information packages. From this, acceptable plans, regulations, and ordinances can be developed and adopted. Finally, an acceptable means and level of finance for this policy needs to be identified. With this, the vision for Fargo to be a City of Trees is real and obtainable.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 606: **Major Public Facilities**

BACKGROUND:

Major public facilities like the airport, the NDSU campus, the Fargodome, hospitals, and federal, state, county, and city buildings typically develop institutional plans. The topics discussed in these plans vary from institution to institution, but they generally address issues relating to public space and the use of that space. Public space or grounds adjacent to the facility will include uses such as: 1) parking, 2) walkways, 3) driveways, and 4) storage areas.

Public facilities should provide services and amenities that accommodate the needs of residents visiting the facility, employees of the facility, as well as the neighborhood in which it is situated. Green spaces need to be a part of the area design for major public facilities, and they should be easily accessible. Aesthetic and functional benefits are provided through appropriate management of the facility's green space. By combining green space, amenities, and design features, the character and atmosphere of the facility can be greatly enhanced. Equally, green space can serve as storm water retention areas or as an area necessary for the piling of snow. The siting and design of green spaces should be a part of all institutional plans for the benefit of the facility and for the benefit of the residents of the area.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage major public facilities to adopt an institutional plan that establishes standards for providing usable green space to both users and employees of the facility.

CONCLUSION:

Fargo City Hall should lead the way and set a positive example for the other major public facilities to follow. Both employees and citizens visiting City Hall should be able to access the adjacent green spaces. Park benches, chairs, tables, shaded areas, drinking fountains, garbage disposal cans, and many other amenities could complement these public green spaces. City Hall has the potential to link the public spaces of the Hjemkomst-Heritage Interpretive Center, Island Park, and the Library. By establishing standards for the use of the facilities' public green spaces, citizens can enjoy the benefits that develop from proper design and planning.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 607: **Boulevard Tree Planting**

BACKGROUND:

Although it may appear difficult to implement or undertake programs associated with City design features, the community has had experience and success in its reforestation program. The Forestry Department has the overall responsibility for maintenance of trees in boulevards, but the current policy for planting the initial boulevard tree is "No Free Trees". The operating funds for the department are derived from a City utility fee in the form of a forestry charge.

The City reforestation program is concerned with seven areas of the community:

1. Residential areas
2. The downtown area
3. Backyard elms
4. Entrances into the City
5. Park areas
6. Public areas
7. Industrial areas

Boulevards along main corridors and arterial streets are maintained by the existing forestry plan, but many boulevards throughout Fargo have planting space or room for additional trees. Also, planting on the downtown boulevard is limited due to a lack of sufficient ground that will support trees.

Priority for tree plantings should continue along high traffic corridor boulevards throughout Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should advance the existing boulevard tree planting program and continue to combat the loss of trees due to disease.

CONCLUSION:

The older residential neighborhoods in the City of Fargo have suffered the adverse consequences of disease and insect problems in trees. Diversification or variety in the species of tree plantings is critical to new plantings. The City Forestry Department plays a key role in managing the future of the City's design features as they relate to boulevard tree planting. As the City Forestry Department develops plans for diversification along the city boulevards; developers, builders, and owners must all share in the effort to preserve and enhance the features that make Fargo what it is today.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 608: Activity Centers

BACKGROUND:

Neighborhoods in Fargo typically have a focal point or a location for the residents in the area to gather. These focal points are many times linked to the neighborhood system of parks through walkways and public spaces. This neighborhood center is designed to attract and accommodate the needs of all residents.

The mini-mall developments along high traffic corridors are perceived to be the focal point of some neighborhoods in Fargo. These developments could evolve into a strong neighborhood focal point if landscape design and public green space criteria were enhanced. Additionally, the activity center would have to be linked to the neighborhood park system.

