

Chapter 3

Community Context

"The Red River of the North forms one of the most fertile river valleys in the world. At the great river's headwaters lies the City of Wahpeton, regional hub for the Wahpeton-Breckenridge "Twin Towns" region connecting southeastern North Dakota and western Minnesota."

Current Context

Regional Setting

Wahpeton, a community with a population of 9,300 is located 50 miles south of Fargo-Moorhead MSA, about 240 miles northwest of the Twin cities, Minnesota and about 180 miles north of Sioux Falls MSA, in South Dakota. The city is located in a major agricultural region and heavily depends on processing of agricultural products such as sugar beets, barley, corn and other agricultural region. products. Along with Breckenridge, Minnesota - its "Twin Town" - Wahpeton enjoys the distinction of being a multi-faceted regional hub for higher education, manufacturing and general services in southeastern North Dakota. The city as it exists today has developed north-south along the river in a linear form, although the original townsite was platted in a very compact form around the east-west Great Northern Railroad. Interstate Highway 29 connects Wahpeton to major cities in North Dakota, Minnesota and South Dakota while ND Highway 13 and MN Highway 210 connect it to Fergus Falls, MN.

Physically, the presence of three rivers - Red River of the North, Bois De Sioux and Ottertail - adds to the aesthetics of the Wahpeton-Breckenridge area and provides a natural setting for outdoor recreational activities. The city is bisected by railroad tracks and highways. Most of the residential development is concentrated on the north side of the city enveloping the North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) and the Circle of Nations School. On the south side, the residential neighborhood is intermixed with small industries and businesses and borders on the airport property which dominates the



south side. Wahpeton's "Main Street" district is located at the heart of the community along Dakota Avenue, which also functions as ND Highway 13. As the county seat for Richland County, downtown Wahpeton is also the center for county facilities. In addition to NDSCS and Circle of Nations, Wahpeton is also home to other regional destinations including Chahinkapa Park, Chahinkapa Zoo, Bois de Sioux Golf Course, Prairie Rose Carousel, Prairie Rose Chapel, and the Richland County Historical Museum.

Early Development

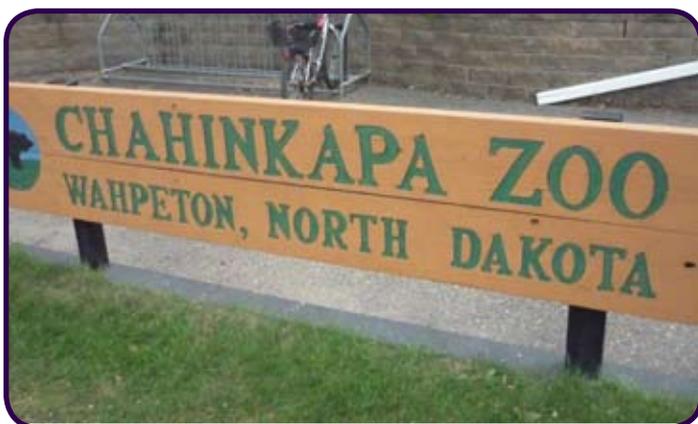
In 1871, at the confluence of the Ottertail and Bois de Sioux Rivers two new towns were born. One town, Breckenridge, was in Minnesota, and the other, Richville was in the new Dakota Territory which was soon to become North Dakota. Richville was a temporary name after Morgan Rich who had settled in the area in 1864. The westward expansion of the railroad coupled with new settlement policies of the U.S. government were the main reasons for formation of these towns across the river from each other. A post office was named after Richville in 1871 bringing mail service to the area. In 1873 the name Chahinkapa replaced Richville for a short time. About a year later the new name chosen was Wahpeton, meaning the "City of Leaves", named after dense vegetation along the river. The original town was platted in 1869 and began to fill in when the Great Northern (St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad) reached across the river. Before that, the dominant form of transportation was the famous Red River ox cart and the ferry boats for carrying people and goods with a history of service since the 1850s. Both of these forms of transportation disappeared after a short time as the railroad made other crossings across the Red River of the North.



