

# AGENDA



## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

### Board Members:

Luis Avila • Rosalynn Bliss • Kayem Dunn • Ryan Foley • Mayor David LaGrand • Greg McNeilly • Jen Schottke • Al Vanderberg • Rick Winn

Wednesday, July 9, 2025  
9:00 a.m. Meeting  
29 Pearl Street, NW, Suite #1

- |  |        |           |
|--|--------|-----------|
| 1. Call to Order   |        | Winn      |
| 2. Approve June 11, 2025, Minutes (9:00)<br>(enclosure)            | Motion | Winn      |
| 3. 45 Ionia Parking Agreement (9:05)<br>(enclosure)                | Motion | Kelly     |
| 4. Downtown Enhancement Grant: Civic Theater (9:10)<br>(enclosure) | Motion | Kelly     |
| 5. Downtown Holiday Lighting (9:15)<br>(enclosure)                 | Motion | Eledge    |
| 6. World of Winter Installations (9:20)<br>(enclosure)             | Motion | Van Driel |
| 7. Executive Director Report (9:40)                                | Info   | Kelly     |
| 8. Public Comment (9:45)   |        |           |
| 9. Board Discussion (9:50)   | Info   | Board     |
| 10. Adjournment (9:55)   |        |           |



## MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY June 11, 2025

1. Call to Order – This meeting was called to order at 8:31 AM by Chair Winn.

### Attendance

Members Present: Kayem Dunn, Greg McNeilly, Mayor David LaGrand (arrived after agenda item #6) Jen Schottke, Rosalynn Bliss, Al Vanderberg and Rick Winn.

Members Absent: Luis Avila and Ryan Foley.

Others Present: Tim Kelly (Executive Director), Jessica Wood (Legal Counsel), Tricia Chapman (Treasurer), Mandy McDaniel (Recording Secretary), Michael Staal, Dustin Kuzee (City of GR), Melvin Eledge, Andy Guy, Kim Van Driel (DGRI Staff).

2. Approve Meeting Minutes from April 15, 2025  
*Motion: Member Vanderberg, supported by Member McNeilly, moved to approve April 15, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

3. Approve Interim April 18, 2025, Statements  
Chapman reviewed financial statements noting it is only through April 18th, due to the changeover of a city-wide financial system. Chapman introduced Teva Arapari, the new Financial Analyst who will be presenting financial statements moving forward.  
  
McNeilly asked about Statement B, specifically the difference between budget and actual debt service. Chapman responded that a full year of debt service was budgeted, and by the end of the year, it should be accounted for. The payment was due on April 1st, and the City may have covered it without using DDA funds. There should be more clarity in the next financial statements.  
  
*Motion: Member McNeilly, supported by Member Bliss, motioned to accept Statement D: April 18, 2025, Expenditures. Motion carried unanimously.*

4. FY26 Budget Adoption  
Kelly stated the City Commission approved the FY26 Budget with no changes and it comes back to this board for adoption.

*Motion: Member Vanderberg, supported by Member Schottke, motioned to adopt the FY2026 budget. Motion carried unanimously.*

5. Gillett Bridge Electrical Infrastructure Funding

The City of Grand Rapids is enhancing the Gillett Bridge by replacing its paving, repairing and repainting structures, and refurbishing light poles. Upgrades will include 12 existing 20-amp electrical outlets and 2 new 50-amp outlets, powered by DeVos Place, to support events and installations.

Construction on the bridge will begin after July 4 with expected completion by early September 2025. Today's request is an amount not to exceed \$35,000 towards the electrical enhancements.

*Motion: Member Bliss, supported by Member Dunn, for an amount not to exceed \$35,000 for electrical enhancements to the Gillett Bridge. Motion carried unanimously.*

6. Lyon Square Projection Infrastructure Funding

Van Driel presented the Lyon Square renovation including integrated projection towers and speaker locations. DGRI is seeking funding for equipment to ensure future success. This initiative aims to boost tourism and economic growth, similar to successful projection mapping projects in other cities.

DGRI proposes partnering LiveSpace for the project, with an estimated cost of \$445,061.30. Today's request is for an amount not to exceed \$511,050.15 including tariffs and contingencies.

Schottke asked about ongoing maintenance and opportunities for private events. Van Driel confirmed that DGRI was handling maintenance in collaboration with LiveSpace. Kelly mentioned that private events are part of ongoing discussions with partners.

McNeilly suggested looking into insurance for the hardware.

Mayor LaGrand proposed using plexiglass to make the towers graffiti and rock-resistant.

*Motion: Member Vanderberg, supported by Mayor LaGrand, approved an amount not to exceed \$512,000 for the contracts supporting the purchasing and installation of equipment with LiveSpace. Motion carried unanimously.*

7. East Riverfront Funding Authorization

Andy Guy presented the Grand River Greenway segment from Fulton to Wealthy. This area features a hardened river edge with limited green space and river access. The initiative was catalyzed by the Acrisure Amphitheater project, prompting the development of a concept plan to extend the Greenway to the south. There is an ambition to connect the Oxford Trail, linking neighborhoods on the southeast side. The shared rendering illustrates greenery and improved river access.

The trail traverses several properties and has been divided into phases. Today, our focus is on Phase One, which extends from the highway to the railroad, wrapping around the amphitheater. This phase aims to enhance river access. Although the project went out to bid, the bids received exceeded the estimated costs. In collaboration with the city, we have

Minutes taken by:  
Mandy McDaniel  
Recording Secretary

## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

approved additional steps to expedite Greenway funding expenditures by the end of 2026. We have collaborated to identify additional funding sources. Today, we are requesting up to \$905,000 to meet the total overall budget. The DDA funds will be the last to be expended. On the DGRI side, some Greenway funds remain, but several projects are pending bids. If these funds remain unused, they can also contribute to this project. These funds will be utilized as needed to secure contracts and advance the project.

Member Vanderberg asked if RAP funding had been approved, which it had, and the DGRI Team is actively working on an agreement.

Members expressed concern about the project's timeline, which needs to be completed by the end of 2026 to meet the ARPA grant deadline.

Mike Staal explained that under the contract, area 1 of Phase 1 must be completed by April 2026 to coincide with the opening of the Amphitheater. Following that, the remaining area is scheduled for completion by October 2026. This funding expires at the close of 2026. We have a team committed to completing it.

*Motion: Member Dunn, supported by Member McNeilly, approved an amount not to exceed \$905,249 in support of the construction of the Grand River East Riverfront Phase 1 project. Motion carried unanimously.*

### 8. Downtown Ambassador Funding Authorization

Eledge highlighted the accomplishments of the Downtown Ambassadors, which included 841 social and emergency calls, over 3,600 resident interactions, 346,122 pedestrian assists, 383,350 pounds of trash removed, 9,335 snow clearances, 95,580 recycled cigarette butts, and 7,231 graffiti removals.

In late 2024, DGRI issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for beautification, maintenance, and placemaking services, receiving three qualified responses to evaluate service quality and pricing. The subcommittee recommends continuing with the same vendor, Block by Block.

The wages for Ambassadors range from \$18 to \$23 per hour, with one member having served for a year and others for over two years.

The total cost for these services is \$1,337,193.05, with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) contributing \$400,000. The remaining funds are expected to be approved by the Downtown Improvement District (DID) board in June. The new Block by Block contract is anticipated to start on July 1, 2025.

Mayor LaGrand inquired about pedestrian advocacy and crowd management within the Ambassador's scope. Eledge stated we do not directly control traffic or crowds but customize deployment based on Downtown events. For instance, with the Griffins' home opener, activity around the arena will increase, and additional ambassadors will be assigned to the area. Our visibility helps create a calmer and safer environment.

Kelly added that, as far as the crowd control and people on the street, it has been examined multiple times and ultimately comes down to city and police department policy.

Minutes taken by:  
Mandy McDaniel  
Recording Secretary

*Motion: Member Schottke, supported by Member Dunn, approved an amount not to \$400,000 for Hospitality, Beautification, Maintenance and Placemaking contractual services in FY26. Motion carried unanimously.*

9. Downtown Planting Funding Authorization

Eledge reported that approximately 5,500 flowers were planted last year, and this year, the plan is to add eight new planters Downtown, including pollinator beds. Positive feedback was received for tulip bulbs planted last fall. The budget for this initiative is \$58,150, with daily maintenance managed by the Downtown Ambassador team and support from MiCandy Gardens since 2017.

The total service cost is \$203,150, with funding from various sources: the Downtown Improvement District covering \$138,000, and the Monroe North TIFA contributing \$7,000. Additionally, there's an ongoing focus on tree maintenance and expanding the urban canopy, with three dead trees at the arena needing attention.

*Motion: Member Vanderberg, supported by Member McNeilly approved an amount not to \$58,150 for Flower planting and Beautification contractual services in FY26. Motion carried unanimously.*

10. Calder Plaza Design

Kelly introduced Dustin Kuzee from the City of Grand Rapids to discuss the Calder Plaza project, with OAK as the construction manager. The focus is on determining costs for deck replacements and defining the project scope, with plans to come back with a budget and designs. Funding from the city is set to be available for two construction seasons starting in 2026, with inspections by the Calder Foundation to protect the Calder sculpture.

In terms of the project's history, the Master Plan for Calder Plaza was finalized in 2017, aiming to enhance landscaping and access while respecting Calder's sculpture. Phase one enhancements, which included a pavilion and restrooms, were paused due to the pandemic. DGRI reassessed its approach, reengaging stakeholders in 2022 to align enhancements with the city's upcoming deck replacement.

By early 2025, design work was complete, with services hired from OAK for the next phase totaling \$1,825,630. Funding for the construction comes from various city departments and the DDA, pending review by the City Commission.

