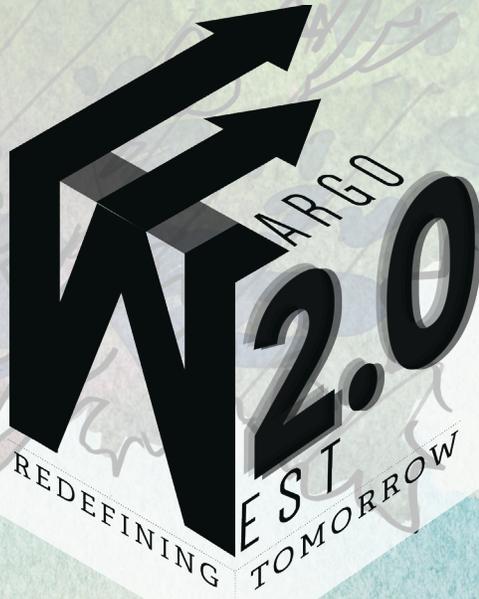


ISSUE 01

FINAL DRAFT
APRIL 2018



WEST FARGO'S VISION

URBAN IS BACK!

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD
PLANNING AND DESIGN

creating
"MUNICIPAL
ADVANTAGE"

BIG IDEAS

GROW
THE
ECONOMY

AROUND THE PLAN



ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN AS A CULTURAL CENTER FOR WEST FARGO

Downtown West Fargo has an opportunity to evolve as a distinct district in the region. While much of West Fargo has developed as a suburban community that plays a major role in the metropolitan area, national trends coupled with distinct economic data from the community indicate that West Fargo is ideally suited to support a revitalized downtown district that follows the following four themes:

- Is a walkable district that connects existing neighborhoods.
- Is home to a vibrant mix of uses centered on Sheyenne Street that would include retail, residential, dining, entertainment, and office space.
- Is a place to create public/private partnerships to foster creative redevelopment, entrepreneurship, the arts, and unique businesses.
- Is viewed by the West Fargo residents and the region as a unique district that defines West Fargo's character.

With a median household income exceeding that of the region, a growing population base, and a largely suburban development pattern, downtown West Fargo can re-emerge as a central gathering place for the community. The primary commercial portion of the district is along Sheyenne Street from Seventh Avenue West to Main Avenue West and has the potential to extend to the east and west along

Main Avenue. The current conditions of the commercial district include a mix of institutional uses including churches and civic facilities; commercial businesses including restaurants, stores in large and small footprint building; and a collection of service businesses.

Over time, much of the growth along Sheyenne Street has developed with staggered street frontage, front loaded parking, and extensive curb cuts. Meanwhile, the public infrastructure along the corridor lacks distinct character elements such as lighting, street trees, street furniture, or pedestrian amenities. Armour Park and the Sheyenne River – which terminate the street, are not connected to the district via pedestrian crossings, trails, or signage.

The following recommendations are designed to foster a downtown in West Fargo that is truly unique to the community, thereby enhancing West Fargo's identity while encouraging future business development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

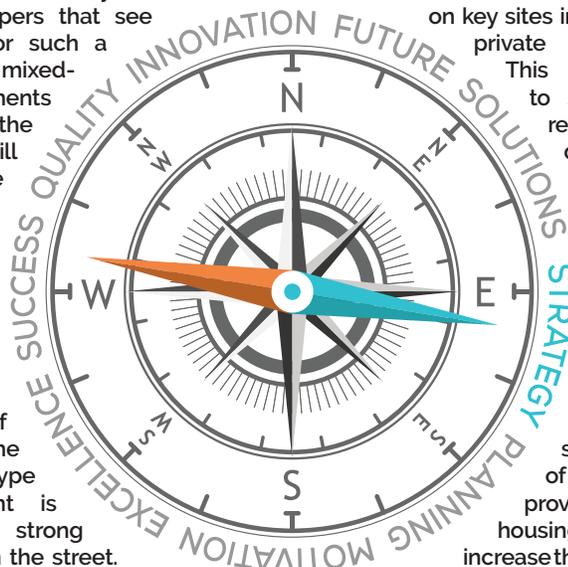
- Establish a Recruitment Strategy to Grow Business and Bring in New investment to Downtown
- ▶ Share the market potential identified in other parts of this plan with local businesses. This can help them understand potential for expansion and can be incorporated into their business and financing plans.
- ▶ Cooperate with local property owners to inventory and promote available space. Available properties can initially be listed on the city's website in cooperation with local brokers. An available property template can also be created with information on size, zoning, utilities, and pricing.
- ▶ Coordinate with regional developers to partner on developments in downtown. West Fargo's role could simply be development support through communication or partnerships. Other communities have found success in negotiating development needs with investors such as providing parking to support development, or facilitating land swaps.

