

PART 1



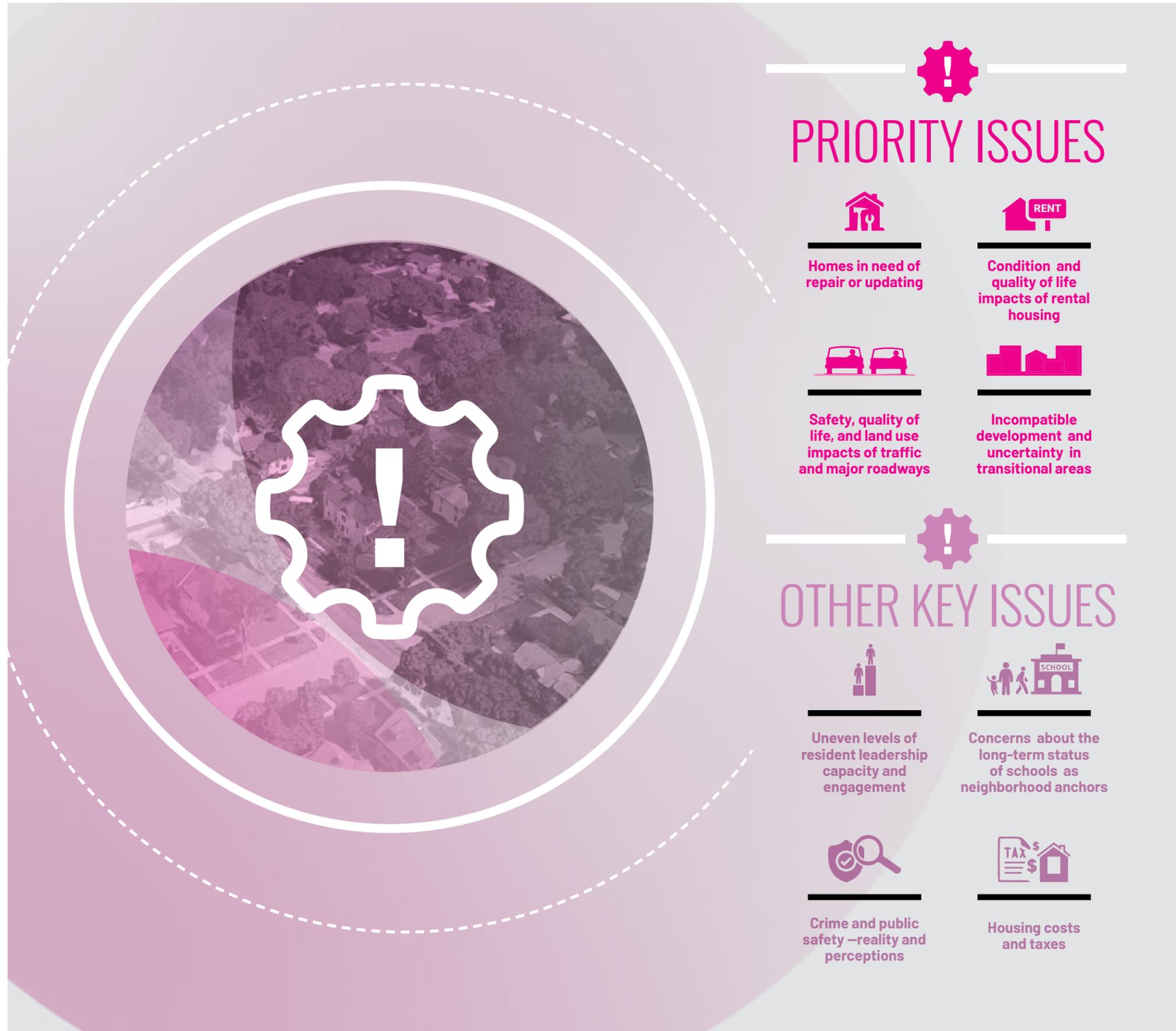
# KEY ISSUES, CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The range of issues that matter to people in Fargo's core neighborhoods is as diverse as the core itself. The planning process, however, revealed that **a relative handful of issues are considered important across the core**. They might be expressed in slightly different ways in each neighborhood, but these issues represent opportunities to focus effort and resources in ways that are likely to be meaningful to multiple neighborhoods.



**PART 1** Part 1 describes issues with currency in multiple neighborhoods, including how they have been expressed during the planning process, what is known about each issue based on broader analysis of neighborhood conditions, and why each issue matters to the health and prospects of core neighborhoods in Fargo. It calls out **four priority issues that were most consistently expressed as important** to many if not most of the core neighborhoods while also describing some other key issues that rose to the surface.

**PART 5** In Part 5 of this plan, **neighborhood-level nuances** around each issue—especially distinctions likely to influence plan implementation—are described in more detail, as are any issues that are much more localized in their impact and importance.



## PRIORITY ISSUES



Homes in need of repair or updating



Condition and quality of life impacts of rental housing



Safety, quality of life, and land use impacts of traffic and major roadways



Incompatible development and uncertainty in transitional areas



## OTHER KEY ISSUES



Uneven levels of resident leadership capacity and engagement



Concerns about the long-term status of schools as neighborhood anchors



Crime and public safety—reality and perceptions



Housing costs and taxes



# Homes in need of repair or updating

## How has this issue been expressed?

Project committee representatives from across the core identified distressed-looking properties as a problem to address.

30% of respondents to an online survey identified homes in disrepair as the most important issue to address in their neighborhood, making it the single most common answer received overall and the most common for nearly all of the core neighborhoods.

