

# What We Heard Report

## Official Community Plan Update - June 2021



### OVERVIEW

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The City of Grand Forks is currently in the engagement phase of the Official Community Plan (OCP) Update. Previously updated in 2011, public involvement in the Grand Forks OCP Update is key to ensure chosen strategies, policies and regulations reflect citizens' current vision for their community and address present-day concerns. The OCP Update Project began in April 2021, with an anticipated completion date of December 2021.

With COVID-19 restrictions easing up, the first round of public engagement was conducted in person over three days. From June 14-16, 2021, the OCP team explored the City, met with City staff, engaged stakeholders, and hosted two public events: one at the Farmer's Market on the morning of June 15, and one dual event at City Park and Market Avenue on the evening of June 16. As this was the initial round of public engagement, the focus was on both education and awareness of the OCP Update process and to gain a better understanding of the community's priorities within the four key focus areas. Community Circles Kits, an interactive booklet and survey designed to get citizens thinking about their community, were handed out to hundreds of businesses and citizens during the June engagement.

The *four key topic areas* as identified by Council include:

- Market District concept (a vibrant downtown core)
- Housing
- Form and character definitions and expectations (the look and design of buildings in your community)
- Active transportation (walking, cycling, rolling) policies and objectives (e.g. trail networks)



FARMER'S MARKET BOOTH JUNE 15



CITY PARK PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE JUNE 16

## PROJECT TIMELINE

Project Timeline	
<b>Project Start</b>	<b>April 2021</b>
<b>Community Engagement</b> <i>In-Person Engagement</i>	<b>June - October 2021</b> <i>June &amp; September</i>
<i>Wayfinding Strategy Meeting</i>	<i>June 14</i> <i>4 - 5:30 pm</i>
<i>Farmer's Market</i>	<i>June 15</i> <i>8:00 am - 1:00 pm</i>
<i>Public Open House @ City Park</i> <i>Market Ave. Roundtable</i>	<i>June 16</i> <i>5:00 - 7:00 pm</i>
<i>What We Heard Report</i> <i>Summary of information collected during June engagement, Community Circles Survey responses, and Thought Exchange online platform</i>	<i>Early August</i>
<i>September Engagement Week</i> <i>OCP Engagement</i> <i>North Ruckle Design Charette</i>	<i>Sept 20 - 25</i>

<i>What We Heard Report</i>	
<b>Draft Plan &amp; Consultation</b>	<b>September - October 2021</b>
<b>Plan Approval Process</b>	<b>November - December 2021</b>
<i>First Reading by Council</i>	<i>November</i>
<i>Public Hearing</i>	<i>December</i>
<i>Final Readings &amp; Adoption by Council</i>	<i>December</i>

## **JUNE ENGAGEMENT FORMAT**

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**Wayfinding Strategy Workshop (June 14, 2021):** A group of stakeholders worked together to identify key areas for improvement to wayfinding throughout the City. Placemaking, interactivity, and landmarks were some of the key areas covered to help make Grand Forks more inviting and easier to navigate for residents and tourists alike.

**Farmer's Market (June 15, 2021):** an informational booth was set up to chat with community members about planning and the OCP, Community Circles Kits were distributed, and the Public Open House was promoted. Notes and ideas were recorded during conversations with community members. Approximately 35 people attended the booth.

**Public Open House & Market Ave. Roundtable (June 16, 2021):** At City Park, interactive informational boards were presented to discuss the four key priority areas. Participants could identify key areas on a series of maps and give feedback using sticky notes. A roundtable discussion took place on Market Ave. with business owners. Combined over 50 citizens attended these events.

**Community Circles Kits** were dropped off to 17 businesses on Market Ave. and surrounding area, as well as locations such as the Silver Kettle Cottages and John A. Hutton Elementary school. Over 600 Kits were distributed.

