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|  | City of Forman  Strategic Plan |
| Adopted December 2019 |  |



## The Imperative to Plan

Forman is not immune from the trends affecting many parts of rural America. Competition with larger cities for jobs, consolidation in agricultural operations, an aging population, and smaller family sizes have all contributed to a significant challenge for small communities: maintaining a sustainable population that ensures it remains viable for the foreseeable future.

Forman’s leadership is willing to tackle this challenge head so that the community is on even more solid footing going forward. Doing so will require the utilization of Forman’s assets that includes its people as well as the facets that give it its high quality of life. Resources are nonetheless finite, necessitating a well-thought out prioritization of needs and wants. Obtaining assistance from outside the community will also be necessary to carry out desired courses of action.

Forman is a progressive community with many strong attributes that position it for future success. Periodic evaluations of where the city has been and where it is going allows for a reexamination of its goals and programs. The result of this effort is this strategic plan, the purpose of which is to create a framework from which to evaluate existing and new projects as well as establish consensus so that resources can be better targeted. A strategic plan should build upon local assets, shore up local liabilities, and achieve a competitive economic advantage that leads to appreciable and sustainable positive changes. Communities that identify, develop, implement, and evaluate long-term approaches will be the ones that will grow in ways best suited to both their desires and their resources.

## Planning Process

Forman’s economic development coordinator, Paige Cary, contacted Lake Agassiz Regional Council (LARC) for assistance in conducting and drafting a strategic plan. A steering committee comprised of local leaders was shortly thereafter convened. Their task was to give LARC staff the background and history about the most pressing issues in Forman.

A community gathering was held June 18, 2019 at the city hall. Approximately 25 residents attended and participated in a World Café style session whereby they shared their opinions on what they thought were the positives and negatives to Forman, as well as what should be done to improve the city as it relates to resident attraction and retention, its housing stock, and economic development. The data generated from this gathering served as the basis for a follow-up meeting and correspondence with the steering committee. Additional information was gathered from stakeholders and experts regarding the issues residents had discussed. The committee crafted goal statements, measurable objectives, and detailed action steps based upon residents’ input.

A group of people in a room

Description automatically generated

*Forman residents participating in community gathering June 18, 2019*

## Forman at a Glance

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| Population | * Total population of 504 in 2010 * Decline of approximately 130 since 1980 * Estimated population of 550 in 2017 * Trend of decline and stagnation in town’s size * Maintaining population is an important concern |
| Age | * Forman’s median age of 46.8 years is similar to Sargent County as a whole, but higher than North Dakota’s median age of 35.1 years * Those under 18 years of age constitute 15.5% of the community; those 62 years and older are 31.3% |
| Income | * Median household income of $45,500 * Lower than Sargent County’s median of $60,824 and the State of North Dakota’s median of $61,285 * Forman’s poverty rate of 10.6% is higher than Sargent County’s rate of 4.3% |
| Employment | * The unemployment rate for Sargent County was approximately 2% for 2018. * The manufacturing, retail, and services were the three top sectors of employment for Forman residents. * A significant share of residents commutes 10 miles north to the Bobcat production facility in Gwinner. |
| Housing | * Single-unit detached comprises 55% of the housing stock with a quarter consisting of three to nine unit buildings. * 44.2% of the homes were built in 1970 or earlier (i.e. 50 years or older as of writing) |
| Education | * 93% of Forman residents have a high school diploma or equivalent, while 10% have a bachelor’s degree or higher. * Home to Sargent Central School District’s K-12 facility * Enrollment of 161 students for 2018-2019 academic year * Decline of 41 students from 2013-2014 |

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

## SWOT Analysis

The purpose of a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats analysis is to identify the elements - both those which are internal and external to the community - that affects not only the community’s situation as it is currently, but also how the situation will change going forward if no course corrections are made. The principle benefit of a SWOT analysis is the clarity it provides on what actions community leaders shall take, given the factors beyond their control that nonetheless must be responded to.

Where the strengths and opportunities align, those are the strategies to chiefly pursue. Where there are opportunities but the community has a weakness that hinders the ability to seize those, the weaknesses shall be addressed first if it is deemed feasible to do so. As threats invariably arise, assets can be activated to face them head on. If that is not possible, a defensive strategy shall be deployed which mitigates the negative effects to the greatest extent possible.