Small or outdated homes were identified as a common turn-off to potential homebuyers in core neighborhoods—especially given the newness of housing elsewhere in Fargo.

## What is known?

Over 1,500 properties in the core neighborhoods—or 1 in every 6—are slipping or distressed

A spring 2020 field survey of residential property conditions across the core found that over 1,500 properties showed signs of visible disinvestment when viewed from the street or sidewalk—such as peeling paint, worn siding, a roof or porch in disrepair, and other signals of neglect.

If the average “catch-up” cost to bring these 1,500 properties into a good state of repair—inside and outside—is \$35,000, that equates to at least \$50 million in deferred maintenance in the core’s private residential stock.



## Some property characteristics correlate with relatively high levels of disinvestment

Certain property characteristics are good predictors of disinvestment in the core neighborhoods—especially size and configuration. Of the most common single-family home configurations in the core, for example, 2 bedroom/1 bathroom properties had lower condition scores than other property types and were more likely to be absentee-owned.

Most Common Small Home Configurations (in order of frequency)	Average Year Built	Average Assessed Value	% Owner-Occupied	Average Field Survey Score (lower score indicates better condition)	
				Least Healthy	Most Healthy
2 bedrooms / 2 bathrooms	1939	\$150,353	82%	4.75	2.67
2 bedrooms / 1 bathroom	1937	\$132,175	77%	3.75	2.84
3 bedrooms / 2 bathrooms	1948	\$165,795	86%	3.25	2.59
3 bedrooms / 1 bathroom	1943	\$148,893	82%	2.75	2.74

Source: czb analysis of City of Fargo assessment data



## Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

While distressed housing is an important issue in Fargo’s core neighborhoods, it is also true that blight is not yet overwhelming. This is an advantage. Fargo has an opportunity to learn from cities that waited too long to counteract blight in a concerted manner. Among the lessons that can and should be applied to Fargo’s core neighborhoods:

**It pays to intervene sooner:** By the time disinvestment becomes visible, it is usually preceded by years of withdrawn maintenance. And if it continues, it becomes more and more costly for the owner (and, eventually, the City) to address with each passing year.

**Housing conditions influence quality of life and safety:** Deferred exterior maintenance is often an indication of deeper levels of disinvestment that can diminish quality of life and safety for individuals at a specific property and others in close proximity.

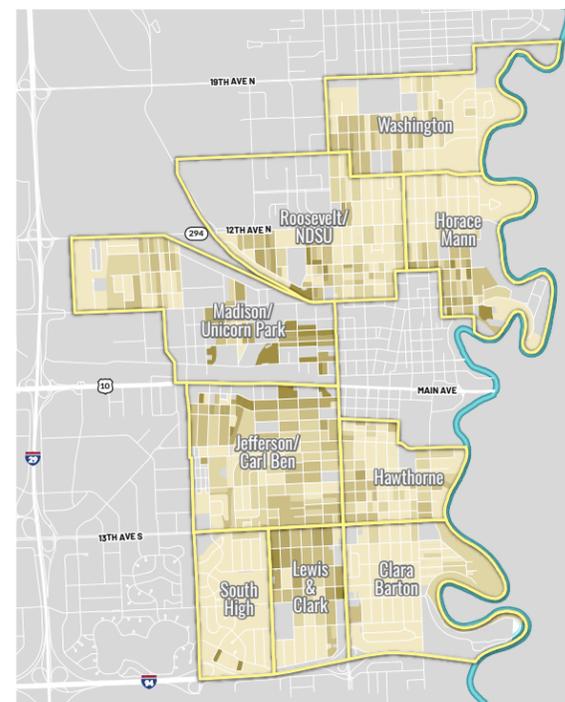
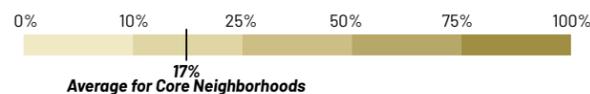
**Each troubled property has a wider impact, especially on confidence:** A few distressed properties on an otherwise stable block can undermine the confidence of other property owners and dissuade potential residents from moving in. Over time, disinvestment can spread to other properties and ultimately undermine the City’s financial capacity to intervene.

**Separating “ability” and “willingness” of property owners is critical:** Are distressed conditions the result of financial hardship or physical disability? Or are they the result of an owner who is capable of keeping their property in good repair but chooses not to? The answers to these questions must shape any intervention.

## These properties can be found across the core but are not evenly distributed

While each neighborhood in Fargo’s core is affected to some degree by homes with deferred maintenance, some areas are much more affected than others. Neighborhoods adjacent to downtown each have multiple blocks with higher-than-average concentrations of slipping or distressed properties, as well as blocks with relatively low concentrations. Further out, Washington and Lewis & Clark both have several blocks where deferred maintenance is noticeable.

## Share of Properties that are Slipping or Distressed According to Field Survey



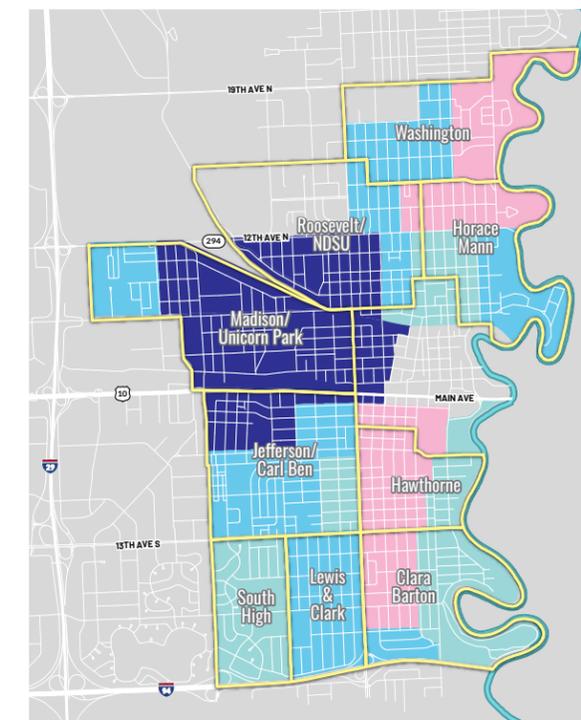
Source: 2020 Field Survey of Residential Conditions

