ULI

DOWNTOWN GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA
DOWNTOWN GRAND FORKS
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA

A Strategy for Rebuilding
Downtown Grand Forks

September 7–12, 1997
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1023 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
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ABOUT ULI—THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a nonprofit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI Initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues, proposes creative solutions based on this research, provides advisory services, and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 13,000 members and associates from 50 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academicians, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice.

The Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
Executive Vice President

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ABOUT ULI ADVISORY SERVICES

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 200 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for such issues as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among others. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each interdisciplinary panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. Panelists are chosen for their knowledge of the topics to be addressed and screened to ensure their objectivity. Teams typically include several developers, a landscape architect, a planner, a market analyst, a financial expert, and others with niche expertise needed to address the project. ULI teams provide a holistic look at development problems. Each panel is chaired by a respected ULI member who has previous panel experience.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day comprising a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day and a half of hour-long interviews of typically 80 to 100 key people within the community, and a day and a half of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. At the request of the sponsor, a written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation prior to the panel's visit—including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration—members of ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to provide accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and provide recommendations within a compressed amount of time.

A key strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw upon the knowledge and expertise of its members—including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and real estate service providers. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services report is intended to provide objective advice that promotes the responsible use of land in order to enhance our environment.

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Both personally and on behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the panel would like to thank Mayor Patricia Owens for her leadership during this trying time and for extending such a warm welcome to the panel and hosting the opening gathering. The panel members would also like to thank Secretary Andrew Cuomo of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and specifically Alvin Brown, director of the special actions office, and Jacqueline Lawing, general deputy assistant secretary in the office of community planning and development, for the sponsorship and support of ULI during this panel.

In addition, the panel would like to express its gratitude to the mayor's task force for cosponsoring the panel and holding the reception for the panel members and all of the interviewees: to John O'Leary, director of the office of urban development, and Christie Storiede, special projects coordinator for the city of Grand Forks, for coordinating preparation of the briefing and resource materials and for facilitating the panel's tour and interaction with the community and city officials; and to the HUD Disaster Relief Office, particularly Ellen Leier, for her assistance in preparing for the panel, facilitating the interviews, and conducting the site tour and other panel activities. ICF Kaiser, Inc., and its subcontractors, specifically Sedway Group's Michael Conlon, and Caminco Group's Les Pollock, also gave the panel valuable information and assistance. Michael Conlon coordinated preparations for the ULI visit, compiling the briefing book and helping to prepare briefing presentations to the panel. Les Pollock made presentations to the panel and supplied the panel with maps and other information during its deliberations.

And finally, the panel would like to thank the more than 100 members of the Grand Forks community who took time to come and share their thoughts and ideas with the panel during the interview process.
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FOREWORD: THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

The winter of 1996–1997 was one of the worst in Grand Forks' history, bringing nearly 100 inches of snow. The resulting snowpack and the heavy spring rains and rapid warming that followed caused what has been called a "500-year flood." As the Red River of the North rose to 59 feet above sea level (more than double the flood level of 26 feet), over two-thirds of Grand Forks was flooded, and nearly all of the city's 50,000 people had to evacuate their homes. The downtown, which lies parallel to the river's western bank, was most severely affected. During the flood, a number of downtown buildings caught fire and burned; several buildings were entirely lost. The citizens of Grand Forks, determined to survive, have begun to rebuild. But much of the downtown remains damaged and vacant, as uncertainty continues to surround the future of the downtown core. The most important components of that uncertainty are concerns about the nature, location, and timing of a new flood protection system.
Government, professional businesses, and office uses dominated downtown before the flood. Many were located in historic buildings that lent character and distinction to the downtown core. Tenants included banks, law offices, accounting firms, insurance companies, and financial consultants. Federal, state, county, and city government agencies, as well as school district offices, were also located downtown. In addition, downtown Grand Forks was home to Central High School and several churches.

The 1997 flood caused considerable damage citywide. Several hundred homes were completely destroyed, many businesses (mostly in the downtown) have either permanently relocated, closed down completely, or been moved to temporary space with indefinite plans for permanent relocation. Although the government offices and schools are expected to rebuild in their existing downtown locations, the future of many of the retailers and professional service firms is uncertain.

Residential neighborhoods, especially those near the river, were also devastated by the flood.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the leadership of Secretary Andrew Cuomo, offered the city of Grand Forks the services of a UIU panel to suggest a realistic plan for rebuilding the downtown core, based on identifying an appropriate market niche for the downtown within the regional economy. The Institute was also asked to provide a step-by-step strategy for implementing that plan.

UIU panels are independent, objective bodies whose findings represent the views of the panel members only—not those of UIU or any of the sponsoring organizations. UIU panels make suggestions and recommendations only; it is the role of the sponsoring community or organization to decide which actions must ultimately be taken and to implement those actions.

UIU panel members volunteer their time and are chosen for their backgrounds as they relate to a given assignment. Each panel assignment involves an intensive five-day period that begins on Sunday evening and concludes with the final presentation on Friday. The panel's work involves a review of the briefing book before arrival, a driving-and-walking tour, a series of interviews with community leaders, and then discussion and debate among panel members to reach the best solutions and to prepare an oral and a written report. The panel is divided into four teams: (1) market potential, (2) planning and design, (3) development strategies, and (4) implementation.

The success of a UIU panel results from an interactive process involving the city, the larger community, and the panel members during which the panel becomes part of the community's team. The Grand Forks panel interviewed more than 100 persons during its week of deliberations and very much appreciates the contributions of these participants.

A number of downtown buildings suffered from fire damage as well as from flooding.
OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Mayor Patricia Owens introduced the panel's presentation.

The panel expresses great empathy for the citizens of Grand Forks and admiration for their spirit, strength, and tenacity. The city has declared that its response to the flood will be to rebuild—not simply to restore what existed before the flood but to create a new city center, one that is better, stronger, and more vibrant than what was there before. The panel commends and concurs with that goal.

Much excellent work was done before the panel's arrival, especially motivated by the Re-Imagining Downtown Committee, the River Forks plan, the North Dakota Business Program, and other work. The panel applauds these efforts and builds on the recommendations of those fine foundations they have laid.

The role or niche that the panel envisions for downtown Grand Forks is that of the symbolic and physical "heart" of the region: an exciting gathering place with restaurants, specialty shops, entertainment, festivals, and open space along the river. Plus housing that offers easy access to downtown amenities and, in some cases, wonderful views of the river and the Grand Forks from which the city draws its name. To reinforce that role, the panel would like to see the downtown include a traditional town square, located on the site of what is now the eastern half of City Center Mall, to serve as the premier public space and the local point for the entire Grand Forks community.

Downtown Grand Forks is blessed with a number of key strengths upon which to build its future: its location along the river, a well-defined, grid-oriented street system, beautiful historic buildings, a strong base of residential use, often including street-level shops and restaurants, clusters of public and institutional uses, a low crime rate; and generally well-preserved nearby neighborhoods.

The panel believes that there is significant unmet demand for both replacement and new development in all segments of downtown real estate: residential, office, entertainment, public sector, and hotel uses. And panel members believe that downtown Grand Forks can be a fun place to be, with buildings of diverse and distinctive architectural styles and, in many cases, historic character, on an urban scale that encourages walking from place to place.

The panel's core design concept for downtown Grand Forks is to contain and celebrate the Red River. The top priority in the panel's proposed plan or any plan must be the protection of the community from the Red River, to ensure that the flooding tragedy that occurred this past spring will never be repeated. To achieve that security while encouraging downtown redevelopment, the panel, after consulting with the Army Corps of Engineers, suggests constructing a floodwall that follows the alignment of the alley between Second and Third streets from University Drive on the north to Kittson Avenue on the south.

The panel also believes that the river is the key to establishing a "sense of place" in Grand Forks. To that end, the panel also recommends the development of a new, bi-state Red River Park that will feature a new water basin to enhance the river's amenity and recreational value. The river park would include a landscaped esplanade anchored by the proposed town square.

The panel proposes building a framework for development of downtown by clustering activities into three principal land use districts: (1) a residential, retail, and entertainment district; (2) the existing government and educational center, composed of major institutional employers; and (3) a new financial center, a first-class, high-profile home for financial institutions and professional services firms. The activity centers would be connected by street-level retail activity, upper-floor apartments, and an array of civic amenities like street trees, lighting, paving, sculpture, fountains, and banners. Panel members recommend that the initial development projects occur in a five-block area that will become a compact, walkable environment attractive to residents, workers, and visitors.

For this vision to become a reality, the panel recommends a reallocation of responsibilities, specifically to implement the rebullding of Grand Forks. The panel suggests using the River Forks Commission to market and promote the downtown, river-related events, and the region. RFC would also lead the construction of the bi-state Red River Park as a major project. The panel advises establishing an autonomous subcommittee of RFC, to be called the Downtown Development Committee, that would craft and implement the plans and budget for rebuilding downtown Grand Forks.

The panel notes that progress in rebuilding downtown Grand Forks will occur only through public/private partnerships. In particular, the panelists suggest encouraging a stronger private sector role by making available "packaged" development opportunities.

The panel recommends both short-term and longer-term strategies to revitalize the downtown. Short-term projects include completing the demolition of unsafe structures, clearing, grading, and seeding lots as an interim measure to prepare them for development, building a skating rink/farmers' market, engaging a historic preservation consultant to prepare site-specific development proposals, and rehabilitating existing housing in key areas. As an important early but highly visible step in establishing confidence and investment momentum downtown, the panel strongly recommends that the city negotiate an equitable and mutually beneficial lease with First National Bank and interested attorneys and accountants as soon as possible. Longer-term projects might include developing site-specific plans for infill and new housing, assembling sites for strategic developments, addressing zoning and other regulatory issues, hiring a director of development, and preparing a detailed infrastructure improvement plan and budget.