Mayor LaGrand raised concerns about activating the plaza and encouraged careful planning to avoid premature decisions. There is potential to enhance connectivity to the Calder and activate surrounding areas. While the city has approved a portion of the contract, no bids are being sent out yet, as the design is still at a conceptual level.

Kuzee highlighted the need for activation to attract more visitors to the plaza. There were discussions about making Ottawa a two-way street to improve connectivity, as well as the possibility of installing public restrooms in City Hall; however, the county is hesitant about installing restrooms on Monroe.

Minutes taken by:  
Mandy McDaniel  
Recording Secretary

## UNAPPROVED MINUTES

The DDA's role is to help synthesize the timing and sequencing of the project. There's a push for including daylight entrances and potentially embedding public restrooms in parking ramps. The goal is to maximize the use of this public space.

*Motion: Member Bliss, supported by Mayor LaGrand, approved an amount not to \$589,627.50 for the DDA share of preconstruction services for Calder Plaza Deck and Enhancement Project. Motion carried unanimously.*

11. Executive Director Report

Kelly presented the following updates:

- DGRI team toured the Acrisure Amphitheater site, and Kelly encouraged board members to do the same
- Lyon Square will be completed by July 2
- Groundbreaking for Canal Park reconstruction
- Sunset Cinema series at Studio Park Piazza
- Farmers Market at Las Canchas is every Wednesday, 4:30 – 7:30 pm
- Designs completed for the upcoming Return to the River Festival, which takes place August 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>

12. Public Comment

None.

13. Board Member discussion:

None.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:46 am.

Minutes taken by:  
Mandy McDaniel  
Recording Secretary

# MEMORANDUM

DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY



DATE: July 9, 2025

TO: Downtown Development Authority

FROM: Tim Kelly, AICP  
Executive Director

SUBJECT: 45 Ionia Parking Agreement

Agenda Item #03  
July 9, 2025  
DDA Meeting

In 2006, the DDA entered into a Development Agreement to sell property at 45 Ionia Avenue to Tall House at 45 Ionia, LLC. In addition to conveying the land, the Agreement also outlined the developer's commitment to complete public infrastructure improvements and a mixed-use project.

The project as envisioned was not able to move forward, and in 2009 the DDA approved the assignment of the Agreement to 45 Ionia Associates (Owner), an affiliate of RDV Corporation. Since that time the site has been operating as the Area 3 parking lot near Van Andel Arena.

While the Owner is still interested in developing the property, the timeline to do so is undefined and the conditions today are different than they were in 2009. In acknowledgement of that, and with a desire for Area 3 to remain available for public parking as interim use, the parties have proposed to terminate the 2009 Development Agreement and enter a lease for the operation of the parking lot. Terms are still being finalized, but as proposed the DDA will pay a monthly rental fee to the Owner until such time that it is ready for development. The monthly lease fee would be covered using revenue generated from the lot. The lot would continue to be managed by MobileGR as outlined in the City and DDA Parking Agreement, and any remaining funds after maintenance and operation fees would become non-tax revenue available to the DDA for budgeted projects and programs.

**Recommendation:** Terminate the Development Agreement and authorize the Executive Director to finalize the terms of a lease agreement with 45 Ionia Associates, LLC for the continued operation of the Area 3 parking lot.

# MEMORANDUM

DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY



DATE: July 3, 2025

TO: Downtown Development Authority

FROM: Mark F. Miller, Managing Director of Planning + Design

Agenda Item #04  
July 9, 2025 DDA  
Meeting

SUBJECT: Downtown Enhancement Grant Request: Civic Theater

As part of the currently underway reconstruction of Division Avenue from Fulton to Crescent, the City of Grand Rapids has collaborated with several adjacent property owners to remove existing areaways. These areaways are pre-existing encroachments that typically extend private basements under sidewalks and into the public right-of-way. The areaways are difficult to maintain, create potential safety issues and limit streetscape improvements such as trees, lighting, benches, and snowmelt.

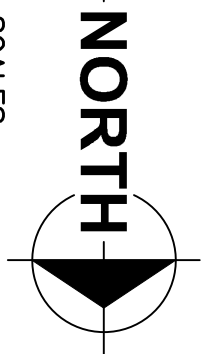
As part of this ongoing collaboration, the Civic Theater secured \$527,000 in congressionally directed funds to support the removal of their areaway and installation of snowmelt in the new sidewalk from Library Street to Monroe Center. The snowmelt will be a private system and not part of the snowmelt district managed by the Downtown Improvement District.

The cost of the Civic's areaway project is \$834,719.07. This includes the complete removal of the areaway, the removal of existing private utilities within the areaway, new foundation walls, backfill of the areaway, construction of new sidewalk, and private snowmelt in the sidewalk. The approximately \$308,000 funding gap is being shared between the Civic and the City of Grand Rapids.

To support their share of the funding, the Civic applied for a Downtown Enhancement Grant to help cover the costs associated with the private snowmelt system that will be installed in the reconstructed sidewalk. The snowmelt portion of this work will cost \$133,914.00, and the application has requested a 50% reimbursement for a total of \$66,957 (this includes a 10% contingency).

This work will take place during the street reconstruction project in 2025.

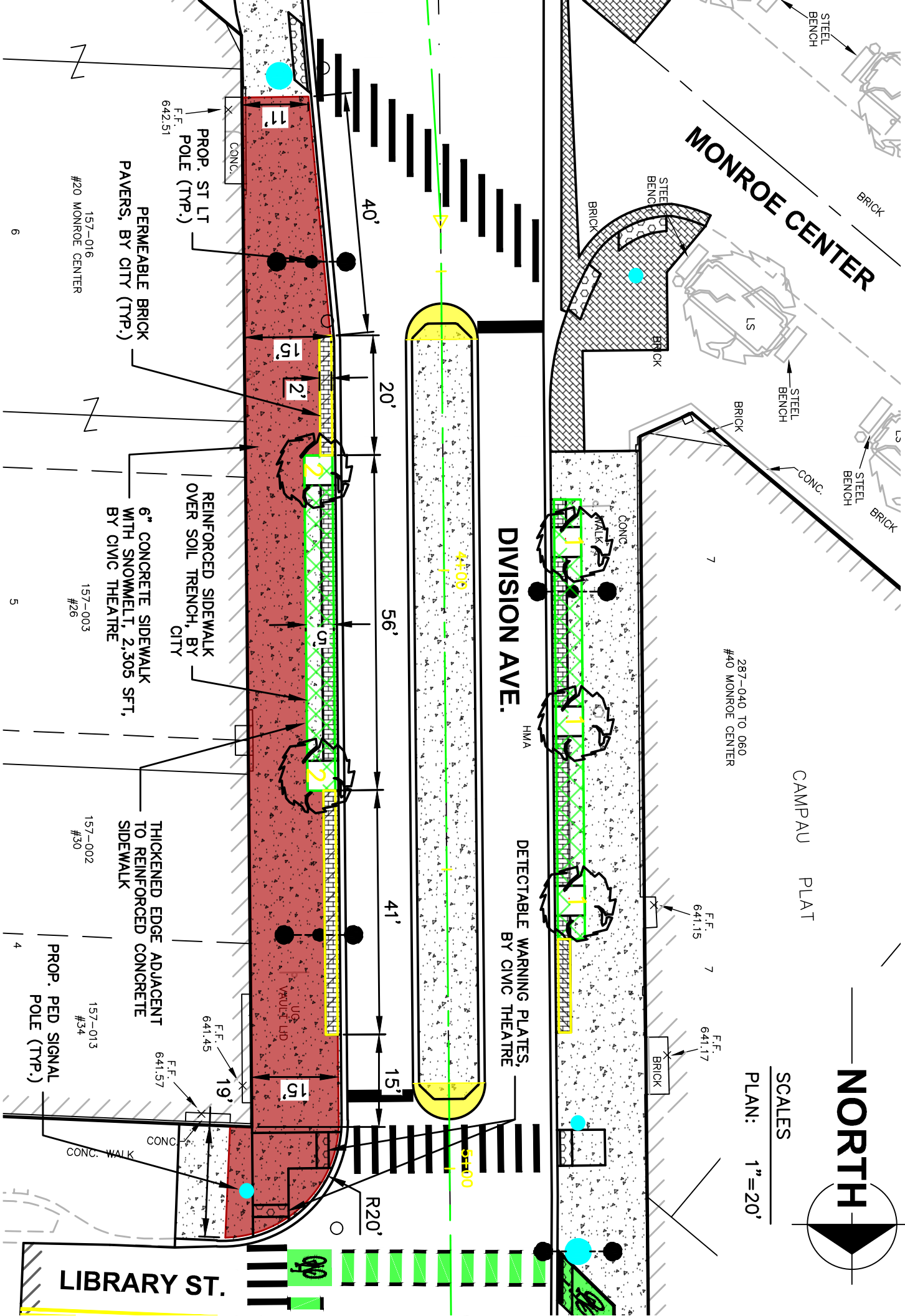
**Recommendation:** Approve the Downtown Enhancement Grant request for an amount not-to-exceed \$67,000 for the Civic Theater (30 Division Avenue N)



NORTH

SCALES

PLAN: 1"=20'



# CIVIC THEATRE SIDEWALK EXHIBIT

# MEMORANDUM

DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY



DATE: July 9, 2025  
TO: Downtown Development Authority  
FROM: Melvin Eledge Jr. - Director of Operations  
SUBJECT: Holiday Lighting Funding

Agenda Item #05  
July 9, 2025  
DDA Meeting

In 2014 DGRI took over the holiday décor to enhance Downtown public spaces during winter. Since then, we have continued to make investments in this activity through the maintenance and upkeep of the lights year after year as well as incrementally expanding the installations throughout Downtown.