Create a Recruitment Strategy for Downtown Mixed use residential

Mixed-use development including residential space and ground floor office or retail space is currently under development in downtown West Fargo. This project represents a bellwether for how the development community views the district. Because there are few comparable products for mixed-use in West Fargo, the community is fortunate to have developers that see the potential for such a product type. As mixed-use developments continue, the market will hone in on the importance of preserving ground floor space for retail development and developments may incorporate a greater mix of use types. The key to this type of development is maintaining a strong relationship with the street. West Fargo can continue to be proactive in encouraging this kind of development by doing the following:

- Identify property for residential and mixed-use development and work with property owners to pursue public private partnerships, or enter into an agreement with existing owners to work together to attract the development identified in the plan.

- Solicit interest from regional developers that have successfully completed similar projects in the metro area (or even outside of North Dakota).
- Issue a Request for Development Proposal (RFDP) for projects based off a vision for a mixed-use downtown on key sites in partnership with private sector owners. This would be used to solicit bids from regional or selected developers and would incorporate development criteria to ensure any new development is consistent with the vision. Developing residential should be one of these criteria, providing market rate housing options that will increase the variety and price point of product in West Fargo.
- Enter into public-private partnerships with developers that could include the provision of infrastructure, parking structures, or land write-down or swaps.
- Coordinate with regional economic development partners to determine if any other incentives may be applicable for a significant mixed-use or residential development.



Consider a Micro-enterprise Retail Project In or Near Downtown

The market snapshot of West Fargo clearly indicates the potential for additional retail/restaurant development in the community, particularly within specialty retail categories that include specialty and ethnic dining. Many small businesses face challenges during their start up phase, especially in a district such as downtown West Fargo that is not on the "main drag" for many traditional big box retail stores. Nationally, as large retailers are seeing consolidation and closures, highly specialized retailers can become opportunities for entrepreneurial growth. More and more often, communities are exploring micro-enterprise retail projects to help small business owners start up while at the same time creating a "critical mass" of shopping and a destination for locals and visitors. There are several sites in and around Sheyenne in West Fargo's downtown that could accommodate these type uses. Micro retail can take several forms:

- Small retail spaces in mixed use buildings: these spaces often utilize shopfront space in mixed use buildings to allow for ground floor activity, amenities for residents who live and or work above, and to maximize return on investment. The Art Crossing project in Greenville, South Carolina uses spaces the size of parking spots to create affordable studios for artists in the heart of the downtown.
- Emporium style retail: This type of product encourages retail development clustered in one larger space. Each retailer can either operate independently within the development while others allow for retailers to become "vendors" in the

space depending on their needs for growth. 19 West Main Street in Spokane, Washington is home to an artisan bakery, a brewery, a restaurant and a coffee shop featuring local artists. The building is configured so that each tenant has a small space within the larger building.

- Cottage/container village: This small format retail/restaurant use takes advantage of vacant and/or underutilized space and uses either small cottage style retail spaces or containers to create dynamic retail, entertainment, and dining experiences. Pascagoula's Anchor Square is home to 17 merchants and restaurants in cottages recycled from Hurricane Katrina; while Las Vegas is home to Downtown Container Park, a mixed use development using recycled shipping containers to house restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues.



Pascagoula's Anchor Square



Container Park - Las Vegas, NV - Photo Credit: Arnett Muldrow Associates

Promote and Augment the Façade Improvement Program to Assist Investments in Downtown Buildings in Conjunction with Design Guidelines

West Fargo has deployed a façade improvement program for the downtown area of the city. This program is a valuable opportunity for property owners to enhance their building facades and improve the downtown area as a walkable mixed-use district.