The panel recognizes that, initially, most market-rate projects will not work financially in downtown Grand Forks but must be assisted with public funds, so the panel has delineated ways in which the city could leverage its investment. Use of public funds must be considered an investment that will pay dividends in the future for the entire community. The commitment of public money to help rebuild the downtown will also send a clear message to investors, the development community, and the citizens of Grand Forks that the city is totally dedicated to the rapid recovery and revitalization of its downtown.

The panel also urges Grand Forks and East Grand Forks to work closely together on rebuilding their downtowns so that their efforts will complement each other rather than compete with each other.

And finally, the panel does not recommend that the Grand Forks community revisit its decision on where to build the planned Aurora Center. The Aurora's location has been and continues to be the subject of some controversy, but highly visible to the university and the city. The panel acknowledges that the Aurora Center project is closely tied up with the university, its anchor tenant and advises that moving plans for the Aurora forward in the current location near the university would be a positive initiative for the community. In the panel's opinion, the plan recommended for downtown needs to be achievable without a downtown Aurora Center, and the panel's vision does not require one (though strong linkages will be needed). The Aurora could be a plus to the downtown, but given the many other initiatives that are needed in the community and in downtown Grand Forks, the panel does not recommend a shift in the Aurora's location.
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Forks, North Dakota, is a city of approximately 50,000 people located on the border shared by North Dakota and Minnesota, at the junction of the Red River of the North and the Red Lake River. The city lies 75 miles north of Fargo, North Dakota, and 150 miles south of Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada. Across the river from Grand Forks is East Grand Forks, Minnesota, a town of about 8,600 people.

Boasting a stable economy founded on agriculture, retail trade, wholesale distribution, aerospace technology, and education, Grand Forks is the metropolitan service center for a 17-county region having a population of 210,000 persons. The University of North Dakota (UND) is a primary economic driver in the Grand Forks community, and Grand Forks Air Force Base plays a strong role within the regional economy. UND numbers some 13,000 students, faculty, and staff, while Grand Forks Air Force Base, located 15 miles west of the city, has a population of 12,500.

The area referred to in this report as "downtown Grand Forks" is that section of the city bounded on the north by University Avenue, on the east by the Red River of the North, on the south by Division Avenue, and on the west by North Sixth Street, Kittson Avenue, and North Fifth Street.

Over the past 20 years, Grand Forks' downtown core has gradually lost its position as the city's central business district. While the traditional downtown presence of government and public services remained, it had become increasingly difficult for the downtown to attract or retain many retail or commercial users, and retail and office activities had begun to relocate in the southern and western portions of the city. Though downtown Grand Forks could boast many historically significant structures, very low crime rates, and the continuing presence of a few businesses with long and strong ties to the community's past, its surface infrastructure was deteriorating, and downtown promotion and new business growth were nonexistent. The number of owner-occupied housing units was diminishing, and much of the housing was subsidized. While a few popular bars and restaurants survived in the downtown, cities such as Fargo and Minneapolis had become the entertainment destinations for the area's youth.

The transition that had been occurring in downtown Grand Forks before the spring flood of 1997 was the normal transition that all downtowns across the United States have been experiencing—from the principal retail and office center of the community to more of a government, housing, and entertainment center.

But in Grand Forks, the recent flood presented the city and its citizens with an opportunity to ask basic questions about the role and function of the downtown: whether to rebuild downtown Grand Forks in its present location, to seek a new location somewhere else, or to dispense the existing downtown functions throughout the community. This discussion has been clouded by the more immediate need to deal with the physical and financial impacts of the disaster. Understandably, issues such as damage estimates, property valuations, flood control alternatives, cleanup requirements, government approvals, and funding for repairs have dominated the city's attention in recent months.

The resulting uncertainty regarding the future of the downtown core has made it difficult for the business community to make critical rebuilding, refurbishing, and location decisions. Until that uncertainty is resolved, the downtown will not be viewed as a desirable location for reinvestment. Because affected businesses need to make location and investment decisions quickly, in the absence of a clear and vigorous public commitment to rebuilding the downtown, opportunities to build a strong business base may be lost.

The panel strongly advises that it is in the city's best interests to reinvest in the downtown and to reshape it into a more functional, convenient, beautiful, and vibrant place for the entire community.
MARKET POTENTIAL

In the panel’s opinion, there are several reasons to rebuild the city’s urban core. From a financial point of view, millions of dollars have been invested in buildings, infrastructure, and community facilities downtown, including Central High School, City Hall, the county courthouse and administrative offices, public safety offices, the federal building, and significant private investments. Despite the flood, the underground utilities are in reasonably good condition. The multimillion-dollar investment core still has important usefulness and value.

In addition, before the flood, downtown Grand Forks had remained a very viable and affordable residential location. Multifamily housing on the upper stories of historic and nonhistoric structures had served the needs of the elderly and of university students. Nicely renovated and generally affordable, these units were typically fully occupied and waiting lists were common. Downtown remains the geographic center of the metropolitan area and is one of the most accessible points in the entire region, with its bridge across the river and its grid of streets radiating from the core. City and county government offices stand in close proximity to one another downtown, providing an opportunity for these systems to work together better and more efficiently.

The city also represents the historic heritage of Grand Forks, with a beautiful collection of historic buildings that is greatly admired throughout the West. Downtown continues to serve as the community’s “public living room” and common gathering place for community celebrations. The city’s riverbank has continued to serve as the site for citywide community events and such popular annual festivals as the Fourth of July, Catfish Days, Forks Fest, and, more recently, Panta on the Prairie celebrations. Little infrastructure is in place, however, and little effort has been expended to capitalize on the river as one of the city’s major assets and potential gathering spots. Though the downtown lacks an identifiable physical and social center, functionally and symbolically it has remained Grand Forks’ focal point.

Today, a growing sentiment for recreating the downtown as a significant city and regional center, together with some promising local and regional economic trends, will offer a realistic opportunity to reverse the 20-year trend of gradual decline downtown.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

An overview of the historical and projected market forces shaping land absorption in the city, and especially in the downtown district, must be factored in when planning the future of Grand Forks’ downtown core.

Grand Forks is located in the two-county Grand Forks metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which includes Grand Forks County, North Dakota, and Polk County, Minnesota. The population of the two-county region has been growing slowly but steadily. As shown in Figure 1, the region currently numbers 104,000 people residing in 39,400 households. This represents an increase of about 315 people and 440 households each year since 1970. Just over half of the population of the two-county region lives in the city of Grand Forks, which contains 52,872 people in 19,499 households. On average, the city’s population has increased by 513 people each year since 1970, while the number of households has grown by 310 per year.

Figure 1
ESTIMATED POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS; GRAND FORKS MSA AND CITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MSA Population</th>
<th>MSA Households</th>
<th>City Population</th>
<th>City Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>95,537</td>
<td>27,477</td>
<td>39,008</td>
<td>11,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>100,044</td>
<td>34,262</td>
<td>43,765</td>
<td>15,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>103,023</td>
<td>37,324</td>
<td>49,425</td>
<td>18,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>104,010</td>
<td>39,400</td>
<td>52,872</td>
<td>19,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Projected) 2007</td>
<td>117,000</td>
<td>44,560</td>
<td>62,625</td>
<td>23,995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical</th>
<th>Percent of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+314</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+442</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+513</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+310</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of the vitality of the Grand Forks County/Pola County socioeconomic base, the region enjoys a dynamic real estate market. Growth is projected in all commercial real estate sectors, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**
**PROJECTED COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE TWO-COUNTY REGION (Square Feet)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Existing (1991)</th>
<th>Per-Year Estimated Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>6.1 million</td>
<td>109,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>3.5 million</td>
<td>64,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>2.5 million</td>
<td>33,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the greater Grand Forks area has 24 hotels that, together, contain 1,793 rooms. Hotel occupancy averages 60 percent, with development of an additional 65 rooms per year projected.

Total land absorption for commercial use in the two-county area is projected at 236,900 square feet per year, on approximately 18 acres of land. This amount includes 7.1 acres for industrial development, 5.3 acres for office, 3.5 acres for retail, and 2.1 acres for hotel/motel development. Nearly 80 percent of this expected land absorption will occur in the city of Grand Forks.

In addition to this steady demand for real estate to accommodate businesses, the two-county region will remain a strong market for residential construction, as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**
**PROJECTED RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION THROUGH 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing Type</th>
<th>Two-County Area</th>
<th>City of Grand Forks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>560 units per year</td>
<td>430 units per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Family</td>
<td>280 units per year</td>
<td>180 units per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouse/Condo</td>
<td>40 units per year</td>
<td>35 units per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Apartments</td>
<td>210 units per year</td>
<td>190 units per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufactured Homes</td>
<td>30 units per year</td>
<td>25 units per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT STATUS**
Downtown Grand Forks has played a pivotal role in the regional real estate market. Figure 4 summarizes the estimated pre-flood square footage in the downtown for each major category of land use.

Prior to the flood, 2 percent of the households in the Grand Forks metropolitan area lived downtown. Downtown Grand Forks contained 11 percent of the office space and more than 20 percent of the retail square footage in the metropolitan area. These land uses were situated on about 90 acres of gross land area, indicating that the ratio of building square footage to the land area was over 100 percent, a very intensive use of the land.

According to research by Sedway Group, before the flood the downtown core was home to approximately 300 businesses that together employed more than 3,700 workers (11 percent of the city's workforce). About 40 percent of downtown employees worked in the service sector.