In recent years we have expanded holiday lights along Ottawa, Sheldon and Jefferson as well as made improvements to the lights on Monroe Center which are left installed and activated throughout the year and last year, we deployed new light tunnels at Rosa Parks and Monument Park respectively.

For FY 26 our focus is on replacing existing lights that have exceeded their lifespan as well as adding holiday lighting to the newly opened Lyon Square space.

**Recommendation:**

**Approve the expenditure not to exceed \$83,275 to Christmas Décor by DeVries for the provision, installation, de-installation, and storage of holiday decorations for FY26.**

# MEMORANDUM

DOWNTOWN  
DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY



DATE: July 1, 2025

TO: Downtown Development Authority

FROM: Kimberly VanDriel, Director of Public Space Management

**SUBJECT: World of Winter Art Activation Funding Authorization**

Agenda Item #06  
July 9, 2025  
DDA Meeting

GR Forward's Goal 5 emphasizes the importance of activating public space during the winter months, recognizing that events are essential for attracting foot traffic and building vibrancy in Downtown Grand Rapids. Across the globe, cities have embraced illumination, interactivity, and color as tools to enliven urban areas during darker seasons—strategies that don't rely on snow or ideal weather conditions to be effective.

Over the past five years, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) has welcomed millions of visitors through thoughtful winter programming. In 2024, an estimated 4.6 million people visited Downtown, with 2.3 million attending specifically for the World of Winter (WoW) Festival. The two-month event included 43 events, 80 art installations, support for 68 grants, and collaborations with more than 100 artists, businesses, programmers, and community organizations. The result was a dramatic seasonal transformation, contributing an estimated \$38 million in economic output and supporting 335 jobs throughout the Grand Rapids area.

Building on this momentum, the Citizen Alliance has again prioritized WoW for funding and support in Fiscal Year 2025.

In March 2025, a global Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to identify innovative winter art installations focused on lighting, interaction, and public engagement. The RFP received 176 proposals from 43 different artists and companies worldwide. A coalition of community stakeholders—including the Citizen Alliance, River Activation Committee, Grand River Greenway Public Art Committee, and the City of Grand Rapids Arts Advisory Council—reviewed, voted, and deliberated on the submissions.

After careful deliberation with budget, construction and availability, we are proud to recommend eight interactive art installations from local, national, and international artists for the upcoming World of Winter Festival. Each installation offers unique opportunities for

hands-on engagement, cultural programming, and creative placemaking—all aimed at bringing energy, beauty, and connection to Downtown Grand Rapids this winter season.

In addition to these installations, the DGRI team will curate, purchase and program additional works and events for the festival. We will continue to work with local event planners, placemakers and programmers through curated programming and events for the festival. We will also continue our Activate grant program by offering up to \$10,000 per grant for local artists and programmers.

If approved, each installation will be placed in various locations within the Downtown footprint during the two-month period of the festival happening from January 9 through March 1, 2026. Additional programming, partnerships, and winter activities will take place throughout Downtown as part of the annual World of Winter festival.

The total request for up to ten installations is for an amount not to exceed \$400,000 that would help to cover rental fees, insurance, equipment, and logistics. This amount is budgeted in the approved DDA FY26 budget and is included as part of the Public Space Activation and DGRI Events line item.

**Recommendation: Approve expenditures not to exceed \$400,000 to support winter art installations for World of Winter 2026.**



## DOWNTOWN GRAND RAPIDS WoW 2026 INTERNATIONAL ART INSTALLATIONS

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Our goal is to remind our citizens that we are a 4-season city. In an effort to activate the downtown during the cooler months of the year, we invest in various initiatives through art, placemaking and events to get people to come downtown and experience all our city has to offer.

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) sought proposals from qualified vendors on ideas for public space and placemaking art installations from January 9, 2026, through March 1, 2026. We are particularly interested in installations that incorporate light and sound as well as being able to allow citizens to interact with the installations.



## INSTALLATION # 1 – Emergence by This Is Loop from the UK

### [VIDEO](#)

‘Emergence’ is a place for contemplation. A sanctum within which to consider the dynamic interplay between order and chaos and the momentous role this plays in systems, life, the self, the universe and beyond. Every decision, every idea and in fact every thought comes from this narrow region where the disarray of chaos and the regiment of order endlessly fold into and out of one another. Turbulent and ever changing permutations enabling an imperative blurring of the lines that fosters innovation, creativity, understanding and ‘being’ itself. With reflective surfaces completely covering all of its facets EMERGENCE takes on the surrounding environment providing new ways of perceiving a previously familiar space. The structure consists of 75 large mirror units covered on all surfaces with a mirror finish arranged into a cylindrical pavilion style structure with three entrances, all entrances are all wheelchair accessible.



## INSTALLATION # 2 – Anooki by Inook from France

### [VIDEO](#)

The Anooki are two characters inspired by the Inuit. Their pack ice has melted. Now, they travel the world with cheeky determination to inspire us to take care of the earth. The Anooki are droll and cheeky. They convey values of friendship, of peaceful cohabitation. They communicate their high spirits, touching the hearts of adults and entralling the little ones. They commandeer urban spaces, diverting them and reimagining them as playgrounds, bubbles of freedom. They change how we see cities and our surroundings. They redefine the scale and importance of places. They are also stalwart messengers for the environment. The Anooki are well positioned for observing the fragility of our planet and climate change. Their ice floe has dissolved; they are on the front line in experiencing these climate upheavals.



## INSTALLATION # 3 – Somnius by Illumaphonium from the UK

### [VIDEO](#)

Somnius transcends the boundaries of waking life, elevating us to a state unbound and mutable. A mesmerizing sky of light and sound dances above us in response to our every movement. Reminding us of our ongoing relationship with the cosmos, nature and each other. We are free to explore another version of what life could look like. An unrestricted reimagining of the world. Together. Somnius is not an individual dream, but a collective one. An immense hexagonal matrix of light is suspended overhead. Parallel lines converge and interfere from every angle. In contrast to the exact geometry of the structure, an organic, living surface is rendered in real-time on this magnificent volumetric display. The movement of this shape is reminiscent of the reflections of sunlight on a rippling surface water. Murmuration's of birds effortlessly creating spellbinding patterns above us. ~Schools of fish, swimming freely yet entirely in unison throughout an ocean of possibility. It dances in response to the audience below whose movements direct and conduct an electronic dance music orchestra.



#### INSTALLATION # 4 –Blueprint by Studio Vertigo from UK

Blueprint is a large-scale immersive artwork inspired by the form of a double helix, the physical structure of DNA. It is a parametric design, with sweeping curves that are highlighted with a sequence of high-resolution lighting effects, representing the four bases of DNA slowly flowing through the artwork. The edges are also highlighted with a dynamic lighting program to show the DNA backbone. The sculpture appears to be in a state of constant transformation, its free-flow of curves are set within a functional and orderly working of lines. The artwork responds to the curatorial theme of red, a color that can be felt in a deep, visceral way. It is frequently connected to life sustaining elements, influencing our behavior in profound ways. DNA is often called the blueprint of life because it contains the instructions for development, growth and survival. However, while a blueprint is a guide for making something, a design or pattern to be followed, this can sometimes be interpreted as having the ability to determine each and every feature of human life. Blueprint reflects on this idea that there is an unchanging 'essence' that makes us who we are, rather than our capacity to change as we live, something that has gained more popularity with advancements in genomics.



#### INSTALLATION # 5 – WECI | KONINUT by CREOS from Canada

[VIDEO](#)

Weci | Koninut invites passerby to a sensory journey through the forest (Notcimik) guided by the six seasons of the Atikamekw culture. The interactive installation offers an evocative space that encourages visitors to explore their own dreams and inner reflections. The peaceful spirit of the forest meets the urban landscape.

Composed of six giant dreamcatchers, Weci | Koninut embodies the wisdom of the ancestors and deep respect for our environment. Each season—from Pitcipipon, the early winter, to Takwakin, the autumn—creates a vibrant, immersive setting with its own unique interplay of light and sound. Visitors are invited to settle comfortably within this space, where their presence activates the experience and carries them into a world of dreams.

Weci | Koninut is more than just an installation; it is a powerful tribute to Indigenous cultures—a space for pause, for dreaming, and for reconnection with nature. It sparks dialogue on identity, ancestral values, and our shared responsibility toward our environment.



## **INSTALLATION # 6 – The Doors from Big Art from Canada**

The DOOR is a BIG ART classic and fan-favorite, regardless of age. BUT we always like to bring it back in a new configuration, to keep everyone guessing. Each door contains a set of animations in a particular theme, direct from the creative minds of our animators. No two doors are ever the same with over 200 unique videos, so they'll need to open them all to find out what...is where. Additionally, the exteriors can be adorned with items that give clues to what lies behind. How did a door become such a metaphor for success, failure, opportunity, family, home, change, transition, and so many other moments of emotional connection? This project explores the greater meaning of a door, and its ability to change our path in life when we have the courage to open it. After all, it's just a door. Door after door after door, guests will encounter interactive surprise and delight for hours.



## INSTALLATION # 7 – Seasonal Wonders Projection Show by LiveSpace from Grand Rapids, Michigan

### [VIDEO](#)

Bringing back the 2021 Seasonal Wonders Projection Show now that the new infrastructure will be permanently in place at the newly developed Lyon Square for us to show nightly performances of the show without closing the roads, staffing, and bringing in equipment. This custom-made projection mapping show is a 20min projection highlight of local Grand Rapids history and the 4-seasons we all know and love here in Michigan.