In 1873 Wahpeton had a population of 300. Two years later the first school house was built near First Street and Second Avenue. By 1880 St. Paul and Pacific Railway extended westward and started the "Dakota Boom". New business including the first flour mill appeared in Wahpeton. The first court house was built in 1882 and the phone service arrived in 1884. Wahpeton was gearing up for a much larger population in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

What triggered the city population to grow by the mid 1880s was the first Dakota boom which brought hundreds of new settlers into the northern Dakota Territory. At this time Richland County enjoyed a population of 9,000 and Wahpeton was the service center of this new growing area. Wahpeton was organized as a town in 1882 and incorporated as a city in 1887. In about 15 years, the new town had four hotels, six boarding houses, two restaurants, one opera house, three banks, three newspapers, four lumber yards, fifteen saloons, one beer bottling manufacturer, four barbershops, three hardware stores, three clothing stores, two drug stores a number of general stores. The wooden sidewalks were installed in 1882 and the city began to look at water and sewer needs.

At the time when North Dakota gained statehood in 1889, the Methodist Church established the Red River Valley University in Wahpeton. The campus was bought by the State in 1903 and the new name became the North Dakota State School of Science. An Indian school (Circle of Nations) was established in 1904. The first city water service began in 1895. Wahpeton-Breckenridge Street Railway Co. organized in 1907 functioned until 1925 providing a regular linkage between Wahpeton and Breckenridge.



As the new century marched on, Wahpeton attracted new services and it grew to about 2,500 by 1910. By 1914, Richland County needed a new court house. 1918 brought hard pavement to make Dakota Avenue and Seventh Street more passable. A new library was built in 1923 and major additions to the schools began in 1929. During the Great Depression, Wahpeton grew to a population of 3,750 by 1940. Similar development took place in Breckenridge although the growth was slower. By 1940 Breckenridge had a population of 2,750 making a combined population of 6,500 for the two cities.

The arrival of the automobile heavily influenced the growth of the city, as it added to the mobility of population. The railroad was still the dominant form of transportation for longer distances, but the automobile definitely helped the population growth. Wahpeton continued its steady growth through the succeeding decades as a service center in southeastern North Dakota. Because of the uniqueness of its educational offerings by the College of Science, it also established itself as a training center for a wide range of vocations. In the 1970s, the city focused on manufacturing of agriculturally related products, a tradition which it has carried on since and is likely to continue in the future.

Natural Environment

The Wahpeton area is in the Agassiz Lake Plain physiographic part of the Central Lowland of the Upper Great Plains. The area is drained to the north via Bois De Sioux, Ottertail River and the Red River of the North. Precambrian granite consists of the basement underlying rock. The bedrock is overlain by pleistocene glacial drift with thicknesses ranging from 134 to 307 feet. Till and glaciolacustrine deposits act as confining boundaries and are generally not considered aquifers. Two major aquifers in the area are Wahpeton sand-buried aquifer and Wahpeton sand-plain aquifer. Wahpeton sand- buried valley aquifer underlies about 16 square miles and contains about 540,000 acre feet of ground water. The water quality varies from calcium bicarbonate to sodium bicarbonate type, it is hard and usually contains excessive iron. Wahpeton sand-plain aquifer underlies about 80 square miles with storage capacity of 610,000 acre feet of ground water. High capacity wells are possible in both of these aquifers.

The soils in the Wahpeton area largely consist of Fargo series with slow permeability. The soils are typically deep,

poorly drained, level to gently sloping and fine textured with high shrink-swell characteristics. The surface layer is black silty clay about eight inches thick, the subsoil is very dark gray, very firm clay about nine inches thick. This series consisting of Fargo Silty Clay, Fargo (silty) Clay Depressional, Fargo Silty Clay Till substratum is high in organic matter, with high fertility and high water capacity, but with very slow runoff.

The union of the Bois de Sioux River from the south and Ottertail River from the east form the Red River of the North in Wahpeton-Breckenridge area. This river system has a large drainage area. The Bois de Sioux River has a drainage area of 1,967 square miles and the Red River has a drainage area of 4,010 square miles. Being located in the bed of the Lake Agassiz glacial drift, the river is winding and flat. This flat configuration produces a flooding problem along the entire length of the river system including the areas within the two cities. The peak discharge, in cubic feet per second, varies substantially over time. For example, the peak discharge over a 10 year interval for the Red River is 5,700 cubic feet per second but rises to 11,000 cubic feet per second at 100 year intervals. For the Bois De Sioux River, the peak discharge from a 10 year interval to a 100 year interval rises from 3,670 cubic feet per second to 6,200 cubic feet per second. The severe flooding in Wahpeton occurs as a result of spring snow melt and/or rainfall. Major floods date back to 1897, about 25 years after the first settlement in the area. Other flooding occurrences include 1947, 1950, 1968, 1969, 1979, and 1989. The city presently enforces flood plain regulations which exclude permanent buildings and structures in the path of the potential floods.