The data that populates the following table came from the residents who participated in the community gathering, input from the steering committee, and from secondary sources.

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| Strengths | Weaknesses |
| * Community facilities (e.g. library, community center, senior center, county museum, wellness center) * K-12 school within town * Recreational facilities (e.g. golf course and parks) * Organizations (e.g. Forman Community Club and Forman Community Development Corp.) * County seat * Low crime rate and safety * Sense of community * Location at the junction of two highways * Bobcat’s production plant being nearby | * Uninhabited and/or dilapidated properties * Inadequate housing stock * Limited staff capacity * Insufficient funds to match grants * No grocery store * Lacking enough career opportunities * Minimal variety of retail and services in town * Small labor pool |
| Opportunities | Threats |
| * Main Street revitalization efforts initiated at the state-level * Formation of a community endowment fund and growing it through legacy giving * Internet-based businesses and e-commerce * Creation of a social gathering space targeted towards youth and teens | * Outmigration and “brain drain” * Self-fulfilling perceptions of decline * The depressed agricultural sector and its ripple effects from across the economy * Declining funding for infrastructure and other basic needs |

## Action Plan

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| Goal 1 | Forman will have enough housing that meets the demands of current and prospective residents in terms of types, layouts, features, and price points. |
| The housing stock is a critical element for a town’s continued community and economic development. Rural areas are presented with a unique set of challenges in establishing and maintaining that housing stock. Typically, homebuilders must deal with more uncertain occupancy rates and return on investment. Fewer qualified contractors from which to choose from as well as increased distances to deliver materials can increase costs. The economies of scale typically found in more urban areas draws builder’s attention, leaving rural areas with a constrained set of options.  A multi-pronged approach that rectifies those issues with Forman’s existing and new housing stock will attempt to overcome those barriers. The first step in the strategy will be to establish baseline data on the current supply and the current and projected demand. Subsequent steps will consist of actions to encourage new construction as well as the rehabilitation of existing houses. | |
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| Objective 1.A | Discover the baseline condition of the housing stock and status of the local real estate market. This will allow for a refinement of strategy and for a progress tracking system to be established. |

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| **Action Step 1.A.1** | Conduct a housing market analysis and needs assessment via a third-party contractor | High Priority |
| Description | Before undertaking any effort to encourage or incentivize the construction of new housing, developers will more than likely request to view an independent study on the town’s housing needs. This study will examine several elements of Forman’s market including but not limited to the current and projected need as it relates to demographic and economic changes, the types of housing necessary to meet demand, the price points and features found in those units, an inventory of buildable land, and the share of the population who will require special accommodations in their homes, among other topics.  This study will provide quantitative data about the local housing market upon which homebuilders will be comfortable making decisions. This information will hopefully allay their concerns. A study is often a prerequisite for some developers or funders to considering a town in the first place.  The North Dakota Housing Finance Agency offers grants to defray half of the cost of hiring a contractor. Grants will be sought out to pay the remainder of the study’s cost. | |
| Cost | $6,000 - $10,000 with possibility of half of the cost – up to $5,000 – being covered with Housing Market Survey Grant through NDHFA. | |
| Partnerships | Qualified contractor with expertise in housing market studies | |
| Resources Needed | Grant match through foundations or with local funds | |
| Timeline | The study will take no more than six months. It will be discussed whether to do the study following the public release of Census 2020 data, slated to come out in late 2020 or early 2021. | |

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| Objective 1.B | Enhance the city’s capacity to respond to instances of nuisance-generating and dilapidated housing |

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| **Action Step 1.B.1** | Implement a targeted code enforcement effort focusing first and foremost on the most important problems. |
| Description | Ensuring that all property owners adequately maintain their structures is a constant challenge, especially so for rural communities with less capacity to comprehensively enforce its adopted building codes. This includes not only the staff time and expertise in which to undertake the proper procedures for dealing with problem properties, but it also includes the money necessary for nuisance abatement or for bringing civil action against a property owner.  The City of Forman will contact nearby communities to find out if jointly hiring a building inspector is desirable. This will be a solution to the problem of each city not having enough of a case load to justify a new hire by itself. The terms of this new position will be negotiated and described via an inter-jurisdictional agreement among the participating towns. |
| Cost | The cost to Forman of participating in the hiring of a building inspector is to be determined. |
| Partnerships | Neighboring jurisdictions |
| Resources Needed | Line-item in annual budget for Forman’s share |
| Timeline | Coordination with other cities and agreement signed in 2020, to be ready for 2021 budget planning cycle |