**Figure 4**
**LAND USES DOWNTOWN BEFORE THE FLOOD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Use</th>
<th>Estimated Square Footage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>727,200 (in approximately 442 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>376,400 (for approximately 1,075 employees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/Institutional</td>
<td>577,600 (for approximately 1,179 employees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>579,600 (for approximately 990 employees and 145 tenants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,260,800</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL**

The vitality of downtown Grand Forks is based on a strong foundation of residential development. Despite the decrease in downtown nightlife and a marked decline in convenient retail outlets, housing occupancy rates have remained strong, and waiting lists for residential units are common. Downtown housing is occupied primarily by single professionals, students, and elderly people. The housing stock is affordable (with rents in the range of $6 to $7 per square foot per year), diverse, and, in a majority of instances, renovated to current standards over the past 15 years.

While postflood conditions have delayed many residential repair and renovation plans, demand for residential units downtown remains strong. With a pre flood vacancy rate of about 2 percent and an approximate 40 percent decrease in the number of housing units available as a result of the flood, there now exists strong unmet demand for both replacement and new housing products. Both land and historic structures are available for sale at reasonable prices, a factor that may encourage both new construction and the renovation of existing buildings for residential use.

The panel has also identified a potential market for townhouses and larger, upscale units downtown for that segment of the population seeking to escape the maintenance responsibilities associated with owning a single-family house.
The Grand Forks area has an acute housing shortage today, and the market will continue to grow as the regional economy expands. The panel believes that the downtown, with its central location and convenient access to employment centers in the core and at the university, is in an excellent position to capture a significant portion of the existing and projected demand for high-density residential development.

Currently, the city of Grand Forks contains 7,360 multifamily units, with few or no vacancies, and this market is projected to expand by 190 rental apartments and 35 townhouses and condominiums per year. Current residential occupancy rates would suggest that 370 multifamily units could be added to the city of Grand Forks market, to normalize to a five percent vacancy rate. In the panel’s opinion, the downtown can capture an estimated 20 to 30 percent of the rental apartment, townhouse, and condominium market.

At present, the potential exists to construct 75 to 115 rental apartment units downtown to satisfy pent-up demand. This market is expected to peak at 40 to 60 units per year, or 400 to 600 units in ten years, bringing the total rental apartment potential in the downtown to 475 to 700 units. At a density level of 30 units per acre, roughly 16 to 24 acres should be programmed for rental apartments.

The townhouse and condominium market in the downtown will average approximately seven to ten units per year, with a ten-year inventory requiring 70 units and about ten acres.

Convenient, covered parking remains at a premium in the downtown residential market. While there is some opportunity for shared parking with adjacent and downtown retail and commercial uses, this is an issue that must be addressed as additional housing stock is developed.

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

With the opening of the Columbia Mall nearly 20 years ago, the downtown core ceased to be the retail heart of Grand Forks. As is typical in communities across the country, retailers of all types of goods and services followed the suburban migration of homes and businesses, in this case to the southwestern portions of the city. In an all-too-familiar scenario, major malls, strip centers, and community and neighborhood shopping centers have replaced the downtown’s familiar storefronts as the sources of the community’s goods and services.

Columbia Mall is a Use-oriented type of retail that will thrive in the downtown will include antique shops, collectibles and bookstores, high-end fashion stores, and music shops. The stable, diverse downtown residential population now requires and will support a convenience grocery store and service retail uses, such as shoe repair shops, dry cleaners, optometrists, coffee and sandwich shops, newstands, copy stores, and florists.

The University of North Dakota’s significant presence on a suburban campus and its summer drop in population pose additional impediments to sustainable primary retail development in the downtown. Similarly, the downtown lacks the land or retail space inventory necessary to capture the large, but fluctuating, primary retail demand generated by visitors from Canada.

The panel believes, however, that the strength of the downtown residential market, the destination character of the downtown, the traditional strength of specialty and service retail in the central core, and the more affordable rents for retail space will make it possible to sustain a stable retail presence in the downtown market.

In the panel’s opinion, the kinds of specialty retail that will thrive in the downtown will include antique shops, collectibles and bookstores, high-end fashion stores, and music shops. The stable, diverse downtown residential population now requires and will support a convenience grocery store and service retail uses, such as shoe repair shops, dry cleaners, optometrists, coffee and sandwich shops, newstands, copy stores, and florists.

Convenient, available parking is also a critical element for small-scale retail stores and services downtown. While the panel views the city’s offer of free parking a number of years ago as a positive move, there is a perceived shortage of spaces adjacent to the retail frontage. Although the number of on- and off-street parking spaces downtown appears ample, there is substantial competition for these spaces from students at Central High School and workers in government offices. The severe winter weather conditions exacerbate the competition and the perception of a parking deficiency.

Real estate dynamics in the downtown district suggest that, by the year 2002, there will be approximately 1,750 households living in or very near downtown Grand Forks. These households, with a median family income of $31,410, can be expected to spend $10,530 on retail items of a variety of types. Considering the current retail sales per square foot, as well as the typical sizes of stores developed in the marketplace, a variety of stores could be supported, as indicated in Figure 5.

As shown, in the panel’s opinion, the potential now exists to develop a total of 69,450 square feet of retail space in the downtown. Through the next decade, potential demand will be generated for an additional 49,130 square feet of retail space, and the retail market in the downtown is expected to expand by approximately 5,000 square feet per year.

Figure 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Tenant</th>
<th>Square footage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto</td>
<td>3,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialty Clothing (1)</td>
<td>7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and Antiques (1)</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (5)</td>
<td>15,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquor</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and Stationery</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florist</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Retail (2)</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and Related</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Cleaner</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Store</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Personal Services (2)</td>
<td>3,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (22)</td>
<td>69,450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OFFICE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

Though major public sector activities and financial, legal, accounting, and small businesses were located in downtown Grand Forks at the time of the flood, many traditional downtown office tenants had begun finding suburban locations more attractive. Debate exists in many cities, including Grand Forks, about whether existing office uses can be retained downtown and whether additional office uses can be attracted to the downtown market. Aging building stock and infrastructure, perceived parking problems, a diminishing corporate presence, and the declining number of traditional downtown retail uses have made the downtown office market less desirable despite rents that are as much as 50 percent below those in the suburbs. The University of North Dakota, largely self-contained on its suburban campus, does not appear to be a likely generator of demand for downtown office space.

Although several major tenants are considering relocating downtown, the panel does not expect to see an immediate, major influx of corporate and large (exceeding 2,000 square feet or about nine employees) office tenants into the downtown. There is, however, sufficient projected office demand to support the development of replacement and some new office space in the downtown.

With its ample and high-quality multifamily housing stock, downtown Grand Forks can also expect to remain a viable alternative for small businesses whose owners want to live near their work. Growth of specialty retail uses, restaurants, bars, and galleries within a pedestrian setting will help create an attractive environment for these potential office tenants.

The panel estimates that there were some 376,400 square feet of office space downtown before the flood. A number of downtown office tenants have relocated to suburban locations or to other commercial space that could be retrofitted quickly to accommodate their emergency needs.

The panel estimates that approximately 33 percent of the previously displaced employees and tenants will return to rehabilitated structures, absorbing 40,000 to 50,000 square feet of office space. In addition, in the panel's opinion, financial institutions, county government offices, and professional services firms will generate a demand for approximately 150,000 square feet to 200,000 square feet of new office space downtown.

In addition to accommodating office users who will return after the flood and meeting other immediate office space needs, the downtown can participate in future office development in Grand Forks as the market continues to expand. The panel research indicates that the city of Grand Forks’ office market will expand by 51,450 square feet per year and that the downtown region will capture some 20 percent of this potential in new and rehabilitated office space.

The panel advises that an additional 100,000 square feet of office space will be needed to accommodate the projected demand over the next ten years. To satisfy this demand, another one and one-half to two blocks within downtown Grand Forks will need to be developed as office space.

THE AURORA CENTER

The Aurora Center is a planned $70 million convention and entertainment facility that will include a 90,000-square-foot convention center and a multipurpose indoor arena designed to accommodate sports events, concerts, and trade shows.

Though a location for the Aurora has been selected in the western part of the city near the University of North Dakota, debate persists over the construction and location of the voter-approved activities center. Portions of the construction contracts have already been let, and some $8 million has been committed to the project.

In support of completing the project in its current location, proponents of the selected site point to the anchor tenancy of the University of North Dakota, regional transportation access, site ingress/egress and parking advantages, and availability of the urban core. Yet other observers doubt that the Aurora would in fact draw collateral uses to the downtown.

Criticism of the current location and proponents of the downtown site raise questions about what demand exists for the facility beyond the needs of the university. They cite the need for a "magnet use" to kick off and accelerate revitalization of the downtown. Parking, scale, facility programming, and ingress/egress are concerns raised about a downtown siting of the project. This particular use of taxpayer funds, in light of other local and regional needs (both pre flood and post flood), has also been raised as an issue requiring further examination.

The panel has not expressed any opinion on the feasibility and location of the Aurora, other than to say that, given the many urgent needs competing for energies and resources in Grand Forks today, the panel members do not recommend that the city revisit the location decision. The panel recommends, however, that the city spend the necessary resources to explore fully and plan for the complete and seamless integration of the Aurora Center into local and regional economic development and downtown revitalization efforts. Topics to examine and plan for include marketing the facility and the region, transportation links between the Aurora and the downtown, and maximizing the financial benefits of owning and operating the facility.

The community has rallied behind the refurbishment of the Empire Theater as a focus for cultural activities and live performances. This project represents a unique opportunity to satisfy an expressed demand for dinner theater as an alternative form of entertainment for the community. The Empire Theater will also act as a magnet for such collateral uses as downtown coffee bars, restaurants, and bars.
The University of North Dakota has sufficient land on its campus to conduct its various functions and activities in close proximity to one another, and so the university is not viewed as a strong generator of demand for downtown office, meeting, or performance space. This possibility is further discouraged by the lack of innovative and timely transportation between the campus and downtown Grand Forks. But continuing education programs that serve a regional population could be located downtown. By establishing a downtown continuing education facility, the university would be able to serve downtown residents, draw more people to the central city, use downtown auditoriums, theaters, and meeting places, and generate demand for indoor restaurants, bars, and other entertainment and cultural activities.