Residents need a place to gather. Some neighborhoods may have an activity center. Some neighborhoods may have a focal point that developed around an elementary school. Future land use development in Fargo will include the siting of several City buildings. Neighborhood activity centers could be strengthened through the co-location of public facilities and commercial facilities.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage development proposals that include the co-location of public facilities, as well as with commercial facilities. Facilities such as fire stations or library branches should be sited in neighborhoods to serve and function as a focal point when feasible.*

CONCLUSION:

Activity centers along high traffic corridors may be the focal point for areas that have developed without an elementary school. Not all area plans may have a need for an activity center, but land use development proposals should be encouraged to use this option in design.

* See also Policy 207

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 609: **Beautification Standards for Corridors**

BACKGROUND:

Design features that can enhance the appearance of the City are important. The features may not protect and provide for the public health and safety, but the features address the general welfare of the City of Fargo. The Fargo Subdivision Regulations cover certain aspects of the "general welfare of the City", but additional standards may need to be established.

Beautification standards should include a continuation of past practices that may need to be reinforced, and an initiation of some new items on a more formal basis. Suggestions for new beautification standards include:

1. Wildflower plantings at the City landfill site and along ditches leading to the site
2. An adopt-a-highway (or street) program
3. Enhanced use of perennials along public planting areas
4. Fencing to conceal solid waste handling structures, both the City igloos and dumpsters and the residents' receptacles

The benefits resulting from these improvements may not be immediate, but the general welfare of the City can be addressed through beautification standards.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage the development and implementation of beautification standards to improve the aesthetics of transportation corridors and protect the image of the City.

CONCLUSION:

Consideration for the maintenance of any new standard in development is key. Just as these beautification standards are new, new approaches to maintenance should be suggested. Volunteer assistance through various public organizations could be enhanced. The City also has a number of incarcerated residents, or residents directed to work in community service that could be used in support of any required maintenance.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 610: **West Side Coordination**

BACKGROUND:

The City of Fargo has positive examples that can be followed or even improved upon as the community expands outward. Coordination between the Fargo Park District and Fargo School District has provided both entities with cost savings and improved community services. The sharing of the sports fields, parking lots, and indoor facilities are just a few of these positive examples.

As Fargo grows west, it enters into the West Fargo School District and abuts property that is controlled and managed by the City of West Fargo. Also included in this growth area are the representatives from the county, township, and neighboring communities.

The City must communicate with representatives from the adjacent political subdivisions. Past attempts for shared development of park areas in West Fargo were not successful, but efforts should continue. Citizens of Fargo living on the west side will continue to expect recreational services that are in close proximity and accessible. The City's boundaries should not limit or restrict the growth of recreational services.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should pursue coordination with other political subdivisions in order to avoid duplication of services and cut costs, while still providing a quality service.

CONCLUSION:

Recreational growth beyond the current City limits of Fargo is occurring. Citizens desire continuity of bikeways and walkways that expand into adjacent jurisdictions. Public spaces for recreation should expand in a coordinated and planned manner, both for the benefit of the cities and for the residents.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Public Spaces"

Policy Letter 611: **Siting Public Spaces**

BACKGROUND:

Many terms or definitions are used to describe the space where active or passive outdoor activity takes place. The City of Fargo has nearly 2,000 acres of park land which provides passive (e.g. hiking and bird watching) or active (e.g. soccer and baseball) recreational uses in the outdoors. Major public facilities also provide usable green space to the City's residents in a form that may not be the same as park land. Whether the land is park land or usable green space may not be critical, but what is important is how the City sites and links this outdoor public space.

The ideal standard for siting public spaces is to include both neighborhood parks and playfields in every area plan (one section of land). These recreational spaces should be connected to schools through linear parks when they are not built adjacent to each other. Additionally, other major facilities that provide services within the area should become a part of this park linkage.

The siting of public space within a neighborhood, and the linking of these spaces is important in promoting and preserving the character of Fargo. Siting public spaces is a positive approach in building the "small town atmosphere" in Fargo.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage coordinated efforts for the siting and linking of outdoor public spaces throughout the community. Both park land and public green space should be linked through linear parks.*

CONCLUSION:

Communication and coordination must take place to ensure that a balance of siting and linking of public spaces occurs throughout Fargo. Area plans that are dominated by industrial or commercial land use must also have balanced access to public space. No section of land should be isolated and without access to public space.