## Disinvestment is a symptom of relatively soft markets

Fargo’s housing market is, on the whole, a healthy and stable one where the supply of housing is well-matched to demand. But some areas in the core have levels of housing demand that are relatively low for the Fargo market. Such areas tend to correlate with blocks where disinvestment is visible.

The adjacent map of housing market demand is from a citywide typology produced during the planning process that used a combination of value per acre, average sales prices, owner-occupancy rates, and building permit concentrations to gauge relative levels of demand and investment throughout Fargo.

## Housing Market Demand by Block Group



Source: czb Summary of Neighborhood and Housing Market Analysis for the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan, June 2020



# Condition and quality of life impacts of rental housing

## How has this issue been expressed?

Project committee representatives from several neighborhoods cited a variety of concerns about rental housing, including conditions at older apartment complexes, the transitioning of single-family homes into rentals, and the location of multi-family infill development.

18% of respondents to an online survey identified declining conditions at rental properties as the most important problem to solve in their neighborhood—the second most common answer.

Maintenance or nuisance-related issues at rental properties were cited by survey respondents as major turn-offs for potential residents in six of the nine core neighborhoods.

## What is known?

Over 50 of the 286 apartment buildings in the core neighborhoods—or 1 out of every 5—are slipping or distressed

Apartment buildings in the core neighborhoods (buildings with four or more units) account for almost 3,400 housing units—around 20% of all housing units in the core. Of these 286 buildings, 57 were found to have visible signs of disinvestment in the 2020 field survey of residential properties. These buildings tend to be older (86% were built before 1980) and have fewer units than newer apartment complexes.

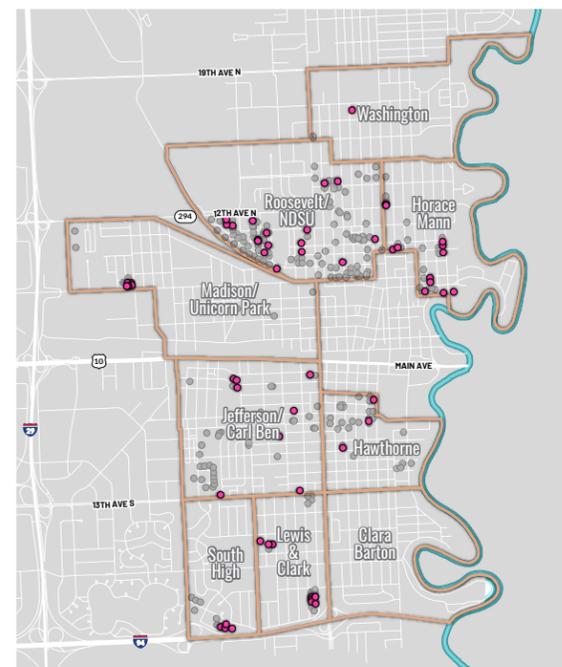
Every neighborhood in the core has at least one apartment building or complex considered slipping or distressed—with the exception of Clara Barton, which has no rental properties with four or more units.

Rents in older, underimproved properties are relatively low and widely affordable—which makes them less likely to be improved

Analysis by czbLLC of regional construction costs suggests that major rehabilitation work to outdated rental complexes will often require that rent be raised to at least \$1,200 upon completion for the owner to fully cover their construction and operating costs. If owners or investors are not confident that such rent can be achieved—in a market where median rent is \$800 and older complexes compete with thousands of more recently built units—major rehab will be delayed indefinitely in favor of minor fixes.

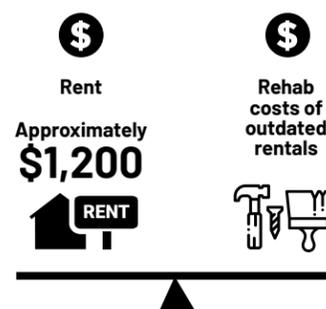
### Distribution of Slipping or Distressed Apartment Buildings in Fargo

● Slipping or Distressed Apartment Building ● Apartment Building in Excellent to Average Condition



Source: 2020 Field Survey of Residential Conditions

### Break-even rent for rehab of outdated rentals



Single-family rentals tend to be smaller and more poorly maintained than owner-occupied homes

Of the more than 7,500 single-family homes in the core neighborhoods, just over 1,200—or 16%—are estimated to be absentee-owned based on owner address data. Analysis of the size, value, and condition of single-family properties by ownership status reveals a clear pattern: those that are absentee-owned are, on average, 10% smaller, have assessed values that are 17% lower, and average conditions that are less healthy than their owner-occupied counterparts. Once single-family homes decline to a certain price point in the core (generally below \$130,000, but higher closer to NDSU), their feasibility as investment properties rise and investors out-bid the owner-occupant competition.

