

# FORMING NEIGHBORHOOD

LUKE MORMAN



FIGURE 1: Walking through Urban Plains Neighborhood

## THESIS ARCHIVAL NOTE

The following thesis project, entitled Forming Neighborhood: Creating community identity through connectivity, placemaking and functionality for the Urban Plains development in southwest Fargo, was composed over the course of the 2018-2019 academic school year. The Thesis Program, as contained here, was initiated and completed in the fall semester as a part of the LA 763: Programming and Thesis Preparation course. Supplemental material, including the Thesis Boards and Thesis Presentation documents, were generated in the spring semester as a part of the LA 772: Design Thesis studio. Any inconsistencies between the different documents, in terms of research and design, should be excused per the evaluation of the project across the two semesters.

# FORMING NEIGHBORHOOD:

CREATING COMMUNITY IDENTITY THROUGH CONNECTIVITY, PLACEMAKING AND  
FUNCTIONALITY FOR THE URBAN PLAINS DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHWEST FARGO

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A Design Thesis Submitted to the  
Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture  
of North Dakota State University

By

Luke Morman

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Landscape Architecture



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**PRIMARY THESIS ADVISOR**  
**JASON KOST**



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**SECONDARY THESIS ADVISOR**  
**MATTHEW KIRKWOOD**

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

The city of Fargo, ND has been growing steadily in recent years. This has brought up issues of urban sprawl and lack of intentional design because developers mainly just try to keep up with the demand. It is becoming a popular desire within neighborhoods and cities to create walkable and dense developments. Many cities have began increasing density and connecting different uses to follow along with this desire. Dean Schwanke - the Senior Vice President for a company, called Urban Land Institute, dedicated to researching land development - describes the trends of urban and suburban lifestyle with this generation:

*The town center style of suburban development has been going strong for decades...increasing in dense, walkable development replicating 'the great American neighborhood'... It's a new take on a classic problem for those building far from dense urban centers: the lack of any "there" there... "There's a need and desire for a more urban feel for all types of suburbs,' says Schwanke. "The talented and educated millennial generation may have chosen to live downtown so far. But will they move to the suburbs if they offer a more urban lifestyle?" (Sisson, 2017, p. 4).*

Following the desires of today's society, the typical suburbs can be modified to give people their privacy, and at the same time give people an opportunity for community. Our cities do not need to turn into downtowns or suburbs, there can be a middle ground, and I wish to find out what that can look like.

Form-Based Code is a tool that encourages density and holistic design for developments, and is seen as a solution to the problems of urban sprawl. This thesis will evaluate how neighborhood planning and land development code can reduce the trends of urban sprawl and un-defined community. Through the use of a comparative analysis between mixed-use developments, guidelines will be identified showing a relative proportion between buildings of residential, commercial, civic, and mixed uses. A secondary comparative analysis will then be performed on the codes used in creating said developments. The results found will provide a spectrum of what the current land development code and Form-Based code can provide revealing a mixture of uses and density that best benefits the neighborhood community, as well as discovering other factors that can be used to formulate a process of creating developments with *identity*.



# THESIS NARRATIVE

## PERSONAL INTEREST

I grew up in a home where family is one of the most important things in our lives. Both immediate and extended relatives are highly valued still today. For forty-nine years, my family has had a week-long reunion every summer in order to be with each other. Throughout my whole life, many of the relatives – myself included – sees this event as one of the top highlights of every year. The past several years has been held at Rush Lake in Perham, MN. There is a line of resorts, off the road called, Rush Lake Loop, that go along the western edge of the lake. Scattered along the Rush Lake Loop is where our families reside, but every day we convene at the Hook Line & Sucher Resort & Campground. We can walk to and from the resorts to Sucher's, which only adds to the fun and memories.

Through my years of studying Landscape Architecture, I have realized how the best landscapes have meaning and value to the community around it. But only recently have I realized how that is what I was raised in; a community where the Rush Lake Loop and Hook Line & Sucher Resort holds a special place in our family's identity.

## BACKGROUND OF FARGO, ND

Fargo, North Dakota is a city that is home to a growing population from almost one hundred and six thousand in 2010 to over one hundred and twenty thousand in 2016. It also embraces a growing community, which in response, is bringing a region booming with development. This city follows the principles of Euclidean zoning with their Land Development Code (LDC), which aims to separate unrelated uses. With Euclidean zoning, a town or community is divided into areas in which specific uses of land are permitted, and the regulations for the buildings and property are based on the uses within each zone.

The city of Fargo has been struggling with trying to create meaningful development and opportunities to build community and improve sustainability. Euclidean zoning in Fargo has produced sprawling suburbs and other infrastructure, neglecting the important interactions that can take place when various amenities are planned to create networks for the community within. "Scholars have argued that this regulatory approach contributes to sprawl, increases dependence on automobiles and has limitations in achieving important objectives, such as sustainable design" (Garde & Hoff 2017). This growth has caused a trend where developments meet the physical needs of the city, such as residential and commercial infrastructure needs, but does not attempt to create relationships between them.

## FORM-BASED CODES

Form-Based Codes (FBC) is a set of regulations for a city that takes into account the interactions of forms, spaces, and people from the scale of an entire city down to the alleyway between two buildings. This wholesome approach to designing has potential to guide development to profit from the visual aesthetics, form, and functionality of each development and its neighbors.

## THEORETICAL PREMISE

This research will seek to answer the question, “How can a mixture of uses and land development code create identity for a neighborhood?” In a video by William Hosley called *Placemaking - History, Practice, and Philosophy*, Hosley describes locations that give people an identity as the term “placemaking.” “... What placemaking is all about is engaging people and their imaginations with the qualities and character of the places that matter” (23:14). A place without identity has little value to those that experience it.

The research strategy adopted is a comparative analysis. This will help give perspective to the quantitative and qualitative elements being observed in the analysis. To start, a comparative analysis will be performed on developments with a mix of residential, commercial, civic/public uses within buildings in reference to the overall building coverage to a site. These results will show commonalities between the use densities, highlighting a proportion of each use they all share - an *optimal minimum ratio*, per say. Next would come a comparative analysis with Form-Based Codes and Fargo, ND’s current Land Development Code. This will evaluate what limitations or boundaries can be set on the *optimal minimum ratio* previously found. This research will begin to formulate a template of sorts, indicating a density and mixture of uses that produces generally “good” development. This assumed “good” development will either be supported or not through the findings of surveys of residents and developers.

Fargo’s current design trends don’t create opportunities well to form an identity for neighborhoods, only certain buildings or open spaces seperately. By analyzing FBC methods and creating a formula stemmed from that, I will further define neighborhood identity through my research and eventually my design. I believe that my results will reveal that FBC can give flexibility to the design of a neighborhood or development, also showing that more dense neighborhoods with an even distribution of uses will give an identity to those that call it home.



FIGURE 2: T.H. Penuel | Frosty Trees



FIGURE 3: Loida Mance-Tobias | Spring Trees  
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# PROJECT TYPOLOGY

## NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY PLANNING

Planning for a good community or neighborhood should have designed places that are fun, safe, and inviting. Designing a place that can accomplish these things has to come from some level of civic attachment. Civic attachment is where “curiosity leads to knowledge, leads to understanding, a sense of civic responsibility, of caring, and then action. It’s a quality that makes us better citizens, and makes us concerned about the places we inhabit” (Hosley 26:33). Through the process of planning and developing spaces for the residents of a neighborhood to enjoy, people will begin to care for these places and create identity from their value.

## FORM-BASED CODE

This twenty-first century idea focuses on the regulations of building form, street form, and density, which then promotes walkability for people. Form-Based Codes have been known to improve sustainability within a city and its future growth.

## EUCLIDEAN ZONING

Conventional zoning methods separate the land into parcels defined by specific zones that point to what those parcels should be used for. The intention of this practice is to keep each use healthy and successful, instead of negatively affecting each other.

## URBAN DESIGN

The study of urban areas takes into account the function of an entire city. A designer needs to understand the scales of an urban environment, from largest (macro) to smallest (micro). Using that knowledge of the urban environment, the designer can then plan accordingly with sustaining and improving on what is existing.

# MAJOR PROJECT ELEMENTS

## ELEMENTS INVOLVED WITH COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Building density  
Residential, commercial, civic, and mixed-use buildings  
Green space  
Building setbacks  
Euclidean Zoning code  
Form-Based code

## USER/CLIENT DESCRIPTION

### USER

Residents and guests to the area have their needs of shelter, work, and play met. They will use public and private spaces to connect with new and familiar people.

