



**Study for the Metropolitan Area of:
Fargo and West Fargo North Dakota;
Moorhead and Dilworth, Minnesota
Four-City Framework Plan**

City of Dilworth



**CITIES OF DILWORTH, FARGO,
MOORHEAD, AND WEST FARGO**

**REGIONAL FRAMEWORK PLAN
*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

November 2005

Executive Summary

Purpose of the Study

Developing the sports facility Framework Study is a basic conceptual structure for the development and location of sports venues in the four city metro area. The concept of the study is to determine the needs, available resources and community support for additional sports facilities taking the entire metro area resources into consideration versus the individual cities and school districts. The metro area sports facilities were analyzed from a metro area perspective to determine the level of service each type of sports facility identified through the community input process. Recommendations for the type of facilities and amenities as well as a general location for the facilities were determined as the outcome of the Framework Plan.

Vision and Mission

Through the citizens involvement process and survey data, an understanding of the issues and a vision for service was determined that reflects where the four city metropolitan area wants to be or become in the future. The vision is to deliver sports related services for the entire regional market area with the same equity levels for all users within the metro area regardless of the city and/or school district boundaries. This can be accomplished through an active collaborative effort between all appropriate agencies working together to attain this vision and goal.

Methodology of the Planning Process

This project has been guided by a project team that met with the consultant team and provided input for, and review of, the document. Staff also spent considerable time working with the consultant to edit and prepare the final draft. This team effort has resulted in a Framework Plan that fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates the local knowledge and institutional history that only community members can provide. The project consisted of the following tasks:

Needs Assessment:

- review of each of the four cities historical information;
- consideration of the profile of the community and demographics, including anticipated population growth;
- extensive community involvement effort including focus groups, meetings with key stakeholders, community wide public meetings and a statistically valid community interest and opinion survey;
- identification of alternative providers of recreation services to provide insight regarding the market opportunities in the area for potential new facilities and services; and
- research of trends and statistics related to American lifestyles to help guide the efforts of programming staff.

Service Analysis:

- interviews with staff to provide access to City records, along with insight into the current practices and experiences of the City in serving its citizens;
- analysis of service addressing the identified sports facilities in the Metro area.

Inventory:

- inventory of sports facilities using existing mapping, staff interviews and on site visits to verify amenities and assess the condition of the amenities and surrounding areas.

Assessment:

- measurement of the current delivery of service using the GRASP™ Level of Service Analysis and allowing for a target level of service to be determined that is both feasible and aligned with the desires of citizens as expressed through the citizen survey. This analysis is also represented graphically through mapping at both a neighborhood and community level;
- exploration of finance and funding mechanisms to support development and sustainability of the system.

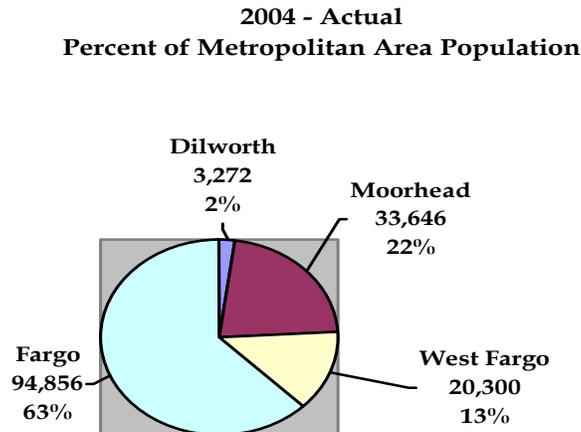
Recommendations and Implementation Strategies:

- identification of type of sports facilities and amenities necessary to increase the level of service expected by the metro area residents, what they are willing to support and a general location of these sports facilities; and
- identification of methods of collaboration between agencies to provide total equity for usage by all metro area participants regardless of City and/or school district residency; and
- identification of funding source potentials to support the implementation of the Framework Plan.