Places of worship have also been a downtown staple. Because residential development patterns are changing and because religious organizations recognize the need to locate near their members, however, the future of downtown churches is uncertain. Several churches have already followed the residential growth to the southwestern portions of the city, and at least one downtown church, the Presbyterian, which suffered major flood damage, also plans to relocate outside of the downtown core.

The departure of religious institutions may in some cases, however, represent a major opportunity for the adaptive reuse of grand and historically significant structures in the core. Museums and performing arts theaters represent strong potential uses for flood-damaged but well-located facilities.

Currently, the greater Grand Forks area has 1,750 hotel/motel rooms, including 113 rooms within the downtown core. Hotel occupancy rates average 60 percent. Although the current market is close to equilibrium (perhaps oversupplied by 150 rooms), the hotel market is projected to grow by 65 rooms per year. Over the next decade, the demand for hotel and motel rooms in the city of Grand Forks will grow by 400 rooms, in the downtown, by 80 rooms.

SUMMARY OF LAND USES

To summarize, the panel believes strongly that downtown Grand Forks offers rich and diverse real estate investment and development opportunities. The panel's research suggests that several land uses should be programmed to meet the current and projected demand (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6**
**DEMAND FOR DEVELOPMENT DOWNTOWN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>1997 Demand</th>
<th>2007 (Projected Demand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail Space (sq. ft.)</td>
<td>69,450</td>
<td>118,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Space (sq. ft.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>150,000-200,000</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitated</td>
<td>-80,000-90,000</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Office Space</td>
<td>190,000-250,000</td>
<td>370,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Uses (no. of units)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Apartments (1,000 sq. ft/unit)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouses/Condos (1,500 sq. ft/unit)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Residential Units</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Motel Rooms (600 sq. ft/unit)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Square Footage</td>
<td>409,450</td>
<td>1,096,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLANNING AND DESIGN

The panel has observed that downtown Grand Forks has in place a number of structural elements that make a strong foundation on which to build. From a land use perspective, the presence of both city and county government provides a large, stable working population and an activity level that will support other businesses. The mixed-use nature of the downtown, with retail development and apartments on the upper levels of many commercial buildings, is highly desirable from a planning standpoint.

The generally well-preserved residential neighborhoods immediately to the north and south of the downtown are an exceptional asset and generate demand for the retail, service, and entertainment uses that could be developed downtown. Preserving the vitality of such neighborhoods is a goal universally sought by other cities, and the houses in downtown all have people living in or near them. The university, with its large student body, faculty, and staff, is a few miles to the west. The renovated high school and new elementary schools, all within reasonable walking distances, are additional assets. And the physical form and urban design characteristics of the downtown, from a planning standpoint, are exceptional: the strongly defined grid of streets, the extraordinary position on the banks of the Red River, overlooking the Grand Forks, and the resulting beautiful views and unlimited recreational potential. Downtown Grand Forks is easily accessible from the west by way of major arterials, especially Gateway Drive and DeMers Avenue, which feed into the city’s grid-patterned street system. Though Grand Forks’ parking authority operates ten parking lots throughout the downtown—including a 490-car structured facility at First Avenue North between North Fourth and Fifth streets—parking is perceived as an issue affecting downtown development potential.

DESIGN CONCEPT

The panel’s suggested planning and design concept for Grand Forks is based on containing, but at the same time celebrating, the Red River, which is the city’s distinctive natural asset and the source of its historic heritage. The suggested plan for the city involves four principal features:

1. Flood protection, in the form of an architectural wall following the alignment of the alley between Second and Third streets from University Avenue on the north to Kittson Avenue on the south.
2. A bi-state Red River Park, supported and sponsored by both communities in both states, that will feature a new water basin with considerable amenity and recreational value.
3. A traditional town square on the site of the existing City Center Mall.
4. The development of three principal use centers that will focus the existing and future activities of Grand Forks: (1) a financial center at DeMers Avenue and Fourth Street, flank by (2) government and education uses to the north and government to the south, with (3) a third major district along Third Street that the panel has characterized as a mix of housing, retail, and entertainment uses.

East Grand Forks is nearing the completion of an ambitious comprehensive redevelopment plan, and the community’s leadership is prepared to commit a significant investment to implementing it. This plan is oriented toward the Red River and toward the proposed new bi-state Red River Park along the axis of the DeMers Avenue bridge. The proposed downtown plan for East Grand Forks places a civic center and entertainment retail development along a new Second Street that would face Grand Forks and the river.

The visual and physical connections between East Grand Forks and Grand Forks have historically been very important and continue to be given high priority by the leadership of East Grand Forks. The panel’s suggestions for Grand Forks and the proposed plans for East Grand Forks are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The panel urges the two cities to continue to work closely together in implementing their downtown redevelopment plans.

FLOOD PROTECTION

The panel suggests that flood protection for the downtown take the form of a floodwall to be located immediately behind the existing historic buildings on the eastern side of Third Street from University Avenue on the north to Kittson Avenue on the south. This proposal has been reviewed with the engineers of Grand Forks, East Grand Forks, and the Army Corps of Engineers. The proposed alignment would be about 60 feet from the eastern toe of the clay dike proposed by the Army Corps of Engineers on the east side of Third Street. In this position, the wall would maintain the integrity of both faces of Third Street and preserve a series of important historic buildings, including St. John’s Block. All existing major streets will pass through the wall, allowing physical and visual access to the proposed new Red River Park. Movable floodgates will secure the open passages during flood periods. The gates, which will offer a wonderful opportunity for public art, should be developed in a way that both marks and celebrates the entrances to the new park.
THE BI-STATE RED RIVER PARK

The existing downtown Grand Forks is quite small. It stretches perhaps six blocks from University Avenue to Division Street on its north/south alignment; three or four blocks along the east/west alignment. From a commercial development perspective, active uses on both sides of the street are critical in mutually reinforcing retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses. Given the extensive government and educational uses along Fourth and Fifth streets, Third Street represents the only chance to create a mixed-use residential, retail, restaurant, service, and entertainment street.

The other significant benefit of the proposed alignment will be that a floodwall behind the historic buildings can make an integral architectural composition with the buildings, minimizing the visual impact of the proposed wall. The proposed position of the floodwall is vital to maintaining the integrity of both sides of Third Street, and the panel urges that this suggestion be made part of the city's preferred flood control plan.

Between the people of Grand Forks and those of East Grand Forks flows the Red River. In its beauty and its menace. For many communities, this river would be a significant asset, something to build upon, to be proud of, and to enjoy. But looking at this river merely as a design element, it is contained, at its quiet time, in rather restricted, small banks. And as viewed by most people from a few hundred yards away, it loses its drama. In the spring, when it rises, it is threatening and difficult to enjoy. After the river has risen and receded, its black silt deposit takes some months to dry out and be cleared, then the river recedes and is small again for the summer. In the winter, the river freezes and disappears.

Modifying the river, however, is achievable, and the river can then become a dramatic component of a new, bi-state Red River Park. The panel recommends a comprehensive redevelopment of the floodway between Grand Forks and East Grand Forks to improve its hydraulics, aesthetics, and recreational potential. Sponsored by both states, the proposed bi-state Red River Park would feature a raised water basin, a reshaping of both banks to improve hydraulic flows, and a new landscaped approach that would feature natural flora along the lower reaches of the channel.

The ground along the existing riverbank rises as it comes up toward the beginning of the bridge. This suggests the need for improved hydraulic release as the river moves through the city. Lowering the ground level on both sides as the river approaches the bridge abutment, down to what would become an even water level, would create an improved volume area for water to pass through at high-energy times. Though the panel did not comment on the question of whether to raise the bridges, panel members believe that constructing new approaches to the bridges in a decorative fashion, with a volume pass-through beneath, would further increase the hydraulic pass-through capacity of the river passageway.

The concept of a raised water basin using a weir has been reviewed with the engineers, including the Army Corps of Engineers, who viewed it as a positive way to maintain hydrostatic pressure on the adjoining banks of the floodway. If necessary, release gates could be placed in the weir to release water in advance of any flooding.

The panel's proposed design concept focuses on pedestrian access and visual orientation from the downtown to the Red River. Along with improvements to the water flow and surface, the panel advises that both shorelines be regraded and landscaped. A riverwalk is proposed along the water's edge, most of which will be planted with natural, brushy vegetation that will survive the months of silt deposits and look good quickly after the water has receded. The landscape concept is to recreate a natural habitat along the lower reaches of the channel, using a multispecies riparian buffer strip. (More domesticated landscaping would be restricted to the upper reaches of the channel.)

Furthermore, because the river is only at the 14-foot mark at its quiet time, by installing a weir (an underwater dam over which the water would flow) to raise the water level six feet, and by lowering the grade to the existing water level elsewhere, Grand Forks could more than double—in fact, nearly triple—the existing water surface plain as it goes through town. This would make for a highly dramatic waterway. The panel suggests placing the weir just north of the existing pedestrian bridge.