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| **Action Step 1.B.2** | Create a code violation complaint system on website |
| Description | Residents are encouraged to report properties with suspected structural issues, nuisances, and health and safety concerns. Residents may feel more comfortable with notifying the city if the reports can be made anonymously. On the city’s website, a form that allows for anonymous submissions can be created. The building inspector is charged with following up on those reports to determine their veracity |
| Cost | No expenditures anticipated |
| Partnerships | No partnerships needed |
| Resources Needed | Ability to add form feature to website |
| Timeline | This shall be completed before a building inspector is hired |

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| Objective 1.C | Encourage and incentivize the rehabilitation of existing housing units |

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| **Action Step 1.C.1** | Promote the usage of existing grant programs and incentives among homeowners. |
| Description | Homeowners may not be aware of the state or federal programs that exist to financially assist them with fixing up their homes. The local role in relation to these grant, loan, or credit enhancement programs is one of outreach and promotion. Methods include adding information on the city’s website and social media, adding to any promotional materials the city creates whose audience is prospective residents, inserting within the letters sent to those with building code violations, as well as including information along with water and sewer bills. The following are the agencies and their programs to promote. This list is not comprehensive.  *USDA Rural Development*   * Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants (a.k.a. Section 504 Home Repair)   *Southeast North Dakota Community Action Agency*   * Emergency Furnace and Water Heater Replacement * Weatherization * Helping Hand * HOME-funded rehabilitation   *City of Forman*   * Renaissance Zone tax incentives   *North Dakota Housing Finance Agency*   * Major Home Improvement Program * Rural Accessibility Program * Rural Housing Rehabilitation Program |
| Cost | Minimal expenditures anticipated with this promotional effort |
| Partnerships | Work with aforementioned agencies to determine the best methods for spreading the word |
| Resources Needed | No additional resources needed for this action |
| Timeline | The timeline varies among the outreach methods. For example, adding information to the city website can be done sooner rather than later. The inserts in the utility bills can be done once a year. |

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| **Action Step 1.C.2** | Obtain new grant funding to assist low-to-moderate income households with necessary repairs. |
| Description | Government programs for repairing the housing stock are chiefly targeted towards those of limited means. If Forman wishes to undertake a concerted effort to aid those homeowners it can be the lead applicant. The City has the option of being the program administrator or it may be deferred to an organization already involved with housing rehabilitation.  For greater impact, multiple funding sources can be brought into play as long as the regulations and requirements associated with each source do not conflict. Federal funding for a Forman-specific effort may come from HUD (Community Development Block Grant) or USDA Rural Development (Housing Preservation Grant). These can be buttressed with donations from foundations and local organizations, who inherently come with fewer bureaucratic requirements. Examples include the North Dakota Community Foundation or Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative’s Round Up program. |
| Cost | Administration costs may be paid for with grant funds, depending upon the rules associated with the program. |
| Partnerships | Organizations currently involved in housing rehabilitation such as Southeast North Dakota Community Action Agency, for example. |
| Resources Needed | If the city does not contract with an organization with expertise in housing rehabilitation, then additional staff capacity is needed. The hiring of a building inspector is critical, since he or she will be responsible for finding the health and safety deficiencies that must be addressed. |
| Timeline | Application deadlines vary by program. In early 2020, the City will look into various funding sources to see if it will be a good fit for the specific needs of Forman’s low-and-moderate income residents. |

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| Objective 1.D | Support the construction of new housing options tailored to homeowner preferences and needs. |

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| **Action Step 1.D.1** | Participate in the financing of speculative housing construction |
| Description | Due to its inherent challenges, new housing construction in rural areas often necessitates a public-private partnership to make it feasible. The neighboring communities of Milnor and Gwinner have successfully partnered with the Sargent County Job Development Authority and Lake Agassiz Development Group – a participating intermediary lender with USDA Rural Development - to finance the construction of speculative single-family housing.  Although subject to change, as it stands currently the loan from USDA Rural Development will be structured as a one year loan for the construction with the possibility of two six-month extensions. The IRP loan can go up to 75% of the project costs with a maximum of $250,000. The remaining 25% can come from the Sargent County JDA.  Forman will engage in discussions with those partners to determine what resources the city will bring to bear that will make this idea a reality. A lot has been identified for the new house. |
| Cost | To be determined |
| Partnerships | Sargent County JDA, LADG, USDA Rural Development |
| Resources Needed | Financial contributions through loan capital  Contribution of city-owned lot |
| Timeline | Discussions are to begin in earnest following the completion of projects in Milnor and Gwinner |