Market Analysis - Dilworth, Fargo, Moorhead, and West Fargo

Service Area and Population

This analysis includes five service areas: the cities of Dilworth, Fargo, Moorhead, and West Fargo. Additionally, a service area that combines all four of the above mentioned cities is included. This service area will be used as an average for comparisons and is referred to as the Metropolitan Area of Study. The 2004 estimated population for these cities is as follows: Dilworth 3,272; Fargo 94,856; Moorhead 33,646; West Fargo 20,300; and Metropolitan Area of Study 152,074.

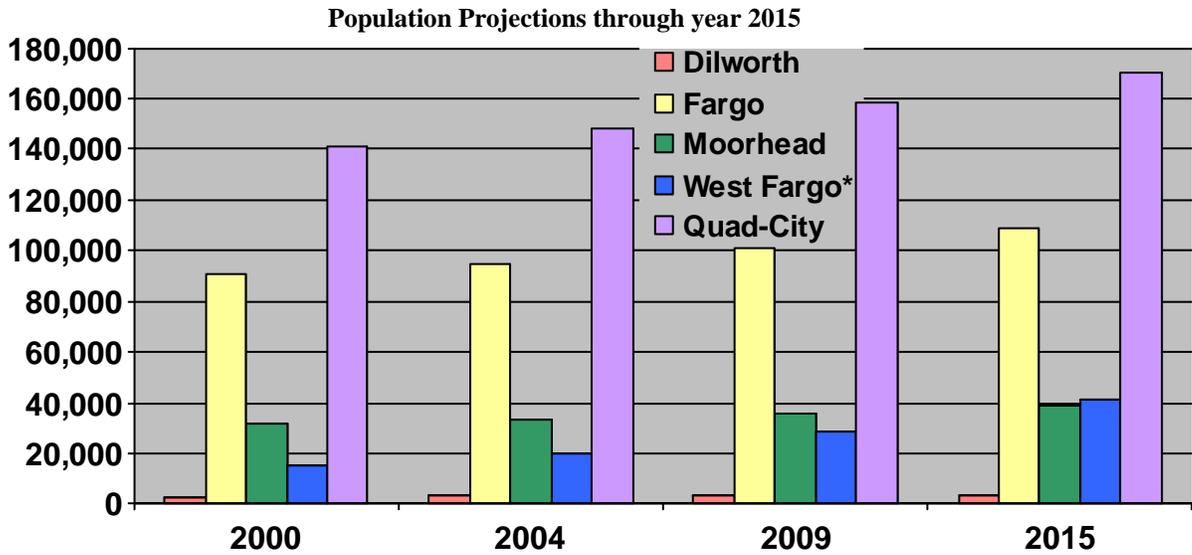


Household Income

According to ESRI Business Information Solutions, the 2004 estimated median household incomes for the service areas were as follows: Dilworth \$40,153; Fargo \$42,045; Moorhead \$41,469; West Fargo \$51,839; and Metropolitan Area of Study \$42,988. The states of North Dakota and Minnesota were \$40,503 and \$56,724 respectively, and the United States was \$48,124.

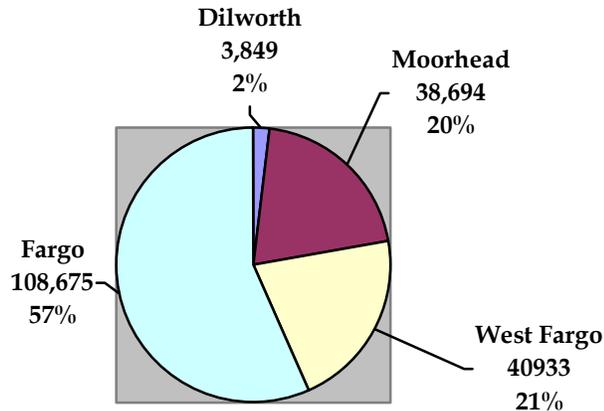
Population Forecasts

Although we can never know the future with certainty, it is helpful to make assumptions about it for economic reasons. ESRI Business Information Solutions has produced the following results for 2004 and 2009 projections. Using the 2004-2009 annual rate of growth provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions, GreenPlay has made population projections for 2015. West Fargo projections were generated by an annual growth rate provided by the West Fargo Planning Department.