Current Population & Household Demographics

Population

The current population of Wahpeton, based on the 2010 U.S. Census, is estimated at 7,766. The City's population declined by about 800 people or almost 10% from 2000 to 2010. Richland County, the City of Breckenridge, and Wilkin County experienced similar declines over the past decade. This down trend in Wahpeton's population follows small declines during the 1980s and 1990s.

Historically, the population of Wahpeton experienced consistent growth from its incorporation in 1887 to the 1980s. In contrast, Richland County's population peaked around 1930. Due to the declining farm population and the rural-to-urban migration trends, the County has been declining in population since the 1930s. As a result, Wahpeton's percentage of the County's population grew significantly during this time from 15% to almost 50%. Table 3.1 summarizes historical population trends for the City of Wahpeton and Richland County. Table 3.2 provides a comparison of population trends for selected similar size

cities in North Dakota, as well as Breckenridge, from 1960-2010. Over the past four decades, Wahpeton's population trend has been comparable to these similar size cities with the exception of the most recent decade. For the 2000-2010 time period, Wahpeton experienced the largest decline, followed by Breckenridge.

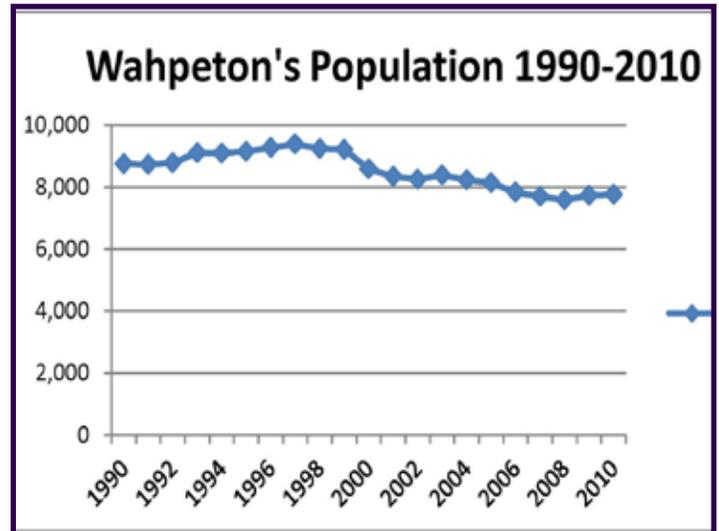


Figure 3.1: Wahpeton's population trend 1990-2010

Table 3.1: Population Trends 1890-2010, Wahpeton & Richland County

Year	City of Wahpeton	% Change	Richland County	% Change	Wahpeton as a % of Richland County
1890	1,510		10,751		14.0%
1900	2,228	47.5%	17,387	61.7%	12.8%
1910	2,467	10.7%	19,659	13.1%	12.5%
1920	3,069	24.4%	20,887	6.2%	14.7%
1930	3,176	3.5%	21,008	0.6%	15.1%
1940	3,747	18.0%	20,519	-2.3%	18.3%
1950	5,125	36.8%	19,865	-3.2%	25.8%
1960	5,876	14.7%	18,824	-5.2%	31.2%
1970	7,076	20.4%	18,089	-3.9%	39.1%
1980	9,064	28.1%	19,207	6.2%	47.2%
1990	8,751	-3.5%	18,148	-5.5%	48.2%
2000	8,586	-1.9%	17,998	-0.8%	47.7%
2010	7,766	-9.6%	16,321	-9.3%	47.6%

Source: U.S. Census

Table 3.2: Population Trends 1960-2010, Selected North Dakota Cities

Cities	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	1970 -1980	1980 - 1990	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2010
Wahpeton	5,876	7,076	9,064	8,751	8,586	7,766	28.1%	-3.5%	-1.9%	-9.6%
Devils Lake	6,299	7,078	7,442	7,782	7,222	7,141	5.1%	4.6%	-7.2%	-1.1%
Dickinson	9,971	12,405	15,924	16,097	16,010	17,787	28.4%	1.1%	-0.5%	11.1%
Valley City	7,809	7,843	7,774	7,163	6,826	6,585	-0.9%	-7.9%	-4.7%	-3.5%
Williston	11,866	11,280	13,336	13,131	12,512	14,716	18.2%	-1.5%	-4.7%	17.6%
Breckenridge, MN		4,200	3,909	3,708	3,559	3,386	-6.9%	-5.1%	-4.0%	-4.9%

Source: U.S. Census

Number of Households

Wahpeton was estimated to have approximately 3,100 households in 2009, which is a 4.8% decline from 2000. Richland County, the City of Breckenridge, and Wilkin County experienced similar declines over the past decade. Table 3.3 provides a comparison of number of households for Wahpeton, Breckenridge, Richland County, and Wilkin County for 1990-2000.

