



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

PLANNING DIVISION

2025

Annual Report

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This past year was another busy year for the Planning & Community Development Department. Our recent focus has been with housing which incorporates our full department (Planning, Community Development, and Economic Development divisions).

The recent housing trends in the City have been causing some concern. New construction for single family and multi-family are down over the last few years. This decrease has caused a reduction in vacancy as well with the Apartment Association reporting a 3.55% vacancy rate to close 2025. We will continue our work on parking code changes into 2026 in hopes of reducing that cost burden on developments and housing affordability. We'll also continue to work with developers and builders to try to increase new starts for 2026.

The recent opening of the Altru Hospital as well as the improvements on the campus of UND have been the highlights of 2025. New projects include the work with Agristo, Altru Sports Complex, the Children's Museum, as well as the new Valley Middle School.

In addition, the DeMers/42nd St grade separation will start construction in 2026. This project has been in the planning stages for many years and will provide a great improvement for the transportation network as well as improved safety for the community. Staff is also working on plans for the 47th Avenue South Interchange. This work is planned for around 2030 and as those plans develop, staff will coordinate to ensure thoughtful development can occur in conjunction with that much needed investment into our community.

- Ryan Brooks, Planning & Community Development Director

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

Peter Kuhn joined the Commission in March 2014 and his last meeting was April 2025, serving 11 years on the Commission.

Steven Wasvick (President) (County Rep)
Term Expires - 03/30/2026

Alex Reichert (Vice President) **Jordon Klava** (County Rep)
Term Expires - 12/21/2026 Term Expires - 09/19/2028

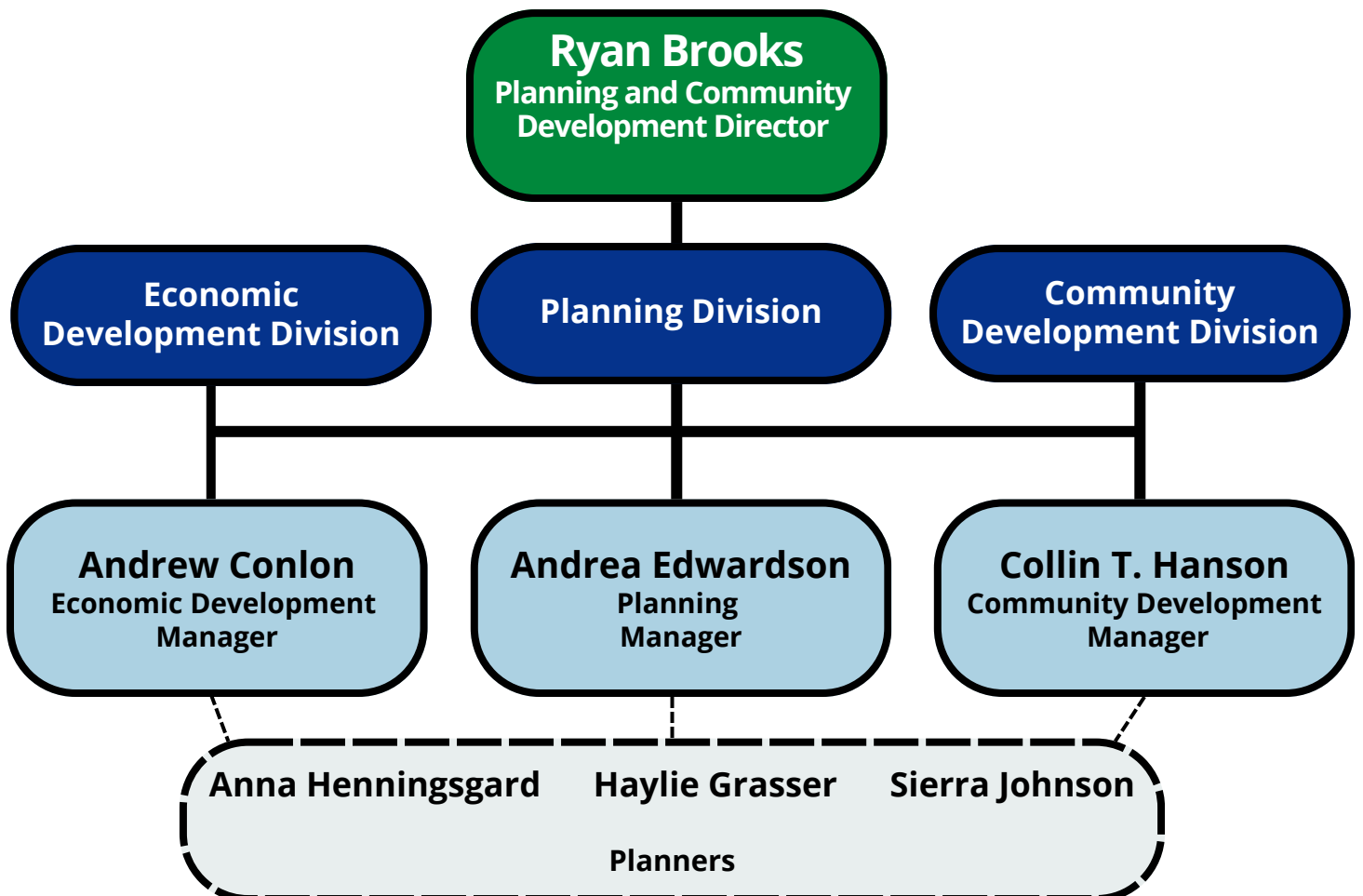
Meggen Sande (Secretary) **Andrew Budke**
Term Expires - 07/18/2027 Term Expires - 12/16/2029

