

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Fargo is a city with a lot going for it. Fargo weathered the current economic recession with remarkable resiliency and maintains a low unemployment rate and a diverse and productive economy. Fargo's education system, from kindergarten through college, is among the nation's finest. Fargo has a welcoming community and is growing in population and national influence.

With all its strengths, Fargo is well positioned to flourish over the coming decades. The Fargo Comprehensive Plan is an investment in the idea that smart decision-making and careful planning will position Fargo to leverage its strengths and become an even better city. The comprehensive plan builds on hundreds of ideas from thousands of residents who gave their time to help imagine how Fargo could maximize the impact of policies, projects, and other investments that will advance Fargo into the year 2030. The comprehensive plan represents the community's vision for the future of Fargo.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The comprehensive plan is the City of Fargo's official policy for the future growth and development of the city. The plan was created through a public process that brought together residents, business owners, and policy makers to reach consensus on a vision for the future of Fargo. The Fargo Comprehensive Plan is a democratic and optimistic document that represents a common vision for Fargo's citizens. This plan will be a decision making guide for city staff on a day-to-day basis and direct Fargo's long term policies.

VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, INITIATIVES, AND CATALYSTS

This document has a hierarchy of organization. The vision is the plan's broadest level. All other elements in the plan are designed to advance the vision. The guiding principles elaborate on the vision and represent the community's priorities for different topics. The initiatives define in more detail the recommendations of the comprehensive plan within each topic. The catalysts section stands somewhat apart from this hierarchy. The catalysts are a collection of ideas to accelerate Fargo's growth and development while improving quality of life. Each catalyst is accomplished by a set of initiatives from different chapters. The catalysts section shows how initiatives from different topics are connected and work together to advance the vision.

IMPLEMENTATION WORKBOOK

The implementation workbook is a fundamental complement to the plan that will continue to evolve over time. This will not be adopted as part of the plan so that it can remain a living document capable of flexing and growing as Fargo moves forward with plan recommendations. The implementation workbook will contain the comprehensive list of strategies, resources, and indicators that will allow the City to prioritize efforts and make sure they are on a path toward accomplishing the goals and recommendations in the comprehensive plan. It might be helpful to think of the comprehensive plan as the description of "where you are going" and the implementation workbook as a list of the "routes you could take."

WHY PLAN?

VIEW THE “BIG PICTURE”

A community is like an organism and all the parts must work together in order to sustain the city’s future. A plan works to align City programs, projects, and government in a synergistic relationship.

BUILD AN INFORMED CONSTITUENCY

The public has a primary role in creating this plan, and they will be a strong constituency in seeing it implemented.

COORDINATE LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Specific community goals in a plan allow local decision makers to align around a citywide vision and ensure that all projects are supported by the greater community.

ESTABLISH A SOUND BASIS IN FACT FOR DECISIONS

The data and analysis incorporated into the plan allows decision makers to base programmatic, policy, and development decisions in fact.

GIVE GUIDANCE TO LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS

No one wants to build on a lot with an unknown future. Effective planning will give individual, commercial, and corporate investors the confidence to build in Fargo.

INVOLVE A BROAD ARRAY OF INTERESTS IN DISCUSSION ABOUT THE FUTURE

This plan incorporates many different voices and a variety of interests, ensuring recommendations are well-rounded and inclusive. This allows the community to advance in a way that is appealing to everyone.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL PLAN

TRUE COMMUNITY VISION

To successfully direct long-term growth and development in Fargo, the vision must come from the community. The hundreds of residents who participated in meetings and the thousands who participated online are the source for the ideas that direct the Fargo Comprehensive Plan.

INTEGRATED DECISION MAKING

The future of Fargo depends on thousands of overlapping decisions from local government, civic organizations, the private sector, and others. By integrating these decisions, opportunities will emerge to coordinate efforts in support of a common vision. Thinking about the long-term and potential partners when designing policies and projects maximizes the impact of these decisions.

A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

The comprehensive plan includes a strategic set of recommendations. These recommendations are visionary, yet realistic, far-reaching, yet implementable. By taking into account the community's vision, stakeholder priorities, and the capacity of local government, the Fargo Comprehensive Plan will proactively advance Fargo to the year 2030.