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions and GreenPlay
*West Fargo Planning Department

**2015- Estimate
Percent of Metropolitan Area Population**



Stakeholder Input – Citizen Survey

The communities of Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth conducted a statistically valid Community Attitude and Interest Survey during July and August of 2005 to determine priorities for fitness, sports, recreation and aquatics services to serve the residents in the four communities. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

A random sample of 3,504 households was surveyed in the mentioned communities. The goal was to obtain a total 600 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with 701 surveys having been completed. The results of the response have achieved a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least $\pm 3.7\%$.

Highlights from Survey

Facility Needs and Importance

The most striking finding to come out of the results of this survey is the consistency of the response between the citizens of the Cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth. Although the exact order may not be the same the outdoor and indoor facilities identified as most needed and most important were:

1. Walking/biking/recreation trails (not considered a sports facility)
2. Indoor fitness and exercise facilities
3. Outdoor swimming pools/leisure pools
4. Indoor leisure pool (Moorhead Only)

Programming Needs and Importance

As with outdoor and indoor facilities respondents from Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth showed consistency when being surveyed about programming needs and importance. Once again the exact order may not be the same for each city but the top programming needs were:

1. Fitness and wellness programs
2. Water fitness programs
3. Youth learn to swim programs
4. Golf programs and tournaments

Indoor Programming Space Priorities

Again, as with facilities and programming, respondents from each surveyed city were consistent with what they would use most in an indoor recreation facility. The top priorities for indoor recreation spaces were:

1. Walking and jogging track
2. Leisure pool
3. Weight room/cardiovascular equipment area

Funding Priorities

Respondents were asked what they would most willing to fund with tax dollars. Once again the survey delivered a consistence message regardless of what the city the responses came from. Facilities that people would be most willing to fund with tax dollars were:

1. Renovate walking and biking trails
2. Develop a new indoor recreation center
3. Development of new trails

Willingness to Travel to Recreate

The survey demonstrated that although respondents have the need for additional recreation facilities, their willingness to travel is limited to the state in which they reside. People who live in Fargo and West Fargo are willing to travel to each other's community for recreational purposes but are far less willing to travel to Moorhead and Dilworth and vise versa. *The Red River is considered to be a major barrier to potential users participating in the adjoining state.*

Summary of Findings

The survey points out clearly that there is a need for outdoor and indoor recreational facilities and that those needs are consistent from City to City. The same can be said in regards to how people responded to the needs for programming and indoor recreational spaces. People's unwillingness to travel presents a problem in that if new facilities are built in Fargo or West Fargo, people from Moorhead and Dilworth may not necessarily be willing to travel to then and visa versa.

Recommendations and Action Plans

The results of the community survey ranked the top priorities in the metro area as well as individual cities. The top ranking amenities were included in the analysis and recommendations. The amenities that ranked lower in the survey were not addressed in the analysis and recommendations based on the lack of community support for those amenities such as ice rinks, ball fields, competitive pools, aquatic centers, racquetball courts, gymnastic space, diving well, rock climbing wall, etc. Trails ranked the highest priority but were not included as a sports facility. According to the survey, the respondents indicated that there is a need for indoor fitness and exercise as well as aquatics facilities.

North Dakota - Facilities

A new recreation center is recommended with fitness/weight machine area, exercise room, indoor/outdoor leisure pool, gymnasium, walking track, multi-use classrooms/meeting rooms, game room, locker rooms, etc. These amenities will create a well rounded facility that can be utilized by the communities West of the Red River in a multipurpose type of operation. The new recreation center should be located in the high growth area in South of Interstate 94 and West of Interstate 29. Collaboration with all recreational service providers can determine the appropriate entity for the operation of this facility as well as the opportunities for a joint capital venture. The joint capital venture can be determined via population of the cities and/or determined by the potential users of the facility.