Jennifer Arel **Derek Holt**
Term Expires - 07/09/2026 Term Expires - 12/16/2029

Benjamin Matson **OPEN** (County Rep)
Term Expires - 07/18/2027



Derek Holt joined in January 2025



CODE AMENDMENTS



Non-Conforming Uses, Lots, and Structures

Staying current with state legislative changes, the update addressed: permit repairs and maintenance of non-conforming properties, removed amortization option for non-conforming uses, permitted non-conforming residential properties to be rebuilt if certain conditions are met, allowed for all existing structures to be rebuilt to existing footprints with conditions as long as use is conforming, and creation of appeals process.



PZ Commission Membership

Expanded to include the Commander of the GF Air Force Base, or their designee, as a non-voting ex officio member in response to proposed state legislation regarding city development projects that could impact the Air Base.



Off-Street Parking Code Changes - Phase 1 Multi-Family

Parking requirements were reduced for each unit type in response to feedback that requirements were higher than other peer cities and field observations. Staff worked with the Parking Subcommittee of the Commission on these and other proposed parking ordinance changes.

STANDING COMMITTEES

GF, EGF Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

A MPO is a federally mandated transportation policy-making organization that is made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities. They were created to ensure regional cooperation in transportation planning. MPOs were introduced by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, which required the formation of an MPO for any Urbanized Area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000.

MPO Executive Policy Board

The MPO's Executive Policy Board is the City Council equivalent and final action body that governs all MPO and subsequent Grand Forks and East Grand Forks DOT funding activities. City Engineer, Al Grasser is appointed by the Planning & Zoning Commission through his role as an ex-officio member of the P&Z Commission. Council Members Tricia Lunski and Ken Vein also sit on the executive committee.

MPO Technical Assistance Committee

Planning staff participate on the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC) and provide staff perspective and historical knowledge on projects, plans and funding opportunities that go through the MPO. Staff are active on steering committees for various planning documents with the awarded consultants and other MPO staff. This year the following projects were in-process or completed:

- Grand Valley Pedestrian Study
- Safe Streets 4 All Planning Grant/Study
- MicroTransit Study

Downtown Design Review Board

Administers Downtown (B-4) Design Standards.

