



# Alliance for Livability

*“Purpose: Advise on DGRI-related programs, services, and investments related to cleanliness and safety, mobility, beautification, asset management, and urban recreation.”*

September 28, 2015

11:00am – 12:30pm

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

## Agenda

***Main work item: Prioritize goals and timelines for specific projects to guide working group and staff work plans for the remainder of 2015 (i.e. Monroe North Gateway, Recreational Trailhead, Public Art Projects, etc.).***

1. Call to order
2. Public Comment, Current Business – 3 minutes per person
3. Consent agenda items (Downtown Ambassador reports, August meeting minutes) – 1 minute – **action required**
4. Project Updates (Kirk) – 10 minutes
5. Engagement Updates (Buller and Traylor) – 10 minutes
6. Downtown Census Update (Gustavo Rotondaro) – 30 minutes
7. Walking Tours Recap (Full Alliance) – 10 minutes
8. Project Planning – (Full Alliance) – 25 minutes
9. Public Comment, Old/Other Business – 3 minutes per person
10. Adjourn



# Alliance for Livability

August 24, 2015

1. Call to order- Lynee Wells called the meeting to order at 11:04am
2. Members Present: Shaun Biel, Asante Cain, Stephen Faber, Dr. Wendy Falb, Christian Frank, Johanna Jelks, Matt Koning, Lance Marconi, Jenn Schaub, Jay Schrimpf, Lynee Wells

Members Absent: Amy Baas, Trevor Bosworth, Kim Dabbs, Robert Dean, Joe Elliott, John Helmholdt, James Hurt, Chris Muller, Nate Phelps, Marcia Rapp

Others Present: Captain Matt Ostapowicz, Annamarie Buller, Murphy Ackerman, Bill Kirk, Officer Eric Gizzi, Melvin Eledge, LaTarro Traylor, Aaron Terpstra,

3. Public Comment-Current Business-  
Captain Ostapowicz introduced Officer Gizzi and explained that Gizzi will be assigned to the core of Downtown between Heartside and North Monroe on a Monday through Thursday schedule. Ostapowicz explained that due to increased activity Downtown, there has been an increase in patrol. The Police Department has also two segways to help the officers navigate Downtown more quickly without the need of vehicles. Gizzi added that the officers are working to deter the increased violence that has been occurring with the after bar crowd. Traylor commended the Police Department for their increased presence at community events. Cain asked if the current number of five (5) community officers was higher than normal. Ostapowicz said that it was a higher number, but had been increased due to increased activity Downtown.

Eledge gave an update on the safety ambassadors to the Alliance. Eledge explained that they had recently changed the term "homeless" in their reporting to "outreach contact", as it was noted at the previous DDA meeting, that this may not be the best way to categorize these contacts. Eledge also noted that the increased amount of traffic Downtown has resulted in an increased number of contacts. The ambassador team is currently working to deploy around peak times and are gearing up for

ArtPrize deployment.

4. Consent Agenda Items-

*Motion: Shaun Biel supported by Jay Schrimpf, moved approval of the July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015, minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

5. Project Updates-

Kirk gave an update on various projects from the Alliance. The partnership with WMCAT to paint utility boxes throughout Downtown has been completed. Six (6) utility boxes were painted by student to represent various cultural and historical figures. Kirk encouraged Alliance members to seek them out and added that they received a high positive response on social media. Kirk explained that the Exit Space mural on Division is currently underway and will be completed in the coming days. Staff will be working with the UICA on a communications plan as well as debriefing to determine whether or not this project will be continued. Kirk thanked Schaub, Elliott, and Biel for their contribution in helping review RFP's for the DID clean team contract. Kirk explained that Block by Block was selected, and this will help to minimize oversight within the program and streamline management to a single source for both the ambassadors and clean team. Kirk added that the current clean team members have first priority interviews and with the transition will access to increased wages and benefits. Eledge added that transition will take place sometime in November. Schaub explained that one of the strongest components that lead her to choose Block by Block was the increased services such as cleaning and washing sidewalks. Biel added that their cross training as ambassadors will help to make Downtown more inviting. Kirk gave an update on the care share program and explained that parking commission has decided to table the decision to enter into a contract with Enterprise at this time. Kirk explained that he would give more updates as they become available. Kirk added that there has been a nighttime Riverwalk audit tour schedules, to begin looking into lighting and safety concerns along the river. Ostapowicz volunteered to have an officer join on the walk if it was needed. Kirk explained that the Downtown census is moving forward, and Rotondaro is continuing to collect and gather data.

6. Tour-

Wells explained that staff has taken the time to go through the GR Forward plan and identify projects that relate specifically to the Alliance for Livability. The hope for today's meeting is to have the alliance visit these sites to begin to better understand the opportunities. Kirk encouraged members to take comment card and fill them out for submittal to GR Forward as public comment to ensure that alliance has had input on the plan.