### CLIENT

Building and land owners manage the upkeep of the land and infrastructure to a high quality. Business owners use common business practices to attract more visitors and clients to their businesses.



FIGURE 4: Fargo-Moorhead CVB | Fargo Aerial

# SITE INFORMATION

## IMPORTANCE

Urban Plains began with a goal to have a variety of uses laid out on a three hundred acre plot of land in order to promote interaction between the residents, visitors, and the environment they are in. Due to the land not being sold and built upon within a reasonable time-frame, the land owner sold chunks of land away for quick income. The original design (as shown in Figure 7) was changed to fit multiple apartment complexes. As it exists today (Figure 8), there would be no reason to go to areas in Urban Plains unless one lived there, worked there, or wanted to travel to their park. There does not seem to be an identity that would attract people to experience this development.

## REGION

North Dakota is not well known for much across the United States, except for its extreme winters, vast farmland, and areas of very flat land.



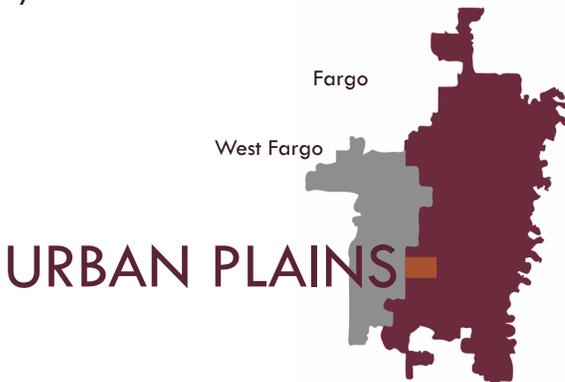
## CITY

Fargo, ND is a thriving city that continues to grow, despite its sprawl and lack of general tourist attractions. Some draws to this community are its colleges, low unemployment rate, and safety amongst others. Livability.com ranks Fargo, ND eleventh on their list for the Top 100 Best Places to Live in America for 2019



## SITE

The Urban Plains development is roughly three hundred ten acres. It stretches roughly a half a mile north and south, and a full mile east and west. It is located in the southern part of the Fargo and West Fargo area, but has a steady amount of land being developed from year to year.



# PROJECT EMPHASIS

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The major area of interest for my approach in this thesis is comparative analysis. By reviewing developments under the same criteria, it will show commonalities and discrepancies between what they offer. Through a process of comparison, it will point out what is successful in each case. This will evaluate similar topics within traditional Euclidean Zoning code and Form-Based code. There will be quantitative data that will have the most weight in making an analysis, such as the physical effect of building setbacks and density, but there will be additional qualitative data to provide general reason in making assumptions in the data, such as the feel of a neighborhood.

## MINOR EMPHASIS

*Landscape assessments* will look at small details that can add or take away from the quality of a place such as the aesthetic value or general enjoyment.

*Master plans* will show a general relationship and understanding for the site.

*Code analysis* will review existing Land Development Code for Euclidean Zoning practices and Form-Based practices.

*Neighborhood analysis* will help show public opinion of a neighborhood or development.

*Urban analysis/design* can help understand the form of a neighborhood or development to visually show how spaces and uses will relate.

# GOALS OF THE THESIS PROJECT

## ACADEMIC

I aim to learn of ways identity can be created within a neighborhood by the use of traditional Euclidean Zoning code and Form-Based code. I hope to learn from companies with an emphasis on Form-Based code like Place Makers and Duany Plater-Zyberk.

## PROFESSIONAL

Developers and local government could see this Optimal Minimum Ratio as a template to use for future development. They will be able to see how this ratio of density and uses is supported by my comparative analysis and surveys of residents of various neighborhoods and developers.

## PERSONAL

My design will show how a neighborhood could have been designed following different guidelines and regulations than what exists. I will also explore developing a formula or process to follow in order to form an identity within a neighborhood.

# PLAN FOR PROCEEDING

## DEFINITIONS OF RESEARCH DIRECTION

In order to solve my design problem of finding neighborhood identity, I need to understand and research developments and neighborhoods that I see as successful. These observations I make will give me an idea of what I see as “ideal” or “successful” within a development, and choose to perform case studies on several “ideal” developments. Using these chosen developments, I will then move on to use comparative analysis.

It is necessary to establish what a neighborhood and development is. A neighborhood is subjective to those living in it, but they have legally placed boundaries typically based on the physical restraints or divisions of the land. A development can be unified and planned out, or it can seem to be a random grouping of infrastructure that are physically close together. Moving forward, I will need to lay down a definition of each for any audience to understand.

## DESIGN METHODOLOGY

My design method of comparative analysis will start by comparing developments that I have observed as good and successful. This will give me a range of density and building uses, which I am calling an *Optimal Minimum Ratio (OMR)*. That range will then be used when comparing Euclidean Zoning code and Form-Based codes to see what additional flexibility or restraints the code can allow. Once this is second comparative analysis is performed, I will have a practical view of the OMR. I will use the defined Optimal Minimum Ratio to survey developers and various neighborhood residents to see a wide range of public view regarding the Ratio’s densities and uses. Surveys will be performed at neighborhoods where there is mixed-use and neighborhoods where there are only residential uses.

The research strategy adopted is a comparative analysis. This will help give perspective to the quantitative and qualitative elements being observed in the analysis. To start, a comparative analysis will be performed on developments with a mix of residential, commercial, civic/public uses within buildings in reference to the overall building coverage to a site. These results will show commonalities between the use densities, highlighting a proportion of each use they all share - an *Optimal Minimum Ratio*. Next would come a comparative analysis with Form-Based Codes and Fargo, ND’s current Land Development Code. This will evaluate what limitations or boundaries can be set on the Optimal Minimum Ratio previously found. This research will begin to formulate a template of sorts, indicating a density and mixture of uses that produces generally “good” development. This assumed “good” development will either be supported or not through the findings of surveys of residents and developers.

## DOCUMENTATION OF THE DESIGN PROCESS

I will utilize Google Drive to weekly upload my working files so I don't lose any progress during a technological mishap. It is very important to track my research and thoughts by keeping useful website URL's and hyperlinks on a Google Doc. I will put on that Doc links and notes on those links. Google Docs can be very useful because I can work on the same document from both my desktop computer and laptop. This will allow me to change scenery to keep up my own productivity.

## SCHEDULE

By arranging weekly meetings with my advisor, Matthew Kirkwood, I will be guided to make sure I'm heading in the right direction with proceeding with my research and analysis. I will work outside of my classes to have new information and questions to bring up during my advisor meetings. We will work together during our meetings to lay out practical steps to reach before our next meeting. Overall, I will also follow the LA 763, Thesis Prep, class schedule as shown in the figure below.

### FALL 2018

- 10/11 - Thesis Proposal DUE
- 11/12 - Veterans' Day HOLIDAY
- 11/23 - Thanksgiving HOLIDAY
- 12/7 - Last day of full classes
- 12/10-14 - Final's Week
- 12/12 - Final Thesis Program DUE

### SPRING 2019

- 1/8 - First day of full classes
- 1/21 - Martin Luther King, Jr. HOLIDAY
- 2/19 - President's Day HOLIDAY
- 3/11-15 - Spring BREAK
- 4/19-22 - Easter HOLIDAY
- 4/19 - Final Thesis Project Exhibits digital form DUE
- 4/22 - Physical Exhibits DUE in Renaissance by 9am
- 4/29-5/2 - Final Thesis Reviews
- 5/3 - Awards Ceremony
- 5/6 - Digital Final Thesis documentation DUE
- 5/6-10 - Final's Week
- 5/10 - Final Thesis Document DUE to Institutional Repository by 5pm
- 5/11 - Commencement at Fargo Dome