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| **Action Step 1.D.2** | Complete the installation of infrastructure at the southside residential subdivision |
| Description | The subdivision adjacent to the golf course has eight unbuilt lots, albeit only five of those have the requisite infrastructure installed. For the remainder of the lots, a new lift station will need to be built in order to create enough pressure in the sanitary sewer system.  The subdivision currently has no special assessments tied to the lots, thus presenting a favorable offer to prospective homeowners. The City intends to complete the build-out of the southside subdivision as well as in-fill lots before contemplating a new subdivision. |
| Cost | To be determined by professional engineer |
| Partnerships | Preliminary engineering will find the costs of this infrastructure extension, which will lead to working with agencies on finding the best way to pay for it. |
| Resources Needed | The city will seek out grant and favorable loan financing to implement this project. Potential sources include USDA Rural Development, the Bank of North Dakota, and Community Development Block Grants. |
| Timeline | Due to the scale of the action step, it will be a longer-term timeframe |
| Priority | Low |

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| **Action Step 1.D.3** | Discover whether it is feasible to create a new manufactured home park (MHP) in Forman | High Priority |
| Description | The closure of a MHP on the western side of Forman due to flooding issues has left a void of affordable housing options in the community. Residents indicated through this planning process that a new MHP is desired. Due to the financial realities of MHPs as a business venture nowadays, it is rare across the country for new ones to be established.  Therefore, the city will need to study the feasibility of either a MHP that is owned and operated by a developer or one that is a resident cooperative. For each option, technical assistance providers have offered to assist Forman with this process.  At the time of writing, the city-owned parcel on Maple Avenue across from the elevator is an option. Whether it is viable given its size, infrastructure connections, and other factors remains to be seen.  An initial first step would be for the City to examine its Land Development Code for any undue barriers to MHP while maintaining regulations necessary for health, safety, and nuisance concerns.  Second, since manufactured homes are more vulnerable to extreme weather such as high winds and tornadoes, it would be wise to pursue the construction of a storm shelter within the park. Grant funding from FEMA is available for this purpose. For the project to be eligible for said funding, it must be listed within the Sargent County Mitigation Plan. Forman shall work with the county’s emergency manager to ensure this is included within the plan document with an amendment, if needed. | |
| Cost | To be determined with assistance of experts in MHPs | |
| Partnerships | Technical assistance providers  Sargent County Emergency Management | |
| Resources Needed | Any city contribution to a new MHP will be decided further along in the process | |
| Timeline | Feasibility analysis conducted in 2020 | |

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| Goal 2 | Forman will contain a range of attractive career opportunities that allow current and future residents a change to make a decent living. |
| The economies of small towns in North Dakota are often intrinsically tied to the health of the agricultural sector. Forman is no exception. In addition, the Bobcat engineering and production plant in nearby Gwinner is a highly significant employer for the entire county. Forman’s leadership shall recognize the economic assets of the community and surrounding region, while acknowledging the weaknesses that undermine its economic resiliency.  Increasing the number of companies and jobs is not something done for its own sake only, but rather is a mechanism by which the city of Forman becomes more attractive to residents, both current and future. It leads to more amenities and services, improves the tax base, and allows the town to remain viable for the long term.  Economic development is akin to a three-legged stool of attraction, retention, and gardening. The first comprises efforts to create a favorable business climate coupled with active outward promotion; the second comprises continuous contact with business owners and assisting them with issues as those arise; and the last comprises bringing in the assistance and resources to help those second-stage companies expand their markets and operations. | |
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| Objective 2.A | Create an environment conducive to the attraction of companies who offer high-quality and stable employment opportunities. |

