



# CHAPTER 6

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## Neighborhood Planning Principles



# Neighborhood Planning Principles

## Introduction

An important goal of the neighborhood planning effort is to provide resources to address many of the common issues identified across all six neighborhoods. These resources follow the same themes of the planning principles and provide more specific and useable tools that neighborhoods can work together to implement; while others will be led by or in cooperation with the City.

In April 2013, meetings were held with stakeholders in each of the six neighborhoods to identify important issues to be addressed in the plan. The identified issues were then distilled into principles from which goals and action steps could be created. Many of the goals were neighborhood specific. However, many were also common to all six neighborhoods. This chapter addresses these common goals and provides additional background information on the basic elements of neighborhood planning to help put the guiding principles and goals into a more understandable context.

## Neighborhood Guiding Principles and Goals

Goals assist planning efforts by guiding the decision-making process and facilitating the selection of appropriate policies and action steps for implementation. The goals that serve as guideposts for this planning effort are presented below. These are grouped among similar guiding principles that set the overall framework for each concept.

### Connectivity

These goals strive to connect people and places by providing safe and functional multi-modal transportation choices between Downtown Minot and neighborhoods through a network of streets, sidewalks, trails and greenway corridors.

**Goal #1: Develop a multi-season trail system that is safe, enjoyable, and accessible to the public with connections to neighborhood destinations.**

Sidewalks and trail facilities that provide access to key neighborhood amenities contribute to the overall vitality of neighborhoods. Each neighborhood identified missing links to key destinations within and beyond

the neighborhood. Gaps in sidewalk and trail connections for pedestrians and bicycles are mapped.

**Goal #2: Provide safe and functional streets that serve vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit.**

Well-planned street systems can manage traffic into and through neighborhoods to minimize impacts and speed on local streets. All modes of transportation need to be considered. Feeling safe while biking, walking or driving and increasing concerns over speeding was heard across all neighborhoods. Local streets are busier than ever with increasing impacts on local roads to support growth. This results in the need to design and install appropriate traffic calming techniques that minimize speed and discourage through traffic from penetrating residential neighborhoods.



### Safety

These goals strive to enhance real and perceived feelings of safety in homes, along the streets, in parks and community destinations. Safety is important to quality of life and peace of mind to residents across all neighborhoods. The 2011 flood and subsequent employment boom that Minot is experiencing have resulted in increased neighborhood turnover, increased traffic and parking, and a more transient nature to the neighborhoods in the valley.

**Goal #3: Manage on-street parking in the neighborhood.**

Parking is a necessary amenity but can also be a neighborhood problem if not managed well. Across all neighborhoods residents are experiencing an increase in on-street parking that is resulting in concern over safety, ability to access driveways, reduced visibility to the street, and increased traffic issues. Within the neighborhood specific chapters alternative on-street parking options will be explored that may reduce the impact to residents and homeowners.

#### Goal #4: Maintain and improve public safety in neighborhoods.

Feeling safe while in your home, and larger neighborhood, should be a right shared by all. Improvements can be made to existing neighborhoods to address basic safety improvement efforts such as: improved street lighting, crime prevention programs and neighborhood events that can return that feeling of security and enjoyment of where you live.

The increased conversion of single-family residences to retail units as demand for housing remains strong is an issue in all neighborhoods across the valley. Concerns voiced include noise, overcrowding, on-street parking and oversupply of vehicle parking on single-family lots, poor property maintenance and code violations. While these concerns have been heard this singular issue is difficult and costly to enforce. Specific neighborhood chapters will address this safety concern and introduce alternatives to reduce this rising problem.

#### Maintenance of Public and Private Property

These goals recognize that private property owners, together with the City, have a responsibility to maintain and improve properties and that standards need to be established and enforced. Since the 2011 flood, both residents and the city have been dealing with the challenges to meet basic maintenance standards. Renewed efforts on enforcement and clean-up are effective in achieving results. Neighborhood specific plans identify remaining areas that need attention and or renewed focus to strengthen the identity of these valley neighborhoods.

#### Goal #5: Maintain and improve the appearance and condition of property and buildings in all neighborhoods.

A few blighted properties can bring down a block or neighborhood. Enforcing community standards on the worst cases will do the most for community appearance. Increasing enforcement and compliance of building and zoning codes, increasing the number of clean-up events, and removal of abandon properties are some of the basic efforts the city can employ to reduce the impact of blight on a neighborhood.

#### Goal #6: Encourage investments and improvements that will maintain and enhance property values.

Public uses contribute to the quality of life in a neighborhood including parks, schools, street lighting, and other elements which can positively reinforce the neighborhood character and value. The 2011 flood caused destruction of parks, street lighting, street trees, play structures, and other amenities residents' value within their neighborhoods. Specific neighborhood plans will identify each of these elements that need appropriate repair maintenance or restoration.