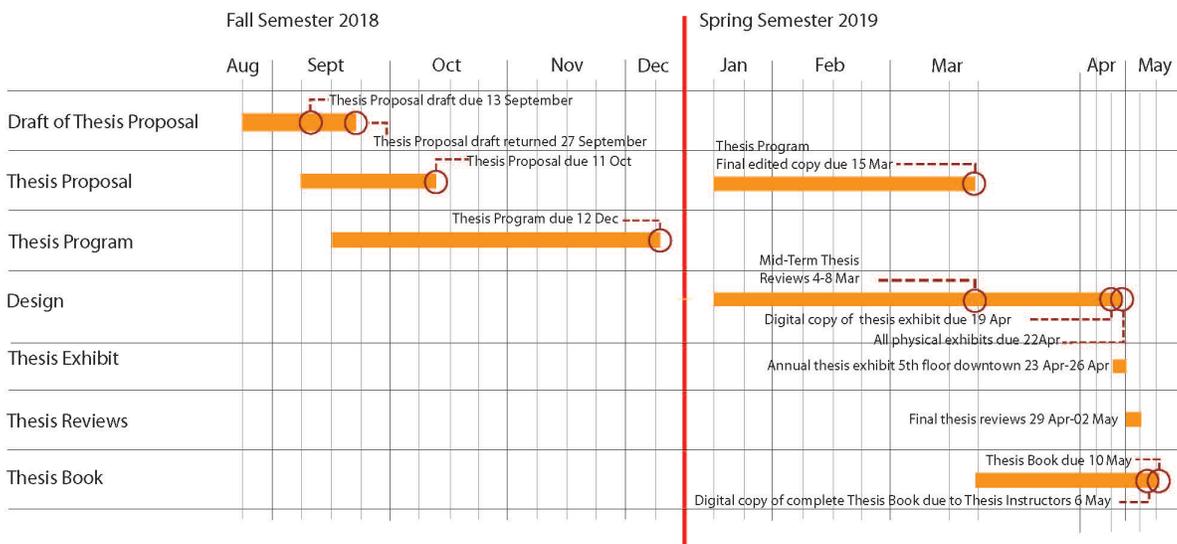


FIGURE 9: Ganapathy Mathalingam | Design Thesis Calendar



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## RESULTS FROM THEORETICAL PREMISE/UNIFYING IDEA RESEARCH

### *THEORY AND PRACTICE IN PLANNING THE SUBURBS: CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING NEW URBANISM, SMART GROWTH, AND SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES* BY **JILL L. GRANT**

This article looks at how three case studies in Canada have varying successes and failures with implementing new urbanism, smart growth, and sustainability principles. There are common findings in all of them, making the point that the vision of a city – which is being to implement the principles listed – is very often-times hard to bring to fruition. The cities studied are Surrey (British Columbia), Calgary (Alberta), and Markham (Ontario). To understand how the implementation of these new urbanism elements are done, Grant organized interviews with several planners, developers, and councilors – which is Canada’s term for commissioners – within each city. The results give a spectrum of how well a city’s vision is followed.

#### *Theorizing and Producing Developments*

Grant summarizes the planning and development process as “...negotiations with the developers, public input, planning recommendations, ending with a council decision. With permits in place, developers put in the infrastructure for development and sell off lots of small building firms for construction” (Grant 14). The three cities studied created similar values through public input and planning recommendations to create a vision to implement new urbanism, sustainable development, and smart growth. New urbanism development desires mixed use, intentional street forms, and walkable communities in order to ultimately create a unified development in form and use. Sustainable development emphasizes protecting local ecology and influencing healthy living conditions. Smart growth is a potential solution to urban sprawl because it looks at regional scales to create efficient land use that benefits those within it (12). These three elements being implemented in the cities can solve issues of unintentional development. Without strong values such as these presented, cities and developments will be sporadic and pieced together without cohesion. Unified developments help people feel that they are a part of a bigger picture, a part of a community. Since there are so many pieces playing in the process of development, it is tough to see the vision of a city completed, as this article points out in its case studies.

#### *Case Studies of Surrey, Calgary, and Markham*

“Although much of the literature about the implementation of planning theory concentrates on examining planning documents, processes, or decisions...the study reported here focuses on perceptions of development outcomes, considering whether the suburbs produced by new urbanist planners reflect the substantive ideas that theorists have articulated” (Grant 14). The study performed aimed to see responses and views on the development process and trends within the cities of Surrey, Calgary, and Markham, especially paying attention to how the theory and practice differ when creating the theories and carrying them out. Through interviewing various planners, developers, and councilors in each city, there were common views in each city. The cities showed a different view for how the policies have been implemented in them.

The feedback for Surrey, British Columbia was described as “a bit of a free-for all” (Grant 18). Surrey’s councilors and planners both see how developers seem to do what they see fit for their business instead of the overall planning principles and visions. The administration - councilors and planners - work to review the proposed developments with the minimum requirements, and have difficulty pushing the envelope to improve the city as a whole - if possible. From the developers’ point of view, people don’t

like to make community with their neighbors, they like their privacy, and that goes against what much of the planning principles desired by the administration. Fargo is a very similar scenario when it comes to how the administration reacts to the developers proposals. They seem to rarely push for a developer to change anything unless it directly goes against the city's requirements.

Planners in Calgary see a separation from what they tell developers to do and what the developers actually end up building. Their new urbanism projects have mainly been implemented by some developers that value what new urbanism can offer. After successful new urbanism implementation occurred with projects like Garrison Woods, the council and developers began to followed suit, seeing the benefits it could bring. Specifically, some developers noticed trends in the benefit of market value and interest with increased density. But some developers held strong to their traditional beliefs and what they saw from their clients. One developer argued that many of their buyers like their privacy and attached garages over sharing open space or having pedestrian circulation systems in their back yard. Overall, developers still primarily see the need to create income for their business, and can't understand how it would be possible with some of the new urbanism and smart growth ideals that may be difficult to implement.

In Markham, Ontario, new urbanism has been implemented very smoothly into the actual built environment. The main drawback of this is that having planners pushing their city's vision for new urbanism and smart growth practices, ended up also pushing up the price of development in order to develop with a higher standard of design. The process they usually take in implementing these plans involves meeting with the right administrators to understand what is required and requested, eventually leading to the project being implemented. It starts with a growth strategy (explaining the vision of the projects), an official plan (a legal draft of what is being proposed), a secondary plan (revising what was originally proposed), and finally drafting subdivisions and zoning to then build from.

### *Conclusion and Reflection*

On the side of going against new urbanism pushes from the administration, developers point out the difference between values in a private development community compared to a public and open community. "Ironically, some of the elements that Calgary planners would like to see in the public realm can only be achieved in private communities" (p. 22). Could these elements be implemented in *private* developments, but open to the *public*? Again, the separation of the public realm and private realm are addressed saying, "While contemporary growth pressures promote density and transit oriented development they are simultaneously driving privatization of suburban landscapes" (p. 23). Is "driving privatization of suburban landscapes" a bad thing? I would say it is not. Privatization of suburban landscapes isn't a bad thing. This quote is describing how the city policies and the actual product of the developer can stay in their own bubbles, and don't try to meet each other half-way. In this case, the privatized suburbs and the implementation of the policies, in general, don't happen very often, meaning that the privatized suburbs aren't implemented with the policies. Overall, policies can only be implemented by the developer. On a parallel to this point - referencing this research - identity isn't formed just by mixing uses. There are many factors that may need to be implemented in order to create identity. These cities aren't changed just by their city having policies to implement new urbanism and smart growth. The developers need to add many factors to implement the policies, and work it into their process the best they can while still meeting the needs of their business, and especially their clients.

# PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

## JUSTIFICATION AS A STUDENT

Since I was a little kid, I've always loved the big-picture of things. I loved the immense battle scenes in movies, seeing vast natural landscapes, and now I see a similar wonder in the process of a city's development. I have lived in Fargo, ND my whole life, allowing me to see it grow and thrive throughout the years. This project is a final challenge to be the best I can be. The topic is interesting for me, and it progresses only by my willingness to do so. It is focused not on just an academic practice, but to be implemented in the real world in the future, making it a worthwhile for my personal growth in this academic season, looking onward to the future. My experiences and processes with projects now will benefit me in professional projects down the road. I see it as good practice to invest in each project and do the best I can for the sake of those around me. Although this is a rare opportunity to have a project of my own making - both as a student as a professional - I can use the same passion I have now to give my all, and apply it to future projects.

I have been curious about planning for the last few years, and this project helps me explore various planning methods. Through understanding various methods to the planning process, I'll be able to assist in the design of projects later on with the knowledge of how to fit within the constraints of an agency's rules, regulations, and freedoms. Over the past four years of schooling, we've had three projects per semester, giving us students an idea of how fast some professional projects may need to be designed. In the more recent years, we have had a few projects with a design process that took up a majority of the semesters, again giving us an idea of the amount of time some professional projects take. Now we dedicate an entire school year to develop a project of our own making, attempting to meet the needs of the profession and real world.