7. Meeting Survey Feedback -

8. Public Comment - Old/Other Business-

None

9. Adjourn –  
Wells adjourned the meeting at 12:32pm

Minutes taken by:  
Murphy Ackerman  
Office Manager  
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



# **Downtown Grand Rapids Ambassador Program**

## **August 2015 Report**





# Outreach Highlights



Sue escorts a man to Mel Trotter Ministries



## Field Observations

We have observed less instances of panhandling in August compared to July 2015. One contributing factor for this decrease could be the amount of days where the temperature was in the high 70's or above (a total of 28 days in August 2015).

Live Downtown Grand Rapids alerted the team to the existence of a homeless camp on their Metropolitan property on South Ionia Street. We sent our Team Leader and Outreach Specialist to make contact with the individuals living in the camp during the evening, when the staff said they had seen people sleeping there. We did not encounter any individuals staying there and the camp has since been cleaned up.

## QUICK VIEW

*Aug 01, 2015 -- Aug 31, 2015*

**73** Panhandling - Aggressive

**77** Panhandling - Passive

**2685** Outreach Contact



# Hospitality Highlights



Rebecca escorts a couple to Founder's Brewing Co.



Abbie provides information to Downtown visitors

## Initiatives

The team is gearing up for Art Prize 2015 which begins in mid September. We have begun the process of looking at our deployment schedules as well as discussing what challenges and opportunities presented themselves last year that we can better take advantage of this year.

Several new businesses have popped up in the downtown and we have made it a goal to interface with them on their opening date or before. We have made contact with the majority of them already explaining the ambassador program and the services it provides in Downtown Grand Rapids. We have also re-established our business opening and closing notification system with Annamarie at DGRI. This system allows the ambassador team to quickly and easily report when new businesses are opening in downtown and helps to ensure that someone from both the ambassador team and DGRI make contact with them.

## QUICK VIEW

*Aug 01, 2015 -- Aug 31, 2015*

- 7** Umbrella Escorts
- 10** Motorist Assistance
- 19.25** Segway Hours
- 218** Business Contact
- 1581** PA - Directions
- 2223** PA - Program Information
- 5314** PA - Information
- 11182** PA - Other



# Safety Highlights



Kevin does a business check with Barfly security



Sue documents a bag left in the park

## Accomplishments

The ambassador team provided enhanced deployment for two Movies in the Park events, the Grand Jazz Festival and the Polish Festival as well as ongoing enhanced deployment for Tuesday nights which have proven to be busy with several groups of teenagers coming and hanging out in and around Rosa Parks Circle.

Operations Manager Melvin Eledge met with Kris Larson and Capt. Matt Ostapowicz to continue coordinating our efforts in providing optimal service to the Downtown. Melvin also met with Salespad who is having an event at the Harris Building and wanted to talk about the ambassador's escort and hospitality services. Melvin also attended a Safety Summit hosted by Rockford Construction about several safety concerns that have been occurring recently on the near West Side.

## QUICK VIEW

*Aug 01, 2015 -- Aug 31, 2015*

- 9** Suspicious Package
- 9** Request for Police
- 52** Observation - Fighting
- 87** Graffiti - Removed
- 156.5** Bicycle (miles)
- 118** Suspicious Person
- 768** Sidewalk Violation (skateboarding/Bicycling/Rollerblading)
- 1748** Safety Escort
- 18** Request for Fire/EMS



# Stakeholder Feedback



Abbie poses with two education conference attendees

## Feedback

We met Rebecca in downtown Grand Rapids, Mi. She asked us if we needed any help and from there began a delightful conversation about the Grand Rapids and all that is going on in the area. Rebecca was very well informed and charming to speak with. Jerry Smith

I wanted to share with you the positive experience we had in Grand Rapids and with Ambassador Abbie. We were visiting Grand Rapids for an educational conference Sunday-Wednesday. We really enjoyed our visit to Grand Rapids. The city was so inviting and clean. The restaurants were awesome!! Each evening we would take a walk and had the opportunity to see all the fun and engaging activities, such as Jazz Night and Swing Dance Night. One evening, we ran into Abbie and she was so friendly and informative. We asked her many questions about Grand Rapids and the Downtown Ambassadors program. We were very engaged and learned so much!! I will share this program with some organizations in our community. I have attached a photo with Abbie and 2 of my colleagues.

Thanks for being a wonderful host city for our conference!!