Alex Reichert - Planning & Zoning representative
 Bill Schoen, (Architect)
 Leah Byzewski, Myra Museum (Historian)
 Chuck Flemmer, (Historic Preservation Commission)
 Dave Badman (Downtown Owner/Operator)
 Blue Weber (Downtown Owner/Operator)
 Dillon Trosen (Downtown Owner/Operator)



SUB COMMITTEES

Signs

Off-Premise (Billboard) Sign regulations were under evaluation by staff and the Sign Subcommittee members Meggen Sande, Ben Matson, and Jenny Arel in 2025.

A draft ordinance has been reviewed by the Subcommittee presented and discussed with billboard companies, and is currently under review by the City Attorney's office. Another focus group with sign companies will occur after City Attorney review and input. Staff anticipate bringing a proposed ordinance change in 2026.

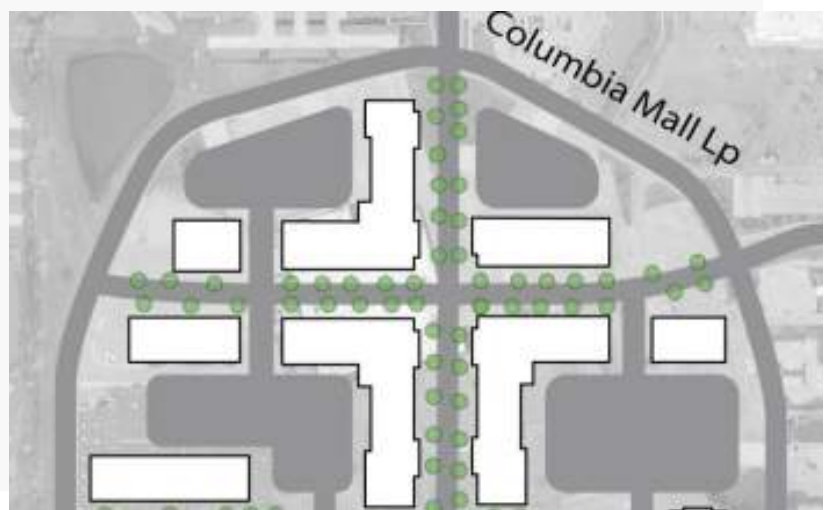


Off-Street Parking

Subcommittee members Alex Reichert, Ben Matson, and Andrew Budke participated in almost monthly meetings with staff throughout 2025 evaluating and discussing where current parking requirements sit compared to other regional and national communities, national standards (ITE Parking generation Manual), and field observations to develop a draft ordinance.

While 2025 was technical work on developing new policies, 2026 will usher in public input opportunities and a final draft for Planning & Zoning and City Council to consider.

All changes proposed are focusing in on 'right-sizing' parking and providing alternatives that prioritize building space on a property versus parking.



SITE PLANS

Planning coordinates plan reviews for residential projects of 4 units or more as well as all commercial and industrial projects. Dept. of Building Safety reviews single family and twin home projects. The site plan review considers all elements exterior to the building and on-site including building location (setbacks), site access, parking lot dimensions, landscaping, storm water, utility locations, refuse collection areas, and many others. Planning staff coordinates review comments from multiple departments including Engineering, Department of Building Safety, Sanitation, the Fire Marshals, and others as necessary.