## **JUSTIFICATION AS A PROFESSIONAL**

This project is important for the profession at this time because the world is full of urban sprawl, and much of it is not being addressed. Among the expansion of cities, I've noticed how a lot of the infrastructure is put together to only meet the residential and commercial needs of an expanding community. An example is the large areas of apartment buildings and parking lots for people to live and park, but they were not developed to relate to their surroundings. Pieces of land are being developed without thoughts of them working together. This project advances landscape architecture and other related fields, because it addresses the needs for good design. If development continues with a lack of identity, then the people within them will have less enjoyment in where they are. People will then move elsewhere to find some personal connection with where they reside, which may cause a chain through every development if they never seek an identity.

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR THE REAL-WORLD APPLICATION**

Economically speaking, this designed development would be implemented on a private level. The developer that owns the land could use my process to develop the land over time, forming the desired goal of identity within neighborhoods. Funds put into this project is the same as current typical development – in terms of buying and selling land to builders and such. The only difference is that the process prior to the point of actually using the funds to start building.

Government agencies and private companies will use the process identified in this thesis to be a part of their planning process. The return-on-investment would be an overall enjoyment of development for the people that live, work, and play there. The people will have a personal connection, benefiting the liveliness of the development, and the wellbeing of the city as a whole. It is a quality that is generally hard to gage, but through my research, it will prove to be beneficial based on previous similar projects.

# HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THESIS

## THE LAWS OF THE INDIES

The Laws of the Indies: Ordinances for the discovery, the population, and the pacification of the Indies was written in 1573. During this time, many countries and municipalities were exploring and discovering new lands. These laws and ordinances were placed to guide discovery and development for the people residing in these places. This is what started much of the zoning regulations we see today.

Similarly to what we see today in the permitting process of drafting subdivisions or submitting plans in order to develop an area, the first couple of ordinances mention the legal process of getting documentation that allows one to explore and discover lands that are uninhabited (Vivienda, 1573, p. 1-2). It is not an option to claim land that has already been discovered, protecting the rights of those already developing or cultivating the land.

In ordinance 37, they require that discovered lands should have access to water, and the land that leads to and from it should allow for easy passage and travel. Comparing it to current practices, new lots need to have access to the right of ways in order to have good access in and out of their property.

Many more of the ordinances described in this document were about respecting and taking into account the context of every development. Some of the context was in reference to the Native Americans and farms surrounding their developments, while others addressed the surrounding natural environment. This historical document is opposite to the way current laws are directed towards the efficiency of business and vehicles, and less on the people and their function. Modern trends are going against the grain of how developments and regulations have been moving for the last several-hundred years, shifting the focus back to the pedestrian experience.

## URBAN PLAINS NEIGHBORHOOD OVERVIEW

Urban Plains is a mixed-use development that covers over three hundred acres of land in southwest Fargo, surrounded by the popular arterial roads of Veterans Boulevard South, 32nd Avenue South, and 45th Street South. The placement is in the middle of rapidly expanding multi-family homes and commercial properties. According to Prairie Business Magazine, their initial plans were adjusted to incorporate more multi-family residential dwellings.

*Original plans called for condos, an office and medical park, retail shops, a park and trail system, and a new hockey arena. Many of those have been realized or are still planned. The biggest change is in the number of residential versus retail units and where they're located (Von Barga).*

Residential uses were given priority to be located in the middle of the neighborhood, while commercial and retail properties were pushed to the border.

The Urban Plains Land Development website states their vision and dreams of what this neighborhood will look like now, and upon completion.

*Urban Plains strives to incorporate 21st century ideals into an urban lifestyle. Through the use of sustainable design, ultra modern architecture, and co-locating work, living, and recreational spaces, the Urban Plains Development is a unique project for the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo area (Urban Plains Land Development).*

In order to help create this vision, the owners, Brandt Holdings, has worked with the City of Fargo, developing a series of Conditional Overlays to maintain standards of design through their development. Conditional Overlays are used to create further regulations on a site in order to have consistency such as common architectural materials and building forms. In order to create these standards, they need to apply through the Planning Commission with the City of Fargo.

## URBAN PLAINS PLANNING COMMISSION CASES WITH THE CITY OF FARGO

Since 2007, the Urban Plains Neighborhood has been the subject area for consistent Planning Commission cases and re-plats to organize the land. For example, in 2010, the zone changed on the Urban Plains by Brandt First Addition from a General Office zone to a Multi-family Residential zoned property (City of Fargo). As of now, there are a total of sixteen different ordinances throughout the development, specific to certain lots. This shows how the owners care for quality development, and are making efforts to make it one-of-a-kind.

# TYPOTOLOGICAL RESEARCH | CASE STUDIES

## INTRODUCTION

The case studies presented are examples of mixed-use developments with popularity and identity within their communities. These developments will be analyzed by their physical components such as use density, as well as their intangible qualities that are gathered from articles and from my own observations.

For each case study, there is an overview of the project type, location, sizes, and detailed calculations on the use densities compared to the total lot square footage (SF) and to the total building coverage SF. Note that only the densities of each use to the *total lot SF* is graphed out for a more relative comparison with the other case studies (see *Site Analysis* section). There is further research of articles and observations on the conceptual and programmatic areas of each site, finding out where each development finds its identity. The calculations performed will give insight to give further comparison with the Urban Plains development.

## CALCULATION AND MAPPING NOTES

All of the SF were measured from aerial imagery, calculating the SF of an area of land or a building footprint - height was not calculated. Some of the developments still have undeveloped land, so those lots and areas were excluded from the calculations. The color-coordination on the aerial imagery and Gravity Model Template below are relative to the City of Fargo's zoning information on their Interactive GIS Map.



FIGURE 10: City of Fargo | Zoning Information

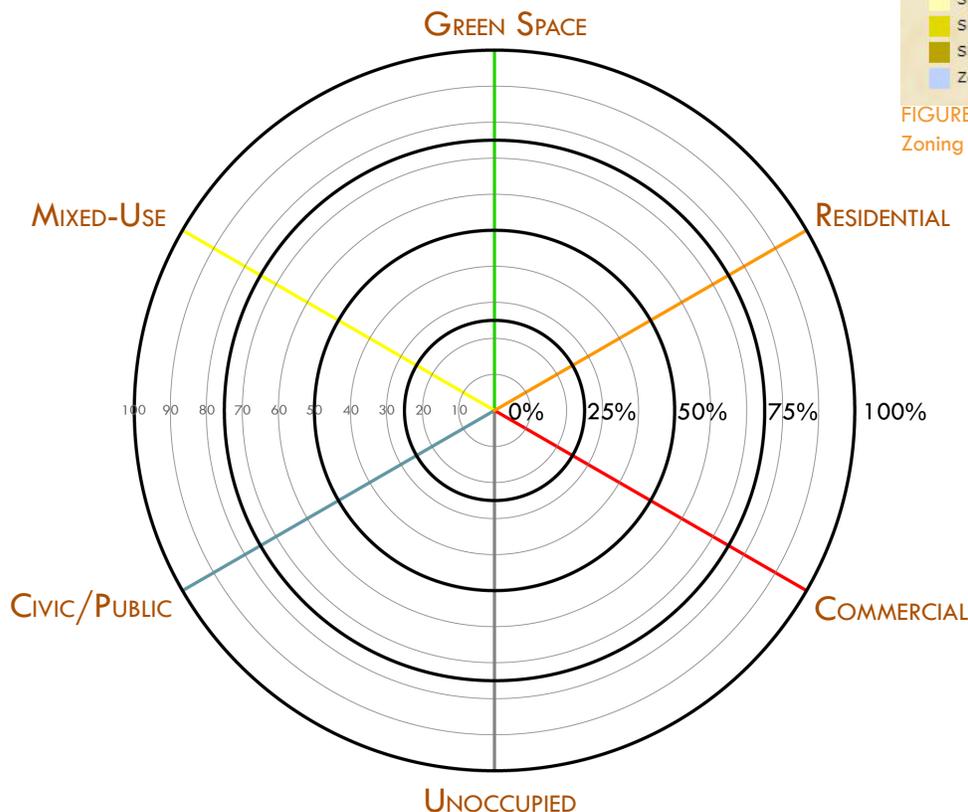


FIGURE 11: Gravity Model Template

## FIVE CASE STUDIES AND URBAN PLAINS (PROJECT SITE)



FIGURE 12: David Lloyd | The Cannery



FIGURE 13: theindychannel.com | City Center



FIGURE 14: Torti-Gallas | Liberty Center



FIGURE 15: Fairmount Properties | Pinecrest



FIGURE 16: Hillary Ehlen | Rocking Horse Farm



FIGURE 17: Lux Communities | Urban Plains

## URBAN PLAINS

# THE CANNERY | DAVIS, CA

## PROJECT TYPE

Planned community surrounding a community farming operation.