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Installation	Company	Total
Emergence	<a href="#">This Is Loop</a>	\$75,000
Inook	<a href="#">Anooki</a>	\$100,000.00
Nurby/Somnious	Illumaphonium	88,500
BluePrint	Studio Vertigo	\$30,000.00
The Doors	BIG Art	\$15,000
Weci	CREOS	\$45,000
Seasonal Wonders	LiveSpace	\$2,160
Logistics/Shipping		\$36,340
Contingency		\$8,000.00
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$400,000.00</b>



# The Economic Impact of the World of Winter Festival 2025

May 2025

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

**Christian Glupker, MBA**, Primary Researcher  
Senior Clinical Affiliate, Economics Department  
Grand Valley State University

## FUNDING PROVIDED BY:



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Grand Rapids, MI 49504  
[\*gvsu.edu/seidman/\*](http://gvsu.edu/seidman/)

**Cover Image:** Photo source: World of Winter website.

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# 1.0 OVERVIEW

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## 1.1 SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC IMPACT

The World of Winter 2025 festival (WoW) is estimated to have generated or supported economic benefits for the city of Grand Rapids in the following ways:

- The total economic impact on the Grand Rapids area is estimated at \$38 million in economic output, supporting 335 jobs.
- The total annual fiscal impact (tax revenue) of WoW is estimated at \$311,000 for municipalities and \$238,000 for Kent County.
- WoW attracted 2.3 million visitors, with 67% visiting from outside the local region.
- 44% of local visitors and 55% of all nonlocal visitors stated that WoW was their primary reason for visiting the area.
- Direct spending of all visitors is estimated at \$48 million, with nonlocal visitors spending \$38 million (80%).
- 92% of the visitors agreed that the festival inspires a sense of pride in the community. Approximately 33% would have traveled to a different community to attend a similar event if the festival was not available.

## 1.2 WORLD OF WINTER FESTIVAL BACKGROUND

The World of Winter 2025 festival (WoW) in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was held from January 10 to March 2, 2025. Recognized as the largest winter festival in the United States, WoW featured over 100 events, outdoor art installations, activities, window displays, ice sculptures, and more. The festival is designed to celebrate Downtown Grand Rapids as a winter destination and provide attractions for people of all ages and backgrounds. Now an annual staple in the Downtown events calendar, WoW combines new and returning events with local, regional, national, and global art to curate a unique and authentic experience over two months in Downtown Grand Rapids. Highlights include:

**Interactive Art Installations:** WoW showcased numerous light-based and interactive artworks from places as far away as Australia, France, and Thailand, as well as pieces from leaders in the art and design community right here in Grand Rapids.

**Cultural Performances & Unique Experiences:** WoW featured diverse cultural celebrations, walking tours, live performances, and family-friendly activities. Each year, crowd favorites like Silent Disco, Noodle Fest, the Great Lakes Snow Snake Competition, and Human Hungry Hungry Hippos return. In addition, new events were added this year, including a Native Drum and Hoop Dance, an outdoor upcycled fashion show, a music production battle, and more.

WoW is organized, produced, and funded by Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI), with in-kind support from the City of Grand Rapids and sponsorships from numerous community partners. DGRI's mission is to make Grand Rapids the most admired, emulated, attractive, and well-run city of its size in the nation – with an unsurpassed reputation as a forward-thinking bright spot to watch for how to do “Downtown.”

## 1.3 SCOPE OF WORK

To measure the economic contribution (direct and indirect) of the WoW to the Grand Rapids region. The economic impact is the amount of economic activity that WoW generates within a defined region. For the purpose of this report, the local region is defined as Grand Rapids, Michigan. This study will quantify the number of visitors to WoW, spending patterns by those visitors, and the indirect/induced values as a result of that spending. Every effort is made to exclude substitute spending. This substitute spending may come in the form of local residents along with visitors who were in the area for other reasons.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

For this analysis of WoW, annual economic and fiscal impacts were estimated for visitors to WoW and operational spending associated with hosting WoW.

### 1.4.1 VISITORS TO WW

Placer.ai data will be used to estimate actual visitor counts.<sup>1</sup> Placer.ai estimated attendance to WoW by analyzing anonymized GPS location data from mobile devices that were present in the designated festival areas during the event period. In general, here is how the process works:<sup>2</sup>

1. **Define the geographic boundaries of WoW:** This is known as Geofencing. Placer.ai first creates custom geofences around key locations where the festival takes place—such as Calder Plaza, Ah-Nab-Awen Park, Canal Park, Gillett Bridge, and Downtown corridors hosting installations or events.
2. **Collect and analyze mobile device pings:** Placer.ai monitors mobile device signals (collected from partner apps on users' smartphones) within those geofences throughout the festival duration. These signals include time-stamped GPS data that indicate when and where devices enter and exit a location.
3. **Visitor Identification:** Using machine learning algorithms, Placer.ai distinguishes between different types of individuals based on their movement patterns. For example, someone who spends approximately eight hours a day at a location regularly may be classified as an employee, while someone who spends nights at a location consistently could be identified as a resident. This helps in isolating actual event attendees from others.
4. **Data Extrapolation:** Since the data is collected from a sample of devices, Placer.ai extrapolates the findings to estimate total attendance. This involves accounting for panel biases and ensuring the sample accurately represents the broader population.
5. **Analysis and reporting:** The platform provides insights into various metrics such as total unique visitors, visit frequency, dwell time, and visitor demographics.

To collect supplemental visitor data, a Qualtrics survey was administered during the WoW months. The survey was distributed by DGRI employees attending WoW events and through DGRI email distribution lists. Data collected included zip code, length of visit, party size, spending patterns, and other relevant information. Respondents were required to be at least 18 years old to participate. A total of 1,245 completed responses were recorded during the survey period.

There is some concern regarding potential sampling bias in both the survey data and mobile device estimates used in this study. These limitations, along with their possible effects on the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.placer.ai/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.placer.ai/foot-traffic-analytics>

results, are discussed in the relevant sections throughout the report. While efforts were made to minimize bias, some level of distortion in representation may still be present.

In calculating the economic impact of WoW, only spending that is directly or indirectly attributable to the festival is considered. To achieve this, survey respondents were categorized into the following distinct groups:<sup>3</sup>

**Local Visitors:** Individuals whose primary residence is within the defined local region (Grand Rapids area). Because their spending may have occurred regardless of WoW, it is generally excluded from the economic impact calculation. Placer.ai data and zip codes provided in the survey are used to identify local residents.

**NonLocal Visitors:** Individuals residing outside the defined economic region. Their spending represents a key driver of economic impact, as it brings new money into the local economy. Placer.ai data and zip codes provided in the survey are used to identify local residents.

**Primary Visitors:** Visitors whose primary reason for being in Grand Rapids was to attend WoW. These visitors may be either local or nonlocal. Nonlocal primary visitors are especially important, as they are considered the primary contributors to new spending in the region.

**Casual Visitors:** Visitors who were already in Grand Rapids for other purposes (e.g., family visits, business, other events) but chose to attend WoW. Because their visit was not driven by the festival, their spending is generally excluded from the economic impact estimate. However, their incremental spending—spending that occurred specifically due to their participation in WoW—may still be considered as *economic impact supported by* the event.

Unfortunately, collecting incremental spending data was beyond the scope of the visitor's survey, therefore this study will focus solely on primary visitors. Therefore, this study will calculate the economic impact based solely on spending by primary visitors—both local and nonlocal—whose main purpose for visiting Grand Rapids was to attend WoW. This approach helps avoid overstating the impact due to substitute spending, which occurs when casual visitors redirect spending they would have made in the region regardless of WoW.

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<sup>3</sup> Crompton, J. L., Lee, S., & Shuster, T. J. (2001). A Guide for Undertaking Economic Impact Studies: The Springfest Example. *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(1), 79-87. doi:10.1177/004728750104000110

### 1.4.2 WoW OPERATIONS

Operational spending is typically included in economic impact studies because it reflects ongoing expenditures—such as staffing, vendor payments, logistics, and site services—that support local employment and stimulate business activity. However, this analysis excludes such spending from the reported impact.

### 1.4.3 ECONOMIC MODELING

The economic impact is estimated using the IMPLAN model. IMPLAN is a regional economic analysis software application that is designed to estimate the impact or ripple effect (specifically backward linkages) of a given economic activity within a specific geographic area through the implementation of its Input-Output model.<sup>4</sup> This modeling system uses multipliers that provide a way to measure the complete economic impact that the initial change in demand has on the local economy. The results of an input-output model are broken down into three effects:<sup>5</sup>

<b>Direct Effects</b>	A set of expenditures applied to the input-output multipliers. The direct effect is often referred to as direct spending or initial change in demand. This direct spending, or initial change in demand, is determined by the researcher or analyst. Applying these initial changes to the multipliers in IMPLAN will then display how a region will respond economically to them.
<b>Indirect Effects</b>	Indirect effects are the business-to-business purchases in the supply chain taking place in the economic region that stem from the initial change in demand or direct spending (direct effects). In other words, this is the increase in sales by businesses that are suppliers to restaurants, hotels, retail stores, etc.
<b>Induced Effects</b>	Increased economic activity from household spending of labor income, after the removal of taxes and savings. The induced effects are generated by the spending of employees within the business' supply chain.

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<sup>4</sup> Full IMPLAN disclaimer can be found in Appendix A1: IMPLAN Disclaimer and Definitions.

<sup>5</sup> <https://blog.implan.com/understanding-implan-effects>.