#### Goal #7: Build and maintain existing infrastructure to City standards.

Public infrastructure impacts the perception of a neighborhood- in its streets, sidewalks, storm water drainage, and other elements. The consistent repair and maintenance of this infrastructure can provide positive impact to the image and feeling within a neighborhood. The 2011 flood damage many infrastructure elements that that city has been actively restoring. It also brought to light that within these valley neighborhoods, some of the oldest in the city, more specific character elements in such things as street lighting or streetscaping can even more effectively identify the uniqueness of these neighborhoods.



## Park and Open Spaces

This goal is intended to create and preserve places for the community and neighborhood to come together.

**Goal #8: Parks and community facilities within the neighborhoods are well maintained and an asset to the neighborhood.**

Areas for active and passive recreation and open space enjoyment are essential to the quality of life for residents of Minot. Many neighborhood parks in the valley are either in need of repair or upgrade due to flood damage or simply old age. Neighborhood specific plans identify parks and facilities in need of repair, including missing programs or activities that might increase use participation of these important park spaces.

## Housing Choice

With a broad mix of housing types to accommodate residents of all ages and incomes, the valley includes a large supply of quality affordable housing that was severely impacted by the 2011 flood. It will be increasingly important to support new infill housing choice to maintain affordability of housing in Minot and these neighborhoods.

**Goal #9: Maintain and expand the supply of safe, affordable, life-cycle housing.**

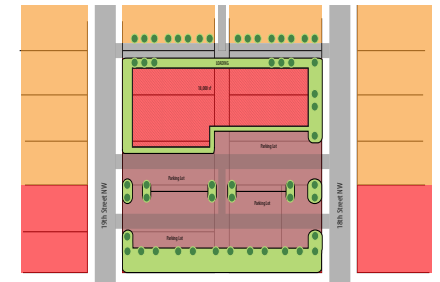
Healthy neighborhoods and communities provide a variety of housing types, price ranges and support life-cycle housing needs. Specific neighborhood plans will identify potential sites for infill and redevelopment. Creative programs that support maintenance and improvement of existing homes can go a long way towards preserving supply of existing affordable housing.

## Economic Activity

Developing or redeveloping business opportunities can have a positive effect on providing opportunities for local residents to live and work in their neighborhoods while increasing the tax base.

**Goal #10: Maintain viable neighborhood commercial and employment centers.**

Viable neighborhood commercial areas that provide good and services for the neighborhood are an asset to the neighborhood, increase the local tax base and provide valuable local jobs. Many existing commercial areas impacted by the flood have been able to recover, while others are still lingering. Efforts need to be made to work with property owners to promote rehabilitation or redevelopment of these existing commercial facilities. Specific neighborhood plans will also identify those that should be converted to an alternate use. Often creative site planning may be necessary to work with existing lot size and configuration while also providing parking and quality building and site design.



## Neighborhood Planning Resources

### Neighborhood Organization

There is a limit to the impact that local governments can have on neighborhood quality without the active participation by the local residents. It is not a coincidence that many of the best quality neighborhoods also have the most active neighborhood organizations. Active neighborhoods provide many benefits to the city including the following:

- Crime prevention and reporting
- Early identification of neighborhood improvements (sidewalk repairs, missing street signs, etc.)
- Reduction of neighborhood conflict
- Informing residents of regulations and assistance programs
- Increased volunteerism

Undertaking a neighborhood-focused process can create initial anxiety in local governments because neighborhoods often tend to naturally organize to provide a large negative response to an action or policy change. This can leave the mistaken impression that an active resident population is going to increase negativity. The reality is just the opposite.

Neighborhood organization is the natural extension of the public participation process and creates opportunities for greater understanding of and participation in municipal issues by the community. In many ways, it is just another step in the continuum of public input activities such as open houses, city web sites, newsletters, and citizen advisory committees. Over time, active neighborhood organizations tend to reduce levels of conflict because the open exchange of ideas leads to an increased understanding of the issues, limitations and constraints that the city must operate within.

Formal neighborhood organizations tend to fall into two categories—the Neighborhood Association and Neighborhood Watch. Neighborhood Associations are very flexible organizations that may deal with many local government departments, while Neighborhood Watch is a much more focused organization concentrating on issue of crime prevention and safety and largely dealing with the local law enforcement agencies. It is very common for a neighborhood to have both a Neighborhood Association and several Neighborhood Watch blocks and both

Neighborhood Association and Neighborhood Watch organizations can work together to solve common problems.

### Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and best known crime prevention concepts in the United States. The National Sheriffs' Association created the National Neighborhood Watch Program in 1972. A Neighborhood Watch program is defined as a group of people living in the same area who want to make their neighborhood safer by working together and in conjunction with local law enforcement to reduce crime and improve their quality of life. The National Neighborhood Watch program has many resources to support residents and local law enforcement officials that are too extensive to include in the appendix, but a good source is the "[Neighborhood Watch Manual](#)."