## LOCATION

Farmland to the north and east, suburbs to the west, commercial to the south, and a major arterial running to the south of the site.

## SIZE

4,133,026 SF (95 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 30% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 2%  |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | -   |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |
| GREEN SPACE  | 47% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 21% |

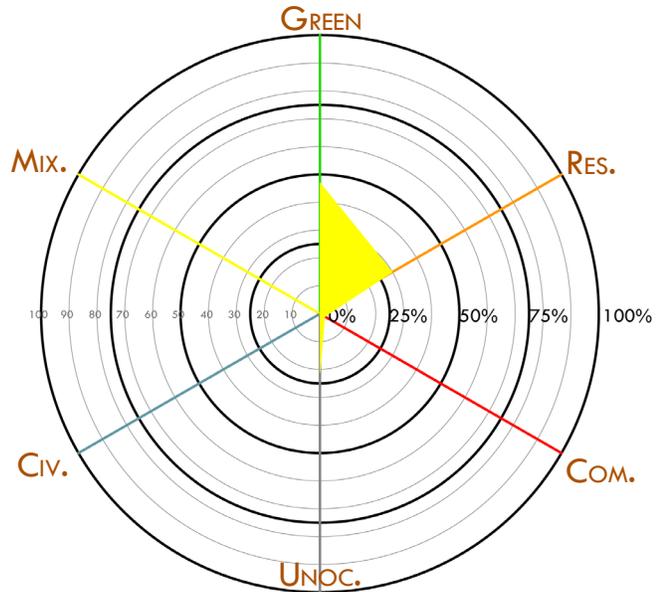


FIGURE 18: Cannery Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 32% Building (1,324,833 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 92% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 8%  |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | -   |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |



FIGURE 19: Cannery Aerial Imagery Measurements  
22 | Forming Neighborhood



## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

This site used to be a tomato picking plant prior to its current development. This residential-orientated, master planned community has now become centered in and around a community farming operation (Sisson, 2017, p. 1-2). The farming is headed by The Center for Land-Based Learning, teaching proper techniques and best management practices.

The whole master plan has yet to be completed, but they intend to have more mainstream commercial properties on the south of the site - as you can see in the Cannery Aerial Imagery Measurements graphic on the previous page. Having a commercial street front will attract visitors to this neighborhood, while simultaneously acting as a buffer between the private properties and the public grounds.

A 10-mile system of shared-use paths highlights the designer's emphasis on building a pedestrian friendly and walkable neighborhood. Additionally, "...the development emphasizes walkability and access to retail and commercial centers, community building, and proximity to green space with each home no more than 300 feet from a park or open space"(Wang, 2016). This aspect benefits those within the development, but since the bike paths lead in and out of the neighborhood, those living outside can still access the amenities inside.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

The Cannery in Davis, CA gets its identity from a focus on public open space, gathering spaces for its residents and outsiders, and especially the community farms it encompasses. Sisson explained the developer, Kevin Carson's, thoughts on why this community has such a draw to people:

*He sees the community spaces, as well as 171,000 square foot cluster of stores, office space, and coffee shops, as placemaking - and the Cannery's true selling point. "What isn't appealing to buyers is a mass of 500 homes done in three different colors of beige," he says, "Now, you're seeing people focus on building neighborhoods that people really want to live in" (2017, p. 2-3).*

There is a unique purpose of the infrastructure here; aiming to bring people together, enjoying the place they live, work, and/or play.



FIGURE 20: inhabitat.com | The Cannery

# CITY CENTER | CARMEL, IN

## PROJECT TYPE

Well-rounded uses focused on the public emphasizing pedestrian connection.

## LOCATION

Adjacent commercial to the north, industrial uses to the southwest, and suburbs on the west and east.

## SIZE

3,299,594 SF (76 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 5%  |
| COMMERCIAL   | 4%  |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 8%  |
| MIXED-USE    | 3%  |
| GREEN SPACE  | 47% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 32% |

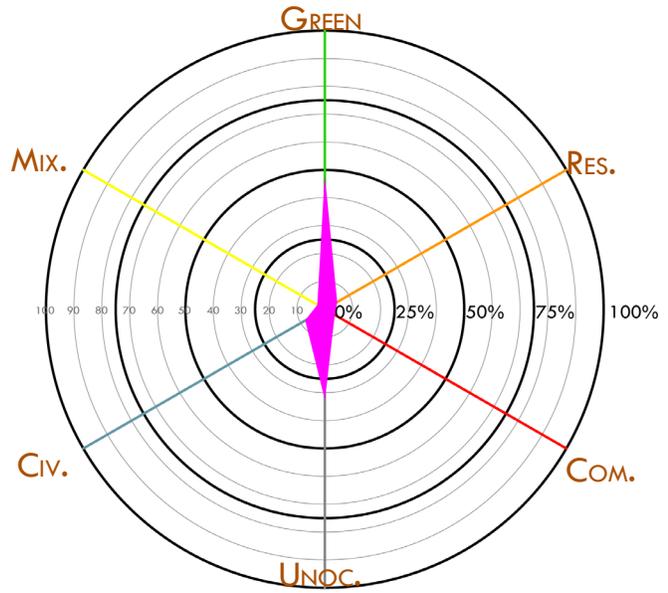


FIGURE 21: City Center Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 21% Building (696,531 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 26% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 19% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 40% |
| MIXED-USE    | 16% |

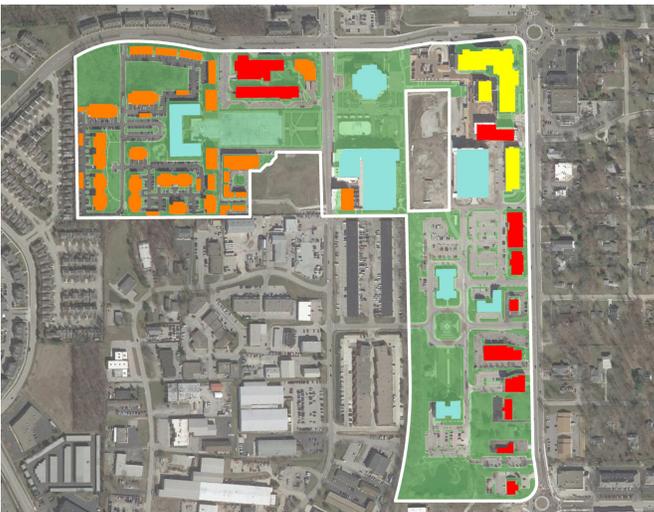


FIGURE 22: City Center Aerial Imagery Measurements  
24 | Forming Neighborhood



## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

City Center has several civic uses directed to the public's use. There are two performing arts theaters, a farmers market, a shared-use path called the Monon Trail that connects across the entire city. This development was not master planned, but the developers were intentional in connecting the surrounding infrastructure.

To the west is apartments, with intentional open space and walking paths between each building. The paths connect to sidewalks and pedestrian walkways stretching to the civic spaces, and the mixed-use center, called Carmel City Center, at the corner of two major roads - on the northeast side of the site. From the mixed-use center, it stretches down south to commercial properties and more open space.

The Carmel City Center acts as a downtown with pedestrian-focused streetscapes and storefronts. This series of buildings and spaces host several events throughout the year for family activities such as ice skating, musicals, concerts, gardens, farmers markets, light shows and more. The amenities here are available to the residents of the city, and also are available to visitors since hotels are near as well.

*Visitors enjoy a full day of fun with activities and venues all within walking distance. Carmel City Center is Carmel, Indiana's exciting new downtown and landmark destination on the Monon Greenway... Visitors to Carmel City Center can enjoy music and theatrical entertainment, outdoor summer festivals and access to Carmel's top attractions, with even more to come ("About the Carmel City Center | Carmel, Indiana", 2011).*

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Carmel Indiana's City Center's identity comes from its placemaking, programming the spaces available, and focusing on family-friendly activities and uses all within walking distance. The architecture and landscape architecture are also defining features for the area because of the style of the buildings, plazas, open spaces, and the trail system that goes through the site.



FIGURE 23: City of Carmel | Ice at Center Green

# LIBERTY CENTER | LIBERTY TOWNSHIP, OH

## PROJECT TYPE

Commercial-focused development with a more dense and urban feel compared to other cases.

