

# Summary Report:

## Listening Session with Downtown Forks (02/19/21)

### East Grand Forks Land Use Plan Update

Updated 04/09/21

#### 1. Summary

Downtown Forks ( [www.downtownforks.com](http://www.downtownforks.com) ) is the Downtown Development Association (DDA) for Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. DDA organizes events and activities that attract visitors to the area and advocates for urban planning and urban design principles to grow and improve the downtown area for both cities, and attract business activity and investment. DDA has led implementation of several innovative ideas and improvements in the heart of Grand Forks / East Grand Forks with the goal of increasing vibrancy in the downtown area.

On February 19, 2021 members of the consultant team met with Blue Weber, President and CEO of DDA, to get his organization's ideas and comments related to East Grand Forks, including issues related to the overall Land Use Plan Update, and also those that are specific to the East Grand Forks downtown. Mr. Weber currently serves as a member of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the plan.

#### 2. Comments and Themes Received

- » Downtown EGF has great potential for transformative investment
- » Many development opportunities in Downtown EGF
- » Recommends reconsidering parking supply
  - much greater supply than needed
  - land could be used to develop apartments and mixed use housing
  - would bring more residents and spending to downtown
- » Recommends rethinking about how space in the Downtown is allocated and distributed
  - Recommends a "Strong Towns" ( [www.strongtowns.org](http://www.strongtowns.org) ) approach
  - A value per acre / Urban 3 approach ( [www.urban-three.com/why-value-per-acre](http://www.urban-three.com/why-value-per-acre) ) would show that downtown is most highly productive location
- » Important to have a working definition of downtown EGF (boundary streets)

- » Focusing on the downtown will bring important benefits to surrounding neighborhoods, including:
  - Increase in amenities and convenience available to current residents
  - Increased desirability for downtown-adjacent residential neighborhoods
  - Increased property values
- » Design standards for new development is key
  - New development is following better urban design models
  - Up North Pizza is a great example of the right approach for downtown
- » A Master Plan for Downtown EGF is needed to take next steps
  - Other similar communities like Prior Lake, Brainerd are seeing the value and benefit of doing master plans

### **3. Recommendations Received**

- » Develop a Small Area Plan for Downtown EGF
  - Include urban design standards
  - Include focus on growing residential uses within downtown
  - Strengthen convenient connection between downtown and adjacent neighborhoods
- » Develop a pedestrian and bicycle plan
  - Trails are a key feature and component for helping people connect with downtown
  - Key question: how do we better connect residents and visitors to the City's main street?

### **4. Next Steps**

- » DDA will work with City to increase participation of EGF businesses in DDA
- » DDA will provide recommendation for boundaries for downtown EGF

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