The IMPLAN model will report economic impact in four ways:<sup>6</sup>

<b>Output</b>	<b>Gross output</b> is the total economic activity, including the sum of intermediate inputs and the value they add to the final good or service. The intermediate inputs are the resources used in the production of final goods and services. It should be noted that gross output can be overstated if the intermediate inputs are used multiple times in the production of other goods and services.
<b>Labor Income</b>	The increase in wages, salaries, and proprietors' income as a result of the initial change in demand (direct effects).
<b>Employment</b>	The total number of jobs supported by direct spending or initial change in demand. This measurement does not distinguish between a full-time or part-time employee. It also does not account for employees who moved from one job to another within the defined economic region. Thus it does tend to overstate the number of jobs created.
<b>Value Added</b>	The contribution to the economic region's gross domestic product (GDP).

In many cases, the results of the economic impact analysis are rounded to the nearest million to avoid conveying a false sense of precision. Readers should keep in mind that the figures presented are estimates generated through economic modeling, not the result of a formal financial audit. The purpose of rounding is not to obscure information, but to present reliable results while maintaining transparency about the inherent limitations of model-based analysis.

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<sup>6</sup> Expanded definitions can be found in Appendix A1: IMPLAN Disclaimer and Definitions.

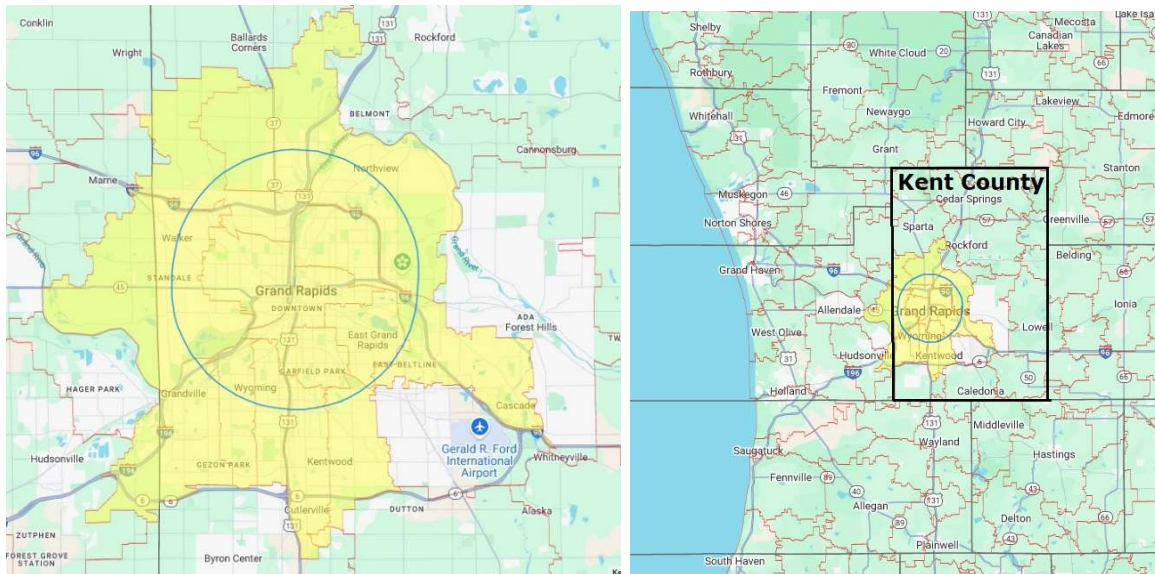
## 2.0 VISITORS AND ATTENDANCE



### 2.1 DEFINING THE ECONOMIC REGION

To accurately assess the economic impact, it is necessary to first define the local region. For this report, the local region is defined as a five-mile radius surrounding Sixth Street Park in Downtown Grand Rapids (see Figure 1).<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1:** The defined economic region: Grand Rapids (5-mile radius)



<sup>7</sup> The map in Figure 5 was created using [www.randymajors.org](http://www.randymajors.org). The Demographics of the economic region can be found in Appendix A3: Economic Region.

## 2.2 THE NUMBER OF VISITORS AND VISITOR DAYS

As noted in Section 1.4.1, this study focuses on the economic impact generated by the WoW, specifically by primary visitors. Visitor counts were estimated using Placer.ai data. As described in Section 1.4.1, Placer.ai uses proprietary algorithms to distinguish between different types of individuals based on movement patterns. For instance, someone who spends approximately eight hours per day at a location may be classified as an employee, while someone who spends nights in the area is likely a resident. This classification helps isolate actual event attendees from regular local traffic.

Placer.ai data estimated 1.4 million unique adult or device-carrying visitors to WoW. Of those, around 669,000 adult visitors were recorded as spending more than 2.5 hours in the area. These outliers may reflect behavior more consistent with casual visitors—individuals who were likely in the area for other purposes unrelated to the festival. Therefore, for this study, these visitors will be classified as casual visitors and excluded from the primary visitor impact analysis.

To account for children—who are typically not captured in mobile device data—survey responses were used to calculate the average number of children per adult attendee. Applying this ratio results in an estimated total attendance of 2.3 million. See Table 1 for a detailed breakdown by visitor type and Table 2 for total visitors by visitor type.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1:** Breakdown of visitors by types

	Local primary visitors	Nonlocal primary visitors	Local casual visitors	Nonlocal casual visitors
Visitor types	44.21%	55.41%	42.31%	53.03%

**Table 2:** Total visitors based on visitor type

	All visitors	Primary visitors	Casual visitors
Local visitors	806,371	407,698	398,673
Nonlocal visitors	1,535,977	827,650	708,326
Total Visitors	2,342,348	1,235,348	1,107,000

<sup>8</sup> For visitor demographic data, see Appendix A2: Visitor Demographics

The survey asked respondents how many times they attended WoW events. Based on these responses, local primary visitors attended an average of 2.98 times, while nonlocal primary visitors attended an average of 2.80 times. The survey data is consistent with Placer.ai data, which showed visitors visited on average 2.99 times.

Using the survey data and the attendance figures from Table 2, the total number of visitor days can be estimated. A *visitor day* is a metric that represents one person attending the event on one day. It is calculated by multiplying the number of visitors by the average number of visits. Table 3 presents the estimated number of visitor days.

**Table 3:** Total visitor days based on visitor type

	All visitors	Primary visitors	Casual visitors
Local visitor days	1,838,911	1,214,939	623,971
Nonlocal visitor days	2,867,063	1,903,596	963,467
Total visitor days	4,705,973	3,118,535	1,587,438

## 3.0 ECONOMIC EFFECTS

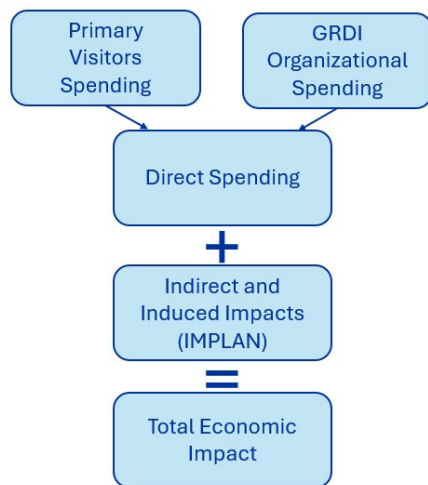


This section estimates the economic impact generated by visitors to WoW. The analysis is based on data collected through visitor surveys, Placer.ai mobility data, and information provided by the event organizers. In addition to the economic impact, this section also includes an estimate of the fiscal impact in terms of tax revenues generated.

### 3.1 ESTIMATING DIRECT SPENDING

The economic impact begins with direct impacts or direct spending by visitors. This initial spending generates additional economic activity through indirect and induced impacts. For example, when a visitor purchases at a local retail store, that is considered direct spending. In turn, the retail store must restock inventory, often from local suppliers—this is classified as indirect spending. Additionally, store employees and owners may see increased income from higher sales, which they then spend within the local economy, creating induced impacts. The dollar value and employment effects of these indirect and induced impacts are estimated using the IMPLAN economic modeling software. Visitor survey data provided detailed spending

estimates across key categories such as meals, shopping, lodging, transportation, and other expenses.



Direct spending is calculated by multiplying per-person, per-day visitor spending by the total number of visitor days. It is important to note that spending categories involving retail purchases must be adjusted to reflect only the portion of the transaction that remains within the local economy. Retail prices often include the cost of goods manufactured outside the defined economic region, and these external production costs should not be included in the local economic impact. The IMPLAN economic modeling system accounts for this by applying retail margin adjustments, which allocate only the local portion of spending to the impact estimates. For this analysis, retail margins are estimated at **34.20%** for retail spending and **6.8%** for transportation spending.

