Supporting Equitable Development

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Mandan, North Dakota
Next Steps Memorandum

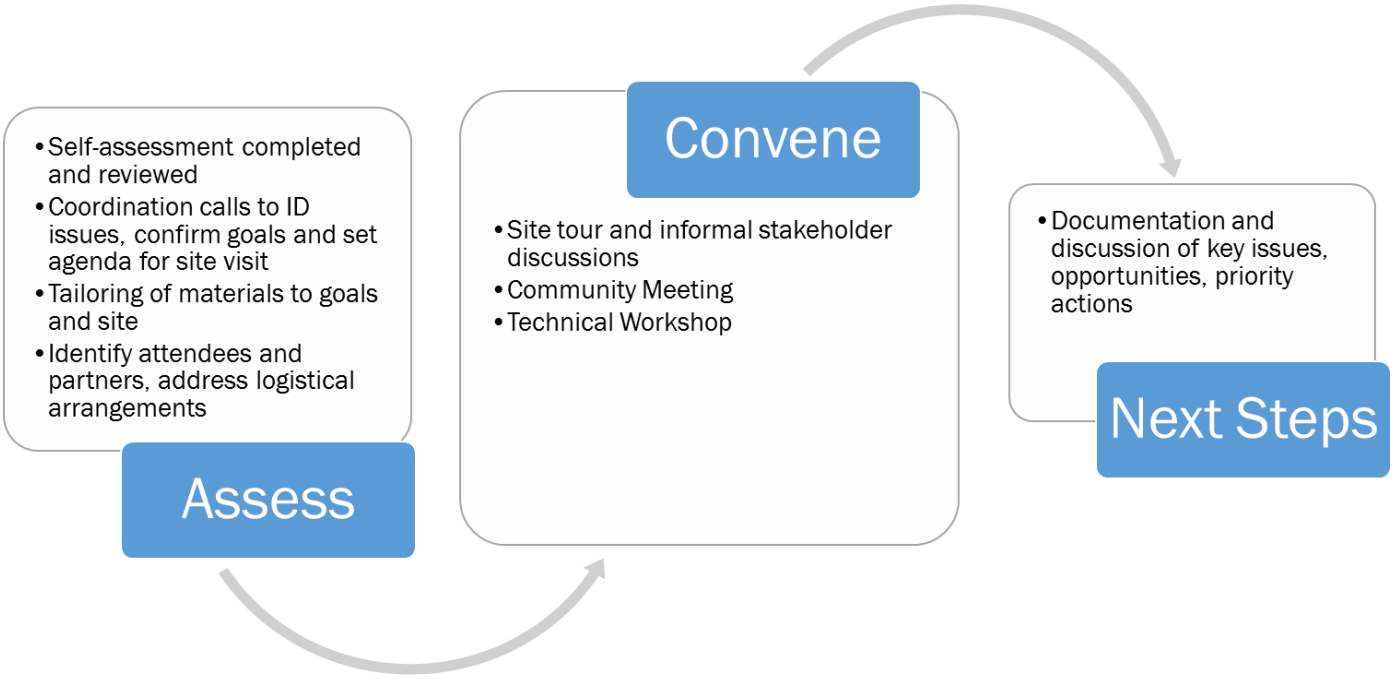
February 7, 2025

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

INTRODUCTION

The core mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and the environment. EPA's Office of Community Revitalization (OCR) helps support this mission by working with communities to reach development goals that positively impact air, water, public health, economic vitality, and quality of life for residents. OCR created the Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program to provide quick, targeted technical assistance on specific smart growth development topics by bringing subject matter experts to communities. Communities request this technical assistance through a competitive application process.

The Building Blocks technical assistance efforts are designed to move a community through an assessment process, convening, and action planning. These steps help local leaders learn about a given topic and create a plan to move the community forward to implementation. The program allows a community to identify challenges and realize opportunities to advance their vision. It includes a series of pre-workshop conference calls, a self-assessment, an on-site convening of stakeholders to discuss issues, and a post-workshop call to identify the next steps in advancing local goals. These efforts also bring a greater understanding of a particular smart growth issue and detail steps necessary to move those ideas closer to implementation. The diagram below outlines the typical flow of the Building Blocks technical assistance program.



THREE STAGES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)

This memo documents the key outcomes of the technical assistance for Mandan, North Dakota. Using the "Supporting Equitable Development Tool," the community identified critical community issues, set goals, and detailed actions for the 3rd Street Southeast corridor, between 10th Avenue Southwest and 6th Avenue Southeast. To accomplish this vision, a local steering committee of residents and stakeholders developed four goals:

- **Attainable Housing Options:** Foster and maintain a sustainable supply of attainable, high-quality housing options for the 3rd Street SE corridor residents.
- **Safe Multi-Modal Transportation:** Create an accessible corridor with a range of transportation options, including safe walking and biking routes and public transportation, while managing the impact of vehicular through traffic on area residents.
- **Community Development and Character:** Promote growth and redevelopment in compact and walkable development patterns while preserving the cherished 'small town feel' and unique identity we enjoy today.
- **Community Health:** Promote public health and community well-being through active living, healthy foods, program support, and a clean environment.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Mandan is an incorporated city across the Missouri River from Bismarck, the state capital of North Dakota. It is also the county seat for Morton County and is home to approximately 24,200 people, according to the 2020 US Census. The population continues to grow, adding over seven thousand people in the last twenty years at a rate consistent with the state average. Local officials continue implementing new programs and investments to help advance the community, which started as a railroad town. Ironically, the railroad alignment is a feature that contributed to issues in the southern neighborhoods along the 3rd Street Southeast corridor, which is the focus of this planning effort.