Key participants in the Neighborhood Watch program are as follows:

- Law Enforcement Liaison-A law enforcement or public safety officer who has been assigned to assist Neighborhood Watch efforts.
- Neighborhood Watch Coordinator-A volunteer resident who serves as the link between the Law Enforcement Liaison and Block Captains.
- Block Captains-A Block Captain serves as the key link between the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and individual residents. A Block Captain is identified for every 10-15 houses and is the primary contact with individual neighbors. The Block Captain maintains the telephone and email chain of participants and contacts neighbors frequently.
- Neighborhood Watch Members-Individual resident member.

### Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations have a broad range of interests from bringing residents together to solve a problem to presenting a common voice on an issue to purely social events. Although work in a Neighborhood Association is handled by resident volunteers, the city can provide support in key areas to encourage the establishment of Neighborhood Associations and to ensure they remain relevant and vibrant.

### Neighborhood Association Startup

The creation of a neighborhood organization can be an intimidating process and many civic-minded individuals may avoid the process

because they do not know how to begin. Cities can take steps to encourage and facilitate effective neighborhood organizations.

One of the first steps is for the city to create a guide for residents that explains the process and some of the issues that should be considered when starting a neighborhood organization. The key elements of the resident guide should include are the purpose/benefits, procedures to set up the organization, tips for maintaining a healthy organization and how the organization fits into the structure of the city's other operations. Many cities have put together such guides that are often used as a basis for other cities.

In addition to the neighborhood organization guide, the City could make available a template for a simple Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws as well as links to relevant federal forms, such as the SS-4 (Request of Employer Identification Number) and Form 990 (Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax).

### Website

The City can assist Neighborhood Associations by creating a "Neighborhoods" page on the City website with key elements including:

- Maps of Neighborhood Associations
- Key contacts for each Neighborhood Association
- Key contacts for city liaisons
- Startup package
- Neighborhood Association newsletters
- Neighborhood Association meeting schedules

### Signage

The City can also assist in the creation and installation of neighborhood signage. Neighborhood signs can be just a simple sign indicating that you are now entering a new neighborhood. However, many cities choose to allow the neighborhood signs to be customized to promote the neighborhood identity.

### Communications

Neighborhood Associations can be used as an extended telephone or email tree for the city. Cities will establish procedures that the heads of a Neighborhood Association will be contacted when a land use application is submitted within the neighborhood or when other city programs are

initiated that could have a neighborhood impact, such as an infrastructure project, changes to park facilities or programs, etc. The use of these types of communication are increasing as the widespread use of the internet and email makes electronic communication relatively inexpensive and time efficient.

City staff can also encourage developers, landlords and others are proposing changes to the neighborhood to meet with Neighborhood Associations prior to formal submittal to the city for approval. These preliminary meetings can often work out potential issues of dispute before the developer expends large amounts of money on design and lead to win-win compromises before the project is even submitted to the city.

### Neighborhood Cleanup

Cities can work with older neighborhoods to schedule neighborhood cleanup days. Cities often supply dumpsters, trucks and equipment, while the neighborhood organization arranges for resident volunteers to assist in removal of large items such as appliances, landscaping debris or other similar items. It is often beneficial to work with the Neighborhood Association to distribute information about common debris-oriented code violations in advance of the neighborhood cleanup and then publicize that following the neighborhood cleanup, there will be a focused code enforcement action in the area.

### Neighborhood Block Parties

Neighborhood Associations should be encouraged to develop regular social gatherings to encourage membership and strengthen the sense of community. Often these take the form of a pot luck. Cities can encourage this activity through some techniques such as the following:

- Simplified and inexpensive process for closing streets or renting park/school sites for the party.
- Some cities establish a small fund to provide matching funds for the minor common expenses such as location rental, plates, etc. These funds might involve a \$200-\$500 matching fund available to the Neighborhood Associations on a first come, first served basis with a limitation that each neighborhood can only be awarded funds once per calendar year.
- City departments can work with the Neighborhood Associations to use the block parties as educational opportunities including crime prevention, education on code violations, recreation and promotion of applicable programs such as rehabilitation loan programs, etc.

### Establishing Partnerships

Neighborhood Associations are often more effective than local governments at establishing partnerships that can assist with neighborhood problems. This can include partnerships with local businesses, churches, social service clubs, schools and charitable organizations.

### Code Enforcement Assistance

The city can periodically provide training for Neighborhood Association leaders to educate them on the common code enforcement issues in the community and the proper procedures for working with the city staff to eliminate the problems. This training extends staff resources through the addition of additional eyes and ears but also ensures that the neighborhood understands any limitations or constraints the city may have in addressing problems so that both sides are working cooperatively towards improving the neighborhood quality.

### Neighborhood Services Team

One of the challenges facing any city that is establishing a neighborhood based service delivery system is maintaining the efforts over the long term. Cities typically maintain energy for neighborhood service delivery by establishing a Neighborhood Services Team (NST) that is made up of a representative of each of the groups commonly involved in neighborhood activities. In Minot, this would likely be the Police Department or a Code Enforcement Officer. Additional support would be provided by other departments, such as Public Works in response to particular technical issues.