As seen in these two photos taken north and south from the DeMars Avenue Bridge, which leads to the center of downtown Grand Forks, city land access from the river's edge has been used primarily for parking lots. The panel instead recommends residential development, protected by a partially hidden floodwall, to take advantage of the beautiful views of the river.
TOWN SQUARE

Moving up to the street level, outside the floodwall and on the same level as the main street, the panel suggests developing a visually exciting esplanade, mostly green and highly enjoyable, leading to a river overlook and a town square. The square would be a meeting place where visitors would be drawn and where the community would gather for festivals or simply to meet with friends. As the floodwall passes through, architectural elements would hide its presence. A waterfall in the center of the town square, for example, would include part of the floodwall within its construction. The traditional town square would be located on the site of the existing City Center Mall. The panel recommends reopening Third Street through the mall site. This landscaped space would help smooth the transition through the floodwall into the proposed bi-state Red River Park, providing a balcony overlook onto the river basin and the Grand Forks, at the juncture of the Red River and the Red Lake River. The more formal character of the town square would contrast with the natural character of the linear Red River Park. And the proposed town square would function as the community’s formal “living room” for civic and cultural events.

LAND USE DISTRICTS

The panel’s proposed concept defines three land use districts downtown and focuses existing and future activities to compose the desired themes of these districts. The districts include a proposed financial district, a government and educational center, and a residential, retail, and entertainment district. The proposed financial district would develop at 2nd Avenue and Fourth Street. Within this district, the panel has identified three potential sites, as illustrated in the concept plan on page 31, for office buildings. Contemporary office buildings, which require 20,000-square-foot floor plates, could be accommodated on each of these sites.

The proposed financial district would be flanked to the north and south by the areas where government and educational uses are now clustered. The school board could be relocated into the old telephone company building or to another site within one of these districts downtown. The panel has identified a site adjacent to the courthouse where a large, new building could be developed for county administrative offices. This large site could contain the required 20,000-square-foot floor plates, as well as an adjoining parking structure.

The existing buildings and proposed new building sites flanking Third Street could compose a new residential, retail, and entertainment district that would focus on the proposed new town square overlooking the river. At the site of the existing City Center Mall, the panel recommends removing the eastern half of the mall buildings, reinstating Third Street. The buildings on the west side could be retained, or, if that is not feasible, the site could be cleared and rebuilt as a mixed-use housing and retail facility.

DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT CONCEPT PLAN
City Center Mall, which had been damaged by the flood, was partially damaged by the flood. The panel recommends removing the roof, demolishing the eastern portion of the original street, and rezoning or replacing the western portion for mixed residential and retail use.

Grand Forks’s downtown is the only urban environment in the region that offers an alternative to typical suburban housing. The panel recommends a major new housing program for the downtown, to involve 300 to 400 units in loft or apartment configurations within existing buildings. In addition, the panel has identified four principal new development sites that could accommodate as many as 500 apartment units in three-story buildings at an average of 1,000 gross square feet per unit. The panel’s proposed concept calls for rehabilitating and remodeling existing historic buildings for housing on the upper floors and filling in vacant sites along the Third Street corridor with buildings whose upper floors would feature apartments overlooking the proposed new Red River Park. Third Street would be reopened through the City Center Mall site, and a major (new or renovated) mixed-use retail and housing development would be created on the west side of Third Street facing the town square.

The panel believes strongly that the city has all the structuring elements in place, plus the market opportunities, to produce a new, better, more vibrant, more enjoyable, and much more beautiful downtown.
DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

A number of businesses, such as Wellness Center, shown here, are committed to the downtown and have already received. As the presence of the adjacent adult development rises, the character of downtown retail development has been changing over time.

Downtown Grand Forks can play a significant role in the growth and development of the regional economy, particularly as a major component of the community's quality of life. Equally important, the vibrancy of the downtown clearly affects Grand Forks' competitive position relative to other cities in the Northern Plains. Businesses making location decisions, students exploring college choices, job seekers researching employment options, planners seeking event venues, and visitors seeking entertainment are all influenced by their perceptions of downtown's offerings and vitality. Enhancing the community's quality of life and competing in a wider economic sphere will require proactive, integrated, and sustained development strategies.

In this section of the report, the ULI panel offers a strategy for achieving positive short- and long-term impacts by maximizing the downtown's market potential and bringing land use concepts to fruition.

A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Re-Imagining Downtown charrette, held in late June of this year, proposed a vision and guiding principles that defined the downtown as a center for culture, entertainment, finance, professional services, and government. With the educational and recreational facilities that already exist at Central High, the proximity of downtown Grand Forks to the university, and the potential for additional outdoor athletic facilities in conjunction with riverside development, the downtown can also serve as a secondary recreational and educational center to the university and Aurora Center.

Even in the short time since the June charrette, government and private business decisions have helped further define the framework within which future development can occur. The panel's proposed development framework calls for a dynamic urban environment to be achieved by clustering activity centers and interconnecting them with street-level retail, upper-level residential, and a palette of civic amenities such as street trees, lighting, paving, sculpture, fountains, and banners.

DEVELOPMENT OF AN URBAN CORE

Pedestrian-oriented districts, composed of a mix of entertainment, commercial, and residential uses, have come to be a highly desired feature of any community's quality-of-life package. Grand Forks has an excellent opportunity to establish a thriving district that will be a destination for people throughout the region. In fact, such a district was beginning to emerge before the flood. Downtown theaters will serve as important anchors for the core. The Fire Hall Theater has proven a successful venue, attracting thousands of people downtown each year. The Empire Theater, under construction and scheduled to open in early 1998, will provide a larger venue in another architecturally significant building.

The potential of this area is further enhanced by its significant resident population. Both the existing residential and projected new housing projects are essential to the long-term viability of the downtown. Incorporating residential development into the upper floors of new development, engaging in building restoration and adaptive reuse projects, and developing new high-density residential products will not only serve the demand for housing but also increase the immediate market for retail and entertainment uses and bolster pedestrian activity.

Third Street developments will enjoy the benefits of being part of the compact pedestrian environment of the urban core and will also benefit from their relationship to the river esplanade.

The character of the building lots on Third Street will enable some creative site planning. The depth of the development parcels affords an ideal opportunity to redevelop sites with shorter bay depths of 90 to 60 feet, with parking spaces located off the alley. Apartment or condominium units can then be developed on upper floors.
The panel has identified two downtown development sites for key infill projects. First, the panel agrees with the proposal to prepare immediately the half-block between Second and First avenues for a temporary ice rink and community gathering place. Ultimately, the site's street frontage should be completely developed with retail and entertainment uses.

Second, at the City Center Mall site, the panel recommends that the roof and the buildings on the east side of the street be removed. The proposed town square that is suggested in this report as a replacement for these structures will fulfill the need for a central gathering place, as identified in previous plans. If possible, the remaining structures on the west side of the street can be rehabilitated for residential and first-floor retail uses. If the mall buildings remaining on the west side of Third Street are no longer habitable, they should be demolished and rebuilt. In the panel's opinion, the structures should accommodate upscale condominiums because they will offer spectacular park and river views.

Numerous businesses are already open or working toward opening in this area. As noted, specialty and service retailers and eating/drinking establishments can fill the streetfronts and make working, living in, or visiting the urban core an enjoyable experience. Business relocation efforts should focus on establishing the critical mass needed to make the downtown a regional activity center.

The panel cautions that ample parking should be planned and incorporated into the project. The parking should be covered, well lit, and attractive from the streetfront. It can serve the companies' employees during the day and visitors to downtown's restaurants, entertainment uses, and cultural activities at night.

High-rise office buildings are not required, and in fact, there are significant benefits to constructing lower-scale buildings. Three- and four-story buildings with an architectural treatment complementary to the brick and stone facades and the traditional development pattern of downtown Grand Forks will help fill the streetscape on a comfortable and inviting scale while providing a handsome, cost-efficient corporate environment.

According to one panel, work to initiate the financial center should proceed apace. The First National Bank project should be packaged immediately, in such a way as to be fair and beneficial to all parties. Focused city assistance will be crucial to making this project feasible. Sites should be selected and readied and architectural plans finalized in the very near future. The project should be viewed as one of the most important economic development projects ever undertaken by the city, as it may be the only chance it will have to establish a significant financial center. City investment in the project will bring long-term returns by reestablishing a strong corporate presence and a stabilized tax base in the downtown.

Currently flanking the urban core are two areas of equal importance. The city, federal, and school facilities at the downtown's northeastern end and the county facilities at the southwestern end are important anchors for the downtown. Some of the most historically and architecturally significant buildings in the downtown are found in these sections.

Several significant actions can help to strengthen these areas. The desired actions build on the county's need to relocate and expand, the potential identified for more strategic use of Central High School facilities, the possibility of providing outdoor recreational facilities in conjunction with Central High School, and the potential for a consolidated administrative and service center for the school district.

The ULI panel agrees with the recommendations in the Re-Imagining Downtown plan that new county facilities be sited between the courthouse and the railroad tracks adjacent to the urban core. Building new county facilities in this location will maintain important links with the courthouse while strengthening ties with the proposed concentration of services, retail development, and restaurants to the north.

The flood has created potential redevelopment sites in this government/education district. In the panel's opinion, residential or office development projects would be appropriate uses for these sites. If the school district determines that its administrative offices and service/training center must relocate, the panel strongly recommends that a site in the northern part of the existing government and education center be chosen. The telephone company facility on North Fifth Street between First Avenue and Second Avenue North and across from Central High is one possible location.

Land acquisition for and construction of the suggested floodwall will produce opportunities for parking and open space that will enhance the downtown as a destination and a residential location. Additional parking would make Central High a viable location for regional athletic and music competitions. Open space and athletic fields behind the floodwall will not only help the high school but also add another amenity for downtown residents.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Repositioning the downtown to maximize its market potential calls for a targeted economic development strategy. In the panel’s opinion, an effort to establish entertainment or retail clusters will not occur or sustain itself without a proactive approach. The panel recommends that the city of Grand Forks embrace the strategic elements of the nationally recognized Main Street program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as described in the following points.

