

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

More photos from the F-M parade, A8

The Forum

OF FARGO

SUNDAY EDITION

SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2019

INFORUM.COM

OUR HIGH-WATER MARK



WILL OVER WATER
A Decade Later

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of several stories looking back at the historic flood of 2009 and its impact on the region. More online elements will be available at inforum.com, which is powered by both The Forum and WDAY News.

Tens years later, flood of '09 remembered as a victory paid for with sweat, tears

By Dave Olson
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WHEN the flood of 2009 hit, Pete and Debra Livdahl's rural Moorhead business, Building and Grounds Management, was in the thick of the battle to preserve area homes.

In the process, the Livdahls paid a price. "My husband saved a lot of places and we flooded. We've been struggling ever since," Debra Livdahl said, recalling the damage their business suffered a decade ago when water entered their shop buildings that housed equipment.

When the flood was over, the Livdahls were able to replace their equipment with the help of FEMA loan money.

However, they only recently made their final payment on the loan and, before they did, every check they wrote was a reminder of what

they went through in 2009.

"We've had a struggle, I tell ya," Debra Livdahl said.

The Livdahls weren't the only ones to suffer water damage when the Red River flooded in 2009, but when it comes to the big picture, the metro area escaped widespread disaster, thanks largely to an army of volunteers that worked day and night to fill and place millions of sandbags.

About three or four million of those sandbags went to Oakport Township north of Moorhead.

Greg Anderson was chairman of the township board in 2009 when flood waters took a number of homes in Oakport and came close to claiming many more, including Anderson's.

'Nothing left in us'

For Anderson, the magnitude of the flood really hit home the night



Forum file photo

Volunteers fill sandbags at the Fargodome in 2009 after officials warned flood levels would climb higher than initially forecast.

he called his wife, Julie, and told her: "You have to evacuate the house, I think we're going to lose it."

The family packed their most important belongings in suitcases and headed to their lake home, thinking it was the last time they would see their Oakport house intact.

But after a night of sleep, they decided to keep fighting and, ultimately, the family saved their house.

"There was that point where we said, 'We don't have anything left in us,'" Anderson said, recalling the despair they felt at the height of the flood.

But he said after

FLOOD: Page A6



David Samson / The Forum

Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker, far right, meets with members of the local and national media during a press conference at Fargo City Hall during the 2009 flood.

Changing Fargo skyline: Block 9 to add a story every 2 to 3 weeks as construction accelerates

By Barry Amundson
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FARGO — With steel and concrete work accelerating, the \$117 million Block 9 building in downtown Fargo is well out of the ground and on schedule.

In the coming months, expect another story to be added to the main tower of the building every two to three weeks.

By September, all 18 stories or 235 feet of the mixed-use building's main tower, which is currently 18

percent completed, will have shot up into the skyline and will be enclosed, ready for interior work.

Also by late summer or early this fall, the 379-stall parking garage, which is currently 65 percent complete and being pieced together like a Lego set with precast concrete, will be open for business and available to the public for downtown parking.

Once the glass-covered main tower is up with its tan and gray exterior trim, workers can complete steel work that wraps around the Broad-

way and Third Avenue sides of the building. That portion will house the R.D. Offutt and Co. corporate headquarters and other office space as well as two or three retail business locations. That part of the project is six stories high.

"We're at one of the pivotal points where we are getting above the ground level," said General Manager Derek Hoeschen of McGough Construction Co. of Fargo in an interview

BLOCK 9: Page A7



Special to The Forum

An artist rendering shows what the parking garage will look like as well as a view of the north side of the Block 9 building.

INSIDE TODAY'S FORUM

- Classifieds G
- Comics..... Z
- Crosswords..... B3
- Obituaries C8-9
- Opinion C6-7
- Sports D1-6
- Variety B1-6

Today's weather

Partly cloudy; Flurries
Details, D6

30°
14°



7 851 60 030 2
\$2.50
(Suggested retail price)
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SPORTS:
Perham beats Hawley to earn trip to the Minnesota state boys basketball tournament
PAGE D1

Fargo Park District to sell land along busy 45th Street

By Kim Hyatt
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FARGO — The Fargo Park District is accepting bids for 16.7 acres in Anderson Park appraised at \$8.6 million.