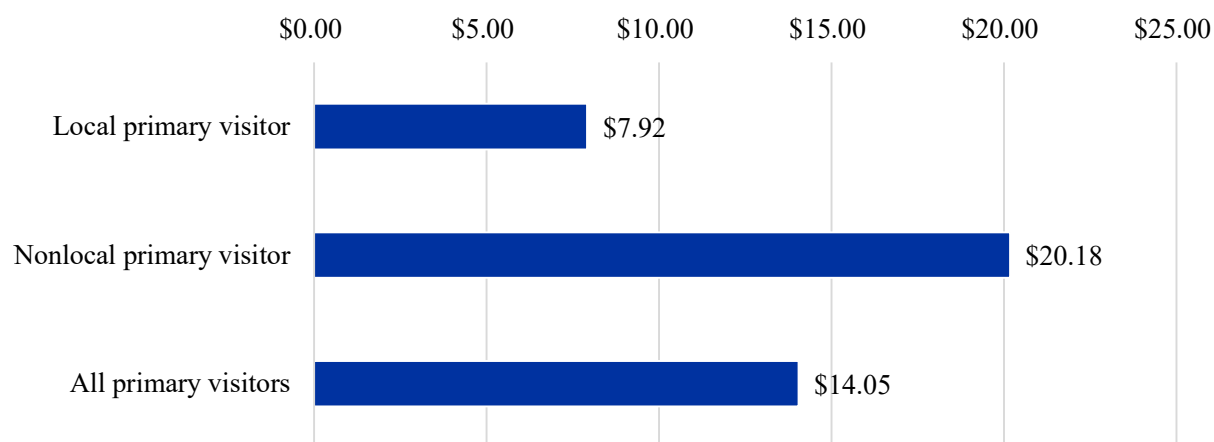
## 3.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PRIMARY VISITORS

As noted in Section 1.4.1, this study focuses on the economic impact generated by primary visitors to WoW. Based on survey responses, the average daily spending per person across all primary visitors was \$14.05, with local primary visitors spending \$7.92 and nonlocal primary visitors spending \$20.18 per person, per day (see Figure 9). Applying these spending figures to the estimated number of visitor days results in approximately \$48 million in direct spending by all primary visitors, with 80% of this total attributed to nonlocal visitors.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> A more detailed breakdown is available in Appendix A4: Estimating Visitor Spending

**Figure 2:** Average per person, per day spending for primary visitors



As previously discussed, direct visitor spending generates additional economic activity through indirect and induced effects. These impacts can be estimated using the IMPLAN economic modeling software. Based on this model, the total annual economic impact generated by primary visitors to WoW is estimated at \$47 million in output, supporting approximately 406 jobs. To isolate the impact of new spending in the region, the focus is placed on nonlocal primary visitors, who account for approximately 88% of the total economic output. The table below presents a breakdown of the economic impact attributable to all primary visitors.

**Table 4:** Total annual economic impact of all primary visitors

All Primary Visitors	Direct Spending <sup>10</sup>	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added (GDP)	Output
Local Primary Visitors	\$5.9M	65	\$2.3M	\$3.7M	\$6.7M
Nonlocal Primary Visitors	\$27.7M	266	\$10.1M	\$18.9M	\$31.3M
Total economic impact	\$33.6M	331	\$12.4M	\$22.6M	\$38.0M

<sup>10</sup> The direct spending reflects the retail margins mentioned in section 3.1

### 3.3 FISCAL IMPACT

The increase in economic activity resulting from WoW also generates additional tax revenue at the local, state, and federal levels. IMPLAN’s fiscal impact analysis estimates tax revenues generated through direct, indirect, and induced economic activity, including taxes paid by businesses, employees, and consumers. This includes property taxes, sales taxes, income taxes, and other business-related taxes. The table below presents the estimated total fiscal impact generated by the WoW visitors.

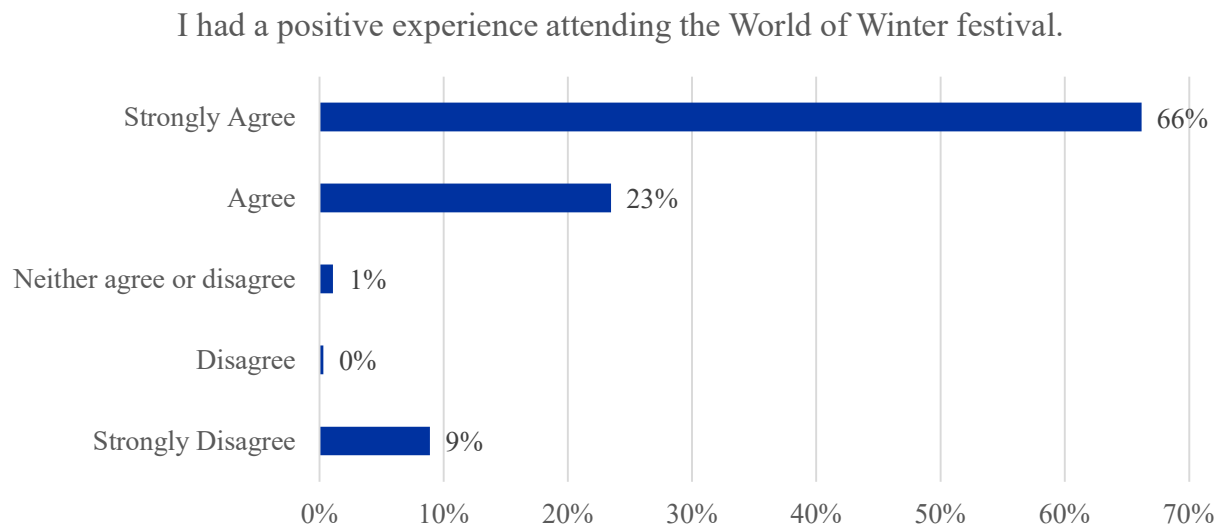
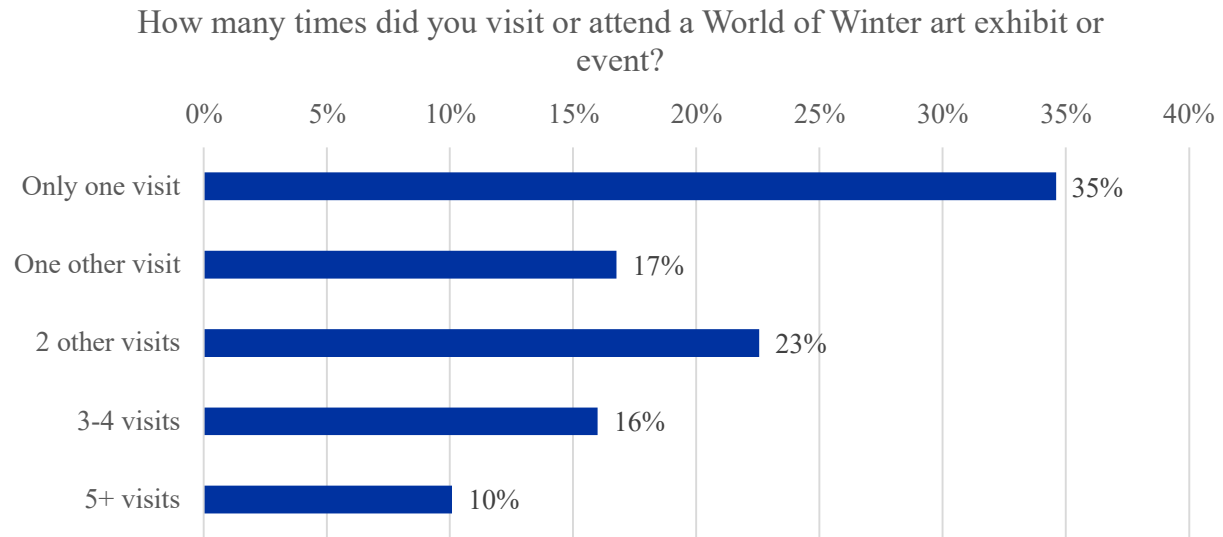
**Table 6:** Fiscal impact of all primary visitors

<b>All Primary</b>	<b>Sub-County: Municipalities</b>	<b>Sub-County: Special Districts</b>	<b>Kent County</b>	<b>Michigan</b>
Direct Impact	\$298,903	\$793,904	\$228,240	\$2,305,985
Indirect Impact	\$8,216	\$19,605	\$5,635	\$67,210
Induced Impact	\$4,705	\$12,224	\$3,514	\$38,676
Total Impact	\$311,825	\$825,734	\$237,389	\$2,411,871

## 4.0 SENSE OF PLACE



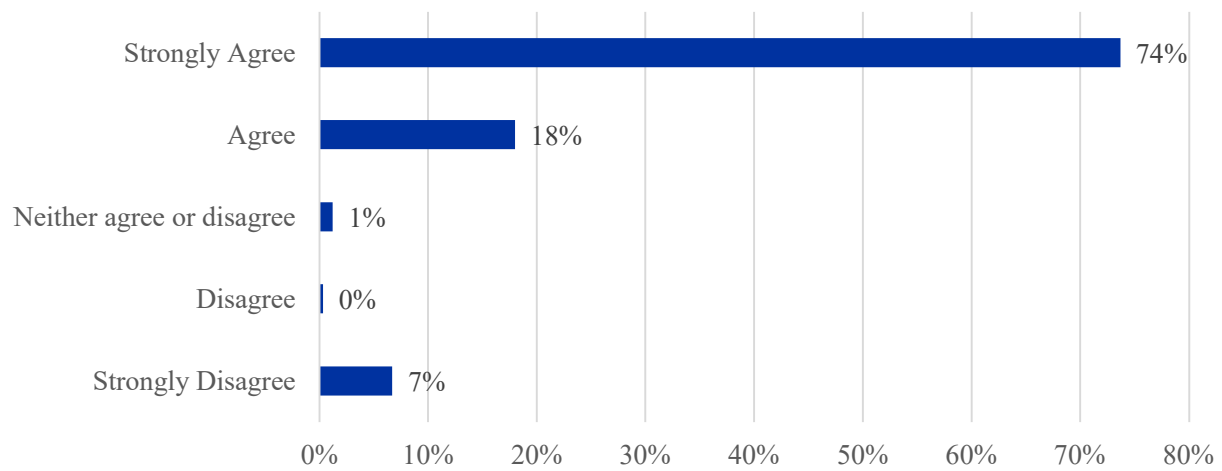
This portion of the study summarizes the results of the “sense of place” survey. The purpose of this survey is to assess how local residents perceive the WoW and its impact on community identity, pride, and overall quality of life. By capturing public sentiment, the survey provides insight into the festival’s social and cultural value beyond its economic contributions. The survey questions were included in the Qualtrics visitor survey.