The city should continue this program and consider coupling the façade program with design guidelines that provide property owners a framework to work within to take advantage of the incentive program. Some communities have taken a proactive approach toward promoting design guidelines by working with local designers to illustrate the potential of inexpensive improvements to facades while others provide grant assistance to encourage sensitive development in the downtown district. This type of incentive can be accompanied by Design Guidelines or a Pattern Book

that can serve as a guide to downtown character by providing either suggestions and regulatory guidance for treatment of building renovations and new construction that are create a downtown setting for the city.

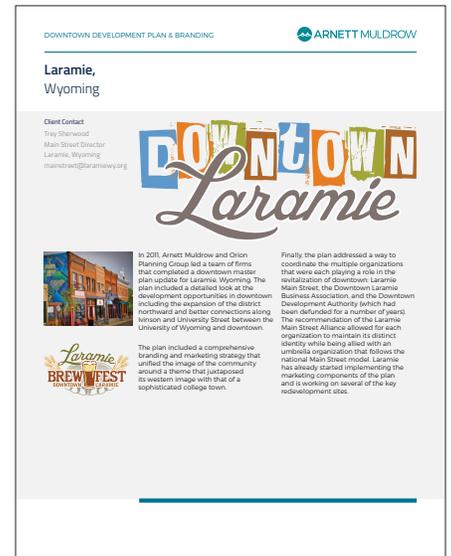
Other options for this program could explore providing incentives for code compliance for buildings that otherwise might not be able to make full use of the building. These could include sprinklers, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance assistance, and rear façade improvements to activate other streets. In any event, West Fargo should actively promote the façade program with literature, meetings, and marketing for local property owners.



Develop a Comprehensive Marketing and Branding Program for Downtown

West Fargo has done a good job of creating a citywide identity that reinforces its core strengths; a family friendly place to live, a place that provides a high level of service for its residents, and a progressive community. Downtown West Fargo, however, has no distinct identity of its own. For the outside visitor Sheyenne Street could be “any street” in “any town” and not the downtown district for a fast growing and dynamic city. Moreover, in the metro market, Fargo’s downtown revitalization success and Moorhead, Minnesota’s infill development in downtown has eclipsed the identity of West Fargo’s downtown. Having said that, West Fargo has a series of dynamic events that are held downtown and bring residents and visitors together. West Fargo should consider a branding package for downtown that would include the following:

- Create a Brand Statement for West Fargo’s downtown: A brand statement is a way to position a community in the marketplace. It should resonate with local residents, visitors, and investors. The brand statement for downtown should be assertive and should differentiate the downtown from other districts in the region.
- Initiate a Consistent Logo and Tagline for Marketing West Fargo: West Fargo’s downtown should have a marketing logo that is distinct from that of the municipal government. It should be inviting to residents, resonant with visitors, reinforcing to local businesses, and provide a platform to expand as downtown continues to develop.
- Extend Downtown Marketing to Collateral Material and Events in the district: A great opportunity to extend the downtown identity is to adapt the typeface and color scheme to special events and collateral materials such as tee shirts, hats, and other marketing materials as downtown develops.



Delaware

Authentic Every Day. City

All branding examples provided by Arnett Muldrow Associates

Continue to Promote the Downtown West Fargo Business Association

West Fargo currently has a recently implemented business association in downtown that serves as a link between the public and private sector to advocate for the vitality of a district. Typically, these associations may begin informally and meet regularly to discuss issues and develop strategies to attract business and investment to the district. West Fargo should actively promote this group for businesses with an online presence, social media, and continue to enhance its role as a link between the public and private sector to become a group that actively promotes itself to the overall community.

While diverse – the shops, restaurants, services, and institutions of downtown West Fargo share a common thread of location and the desire for continued vitality. Perhaps a more important opportunity for West Fargo is to capitalize on the statewide momentum to pursue a Main Street Program modeled after state programs across the Country. To date, the state has

incentivized a loan program geared toward downtown businesses and elected officials have discussed the importance of downtown vitality as a pillar for economic success. As the West Fargo Downtown Business Association continues it should make sure to include ongoing efforts to do the following:

- Create programming to share peer knowledge and expertise during regular meetings (marketing, digital media, merchandising, financial planning, etc)
- Host real estate and developer roundtables to bring investors into downtown West Fargo to communicate the district's vision and investment opportunities.
- Most importantly, provide a conduit for shared and cooperative marketing efforts to promote downtown West Fargo businesses to facilitate a "Shop Local" strategy.