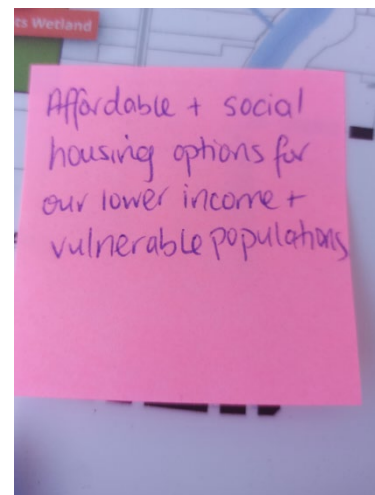
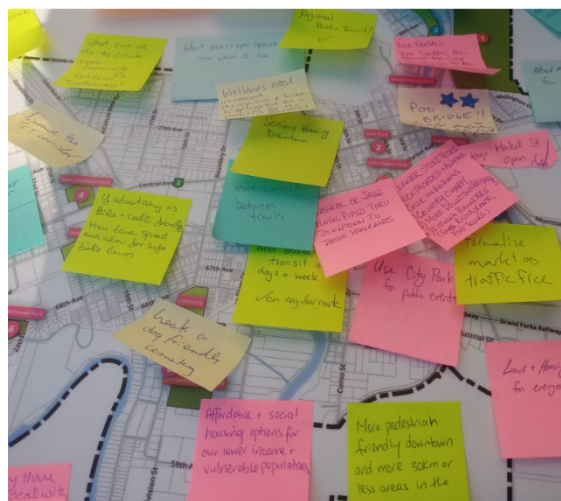
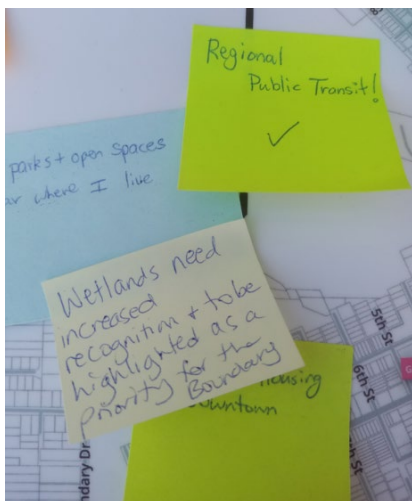
**Thought Exchange Forum:** Through Community Futures Boundary, an online forum was designed to bring together the Grand Forks Business Community to discuss thoughts, ideas, and issues affecting the downtown core.

## KEY THEMES

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As a team, we managed to get lots of meaningful feedback from the community and are seeing some key themes and ideas emerge, including:

1. More housing options, including innovative housing ideas for everyone (all ages, household types & incomes)
2. Preservation of heritage, neighbourhood character, and trees
3. Community cohesion and togetherness
4. Trail systems, trail connections (or lack thereof) and an easier way to move around the city
5. Downtown vibe: create a community hub which is pedestrian friendly, offers a variety in services and stores, and supports local businesses



## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

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It's easy to see that community members in Grand Forks value having a tight-knit community rooted in nature, where trails are accessible and allow access to the rivers, recreation opportunities, and beautiful spaces throughout the valley. Being a smaller community, fostering a sense of connectedness where neighbours and local businesses can be friendly and supportive is important.

The following is a more detailed list of feedback received from the Community.