Initially, the NST would be responsible for the implementation stage of this plan. Meetings would be no less than quarterly and be focused on issues such the following:

- Coordination of efforts and strategies to support neighborhood quality
- Sharing feedback on efforts and identification of new problems
- Communications
- Identification of ways to retool existing operations to support neighborhood level service delivery. This can include items such as using the city's GIS capabilities to report data at the planning area or neighborhood level, such as police calls, changes in rental properties, property valuation, etc. or tapping into the system of neighborhood links in order to receive more thorough public input on city activities.

The Neighborhood Services Team is a staff level group coordinating response to neighborhood issues city-wide. This differs from the Neighborhood Association, which is a group of residents focused on the issues of one particular neighborhood. It is expected that there would be a lot of interaction between the Neighborhood Services Team and the various Neighborhood Associations in the city.

### Neighborhood Action Team

Occasionally, a city will find a particularly severe issue that needs focused attention beyond what can be provided by the Neighborhood Association or Neighborhood Services Team by themselves. These types of issues tend to be complex but geographically focused and require assistance from a variety of public, social service and neighborhood sources that might not be members of the other two groups such as non-profits, places of worship, the school district etc. An example might be chronic homelessness in a City park, crime in an area around a school, etc.

In these situations, it might be beneficial to create a Neighborhood Action Team focused on that narrowly defined problem that might meet more regularly or have access to additional membership resources. This allows effective, focused effort, but also prevents bogging down the Neighborhood Services Team with a single topic at the expense of all the other issues in the community.

### Code Enforcement

As is the case in many cities, the code enforcement efforts in the City of Minot are handled by a variety of individuals and departments each with varying degrees of responsibility and authority. Code enforcement activities are largely driven by complaints. This kind of system can be effective when a city's housing stock is relatively new. However, once the natural decline of aging structures occurs and residents need to invest in their properties to reverse that natural decline, a more formal code enforcement process is often necessary.

Code enforcement can often be inadvertently neglected because it does not have the urgency or life critical elements that other municipal enforcement activities have such as fire and police safety. In the constrained budgets of most municipalities, it is difficult to fund a staff



position to attack issues that may be minimized as “cosmetic” while having to cut police or fire positions that have a direct impact on public safety.

Effective code enforcement is a critical component of maintaining and improving neighborhood quality. The impact of a single blighted property can have very real and lasting negative impacts on surrounding, innocent properties. These can include destruction of property values and health and safety issues caused by vermin infestations, unsafe structures, spread of toxic molds, etc.

### Repair Costs

It is important that issues of blight be addressed on a consistent and timely basis for both the underlying property owner and the surrounding neighborhood. For property owners, identification of problems at an early stage can prevent much more significant damage if left untreated. For instance, a simple repair involving painting, caulking or weather stripping on a sound house may involve a minimal cost but prevent hundreds or thousands of dollars of damage to the structure. A minor repair could be a small repair to a roof, windows, site drainage or siding that could be several hundred to thousands of dollars for a homeowner. However, if left unrepaired, the damage can expand into other building systems which increases costs exponentially (particularly water damage). By the time a structure reaches the dilapidated state, the costs of repair can often exceed the cost of demolition and reconstruction.

### Problems from a Lack of Code Enforcement

For neighborhood health, delays in code enforcement can frustrate surrounding residents and ultimately drive them from the neighborhood. When the frustration level reaches the point where the innocent neighbor decides to sell their home, the seller may experience a loss of value on the home sale since buyer interest in the property is subdued by the surrounding blight. The lack of enforcement benefits the blighted property and can cause real negative financial impacts to the surrounding property owners (and ultimately the taxing authorities). Over time, this lack of enforcement pushes the residents from the city that value property maintenance and compliance with city regulations and they are replaced by residents that are not bothered by the adjacent blight, which can cause the problem to spread to other properties.

In this light, the investment in effective code enforcement should pay for itself in increased or stabilized property values above and beyond the revenue that is generated in fines and penalties. The positive impacts on quality of life and neighborhood harmony are more difficult to quantify, yet still very real for the city’s residents.

### Move In and Move Out Program

One of the common code enforcement issues in college communities is the management of the “disposable furniture” problem that can occur when college students return to their home communities in the spring. Students often have difficulty disposing of the furniture properly and the community is unable to absorb such a large influx of used furniture at one time. This cycle reverses in the fall, as students scour the community for inexpensive furniture options to outfit their new apartments. In addition to being a code enforcement issue when large items are disposed of improperly, the increased focus on sustainable practices on college campuses has identified this issue as a very wasteful practice. Some colleges and communities (including the University of Minnesota and University of Illinois) have developed Move In Move Out programs to manage this situation. The program arranges free pick up and storage of furniture over the summer and then in the fall, the warehouse is emptied by students and community members outfitting their homes.

