

Comprehensive Policy Plan
"Living Spaces"

Policy Letter 206: Neighborhood Structure/School Enrollment Areas

BACKGROUND:

The actions taken on the policy of Neighborhood Structure and Elementary School Enrollment Areas may have a critical impact on the efforts taken by the City to preserve and foster the small community atmosphere and the idea that a school is a neighborhood focal point. In the decision making process for new development of public elementary schools, the choice of whether the optimal school enrollment size should be from 800 to 1,600 students or whether that number should be no more than 800 students is in question.

It is good for the educational process and family support of students and schools, for students to live close to schools. The City of Fargo has several very successful models or examples of neighborhoods with elementary schools at an enrollment of 300 to 400 students. The enrollment area of these models are generally within walking distance from the school and the atmosphere of the neighborhoods relay a sense of community within it.

In considering the best interest of students and the community, there are factors that support the idea that bigger is better and factors that support the idea that bigger is not better. In fairness to citizens with different views on this issue, a formal presentation of the facts and philosophies should be given prior to the City adopting this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT:

The City of Fargo should adopt residential development plans that improve the probability that children can live within walking distance of an elementary school with an enrollment goal to be established in conjunction with the School Board, Planning Commission, and City Commission.

CONCLUSION:

In bringing the issue of Neighborhood Structure and Elementary School Enrollment Areas forward through the Living Spaces Committee, we invite the public to voice their opinion. The character and community role of existing elementary schools with less than 800 students should be preserved. The overall recommendation of this committee is for the City to adopt this policy.