### Characteristics of Single-Family Properties in the Core Neighborhoods, by Ownership Status

	Absentee-Owned	Owner-Occupied
Number of Properties	1,202	6,366
Average Size of Property (Square Feet)	1,168	1,307
Average Assessed Value, 2019	\$153,063	\$184,892
Average Field Survey Score (lower score indicates better condition)	2.94	2.46

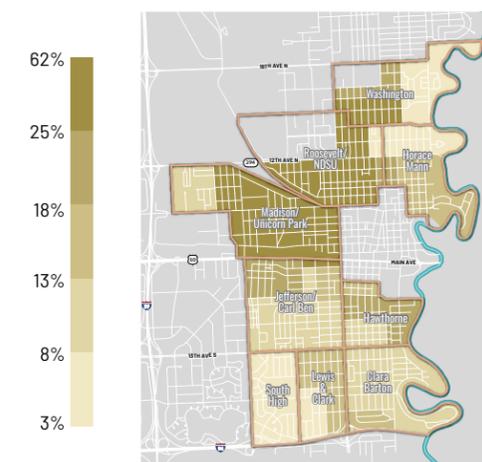
Source: czb analysis of City of Fargo assessment data

Absentee ownership of single-family homes is concentrated near NDSU but on the rise in most areas of the core

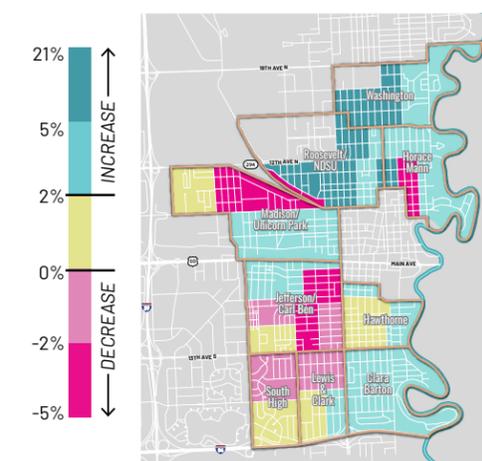
More than 25% of single-family homes are absentee-owned in much of the Madison/ Unicorn Park and Roosevelt neighborhoods, and in parts of Washington. Hawthorne, Jefferson/ Carl Ben, and Horace Mann also have notable concentrations of these properties.

Between 2011 and 2019, absentee-ownership rose to some extent in each neighborhood, though a few areas saw modest decreases.

### Share of Single-Family Homes that are Absentee-Owned, 2018



### Changes in Absentee-Ownership of Single-Family Homes, 2011-2019



## Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

A distressed or problematic rental property is very often a symptom of the same market forces that influence neglect at an owner-occupied property. But distressed rentals are often thought of as distinct issues in older neighborhoods for good reasons. They tend to be in highly visible locations along or near busier streets and are thus more noticeable and likely to have a bigger impact on internal and external impressions of a neighborhood than a typical house. They also happen to be businesses, which means that the owners have different motivations and responsibilities than a homeowner.

Understanding the motivations and responsibilities of rental property owners and investors is an important part of designing policy tools or programs that are likely to keep healthy rental properties healthy or turn around properties that are in trouble. This is true for an apartment complex with 20 units owned by a large management company—and for the single-family house being rented out by a smalltime landlord.



# Safety, quality of life, and land use impacts of traffic and major roadways

## How has this issue been expressed?

Concerns about the impacts of major roadways on neighborhood atmosphere and quality of life, on the walkability and bikeability of core neighborhoods, and on the marketability of properties along or near major roadways were raised by all three of the project's Sub-Area committees.

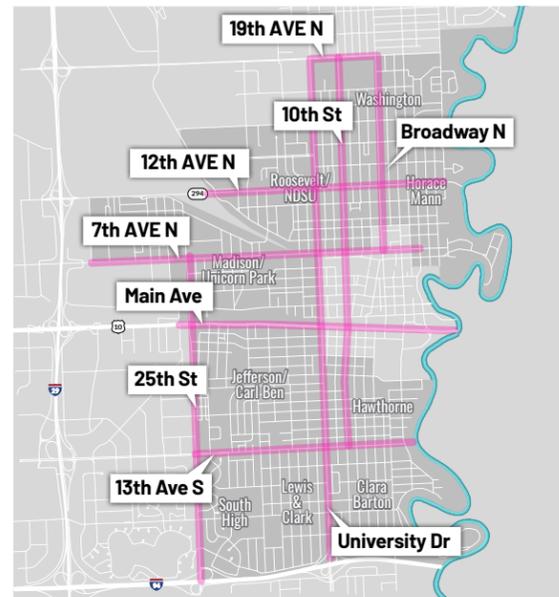
16% of respondents to an online survey described a combination of concerns about traffic and streets—speeding, noise, conditions—as neighborhood detractors, making it the third most common issue cited.

## What is known?

### All core neighborhoods are influenced in some way by busy, auto-oriented arterial roadways

The presence of busy, auto-oriented roadways are a fact of life for all core neighborhoods and help to make driving within and between parts of the core fast and efficient. For the most part, these roads follow auto-oriented highway-design principles from the late 20th century, which means that accommodations for neighborhood character or the experience of other users (pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders) is largely a secondary concern.

### Arterials that carry at least 10,000 vehicles per day



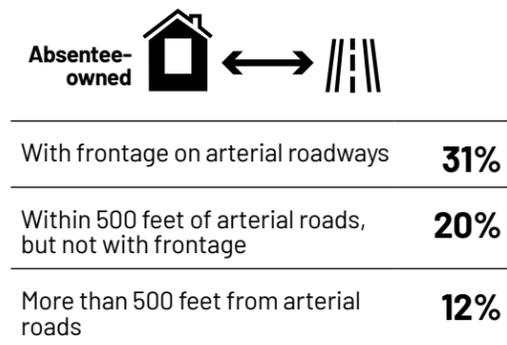
Source: czb analysis of NDDOT traffic counts

### Arterial roadways have an influence on residential property ownership and condition patterns

Just over 550 single-family homes front arterial roadways in the core neighborhoods. Among these properties, the absentee-ownership rate is 31%—nearly double the 16% rate for the core overall.