### City Code

The regulation of code enforcement problems, when fragmented, can increase the difficulty in establishing responsibilities and authority. When code enforcement regulation is allowed to grow in a fragmented nature, it can take on a life of its own since the thought of trying to track down and modify all of the regulations can quickly become overwhelming. One relatively simple way to limit regulatory fragmentation is to adopt a standard reference document in the same way that building codes are often adopted by reference. For instance, the International Code Council (ICC) produces The International Property Maintenance Code which is a compilation of code compliance regulations designed to be adopted by reference. Information on the ICC can be acquired at [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org).

In addition to the standard property maintenance issues identified in ICC's code documents, the regulation of vehicles is a common code enforcement issue. The vast majority of vehicle code enforcement issues can be controlled with enforcement of four city code sections:

1. **Parking on unapproved surfaces**-This code section typically defines acceptable parking surfaces with a definition such as "shall be surfaced with asphalt, concrete, or an equivalent surfacing material (including porous pavement options) as may be approved by the Zoning Administrator." Given the large number of gravel parking areas in the city, Minot will have to provide some accommodation for grandfathered parking areas, but new parking areas in the urban core areas should be properly paved to maintain minimum standards of neighborhood quality. The city could also consider requiring proper paved surfaces as a condition of renewal of rental licenses. Efforts to decrease gravel parking areas could also take the form of an incentive, such as a paving revolving loan fund to help ease the initial cash flow requirements of replacing a gravel parking lot.
2. **Oversized vehicles**-This code section typically sets a maximum weight limitation or other vehicle description to prevent the parking of semi-trailers, large commercial trucks and excavating equipment in residential areas. Exceptions are listed for particular activities such as temporary construction on a residence, moving vans and delivery vehicles.
3. **Inoperable vehicles**-All vehicles parked outside of a garage must be operable and have current license plates.
4. **Minimum landscaping surfaces**-There are numerous examples throughout the community where long term parking on lawns has killed the underlying grass surface. Cities can limit this occurrence by regulating minimum landscaping requirements (grass, trees, shrubs) and indicating that parking on landscaped surfaces is not allowed.

### Active vs. Complaint-Based Enforcement

Another controversial issue with code enforcement efforts is determining whether a response should be based on neighborhood complaints or if city staff should actively engage in code enforcement activities.

Communities have discovered that one way to turn around difficult neighborhoods is to target the area on multiple fronts, providing a sufficient level of improvement in a short period of time. The goal of this targeted

activity is not to increase the number of violations issued, but rather to make a noticeable and lasting difference. This process generally follows the following steps:

1. **Identification of an area of actionable size.** It is important that this area be small enough that efforts can be focused but not be so small that improvements will not be able to serve as a catalyst.
2. **Creation of a Neighborhood Action Team** including members of the neighborhood organizations and relevant city staff (code enforcement, zoning, housing, police, as applicable) to develop a multi-pronged response strategy.
3. **Provide affected residents with enough information and time to be able to evaluate their own code compliance problems prior to a concentrated action.** Included in the information should be any contacts for assistance with financing or technical issues including non-city resources and charitable organizations.
4. **Begin concentrated activities** such as focused code compliance, police patrols, neighborhood clean up, parking enforcement, neighborhood organization, street tree trimming or planting and infrastructure repairs as applicable.
5. **Evaluate the impacts of concentrated activities and sustain long enough that they serve as a catalyst for neighborhood change.**

Code enforcement has been an important issue raised at many community meetings which suggests public support for increased code enforcement activities throughout all six neighborhoods.

### Community Education

A key part of effective code enforcement is community outreach and education. Many code enforcement problems are the result of a lack of understanding on the part of residents and can be eliminated without enforcement action once simple steps are taken to ensure basic understanding. The first step is the creation of a short booklet that outlines the following key points:

- Explanation of the code enforcement process in common language
- Common code enforcement issues
- How to work with contractors and avoid fraud
- Resources for residents suffering financial difficulties
- Key contacts

## Housing

One of the goals of any effort to improve neighborhood quality is to ensure that the residents of Minot have access to safe, adequate and affordable housing regardless of age, income or ethnic background. This is generally accomplished through strong housing code enforcement, good public facilities/infrastructure and in some cases, the use of rehabilitation or other incentives. In severe cases, scattered site clearance and redevelopment may be the only feasible alternative.

### Housing Programs

The City of Minot actively pursues opportunities to improve the quality and amount of housing in the City and seeks grants from state and federal resources to support its efforts. These activities include the rehabilitation of substandard units, down payment assistance and development of homes. The North Dakota Housing Finance Agency is a state agency that offers home improvement loans for North Dakota residents with modest incomes. These programs include:

- Helping HAND Program -- program supports new or existing single- or multi-family housing rehabilitation programs.
- Housing Incentive Fund -- supports the development of new multi-family housing units or the substantial rehab of existing structures to create housing.
- Major Home Improvement Program -- low-interest loans to buy and rehab a single-family home or refinance and rehab the borrower's current residence.
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program -- provides funds to purchase and redevelop foreclosed or abandoned property.
- Rehab Accessibility Program -- grants support accessibility improvements made to single- or multi-family properties occupied by low-income people with physical disabilities.