The 3rd Street Southeast area is directly adjacent to Mandan's downtown but seems much farther away due to the Mandan Rail Yard between the two districts. From downtown, two avenues (6th and 10th) connect to 3rd Street at its western and eastern ends, but these are indirect routes. Other physical barriers isolate the 3rd Street area, as the Heart River and a levee system define the western and southern borders. One road (3rd Street) connects these neighborhoods to the eastern commercial corridor, Memorial Highway. Residents raise concerns that trucks and other "through traffic" use this single route to bypass downtown, adding high travel speeds and noise and creating an unsafe pedestrian corridor. These physical features isolate 3rd Street residents from the rest of Mandan.

Mobile home courts are prominent features along the 3rd Street corridor. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

In 1949, a Lower Heart Levee project redirected the Heart River behind a levee system, designed to mitigate persistent flooding. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Other physical features help define this area. The Heart River once twisted through this area in an oxbow shape. Due to persistent flooding, a Lower Heart Levee system redirected the river into a straight channel in 1949 (City of Mandan Website). The previous riverbed still weaves back and forth along the 3rd Street Corridor as a vacant, grassy ravine that occasionally serves as an overflow for flood events. Regarding manmade features, thirteen ballfields occupy several city blocks along the corridor and are home to several tournaments. Homes west of 1st Avenue Southwest are primarily small, stick-built houses. The remainder of the corridor consists mainly of mobile home courts. Substandard manufactured home conditions are a significant issue, especially in some areas where more than half of units predate 1976 HUD regulations.

City officials applied for EPA technical assistance under the Building Blocks program to envision the 3rd Street area as a place for vibrant neighborhoods with high-quality, affordable residential units and enhanced accessibility to services.

Mandan Steering Committee

- **Andrew Stromme**, City of Mandan
- **Madison Cermak**, City of Mandan
- **Jordan Singer**, City of Mandan
- **Tim Helbling**, Mayor
- **Cole Higlin**, Mandan Parks District
- **Cheryl Kary**, Sacred Pipe Resource Center
- **Lt. Dan Poppe**, Mandan Police Department
- **Jane Winker**, Resident
- **Hannah Knudson**, Resident
- **Erin Ourada,** Western Plains Public Health
- **Chad Radke,** Mary Stark Elementary School

COMMUNITY CONVENING

The key feature of the Building Blocks technical assistance program is the community convening, which allows local stakeholders, government officials, residents, community organizations, and other potential partners to engage with one another around a given topic. A local steering committee leads the process. The following section documents the steering committee's calls, the site tour, and the in-person technical workshop.

Steering Committee

A local steering committee guided the planning process and hosted an October community workshop. This group of local representatives participated in two pre-workshop meetings with EPA facilitators and one post-workshop call, where they drafted community goals, planned the workshop, coordinated workshop invites, and helped complete this action memo. Their call schedule included:

- Call 1: Wednesday, May 29, 2024
- Call 2: Tuesday, September 16, 2024
- Call 3: Thursday, January 16, 2025

Site Tour

On Monday, October 28, the Mandan steering committee hosted a community tour to provide facilitators and other state/federal partners with a better understanding of the 3rd Street Southeast Corridor. Local representatives guided the Building Blocks technical assistance team for two hours between 6th Avenue Southeast and 10th Avenue Southwest. The walking tour left the Spirit of Life Church (801 1st Street Southeast), crossed 6th Avenue, and walked to the Western Plains Public Health offices, where Erin Ourada briefed participants on their services. Across Burlington Street Southeast is Mandan's only grocery store - Family Fare. The tour went south on 3rd Avenue Southeast and then turned west on 3rd Street. The City's point of contact and City Planner, Andrew Stromme, showed participants the oxbow that weaves back and forth through the corridor. The oxbow was the path for the Heart River before it was diverted behind a levee. The group discussed how the oxbow had the potential to be re-envisioned for various purposes, including re-establishing a native prairie ecosystem. Participants examined the poor condition of sidewalks along 3rd Street and looked for speeding traffic, issues that the steering committee highlighted in the two pre-workshop calls. The mobile home courts were central to the conversation, as the group discussed housing conditions and concerns about resident displacement. The staff visited Kiwanis Park, ball fields, and Mary Stark Elementary School.

Tour attendees included various local, regional, and federal stakeholders. Representatives from the City of Mandan's planning and engineering departments provided context on various community issues. Erin Ourada, with Western Plains Public Health, discussed health-related matters. Jena Gullo, with the Missouri Slope Areawide Missouri Slope Areawide United Way, discussed housing and other human service needs. Kristen Sperry, Federal Highway Administration, and Kim Riepl, Bismarck-Mandan MPO, were present to review and discuss transportation concerns.

The site tour included city staff, partner organizations, and federal agencies. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Several sidewalk segments are in poor condition, with broken concrete and deteriorating surfaces. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Technical Workshop

The community's technical workshop began after the walking tour on Monday, October 29, at the Spirit of Life Church. Roughly 30 people attended to hear the evening presentations and participate in the various activities. Participants unanimously agreed with the steering committee's four goals: affordable housing options, safe multimodal transportation, community development, and health. Facilitators guided activities and discussions in these early sessions, including an exercise on community assets and challenges, described below.

The second day (Tuesday, October 29) started in the morning with stakeholders and partner organizations. A smaller group of about a dozen people reviewed aspirational headlines for what they would like to see on the front page of the local newspaper published in the next 3-5 years. Next, attendees referred to a study area map and identified community assets, opportunities, and areas of concern. Before lunch, facilitators presented several community case studies that have similar visions and face comparable challenges.

Equitable Development Case Studies are an essential part of the workshop. They identify concepts, inspire stakeholders, and show how other communities have addressed similar issues under the goals. The EPA technical assistance team presented ten stories from nationwide representing the four goal areas.