Additionally, recent average sale prices, average assessed values, and property condition scores for single-family homes are all lower, on average, along arterial roadways than in the core as a whole. Key exceptions include Broadway and University Drive South, where conditions, owner-occupancy rates, and values are relatively strong.

### Absentee-ownership rate of single-family homes by proximity to arterials



Source: czb analysis of City of Fargo assessment data

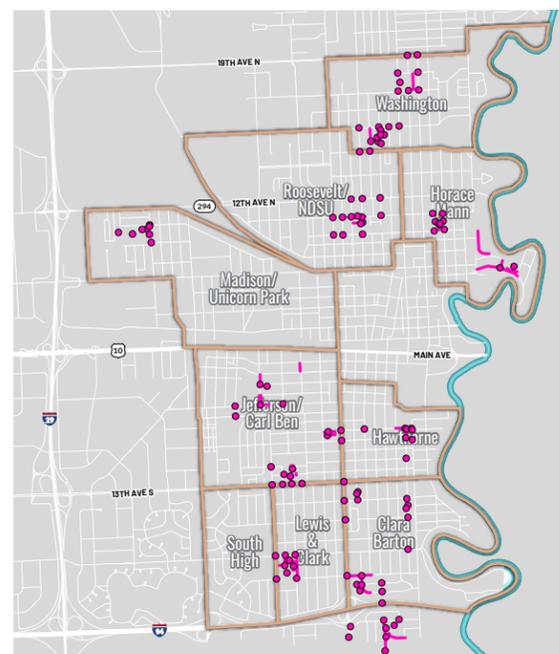
### Pedestrian safety issues exist throughout the core, especially as it relates to school walking routes

While pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience have become more prominent issues in Fargo than they were in previous eras, substantial room for improvement remains.

A Safe Routes to School Plan completed for Fargo in 2020 found numerous opportunities to improve pedestrian safety in core neighborhoods—in areas adjacent to schools and along key streets leading to school facilities.

### Safe Routes to Schools Opportunities

● Intersections or crossing that need attention      — Sidewalks in need of attention or addition



Source: Fargo Safe Routes to School Plan

### Reconstruction of Main Avenue is a model for arterial roadway redesign

The reconstruction of Main Avenue between University Drive and 2nd Street in 2020—enhancing the street's safety for all users and its visual appeal—serves as a model for arterial redesign in Fargo. Its presence is likely to influence public demand for similar work elsewhere in the core when opportunities arise for full reconstruction or more limited traffic-calming efforts.



Photo credit: Apex Engineering Group

## Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

The environment along major streets in Fargo's core is often at odds with the quieter, tree-lined atmosphere found on interior streets. This is unavoidable in some respects—after all, traffic volumes and noise will be higher on major streets, and arterials help to limit the number of cars that use local streets to get through a neighborhood.

It is also true, however, that busy streets can be designed in ways that enhance rather than detract from a neighborhood's general character, and that they and their adjacent land uses can be designed to feel safe to non-auto users.

Perhaps the most significant advantage that core neighborhoods have over other locations in the region is a strong sense of place. Everything that can be done to reinforce that sense—especially the design of well-traveled streets—is a step towards making the core more livable to current residents and more appealing to future residents.



# Incompatible development and uncertainty in transitional areas

## How has this issue been expressed?

Concerns about the design, density, and/or land use of infill development has been expressed in a number of ways by volunteer committee members and survey respondents in most of the core neighborhoods. Specific concerns have included:

The design of new homes, garages, or rental infill being out of step with established vernacular character

Higher density housing or mixed-use structures being developed in an ad hoc manner that is difficult to anticipate

## What is known?

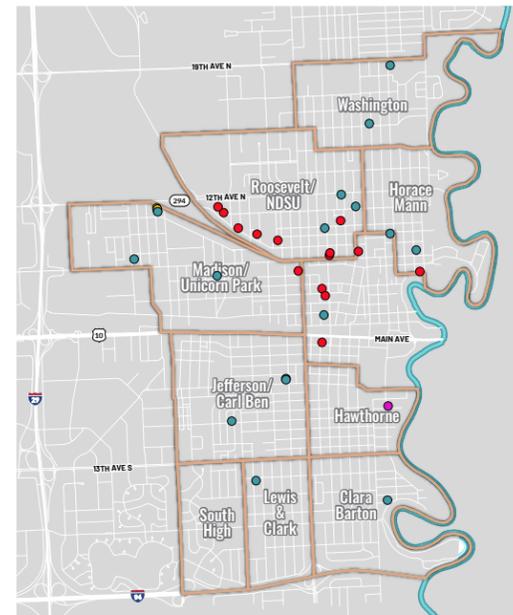
**New construction has occurred in most core neighborhoods since 2015, but especially in areas adjacent to downtown and NDSU**

Whenever infill development is proposed in established neighborhoods, concerns can arise if it represents a deviation from what is expected or desired by others who have a stake in the neighborhood. Those expectations might be formally expressed in plans or by the Land Development Code, or they might be informal preferences.

While new residential construction is not a widespread occurrence in Fargo's core neighborhoods, it has been happening with more frequency in recent years—especially in areas abutting downtown Fargo and NDSU—creating flashpoints around opposing visions for particular properties, blocks, or neighborhoods. Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) have been used as a tool to flexibly negotiate development details for many of the larger projects in the core, but this ad hoc approach often leaves disagreements over neighborhood vision unresolved.