The city can also participate in some housing redevelopment efforts through the use of housing TIF districts which can mitigate some of the extraordinary costs that are part of any redevelopment project.

### Community Land Trust

One tool that is being more frequently used to protect opportunities for affordable home ownership is the Community Land Trust (CLT). The CLT concept in the United States began in the 1970s but has roots that date back thousands of years.

When an individual buys a home, they are typically purchasing the right to the buildings on the land as well as the land itself. When home values rise, it is typically due more to the escalation of the value of the underlying land than it is the escalation of the replacement cost of the structure.

In a CLT form of ownership, the value of the lot and the value of the structures are separated from each other. The single family homeowner owns the house, garage and other improvements, but the land trust owns the underlying land. The land trust provides a long term, renewable ground lease to the homeowner, giving them the right to use the lot much in the same manner as any other single family homeowner.

Because the land trust owns the underlying land and has a contractual relationship with the homeowner, the land trust has an ability to control the actions of the homeowner in ways that exceed what is typically provided to a city through police powers (such as zoning). Land trusts can control issues such as whether the property can be rented out or must remain in an owner occupied state and whether the property needs to remain affordable in some manner into perpetuity.

If this tool were brought to Minot and coupled with some of the other housing programs that are already active in the community, it could provide assurance that some homes would remain owner occupied into perpetuity. This level of assurance could then encourage additional investment by owner occupied buyers who otherwise might be hesitant to purchase in the area because of the possibility that the adjacent homes could be converted to rental or student housing. Finally, existing homeowners could also work with the CLT to transfer ownership of their lots to the CLT, providing the homeowners greater control over what happens to their home when they sell it.



Grand Forks established North Dakota's first CLT in 2010. Additional information on GFCLT can be found at their [website](#).

## Community Education

It is important to create an educational environment that promotes quality housing renovation. Renovating a home can be an intimidating and expensive process, but increased knowledge and access to resources can minimize those problems and facilitate increased private investment. Some elements that can assist with this process include the following:

**Coordination** - Links pointing residents to lists of available rehabilitation funding sources, key contacts and helpful programs should be provided in numerous locations, such as on neighborhood and code enforcement websites, in the Code Enforcement Handbook, Rental Permitting applications, regular newsletters and in the guide for organizing neighborhoods to ensure that local residents are knowledgeable consumers and also able to leverage their private dollars with additional state and federal funds to maximize the benefits to the local community.

**Home Improvement Fair** - Cities have had success at encouraging more interest in home improvements by facilitating annual home improvement fairs that bring local contractors, housing experts, city and agency officials and representatives from lending institutions together so that residents can see products and discuss details first hand with local experts.

**Remodeling Handbook** – As a community's housing stock ages and functional obsolescence sets in, there is often a need for creative solutions to problems common to many houses of a particular style or age. For most homeowners, the cost of hiring an architect to solve these problems is cost prohibitive so the problem does not get solved and reinvestment opportunities do not occur.

A consortium of Twin Cities suburbs faced with these common problems developed two remodeling planbooks of remodeling ideas for houses common to their communities – Split Level, Cape Cod and Ramblers. These planbooks identify ideas for resolving the common challenges with updating these building styles. The cities make the planbooks available to their residents for \$10.





## Parking

In almost every city, the community is highly dependent on the automobile for the majority of its transportation needs. Typically, cars spend more than 90% of the day in a parked condition and require several parking spaces throughout the community in order for drivers to accomplish their daily errands.

Managing parking needs can be extremely costly, complex and have a significant effect on the character of a neighborhood. A lack of spaces for the demand can overload the public street spaces, result in parking in illegal locations, or cause land use changes that are disruptive to the neighborhood character, such as excessive paving of yard areas or removal of houses in order to create parking areas that have more of a commercial rather than residential character.



*Example of illegal parking*

Excessive on-street parking is also a significant barrier to effective snow removal, can reduce traffic visibility and can complicate motorized and non-motorized traffic flows.

Parking problems can also be managed with efforts to reduce parking demand. These parking management efforts aim to encourage less use of the automobile and more efficient use of the existing parking supply with sharing strategies.

Parking problems have been one of the top concerns mentioned during community meetings. Concerns have centered on a lack of off-street parking which has resulted in overused street spaces and parking in illegal locations, particularly in residential yards.

Colleges and universities are unique institutions because they are large activity centers which have a very dense residential component as well. Colleges and universities have large events, such as sporting events, graduation, etc. that can increase the peak parking demand substantially. Typically, colleges and universities manage the parking needs of their

employees and the students in their dormitories, but not necessarily the needs of those students living in off-campus locations.