Selling the park district-owned land along 45th Street South, a busy and growing part of the city, has been discussed over the past decade among park staff and commissioners.

Joel Vettel, executive director of the park district, said the district's plan was to sell the land after completing the softball complex in north Fargo, 6101 45th St. N. — a project that

wrapped up last summer. Construction of that complex kicked off in 2015 and the 18 fields will be available for games this year.

The parcel for sale consists of four baseball fields and a gravel parking lot. To the east, there are eight adult and youth baseball fields closer to 42nd Street South that will not be affected by the potential sale.

The property for sale is zoned as general commercial, so potential future use would be similar to what exists along the corridor. Businesses near the property include a Sonic Drive-In, Pizza Ranch and Famous Dave's BBQ.

Bidding is open until April 4, and bids will be considered at the park board meeting Tuesday, April 9. Park board commissioners unanimously approved seeking bids at a meeting on March 12.

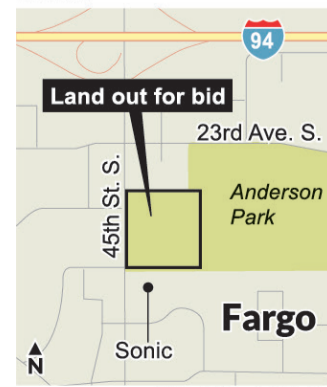
Vettel said the district has owned a lot of land near 45th Street South since at least the 1980s, including the ice arena and Red River Zoo land that's leased by the park district to the zoo. South of the zoo is Anderson Park, which was built about 30 years ago, Vettel guessed.

"When it was built, it was a fairly rural area.

LAND: Page A5

Park land for sale

The Fargo Park District is seeking bids on 16.7 acres of land at 2500 45th St. S. The property, which currently holds four ballfields, is valued at \$8.6 million.



Forum News Service



David Samson / The Forum

Volunteers work to raise the level of a dike at Eighth Avenue North and Oak Street near Mickelson Field in Fargo during the 2009 flood.

FLOOD

From Page A1

getting a restful night of sleep the sense of defeat gave way to a different thought: "We're not giving up."

Setting the table

The 2009 flood began, in a sense, in the fall of 2008, when autumn rains left soils saturated and ditches and culverts choked with ice.

Then the snow started falling.

Record snow fell in December 2008 and by late February 2009 forecasters were predicting a 60 percent chance the Red River would rise above 35.1 feet and a 10 percent chance it would top 38.5 feet, about a foot shy of the record 1997 crest of 39.72 feet.

On March 10, 2009, a storm dropped more than 10 inches of snow and brought the flood threat

into sharp focus.

Nine days later, Fargo-Moorhead residents were told they had roughly a week to prepare for a flood that could rival 1997.

As municipal employees and volunteers scrambled to fill, transport and place millions of sandbags, ominous predictions flowed from the National Weather Service.

The weather service warned at one point of a possible crest of 43 feet, more than three feet above the 1997 record flood.

When the crest finally arrived on March 28, 2009, it reached 40.84 feet, setting a record that stands to this day.

The hard work of metro-area residents had paid off, however, as much of the metro area was spared serious damage.

Still, not all properties escaped.

Uniting communities

Many houses in the Forest River area south of

Fargo flooded, including the home belonging to Chris and Rachel Ebeling.

After days of sandbagging with help from friends and co-workers, the Ebelings had to watch as water found its way under the sandbags and flooded their basement.

Nine sump pumps couldn't stay ahead of the water, Chris Ebeling recalled, adding that his family was grateful for a group of friends who hauled furniture and other items from the basement to upper levels of the home, limiting the impact of the flooding.

Following the flood, the Ebelings ultimately accepted a buyout and now live in a different house in south Fargo.

Looking back on 2009, Chris Ebeling said what stands out most clearly to him was the effort and time that so many people expended in helping others.

He said the flood preparation and sandbagging was a blur, but there was a moment after that and before the Red River actually hit his home when he had a moment to think about all that had been done to help his family and their neighborhood.