The first case study was from Charlottesville, Virginia, which showed how the community redeveloped a Section 8 apartment complex without displacing residents. The effort involved an authentic resident engagement process. In the middle of the country, the City of Boulder, Colorado, developed a Manufactured Housing Strategic Action Plan to identify guiding principles and prioritized actions for manufactured housing. The City also headed the Ponderosa Community

The former riverbed twists through the study area as an underutilized feature. The staff mentioned an instance of a pedestrian falling into these oxbows, which abut the sidewalks. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

During the workshop, participants discussed opportunities to re-establish native habitat in the oxbows and develop pedestrian paths that follow these features. Attendees also brainstormed ideas for working with the local tribal community to educate city staff on appropriate plantings and native vegetation. This photo rending depicts how the oxbows might be re-imagined. Notice the native prairie vegetation and pedestrian paths along the oxbow. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Stabilization Project to purchase property with plans to minimize displacement, preserve long-term affordability, replace outdated infrastructure, reduce flood risk, and introduce new energy-efficient affordable housing options. The technical assistance team also discussed Community Land Trusts (CLTs), non-profit organizations that purchase properties and then sell the homes but retain ownership of the land. This reduces purchase costs for the new homeowner and allows the CLT to maintain restrictions on the resale to ensure continued affordability. The North Dakota Housing Finance Agency supports CLTs through funding, technical assistance, and loan guarantees. These funds can be used for acquisition, rehabilitation, demolition, and/or new construction. Successful CLTs operate in North Dakota, including in Grand Forks and Minot.

Transportation case studies included multimodal examples. In Hillsboro, Virginia, the community added sidewalks, trails, roundabouts, street parking, and streetscape improvements with Transportation Alternative and Federal Highway Administration Grants, along with local funds. The City of Pikeville, Tennessee, served as an example of a community revitalizing its downtown with a streetscape overhaul. The improvements included 48 ornamental streetlights, textured brick crosswalks, and 1,600 linear feet of sidewalks. Funding came from the Appalachian Regional Commission, USDA Rural Development, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation. In Bexley, Ohio, the community completed a pedestrian project called Moose Tracks on Montrose, where alleys and crosswalks provide direct access to the local elementary school, city library, and downtown businesses. A Grassroots citizen-led initiative painted alleys and sidewalks with colorful "moose tracks." These designs helped calm traffic, make pedestrians more visible, and create a fun walking and biking environment.

Participants included city staff, local non-profits, residents, and partners from regional, state, and federal agencies. Elected officials and their staff also attended, including Senator Cramer and Congressman Armstrong (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.).

Federal, State, and Regional Partners

- **Chip Gurkin**, EPA
- **Joann Jeplawy**, EPA Region 8
- **Kristen Sperry**, USDOT
- **Nicolette Daschendorf**, State Department of Commerce
- **Jena Gullo,** United Way
- **Kim Riepl**, Bismarck-Mandan MPO
- **Janelle Moos**, AARP

Technical Assistance Team

- **Will Cockrell**, Principal Planner, EPR
- **Eric Feldman**, Associate Principal, Rhodeside Harwell

The final case studies included environmental and health-related stories. King County, Washington, created an Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan by looking through a health and equity lens. They incorporated policies aimed at improving health in all departments. Williamson, West Virginia, established a Health and Wellness Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center that opened in 2014. The center is dedicated to building a culture of health through holistic community and clinical interventions to stimulate a thriving local economy centered on wellness for the entire population. In the center, the Mingo County Diabetes Coalition provides diabetes education, a community garden, a farmers market and mobile farmers market, and active living programs and activities. The Health Innovation Hub offers entrepreneur assistance and a co-workspace. Denver, Colorado, established greenways, shared streets, and public space amenities in a former industrial area. The project included oxbow features that were replanted as natural space. In the final case study, North Carolina State University developed an edible greenway project to demonstrate the suitability of edibles along greenway systems. All food is free to harvest.

In the afternoon, workshop participants revisited the four community goals and brainstormed possible actions to implement that vision, writing ideas on sticky notes. Facilitators placed these notes on four large flip charts labeled with the four goals. After organizing participant ideas, attendees broke out into groups, one per goal, and started to detail actions. These actions are reflected in this document. EPA and local city staff invited various federal, state, regional, and local stakeholders to the workshop. The complete list of participants and workshop results are in the appendix.

The Moose Tracks on Montrose project is an example of affordable approaches to improving pedestrian connections. (CREDIT: Natural Sacred.)

The Charlottesville case study shows how a community can revitalize lower-income housing while avoiding displacement. This example also proves that resident engagement should be the cornerstone of such efforts. (CREDIT: Piedmont Housing Alliance)

KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES

The workshop attendees were thoughtful about what worked and what needed improvement in this area of Mandan. The mobile home courts were central to conversations. While participants wanted to see improvements to housing and reinvestment, they also wanted to avoid displacement. Despite a

robust list of challenges, many attendees focused on finding solutions using existing strengths to transform challenges into opportunities.

Strengths

Workshop participants identified several strengths or assets in the corridor. During the walking tour, stakeholders mentioned additional opportunities that could be central to future efforts. The list of assets includes existing services, residents, and parks.

- **Parks and Recreation**: The study area has several parks and recreational amenities, including the Kiwanis Park, Legion Park, the Mandan Youth Baseball Complex, the Mandan Veterans Memorial Ballpark, and the Mandan Municipal Golf Course.
- **Police Coverage:** Participants discussed the City of Mandan's police coverage and noticed that officers patrol the area regularly.
- **Community Services:** The area is home to various organizations that can provide community services in the corridor. Groups include the Spirit of Life Church and its food pantry, the Western Plains Public Health Office, Bis-Man Transit, and AID, Inc.
- **Residents:** Residents help define this area's character. Despite their challenges, the people in these neighborhoods hope to see progress.
- **Natural Features:** Several natural features bring opportunities to the area.

Residents are motivated to transform the 3rd Street corridor, and the city has engaged partners who will help address key community concerns. The city's prime location provides opportunities for collaboration with other municipalities, while the strong school system can be leveraged to incorporate youth in planning processes. The parks are community anchors that can continue bringing people together as Mandan focuses on this area.