Contemplate a West Fargo Business Improvement District (BID)

As interest in West Fargo continues to grow, the city may want to work with property owners and other interests to consider a Business Improvement District in downtown. This is a funding mechanism whereby commercial businesses incur an additional tax in exchange for a series of enhanced services to the district. Frequently, BID districts are governed by a board of directors with representation from both the local government and the business community contained within the district. While common nationally, Fargo is the only city in North Dakota that currently has a business improvement district. Fargo's downtown BID follows five key tenets to keep downtown: clean, safe, maintained, beautified, and promoted.

Enhance Gateways and Wayfinding into Downtown West Fargo with a Consistent Sign System

Utilizing the assets created in the branding of downtown as outlined above, West Fargo should create branded wayfinding and banner systems to signify key entries into downtown, direct locals and visitors to parking as well as key attractions and nearby locations. Ultimately this system should extend citywide to help visitors and residents navigate West Fargo while reinforcing its unique identity.



Create a Targeted Strategy Focusing on Bringing Millennials and Active Empty Nesters to Downtown

The primary demographic base of West Fargo is young to middle aged families, however, downtown West Fargo could emerge (particularly with the development of new mixed use buildings) into an alternate destination for young professionals and active empty nesters. Marketing tools focusing on the quality of life and future plans for West Fargo can be created including advertisements, social media strategies, and overall messaging that is relevant to the targeted population of young professionals and active empty nesters – both a significant part of the metro and local population.



Develop the West Fargo Creative Spaces Initiative

Creative spaces such as co-working spaces, accelerators, makerspace, and hybrid concepts are thriving in the U.S.. These spaces have witnessed dramatic growth in the last five years and are expected to continue these patterns as businesses and entrepreneurs rethink the traditional work environment. The metro market has one existing co-working space in downtown Fargo: The Prairie Den. The combination of high skilled blue collar jobs, independent operators who desire flexible space, young professionals emerging from the region's higher education system, and "trailing spouses" who may want unique spaces to work indicates potential for such a product in West Fargo.

Co-working spaces have moved from what some might consider a fad into a full-blown national trend with more than 80 percent growth in spaces over the last two years. West Fargo has the opportunity to capitalize on this growth while fostering an environment of creativity in the community. In fact, the West Fargo Public Library has been offering opportunities for children and adults to utilize technology and education to broaden their skills for years. Before delving into the specific recommendations, it is important to begin to define how each of these spaces work, as semantics can sometimes get in the way of truly understanding the purpose of these new models. It is also important to know that, although their definitions are provided below, the fluidity within

which they can function in a space is as creative as the very ideas themselves.

Co-working Spaces provide spaces for individuals or small companies to work in a shared environment. Companies can interact with one another in informal ways, form collaborations, or simply share in the creative atmosphere of the space. Co-working spaces may host events and activities but rarely provide formal business coaching.

Examples:

[Prairie Den – Fargo](#)
[CoCo – Minneapolis](#)
[Gravitate – Ames](#)
[Juniper – Bismarck](#)

Accelerator Spaces provide a structured way to graduate companies, often within a specified period of time. These spaces may have a higher education partner that is helping to cultivate and coach a business toward success. In other examples, accelerator spaces receive significant support from venture capital that is directly investing in the companies in the spaces. The goals of an accelerator is to "spin out" successful ventures. These spaces tend to gravitate around "like businesses" that have collaborative capabilities.

Examples:

[RetailXerator – Minneapolis](#)
[Techstars - Boulder](#)

Makerspaces are physical locations where people gather to share resources and knowledge. Unlike the spaces described above, makerspaces focus on projects and fabrication. Consequently, makerspaces provide tools and facilities for the makers. While experts or university-affiliated advisors may be available, makers frequently get help from other users. These spaces began to be associated with fields such as engineering, fabrication, computer science, and graphic design. Many makerspaces have higher education partnerships that desire to create an informal combination of lab, shop, and conference room. Frequently, 3-D printers, manual tools, and classroom spaces are associated with makerspace. Even local libraries are offering makers spaces and camps for children.