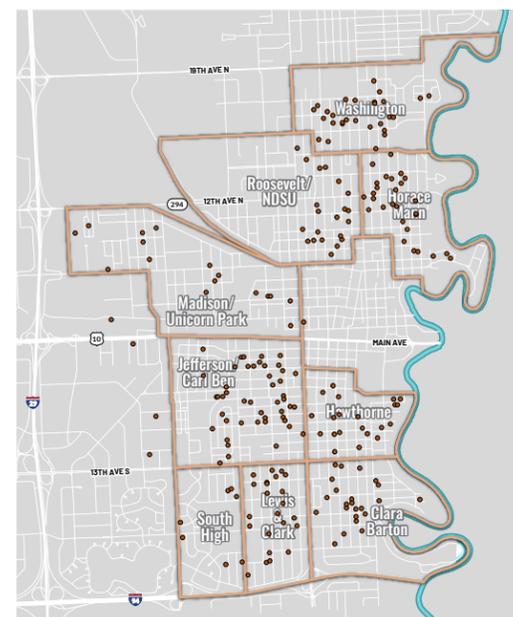
**New Residential Properties Built Since 2015**

● Single-family ● Twin Home Unit ● Townhouse Unit ● Apartment



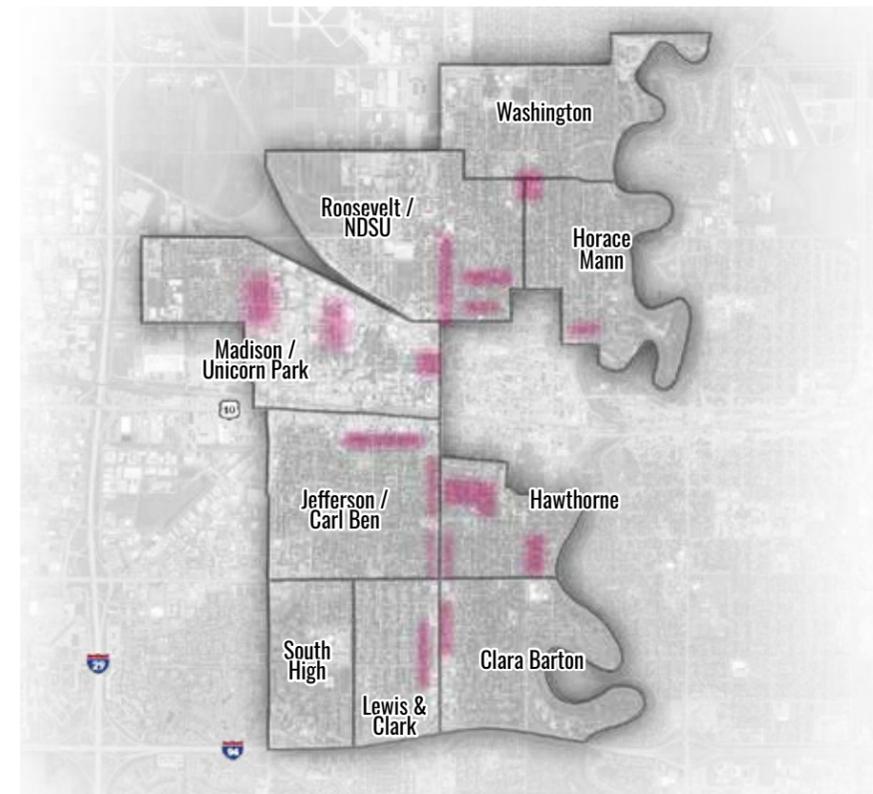
**Permits Issued for Garage Construction, 2015-2019**

● Garage



Source: City of Fargo building permit data

**Map of edges / transitional areas in the core**



**'Edges' in the core neighborhoods are the areas most likely to be transitional and contested**

The boundaries between certain land use or development patterns—between single-family blocks and commercial or mixed-use blocks, for example—are the areas where new development is most likely to be contested. This is especially true if land use demands are changing and leading to proposals to redevelop underutilized land.

Almost every neighborhood in the core has edges that are either currently or could become areas where evolving land use demands might conflict with long-held or more recent expectations.

## Fargo's Land Development Code (LDC)



Analysis of Fargo's Land Development Code (LDC) in 2020 has found it to be at odds in several important ways with goals expressed by the Go2030 comprehensive plan and other plans that have been developed since the last time the LDC was substantially revised in the 1990s.

Shortcomings include inadequate development standards, especially as they relate to urban form—or how new buildings relate to the physical fabric of a neighborhood or street.



**Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?**

Too much uncertainty about what can be built and what it will look like—especially in areas where land uses mix or transition from one use to another—is a bigger issue for some stakeholders than others. It matters to neighborhood vitality, though, if it causes enough existing owners to hesitate on making investments to their properties because they lack confidence in the direction of the neighborhood or their own willingness to remain there. It also matters if it steers away homebuyers who sense uncertainty and have plentiful options elsewhere that give them more confidence.

Incompatibility of development matters if new development has the effect of lowering standards in a given neighborhood or disrupting urban form in a way that detracts from a neighborhood's established physical character. Either change can have the effect of setting a tone for future investment that erodes certain advantages that core neighborhoods have over other parts of the Fargo-Moorhead region.



## Uneven levels of resident leadership capacity and engagement

### How has this issue been expressed?

The response to the call for volunteers to participate on committees for the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan largely reflected existing levels of resident leadership capacity and organization. Areas with a longer history of organized engagement had more residents expressing an interest to participate than those with less formal or visible resident leadership structures.