Major public facilities that share recreational land should share the responsibilities for linkage throughout the area plan. "Use agreements" should be encouraged to assist in the coordination of space and facilities when public space is shared.

*See also Policy 208

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN
“River”
700

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"River"

Policy Letter 701: **Riverfront Coordination**

BACKGROUND:

Citizen concern over the management of the Red River does not appear to be high. Residents are aware that the river serves as a release for floods; also, most residents have a healthy fear of the river and share concerns over safety; and residents understand that Fargo relies on the river for drinking water.

The role that the Red River plays in the life of Fargo residents is significant. Issues that relate to the river that may need attention include:

1. A need to look at the ecology of the river and to identify what the City is doing right or wrong as it impacts the river.
2. A need to identify a funding source and a mechanism for river bank maintenance that ensures minimal bank slippage.
3. A need to establish a public information program with a checklist of what can or can't be done along the river. The program should also include an aggressive enforcement system.
4. A plan to promote river awareness and the role it plays throughout the City.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should ensure proposed land use development will not negatively impact the river. Efforts to improve the quality of the river and prevent the degradation of the river system must be enhanced.

CONCLUSION:

No single entity is alone in the responsibility for the care and management of the river. A concern for the preservation and an understanding of the need for constant river improvements are critical. The City of Fargo, and all other agencies, should accept their share of responsibility in the proper management of the Red River.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"River"

Policy Letter 702: **Riverfront Park**

BACKGROUND:

The Fargo Park District currently or potentially owns or controls approximately 70% of the riverfront property within the City limits. The river enhances the character of the community and also serves a functional role that is critical to the sustainment of Fargo. In addition to the benefits the river provides, it periodically roars up and must be handled with extreme care.

The Red River's aesthetic and recreational value to the City would be difficult to measure. Life and activity surround the river year around, and enhanced measures are needed to preserve that vitality. To ensure the preservation of the river a mechanism to maintain the riverbank is needed.

A possible approach to maintaining and preserving the Red River would be to classify the entire river corridor within the City limits as a regional park. Placing the river corridor under the care of the Fargo Park District is a needed step towards riverfront management. The complex issues related to the care of the river can be addressed effectively by the department that owns or controls over half of the river property.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish a systematic and comprehensive approach to acquiring riverfront property and easement agreements that allow specific uses. The City must protect the community's interest in the water quality, storm water management, floodway management, and recreation and scenic habitat as it relates to the Red River.

CONCLUSION:

The acquisition of riverfront property should be done through the joint effort of the Fargo Park District and the City of Fargo. Riverfront property out of the City limits is also important to the future use and preservation of this corridor. Easements on riverfront property that is subdivided but not developed should be obtained. The time to establish a riverfront plan is now. The City of Fargo should continue to move forward in the challenging task of managing the Red River of the North.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"River"

Policy Letter: 703: **Riverfront**

BACKGROUND:

Riverbank improvements along the Central Business District in Fargo have been minimal and the general feeling is that the riverfront is underutilized from a tourist standpoint. Over the past years studies have been done identifying the attributes of the Red River and also plans were developed highlighting opportunities for land and riverbank use. The River Keepers organization has developed as the local stewards of the river system and are a great asset to the City in guiding future riverfront activities.

More activity is needed in aggressively pursuing opportunities to acquire land along the riverfront that can link City parks and facilities. The City should purchase or acquire riverfront land when opportunities allow, to protect the long-term viability of this natural resource, which has environmental, economical, recreational, and educational significance to the City.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should encourage development projects within the Central Business District support and are compatible with riverfront plans and utilization strategies. Riverfront property should be protected from disruptive uses.