Minnesota - Facilities

A second new recreation center type of facility is recommended with fitness/weight machine area, exercise room, indoor instructional/lap pool, gymnasium, walking track, multi-use classrooms/meeting rooms, game room, locker rooms, etc. These amenities will create a well rounded facility that can be utilized by the communities East of the Red River in a multipurpose type of operation. This second priority facility could lend itself to be a great growth location for the Minnesota residents. The facility should be located in the future growth area of Southeast Moorhead as a need and method of planning due to the Red River barrier identified in the survey as well as the fact that there is not a recreational facility with these amenities in Moorhead. Collaboration with all recreational service providers can determine the appropriate entity for the operation of this facility as well as the opportunities for a joint capital venture. The joint capital venture can be determined via population of the cities and/or determined by the potential users of the facility.

Feasibility Studies

In both Fargo/West Fargo and Moorhead/Dilworth an indoor recreational facility has been recommended based on findings from the Citizen Input Survey. The next step for the four City area is conduct Feasibility Studies to determine if building and operating a new indoor recreational facility is economically practical. Components of the study include the following.

- **Public Outreach** – To obtain additional input from stakeholders, other providers of recreation services, potential users and the general public regarding the development of the facility. Stakeholder group invited may include representatives of organizations who may have an interest in hearing about the project and providing input from their unique perspective; public safety; library; chamber of commerce; business community groups; public schools; higher education, government; etc.
- **Market Analysis** - To provide an analysis of community characteristics and comparable data to determine the appropriateness of facility components, fees and charges. Data that should be reviewed will consist of a demographics analysis, analysis of relevant recreation and lifestyle trends, admission fees (daily, punch pass, annual) of selected comparable facilities located within the region, alternative fitness provider's membership fees and charges (i.e. Gold's Gym, 24 Hour Fitness, etc.).
- **Revenue Projections** – To project potential revenues based on program and building use.
- **Operations** – To determine operational structure including program and building use plan staffing models, management strategies, maintenance staffing levels, hours of operation, contractual service needs, pricing and cost recovery models.
- **Site Analysis** – To determine the best location for the recreation centers based on purchase price, development costs, accessibility, marketability, etc.
- **Conceptual Design** – To determine the potential amenities, adjacencies, square footage, can capital cost estimates.

Creation of a Sports Commission - A Regional Advisory Committee

The Sports Commission should consist of representation from the four cities, the three or four school districts, and one representative from each sport that will act as an advisory committee to fairly and equitably support the management, operation scheduling and fee policies of the regions' facilities in some capacity. Part of their charge is to create partnerships, and assure equitable use and access for the region as a whole.

The independent Sports Commission should be "advisory" only in nature that will be responsible for the fair and equitable allocation of access, resources and fees. The city where the facility(ies) will be located should have jurisdiction, use their own taxing authority, hire staff and manage the recreation center. A collaborative effort for sharing the capital costs as well as operational costs should be determined based on the population of each city that wishes to have their residents to be able to participate without non-resident rates. This is crucial as most team sports can not be determined as a resident team or a non-resident team as they typically have participants from all over the metro area. If both facilities are planned, the cities of each state can participate in the collaboration of the recreation facility in their own state.

Pricing and Cost Recovery Philosophy

None of the four cities have a policy which could be adapted or modeled for the Sports Commission. Each city has different fee structures, residency requirements or preferences, cost recovery goals, subsidization methods and funding levels. The Sports Commission will need to establish or contribute to the pricing and cost recovery philosophy of the regional facility(ies). Establishing a pricing and cost recovery philosophy will serve as an implementation guide. The philosophy will establish governing boards', commissions' and/or councils' buy-in for revenue goals and pricing. It will keep the policies from straying or having unintended consequences. A pricing policy will determine a fair, equitable and simple pricing structure that can be applied consistently throughout the Metro area. Some of the benefits of having equitable fees is that it creates value for the services and facilities as well as allowing an equitable ration of high demand services and facilities throughout the Metro area.