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| **Action Step 2.A.1** | Participate in the Area Sector Analysis Process |
| Description | Forman can obtain a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses when it comes to types of businesses it can realistically and successfully accommodate and retain. Also, residents’ preferences for which business types they will prefer to see will create public support for any follow on actions aimed at economic development.  One method for gaining that insight is through the Area Sector Analysis Process (ASAP) program. It is a technical assistance program offered through states’ land-grant university extension services.  ASAP is a data-drive process with three sources of inputs: the preferences of residents gathered through a survey, an assessment of the quantity and quality of local assets, and the various requirements of businesses across sectors that was compiled through a national survey. The output of this process is akin to a Venn-diagram with the overlapping middle being those industries most compatible to Forman. The result will hopefully shed light upon those types of businesses possible given local conditions, as well as identify those gaps that can be easily rectified.  For the purpose of cost-effectiveness, this program should be conducted on a regional basis among multiple counties at the same time. Lake Agassiz Regional Council will take on the responsibility of reaching out to cities and counties to determine the level of interest in doing this process jointly.  Currently, the provider is based out of Nevada. NDSU Extension staff can be trained in how to conduct this program, although the decision to do so is up to their level of resources. |
| Cost | To be determined based upon the extent of other jurisdictions participating. |
| Partnerships | NDSU Extension  Western Rural Development Center |
| Resources Needed | Grant funding can defray costs to the communities. Potential sources include USDA Rural Development’s Rural Business Development Grant or a Community Innovation Grant through the Bush Foundation. |
| Timeline | If this were to occur, the timeline will be based upon the availability of other jurisdictions. In early 2020, LARC will reach out to those communities to find if any interest in the program exists. |

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| **Action Step 2.A.2** | Install infrastructure on the southside properties for incoming businesses. |
| Description | On the south edge of town are several lots along Highway 11 zoned for industrial-type businesses. These lots, other than Wurth Adam’s, are owned by either the City or by the Forman Community Development Corporation. Currently these lots are not connected to the sanitary sewer system. Wurth Adams utilizes a septic system.  Extending infrastructure to those lots – e.g. roads, sewer, electricity, broadband, and so on – would make them marketable to companies. However, doing so on speculation is a risky endeavor for the city. Instead, the City will market these properties with the prospect of grants or loans being available to pay for the necessary infrastructure. This funding will come into play when a business has agreed to purchase a lot and committed to setting up operations there.  An initial first step can be for the city to contract with an engineer who will conduct a site analysis, the results of which will provide critical information as to the soil composition for building suitability, as well as the infrastructural capacity and the cost to remedy any shortcomings. This information can be shared with the North Dakota Department of Commerce, who are often the first point of contact for site selectors. |
| Cost | Cost of infrastructure installation to be determined |
| Partnerships | Private-sector contributions will be required for any infrastructure expansion. An engineering firm would be responsible for conducting the site analysis. |
| Resources Needed | EDA grants for public works projects may cover half the cost of the infrastructure expenses with the remainder to be paid by the benefit business and/or the city.  This project may be eligible for CDBG, given that Forman is a qualifying community based upon the income level of its households. |
| Timeline | The site analysis may be conducted at any time. The infrastructure project will occur when a company has committed to moving into the industrial park. |

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| **Action Step 2.A.3** | Facilitate the expansion of natural gas into Forman |
| Description | In the fall of 2018, Montana-Dakota Utilities built a short pipeline to the City of Gwinner that tapped into the Alliance natural gas pipeline. Milnor obtained service in 2019. MDU will consider extending into Forman only if sufficient demand can be exhibited. Preparatory work on the part of Forman’s leadership can make that argument, thus facilitating the expansion if and when it occurs.  First, Forman’s land use regulations should be examined for any barriers to development that can result. Notwithstanding the fact that the ND Public Service Commission has the legal authority to preempt local regulations if they are deemed to be “unreasonably restrictive”, if Forman permitted the construction of buildings that would block the more efficient routes, it would increase costs to MDU. That would harm the financial feasibility of the project. The zoning ordinance should be amended to create so-called “consultation zones” whereby new buildings within that zone will require the input from MDU before a permit is issued. Another amendment can address the siting of sensitive uses near a pipeline. These include those uses with vulnerable populations that are more difficult to evacuate or are critical for emergency response (e.g. nursing homes, daycares, apartment buildings, first responders, etc.).  Secondly, the commercial and institutional users who would conceivably benefit from natural gas are to be brought to the table to determine their level of interest. If a commitment, even if only a tentative one at the moment, among those businesses can be reached, that shall be shared with MDU so as to demonstrate the demand for natural gas in Forman. |
| Responsible Entities | City of Forman |
| Cost | No expenditures anticipated to review and amend zoning ordinances. |
| Partnerships | Montana Dakota Utilities |
| Resources Needed | Land use planning expertise when it comes to natural gas pipelines |
| Timeline | In 2020, the City will contact businesses within town who may be interested in hooking up to natural gas. The City will also work with MDU to finetune its zoning ordinances so that it does not present an undue barrier to expansion. |