CONCLUSION:

The Red River of the North is too great of a resource in the community to leave it virtually unutilized. The river does force certain restrictions on its use or the use of the land adjacent to it due to its natural character, but these are only limitations. Nationwide, communities have established river walkways and focused recreational or educational activities along the river. Fargo's promotion of community activities must include the Central Business District riverfront opportunities as a key element, both as a link between activities and as a focal point of the character of the community.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICY PLAN
“Process”
800

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Process"

Policy Letter 801: **Reconciling Planning Policies and Actions**

BACKGROUND:

The City of Fargo Comprehensive Policy Plan articulates the vision and desires of its citizens and elected officials for growth into the future, but policies cannot anticipate every situation and every proposal which might be to the benefit of the community. Policies in one sphere of interest, such as land use, may not be compatible with policies in other areas of activity such as financing or engineering.

This plan will be used as a bench mark for subsequent development regulations and land use decisions but as times and circumstances change, long standing policies may become obsolete and counterproductive. As public and private spending for facilities and services continue to increase and citizen and development interests change and expand daily, the City's planning policies and actions must reflect an up to date approach to meeting the needs and desires of the community. A practice and a process must be developed to ensure planning decisions for growth in the community are consistent, and address issues impacting citizens today and into the future.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt the practice of maintaining a detailed record of the decisions made in land use development, and the reasons behind those decisions. Additionally, periodic review of the current policies and those decisions made in land use development should be required to reconcile conflicts that become apparent.

CONCLUSION:

An annual or periodic review by the Planning Commission, together with follow up recommendations, will serve to keep any long standing or resulting plans current and viable, and conversely avoid the "plan on the shelf" syndrome. Increased demands by developers for an accelerated permitting process and a need for greater consistency in the land use decision making process are but two very strong reasons for enhancing the City's record keeping and review systems.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Process"

Policy Letter 802: Availability of Plans

BACKGROUND:

Fargo has a long history of planning and development expectations and intentions of one interest group running into and conflicting with planning and development expectations and intentions of another interest group. Property owners have expressed surprise and sometimes anger toward both public and private development proposals. Good or necessary projects have been frustrated or badly compromised by opposition groups. Private development proposals occasionally have been surprised by late developing resistance to their proposals. Time and money is lost to negotiating the project to a conclusion and sometimes rejection.

Besides the purpose of achieving a desired end result, it is the purpose of planning to provide an orderly process to development decision-making. This process needs to provide early and clear information with respect to development intentions. In so doing, it is hoped that there will be a higher level of development compatibility and a lower level of development conflict.

Everyone with an interest in the outcome needs to know as much as possible, as early as possible, if these aims are to be achieved.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should establish very accessible public locations, systems, and electronic data processes where specific and detailed information regarding current and proposed plans of the City can be reviewed. This information should address, but not be limited to, land use, transportation, utilities, public facilities, and other important features of the City.

CONCLUSION:

The City needs to design and implement a specific program to make planning information readily accessible to the community. This program needs to decide specifically what information is available and design a format that makes that information as understandable as possible. The program needs to decide where and how this information will be made available and how the general public will be informed as to how to access the information. Finally the program needs to have a built in system of current updates. In order for the program to become and remain viable, a specific budget needs to be provided.

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Process"

Policy Letter 803: **Policy Review Procedure**

BACKGROUND:

Long range planning documents historically have a tendency to quickly become documents on a shelf. They should be living documents that play an active role in guiding the development decisions of the community. There are several reasons why long range planning documents become stale and do not continue to influence the development outcome. The social and economic situation changes. There is little or no organizational structure to bring the plan into focus during development decision-making. There is not a strong commitment to making the planning process an active influence in development decision-making. A procedure that serves to keep the policies relevant and keep the community committed to those policies may be as important as the specifics of the policies themselves.

POLICY STATEMENT:

In order to preserve, strengthen, and build the Comprehensive Policy Plan, the Planning Commission will develop and follow a regular and systematic procedure with respect to regular evaluation of the plan. This procedure should provide a path for eliminating policies that are no longer relevant, amendments that will strengthen existing policies, and a way to incorporate new policies and the need becomes apparent.

CONCLUSION:

In general, the process for elimination, changing or creating new policies should follow the same path as was used in the adoption of the original document. Time constraints strongly suggest that the process be simple. At the same time, the importance of these policies suggest that there is a need for public awareness and input.