THE PROCESS

The Fargo Comprehensive Plan followed a 13 month timeline. There were five phases to the planning process.

During the first phase, **discovery**, the planning team listened to the public, interviewed key stakeholders, and gathered the existing planning data. The community shared their vision for the future of Fargo and submitted ideas for accomplishing that future. This vision was the guiding force for the following planning phases.

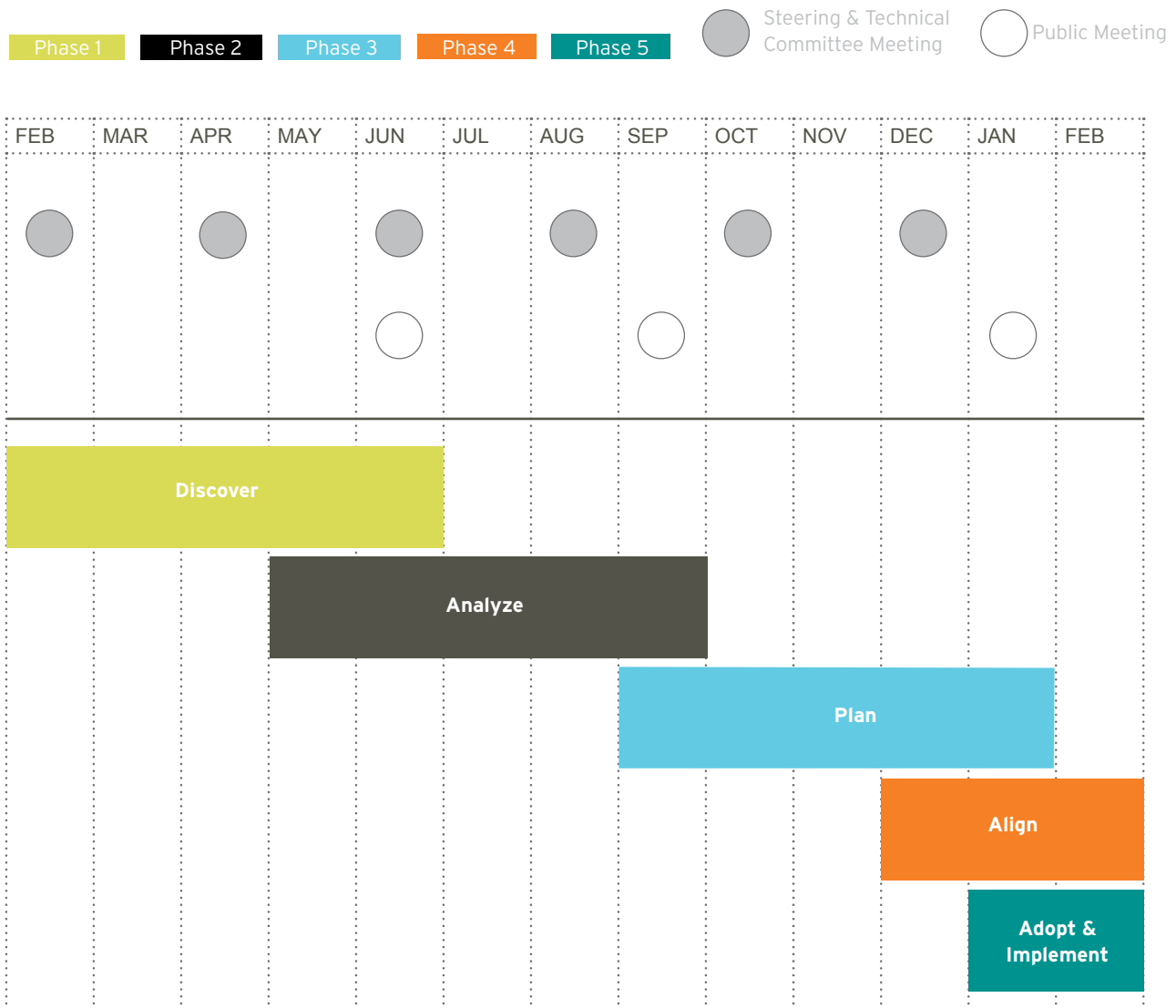
In the analysis phase, the planning team determined the biggest opportunities for Fargo's future. The team analyzed all the ideas and determined how to accomplish them with policy tools, potential projects, and partnerships.