Other Management Policies and Tools

Rental Policy

Each city has different fee structures, rental policies, residency requirements or preferences. The Sports Commission should address rental fees and policies to assist in developing a universal and consistent rental policy that will work for all agencies in the Metro area.

Fee Reduction/Scholarship Policy

West Fargo and Moorhead have fee reduction or scholarship policies in place that could be adapted or modeled for the Sports Commission. Ability to pay is best dealt with as an implementation issues, separate and apart from pricing and cost recovery. The Sports Commission will need to determine if a fund will be established to address the loss of revenue actualized by fee reductions and scholarships. This would be a great opportunity for a partnership, corporate sponsorships or philanthropic endeavor.

Program Goals and Evaluation Methods

The Sports Commission will need to establish program goals and methods of evaluating the success of the sports programs and services. Through the use of participant feedback, program evaluations, customer comment cards, and registration and usage statistics, the Commission can monitor performance other than monetarily. Available computer technology will provide many resources for evaluation of data.

Information Technology Strategy

The Sports Commission will need to develop an IT Strategic Plan for the research and implementation of available technology to include an analysis of needs, existing systems within the agency(ies), integration with finance department's software (or not), and available park and recreation application software like point of sale, program registration, pass and membership management, identification cards and facility access, on-line and phone registration, league scheduling, locker rentals, reservation/rentals, web-based marketing. There are several providers of this type of software.

Conclusions

It would seem that with the results of the survey expressing community needs, in consideration for current City development plans, the YMCA's long range plans, other providers within the region, the needs of the school districts, and the Red River being determined as a participation barrier, the recommendations for a well rounded recreation center in North Dakota as well as Minnesota fulfills the Framework Plan for sport facilities.

The citizen survey does not support the addition of new indoor ice rinks but supports a need to maintain the current levels of service for indoor ice rinks. The survey does not support the addition of an indoor competitive pool but supports an indoor/outdoor leisure pool with capabilities to increase instructional swimming as well as exercise swimming.

The future growth areas have been addressed as great locations for the multipurpose recreational center in Fargo (South of Interstate 94 and West of Interstate 29) as well as in the Southeast growth area of Moorhead. These recreation centers should include fitness/weight machine area, exercise room, indoor/outdoor leisure pool, gymnasium, walking track, multi-use classrooms/meeting rooms, game room, locker rooms, etc.

With the partnership opportunities, the potential funding sources, the support of the community for these types of facilities, the creation of a Sports Commission to supervise the equity of facility allocations as well as fee equity for all sports venues in the metro area, the accessibility from the entire metro area, and the willingness to collaborate, these facilities should be well utilized in the future of the entire region.

Feasibility studies for each of these facilities should be conducted to determine the actual amenities, size and number of amenities, capital costs, operational costs, partnership opportunities, and a site analysis. Although these facilities may be similar, total duplication of amenities can be avoided and addressed through the feasibility study.

An example of designing complimentary facilities rather than facilities that are exactly the same is the ability to have indoor aquatic features that are different and compliment each other can be achieved with a different ratio of leisure water versus instructional and exercise water.

Collaboration with all recreational service providers can determine the appropriate entity for the operation of these recreational facilities as well as the opportunities for a joint capital venture. The joint capital venture can be determined via population of the cities and/or determined by the potential users of the facilities.

The school districts in the Metro area should collaborate with all other recreational and sports service providers to develop maximum use of existing recreational facilities. The school districts should also collaborate with all recreational/sports service providers when planning and/or designing new school facilities or renovations to existing facilities to maximize recreational sports venues for the entire Metro area. Joint capital ventures may be a potential opportunity in the future to increase sports venues in the Metro area collectively. The Sports Commission can also prove to be a valuable resource to help determine future needs and support for joint ventures.