"A lot of emotion hit at that point, because of all the friends and co-workers and everyone who came out," Ebeling said.

Anderson felt it, too. "Everybody helped," Anderson said.

"The city of Moorhead gave us support. The city of Fargo gave us support. Everybody was in it as a community; there were no boundaries," Anderson added.

And the community effort didn't end with the flood.

Anderson said just as families in Oakport were trying to figure out how they were going to tear

down their sandbag dikes, a busload of students from California showed up.

He recalled the relief expressed by one elderly couple who were the recipients of the students' assistance.

"It was just unbelievable," Anderson said.

'You don't have a choice'

The flood of 2009 will be remembered for many firsts, like the evacuation of a number of nursing homes in the Fargo-Moorhead area, as well as the evacuation of entire neighborhoods in Moorhead.

The flood will also be remembered for the efforts of Fargo's late Mayor Dennis Walaker, the man who became the face of the 2009 flood.

Walaker, who died in 2014, had joked during the flood battle that if the people of Fargo were successful in warding

off disaster, he'd buy everyone a beer.

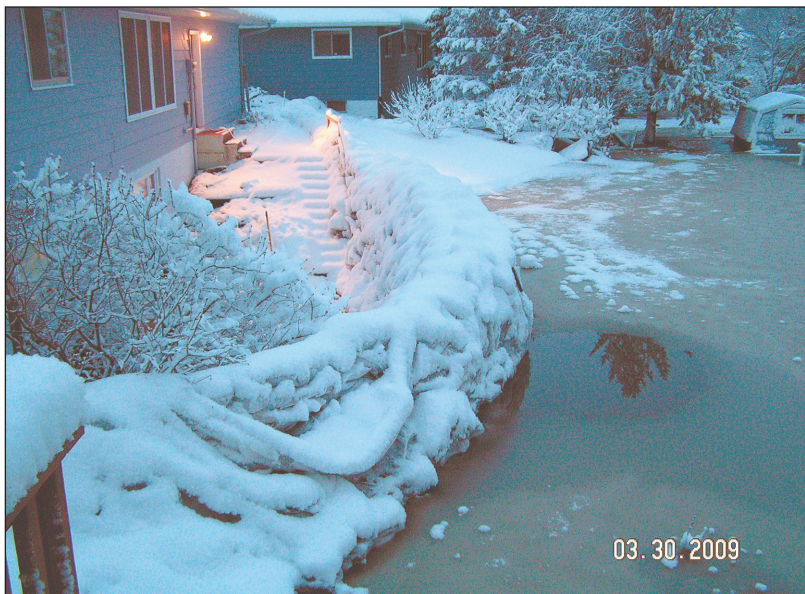
The promise was later fulfilled, in a symbolic way, when Walaker handed out 9,000 "Denny Dollars," coupons that, through the generosity of Miller Lite, could be redeemed at a nightclub in Fargo for \$1 off beers.

At one point at the height of the flood fight, Walaker reacted strongly to news that the weather service was predicting a crest of just over 41 feet, a prediction that didn't come true, but nonetheless left many feeling deflated.

"Your mind doesn't want to deal with it," Walaker said at the time. "Your mind wants to tell you it's impossible. But you don't have a choice."

Note: The historic flood of 2009 was chronicled in a Forum book called "Will Over Water" that is available for purchase at inforum.com/2009flood.

Readers can reach Forum reporter Dave Olson at 701.241-5555.



03.30.2009

Special to The Forum

This photo was taken during the 2009 flood and shows the Red River outside the home of Roger and Barbara Sipson in south Moorhead. The Sipsons and a number of their neighbors on Rivershore Drive accepted buyouts after the flood.

Fargo nonprofit helping felons live successfully in community expands in Fargo, Grand Forks

By Alex Derosier and Alyssa Kelly

FARGO — Between moving to a new office as well as opening a new women's house in Fargo and a new home for male felons in Grand Forks, F5 Project has had a busy couple of months.

The Fargo-based nonprofit helps recovering addicts and felons re-integrate into the community.

Founder Adam Martin, a recovering addict and five-time felon who turned his life around and has a successful marketing career, said an increase in private donations has been a big part of the expansion.