## LOCATION

Highways on the north, east, and stretching to the southeast and commercial and residential to south.

## SIZE

2,687,890 SF (62 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | -   |
| COMMERCIAL   | 22% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 10% |
| MIXED-USE    | 5%  |
| GREEN SPACE  | 21% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 43% |

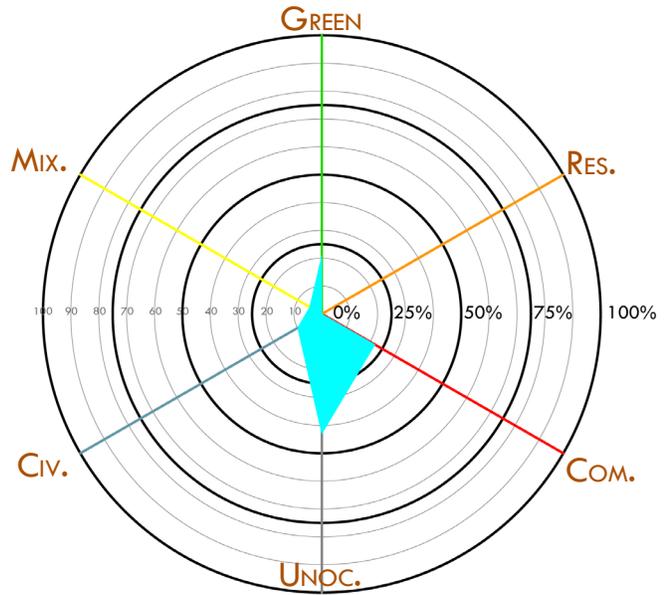


FIGURE 24: Liberty Center Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 36% Building (975,605 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | -   |
| COMMERCIAL   | 60% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 26% |
| MIXED-USE    | 15% |

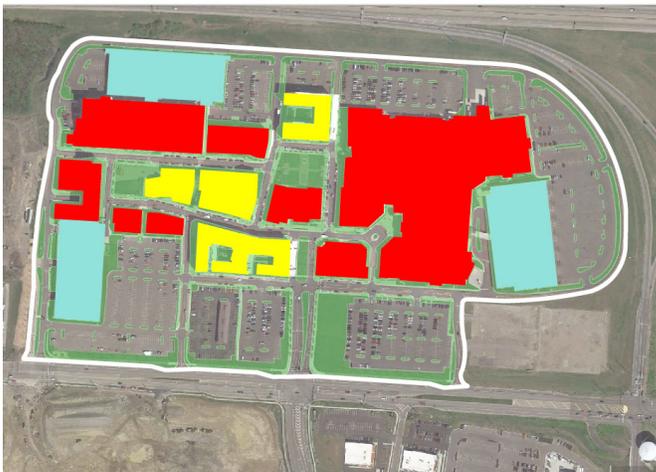


FIGURE 25: Liberty Center Aerial Imagery Measurements  
26 | Forming Neighborhood



## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

Liberty Center’s building coverage is mostly commercial uses. Even with this the case, there are mixed-use buildings providing residential, more commercial use, and even public green space within/on top of the buildings. There are areas for shopping, living, dining, entertainment, events, children’s playgrounds, and various programmed community events.

Dean Schwanke describes the need for relating a mixture of uses, “By being strategic about including the right commercial development, as well as parks and public places, the value of the land multiplies...” (Sisson, 2017, p. 5). The developer of this site, named Yaromir Steiner - founder of Steiner & Associates - similarly mentioned the reason to why this development was so successful, was for the community-focused and family-oriented activities programmed into the site. When designing this development, Steiner also had a large focus on placemaking, which is being intentional about looking at how every place created will be used. One example of how this site follows through with placemaking is by providing tree coverage over walkways and plazas, giving pedestrians a more friendly scale to the dense collections of buildings around them.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

“Steiner points to the parks and unifying design elements, such as tree-shaded sidewalks and a focus on repeating classic architecture motifs as the glue that holds his developments together” (p. 6). This aspect of placemaking sets this development apart from many other mixed-use developments. The variety of the forms of spaces and the available uses for each of them creates a freedom for the site’s users.



FIGURE 26: apartments.com | Liberty Center Apartments

# PINECREST | ORANGE VILLAGE, OH

## PROJECT TYPE

Hosts community events for a variety of audiences, centered along a central avenue.

## LOCATION

Commercial and highway to the west, residential to the east, and an arterial road to the south.

## SIZE

2,293,142 SF (53 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | -   |
| COMMERCIAL   | 15% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 4%  |
| MIXED-USE    | 2%  |
| GREEN SPACE  | 41% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 39% |

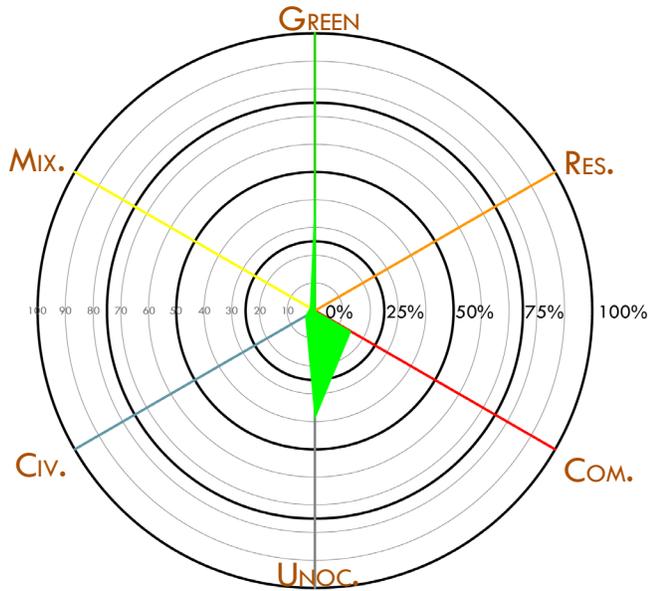


FIGURE 27: Pinecrest Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 20% Building (469,608 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | -   |
| COMMERCIAL   | 72% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 18% |
| MIXED-USE    | 10% |



FIGURE 28: Pinecrest Aerial Imagery Measurements  
28 | Forming Neighborhood



## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

In Orange Village’s visioning plan called, “Orange Village, the Years Ahead,” the city lays out their core principles to make sure their development follows suit in the future. “Orange is a ‘...Community for all generations’” (2018, p. 2). The developer, Fairmount properties, specializes in these kinds of mixed-use town centers, designed with pedestrian-scaled infrastructure in mind, and mainly with community as the main goal.

*Fairmount Properties approaches town centers with two basic goals. The first is to enhance the voice of the existing community, which begins with purchasing land or rehabilitating existing properties based on actual marketplace demand. Fairmount Properties then creates a sustainable hub: that is, a gathering place around which the community can grow... (“Suburban Mixed Use - Fairmount Properties”).*

This site has more specific uses such as shopping, dining, living, movies, offices, and events. There are both summer and winter events utilizing the outdoor plaza and open space available.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Fairmount Properties’ intent with this site was to establish a solid foundation to be a community hub. “Fairmount Properties works to ensure that each of their town centers make meaningful, lasting contributions to the communities in which they are developed” (“Suburban Mixed Use...”). The identity for this site comes from the overarching value of forming a community, that was established from the start of their design. Having this value as the core foundation of the whole development let the programming elements of events and such to come naturally.



FIGURE 29: Orange Village News | Community event

# ROCKING HORSE FARM | FARGO, ND

## PROJECT TYPE

Master planned with a heavy emphasize on residential use, green space, and design of the site.

## LOCATION

Golf course and school to the north, suburbs to the west and east, commercial to the south, and at the corner of two arterial roads.