The Kiwanis Park is the central community-facing recreational amenity. While the baseball fields are an asset, they are larger facilities that are not necessarily designed as neighborhood parks. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Transit serves the area, including this stop by the Western Plains Public Health Office and Family Fare. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Challenges

Workshop participants identified numerous challenges, which aligned with the steering committee's four goals: housing, transportation, community development, and community health. During the site tour, stakeholders identified several items the action-planning process could address.

- **Poor Housing Conditions:** Many housing units, including mobile homes, have structural issues, and residents may need more resources to resolve those conditions.
- **Housing Costs:** Increasing rents and housing costs put pressure on already struggling, lower-income households.
- **Mobile Home Court Management:** While new court owners and managers may try to clean up their communities, many residents are concerned about evictions, increased rents, unclear rules, and displacement.
- **Travel Speeds:** Residents have concerns about higher travel speeds and through traffic along the 3rd Street corridor.
- **No Crosswalks:** The corridor lacks crosswalks – a more significant concern with the perceived travel speeds.
- **Incomplete and Degraded Sidewalks:** Residents emphasized these issues, and the site tour identified several areas with missing or degraded sidewalks.
- **Few Public Spaces:** Residents said the area lacks sufficient community gathering spaces. Aside from Kiwanis Park and Legion Park, there are no other centers where residents can meet.
- **Public Health Concerns:** Participants discussed concerns with mental health and drug addiction in the community.
- **Limited Services:** While organizations serve this area, residents complain that their services are limited. Some residents face homelessness after being evicted from their mobile home courts.
- **Geography:** The Mandan Rail Yard and levee system creates an isolating pocket of this area, contributing to many of its issues.

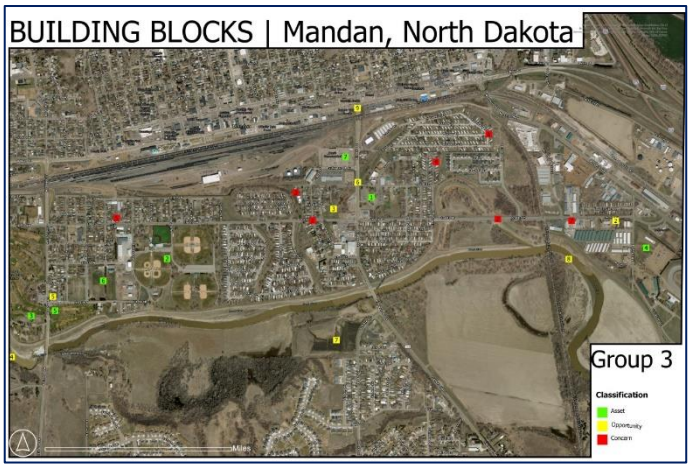
Dirt paths mark gaps in the sidewalk network along 3rd Street Southeast. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

On the walking tour, participants noted through traffic, which included large trucks. With no buffers from pedestrians, speeding vehicles and noise diminished the pedestrian experience. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Opportunities

Many workshop participants framed challenges as future strengths. In a mapping exercise, attendees identified assets, opportunities, and areas of concern. Overall themes included the following.

- **Bike and Pedestrian Safety**: Participants wanted to fill gaps in the sidewalk network and improve the pedestrian environment.
- **Connectivity**: Transportation improvements could connect neighborhoods and provide more direct access to destinations.
- **Oxbows**: The oxbows can be reimagined as ecological corridors, and the Heart River is nearby. The city could reintroduce native plants into the oxbows and install trails along the former riverbed.
- **River Access**: The community could have better river access.
- **Shelter and Community Center:** Participants discussed opportunities to build a community center that doubled as a storm shelter on one of the vacant properties.
- **Gathering Space:** Residents wanted to reimagine the parking area to include a multi-use pavilion, splash pad, and other community activity amenities.
- **Placemaking:** The city could name neighborhoods and better design this part of Mandan.
- **Economic Development:** Participants also discussed opportunities for commercial uses that serve residents in this area.
- **Community Garden:** A local community garden is also thriving, with available spaces filled.



Attendees referred to a study area map and identified community assets, opportunities, and areas of concern. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

Attendees shared conclusions. (CREDIT: EPR, P.C.)

In the action-planning process, partners and other stakeholders discussed ways they could help bridge any gaps. At the end of the workshop, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) helped to identify other federal agencies, regional partners, and local stakeholders to assist with the following action tables.

NEXT STEPS

Residents and stakeholders shared many ideas during the workshop that will help advance the 3rd Street Southeast corridor. During the process, facilitators asked participants to prioritize immediate and near-term actions, understanding that these would create momentum for longer-term initiatives. All ideas and comments have been documented, but the actions below are those that participants and stakeholders selected as top priorities. These actions are a starting point; they can evolve as more partners become involved and new ideas arise.

Attainable Housing Options: Foster and maintain a sustainable supply of attainable, high-quality housing options for the 3rd Street SE corridor residents.

Housing was a central theme throughout the process. In the City's letter of interest, staff identified "high-quality, affordable housing" as one of the key themes for this effort. The study area has multiple mobile home courts, where residents want to see improved living conditions while avoiding displacement. In some neighborhoods, most mobile homes predate the 1976 HUD regulations and are in poor or dilapidated condition. Many households lack sufficient resources to resolve those issues. Other neighborhoods include relatively small, stick-built homes. Regardless of housing type, this part of Mandan is vulnerable to rising costs as residents struggle with lower incomes.