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| Objective 2.B | Retain existing businesses, particularly those offering basic goods and vital services. |

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| **Action Step 2.B.1** | Assist business owners nearing retirement in finding new owners |
| Description | As the Baby Boomer generation continues to enter retirement, concern grows about the future of the businesses they have built up over the years. The inability to find successors will lead to closures of businesses. In rural areas, the closure of those businesses selling critical and everyday goods and services is especially felt.    While a nationwide issue, on the local level several actions can be taken. First, the question of a pending retirement should be a point of conversation more openly discussed in the normal business retention visitation process. The earlier this can be discussed, the more time there will be for a well thought-out and planned transition phase. The owners can be connected with outside technical assistance providers to help shepherd them through.  Second, the economic development coordinator shall create a list of those who grew up in Forman but had moved away for college or technical training. This list will identify those who have obtained skills and experience and would be most likely to move back to Forman. For those professions whereby a person with local ties can not be found, outreach to the career centers at colleges and universities may be fruitful. |
| Responsible Entities | City of Forman |
| Cost | Minimal expenditures anticipated. |
| Partnerships | Technical assistance providers (e.g. SBDC, SCORE) |
| Resources Needed | Assistance from residents is needed for the crafting of the list of those who moved away from Forman. |
| Timeline | The provision of assistance will be an ongoing process. |

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| Objective 2.C | Enhance Forman’s entrepreneurial ecosystem. |

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| **Action Step 2.C.1** | Engage youth and young adults with entrepreneurship programming |
| Description | The “entrepreneurial ecosystem” of a community is defined as the social and economic environment that affects entrepreneurship in both positive and negative ways. While a rural town’s ecosystem is constrained by its small population, efforts to increase entrepreneurship and improve its outcomes – measured by numbers of new businesses and increasing those that appreciably grow – are nonetheless still very much worthwhile.  These efforts can begin among youth. It is vital to impart upon them that starting one’s own business is a viable option in Forman. This will be done through the continuation of career exploration efforts within the school curriculum, a component of which touches upon entrepreneurship.  Outside the school setting, exposure to the idea of entrepreneurship can take the form of mentorships, “shark tank” business plan competitions, student-run retail spaces, mock loan application exercises, and having youth representation on economic development committees. These and similar activities will plant the seed in their mind that Forman can be a great place to run their own business. |
| Cost | Modest expenditures for supplies and materials can be expected in holding the entrepreneurship events with youth. |
| Partnerships | Engage the participation of entrepreneurial support organizations such as SBDC, SCORE, and Sargent County JDA. |
| Resources Needed | Local business owners can volunteer to assist in carrying out this action step. |
| Timeline | Integrating entrepreneurship education in the schools and in the community will be an ongoing process. |

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| Goal 3 | Improve Forman’s quality-of-life and its amenities so as to maintain its reputation as an appealing town to live, work, and raise a family. |
| For Forman to be successful and viable going forward, it will need to possess a range of amenities and services. Prospective residents will consider a community’s quality-of-life within their decision making. Rectifying the town’s shortcomings and elevating its strengths is a necessary economic development strategy. In this plan, the focus is placed upon three elements: the retail and service businesses people rely on every day, the appeal of Main Street and the impact it has upon the whole town, and the implementation of basic safety measures in the public realm. | |
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| Objective 3.A | Assist the businesses who provide basic goods and services to residents. |

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| **Action Step 3.A.1** | Reopen the grocery store | High Priority |
| Description | Grocery stores are a basic amenity for residents’ day-to-day lives. A town with one is not only at a great disadvantage, but it is also a sign people use to gauge whether a town is in the midst of decline.  Following the closure of Forman’s grocery store in early 2019, the Community Development Corporation initiated a plan to purchase the building and lease it to a new owner. A letter-writing campaign the owners of nearby grocery stores is underway. The results will be to show the level of demand, hopefully spurring them to consider opening up in Forman. | |
| Cost | The cost to reopen is dependent upon the ownership model chosen and the extent of rehabilitation or equipment replacement which is required. | |
| Partnerships | If assistance is needed, the ND Rural Grocery Initiative at the ND Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives may be able to help. | |
| Resources Needed | The pursuance of funding will depend upon the ownership model of the new grocery store. Funding may go towards any renovations to the building or for equipment. | |
| Timeline | While the exact timeline is to be determined, the City has engaged partners already to initiate the process. | |