# Highlights



Veronica removes a sticker from a stop sign



Sue talks with a man at a Relax at Rosa event



Melvin removes spray paint from a public utility box



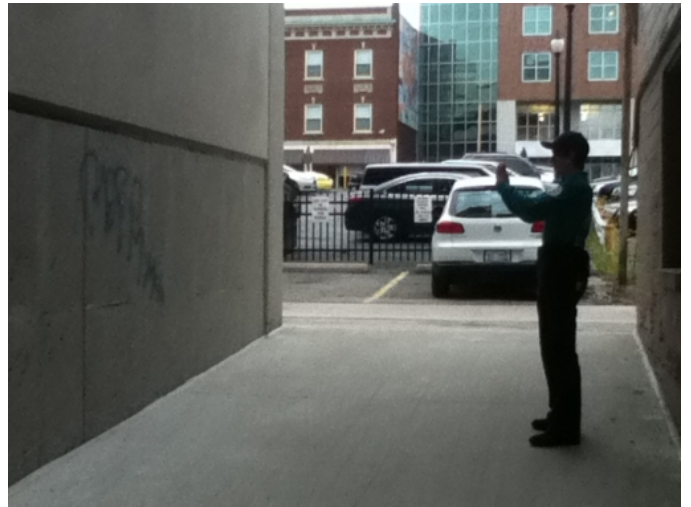
Eryn removes a sticker from a trash can lid



# Highlights



Sue removes graffiti from a magazine box



Eryn documents graffiti on public infrastructure



Abbie takes a picture of a group of visitors

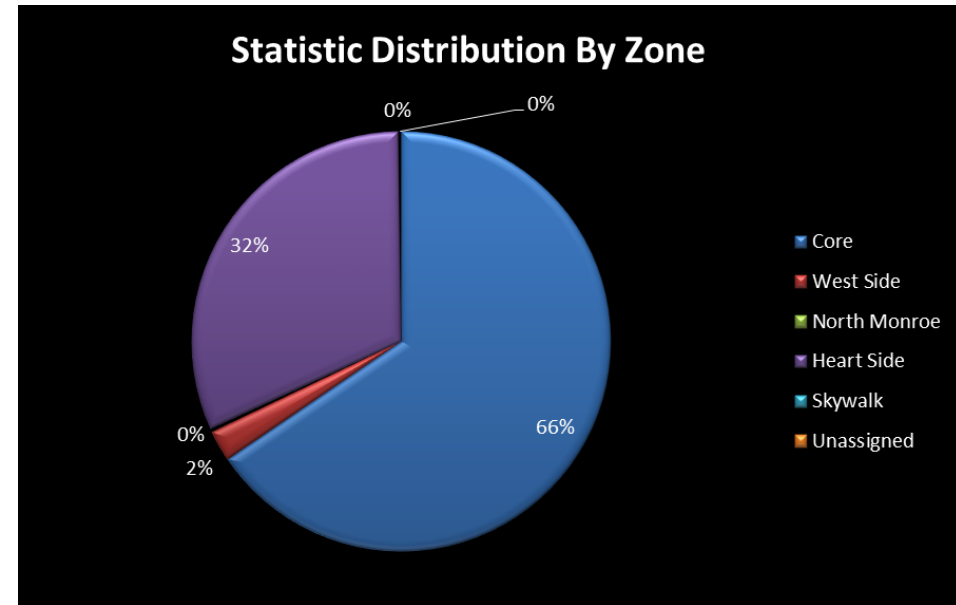


Kevin documents a homeless camp on private property



# Statistics

Activity	Aug. 2015 Totals	Aug. 2014 Totals	Variance	Totals YTD
Bicycle (miles)	168.5	268	(99.50)	1042.45
Segway Hours	19.25	26	(6.75)	248.92
Business Contact	220	439	(219)	4274
Graffiti - Removed	87	270	(183)	1389
Motorist Assistance	10	10	0	128
Observation - Fighting	52	48	4	469
Outreach Contact	2772	3821	(1049)	71123
PA - Directions	1610	3653	(2043)	28969
PA - Information	5479	8303	(2824)	63674
PA - Other	11587	11160	427	107065
PA - Program Information	2241	5322	(3081)	38337
Panhandling - Aggressive	73	182	(109)	1706
Panhandling - Passive	77	297	(220)	1436
Request for Fire/EMS	20	29	(9)	207
Request for Police	9	31	(22)	122
Safety Escort	1805	1480	325	17214
Sidewalk Violation	792	1237	(445)	6528
Suspicious Package	10	110	(100)	864
Suspicious Person	119	249	(130)	4500
Umbrella Escorts	7	240	(233)	930
<b>Total Contacts August 2015</b>	<b>26970</b>			
<b>Total Contacts August 2014</b>		<b>36881</b>	<b>(10017)</b>	
<b>Total Variance (2014 v. 2015)</b>				<b>348935</b>
<b>Total Contacts YTD 2015</b>				