Action: Conduct a Mobile Home Community Strategic Action Plan, working with stakeholders, such as residents and court owners.	
Why is this important?	New out-of-town investors are purchasing mobile home courts. While these groups may attempt to improve living conditions, anecdotal stories tell of rising rents, evictions, and displacement. A Strategic Action Plan would help to bring all parties to the table, communicate issues, and identify solutions. The EPA Building Blocks effort initiated this work, but a follow-up process will be needed to explore these issues further. The process can also help find ways of addressing zoning non-conformities in the courts.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Develop a scope of work for the Strategic Action Plan. • Create a list of mobile home court owners and managers. • Draft a communications plan and talking points for how to engage with court owners and managers. • Using these talking points to reach out to court owners and managers. • Facilitate anonymous engagement with residents in the area via an online survey. • Facilitate discussions with owners and managers to determine a vision for these communities, develop specific steps, and build relationships between the City and mobile home court investors and owners.
How will we measure success?	• Establish an ongoing dialogue with mobile home court owners, managers, and residents. • Develop a Mobile Home Community Strategic Action Plan. • Work together to find ways to improve living conditions.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Jim Neubauer, City Administrator, City of Mandan • David Flohr, Director, State Housing Finance Agency • Jena Gullo, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way
Potential Needs and Resources	• Refer to the Boulder, Colorado, Case Study: https://bouldercolorado.gov/media/2924/download?inline • Identify planning grant opportunities to contract with a facilitator.

Action: Create a Housing Rehabilitation Plan for the planning area.	
Why is this important?	Housing conditions are an issue for mobile home courts and stick-built structures in the study area. Currently, Mandan does not have a complete inventory of those conditions. The city should better understand the need before securing resources and developing programs. A simplified Housing Rehabilitation Plan would help local officials identify the true scope of existing conditions, identify additional partners, develop specific actions, and connect with funders. As a result, improved housing conditions would improve overall living conditions and help transform the 3rd Street corridor. The plan should also explore moving forward with these actions while minimizing displacement.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Conduct the existing conditions inventory of the housing stock. First, develop a methodology for scoring housing conditions. Second, communicate with property owners and residents on the pending fieldwork. Third, conduct fieldwork and assess the conditions of the housing stock. Fourth, conduct an analysis that quantifies the need for housing rehabilitation. • Use these results to secure additional funding that would help support home rehabilitation efforts. • Continue to build partnerships with allied organizations and non-profits. • Develop programming, initiatives, and outreach efforts.
How will we measure success?	• Complete an inventory of housing conditions. • Develop partnerships with funders. • Finalize a list of strategies and actions.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Jim Neubauer, City Administrator, City of Mandan • Jordon Singer, Building Official, City of Mandan • Maria Efferz Hanson, Department of Commerce
Potential Needs and Resources	• Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement (PRICE) program, Housing and Urban Development • Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families • Refer to Appendix A

Action: Create incentives and remove barriers to creating affordable housing.	
Why is this important?	While revitalizing the existing housing stock is a priority, Mandan should also explore strategies for incentivizing new home construction and removing barriers to developing affordable living options. An initial step would be an initiative to re-examine the zoning code to allow for a broader range of housing types, including tiny homes, accessory apartments, and other approaches. Next, Mandan can pursue partnerships to develop housing under the updated code.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Convene developers to identify barriers to affordable home construction. • Update the City's zoning and related codes to allow for a broader range of housing types. • Explore the relocation of the Renaissance Zone Program to 3rd Street Southeast Corridor. • Identify other funding sources and partners to assist with affordable home construction.
How will we measure success?	• Completed an update to the land use regulations that remove housing barriers. • Develop a Housing Strategic plan identifying partners and funding sources to develop new affordable units.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Jordan Singer, Building Official, City of Mandan • North Dakota Housing Finance Agency
Potential Needs and Resources	• Staff time for code updates • Financing and partners, such as the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency, for home construction

Action: Develop an emergency sheltering plan by 2026.	
Why is this important?	The 3rd Street corridor is home to numerous vulnerable households that struggle to pay monthly housing costs and other bills. In the mobile home courts and rental units, individuals and families can be evicted and left with no housing options. When people are unhoused, individuals may be unaware of existing social services or not have access to resources. An emergency sheltering plan can help identify the need and develop a consortium of partners to help shelter those without a safe place to live.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Finalize a list of partner organizations, including departments, agencies, and non-profits. • Coordinate with the school family liaison. • Develop an inventory of sheltering needs. • Develop a tracking tool for uniform data collection. • Create a list of strategies to assist the unhoused.

	• Formalize a consortium to meet regularly and steward the sheltering plan.
How will we measure success?	• Create a consortium of partner organizations. • Create a uniform data collection tool for all organizations and service providers. • Draft a plan to address sheltering needs.
Lead and Support Roles	• Jena Gullo, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way • Jenn Pelster, Infectious Disease Program Supervisor, Western Plains Public Health • Anita Bohner, YouthWorks Homeless Program Manager • Janelle Moos, AARP
Potential Needs and Resources	• Staffing for coordination and related efforts. • Funding to implement strategies in the plan.

Participants discussed additional ideas during the brainstorming activity:

Promoting New Housing

- Designate 3rd St corridor as an Economic Development Zone. Provide tax incentives and grants to private developers to accelerate development
- Modify zoning to provide more housing options; higher density/<Sq Ft.
- Lower cost per foot, more affordable options
- All garage alley access only
- Offer incentives to contractors to build low-income housing units
- Promote/incentivize the development of other types of housing options (missing middle housing)

Coordinate with Park Owners

- Meet with mobile home park owners to see what plans they have
- Affordable housing options
- Meet with Brent Ekstrom Lewis & Clark Development Group
- Reinvest in affordable housing projects in the corridor

Tenant Rights Awareness Advocacy

- Advocate for stronger tenant rights at 2025 legislative session
- Ensure landlords/property management and tenants are aware of rental rules, regulations and rights
- Monitor state housing plan and law

Housing Rehabilitation

- Rehabilitate/ Remodel existing homes to make more accessible and age-friendly homes (Need money to do)
- Explore expansion of City NRI into manufactured housing rehabilitation

Safe Multi-Modal Transportation: Create an accessible corridor with a range of transportation options, including safe walking and biking routes and public transportation, while managing the impact of vehicular through traffic on area residents.