In the **planning** phase, the community prioritized the ideas, policies, and projects based on the planning team's analysis work. The planning team developed the initiatives and explored how ideas build on each other to advance the vision.

During the **align** phase, the planning team sought further consensus and momentum behind the plan. The team determined responsible organizations, costs, and a timeline for implementing the plan.

The City will formally **adopt** Go 2030: The Fargo Comprehensive Plan during the adopt and implement phase. This means the plan will be the official City policy and will be a decision making guide for the City Commission. It will form a basis for funding and building projects by both the City and the private sector.

SCHEDULE



COMMUNITY PROFILE

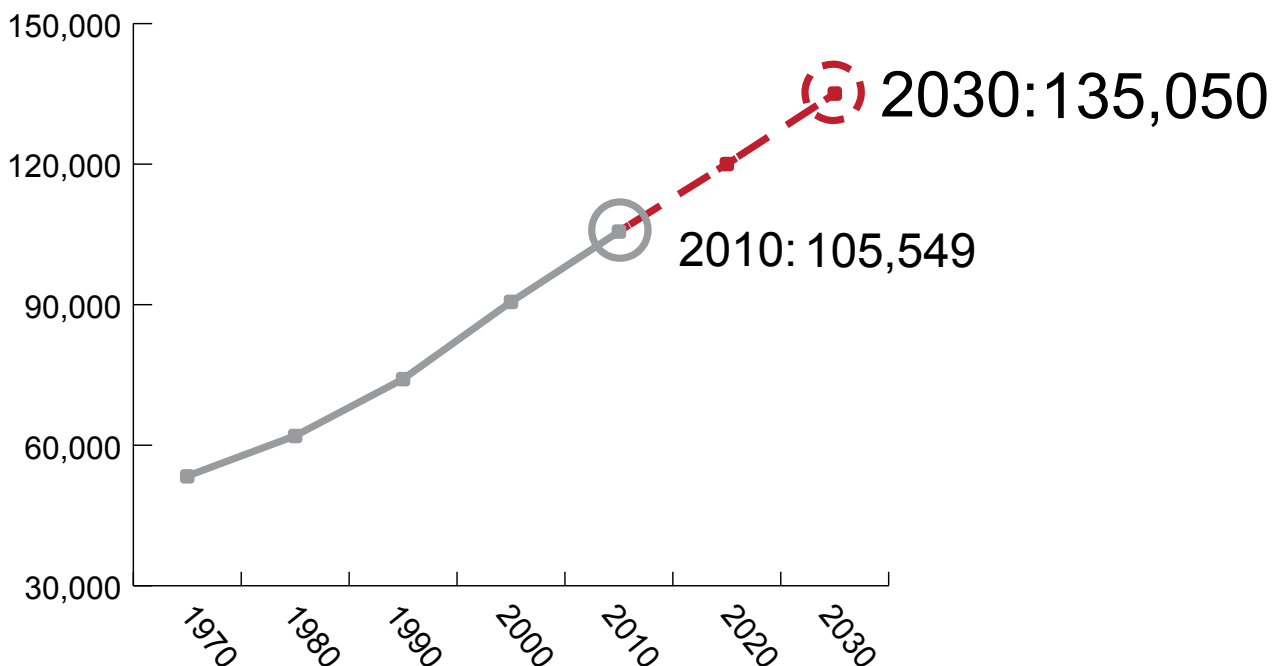
Fargo is a growing, dynamic city. The recommendations of this plan are based in an understanding of the following trends.

POPULATION GROWTH

Fargo is growing quickly. In the past 2 decades Fargo has grown from 74,111 people in 1990 to 105,549 in 2010. Fargo will continue to grow, and is projected to reach 135,050 people by 2030. Adding nearly 30,000 people to Fargo while increasing the quality of life for existing and future residents will require careful planning

AGING POPULATION, INCREASING DIVERSITY

As Fargo grows, its demographics are changing. Fargo's population is becoming older and more diverse. These demographic changes will impact areas such as preferred housing types, transportation options, and the role of education in the community.