Examples:

[SpaceLab – Outside of Chicago](#)
[Twin Cities Maker – Minneapolis](#)
[Meld Workshop – Fargo](#)

For West Fargo, these spaces should be considered fluid and subject to change with downtown being a focal point early on for this development. Some of the infrastructure that may be required for such spaces is high speed internet capabilities that will allow for technology firms to thrive in the environment.



DOWNTOWN WEST FARGO

1 New Downtown Square

Incorporating a central civic space within the downtown would create an important presence as well as a main gathering space for city events and activities. This plan shows a large civic green at the intersection of Main Avenue and Sheyenne St. This public space could provide a location for outdoor dining and gathering, promoting investment in new mixed-use buildings. It would create a destination and place for daily civic life for both the community and passersby.

2 Pedestrian Connection to Armour Park

The Sheyenne River to the north of Main Avenue acts as a barrier for what could be an easy connection with Armour Park. The distance is very short between the northern end of downtown and the park. This lack of connection forces potential park users to drive to Second Avenue West in order to access the neighborhood and finally the park, or likely deters them altogether from visiting it. There is an opportunity to link downtown to Armour Park directly with the construction of a pedestrian bridge, which coupled with the new downtown square could create a fun destination for residents and visitors alike. A second connection to the park from Center Street could also provide easy access to people living and working to the east of the Sheyenne River.

3 New Civic Building

The new square transforms the downtown into a destination and place for daily civic life. The plan shows the new square with mixed-use buildings facing it as well as a new civic building that would help enclose the space and provide community services in this new gathering place. The new library could be located here, along with a community facility for young and seniors to attend activities and events. This would also be a great location for public restrooms to be provided.

The West Fargo downtown is located at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue, in the northern and oldest part of the city. This area is currently not considered the city center by many because of the lack of activity and identifiable civic space. However, there are currently two new mixed-use projects under development on Sheyenne Street at 4th Avenue, with one under construction that will begin to change the character of the area and begin a pattern of downtown development. Continuing this redevelopment activity will greatly benefit the city and can help create a “true” downtown giving a geographic heart to the city and creating a place where local residents will gather and others from around the region will be excited to visit.

The plan shows one version of what a fully redeveloped downtown could look like in the future. A new downtown square at the intersection of Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue could provide a much-needed gathering space where grand events and the more intimate moments of daily life could happen. From there, a pedestrian bridge to Armour Park (as well as another pedestrian bridge to the east of the park) would allow more West Fargo citizens to enjoy this great space. Several new mixed-use buildings are shown along Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue that would help frame the street and create an inviting public realm for living, walking, shopping, and recreation. New multifamily buildings are also shown on some of the side streets and could be built as smaller apartment houses, fitting more closely with the fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods. This could help create a transition from the more intensive/taller buildings on Sheyenne to the existing smaller residential homes.

4 New Mixed-Use Buildings

This plan illustrates how new mixed-use buildings could be incorporated and located throughout the downtown. The orientation of these new buildings defines blocks, creates walkable streets, and brings buildings up to the sidewalk to create an activated pedestrian environment. These new mixed-use buildings would incorporate retail/restaurants uses on the ground floor with offices or residential units on the upper floors to bring more people into downtown and create 24/7 vibrancy.