Core	17669	65.5%
West Side	647	2%
North Monroe	74	<1%
Heart Side	8521	31.5%
Skywalk	30	<1%
Unassigned	29	<1%

August 2015 showed a nearly 27% (10,0017) decrease in contacts compared to the same period the previous year. We especially observed large decreases in Directions, Information and Program information provided to individuals. One of the biggest contributing factors for this decrease is the addition of 2 new staff to our team early in the month. We often observe the contacts driven by newer team members are lower than existing ambassadors. This is often due to a lack of experience collecting data through the SMARTSystem and it takes time for the new ambassadors to become comfortable with using the system. I continue to look for ways to refine and improve our training process for new ambassadors in an effort to minimize the skill gap that occurs when bringing on new team members.

The statistical distribution again shows the core to be the highest area of contacts driven with Heartside showing a substantial increase from the past month. We have also significantly reduced the amount of 'unassigned' data from 21% of total statistics in July down to less than 1% for the month of August.



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

# Alliance for Livability

## August Recap

### Alliance for Livability – Walking Tour Notes

#### Calder Plaza / Monroe North

- Greening opportunities
  - Green wall on 5/3 Building on Monroe
  - Preserve trees and greenspace on Calder Plaza, but improve access (soften cement planter box edges)
- Infrastructure needs:
  - Better wayfinding and lighting around stair towers, as well as ADA and bike access
  - Moveable chairs and tables on plaza to encourage more “flex-space” use
- Programming
  - Prioritize activating the Plaza during the day and between events – utilize food trucks, creating meeting spaces, build on Rosa Parks Circle successes
  - Prioritize activation of space behind the County building
- Plaza Edges
  - Create access point to Plaza from Michigan/Monroe intersection to compliment MSU and Rowe Hotel development - fix the swing!
  - Convert Ottawa to a two-way street to improve visibility and access to the Plaza
- Monroe Ave
  - Install/improve signage to highlight the Monroe entrance to City Hall (tunnel)
  - Install lighting improvements
  - Activate the City Hall “front wall” on Monroe with food stalls/trucks, etc.
- Michigan/Monroe Intersection
  - Create uniformity on all Michigan St crosswalks (green and white coloring), investigate possibility of mid-block crosswalks to enhance pedestrian connections
  - Install lighting enhancements into Monroe North on Monroe Ave, install signage coming into Downtown
- Connections
  - Identify opportunities to improve connections to the Riverwalk that are currently poor due to the overpass
  - Investigate the possibility to open Bond under the expressway for better connectivity

- Bike lanes: improve maintenance and re-striping, install bike lanes on Ionia coming into Downtown
- Monroe North to Ionia/Division/Medical Mile connection: this connection is currently dangerous and difficult to navigate; identify ways to improve connections at multiple points
- Improve pedestrian safety and connections at all points east of Monroe on Michigan (automatic signals, crosswalks, etc.)
- Other
  - Incorporate maintenance/asset management plans into all projects
  - Create a plan for the homeless utilizing underpasses for shelter

#### Ionia/Fulton/Heartside Park

- Ionia Cycle Track: Consider event-night traffic needs (two-lane egress, etc.)
- Fulton
  - Keep four lanes of traffic with no median, widen the sidewalk and compliment with sidewalk beautification
  - Make all improvements “pilot” to analyze operations and impact
- Heartside
  - Keep water resources
  - Focus on activation
    - Reduce rental costs
    - “Centralize” events (i.e. ice sculpture competition)
    - Engage with current users and homeless users to solicit feedback on their desired uses/activations
  - Infrastructure
    - Install more electric access
    - Encourage flexible use (flex space)

#### Riverwalk

- Primary needs
  - Basic repairs: railings, light fixtures, light bulb replacement, electric conduit repair, light post banner-fixtures, benches
  - Basic maintenance: landscaping (tree and bush trimming, weeding), trash receptacle emptying
- Infrastructure needs
  - Additional trash cans, bridge and path lighting (in certain areas), dog waste stations on the Westside of the River, Ah-Nab-Awen restroom improvement
    - Work to create uniform lighting for more efficient bulb replacement
- Accessibility
  - Need ADA signage at entry and exit points
  - Need improved/consistent railings along the path
  - Need curbs or caution strips to warn of the River’s edge
  - Cement extensions near benches for wheelchairs



- Beautification
  - More public art!
    - Fix the button sculpture at GR Ford – safety hazard
- Ideas/needs:
  - Creation of a volunteer corps / adopt the Riverwalk group
  - Access to tools and storage for volunteers to perform basic maintenance
  - DGRl: map out exact property lines (Riverwalk, parks, DNR, etc.)