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Finding Aid to the Fargo Fourth Street Urban Renewal Photograph Collection

Fargo Urban Renewal Agency. Fourth Street (ND R-1) Project.

Fargo Fourth Street Urban Renewal Photograph Collection, 1950s-1960s

226 photographic prints

24 slides

Collection number: Photo 2012

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OVERVIEW

Links: Finding aid to the [Fargo Fourth Street Urban Renewal records \(Mss 22\)](#)
View collection in [Digital Horizons](#).

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Fargo City Planning Commission, July 7, 1978 (Acc. 2023).

Property rights: The Institute for Regional Studies owns the property rights to this collection.

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Citation: Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

HISTORY

Since Fargo, N.D. was incorporated in 1875 the downtown area was the main commercial center for the city. But the portion from Fourth Street to the Red River had become a dead area for commercial development and stagnated. Deteriorated buildings, vacant lots becoming refuse dumps and general blight became a permanent part of the area. The Fargo City Commission in 1945 employed I. S. Shattuck as a city planning consultant. In 1952 he presented a master plan for the city which recommended a cluster of civic buildings in the Fourth Street area. The plan was approved and became part of the city ordinances. In 1954 Harold Bangert visited the Chicago regional office of the United States Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) where he obtained information on the federal urban renewal program which had been broadened by the Housing Act of 1954 to include cities the size of Fargo. Civic leaders and city officials had for some time realized the necessity of improving three blighted areas in Fargo - Fourth Street, Main Avenue, and the Golden Ridge area

Because of encouragement by federal officials, Fargo city officials secured passage, enabling the legislature to allow a city to accept federal aid. The Fargo Urban Renewal Agency was established with Earl Stewart as executive director, and a survey was done with a federal grant on the Fourth Street Project. In December of 1956 due to results of the survey, the Fargo Workable Program Report, was approved by the City Commission and in February of 1957 by the Chicago HHFA office. The final project applications were submitted and the property in the area was appraised with the first purchase of land for the future Civic Center made by the City of Fargo in April of 1957 and continuing into 1958. In February of 1958 the project had been approved with a federal grant of \$1,026,209.00 and a loan, of \$1,750,354.00. In July 1958 the Urban Renewal Agency purchased the Civic Center site from the City of Fargo and also began to purchase other tracts of land in the project area. Through 1958 and 1959 all land was obtained and buildings razed. In 1960 parcels of the land were sold to businesses and in March 1961 the Fargo Library Board purchased a tract for a new public library.

After much delay, authorization was given in October, 1964 by the HHFA to include the construction of a Second Street underpass in the project. Work began on the underpass in January 1965 and was completed in November 1965 thus drawing the R-1 project to an end. The R-1 project, the first urban renewal project in North Dakota, became a model for the other communities throughout the United States. With the completion of the R-1 project full direction was directed at the R-2 Main Avenue Project upon which planning had begun in 1960.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The **Fargo Fourth Street Urban Renewal Agency Photograph Collection** consists of 250 images used in the planning and execution phases of the project. The photographs were accessioned as part of the Fourth Street Urban Renewal records. The records were processed as Manuscript Collection 22. The photographs document the area affected by the project in the downtown residential and business district encompassed by 4th Street east to the Red River, located between 1st and 4th Avenues North. The collection includes aerials of the project area taken before and after urban renewal, and a variety of individual buildings before demolition, and the buildings that were constructed as a result of the project. A large number of the photographs were taken by Fargo photographer Everett Brust.

The first two files include aerial photographs of the area taken from a number of different angles, before and after urban renewal. Photographs of some of the prominent businesses and buildings removed during urban renewal included the Central Hotel, Nokken & Ryan Motors, Grand Hotel Apartments, C. H. Ruud Co., T. L. Berry Building, Flamer Hotel, Clicquot Bottling Co. There are also photographs of some of the buildings that were constructed as a result of Urban Renewal such as City Hall and the Civic Center, Town House Hotel, U. S. Army Recruiting & Induction Station, and Metropolitan Savings & Loan. There are also images of some of the churches located in the project zone, including Pontoppidan Lutheran Church, Bethel Evangelical Free Church, and First Church of the Nazarene.

Prior to the Urban Renewal, a large part of the area was residential. A number of photographs show houses, apartment buildings and boarding houses, prior to and during demolition. There is also a set of photographs that show the squalid conditions inside some of some the residences. Several agency related photographs show planning models of the area, and dedication scenes for the Civic Center which include the Ten Commandments Monument.

There are twenty-four color slides in file eighteen, featuring several aerial scenes, the Northwestern Bell Telephone Co. building, Chamber of Commerce building, Merchants National Bank and Trust building and parking ramp, Metropolitan Savings and Loan building, Gate City Savings and Loan building, NSP office building, Pontoppidan Lutheran Church, Town House Hotel, and the Civic Center and City Hall buildings.

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