

## **NV360 Findings - 2013**

### **Greater Grand Forks is BEST when Citizens are Engaged!**

#### **Introduction**

The Community Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Grand Forks and East Grand Forks partnered in a community visioning project in 2011-13. NV360 was funded by the Otto Bremer Foundation, Knight Donor Advised Fund, the Community Foundation and the Chamber of Commerce. A 12 member steering committee was created and represented specific sectors of community.

NV360 – North Valley, New Vision was strategically designed to focus on community attachment and what matters most to people who live here. Ten key drivers of community attachment were identified and used in conversations with over 1,500 residents. (Listed, pg. 8) Nearly 500 people participated in one or more of 18 round-table conversations and nearly 3700 online-interactions occurred through [www.engagetheforks.com](http://www.engagetheforks.com).

Two key objectives through the NV360 process were:

**Who is Greater Grand Forks?** –Understanding residents’ perceptions of the community, along with its strengths, opportunities and challenges; learning about the desires and dreams for the community of the people who live here.

**Capacity Building** - to engage as many citizens as possible in the process of understanding the “Soul of the Forks”, connecting like-minded citizens for conversation about where they live, encouraging and empowering individuals to speak, leaders to listen and encourage risk to be taken in an effort to build a better place to live.

#### **NV360 BASELINE: Knight Foundation/Gallup Poll**

The Knight Foundation with Gallup conducted a 3 year survey in our community and in 25 other communities. The “Soul of the Community” findings for Grand Forks, ND, provided a baseline community attachment model for NV360 to explore and develop, creating a visioning process unique to Greater Grand Forks.

<http://www.soulofthecommunity.org/sites/default/files/GRANDFORKS.pdf>

## **Knight Foundation's Report & Considerations**

Knight's findings demonstrate that attachment to a place is about more than jobs and the economy. The things that most attach residents to the area in this order are **social offerings, aesthetics, openness and education.**

### **Grand Forks has much strength unique to the community.**

Consistent and growing strength in the eyes of our residents is Aesthetics, especially the parks, playgrounds and trails. – GF & EGF Park Districts are assets.

Social offerings were strong in the area of “residents care for one another”.

### **Despite these strengths, GF has challenges.**

- ✓ CHIEF among them is **openness.**
- ✓ Perceived welcome-ness families with young children is highest, older residents was next. Not open to Young talent without children, immigrants, gays/lesbians
- ✓ Young talent is perceived to be the least welcome group in the community.
- ✓ Additionally, though resident caring is still the highest rated aspect of social offerings, it did decrease in 2010 final year of the three year study
- ✓ Nightlife is the lowest rated aspect of social offerings.

In many ways the GF area is in an enviable position. Two of the three top drivers for attachment – social offerings and aesthetics – are community strengths. Resident caring is perceived to be higher in the GF area than in the other 25 communities studied. Lastly, the highest income earners are most attached to the area. The area's talent force clearly loves Grand Forks, which is undoubtedly serving the community well as we attempt to build our economy.

Knight Recommended the resident caring component should be used as a centerpiece in creating the Grand Forks brand through the Chamber and local leadership.

Also, worth noting is the improving perception of nightlife and the community as a good place to meet people – very important community characteristics for attracting and retaining young talent.

It was recommended Grand Forks leverage all of these strengths to target the differences in perceptions of welcome-ness between families with young children and older residents with all other groups in the community. For attachment to really grow and for people to want to come

and stay in **Grand Forks – all residents must feel welcome** here. This along with resident caring must become part of the community culture.

The fact that we score highly on resident caring, but lower in aspects of welcome-ness to specific groups may indicate that the community is “tight knit” – it may appear closed to outsiders, but once you are part of the community and personal relationships develop, so does the generalized caring.

### **NV360- Community Findings & Recommendations**

The NV360 – community visioning process dug deeper to understand if the Knight data was in fact the case, to get to know locals and understand what citizens really thought and desired; to engage in conversation and build capacity within the population to take on issues, opportunities and challenge the community to accept and be open to others.

**NV360 had 3 phases:** Research was obtained by interviews, round-tables, observations, and open-ended questions through Mind-Mixer. In addition, the Knight/Gallup 2008-10 research and Center for Community Engagement Observations.

Phase 1: Interviewed nearly 500 individuals on key drivers of attached community.

Phase II: Created a virtual town hall meeting space called [www.engagetheforks.com](http://www.engagetheforks.com) to engage citizens in conversation; rather than survey. To let ideas be shared, others to weigh in on – and provide a platform for locals to connect on what matters most. Engagetheforks.com was the highest contributing community across the nation according to Mind-Mixer, web source. Citizens want to be engaged.

Phase III: Compiling and theming information received; working with community partners to organize and create an action plan of recommendations for consideration.

