



Forum editorial: City better protected from flood

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Fargo's newest flood control/water storage proposal is another element of a long-term effort that began shortly after the near-catastrophic flood of 1997. Since then, the city has been developing a system of internal flood control structures that now protect most of the city up to Red River flood elevations that were reached in 1997, 2009 and 2011. There is more to do, including eventual completion of the Fargo-Moorhead diversion to protect the city and its immediate environs from the "big one," which someday will threaten.

The new proposal is for a "lake" in south Fargo to store floodwaters displaced by dikes. Under study by city commissioners, the plan in part would address flood plain concerns raised by Federal Emergency Management Agency. It's not directly related to the diversion, but the lake could have some impacts due to effects of dikes on drains and the subsequent level of water flowing through the city to the river. Various options, including the lake, are being assessed to deal with water backup in and water movement through south Fargo.

If the plan is refined, it could become part of the city's sophisticated flood control systems that have been under construction in phases for about 18 years. Areas that routinely flooded 20 years ago stay dry today because of a new network of park-like holding ponds, widened and deepened drains, high-capacity lift stations, river levees and flood walls, and landscaped dikes in the city's once-vulnerable neighborhoods.

The city has pursued a riverside clearing program that has removed hundreds of homes from the Red's flood plain. It allowed those tracts to flood (no levees needed there) and took all those properties out of harm's way and off the tax

base. It's been a difficult decade or two for families that lost homes. But the anticipated result – to let the river flood the most flood-prone places and thus push more floodwaters through the city into the river – has worked. And thousands of acres of those former housing tracts are being developed as nature preserves, trails and parks.

Unlike upstream critics of the diversion, Fargo leaders and residents have worked hard, spent a lot of money and, with regard to hundreds of homeowners, made great sacrifices for the greater good. Despite all evidence to the contrary, upstream critics continue their one-note preaching that water retention, not the diversion, can protect Fargo-Moorhead. However, they have yet to identify and secure a square foot of land that could be used to hold water. Go figure.

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