### What is known?

#### Resident leadership capacity in the core appears to correlate with a combination of factors

The two neighborhoods with the most volunteers for the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan—Hawthorne and Horace Mann—are two that have longstanding and fairly active neighborhood associations. There may be a number of reasons for this, but a few key ones appear to be:

<p><b>Rallying Points</b> </p> <p>These areas have some of the oldest housing in the city and have been dealing with cycles of disinvestment, reinvestment, and change for decades. Often, some precipitating event or issue is needed to compel people to become and stay engaged.</p>	<p><b>Identity</b> </p> <p>Like the presence of issues to rally around, a clear neighborhood identity is something that existing residents and newcomers alike can connect themselves to. Fargo's most engaged neighborhoods tend to have the clearest or strongest identities.</p>	<p><b>Income</b> </p> <p>Resident affluence and education can influence the degree to which neighbors feel comfortable interacting with City government and seek to actively manage change in their neighborhood. Higher incomes also frequently translate to concentrations of middle-aged homeowners who have been in the neighborhood for enough time to connect with others.</p>
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### Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

**Resident leadership can seem like an abstract or intangible force in a neighborhood, but its absence can have very tangible consequences. If residents are not connected and organized in some way—either formally or informally—a neighborhood's capacity to address small issues before they become larger issues, and to effectively advocate for neighborhood interests, will be limited**



## Concerns about the long-term status of schools as neighborhood anchors

### How has this issue been expressed?

Schools were singled-out as critical assets in almost all core neighborhoods—serving as physical and cultural anchors—during the planning process. But concerns were also raised that schools in the core have been falling behind newer schools in newer neighborhoods. If schools in the core, and the neighborhoods themselves, have a harder time competing for young families, there are fears that certain facilities may not be viable in the long-term.

### What is known?

#### Elementary enrollment projections reflect growth expectations and trends in Fargo

Fargo's growth in recent decades has been concentrated in the city's southern end, where residential development and a growing population have been served by new and expanded school facilities. Over the next few years, elementary enrollments based on student residence show that core neighborhood enrollment will be flat if not declining while enrollment beyond the core will grow by almost 5%.

In terms of enrollment as a percentage of school capacity, core elementary schools are expected to be at 74% in 2023/2024, while non-core elementary schools will be at 82%.

**Projected Elementary School Enrollment by Student Residence**

	2020/ 2021	2023/ 2024	% Change
Core Elementary Schools	2,004	1,979	-1.2%
Non-core Elementary Schools	3,333	3,491	+4.7%

Source: Fargo Public Schools Long Range Facility Plan (2019)

### Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

**The symbiotic relationship between core neighborhoods and their schools—with each neighborhood reflecting and reinforcing the strength of its schools, and vice versa—make schools an important part of neighborhood planning. In Fargo, uneven growth patterns and their influence on planning for school facilities means that the proper scale for addressing this issue is citywide.**



## Crime and public safety —reality and perceptions

### How has this issue been expressed?

In an online survey, crime and safety were identified as priority problems to address in Jefferson / Carl Ben and Madison / Unicorn Park. But it was also among a range of issues noted by participants in a few other neighborhoods, including Horace Mann and Roosevelt / NDSU.

In some cases, crime was raised during the planning process as an issue that impacts neighborhood quality of life. In other cases, it was raised as more of a perception problem, where the external image of crime does not align with reality.

### What is known?

#### A greater density of incidents in and adjacent to downtown Fargo than in most other parts of the city

Crime data in Fargo is not yet reported in a manner conducive to detailed analysis and meaningful comparisons of neighborhood-level crime rates. However, the Fargo Police Department does use CityProtect as an online mapping tool to share incident reports with the public—allowing residents and neighborhood organizations to see the types of incidents that have been reported over recent periods on specific blocks or near specific intersections.

Mapping all reported incidents from the previous 12 months using CityProtect reveals a greater density of incidents in and adjacent to downtown Fargo than in most other parts of the city. This is to be expected given the relative density of population and activity in Fargo’s urban core, as well as levels of economic need that are higher than average (for Fargo). This concentration of incidents—however experienced or communicated—can influence how safe people feel about living in or visiting certain parts of Fargo’s core.



Source: CityProtect

### Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

**Feeling unsafe—regardless of how that impression is generated—can lead some potential residents to look elsewhere and compel existing residents to withdraw from civic life or move someplace that feels safer. But it can also motivate neighbors to reach out, work together, and collaborate with City leaders to make a block feel more orderly, neighborly, and secure.**



## Housing costs and taxes

### How has this issue been expressed?

While the affordability of the core neighborhoods was often mentioned during the planning process as a key asset, concerns about housing costs and taxes were also raised. Rather than concerns about prices or rents, those raising this issue tended to focus on the maintenance and repair costs related to older housing and Fargo’s practice of placing special assessments on properties to pay for infrastructure improvements.

### What is known?

#### While Fargo’s housing market has been strong for years due to rapid growth, it remains broadly affordable.

For example, the median gross rent in Fargo in 2018 was well within the affordability range of the typical renting household, and the value of the median owner-occupied house was well within the purchasing range of typical Fargo homeowners.

The affordability of the housing stock—especially in the core—is often a reflection of age and condition. With nearly 80% of the residential properties in the core neighborhoods now 60-years-old or older, and there being a clear difference in average condition between older and newer properties according to the 2020 field survey of residential conditions, homes in the core present owners with financial decisions and challenges that are more complicated than paying more for a newer house in a newer neighborhood. When the costs of upgrading older infrastructure get added as special assessments, owning an older home in an older neighborhood becomes a particular challenge for households with low or limited incomes.