5 New Multifamily Units (Apartment Houses)

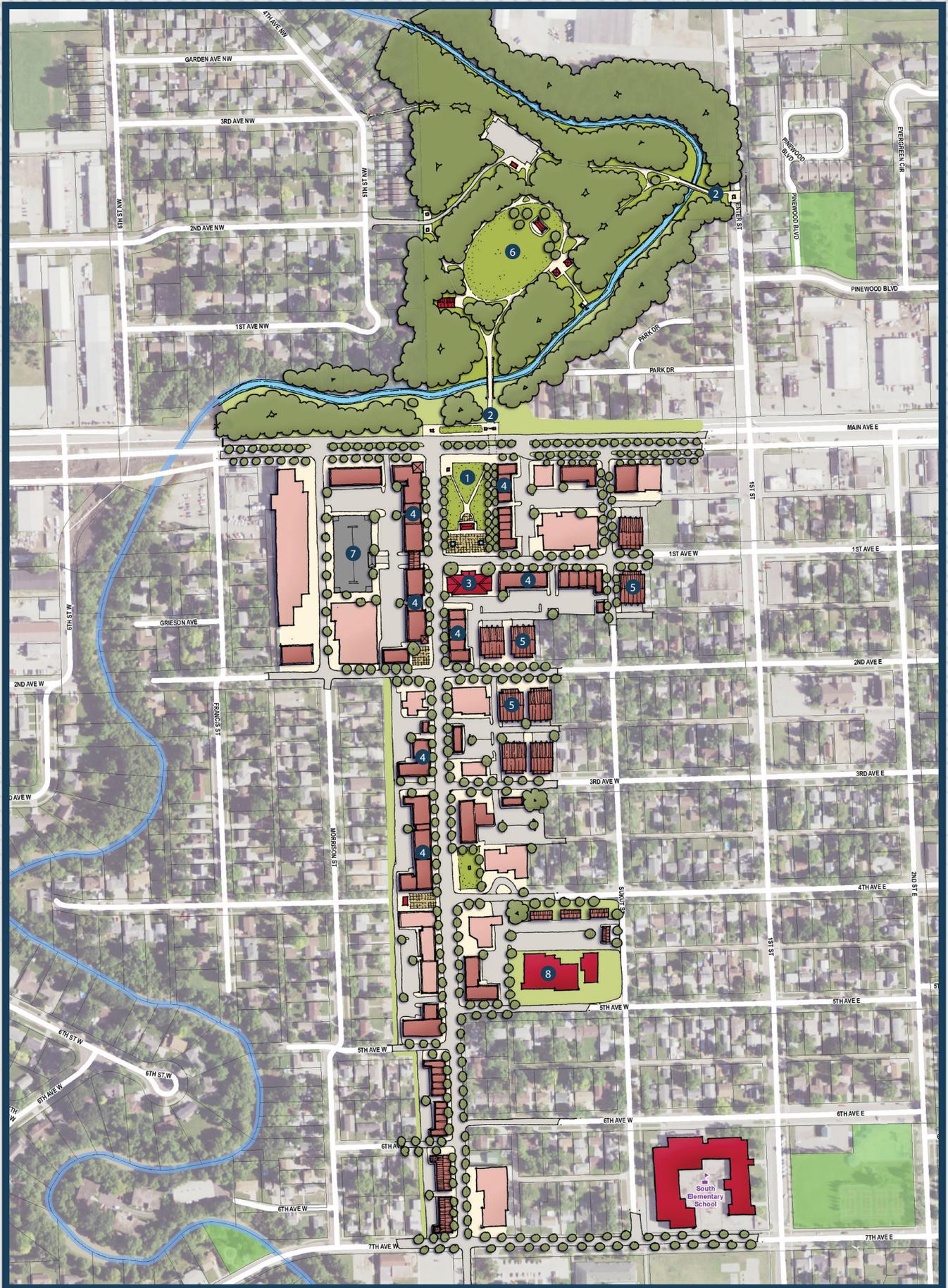
Apartment houses are smaller multifamily units where the building appears to be a large house divided into several units. This medium intensity of multifamily development could provide a great transition from the new mixed-used buildings along Sheyenne Street and Main Avenue to the single-family residential units present in the adjacent neighborhoods.

6 Armour Park Redesign

The re-design of Armour Park should ensure that this important civic space retains its park-like qualities while enhancing its ability to be activated with people, events, and public art. Spaces should be accessible and designed for safe active use and public events, as well as quiet contemplation and respite. Vegetation at the entrance along the river should be thinned so that a clear view of the park is visible from Main Avenue and the new downtown square.

7 Possible Parking Garage

If more businesses and residential units are added to downtown, a certain amount of parking will be needed to serve those uses. Additional parking located in the downtown should be hidden behind buildings with clear wayfinding signage directing people to it. New surface parking lots and a municipal parking structure are likely to be necessary to accommodate the needs of the new development in the area.



Downtown Bird's Eye View

As the main community gathering space for local residents, West Fargo's downtown could provide a much needed location where people could meet daily or for special occasions. This rendering demonstrates the possibility of the downtown to become just that, creating a mixed-use area where day-to-day services are available, along with office space and some additional housing located above retail. Parking would be provided behind buildings or in a parking garage creating a more walkable and attractive streetscape, while still being easily accessible by car. Wider sidewalks and a separated bike lane would improve the welcoming atmosphere for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