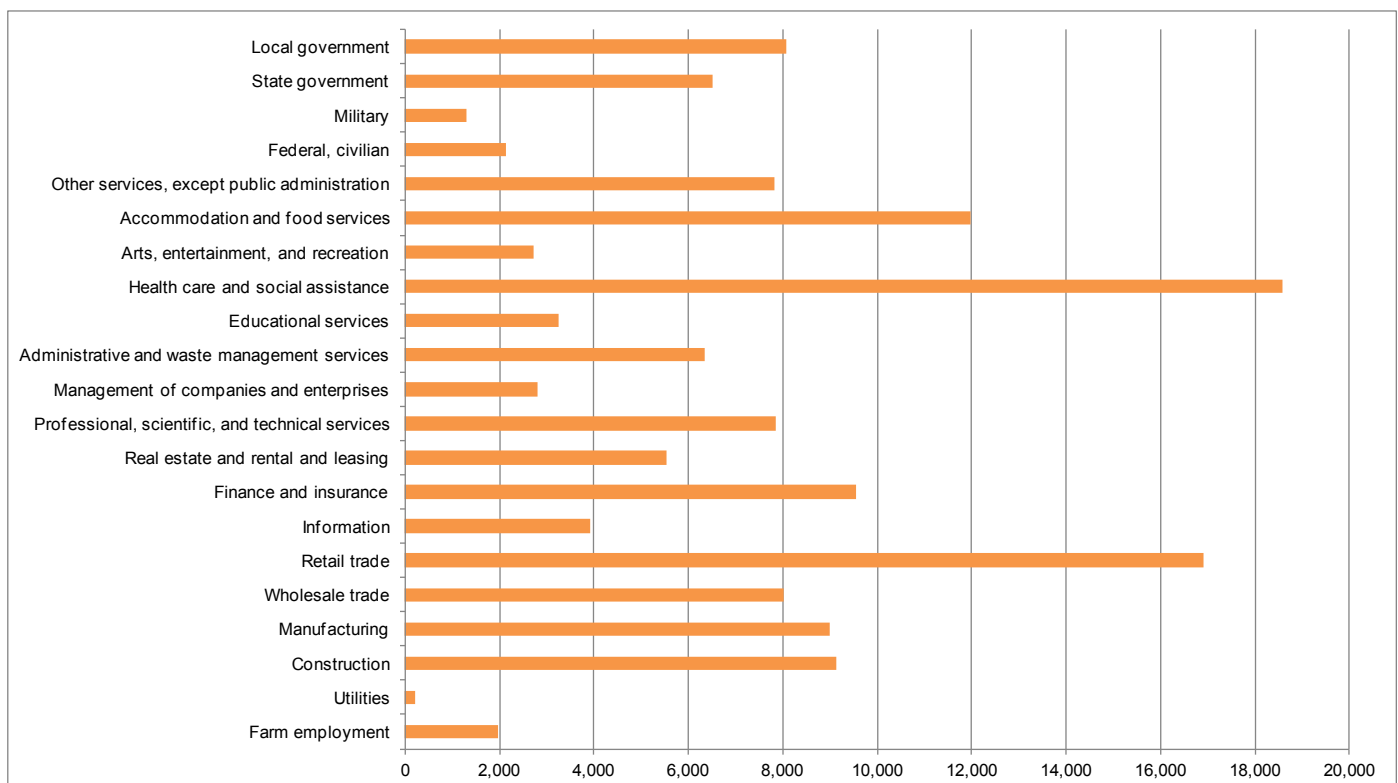
DIVERSE ECONOMY

Fargo has a diverse economy that has been remarkably resilient during the economic downturn. The city's unemployment rate never rose above 5%. As of November 2011, the unemployment rate in the City of Fargo was 2.9%, compared with 8.7% nationally. The economic strength of Fargo and this region contributes to its rapid growth.

2.9%

Fargo's unemployment rate
in Nov 2011.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (FARGO METROPOLITAN AREA, 2009)



* Excludes, forestry, fishing, and related activities, Mining, and Transportation and warehousing due to confidential information.