Economic Restructuring. In this time of transition, and with increasing competition for economic development, it is vital that a business retention and recruitment program be initiated. Vacant storefronts represent new business opportunities. Current, up-to-date building profile data and investment marketing materials can help build interest. Recruitment of public/private “teams” can directly solicit interest. Businesses displaced by the flood are likely candidates if they meet the requisite niche markets. Existing downtown businesses should be aided with expansion plans and other technical assistance needs. This retention/attraction strategy will require not only a hands-on approach to development transactions but also a clear, step-by-step process for the investor.

Design. The Main Street philosophy is based on historic preservation. Good design throughout the downtown creates value and an enhanced image. The city currently operates a storefront grant program. The panel advises increasing the funding for this activity and adding a contractual requirement to comply with design guidelines. Design assistance could be provided by local architects for an agreed-upon fee, to be reimbursed with city CDIB funds.

Organization. All downtown businesses need to collaborate to improve the downtown as a place to do business. The panel recommends that a central organization be designated to focus on the Main Street program objectives.

Marketing. With so many leisure options available to residents and visitors alike, downtown Grand Forks must sell itself as “the place to be.” Similar choices exist for business investment dollars. The designated entity for downtown revitalization must develop a marketing strategy for both investors (business recruitment and retention, as noted earlier) and consumers. There are four key strategies to consider in enhancing the image of the downtown and attracting consumers to it.

Working with UND’s College of Business and Public Administration, a marketing plan must be developed. It must include a survey that will help identify target markets and methods of reaching the diverse segments of opportunity. The plan should consider adopting a theme that can be implemented through all the various promotional activities. The plan should result in a standard package of marketing material (possibly including a slide show) that conveys both a common message and relevant information and that contains a map with key attractions businesses, transportation routes, and parking options shown. And it must be coordinated with the convention and visitors bureau, the hospitality industry, and, of course, local merchants.
While a number of venues will be used, both the new town square and a rejuvenated riverfront will provide important sites for such gatherings and celebrations. A proposed pedestrian linkage to East Grand Forks would provide a physical connection for coordinated events. The focused attention on historic preservation should be complemented by an architectural guide that will feature the downtown’s valuable historic resources. In this effort, the Historic Preservation Commission will be a key collaborator.

Downtown merchants need to do cooperative promotions and advertising, which can be accomplished through a merchants’ association similar to the Central Business District Association. Because merchants’ “free” time is limited, this partnering strategy must be focused and results-oriented.

As to city amenities, the panel has recommended that a designed streetscape improvement plan be developed. This should be complemented by the creation of gateway entrances into the downtown. Coordinated poster and banner campaigns will provide information, as well as present colorful, visual images of a vibrant and active district. The one-mile property tax set-aside for public art can be incorporated into this civic amenity strategy. Coordinating with the North Valley Art Council will add further community support for this agenda, as well as forge that critical link to the cultural arts as part of the downtown fabric.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

In this competitive economic environment, businesses and real estate interests have investment choices. They might choose to locate in Fargo, or on a site on South Thirty-Second Avenue, or perhaps even in downtown Grand Forks. The key is to influence these decisionmakers to consider the downtown. The panel cautions that, at the same time, the city of Grand Forks must carefully consider whether it may itself be implementing policies or programs that continue to encourage suburban growth at the expense of the downtown’s health.

Downtown incentive programs across the country are many and varied. The city already operates a storefront grant program, as well as the Economic Growth Fund. Investment tax credits for both affordable housing and historic preservation have been used, as well as tax increment financing (TIF), for particular projects at a residential development. Currently, the Small Business Administration offers loans for both business expansion and residential property improvements.

The ULI panel recommends that the development strategy include the founding of a new organization to package both residential and business projects and sites in the downtown (as described fully later in this report). Moreover, panel members strongly recommend that the community use all leveraging techniques and incentive programs at its disposal in putting such business and residential deals together.

The city’s significant discretionary CDBG allocation should be used as a gap financing source of last resort. TIF and tax abatement tools should be prudently applied and only when low-interest loans do not fill the “gap.” The expenditure of CDBG funds should be driven by a policy that maximizes loan repayments and has less orientation to grants. Furthermore, it is recommended that proposed development projects requiring related streetscape improvement amenities be undertaken as city-funded contributions. There may also be projects for which the city will need to explore its bonding authority to provide parking solutions to particular projects or districts within the downtown.

While the panel recognizes that city financial involvement will be a key to renewing investor confidence in the downtown market, it also emphasizes that public funding support is a short-term catalytic action to spur long-term private investment.

PARKING DEVELOPMENT

It is generally perceived that the lack of parking in downtowns across America inhibits downtown development. The panel recommends that the city compile an updated parking inventory, plotting the spaces against the locations of existing and proposed uses throughout the downtown. Careful attention will need to be devoted to ensuring that new uses are served by sufficient and convenient parking spaces.

Meanwhile, several strategies may be pursued: further maximizing on-street parking on selected streets through the use of diagonal parking schemes; strategic placement of small parking lots linked to entertainment/retail clusters; the use of an enterprise fund (derived from parking fines and metered city parking lots designated for parking development; and the implementation of a parking management program to guide the locations and use of downtown parking space by Central High School students. In fact, improved management and signage of existing spaces may go a long way toward alleviating perceived parking problems.
REGIONAL LINKAGES

Downtown Grand Forks does not exist in a vacuum. It competes for investment with other areas of the Grand Forks community, but at the same time, it should also establish relationships with regional entities that offer potential benefits. Nowhere is this more clearly evident than with the UND campus community. Its staff, faculty, and students represent a significant source of spending power. The students are also a significant market for downtown housing. Connections with UND should be developed more fully, possibly by making available bus shuttles, shared market information, and a study of the potential for university-related uses in the downtown and/or some city-related activities on campus.

The planned Aurora Center is another example of a potential linkage. Meetings, conventions, conferences, and other events will attract visitors to Grand Forks. The Aurora, when built, must be tied into the downtown with graphics, roadside signs, and joint advertising/promotion campaigns. The downtown community must develop creative means of capturing the entertainment dollars that will flow from the visitors to that facility.

In short, the downtown must reach out to regional employment centers, such as UND, East Grand Forks, the United Hospital medical complex, and the Grand Forks Air Force Base, to ensure that they recognize the opportunities that exist downtown and to encourage them—as members of the greater community and as sources of spending power: diverse activities, and human vitality—to participate in the renewed life of downtown Grand Forks.

IMPLEMENTATION

The success of any planning effort is measured by the degree to which the plan is actually implemented. Shelves are full of well-conceived plans that were never converted into specific action; this must not happen in Grand Forks.

Particularly in this situation, the panel emphasizes that major portions of the plan for the rebirth of the downtown must be implemented now. The panel believes that the city can achieve the short-term objectives of its recommended phased implementation program, even considering the many other important emergency-recovery priorities the city must address.

The panel's suggested implementation process includes both immediate steps and longer-term actions in order to allow Grand Forks to capitalize on short-term opportunities and at the same time to take positions on longer-term critical issues that must soon be decided. Additional issues—those that are serious but do not require immediate attention—can be planned and decided later. Input from all parties can continue to be received, and a consensus plan developed.

The short-term plan—which the panel likes to call the 'Nike plan,' or 'Just Do It'—outlines actions that the panel advises the city to undertake during the next 90 days (by December 15). The panel emphasizes that this time frame can and should be achieved.

The initial steps in the short-term plan are critical to the citizens' health and safety and to the image of the downtown. Immediate, decisive action will give the general population a signal that the city is truly committed to rebuilding the downtown, provide visible evidence that the rebirth of downtown Grand Forks is underway, ease later tasks, and help to attract new and former tenants downtown.

Many private citizens and companies have preceded the city by committing themselves to investing in or relocating downtown, with no assurances from anyone. These actions are very significant. They provide important leadership and demonstrate a concrete interest in the downtown in a highly meaningful way.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The panel suggests an organizational structure to implement the downtown plan in both the short and intermediate terms. The panel's guiding principles in devising this structure were to:

1. Create a system that is easy to administer.
2. Use existing organizations if possible (it is important not to create a new organization).
3. Suggest a structure that could be put in place within weeks.
4. Capitolize on private sector interest and involvement.
5. Use an efficient, cost-effective, and lean organization.
6. Provide accountability for public funds.
The panel recommends that the city use the River Forks Commission (RFC) as the umbrella organization for the marketing and promotion of the downtown, of river-related events, and of the entire region. RFC would lead the creation, seek the financing, and ensure the timely construction of the bi-state Red River Park. The RFC would also play a key role in starting and maintaining a dialogue with East Grand Forks. These would all be advisory functions for the River Forks Commission.

The panel also recommends the establishment of an autonomous subcommittee of RFC to be called the Grand Forks Downtown Development Committee (DCC). The DCC would be responsible for the devising and implementation of the downtown plans, with their accompanying budget and implementation timetable. An eight-member board would be appointed, consisting of the mayor, three city council members, and four individuals from the private sector chosen for their commitment to and ability to lead in the downtown effort.

The panel believes that the inclusion of the public/private board is crucial to the success of the DCC. The private stakeholders in the downtown can be effective advocates, and the energy they have demonstrated to date has earned them "a place at the table."

The DCC would be staffed by a director of development (director) reporting to the DCC Board, who would interact with the city's tri-chairs (the three city officials who were designated to lead flood recovery efforts—John O'Leary, executive director of urban development; Ken Vein, director of public works/city engineer; and John Schmisseur, director of finance and administrative services) on a daily basis to implement various aspects of the plan. The DCC would submit its plans to the city for approval. The DCC would have a contractual relationship with the city to allocate city funds to the DCC for downtown development. To the extent possible, the DCC would use existing city personnel. It would be the entity given responsibility for achieving the downtown goals.

If desired, the director position could be filled immediately by contract organization such as the National Development Council. The DCC could also use existing staff, certainly, the assistance of the city's urban development office and other city staff will be crucial while a lead person is identified.