### **What did we learn?**

1. Knight’s and Gallup research was confirmed
2. Citizens want to engage and participate in developing the community
3. Openness for citizen engagement is a barrier
4. Many opportunities exist with neighborhoods, information/media sharing, entertainment districts, retail and economic development. Young to old, citizens are looking to create a community with a positive, strong identity; a place of pride

## **OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### 1. Entertainment Districts:

- “Geographically Define” & “Name” them,
- Create vibrancy, architecturally modern places, and preserve historical places

Considerations: Family, Adult, Young, College Students

- Arts & Entertainment Zones – Develop “Hot Spots”
  - 42<sup>nd</sup> Street (Opportunity)
  - University Avenue (College Corridor-Opportunity)
  - Downtown Grand Forks
  - Downtown East Grand Forks
  - South Washington

### 2. Neighborhoods – “Geographically Define” & “Name” them

- Promote/encourage mom & pop shops (desire)
- Increased desire for “tight-knit” housing with entertainment, retail, arts access (desire)
- Gathering places within neighborhoods (desire)
- Information sharing (difficult)

Considerations:

Urban Sprawl vs. “districts”

### 3. Openness

- Getting involved in the community is difficult and often times met with resistance. (Barrier)
- Great energy, desire and wiliness from many citizens to get involved in the community.
- Perception is poor of how welcoming the City of GF is to newcomers and new business inquiries/ventures.

Considerations:

- Creating an easy, accessible way for citizens to participate in community and social capital can be maximized. Assist with identifying projects and resources that are aligned with community priorities.

- Find ways to engage diversity
- Open communities foster a feeling of belonging: Embrace innovation, opportunity and newness for all people.

#### 4. **Aesthetics**

- Greenways, Red River, bikes, trails, etc. are community assets.
- Desire to increase walkability through neighborhoods and public street areas
- Increase activity for all seasons on Greenway and Red River
- Improve communication on activities
- Increase winter activities – like snow-man park, ice-skating trails in EGF campgrounds, GF town square to name a few
- Raise community self-esteem relating to weather and our ability to use our natural resources

##### Considerations:

- Aesthetics help create a sense of pride and enjoyment in the community, making residents feel close to home. They also help roll out the welcome mat for visitors.
- Embrace the greenway & river
- Market positively to the community and region.

#### 5. **Information/Media:** Access to free and public reliable information so citizens can participate in a democracy.

- #1 complaint was the inability to connect with the community. To find activities with like-minded individuals - circles, etc. (social offerings)

##### Considerations:

- Community Calendar; On-line Hub (Opportunity)
- Public Libraries –
  - define role as it relates to being a provider of information,
  - modernize facility and technology;
  - consider connecting with arts, culture, intellectual/technological groups and create shared spaces to gather

## 6. Arts & Culture

- North Dakota Museum of Art (desires) needs space for new collection and collections in storage. UND parking is difficult and a (barrier) to access
- NOVAC has visionary staff and board; energy and enthusiasm for creating spaces & places for artists to share their talent and citizens to engage with others and experience the art. (Desire) more space, partners, practice halls, black box, etc.
- GGF Symphony is 100 years old; One of the best symphonies around. Re-energized and new leadership, national Conductor, guild developed that is actively working to engage citizens in the beauty of this talented group of performers. Desire more space; practice, performance, office, etc.
- (Opportunity) for NDMOA, Symphony, ND Ballet, NOVAC, and other arts groups to come together to create “destination” place for artists and viewers
- (Desire) for art land marks to be placed throughout the community. Consider forming a community Public Arts Commission for public art focus
- Appreciate the public art that has brought distinction and character to community: Encourage public art corridor - 42<sup>nd</sup> street and other parts of the city to have more fun.
- Musicians and artists desire coffee-type venues, studios and opportunities for individual artistic expression to be shared

### Considerations

- Cities gain cultural, social and economic value through public and private art. Art reflects and reveals society, adds meaning to cities and uniqueness to community. Art humanizes the environment, inspires creativity in young minds and invigorates public spaces
- Explore partnership possibilities to expand market, creating better and new experiences for people who live or travel here.
- Assist with finding resources to incent market expansion activity

## 7. Housing: Availability of housing and affordable housing are critical to meeting demands of current workforce needs.

- Shortages and Affordability; sprawl or tighten neighborhoods or both; warehouse district ideas for downtown; (Opportunity)

- Senior housing – shortage, access to amenities (Need)
- Safe Shelter for homeless women and children; domestic situations, etc. (Need)
- See neighborhoods

Considerations:

- A Mayor’s Blue-Ribbon Housing Task Force was formed within the first few months of NV360 conversations.

8. Basic Services:

- Conversation on taxes and how much it costs to fund city/government programs. Consider providing information to citizens on how cities/communities govern and operate themselves.
- Find ways to reduce property taxes.
- Strong Health Care system with Mayo access (Strength) preparing for next 20 years (Opportunity/Vision)
- Physician shortage for North Dakota; Support UND’s efforts to increase rural medicine training
- Alliance for Healthcare Access formed to address need for access to affordable healthcare
- Daycare shortage continues to be a concern
- Mental Wellness – mental health concerns regarding lack of services and support for individuals and families. Concerns expressed over youth alcohol and drug abuse.
- Nonprofit leaders feel generally that poverty is “shoved under the rug” and their work is marginalized.