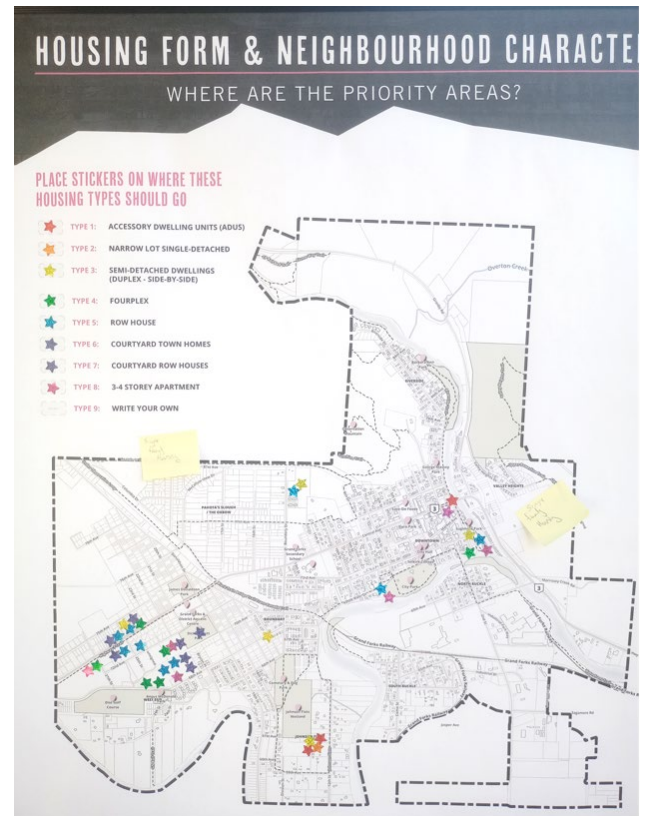
### 1. More innovative housing options for everyone

- Affordable duplexes, townhomes, and condominiums in the \$200,000 - \$300,000 range
- Mixed-use developments (live-work) and pocket neighbourhoods with common greenspace
- Non-profit / co-op housing options
- Tiny homes / tiny home complexes
- Multi-family / multi-unit options
- Options for seniors to “age in place” in independent housing. Extended care for seniors.

- Laneway homes and legal suites, infill options throughout Grand Forks
- Innovative, sustainable housing with solar, grey water use, permaculture
- Affordable ownership and rental options
- Availability of contractors / development to build homes in a timely manner
- The community needs solutions for homelessness, other communities can work as examples
- Variety of housing which includes options for families that need more than 2-3 bedrooms

## 2. Preservation of heritage, character, and trees

- Improve the look and character of the City and neighbourhoods
- Foster and maintain a unique architectural language
- New development should be done right to blend in with the heritage of the community
- Tree lined streets, green space, parks, and community gardens throughout different neighbourhoods
- Preservation and encouragement of shade trees
- Trees help to mitigate fumes and noise throughout the community
- Mitigation of the effects of the "Heat Dome", and other climate effects, by planting more trees
- A green City working towards less pollution, factoring the environment into design solutions
- Celebrate Doukhobor, Indigenous, and settler heritage throughout the community
- Celebrate the heritage of the Granby and Kettle rivers