### Why does this issue matter, and how does it affect neighborhood planning?

**Affordability in the core neighborhoods can be a double-edged sword—providing a wide range of options for homeownership in a strong regional housing market, but putting a greater onus on owners to maintain and improve aging properties to prevent serious degradation. If a growing share of owners are unable to keep up with maintenance for financial reasons, or are unwilling to pay for costly and disruptive upgrades, housing quality and conditions eventually erode along with neighborhood quality of life and the City’s tax base.**

### Comparison of Median Incomes and Housing Costs, 2018

	INCOME NEEDED	INCOME ACTUAL
<b>RENT</b>	Income needed to afford median rent in Fargo <b>\$31,840</b>	Actual median household income of renters in Fargo <b>\$36,867</b>
<b>FOR SALE</b>	Income needed to affordably purchase a home priced at Fargo’s median home value <b>\$66,000</b>	Actual median household income of homeowners in Fargo <b>\$86,970</b>

### Comparison of Property Conditions in Core Neighborhoods by Age

Year Built	Number of Core Residential Properties	Average Field Survey Score (lower score indicates better condition)				
		Least Healthy (4.75)	3.75	3.25	2.75	Most Healthy (2.25)
1939 or Earlier	3,667					2.63
1940 to 1959	3,354					2.56
1960 to 1979	1,444					2.44
1980 to 1999	222					2.45
2000 or Later	154					2.00

Source: czb analysis of American Community Survey 2018 5-Year Estimates and 2020 field survey of residential conditions

# How did we get here?

The priority issues in Fargo's core neighborhoods have not emerged overnight, and they are not isolated from each other or from other issues. They represent choices and processes long in the making that affect older neighborhoods across the country.

Identifying strategies to address these issues requires an understanding of where the issues come from, the problems that need solving, and the interconnectedness of problems and potential solutions.



## Homes in need of repair or updating

When disrepair becomes visible at the scale now apparent in Fargo's core neighborhoods—one in every six residential properties—it is a sign that disinvesting in older housing makes more sense for many owners than investing and actively improving. Plentiful, newer, and generally affordable options on the edges of Fargo make it easier for households to look past the core when they decide where to put their housing dollars.

If the market doesn't respond to an aging and outdated house by substantially renovating it and making it competitive again to the broader homebuying market, the cost of the house will increasingly reflect its condition and it becomes a source of affordable housing. While this is an important role for the house to play and an asset for a community where low-wage workers have a declining range of affordable options, deferred maintenance is likely to mount over time without intervention. And if homes in disrepair become concentrated, poverty is also likely to become concentrated.



## Condition and quality of life impacts of rental housing

Rental housing is a significant part of Fargo's housing supply (56% of all occupied units) and an essential part of a healthy housing market that provides access to a range the full spectrum of housing types. As with owner-occupied housing in Fargo, plentiful and largely affordable options—especially newer units—have contributed to disinvestment in some older rental properties. An older and outdated apartment rents for less than its more modern competitors, which makes them affordable—but it also limits reinvestment into the property and can lead to degradation over time if market or other forces fail to intervene.

The renting of single-family houses—generally not a viable business model—has become viable in areas where acquisition costs are especially low (due to declining condition or unfavorable location) or if the market can bear high rents (as in areas adjacent to NDSU). With thousands of new rental units having been built citywide in recent years, though, landlords of single-family homes may find it increasingly difficult to compete for renters. This has the potential to create affordable homebuying opportunities for some households, but it might also hasten disinvestment in the most marginal properties.



## Safety, quality of life, and land use impacts of traffic and major roadways

When most of Fargo's core neighborhoods were built in the early-to-mid 20th century, Fargo was a much smaller city with far fewer cars. As the city and traffic volumes grew, major streets were re-engineered to better accommodate the efficient flow of cars—something that happened in every American community. Cities are now a full generation into rethinking these practices, and Fargo is no different. While some major roads have been thoughtfully redesigned, many in the core are still stuck in a mid-century model that feels unsafe to pedestrians and bicyclists and detracts from neighborhood character.

The recent reconstruction of Main Avenue has the potential to reset expectations and make it easier for similar redesigns to occur on other corridors. But the physical and behavioral adaptations that will make corridors throughout the core feel safer will take years, patience, and resources to accomplish.



## Incompatible development and uncertainty in transitional areas

Cities and neighborhoods change—any effort to preserve a place in amber will inevitably be met with disappointment. While change cannot be prevented, it can be managed and guided in ways that reflect a general community consensus about the pace, nature, and geography of change, as well as the compromises that stakeholders are willing to acknowledge and make.

In parts of Fargo's core neighborhoods where change has been happening the fastest, efforts to fully recognize and reconcile competing goals have often been inadequate, resulting in feelings of frustration, distrust, and uncertainty. Decisions are being made on a regular basis where key stakeholders disagree about which principles and goals should be the basis for a decision—disagreements that go unresolved and carry over to future decisions.

# What issues require attention?

*Overcoming both a hesitancy and an inability to make large home improvements*

*Isolated examples of blight that threaten stable areas*

*Limited financial motivation to upgrade aging multi-family properties*

*Preservation of affordable opportunities currently provided by underimproved rental properties*

*Making single-family properties in decline less appealing targets for rental investors and more appealing to homebuyers*

*The design and function of major roadways (and of the overall network they form)*

*Uncertainty and disinvestment stemming from evolving land use demands along some corridors*

*Too much uncertainty about what can go where and what it will look like*

*Inadequate processes for mediating disagreements between competing interests and visions*