 10 Commercial Bell Bank Prairie Supply	 7 Industrial All About Moving Forks Freightliner
 7 Institutional Altru Sports Complex Winship School Addn	 16 Other Parking Lots Cell Towers Addns
 2 Multi-Family The Reserve Empire THs - Ph IV	 <u>View Current Planning Projects online</u>



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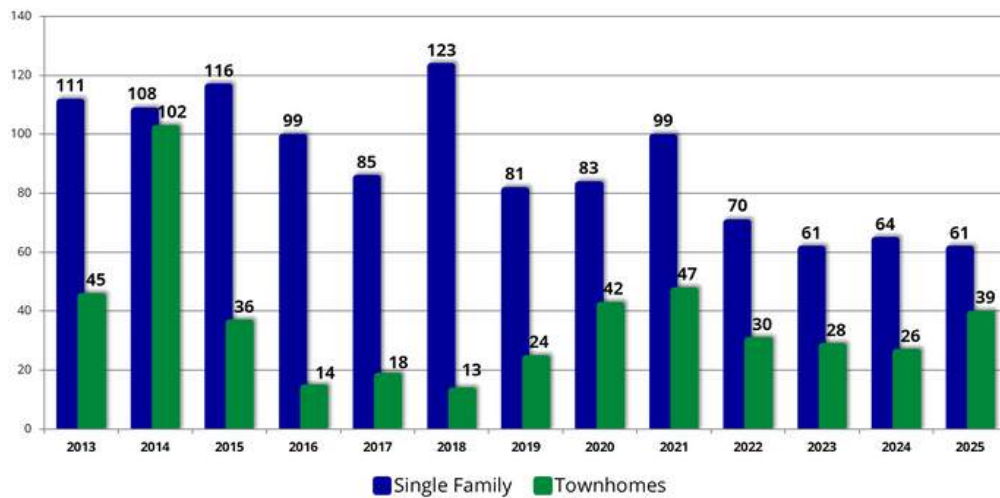
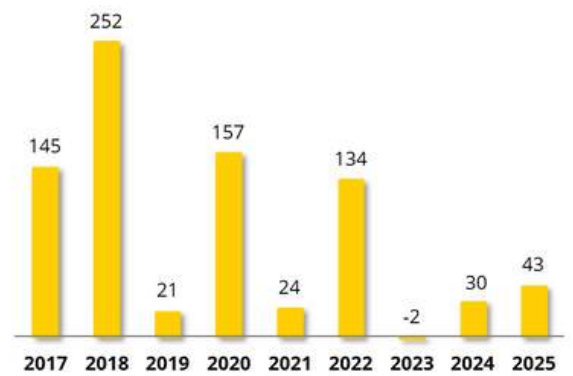
Plans Approved



HOUSING - LOW DENSITY

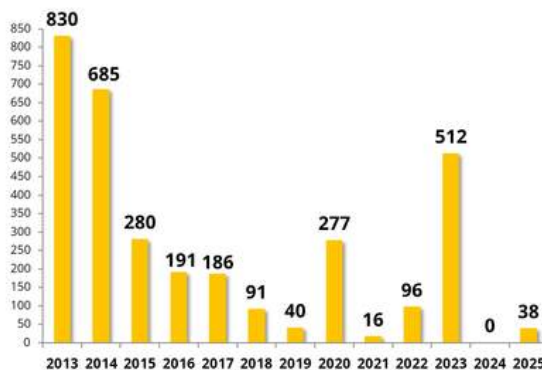
Following the trend observed in 2024, the three plats brought forward in 2025 were for single-family attached housing developments, with no single-family detached units proposed. Market pressures are encouraging more efficient construction models, but with final selling prices above \$375,000 for each unit, alternative options will be explored in coming years to try and find other solutions to help lower prices.

Single Family Platted Lots



HOUSING - HIGH DENSITY

In order to keep up with the average growth rate of the community, Grand Forks should see approximately 250-300 multi-family units built each year. In 2025, there were three multi-family projects permitted for a total of 38 units. Although this number is higher than last year, it is far below the number of units needed per year, driving a need for additional units in the near future.



The vacancy rate is tracked by the Grand Forks Apartment Association through a volunteer quarterly survey. 9-10% is typically considered a "healthy" vacancy rate.