Over demand for on-street parking can negatively affect the character of residential neighborhood. Over demand generally fall into two areas. Daytime peak parking demands can be caused by employees or customers of nearby businesses driving from remote locations. This type of parking demand can be disruptive to commercial areas, but are often not as severe for residential areas since traditional housing areas have low levels of activity until after 5 p.m. This daytime parking situation conflicts most with commercial activities.

Old Parking Paradigm	New Parking Paradigm
"Parking problem" means inadequate parking supply.	There can be many types of parking problems, including inadequate or excessive supply, too low or high prices, inadequate user information, and inefficient management.
Abundant parking supply is always desirable.	Too much supply is as harmful as too little.
Parking should generally be provided free, funded indirectly through rents and taxes.	As much as possible, users should pay directly for parking facilities.
Parking requirements should be applied rigidly, without exception or variation.	Parking requirements should reflect each particular situation, and should be applied flexibly.
Innovation faces a high burden of proof and should only be applied if proven and widely accepted.	Innovations should be encouraged, since even unsuccessful experiments often provide useful information.
Parking management is a last resort, to be applied only if increasing supply is infeasible.	Parking management programs should be widely applied to prevent parking problems.
"Transportation" means driving. Land use dispersion (sprawl) is acceptable or even desirable	Driving is just one type of transport. Dispersed, automobile dependent land use patterns can be undesirable.
Victoria Transport Policy Institute © 2006-2010	

The second parking impact occurs when housing intensity increases due to the density of residential units and the number of cars in each residential unit. This is a particularly common situation near college campuses. Single family residences or small apartment buildings are occupied by multiple residents, each with a vehicle, yet the original building and site design does not accommodate that level of parking off-site. This forces parking to spill over into the public right-of-way. For students or others who only periodically use their vehicle, this means that the vehicle is immobile for long periods of time and can be disruptive to neighborhood character.

Long term residential parking can be provided by requiring that multi-family properties maintain more off-street parking. This is most effective with high-density housing options that can integrate parking into the structure, but can be problematic when applied to converted single family homes.

Single family home rentals typically take advantage of the definition of "family" in zoning ordinances to enable rental conversion. In many cities across the country, the definition of family is any four unrelated individuals. In most neighborhoods, this creates no significant problems because a family renting a house has a similar household make-up to a family owning a house (mixture of adults and children). To the casual observer, it is impossible to notice any difference between houses based on the ownership status and neighborhood character is preserved.

In college areas in particular, the household is made up entirely of individuals of driving age, which can double or triple parking need. As a result, some cities adopt heavy requirements for residential parking such as one parking space per bedroom. For comparison purposes, the standard parking requirement for single family homes, even in college communities, is generally two parking spaces per unit.

*Examples of yard conversion to parking impacting single family neighborhood character*



Requiring this level of off-street parking can create additional issues and does not always solve the problem. On traditional single family home sites, there may not be enough land area to accommodate the increased parking requirement without resorting to paving options that exceed the neighborhood's impervious or open space norms. This results in permanent changes to the property that are obvious to the casual observer and impact the single family neighborhood character. These visual clues can make the neighborhood less attractive for owner occupied and non-student single family home rental and results in permanent rental conversion.

In addition, provision of off-street spaces does not always result in their being used. Many zoning codes count driveway spaces in front of garages as valid parking spaces, yet they are often not fully utilized due to the inconvenience of needing to move another vehicle to access the vehicle in the garage. For this reason, it is quite common for residences to leave a vehicle in the street even when a driveway space is available.

Although there are several issues with attempting to increase the supply of off-street parking in areas with high demand, college populations are ideal for demand management strategies. Since college students generally live campus-centered lifestyles, demand management is much less complex than if the population consisted of a wider range of residents with more varied parking needs. Demand management techniques tend to fall into several broad categories:

- Mixture of land uses- Providing a range of services in close proximity to residences
- Consumer choice- Providing viable options to vehicle use
- Pricing and Restrictions- Users paying directly for parking use or being subject to restrictions

## Land Uses

The City of Minot's historic land use pattern is unusual for a community with a sizable campus because there is not a large location immediately adjacent to the University that serves as a "Campustown" where goods, services and housing geared towards college students is concentrated which limits the walkability of the neighborhood and encourages excessive use of automobiles by students.

## Consumer Choice

Consumer choice in campus areas generally consists of taking steps to encourage expanded use of non-motorized forms of transportation (sidewalks, trails) and promotion of the use of transit. When given convenient alternatives, student populations respond positively to opportunities to walk or use bicycles. Some cities and universities have gone so far as to designate some key street linkages for non-motorized traffic only, although this solution does not seem to be a viable alternative in the MSU area due to the existing land use patterns.