Average Household Size

In general, average household size has been trending down for in recent decades. In Wahpeton, average household size declined from 2.49 to 2.28 in the 1990s. Based on estimates for 2009, it appears that average household size rebounded back to its 1990 level in Wahpeton. Table 3.4 provides a comparison of average household size trends for Wahpeton, Breckenridg, Richland County, and Wilkin County for 1990-2000.

Table 3.3: Number of Households Trends

	1990	2000	2009	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2009
Wahpeton	2,967	3,254	3,098	9.7%	-4.8%
Richland County	6,518	6,885	6,677	5.6%	-3.0%
Breckenridge	1,477	1,438	1,343	-2.6%	-6.6%
Wilkin County	2,805	2,752	2,623	-1.9%	-4.7%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 Housing Study

Population by Age

Table 3.5 shows population change from 2000-2010 based on U.S. Census data for year 2000 and Claritas' 2010 estimate from the 2010 Wahpeton-Breckenridge Housing Study. Three age groups are estimated to grow in population between 2000-2010: 45-54, 55-64, and 85 & over. The 15-20 age group has the largest decline with a loss of almost 600 people, which is a 35.2% decline. The age groups estimated to have the next largest declines are 21-24, 35-44, and 75-84.

Annual Household Income

Annual household estimates in the 2010 Housing Study found that the number of households with annual incomes of \$50,000 or more has increased over the past ten years, while the number of households with incomes less than \$50,000 has decreased. The median household income in 2010 was estimated at \$41,056, compared to \$33,097 in 2000, an increase of 24%. Table 3.6 shows annual household income for 2000 and 2010.

Table 3.4: Avg Household Size Trends

	1990	2000	2009	1990 - 2000	2000 - 2009
Wahpeton	2.49	2.28	2.49	-0.21	+0.21
Richland County	2.55	2.43	2.49	-0.12	+0.06
Breckenridge	2.43	2.38	2.40	-0.05	+0.02
Wilkin County	2.63	2.54	2.46	-0.09	-0.08

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 Housing Study

Table 3.5: Population by Age 2000-2010

Age	2000 U.S. Census	2010 Estimate	Change in Population 2000-2010
0-14	1,494	1,254	-240(-16.1%)
15-20	1,672	1,083	-598(-35.2%)
21-24	727	510	-217(-29.8%)
25-34	980	899	-81(-8.3%)
35-44	1,101	824	-277(-25.2%)
45-54	958	974	16(1.7%)
55-64	542	833	291(53.7%)
65-74	463	364	-99(-21.4%)
75-84	427	277	-150(-35.1%)
85 & over	222	251	29(13.1%)
Total	8,586	7,269	-1,317 (-15.3%)

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 Housing Study

Table 3.6: Annual Household (HH) Income
2000-2010

Household Income	No. of HHs 2000 U.S. Census	No. of HHs 2010 Estimate	Change in Household Income 2000-2010
\$0-\$14,999	777	530	-247(-31.8%)
\$15,000- \$24,999	439	371	-68(-15.5%)
\$25,000- \$34,999	506	328	-178(-35.2%)
\$35,000- \$49,999	681	560	-121(-17.8%)
\$50,000- \$74,999	562	628	66(11.7%)
\$100,000- \$149,999	153	268	115(75.2%)
\$75,000- \$99,999	104	156	52(50.0%)
\$150,000+	30	69	39(130.0%)
Total	3,252	2,910	-342(-10.5%)

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 Housing Study

2030 Projections

Projections Approach

In order to prepare an effective long-term Comprehensive Plan for the City, it is necessary to establish projections for the City’s population and number of households in 2030. In particular, the City needs to identify the general range of additional households that are anticipated between now and 2030 to be able to guide an adequate quantity of land and locations for residential land uses to accommodate the anticipated housing growth needs. Our approach to this task is essentially as follows:

- analyze the trends in Wahpeton’s/Breckenridge’s population, number of households, and average household;
- understand existing 2030 projections that are relevant to Wahpeton, such as the 2010 Housing Study for Wahpeton/Breckenridge and U.S. Census Bureau projections;
- understand trends and available projections at the county and state level;
- develop alternative population projection scenarios between now and 2030;
- develop alternative projections for number of households and average household size;
- identify quantity of residential land needed for the projected number of households;
- identify the preferred land development areas to accommodate the anticipated housing growth. space, housing, and community/economic development.