"It was the people in Fargo that surrounded us and helped build up,"

he said of the new women's home that serves as a replacement for an earlier women's home the organization ran in the city. The home can now accommodate three residents instead of two. Housing director Kristy Johnson said the organization aims to "empower the women" who live there.

The new six-bedroom men's home in Grand Forks was backed by a \$10,000 federal grant, but Martin said he's traditionally preferred private donors because government money often involves specific stipulations about its use.

Martin said more donors have been attracted to the organization as it demonstrates successes.

There isn't yet an official count, but Martin noted that of a sample of 25 F5 residents from the last two years, only three went back to jail. F5 project has housed approximately 200 residents in two years.

Some foundations won't back newer nonprofits that don't have much of a history, he said, so it was initially tough to find financial support from major charitable trusts.

Martin said the organization raised more than \$111,000 on Giving Hearts Day alone in 2019; the amount is more than half of what the organization's total budget was when it first started, according to previous tax filings.

The organization has grown quickly; it had just

one house in Fargo in 2016 and now has eight locations across North Dakota, including Bismarck, Devils Lake and Grand Forks.

Martin said more private donors are becoming interested in the nonprofit as it has been around longer, and he hinted that plans for the organization could be ambitious.

Ron Robson, a former chief operating officer for Fargo biotech company Aldevron, recently joined the team as a volunteer at F5, a move Martin said will help streamline the organization as well as plan for an eventual regional or national expansion.

"(We're) figuring out who we are and where we're going in the future," Martin said.



Dennis Krull / Special to The Forum

Adam Martin, founder of the F5 Project, shares his story at the 2016 United Way of Cass-Clay kickoff event at the Holiday Inn in Fargo.

BRIEFS

Pollinator workshop March 19 & 26 in Moorhead

MOORHEAD — Pollination conservation groups are partnering to host a two-day Pollinator Habitat Workshop from 6 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, March 19, and Tuesday, March 26, at Probstfield Center for Education, 2410 14th St. S.

River Keepers, Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cass County Soil Conservation District are hosting the workshop, which will teach the benefits of pollinator habitats and how to design a prairie garden.

Pollinators and pollinator habitats provide food, improve biodiversity, help with soil stability, improve water quality and more for bees, birds and insects.

The workshop will cover the basics of pollinator habitats and explain the importance of landscaping with native plants. Participants will also learn the process of installing their own pollinator habitat from start to finish. They will leave with the start of a design plan and a pollinator-friendly kit, which is included in the

ticket fee.

The cost is \$19 or \$14 for Moorhead residents. Register online through Moorhead Community Education at <https://moorhead-communityed.ce.eleyo.com>.

17th Avenue South open house March 19

FARGO — A public input meeting will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 19, at the Hilton Garden Inn, 4351 17th Ave. S. The meeting will include a formal presentation at 5:30.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the recommended street improvement plan, which was derived from the first two public input meetings and a survey.

If unable to attend the meeting, written statements or comments can be mailed to Mike Bittner, PE; KLJ Project Manager; 728 Beaton Drive, West Fargo, 58078, or emailed to mike.bittner@kljeng.com with "17th Avenue Public Input" in the email subject heading. The deadline for comments and written statements is Friday, April 5.

To request accommodations, contact Savanna

Leach, Metro COG Executive Secretary, at 701-232-3242 or leach@fmmetro-cog.org. TTY users may use Relay North Dakota at 711 or 1-800-366-6888.

Place your City Briefs at citybriefs.forumcomm.com

For the Love of Gardens
Sat, March 23, 1:30 pm
Learn how to capture the beauty of flowers in photos with Kari Barchenger of Memories Forever Photography.
West Fargo Public Library
109 3rd St E, West Fargo

Thanks for reading
The Forum
OF FARGO-MOORHEAD

Beginning Experience, is a support group for widowed, separated and divorced persons. Coping With Life Alone will be offered Monday evenings beginning on March 18th. Registration starts at 6:30 PM and program begins at 7 PM. This 10 week program will be at Liberty Lutheran Brethren Church, 1702 32nd Ave S, Fargo, ND. Program cost: \$40. Questions please call (701) 277-8784 and leave a message.

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