Considerations:

- A community’s basic services create the major infrastructure on which residents depend on for their quality of life
- Support innovative initiatives where **collaborations/partnerships** work to address community issues and systems change
- Support and build on projects such as “Choice/YMCA” partnership that **expand markets** and provide healthier activity choices for all generations.
- Support and continue to plan for municipal and county-level infrastructure to meet growing needs of the community

## 9. Education:

- Neighborhood schools are valued; continue to build on the neighborhood school concept. Especially, elementary schools as they are neighborhood anchors that builds community and contributes to safety, stronger property values and community pride.
- Pre-school and early education needs are priority; concerns of not enough available resources.
- Local businesses concerns about having an adequately trained job pool available; low-unemployment rates.

### Considerations:

- Educational opportunity creates economic and career options and helps community attract and keep talented working-age people. Well-educated young people attract business and bring vitality to community.
- Consider working to improve relations between University Administration, Faculty and Students and community, nonprofit, business and social networks
- Embrace Northland Community and Technical College as the regional community college. More than 75 percent of NCTC's graduates find careers in the Northern Valley.
- Note: Consider creating more activity that connects younger generations to community social networks, businesses and nonprofits.
  - Middle and High School students feel there is nothing to do here. (Opportunity)
  - UND & NCTC students don't feel "wanted" here, don't know much about community offerings or where to get connected.

## 10. Economy: A growing community is a vital community

- A desire to be a business friendly community
- Supportive both with resources and mentoring
- Workforce shortage for labor positions
- Not enough retail shopping, unique restaurants and whole food grocery.
- Support and encourage retail expansion, offering more choices for local customers, strengthen the regional trade center status, serve as a destination for visitors



- Support, encourage and recruit emerging industries such as unmanned systems, data centers, bioscience, innovative agriculture, advanced manufacturing and energy-related opportunities.
- Support Global Hawk, KC46A tanker and future missions at GFAFB. The base adds diversity, brings in talent, helps keep us economically vibrant and makes our nation safer.
- Support development of Downtown and 42nd corridor initiatives for business, social offerings, arts & entertainment, etc.

Considerations:

- Embrace Entrepreneurs: foster activities that help businesses be innovative and take business to next level

## **OPENESS: THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CULTURE OF THE FORKS**

The “citizen” landscape is changing in Greater Grand Forks. Traditional North Dakota & Minnesota communities are not what they used to be. It’s important for the business community to attract young talent and retain work-force; therefore, an understanding of the make-up of the community is necessary. Some value considerations:

**Encouraging a culture of openness** - where voices are heard, citizens are able and welcome to participate, neighborhoods are safe, strong, and reflective of like-minded citizens, critical social issues are addressed.

That **opportunity is encouraged and supported** – by community leaders, government and private funders. Citizens have a right to work to better the community and that they hold the answers – even if ideas fail.

That Greater Grand Forks be **a thoughtful community** to what often connects with individual soul – encouraging development of arts and culture; consideration of what social offerings citizens are interested in, to have a beautiful place to live – green space, parks, greenway – embracing the strengths that exist, building off those.

**VISION:** Greater Grand Forks, nationally known as “A Great Place to Live!”

**OVERVIEW**

Phase one: Information gathering included 18 large group conversations with nearly 500 participants that provided baseline information on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities – including natural opportunities and big ideas. Information was documented and provided the framework for a community-wide conversation.

Phase two: Community-wide on-line Conversation on [www.engagetheforks.com](http://www.engagetheforks.com) launched September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Nearly 3,700 interactions occurred between residents.

Phase three: Community Action Plan will be developed from the community wide conversation. Results were published in the Grand Forks Herald, January 16, 2013 <http://issuu.com/gfherald/docs/nv360/1>

***Citizens were engaged in conversation in the following categories:***

<b>Social Offerings</b>	Places to meet other people and to feel that people in the community care about each other
<b>Aesthetics</b>	Physical beauty of the city, its buildings, developments, parks and green spaces
<b>Openness</b>	Acceptance of others; how welcoming the community is to different types of people, including families with young children, minorities, students, and young professionals
<b>Education</b>	Accessible, available, quality schools, pre-kindergarten through graduate programs
<b>Basic Services</b>	Basic needs for all; availability of infrastructure (water, sewer, power, garbage), safety-net services, healthcare, housing
<b>Leadership</b>	Relations between leaders and citizens; government, city and business leaders, and citizens are heard and seek solutions together
<b>Economy</b>	Prosperity, standard of living, and economic health; resources are available to help businesses of all types to succeed.
<b>Social Capital</b>	Meaningful participation by citizens in community building; personal talents are connected to appropriate areas
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	Public involvement in community decisions
<b>Information/Media</b>	Connection of citizens through communication; depth and breadth of information sharing in community

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