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| Objective 3.B | Revitalize Main Street as the center of the community’s economic and social life. |

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| **Action Step 3.B.1** | Participate in the Community Impressions program in order to obtain an outsider’s perspective of Forman |
| Description | NDSU Extension offers the Community Impressions program that pairs two North Dakota towns with similar populations. Members from each town visit the other in the role of a “secret shopper”. The participants are encouraged to dig in and discover the multiple facets of that community and make note on what they felt were strengths and what were weaknesses. This honest viewpoint will shed light on the town’s appearance, customer service at businesses, and the maintenance of public facilities. |
| Cost | Cost-share for Forman to be a participating community is expected |
| Partnerships | NDSU Extension |
| Resources Needed | Volunteers from Forman will be needed to be the visitors to the other community |
| Timeline | The earliest in which Forman can participate is 2021 |

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| **Action Step 3.B.2** | Activate unused and underutilized spaces along Main Street through clean-ups and creative placemaking. |
| Description | One of Forman’s priorities is to rejuvenate Main Street by adding usable green space on vacant lots, incorporation public art and beautification, filling vacant buildings, and fixing up blighted buildings that detract from the street’s charm. One rule of thumb states that a place should have at least ten things to see, do, and appreciate. Adding elements that stimulate the senses and allow people to congregate and socialize into the gaps along the streetscape will signify that the community cares about its main drag and the businesses located there. This will encourage follow-on investments from the private sector.  In 2019, the City received a grant through AARP that led to the addition of seating and planters, tree planting, and a painting of a mural at a public gathering space. Additional placemaking efforts will continue to make incremental changes to Main Street. Undertaking small-scale projects - some of which may only be temporary - is a thoughtful way to test whether these interventions make a positive impact or not, without committing too many resources. If successful, these can be made permanent and scaled-up.  Resources are available for larger-scale projects; however, those require a larger match that may be out of reach for Forman at the moment. |
| Cost | Typically under $5,000 in total costs for small-scale efforts. |
| Partnerships | Property owners interested in beautifying their public-facing spaces can contribute resources or at minimum offer permission for placemaking projects to occur on their properties. |
| Resources Needed | Grant opportunities are available through the AARP Foundation’s Community Challenge and through National Association of Realtor’s placemaking program. Larger scale programs are offered by the Kresge Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. Local match dollars may come from the city’s economic development fund. |
| Timeline | This will be an ongoing effort. Over the winter, planning can continue for projects that begin in the spring. |

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| **Action Step 3.B.3** | Designated a portion along Main Street as a “slum and blight” to allow property owners to apply for building improvement grants. | High Priority |
| Description | Recent policy changes has added the renovation and repair of commercial buildings as an eligible activity under the Community Development Block Grant program. These funds may be used for façade repairs, fixing of code violations, making the building accessible, and replacing outdated mechanical systems. In order for property owners to apply, the city will need to conduct a property inventory of buildings among Main Street that assess their general condition. The city will then need to decide which parcels constitutes a “slum and blight” area and approve a resolution to that effect. | |
| Cost | The cost to conduct the property inventory will be minimal on the city’s part. | |
| Partnerships | Lake Agassiz Regional Council | |
| Resources Needed | Businesses may receive up to $100,000 in grant funding with a 10% match required. | |
| Timeline | Property inventory is to be conducted no later than the end of 2019. | |