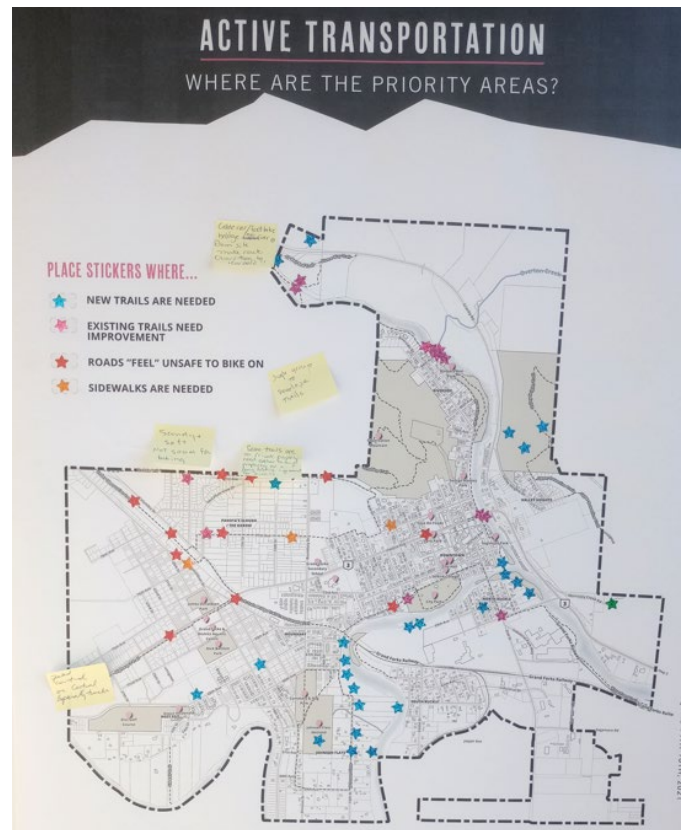


## 3. Community cohesion and togetherness

- Plan for climate change with creative and adaptable solutions
- Unify the community and the downtown core
- Encourage neighbourhood / corner stores
- Opportunities for good jobs, education, health care
- Ways to get involved in the community and enjoy the recreation opportunities and downtown of Grand Forks
- Farmers Market at a community hub for local food and gathering place
- Community needs to continue to work to foster togetherness, continue to celebrate the City
- Opportunities to interact with the community which one wouldn't find in a big city

#### 4. Trail systems and an easier way to move around the city

- Trail network to connect the east and west sides of the city and access the river
- Better access to trails for those with mobility challenges
- Investment into sidewalk maintenance
- Make trails more 'official' with better connectivity, better street trail infrastructure such as one-way streets with a lane for non-motorized traffic
- Better lighting for using trails at night and for safety
- Investment for more trails including machine-built trails
- Hardpack trail along 77<sup>th</sup> with speed reduction, safe crossings at the highway
- Look for solutions to building trails other than asphalt to allow for water permeability
- More trail options to get pedestrians and cyclists off the road and away from busy intersections
- Access to public transit



#### 5. Downtown vibe: create a community hub which is pedestrian friendly, offers a variety in services and stores, and supports local businesses

- Foster more arts and culture, night life, and public space programming including events on Market Ave. and in City Park
- Creation of a plaza downtown to host events
- Biking and hiking theme, promoting the outdoor culture of the community. Tie this into wayfinding.
- Better signage to get around Grand Forks and for people to park and walk 2-3 blocks into the downtown core
- Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, Market Ave. as a pedestrian street with patios and cafes – but not closed for the entire week!
- Use of empty lots, higher density, better infrastructure
- More businesses which fill in the gaps of missing amenities

- Unique style that is Grand Forks, buildings with lots of windows, landscaping which can survive the local deer population, funky, modern, vibrant
- Support local businesses – no high rises, strip malls, or large commercial enterprises
- Access in west Grand Forks to big box conveniences which provide amenities that do not compete with downtown
- Direct larger stores to a Highway Commercial area
- Beautification of the downtown core, surrounding area, and gateway to the east

**MARKET AVENUE**  
WHAT WOULD STRENGTHEN MARKET AVENUE AS THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY?

**PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

**PLACE STICKERS WHERE...**

- ★ YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE ON MARKET AVENUE IS
- ★ YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE PLACE ON MARKET AVENUE IS
- ★ ON A PROPERTY WITH OPPORTUNITY
- ★ A FAVOURITE BUILDING OR PUBLIC SPACE
- ★ STREETS YOU FEEL SAFE WALKING ON OR CROSSING
- ★ STREETS YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE WALKING ON OR CROSSING

**WRITE YOUR OWN SUGGESTIONS ON STICKIES AND PARK THEM HERE!**

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN | OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT | JUNE 14TH - 16TH, 2021

MVH GRAND FORKS

## NEXT STEPS

The OCP Team has taken all compiled feedback from the community and is working on updating the Official Community Plan. This includes updating maps, refining City goals and principles, defining a future land use strategy, and thinking about the community's vision forward. The updated draft OCP will be presented to the community in September for feedback, both in-person and in digital format. Our next round of in-person engagement is scheduled to take place September 20 – 21, 2021. Stay tuned on your email, or the City website ([grandforks.ca/OCP](http://grandforks.ca/OCP)), for details and ways to get involved.

*Thank you for your participation in this important process. We look forward to seeing you again!*