Assumptions & Findings

1. The 2010 Wahpeton/Breckenridge Housing Study estimates population loss from 2000 to 2009 for Wahpeton (-15.3%), Richland County (-10.9%), Breckenridge (-9.7%), and Wilkin County (-12.6%).
2. Wahpeton’s population (annual change) has been declining on average since 1990, see Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Average Annual Population Trends

	20-Year Trend	15-Year Trend	10-Year Trend	5-Year Trend
Annual Change in Number of Residents	-49	-92	-82	-73
Annual Change in %	-0.6%	-1.1%	-1.0%	-0.9%

3. In line with the ongoing rural-to-urban migration trend in the U.S., Richland County has been generally losing population since 1940 while Wahpeton continued to grow until the 1980s. Since 1990, Wahpeton’s population loss has been pretty similar to that of Richland County.
4. In spite of Wahpeton’s population loss from 1990 to 2000, the number of households continued to increase. However, from 2000 to 2010, the continued population loss also resulted in a decrease in the number of households.
5. Average household size has been decreasing in Wahpeton and Richland County, in line with national trends.
6. Based on the 2010 Wahpeton/Breckenridge Housing Study, population and number of households will continue to decline through 2015.
7. U.S. Census Bureau is projecting North Dakota’s population to continue decreasing through 2030; -0.8% (2000-2010), -1.0% (2010-2020), -3.7% (2020-2030).
8. The North Dakota State Data Center (NDSDC) projected that Richland County’s population will continue to decrease through 2020 by -2.0%. Based on the significant 2000-2010 decline in population for Wahpeton (-9.6%) and Richland County (-9.3%), this projection made in 2003 may be a bit conservative.
9. The NDSDC identifies three leading trends that are influencing the state’s future population: rural-to-urban migration, out-of-state migration of young adults & young families, and an increasing proportion of elderly residents. Based on the demographic findings in the 2010 Housing Study, all of these trends appear to be impacting Wahpeton.
10. Based on local, regional and national population trends and projections, Wahpeton should plan for its population to decline somewhat or possibly stabilize between now and 2030.

2030 Population Projection Scenarios

In order to identify a reasonable 2030 population projection, we explored several alternative population growth/decline scenarios based on five-year time periods. Three of these population projection scenarios are below. These scenarios give us a range of population numbers to consider for 2030. The worst case scenario explored is Scenario A, which is to extend the current trend of declining population out to 2030 and results in a 2030 population of 6,352 residents. Scenario B shows the City's population current declining trend softening after 2015 and then stabilizing through 2030, which results in a population of 7,384 in 2030. The best case scenario explored is Scenario C, showing the City's population stabilizing in 2015, then growing from 2015 to 2030, and resulting in a 2030 population of approximately 8,800 residents.

Recommended 2030 Population & Household Projections

Based on the population projection scenarios explored, the 2030 population is projected to be in the range of 7,400 to 8,800 residents, essentially the same or fewer residents than today. In the most optimistic scenario, it is not anticipated that Wahpeton's 2030 population will exceed its previous peak population of almost 10,000. Based on this population projection and the 2010 Wahpeton-Breckenridge Housing Study's findings and projections, 2030 number of households is projected to be in the range of 2,800 to 3,500 households.