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| **Action Step 3.B.4** | Establish an *ad hoc* workgroup to engage the community and find out the feasibility of creating a new youth-focused center. | High Priority |
| Description | A dedicated space whereby younger people can socialize and have fun will become a major draw in Forman vis-à-vis surrounding towns. A team comprised of both youth and adults shall be convened with the charge of finding out the feasibility of starting a new youth center along with creating a plan for long-term sustainability. The youth involvement will ensure the center is tailored to their needs and wants. Additional outreach methods will ensure the center has the features leading them to use the space often.  If there is sufficient buy-in from the community, it is advisable that a location be sought out which contains enough room but will not require extensive rehabilitation or new construction. A co-benefit will result since activity would be injected into a previously vacant space. | |
| Cost | The working group is responsible for coming up with preliminary cost estimates of the youth center. For the planning phase, minimal expenditures are anticipated. | |
| Partnerships | Coordination with the school district will allow for planning and brainstorming sessions with students. | |
| Resources Needed | No additional resources are anticipated beyond volunteers’ time. The economic development coordinator will convene the planning team and assist as needed. | |
| Timeline | A survey asking about preferences for the youth center will be sent out before the conclusion of 2019. | |

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| Objective 3.C | Implement safety measures on Forman’s streets and public rights-of-way. |

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| **Action Step 3.C.1** | Install a Dynamic Speed Display Sign (DSDS) along Highway 11 |
| Description | Highway 11 originally skirted the south edge of Forman. Over time as the city has grown to the south and west of the highway, traffic now presents a greater hazard. This is particularly so for pedestrians attempting to cross the road. Additionally, the orientation of the road means that during sunrise and sunset at certain times of the year, drivers can be blinded by the light.  Fortunately, the speed limit on Highway 11 through Forman has been reduced by the North Dakota Department of Transportation. Installing a DSDS which warns drivers if they are exceeding the limit will aid in enforcement.  The City would be responsible for the installation and maintenance costs. Prior approval from the DOT is required to approve the location of the sign. DOT policy also requires a professional engineer be procured to oversee the design and installation process to ensure it meets guidelines. |
| Cost | Up to $10,000 for two signs (one in either direction) |
| Partnerships | ND Department of Transportation |
| Resources Needed | Professional engineer per DOT policy |
| Timeline | In 2020, the city will decide if signs are to be installed. |

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| Goal 4 | Promote Forman via appropriate methods tailored to various intended audiences |
| It does not take long for people to become acquainted with Forman’s qualities. Getting the word out about Forman’s strengths and opportunities is part of the overarching goal of attracting new economic activity and new residents. Towns, as much as any good or service one can buy, must have their own marketing message. The methods by which this is communicated will naturally differ among the intended audience.  The town’s motto is “A Forever Hometown”, a phrase that indicates the ability of oneself and their family to establish long-lasting roots. This motto shall be used consistently and often by anyone working to promote and improve Forman. | |
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| Objective 4.A | Promote Forman as a great town to live, work, and raise a family. |

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| **Action Step 4.A.1** | Reach out to school alumni who have moved away, encouraging them to consider moving back. |
| Description | Those who have some ties to the community – whether it was being raised here and/or having family live here – can be a receptive audience to the suggestion of moving back to Forman.  A contact list shall be created to the fullest extent possible. Personalized messages, in the form of mail or email, will contain updates on community happenings and progress. A simple survey asking what the town of Forman will need to do in order for them to move back. The data gathered from that survey will help further refine the action steps proposed in this plan.  Attracting families will entail that all members have their needs met. The trailing spouse can find a job, the kids have activities both inside and outside the school, the school district is of high quality, and the family can rely upon local businesses for basic goods and services. |
| Cost | Printing and postage will be the primary expenditures. |
| Partnerships | The school district can be a valuable resource for information on those who may have moved away. Another resource is the Facebook group page dedicated towards those with ties to Forman. |
| Resources Needed | Assistance from current residents may be needed in order to create a contact list. |
| Timeline | Outreach to former residents will begin in 2020. This action step will also be an ongoing effort. |

## Plan Maintenance

## Strategic planning in an on-going process that best practices indicate community leaders – whether in formal or informal positions - should integrate within their normal routines. It is a process that is fundamentally adaptive to changing conditions. The general direction the community wants to go towards has been found. The methods by which to get there will invariably change as time goes on.

## Full-scale updates of the strategic plan are necessary only every five years or so. In the meanwhile, this document shall be referred to the greatest extent possible. Additionally, it shall be amended whenever necessary. A plan is only as good if it is treated as a living document. Plan amendments shall go through the steering committee before going onwards to the city council.

## For the purposes of maintaining the planning process going forward, the City of Forman endeavors to review the plan when it is crafting its budget for the next year. The Community Development Corporation and the Community Club will be encouraged to similarly review the plan when determining its activities for the next year. This plan will be posted on the city’s website for members of the public to access.