The City of Mandan's letter of interest also included language about connectivity. The City has already conducted a "Safe Routes to Services Study" to improve transportation connections in this subarea, but many challenges still exist. This Next Steps Memo shows that the corridor lacks quality and consistent pedestrian accommodations. Residents raised concerns about higher travel speeds on 3rd Street Southeast, where motorists use this road as a cut-through. The mobile home courts are disconnected, and transportation infrastructure serves more to divide than provide links. The city should also find ways to improve connectivity through new development and redevelopment, as the corridor has only two access points – on the east and west of 3rd Street. Most mobile home courts have only one point of ingress/egress.

Action: Facilitate a Bike or walk audit in selected neighborhoods to assess street safety.	
Why is this important?	The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization conducts a bike and pedestrian audit every year. The audit helps the MPO's member governments inventory bike and pedestrian needs in selected areas, with this information defining transportation projects and identifying potential funding sources. The MPO's audit has a limited scope and only examines six to eight blocks. For the current cycle (late 2024), the MPO will consider an audit for the Mary Stark Elementary School Area, including blocks between 8th and 5th Avenue. The City and MPO may consider other partnerships to expand this audit.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• MPO staff presented the audit proposal to the regional Bike and Pedestrian Committee in October. The audit usually occurs in November, with reporting in the first quarter of the following year. • Identify additional partners and funding sources to conduct this audit for the remainder of the 3rd Street Southeast corridor. • Combine these results into an inventory of bike and pedestrian needs. • Use this information to develop defined projects and improvements.
How will we measure success?	• Complete the MPO's audit and receive the final report. • Replicate this process and develop an inventory for the remainder of the corridor. • Develop a list of achievable projects.
Lead and Support Roles	• Kim Riepl, Transportation Planner, MPO • Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roester, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan • Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan

Potential Needs and Resources	• MPO funds for the Bike and Pedestrian audit • City resources to define projects and identify grants

Action: Create an online mapping tool to track sidewalk and street deficiencies.	
Why is this important?	During the site tour, participants identified numerous sidewalk deficiencies, including broken concrete, missing segments, and damaged curbs. These issues constantly change and are difficult to track. Yet street conditions help define the public space, and sidewalk conditions influence pedestrian comfort and safety. During the workshop, stakeholders referenced the City of Bismarck's online mapping tool and suggested that format for Mandan. The benefits of that platform would also have citywide outcomes within and outside of the 3rd Street corridor.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Meet with the City of Bismarck staff and learn more about their online mapping. • Coordinate with the MPO on resources for mapping the sidewalk network. • Identify staff to maintain the online map. • Use information from the field audit to update the map. • Promote this tool and ways for the public to contribute information.
How will we measure success?	• Develop this online tool. • Identify gaps and potential spot improvements.
Lead and Support Roles	• Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan • Kim Riepl, Transportation Planner, MPO • Karla Schultz, GIS Coordinator • Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Refer to Bismarck "Sidewalk Gap Tool." • Identify staff time to maintain the site.

Action: Improve street markings, including bike and pedestrian spaces, on 3rd Street Southeast to better manage the traffic and right-of-way space.	
Why is this important?	The primary vision for 3rd Street Southeast is to redesign the street cross-section, which is a long-term and expensive effort. However, relatively cheap solutions can help improve the corridor, including traffic movements, bike spaces, and pedestrian safety. Pavement markings can address immediate needs by establishing bike lanes and green boxes for cyclists, identifying crosswalks, defining on-street parking spaces, and slowing traffic speeds.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Conduct street measurements to identify possible street markings for bike lanes and on-street parking. • Enhance crosswalks around Mary Stark Elementary School. • Identify new crosswalk locations, such as at Kiwanis Park. • Design other markings, such as "school zone" text, green boxes for cyclists, and areas for on-street parking. The on-street parking lines can help constrain travel and reduce travel speeds. • Conduct a public engagement process on potential markings. • Install markings.
How will we measure success?	• Install roadway markings. • Install curb cuts for crosswalks. • Consider signage to correspond to the markings.
Lead and Support Roles	• Shane O'Keefe, Director of Public Works, City of Mandan • Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Local funds • Consult with the MPO on other funding sources

Action: Design comprehensive and permanent street redesign features.	
Why is this important?	In the long term, the City of Mandan should explore options for completely redesigning the 3rd Street corridor. Improvements would likely include bulb-outs (especially at intersections and crosswalks), improved sidewalks with street lighting, new stormwater features, updated curbs, street furniture, appropriate traffic calming (such as chicanes), and other multimodal features. The existing travel-way is approximately 35 feet, but additional right-of-way may be needed depending on the designs.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Engage the community and stakeholders on possible designs for 3rd Street Southeast. • Develop planning-level designs for the 1.14-mile segment of 3rd Street, between 10th and 6th Avenues.

	• Add the project to the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan and other long-range documents, including the comprehensive plan. • Conduct engineering-level designs and cost estimates. • Secure funding for design, engineering, right-of-way, and construction.
How will we measure success?	• Complete a planning-level redesign of the corridor. • List the redesign on appropriate long-range documents.
Lead and Support Roles	• Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan • Kim Riepl, Transportation Planner, MPO • Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) • Transportation Alternatives (TA) • Carbon Reduction Program

Participants discussed additional ideas during the brainstorming activity:

3rd Street Improvements

- Roundabouts
- Slowing traffic by re-installing drainage dips
- Implement designs to slow down traffic on 3rd St
- Redesignate use of roadway using low-cost improvements
- Redesign driving lanes (reduce width)
- Paint on-street bike facilities; lanes, sharrows, signage
- Create marked Ped crossings throughout corridor

Trails

- Provide a trail that could be used for cross country skiing during winter
- Make trails on the levees

Sidewalk Network

- Plant trees along 3rd St near Wildwood park between 6th Ave and Third Street on north and south sides
- Determine authority to repair and extend sidewalks where sidewalks are in poor condition or nonexistent

- Construct/reconstruct walkable sidewalks throughout the corridor
- Safe multi-modal transportation
- Enforce city codes (if any) for sidewalk snow removal

Miscellaneous

- Create bike share program for use in the community
- Bismarck has bike share

Community Development and Character: Promote growth and redevelopment in compact and walkable development patterns while preserving the cherished 'small town feel' and unique identity we enjoy today.