Table 3.8: Three Alternative 2030 Projection Scenarios

A. Current Trend of Population Decline through 2030

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	7,766	7,385	7,023	6,679	6,352
5-Year Change	-366	-381	-362	-344	-327
5-Year Change %	-4.5%	-4.9%	-4.9%	-4.9%	-4.9%
Annual Change	-73	-76	-72	-69	-65
Annual Change %	-1.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%	-1.0%

B. Stabilizing Population after 2015

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	7,766	7,385	7,203	7,203	7,384
5-Year Change	-366	-381	-183	0	182
5-Year Change %	-4.5%	-4.9%	-2.5%	0%	2.5%
Annual Change	-73	-76	-36	0	36
Annual Change %	-1.0%	-1.0%	-0.5%	0%	0.5%

C. Slight Population Growth after 2015

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
Population	7,766	7,385	7,572	7,958	8,786
5-Year Change	-366	-381	186	386	828
5-Year Change %	-4.5%	-4.9%	2.5%	5.0%	10.4%
Annual Change	-73	-76	37	77	166
Annual Change %	-1.0%	-1.0%	0.5%	1.0%	2.0%

Community Input

As part of updating Wahpeton's Comprehensive Plan, Hoisington Koegler Group (HKGi) planning consultants facilitated stakeholder listening sessions over a two-day period in November 2010. The purpose of these meetings was to gain input upfront from key stakeholder groups regarding the issues and opportunities confronting the community today and in the future. HKGi coordinated with City Staff to organize and schedule these listening sessions. In total, there were 16 stakeholder listening sessions, including small group and individual meetings, involving approximately 70 citizens. The intent is to use the input from these stakeholder listening sessions to guide the updating of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The comments and issues are organized and summarized around the following general topic areas relating to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Land Use, Development & Growth
- Housing & Neighborhoods
- Business & Employment
- Transportation
- Recreation, Parks & Trails
- Public Facilities – Civic, Educational & Cultural
- Public Utilities

A full summary of community input from the stakeholder listening sessions can be found in Appendix A.

Land Use, Development & Growth

Appropriate land use balance & patterns

In general, stakeholders were most concerned about ensuring that future land uses enabled adequate job growth. Future land use issues identified were adding modern/professional office buildings and ensuring that expansion of industrial businesses is done environmentally.

Quality/character of development

The major concerns about development/redevelopment in the community are the future character of commercial development along Highway 210, the character of recent development in the city, and the perceived City regulation barriers to development.

Attracting community growth

Stakeholders identified a number of issues related to community growth. The biggest issue identified was the

large number of Wahpeton employees that do not live in the city. The primary reasons for this situation seem to be the lack of desirable jobs for spouses of employees, more desirable community options outside of Wahpeton, and limited housing options in Wahpeton. Other factors limiting community growth that were identified include competing places to live (Lake Country, Fargo, Fergus Falls), seniors moving out of town to be near kids and/or senior services, and quality of life gaps in Wahpeton. Some concerns that Wahpeton lacks some quality of life amenities, such as natural amenities, vibrant downtown, shopping, entertainment, senior services, etc. These quality of life issues may result in people not choosing to move to Wahpeton and residents choosing to move elsewhere.

Housing & Neighborhoods

Senior housing options

In general, concerns about the availability of good senior housing options as well as essential services for senior residents in the community.

Downtown housing options

Stakeholders expressed interest in the City supporting the development of unique and desirable housing options in downtown Wahpeton.

Other housing gaps

In addition to senior housing and downtown housing, the City would benefit from expanding the types of housing options in Wahpeton, including housing that would attract people currently commuting to Wahpeton for jobs to move here, better rental housing, and fixed-up older houses in the heart of town.

Neighborhood challenges

The City has the potential to improve the community's existing neighborhoods including efforts to improve existing older houses and adding neighborhood amenities, such as trails, retail businesses and public gathering places.

Business & Employment

Downtown physical environment – quality of buildings & streets

There are many concerns with the continuing deterioration of downtown's physical environment and the inadequate

reinvestment in older/historic buildings, storefront facades, streets, and sidewalks. The City is not seen as taking care of its maintenance responsibilities in downtown, including sidewalks and City-owned buildings, most notably the old City Hall building and Town Center Square.

Downtown retail – mix of stores

Stakeholders were concerned about the declining mix of retail stores and restaurants downtown and increasing store vacancies. They also expressed their desires for keeping businesses downtown, such as attracting chain stores to redevelopment sites, creating links to the college, and increasing jobs in downtown.

General retail challenges and opportunities for Wahpeton

Input was mostly positive regarding the recent opening of the Walmart store along Highway 210, which is outside of downtown Wahpeton. Many stakeholders felt that Walmart makes available many basic retail goods that were no longer available within Wahpeton. The major concerns regarding retail in Wahpeton is the challenge of attracting additional desirable retail stores to the city, since it is a smaller city and currently declining in population. Potential competition between downtown retail and the Highway 210 commercial area was not a big concern.

