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## Fargo's downtown named one of best neighborhoods in nation

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Fargo's downtown has been named one of the country's top 10 neighborhoods by the American Planning Association. Michael Vosburg / Forum Photo Editor

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The APA cited downtown Fargo's historic character and its successful revitalization in naming it one of the "10 Neighborhoods for 2009" in its Great Places in America program.

"It feels great. If it had been suggested 15 years ago, people would have scoffed at it," Fargo Planning Director Jim Gilmour said Tuesday. "There's been quite a transformation of the downtown over the past decade."

City Commissioner Mike Williams called the recognition "icing on the cake" for the work done with the Renaissance Zone.

Investment has made the downtown a place "where people are living where they work, shop and play," he said.

"It's good national recognition. We're becoming a more vibrant community where people want to live," Williams said.

More than \$100 million in public and private investment has been made in Fargo's downtown, turning blighted buildings and vacant lots into apartments, condominiums and retail shops.

The result has been that the value of buildings has risen from \$103 million in 2000 to more than \$218 million in 2009, the APA noted in a news release.

"The revitalization of downtown Fargo shows what can be accomplished when city leaders, business interests and citizens create a common vision and plan for their future," said Paul Farmer, CEO of the national planning group.

Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker said he is pleased with the award.

"We are returning our historic downtown area to the attraction it used to be, not only for commercial, retail and housing development, but for our younger population with the addition of North Dakota State University's downtown campus," Walaker said.

Other cities on the APA great neighborhoods list:

Bungalow Heaven, Pasadena, Calif.; Faubourg Marigny, New Orleans; The Haymarket, Lincoln, Neb.; Village of Kenmore, Kenmore, N.Y.; Ladd's Addition, Portland, Ore.; Franklin Historic District, Franklin, Tenn.; Montrose, Houston; Historic Hilton Village, Newport News, Va.; and Browne's Addition, Spokane, Wash.

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