The panel recommends that this organizational structure be used for five years, after which time the tasks and structure will need to be reevaluated.

The panel emphasizes that the tri-chairs have done an excellent job in responding to the flood and to the emergencies it brought. The panel's suggestions are intended to assist and increase the tri-chairs' effectiveness and to support their efforts in a positive, community-serving way.

As a HUD-eligible subrecipient of community development block grant (CDBG) funds, DCC would assist the city of Grand Forks in implementing a plan for rebuilding the downtown. By focusing exclusively on the downtown, the DCC would be able to identify more private, foundation, and other funding opportunities to effectively leverage money already allocated.

Figure 7
SUGGESTED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The DCC would be an efficient and exciting way to develop the downtown. It could effectively put into place the capital programs, operating programs, and major projects to make a dramatic, positive contribution to the entire region. Once approved, plans could be implemented by the director under the authority of the board of directors.

The panel believes that the organizational structure it recommends to lead the rebuilding of downtown Grand Forks will not further overburden city staff or increase their numbers. Instead, it will allow the process of redevelopment to proceed with resources that are essentially temporary. The panel urges the city and private sector to put in place the panel's recommended organizational structure by October 1, 1997. Initial meetings could then begin without delay.

The accompanying organizational chart, Figure 7, details the structure recommended by the panel to implement the downtown plan. The chart is for summary use and is not intended to address all issues.
DEVELOPMENT TIMETABLE

Short-Term Projects (Implementation time frame: now–three months).
Several downtown revitalization projects can be undertaken immediately and be completed within a 90-day time frame. These actions would have a positive visual impact and would raise the confidence of the community in the knowledge that the city is prepared to commit effort and resources to revitalizing its downtown. In addition, these actions will pave the way for the expeditious implementation of economic and housing development projects. The panel recommends the following short-term projects:

- The organizational restructuring of the River Forks Commission (RFC) should be undertaken immediately, as described in the previous section of this report. In the interim, the other projects described in this short-term strategy must be implemented by the city under its current disaster recovery initiative. In the course of considering these recommendations, the panel has identified high-impact activities that can be accommodated within the existing city organizational structure and within available funding.
- The city should encourage the Army Corps of Engineers to consider the alignment of the floodwall project, as suggested by the panel. The Corps should then evaluate the corridor within which the alignment of the floodwall will occur as soon as possible, no later than the end of October, to permit owners of the property to plan their floodwall or commercial development. The city and the First National Bank should work with the Corps to achieve an equitable financial package that will accommodate the floodwall construction.
- The city should clear the debts for the vacant lots in the downtown, whether the lots are publicly or privately owned. If the lots are privately owned, the city could invoke a nuisance or other code-related ordinance to clear the debris and to secure a lien on the property for the cost incurred. This is an appropriate use for the CDIG dollars awarded to the city for disaster relief.

The citizens of Grand Forks need visual reaffirmation that the city is committed to the revitalization of the downtown. The cleared lots should be graced, seeded, and nominally landscaped, or paved with an asphalt overlay to address intermediate parking needs. It may be appropriate, for instance, to landscape lots cleared near the eastern edge of the downtown that are anticipated to be undermined or on the “wet side” of the proposed floodwall. These lots could ultimately be incorporated into a comprehensive riverfront redevelopment initiative.

The negotiations between the city and the financial center’s initial tenant group should be concluded as soon as possible. The financial center could be the first major development project in the downtown. As such, the success of this effort will act as a catalyst for smaller retail shops, residential units, and commercial development. The city and First National Bank should strive to achieve an equitable financial package that will accommodate the spring construction season.

IMPLEMENTATION SHORT LIST

These are items that need to be completed in the short term, which should take three months (through mid-December):

1. Organize the Grand Forks Downtown Development Committee (DDC) to establish its financing, and secure city council approvals.
2. Advocate for and secure a decision from the Army Corps of Engineers to locate the floodwall at Two-and-a-Half Street, as proposed.
3. Negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement for the construction and occupancy of a new building in the financial district.
4. Remove City Center Mall's roof and east side buildings, as shown, and improve, as described. Protect the existing tenants in the remaining buildings for the winter.
5. Secure FEMA waivers, as described, so that tenants can move back into their space.
6. Hire and complete work with a historic preservation consultant, using National Trust funds and assistance from Knight Ridder.
7. Complete and open the ice rink.
8. Clear rubble from parcels, both public and private.

The panel concurs with the Reimagining Downtown charrette that an outdoor ice skating rink should be temporarily erected on the lot on the northwestern corner of DeMers Avenue and Second Street. An ice rink would draw families downtown during the winter season. In the spring, the rink could be dismantled and a farmers' market built on the site. This is a high-impact and low-cost temporary use for this major development site. The temporary ice skating rink/farmers' market would help keep downtown Grand Forks in the public eye and help to make it a highly visible and frequently visited location for recreational and family events.

PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION
• The city should proactively and aggressively assist building owners and tenants who were displaced by the flood and are willing to relocate back downtown. To do this, the city must network with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to ensure that businesses receive low-interest financing to undertake the necessary improvements to their properties or space. Smaller or startup businesses that may not be appropriate for the SBA products should be offered low-interest loans from the CDIB disaster relief funding. These dollars are an excellent mechanism to provide loans with favorable terms to higher-risk yet worthwhile downtown ventures. If the CDIB dollars are structured as loans, the city will have an ongoing source of revenue with which to fund downtown development continually.

• Representatives from the National Trust for Historic Preservation have indicated that the Trust will pay half of the cost to hire a consultant to prepare site-specific development proposals and pro formas for three or four key historic buildings in the downtown. The program is intended to provide clients with the technical expertise to undertake the adaptive reuse of historically significant properties in established redevelopment areas. The National Trust should be asked to engage a consultant immediately to present development proposals for buildings that are considered critical to maintaining the unique historic quality of the downtown and that have not yet found a user. In addition, the city should pursue the Main Street initiative in the downtown. Spurring development at high-profile sites would provide an invaluable stimulus for additional development.

• The city should immediately undertake the acquisition and demolition of (1) buildings that will stand to the east of the floodwall proposed in this report; and (2) buildings in the remainder of the downtown that are not critical to maintaining the fabric and are located on a strategic site for future development. The properties assembled can then be packaged and marketed aggressively to developers.

• Longer-term projects. Longer-term projects should be launched in approximately 90 days, after the short-term strategies have been addressed. These projects will require some preparation but should still be implemented with the sense of urgency inherent in the short-term recommendations.

The major focuses of these actions are the creation and adoption of business and site-specific development plans for projects and initiatives that can be implemented at the start or the spring construction season in 1998. These projects would be spearheaded by the DDC, which should be fully operational by the start of this phase of the action plan. By this time, the DDC should be working under either a full-time development director or a consultant, such as the National Development Council, to provide the necessary development and financing expertise and to implement the Main Street program. The DDC's work program should include the following four elements:

1. The first and most critical task of the DDC, which should be completed four to six months hence (by March 1998), is to develop a site plan for every developed and property-identified downtown. Critical development opportunities should be identified based on a number of factors, including the ownership condition, and historical significance of the property. The plan should incorporate the proposed use for the property, development and operating projections, and sources of financial incentives that may be required to make the project successful. A package should be prepared by the DDC for developers and investors that describes both special financing incentives and other valuable services that are or could be provided by the city, such as parking assistance, site improvements, and streamlined city review and permit procedures.

• The city will have acquired or will be in the process of acquiring strategic properties for development in the downtown. In addition, the city will be completing the demolition and clearance of properties where the buildings are not suitable for rehabilitation. These opportunity acquisitions will now have a comprehensive development plan prepared by the DDC that can be packaged and marketed effectively to developers. The city should continue to acquire aggressively and, where necessary, demolish properties that represent key opportunities. These properties should continue to be acquired in this phase, using the CDIB disaster relief funds.

The city must have a streamlined process for applying for low-income housing tax credits through the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency, in order to raise capital to develop or rehabilitate housing units in the downtown. The tax credits are sold to private investors in return for cash equity in a project. There is a ready market for the credits and a willingness on the part of the state housing finance agency to consider the enormous need for housing in Grand Forks. The renovation of the Ryan Apartments, a HUD preservation project, will be accomplished in part using low-income housing tax credits; this mechanism should be seriously considered for the renovation of other downtown apartments.
Panelist Frank Taylor discusses implementation strategies at Mary Campbell's talk on.

- The federal historic investment tax credit is another valuable tool that can be coupled with the low-income housing tax credit. Used singly to preserve historically significant properties, historic tax credits are sold to investors who contribute cash to a project. The two tax credit tools are critical elements in the revitalization of the downtown. The tax credits can be used to help cover the "gap" between the rent that can be charged to a potential user and the cost of the renovations (or new construction, for the low-income housing tax credit). This is a significant leveraging tool for any city funds invested in such projects.

2. Planning and design work for the new financial center project should be completed during the intermediate phase (by February 1998). A developer should be selected and the project finalized for an anticipated construction start as early as possible in the spring of 1998. The DDC will have coordinated all of the pre-development work required to bring the project to this point, and the city and the tenants of the financial center project will have completed negotiations over the financial package during the short-term strategy.

3. The city of Grand Forks should approach the state department of transportation and request that it re-prioritize the downtown infrastructure improvements that are currently staged for implementation starting in 1999. If the project could be reorganized into smaller phases, the state might be able to fund targeted improvements next spring. New streets and sidewalks surrounding the financial center project are of critical importance in attracting additional tenants. The DDC should coordinate the downtown infrastructure improvements with the city to ensure that placement and design issues are addressed, as the proposed street and sidewalk improvements will greatly enhance the visual image of the downtown as an attractive place to live and work. Additional improvements, like plantings and street furniture, can be used to augment this asset.