While Mandan continues to grow, local officials want to ensure home construction (supply) keeps up with demand, as is described under the first goal. The City also envisions some additional non-residential or mixed-use development in the area. However, growth should not sacrifice the feel and function of small, walkable neighborhoods and the "sense of community." This theme arose during the steering committee calls and persisted in the community workshop. The community should continue to value the people who make Mandan what it is and what it could become.

Action: Coordinate with Mary Stark Elementary and the school system to engage the youth in community projects.	
Why is this important?	Young people are Mandan's future. Engaging this underrepresented part of the community can help give the youth a voice, build connections, and revitalize this part of the City from a grassroots approach. City and school district officials should identify an achievable project and develop a plan involving students.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Meet with Mary Stark Elementary Principal, Chad Radke. • Identify an achievable project for the 3rd Street area. • Implement the effort in the Fall of 2025.
How will we measure success?	• Develop a project. • Show how kids also have the power to get involved and showcase a project.
Lead and Support Roles	• Chad Radke, Principal, Mary Stark Elementary • Dr. Mike Bitz, Super Intendent, Mandan Public Schools • Cole Higlin, Executive Director, Parks District • Barb Sandstrom, Morton Mandan Public Library • Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Resources for staff coordination and possible supplies • Volunteers

Action: Assess community support for a 3rd Street community center.	
Why is this important?	Workshop participants asked for community gathering spaces and other programming that supported the surrounding neighborhoods. A community center would help address that need and serve as a headquarters for the different programming described in this action plan. With an intergenerational function, the center could provide after-school programming, senior services, and activities catered to teens. It could also function as a hub for addressing food insecurity needs. However, the first step would be to assess community support and determine ways to finance such a facility. Workshop participants also suggested this facility as a tornado shelter.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Survey the community to determine support. • Work with the school system to distribute surveys and other outreach materials. • If the community supports the concept and identifies desired programming, conduct a feasibility study examining location, costs, and funding strategies.
How will we measure success?	• Confidently assess public support and desired features of the community center. • Complete a feasibility assessment.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Chad Radke, Principal, Mary Stark Elementary • Dr. Mike Bitz, Super Intendent, Mandan Public Schools • Cole Higlin, Executive Director, Parks District • Barb Sandstrom, Morton Mandan Public Library • Erin Ourada, Administrator, Western Plains Public Health • Jena Gullo, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way
Potential Needs and Resources	• Resources for staff coordination and possible supplies • Volunteers

Action: Establish placemaking strategies, including naming, that design the community along the 3rd Street corridor.	
Why is this important?	Currently, the 3rd Street area has no official name or boundaries. Mandan should work with residents and stakeholders to determine appropriate names and borders for this area to establish a sense of place and community. This effort may also include branding, signage, and beautification to complement the community's identity.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Initiate a public engagement effort to discover the community's identity.

	• Coordinate with the Historical Society and other stakeholders to inform this process, boundaries, and names. • Establish a name(s) of the area. • Develop branding for the community's identity. • Explore options for signage or markers at gateways.
How will we measure success?	• Formalize a name(s) and boundaries for the area. • Outline signage and branding to promote community pride.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Mandan Historical Society
Potential Needs and Resources	Staff time and resources

Action: Establish a Community Public Arts Program in the 3rd Street area.	
Why is this important?	After completing the placemaking task, Mandan should facilitate a Community Arts Program for the area to support community pride and beautification. A Beautification Committee can help identify low-cost projects and coordinate with local artists.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Utilize the existing Community Beautification Committee to convene a subcommittee for the study area possibly. • Referring to the community identity from the previous action, create a list of possible art projects. • Consider coordination with the youth engagement action table. • Explore grant funds to support art projects.
How will we measure success?	• Establish a Community Beautification Subcommittee. • Implement art projects throughout the area.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Barb Sandstrom, Morton Mandan Public Library • Community Beautification Subcommittee • Local artists
Potential Needs and Resources	Funding for art materials and coordination

Participants discussed additional ideas during the brainstorming activity:

Youth and Volunteer

- Community engagement activities with youth on "South-side" of town town-utilizing parks close to their homes (not always N Mandan)
- Engage local youth group organizations to help build benches and picnic tables for public spaces
- Recruit and coordinate (skilled and unskilled) volunteers to work with the city on various projects

Placemaking

- Create distinct markers to tell a story for each neighborhood
- Naming neighborhoods (maybe school) such as Ft. Lincoln Neighborhood or Mary Stark Neighborhood
- Historic house plaques
- Stone pillars or posts (like cathedral)

Public Art

- Provide a vibrancy grant to enhance vibrancy, culture, and arts in places; benches, art, etc. (beautification)
- Small town neighborhood
- Install public art on utility 'boxes?' using art from Mary Stark School
- Add murals to buildings

Goal D – Community Health: Promote public health and community well-being through active living, healthy foods, program support, and a clean environment.

Public health was one of Mandan's core aims for the Building Blocks effort. The letter of interest called for "environmentally safe and healthy communities." During the community workshop, participants discussed concerns with substance abuse, mental health, and food access. Access to the natural environment was another topic discussed.