Employment environment

Stakeholders placed a lot of emphasis on the need for Wahpeton to continue focusing on job growth. Major employers include large industrial businesses and the various schools. The major concerns identified were the necessity of jobs to prevent further declines in the city's population, limited job opportunities for spouses of new employees in Wahpeton, the high level of Wahpeton employees that commute from outside the city, and the challenges of shift work at the large industrial employers.

Industrial environment

The community's large industrial business sector is highly valued by stakeholders. There is a strong relationship between many of the industrial businesses in Wahpeton and NDSCS students and programs. The major concerns regarding the industrial environment in Wahpeton is the decline in local businesses and small entrepreneurial businesses, need for diversification of businesses, limited incentives for expansion, and limited workforce capacity within the community.

Medical services environment

Although Wahpeton residents do have access to some medical services within the community, including Breckenridge, many specialty medical services require travel to Fargo or Fergus Falls. The major concerns were some gaps in essential medical services (such as dialysis) available within the community and the challenges of arranging transportation to Fargo or Fergus Falls for specialty medical services, particularly for seniors.

Transportation

Input regarding transportation identified the community's multi-modal assets, including great railroad, airport, and interstate highway access. The major concerns with the community's transportation system are the need for improved walk/bike access within downtown and to the new Hwy 210 commercial area and improved public transportation options (within Wahpeton and to services in Fargo and Fergus Falls).

Recreation, Parks & Trails

Parks, walking & biking trails

The community's parks and recreation facilities are viewed as major community assets, including the new levee trail. The biggest opportunities identified were filling in gaps in the trails network, particularly for biking around the community and connecting to the new commercial area along Highway 210.

Access to the river for recreation

Opportunities were identified for improving access to the Red River for recreational uses, including canoeing, camping, and birdwatching. Although the new levee is definitely a major asset, opportunities for making the levee easier to cross between the community and the river should be explored.

Public Facilities – Civic, Educational & Cultural

Library

The City's library was identified as a highly valued community asset that has significant potential to be expanded and improved. The library's assets include its

historic building, outdoor lawn “village green”, technology resources, event programming, public gathering place function, partnership with college’s library, and building expansion potential.

Public gathering places

A number of public gathering places were identified in the community, including both indoor and outdoor facilities. Many of them are indoor at the college or the community schools. There appears to be an opportunity to create more outdoor public gathering places within the community, particularly in the downtown area. The new Twin Towns Gardeners’ Market held on the library’s lawn once a week created a new public gathering place/event.

Civic center

Downtown Wahpeton was originally designed with a traditional civic center and County seat that includes the County Courthouse, City Hall, and City Library organized around a central lawn. This civic center has been weakened by the vacant & deteriorating City Hall building to the east, the surface parking lot to the west, and the closing off of 5th Street. The 2006 downtown plan recommended that downtown Wahpeton-Breckenridge be positioned as the social gathering place and hub of the Twin Towns region. Retaining the historic civic center as a functioning and beautiful place would strengthen the historic character of the community and the vibrancy of downtown Wahpeton.

Arts

A number of arts assets were identified by stakeholders. The sum of these individual entities does not seem to add up to a strong arts community or center in Wahpeton. The arts initiatives involve Wahpeton and Breckenridge, as well as NDSCS. The 2006 downtown plan recommended that the City should work with the Three Rivers Art Council to create an arts center in downtown Wahpeton. The future art gallery which is planned for the old National Bank building on Dakota Avenue is an opportunity to begin creating an arts district in downtown Wahpeton. This downtown arts district should be coordinated with Breckenridge and NDSCS as well.

Cultural

A number of assets that define the community’s culture were identified by stakeholders. These assets are not managed by a single entity, so preserving and enhancing them requires coordination across agencies (county,

city, park board, college, seniors, etc.) and community grassroots efforts.

Education

Stakeholders identified the community’s educational assets, including the state college, county vo-tech center, public K-12 school system, and private schools. The biggest issues identified were declining students, both at the college and K-12 public schools, building vacancies & reinvestment needs, and continued sharing of facilities between the schools and the general public.

Entertainment

In general, stakeholders expressed concerns that there is a lack of entertainment or “things to do” in Wahpeton, particularly for teenagers, young adults, and seniors.

Tourism

Tourism opportunities were mentioned by some stakeholders, focused mainly on strategies for marketing the community.

Public Utilities & Services

If the community continues to pursue expansion of its industrial sector, there may be some constraints posed by utility capacities, costs, and environmental impacts.