4. The RFC should prepare a design and development plan for the bi-state Red River Park that would offer recreational opportunities and a regional gathering place for citizens. This process could include significant public input, perhaps using the charrette model that was so successfully employed for the Re-Imagining Downtown study.

5. And finally, the RFC should continue to plan activities that will bring people downtown during the spring and summer months of 1998, including major regional events like the Forks Festival, Pasta on the Prairie, and Catfish Days, as well as smaller street festivals and gatherings. Continuation of these activities will foster a positive image of the downtown and keep the area a strong focal point.

The activities that have been described in this section of the report will provide the base from which the city can transform a development strategy emphasizing disaster relief to one emphasizing growth and community potential.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The panel has attempted to address basic questions regarding the role of the downtown, as well as more specific questions. The recommendations in this report will require major funding and a decisive commitment to implementation, but the panel believes that a viable downtown is essential for the future of Grand Forks, and the required investment of money and energy must be made.

A vital downtown is critical to the city's identity and function. Downtown is where the image and history of an urban area are established. It is the community's public realm, the place that comes to mind when a visitor asks to see the city, the place that most distinguishes the Grand Forks community from all others. Much of what the citizens of Grand Forks are proud of in their downtown was given to the community just before and immediately after the turn of the century. In 25 months, there will be a new source of pride, based on what this generation gives to the future citizens of Grand Forks at the turn of the new century as they pull together to rebuild the city centers of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks.

The panel believes that the citizens of these two communities have the chance right now to create a new heart for their cities of which they—and their children and their children's children—will be very proud.

The panel hopes that these recommendations will help the citizens of Grand Forks not only to recover but to improve and to establish a new downtown for the 21st century. The ULI panel wishes the city well and will follow its progress with keen interest.

Smaller towns: the panel presentation.
ABOUT THE PANEL

SMEDES YORK PANEL CHAIR
Raleigh, North Carolina

York is president of York Properties, Inc., which develops, leases, and manages shopping centers, hotel, office buildings, industrial projects, and residential projects in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina. He is past chair of the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority, the Raleigh-Durham Regional Association, and the North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industries. He served as mayor of the city of Raleigh from 1979 to 1983 and as a council member from 1977 to 1979. He is also a past chair of the Wake County Planning Board.

York is a past president of the Urban Land Institute and a current member of the UII Board of Trustees. His professional affiliations include membership in the Institute of Real Estate Management, the International Council of Shopping Centers, the North Carolina Association of Realtors, and the Raleigh Board of Realtors (of which he is a past president).

York is a civil engineering graduate of North Carolina State University and holds a master's degree in business administration from the University of North Carolina. He served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army and was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for his service in Korea.

Wade DeBose Burns, AIA
Atlanta, Georgia

Burns is an architect who successfully turned around Atlanta's West End (the city's oldest community) in the 1970s as developer of the West End restoration, increasing the tax base of 1,200 homes 400 percent without displacing the low-income and minority population. This effort earned the support of many of the nation's civil rights leaders. Burns lived and worked in this minority community for 27 years. Burns' primary efforts have been in developing and then implementing plans to breathe new economic life into dying downtowns. His most recent effort was the successful development of the riverfront in Augusta, Georgia. Prior to this effort, Burns led the efforts to revitalize four South Carolina city centers, directly resulting in over $1 billion in new economic development.

Mary B. Campbell
St. Louis, Missouri

Campbell has been involved in housing and community development activities in the St. Louis, Missouri, community for almost 13 years. Campbell was hired by NationsBank earlier this year as a vice president in the community investment group. She works with not-for-profit community-based organizations, typically as a joint venture partner to develop affordable housing as a component of a longer-term community development strategy.

Campbell received her law degree from Washi ngton University in St. Louis in 1984 and her bachelor of arts degree from Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, in 1981. Campbell currently serves on the St. Louis Mayor's Business Development Task Force and is a member of the housing committee of the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis.

Daniel M. Conway
Englewood, Colorado

Conway is a real estate marketing and research authority specializing in residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational developments. He currently serves as president and director of economics and market research for THK Associates, Inc., a planning and consulting firm providing services to public and private clients in metropolitan Denver and throughout the nation.

With over 20 years of expertise as an urban land economist, Conway has performed planning studies, socioeconomic impact assessments, and financial planning studies for major developments throughout the United States.
JERRY D. JONES
Wichita, Kansas

Jones is executive director of the Wichita Downtown Development Corporation and the Downtown Wichita Association. He has worked with public and private sector leaders to promote new investment in downtown Wichita since October 1992. Current downtown Wichita initiatives include the solicitation of development proposals for seven acres of publicly owned waterfront property adjacent to the recently completed Hyatt Regency Wichita, the creation of a new downtown management district, the expansion of trolley service connecting downtown attractions; initiatives to stimulate new residential development, and a feasibility study for a new multipurpose sports and entertainment facility.

Before moving to Wichita, Jones accumulated nine years of community and economic development experience as a development consultant in Colorado and a downtown development official for the city of Scottsdale, Arizona. He is an active professional with frequent writing, presentation, and advisory/panel assignments related to urban development projects and practices. Jones holds a bachelor of landscape architecture degree from Kansas State University and a master of design studios/real estate development degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

ALEX J. ROSE
El Segundo, California

Rose serves as director of development for Continental Development Corporation of El Segundo, California. He is responsible for managing all construction and development activities for commercial real estate, including 2.5 million square feet of southern California R&D, retail, and restaurant holdings. Rose oversees the planning and execution of all tenant improvements, construction, and new construction work; major facilities maintenance and upgrades; project budgeting and cost control; internal project management; architect, engineer, and contractor management; and new project development.

Over the past three years, Rose has overseen the physical transformation of over a million square feet of single-tenant R&D facilities into multitenant office space, restaurants, retail, and entertainment uses. Prior to taking over the construction and development responsibilities, Rose served as director of property management. He has also extensive experience in title insurance and general civil and bankruptcy litigation.

Rose received his MBA degree from the University of Southern California in 1990 and his law degree from Southwestern University School of Law in 1980. Rose received a bachelor of arts in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1977. He is a member of ULI, USC Real Estate Alumni and Friends, the California state and federal bars, and numerous community groups.

FRANK M. TAYLOR
San Jose, California

Taylor has directed San Jose's renaissance of its downtown, industrial areas, and neighborhood business districts since fall 1979. As the executive director of the redevelopment agency of the city of San Jose, Taylor directed the $1 billion design, construction, and funding of the redevelopment of the capital of Silicon Valley. A balanced program, it reaches out to the neighborhood business districts and industrial areas and supports a citywide 20 percent affordable housing program.

Taylor previously served as an assistant city manager and as the director of community development for San Jose. In addition, as the assistant director of development for the city of Cincinnati for 11 years, he supervised the development of the downtown, central riverfront, and neighborhood business districts.

Earning 13 design and leadership awards for redevelopment work in San Jose, Taylor also won special recognition for the San Jose Convention Center from the San Jose Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and the Association of South Bay Brokers, the Building Industry Conference Board Honor Award, and, most recently, the 1995 Insight Award for recognizing and commissioning the highest-quality work in the field of environmental graphic design.

Harvard College granted Taylor a Loeb Fellowship in advanced environmental studies from 1977 to 1978. Before that, he had earned his bachelor of science degree in architecture from the University of Cincinnati in 1968.

W. SCOTT TOOMBS
New Canaan, Connecticut

As the owner of Toombs Development Company, Toombs has negotiated and closed transactions with city governments, landowners, and major tenants. As a principal, Toombs has been directly responsible for the development of over $500 million of real estate.

He has arranged permanent and construction loans with major institutional lenders and banks and has formulated construction budgets and supervised construction, completing projects under budget and on time, for office, retail, and hotel projects.

Toombs is currently active in purchasing properties as a principal with equity partners. The business recently purchased a site for a 500,000-square-foot project in Stamford, Connecticut, and is in the process of negotiating with major tenants. The company is also working on a 600-acre acquisition. TDC has worked with a number of financial institutions and corporate owners to help them resolve property issues.

Toombs received his MBA degree from the Wharton School of Finance in 1971. He attended Ursinus College in Collegeville, Pennsylvania, receiving his BA degree in June 1966. After college, he served in the U.S. Army as an officer in the Transportation Corps. Toombs was a company commander in Vietnam and was awarded the Bronze Star. As well as being a member of the Real Estate Finance Association (REFA), Toombs is also an active member of ULI and has served on its Advisory Services panels and several operating committees. Projects completed include an $80 million office tower and a $125 million mixed-use office and retail development.
DIANE R. SUCHMAN
PROJECT DIRECTOR
Springfield, Virginia

Suchman is an independent writer and consultant who specializes in housing, neighborhood revitalization, and urban revitalization issues.

From 1992 to 1994, she was special assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Policy Development and Research at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. She was involved in all aspects of federal policy and programs to foster production and preservation of low- and moderate-income housing and to promote the vitality of the nation's cities.

Before her tenure at HUD, Suchman was the director of housing and community development research for the Urban Land Institute (ULI), where she developed and managed research in single-family and multifamily residential development, infrastructure development, urban revitalization, public assembly facilities, and certain special land uses.

While at ULI, Suchman served as the senior staff support for the Institute's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Task Force, creating and implementing a four-year program of applied research. As part of that work, she initiated and directed a series of Advisory Services panels in low-income neighborhoods.

She is the author of four books, including Revitalizing Low-Income Neighborhoods (1993), Managing a Development Company (1987), Public/Private Housing Partnerships (1991), and Developing Infill Housing in Inner-City Neighborhoods (1997). She has also written numerous articles, working papers, reports, and case studies. Suchman holds a masters degree in planning from the University of Virginia.

She has managed about a dozen ULI panels and served as a panelist on three.