## SIZE

7,457,233 SF (171 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 15% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 5%  |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | -   |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |
| GREEN SPACE  | 67% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 13% |

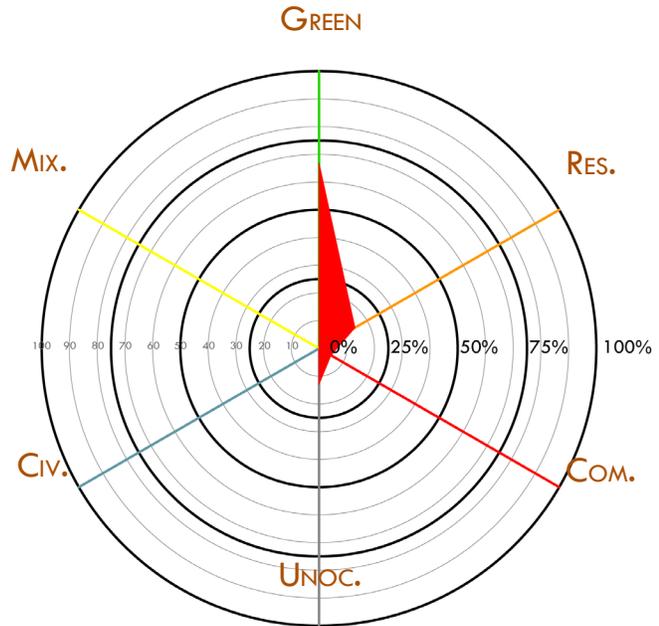


FIGURE 30: Rocking Horse Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 20% Building (1,488,390 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 76% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 24% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | -   |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |



FIGURE 31: Rocking Horse Aerial Imagery Measurements  
30 | Forming Neighborhood



## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

When Rocking Horse Farm first began it was a marketing company that eventually grew into the current vision of creating a residential community under his brand “Rocking Horse Farm”. With his brand a logo in place, he also founded a standard he wanted for his development that followed a design theme working well with “Rocking Horse Farm.” Slowly but surely the land was developed, but only with owner Ken Promersberger’s approval, not selling short of his vision and values for his development (Promersberger & Morman, 2018). The design is based around the central circle of the office park. Here the architectural style of a “farm” aesthetic began, and the rest of the construction followed suit. Although Promersberger lost business at times when companies wanted to come in and deviate from his “farm” aesthetic architectural style, it gained him business at the same time. Several homeowners built their houses in order to admire the architecture, at times reminding them of what they grew up around. Even the business that have filled in the office park are agriculture related, once again enforcing the brand. This vision has held this development to be unified with values of good design throughout.

This site was chosen by Ken Promersberger because he knew it was at the corner of two arterial streets, knowing that in due time, the cities of Fargo and West Fargo would grow enough to meet up with his development. The land around was developed to be very beneficial with his site, as schools, residential neighborhoods, and a golf course were built up near to it. The context of this whole development is very family friendly, allowing individuals and their families to live, work, and play, all within a reasonable distance.

## NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

The identity found in this neighborhood is in the steadfastness of sticking to the values originally created for good design that follows their brand and theme.

*Strong design means so much to us at Rocking Horse Farm that with each residential lot sold we offer complimentary design guidance form residential architect Chris Hawley’s firm. The purpose of the architectural input is to assure each home built in Rocking Horse Farm has strong design...and is somewhat different from another (Rocking Horse Farm, 2018).*



FIGURE 32: Rocking Horse Farm | Interpretive Pocket Parks

# SITE ANALYSIS - URBAN PLAINS | FARGO, ND

## PROJECT TYPE

Emphasizes residential and commercial development with a large park and a stadium for events.

## LOCATION

Surrounded by arterial roads on the west, south, and east, with local streets throughout. There is residential uses to the north and commercial to the west, south, and east.

## SIZE

9,145,188 SF (210 acres)

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 13% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 2%  |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 3%  |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |
| GREEN SPACE  | 49% |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 34% |

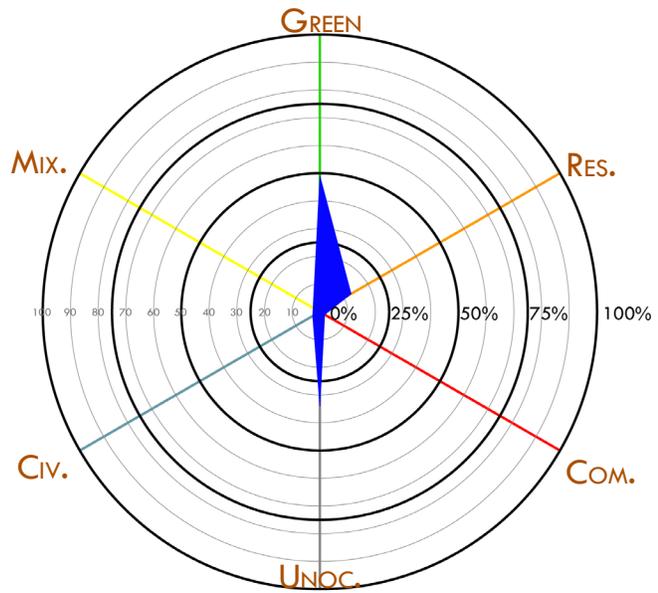


FIGURE 33: Urban Plains Gravity Model

## DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL BUILDING COVERAGE SF 18% Building (1,624,013 SF)

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 74% |
| COMMERCIAL   | 10% |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 16% |
| MIXED-USE    | -   |



FIGURE 34: Urban Plains Aerial Imagery Measurements  
32 | Forming Neighborhood



# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

## OUTLIERS IN USE DENSITY OF THE TOTAL LOT

### URBAN PLAINS:

Lowest building coverage (18%)

### LIBERTY CENTER:

Highest building coverage (36%)

Lowest green space (21%)

Highest unoccupied space (43%)

### ROCKING HORSE FARM:

Highest green space (67%)

Lowest unoccupied space (13%)

## OUTLIERS IN USE DENSITY OF THE BUILDING COVERAGE

### CANNERY:

Highest residential density (92%)

Lowest mixed-use density (0%)

### CITY CENTER:

Highest civic density (40%)

### LIBERTY CENTER:

Lowest residential density (0%)

### PINECREST:

Lowest residential density (0%)

Highest commercial density (72%)

### ROCKING HORSE FARM:

Lowest mixed-use density (0%)

## DEFINING THE IDENTITY

From the case studies analyzed, there are plenty of factors that build off of having a mixture of uses, that have helped form identity within the individual developments.

- The Cannery in Davis, CA has community farming that can bring people together and their parks were evenly spread out so no resident would be more than three hundred feet away from a park.
- City Center in Carmel, IN had a unique amount of structured dedicated to civic and public use compared to the other cases. Also, the buildings connected well with the nearby pedestrian network.
- Liberty Center in Liberty Township, OH emphasized placemaking with every space to make sure people can utilize the entire site.
- Pinecrest in Orange Village, OH had strong values of community forming. They programmed regular events with the community to establish the vision of a wholesome community.
- Rocking Horse Farm in Fargo, ND had high values and strict standards for design. They were very particular in what land uses were put in and especially the continuity for their style of architecture.

Urban Plains doesn't have many amenities. The stadium is an attraction for the area, but that is only for events, rather than a consistent pull for visitors. The residential and commercial structures seem to have no relation to each other, except for being in within a close spatial proximity. I believe there's a better way to further define neighborhood identity in neighborhoods such as Urban Plains.

# PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

## OPTIMAL MINIMUM RATIO

The Optimal Minimum Ratio (OMR) is found through the synthesis of my case study densities to the total lot SF. Visually speaking, on the gravity models, by overlapping the graphs for each case study, there is an internal polygon created that shows a minimum of each use - that is not zero - that will be a base to build upon for an “ideal” development. Mixing uses does not create identity within a neighborhood or development. There are many factors that can attribute to the identity found in a development.