## Pricing and Restrictions

Some cities attempt to regulate street parking by banning overnight parking on city streets. Although this approach is much easier for the public to understand and city to enforce than other parking management programs, it is difficult to implement in communities that have residential areas on smaller lots due to the small amount of opportunities for creation of off-street parking that would not disrupt the historic neighborhood character.

The parking management technique that would be most appropriate for the concerns that have been raised by the community is a more wide spread use of the residential parking permit (RPP) program. The structure of RPP programs can be adjusted to meet a community's goals by adjusting factors such as the number of permits issued, the times of day they are required, pricing and the areas that the permits can be used in. RPP's can be controversial because they allow one group of citizens to purchase preferential use of a public system (street parking spaces) and they can also force parking problems into areas that remain outside of the RPP program. RPPs can also be extremely popular with local residents and be an important part of the enhancement of the neighborhood quality. One advantage of an RPP program is that it encourages more efficient use of current off-street parking spaces. When the street parking is unlimited,

residents will often ignore less convenient off-street parking spaces such as those on the driveway in front of a garage since it requires movement of two vehicles to back a car out of the garage. In addition, in areas where parking is often available at a price and customer parking can flow into the neighborhoods to avoid the fee, will leave pay lots under-utilized. By attaching a price to the convenience of on-street parking, the RPP will encourage greater use of these "shadow" spaces and free up more of the on-street parking supply.

One of the ways to avoid some of the resistance to RPPs is by creating a voluntary RPP program. A voluntary RPP program means that the program is implemented on a block by block basis in response to a petition from a key proportion of the property owners on the block rather than being imposed by the city. The owner threshold level can be adjusted in response to local conditions, but 60 – 75% would be a good level for initial implementation. Once a valid petition is submitted, the process should include a site visit by the city engineering department to verify that there is a parking problem sufficient for the use of RPP. This step should help to avoid overuse and excessive public burden caused by extending the RPP into areas where it is not necessary.

The primary purpose of the RPP should be established to decide whether the intent is only to regulate overnight parking to discourage abuse of street parking by local residents or whether the city would like to discourage day time parking as well. Initially, the City may want to leave unlimited parking open during the day to allow for the shared use of street parking by University employees and commuter students and to avoid the shock to the existing system. The time period for RPP restrictions to be in effect could be from approximately midnight until 7 a.m. This provides enough time for spaces to be available for night classes, campus events or for resident entertaining. The midnight time limitation will also assist in protection of the neighborhood from large, late night house parties if enforcement is prompt. Morning restrictions should come off early enough that they do not interfere with employees arriving at their workplace and students arriving at early morning classes.

It is recommended that the total number of RPPs be limited and available only to neighborhood residents. Initially, the total number issued should be equal to approximately ½ of the number of street parking spaces on the residential blocks in the program. When a new block is added to

the RPP district as part of the evaluation of the block by the engineering department, an estimate of the number of valid parking spaces on the block should be calculated and the total number of RPP's available in the district overall should be expanded by ½ of that number of spaces. The parking space count should be limited enough to provide for sufficient space around driveway accesses to ensure public safety and adequate sight conditions.

Limiting the RPPs to half the number of available spaces is recommended for several reasons:

- During snow emergencies, it will be much easier for residents to comply with the odd/even restrictions since the number of vehicles regularly parking in the streets will be approximately equal to the number of odd/even spaces available.
- Limiting RPPs will ensure that the residents and visitors from outside the RPP area will also have adequate access to public parking spaces when visiting friends or the University.
- RPP limits will also help to account for parking inefficiencies that result from automobiles parking in less than optimum configurations which is common in unmarked, parallel parking situations.
- RPP limits provide better neighborhood access for service vehicles such as the postal service, delivery vans, etc.
- In order to avoid excessive use of RPPs by any single property, it is recommended that the total number of RPP's available to any property be limited to 1 or 2.

For ease of initial implementation, the City will likely desire to issue RPP's on an annual basis. Due to the large turnover of student leases in the spring and fall, it is recommended that the fiscal year for RPP's begin and end in the summer so that permits are not being used by students that are no longer residents within the RPP zone.

It is anticipated that initial demand for RPP's may exceed the supply. For this reason, it is recommended that the RPP program be rolled out gradually and with sufficient notice so that residents can adjust accordingly.

Pricing strategies should also be used to dampen the demand for the RPP. Some programs provide one free pass to each residence in the district while others require that all RPP's be purchased. Whichever method is chosen, prices should be evaluated annually to ensure that the pricing is high enough to reach a level where a small number of RPP's are available throughout the year so that new residents moving into the zone will be able to purchase any needed RPPs.

In order to amplify the positive impact of the RPP program, excess RPP funds generated could be used for seed money to create a revolving loan program to assist residents to pave unpaved driveways, which have a blighting influence on the neighborhood. Additional paving of unpaved driveways could be encouraged by making it a requirement of rental licensing renewal and allowing landlord access to the driveway paving revolving loan fund.