Grand Forks Vacancy Rates
Source: Greater Grand Forks Apartment Association

Use the filter below to change the vacancy rate chart and title

1 Bedroom
2 Bedrooms
3 or more bedrooms
Efficiencies
GFAFB
Grand Forks
Greater Grand Forks Private
UND

Q4 2025
 Vacancy Rate
3.55%

Vacancy Rate by Quarter and Type

Attribute: ● Grand Forks

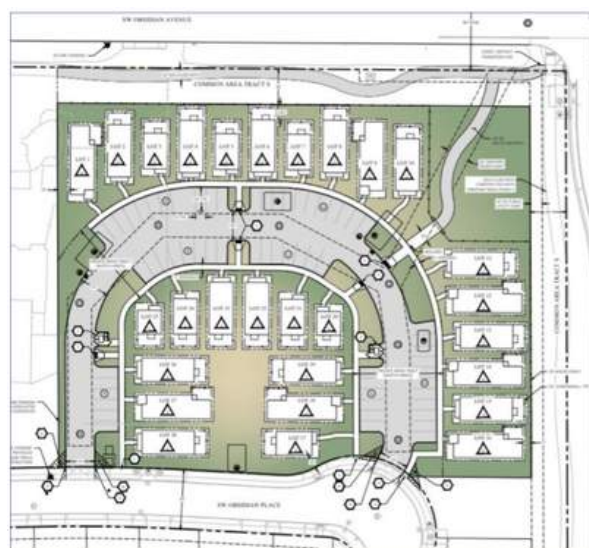
MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING & CODE AUDIT

In 2024, the Planning & Community Development Department began focusing on housing affordability and availability. Specifically, staff began researching and presenting information on Missing Middle Housing to the Commission. As part of this, staff conducted lot tests demonstrating that, under the current land development code, Missing Middle Housing is next to impossible to build without seeking a variance due to setback, impervious surface, and parking requirements.

This focus on Missing Middle Housing, and housing affordability in general, continued into 2025, with the department participating in AARP’s Technical Liveable Communities initiative where AARP-ND connected us with JET Planning on a Middle Housing Code Analysis. In November, Elizabeth Decker presented a summary of the code audit findings to the Commission which included the following:

- 70%+ of residentially zoned land is zoned R-1
- R-3 zoning district allows for greatest range of middle housing types, but dimensional standards and parking minimums inhibit development
- R-4 zoning district includes wide range of permitted housing types which may be de-emphasizing middle housing relative to high density opportunities
- Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) are highly utilized but are not being used to add middle housing and are not codified with clear details
- Infill opportunities to add middle housing are most abundant in established, walkable neighborhoods like Near North
- Greenfield opportunities to add middle housing are dependent on revisions to subdivision regulations or the addition of specific PUD standards

Zoning District	Single-family detached	Accessory dwelling unit	Two-family	Triplex/ Fourplex	Townhouses	Cottage cluster
R-1	Permitted	Not allowed	Not allowed	Conditional ¹	Not allowed	Not allowed
R-2	Permitted	Not allowed	Permitted ²	Conditional ¹	Not allowed	Not allowed
U-D, University District	Permitted	Not allowed	Permitted ²	Conditional ¹	Not allowed	Not allowed
R-3	Permitted	Not allowed	Permitted ²	Permitted ³	Permitted	Not allowed
R-4	Permitted	Not allowed	Permitted ²	Permitted ³	Permitted	Not allowed



STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

In December, Haylie graduated with Distinction from the University of Minnesota Crookston with her Bachelor of Science in Applied Studies with a minor in Sustainability. She is thankful for her departments support while finishing her degree and looks forward to applying her passion for sustainability in her work.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
CROOKSTON

2026 PROJECTS

Continuing Missing Middle and General Housing Discussions

- Residential Zoning District Evaluations

Code Amendments

- Parking Code Updates
- Sign Code Updates

Projects

- Agristo Potato Plant
- Housing Developments - Multi-family, single-family