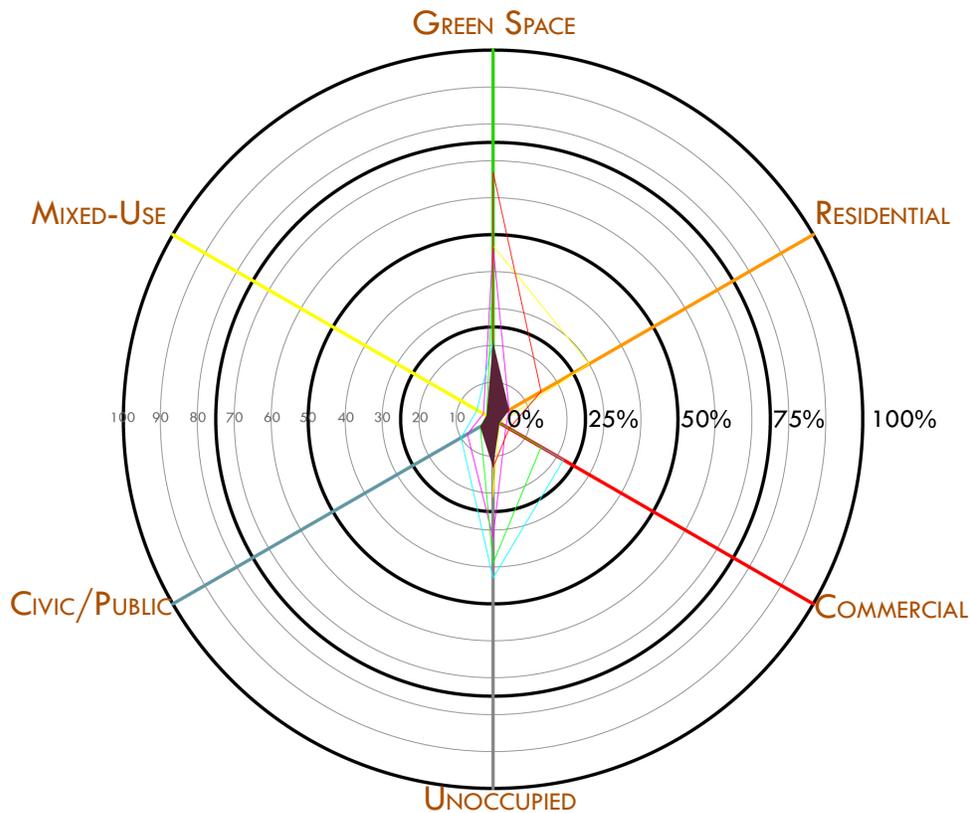


FIGURE 35: Optimal Minimum Range Gravity Model

## OPTIMAL MINIMUM DENSITY OF EACH USE TO THE TOTAL LOT SF

|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| RESIDENTIAL  | 5%                |
| COMMERCIAL   | 2%                |
| CIVIC/PUBLIC | 4%                |
| MIXED-USE    | 2%                |
| GREEN SPACE  | 21%               |
| UNOCCUPIED   | 13%               |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>47% of lot</b> |

## SPACE ALLOCATION | BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

All uses should be greater than the OMR. The uses can be specialized to what is most necessary to the site and the people involved.

## SPACE ALLOCATION | GREEN SPACE

Boulevards, public gathering space, and other elements are spread equally across the building infrastructure. Green space can be increased depending on what elements are to be included in the final design.

## SPACE ALLOCATION | GREEN SPACE

Unoccupied space will increase depending on what is necessary for function of site.

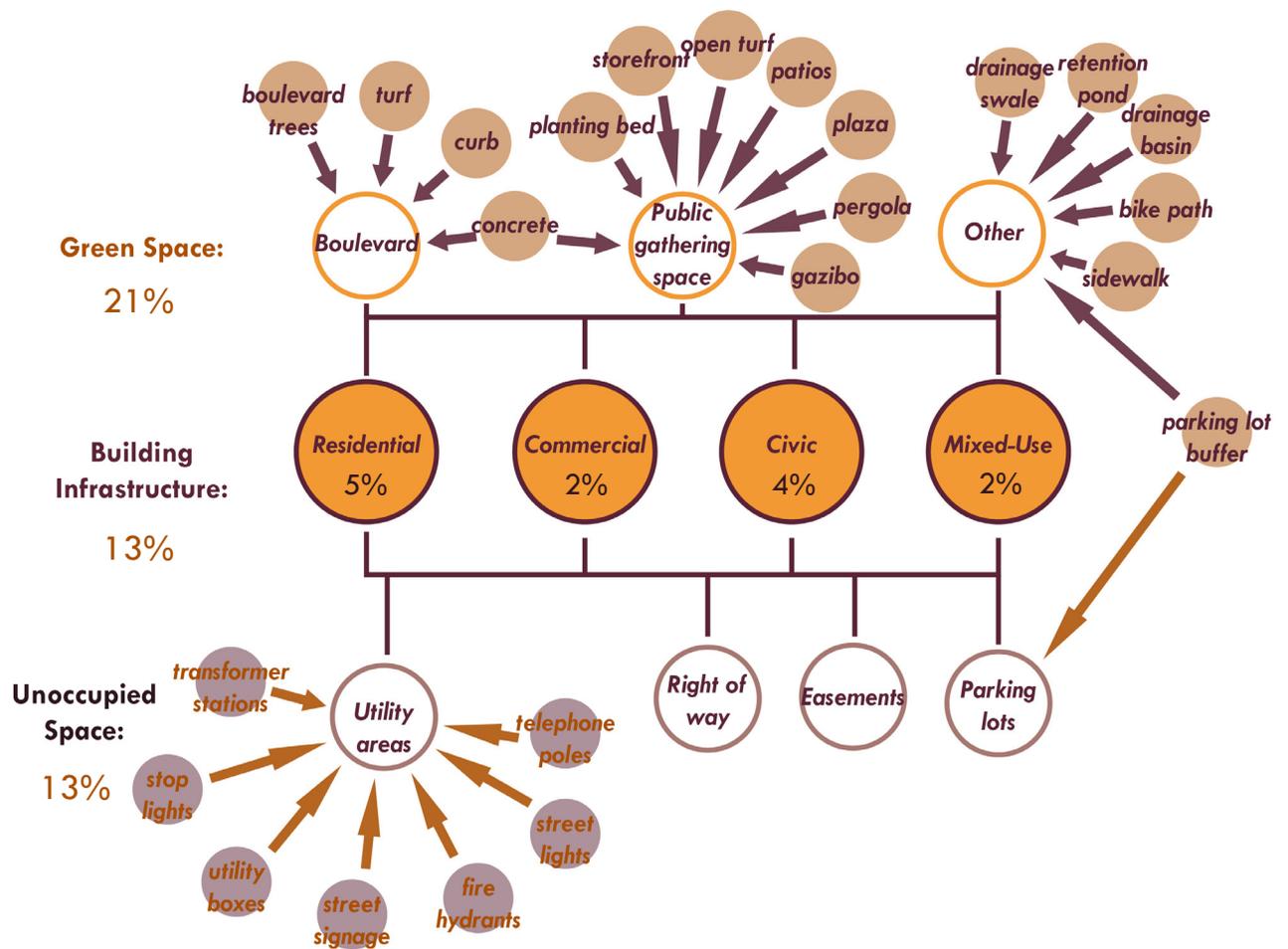


FIGURE 36: Space Allocation Matrix

## MOVING FORWARD:

For my next steps, I will need to utilize the research I have done here and search for validation from various populations to confirm or deny my findings. If my findings are confirmed, I can move forward to seeing what specific needs should be addressed in my design. If my findings are debated, then I will need to consider the feedback and add to this Optimal Minimum Density formula to further refine what will help form an identity within a development.

The identity of each development defined in my case studies will be applied to my design. The data described is primarily qualitative, giving a summary of the intangible qualities each site has for itself. Through the use of surveys and interviews of developers and non-developers, I will gather feedback on the participants' preferences to live, work, and play in the case study sites.

Once I have gathered useful feedback on what is required and preferred - establishing values, I will review the Fargo Land Development Code's applicable requirements to see how the values can be applied. In addition to that, I will reference Form-Based Codes to compare the regulations in other cities and see how these values would be further enhanced or restricted. By creating graphics showing the code requirements in comparison, each regulation can be applied to compare and contrast within my design for the Urban Plains development.



# THE AUTHOR

**LUKE MORMAN**

## ADDRESS

789 14 1/2 Ave. E.  
West Fargo, ND 58078

## CONTACT INFO

(701) 205-9611  
luke.j.morman@ndsu.edu

## HOMETOWN

West Fargo, ND

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

A big measure of my life is my family, both immediate and extended. My family is very close, which has let me see how we have created a fun and involved community. I have recognized that in landscape architecture, community is very important for a place. The strongest pieces of landscape architecture are places that create connections with people and connections with nature.

I am in the pursuit of excellence, aiming to push the limits of ways things can be seen.



# PREVIOUS STUDIO EXPERIENCE

## SECOND YEAR

Fall 2015 | Intro to Landscape Architecture | Prof. Kathleen Pepple

Spring 2016 | Parks and Open Spaces | Dominic Fischer

## THIRD YEAR

Fall 2016 | Site Planning | Matthew Kirkwood

Spring 2017 | Community Planning | Kathleen Pepple

## FOURTH YEAR

Fall 2017 | Urban Design | Jason Kost

Spring 2018 | Remediation and Planting | Yang Song

## FIFTH YEAR

Fall 2018 | Performance Based Design | Yang Song

Spring 2019 | Thesis Design Studio | Jason Kost

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