Action: Complete an assessment of food insecurity, examining needs, existing resources, and opportunities for improvements	
Why is this important?	The City of Mandan has two grocery options: the Walmart Supercenter and 6th Avenue's Family Fare. With these limited selections, many Mandan households lack transportation and resources to access healthy food. An assessment would quantify those needs, resources, and opportunities.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Map food retailers and assets. • Coordinate with food-related organizations for information and partnerships. • Identify areas with the highest food insecurity issues. • Identify opportunities and strategies to address these challenges.
How will we measure success?	• Complete the Food Insecurity Assessment. • Identify the next steps.
Lead and Support Roles	• Erin Ourada, Administrator, Western Plains Public Health • Jena Gullo, Missouri Slope Areawide United Way • Great Plains Food Bank • AID, INC. • Spirit of Life Food Bank
Potential Needs and Resources	• Local Food, Local Places Program, EPA • Data from community organizations • Volunteer and staff time

Action: Restore the oxbows to their natural habitat and install trails beside the installations.	
Why is this important?	The oxbows are majority publicly-owned land that twists through the study area and requires continuous maintenance. They serve as an overflow during flood and storm events and cannot be redeveloped with structures. However, this action proposes installing native plantings and restoring these areas to a natural ecosystem. Multiuse trails at the top of the banks can provide access to these natural areas and provide active recreation options. Coordinating with the Mandan tribal community would bring the knowledge of native culture and offer partnership opportunities.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Coordinate with the tribal community on native plantings. • Include gardening clubs and ecologists. • Install native plantings, including prairie grasses and wildflowers. • Develop planning-level designs for multiuse trails along the oxbows.
How will we measure success?	• Build a permanent partnership with the tribal community. • Install native plants.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Cheryl Kary, Sacred Pipe Resource Center • Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • RIley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Staff time • Resources for plantings

Action: Add trails atop the Heart River levee system.	
Why is this important?	A levee system redirected the Heart River from the oxbow features. The levees stand on the river's northern bank, defining the study area's southern edge. Planning a trail and lighting along the top of this system would provide access to the river and active recreation options. The Greater Grand Forks Greenway would serve as an example.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Communicate with Grand Forks to learn how they implemented the trails atop their levee system. • Coordinate with owners of the levee. • Create an agreement to develop a trial. • Develop planning-level designs.

How will we measure success?	• Finalize an agreement. • Finalize planning-level designs.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	• Staff time for coordination • Funding for trail development

Action: Establish a staff process for code enforcement.	
Why is this important?	Code enforcement is essential to ensuring building safety, managing possible nuisance issues, and protecting building conditions. Currently, the city lacks standardized inspection and enforcement processes across departments. Mandan should explore formalizing consistent processes for enforcing fire, building, health, and zoning codes.
Immediate Next Steps & Deadlines	• Coordinate with departments on current enforcement processes. • Create an audit of those processes. • Conduct benchmarking with other communities on best practices. • Outline updates to enforcement processes. • Begin to develop a standardized approach to inspections and enforcement, along with systems for departments to better communicate with each other.
How will we measure success?	• Finalize standardized processes. • Regular communication between departments.
Lead and Support Roles	• Andrew Stromme, City Planner, City of Mandan • Jarek Wigness, City Engineer, City of Mandan • Riley McAdoo-Roesler, Assistant City Engineer, City of Mandan
Potential Needs and Resources	Staff time for coordination

Participants discussed additional ideas during the brainstorming activity:

Community Centers

- Determine community support for community center with accessible commercial kitchen

Food

- Establish farm to table plans with area farmers, schools, food establishments, etc.
- Continue to raise funds and offer programs to feed children over the weekends
- Create or expand community gardens that are accessible to all community members
- Purchase a refrigerator for Spirit of Life food pantry
- Public gardens, community food drives, clean-up with a police day

Social Services

- Continue to raise funds and operate a community homeless shelter for men, women, and families
- More support existing programs, drug abuse, addictions
- Lead a fundraising campaign to raise dollars for Mandan-based social service needs
- Lead a needs assessment to identify gaps in services and potential solutions with various stakeholders
- There is no place to take those under the influence in winter months or after dark

Library/Community Engagement

- Use Bookmobile and Community Engagement Services from the library to take programming to a central location in the area; computer access, etc.

Neighborhood Clean-up

- Say No Campaign. No to littering, no to drugs billboards and signs

Oxbows

- Place waterfowl nesting habitats in the oxbows by the trolley station as a pilot project
- Include oxbows in the city's animal spring trash cleanup volunteer effort
- Plant native species and create areas for foraging for wild plants and flowers.
- Mow the oxbow 1-2 less times per year to incrementally improve the ecosystem until a formal restoration can occur.
- Convert oxbows to public spaces. Reach out to water resource district to create buy-in.
- Engage local civic groups and schools to assist with construction, (Sponsored) maintenance, etc.

MISC

- Encourage the city (Mayor and commission) to enroll in AARP's Network of Age Friendly Communities
- Create neighborhood clean-up days.

- Provide prices for participating residents
- Be Kind drive
- Mow a neighbor's lawn
- Pick up garbage
- T-shirt says "Be kind. Everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about"

Implementation

Mandan residents have hopes and aspirations for their community. The City has already made progress with many efforts that directly or indirectly influence the 3rd Street area. Local officials began an audit and rewrite of its outdated zoning codes to remove barriers to creating new housing options. A City-lender partnership launched in 2023 provides up to 2 million dollars in reduced-interest home equity loans for improvements to older homes. Mandan conducted a "Safe Routes to Services Study" to improve transportation connectivity. Officials are looking to utilize a Brownfields Grant, which has recently received an Opioid Settlement, to address environmental and health-related concerns[1]. Thankfully, Mandan already has committed allies from partner organizations.

[1] City of Mandan Letter of Interest

APPENDICES

The following appendices catalog additional resources and document the process. The local steering committee should refer to these resources as they progress through the Action Memo.

- Appendix A – Additional Resources
- Appendix B – Workshop Attendees
- Appendix C – Documentation of Workshop Responses