

## **Downtown investment accelerates**

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Two stories on the front page of The Forum this week confirmed that the rejuvenation of Fargo's downtown is continuing at a healthy pace. Significant investments in two large projects – and several smaller ones – are speeding the transformation of downtown, which began about a decade ago when local developers and the city of Fargo took full advantage incentives in North Dakota Renaissance Zone legislation. The two recent and prominent

projects are 300 Broadway, just south of the historic Fargo Theatre, and Cityscapes Plaza on the site of the old Lark Theater on First Avenue North. Both are impressive additions to a revitalized central business and entertainment district. The Broadway

retail and condo development carries a price tag of \$5.4 million and is the brainchild of The Kilbourne Group, which has several downtown projects either completed or under way. The new project fronts Broadway and includes 17 residential condos, 8,000 square feet of street-level retail and 18 underground parking spaces. An expansion of the Fargo Theatre is part of the project. Cityscapes Development in concert with North Dakota State University is building the First Avenue North complex of apartments that will house 220 students on the top four floors, and 40,000 square feet for retail, a fitness center, cafes and possibly an upscale restaurant on the main level, according to the developer. The \$18 million development, which also includes underground parking, would not be possible without the tax incentives available in the city's Renaissance Zone.

The two projects are transformative. The gaping hole in Broadway that had been a parking lot is filled with a building that enhances an entire block. The First Avenue North development will convert the greater portion of a block that was declining into blight into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown neighborhood, in effect, extending the success of Broadway's rejuvenation a couple of blocks west. Cityscapes Plaza helps connect Broadway with a district that includes the NDSU downtown campus in the former book supply building, the Plains Art Museum and the Quentin N. Burdick U.S. Courthouse. After 10 years, Fargo's Renaissance Zone is an example of a public/private partnership that works even better than its visionary sponsors in the Legislature anticipated. Look for more of the same in the next 10 years. Forum editorials represent the opinion of Forum management and the newspaper's Editorial Board.