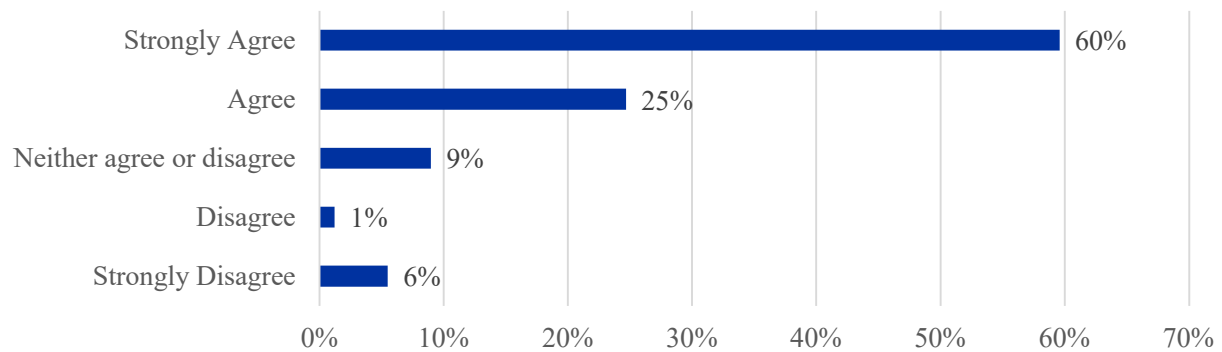
*On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.*

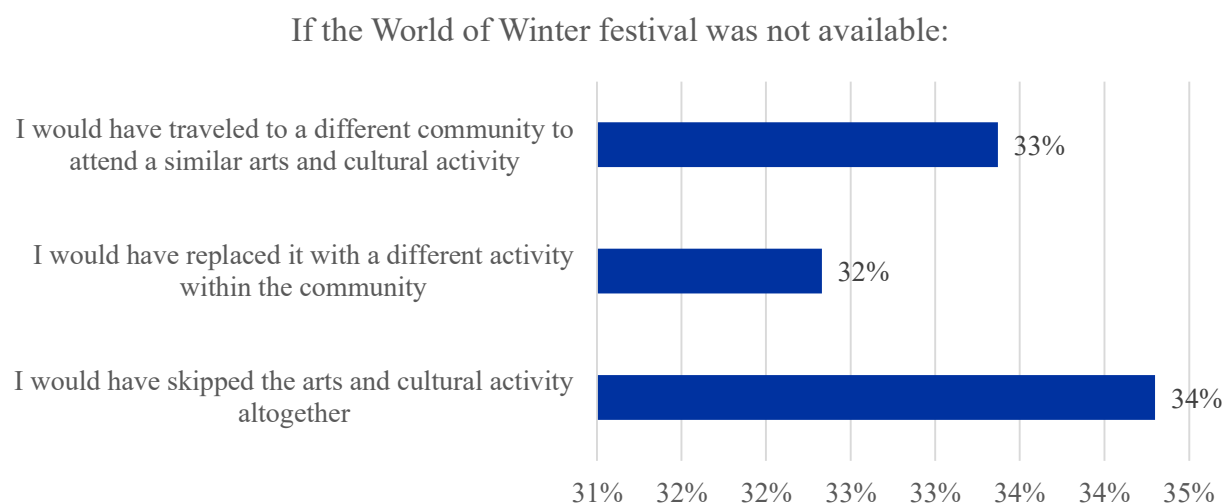
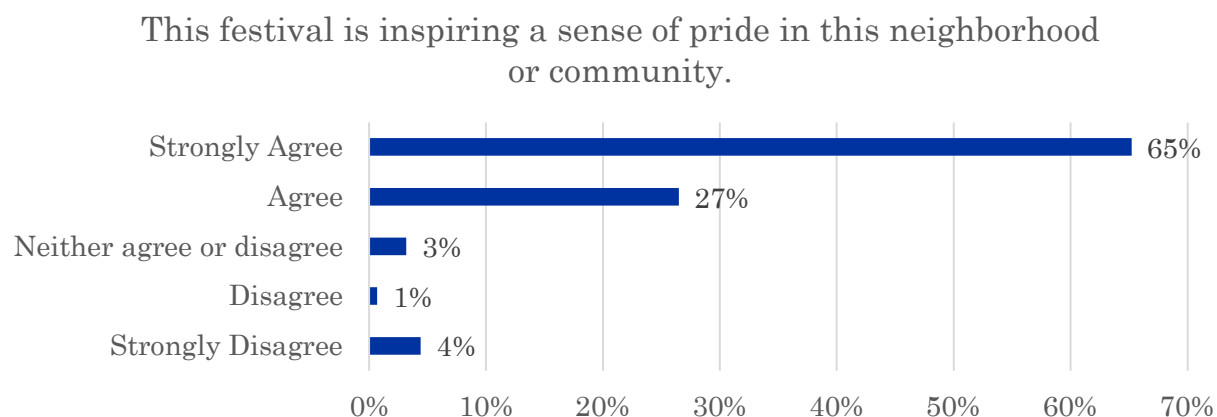
	Mean
How likely are you to recommend attending the World of Winter Festival to your friends or colleagues?	8.76

I feel the World of Winter festival contributes positively to the local area.



I would feel a great sense of loss if this festival were no longer available.





## 5.0 CONCLUSION



This report focuses on the economic impact WoW provided to the Grand Rapids area. The total economic impact is estimated at \$38 million in output with support for 336 jobs. Approximately 80% of the economic output is generated by nonlocal primary visitors. The table below presents a summary of the annual economic impact of WoW.

**Table 19:** Summary of the annual economic impact of WoW

	Direct Spending	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added (GDP)	Output
Local Primary Visitors	\$5.9M	65	\$2.3M	\$3.7M	\$6.7M
Nonlocal Primary Visitors	\$27.7M	266	\$10.1M	\$18.9M	\$31.3M
Total economic impact	\$33.6M	331	\$12.4M	\$22.6M	\$38.0M

The impact of casual visitors is not included in the overall economic impact because they were in Grand Rapids for reasons other than WoW. Because their visit was not driven by the festival, their spending is generally excluded from the economic impact estimate.<sup>11</sup>

The increase in economic activity generated by WoW also results in additional tax revenue at the local, state, and federal levels. These fiscal impacts are estimated using the IMPLAN economic model. As detailed in Section 3.4, WoW is estimated to generate \$311,000 in tax revenue for local municipalities, \$826,000 for special districts, \$238,000 for Kent County, and \$2.4 million for the State of Michigan.

In addition to the immediate economic activity, WoW may also contribute to long-term economic and cultural benefits for the Grand Rapids area. These potential long-term impacts include increased tourism, stronger brand identity for the city, enhanced quality of life for residents, and increased investment in public spaces and Downtown development. Culturally, the festival fosters community engagement, supports local artists and performers, and helps create a more vibrant, inclusive sense of place during the winter months. While these impacts are more difficult to quantify, they play a critical role in the sustained vitality of the region. [Ω](#)

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<sup>11</sup> For information on casual visitors, see Appendix A5: The Economic Impact of Casual Visitors.

## A1: IMPLAN DISCLAIMER AND DEFINITIONS

IMPLAN is a regional economic analysis software application that is designed to estimate the impact or ripple effect (specifically backward linkages) of a given economic activity within a specific geographic area through the implementation of its Input-Output model. Studies, results, and reports that rely on IMPLAN data or applications are limited by the researcher's assumptions concerning the subject or event being modeled. Studies such as this one are in no way endorsed or verified by IMPLAN Group, LLC unless otherwise stated by a representative of IMPLAN.

IMPLAN provides the estimated Indirect and Induced Effects of the given economic activity as defined by the user's inputs. Some Direct Effects may be estimated by IMPLAN when such information is not specified by the user. While IMPLAN is an excellent tool for its designed purposes, it is the responsibility of analysts using IMPLAN to be sure inputs are defined appropriately and to be aware of the following assumptions within any I-O Model:

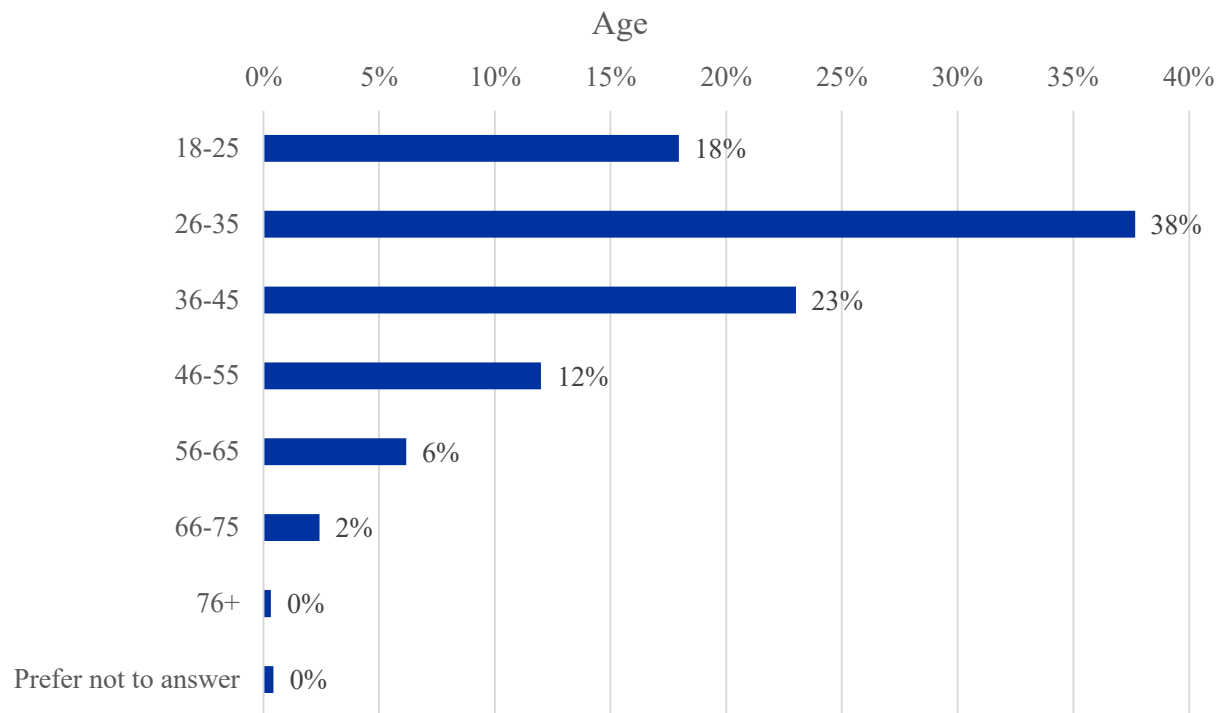
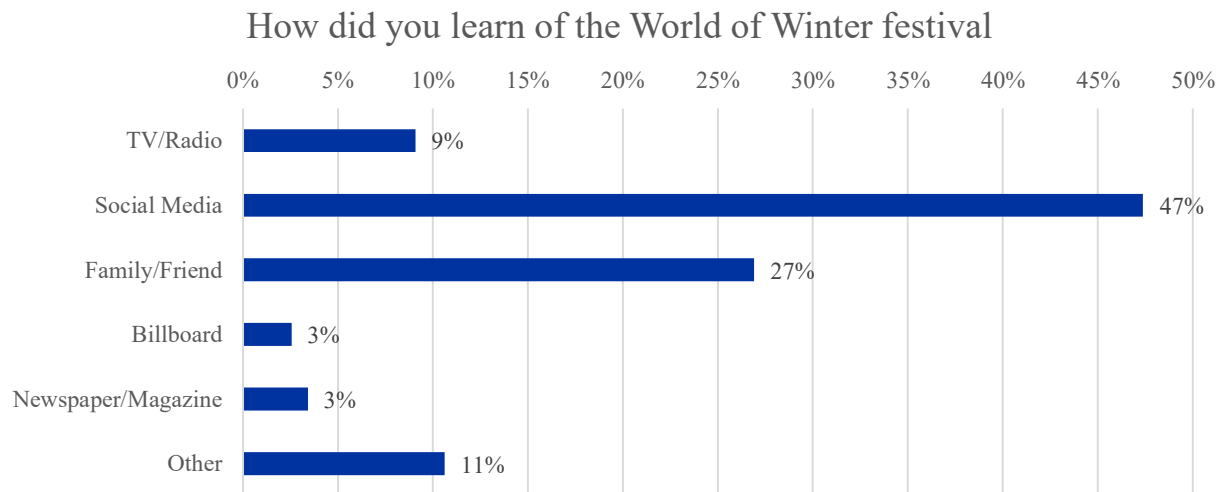
- Constant returns to scale
- No supply constraints
- Fixed input structure
- Industry technology assumption
- Constant byproducts coefficients
- The model is static

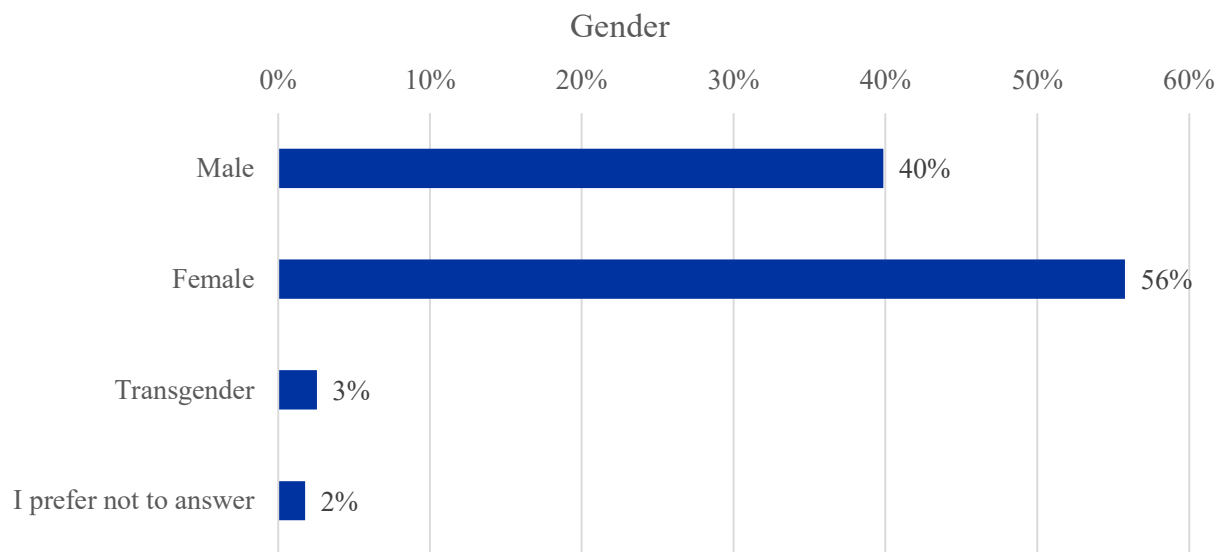
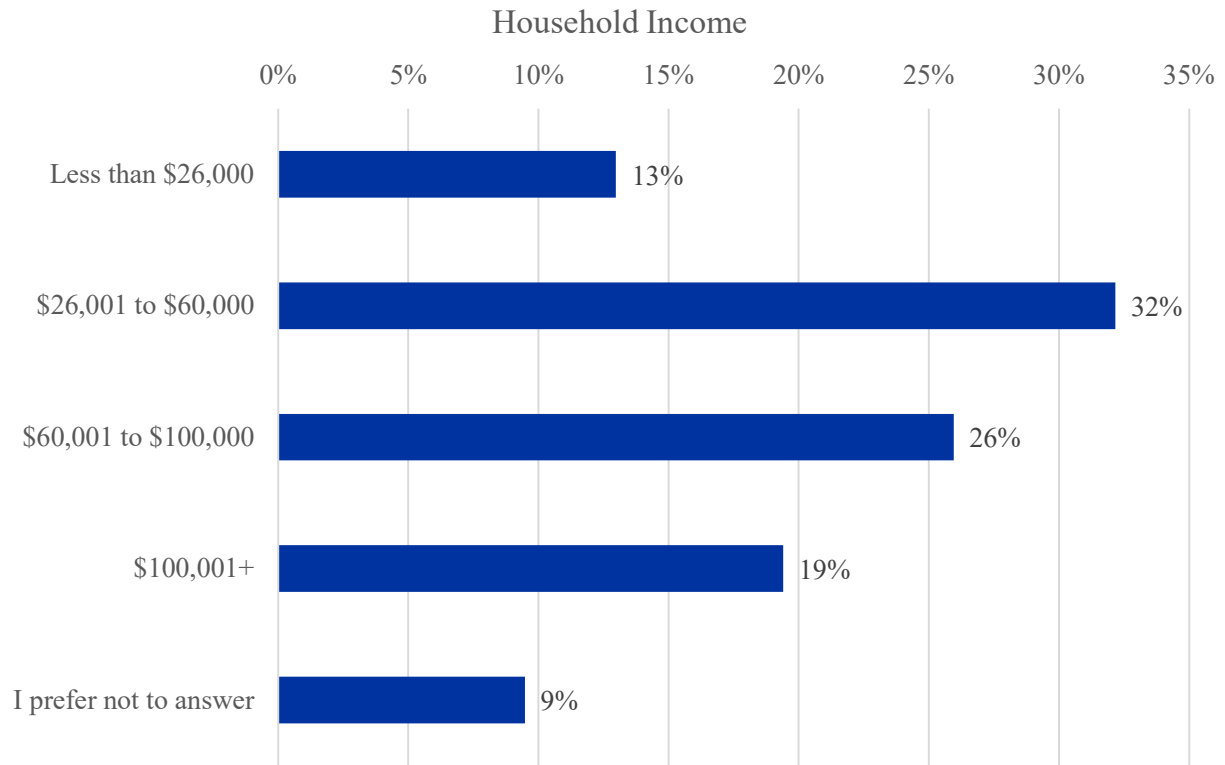
By design, the following key limitations apply to Input-Output Models such as IMPLAN and should be considered by analysts using the tool:

- **Feasibility:** The assumption that there are no supply constraints and there is a fixed input structure means that even if input resources required are scarce, IMPLAN will assume it will still only require the same portion of production value to acquire that input unless otherwise specified by the user. The assumption of no supply constraints also applies to human resources, so there is assumed to be no constraint on the talent pool from which a business or organization can draw. Analysts should evaluate the logistical feasibility of a business outside of IMPLAN. Similarly, IMPLAN cannot determine whether a given business venture being analyzed will be financially successful.
- **Backward-linked and Static model:** I-O models do not account for forward linkages, nor do I-O models account for offsetting effects such as cannibalization of other existing businesses, diverting funds used for the project from other potential or existing projects, etc. It falls upon the analyst to take such possible countervailing or offsetting effects into account or to note the omission of such possible effects from the analysis.
- **Like the model, prices are also static:** Price changes cannot be modeled in IMPLAN directly; instead, the final demand effects of a price change must be estimated by the analyst before modeling them in IMPLAN to estimate the additional economic impacts of such changes.

## A2: VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey asked additional questions about their visit to Grand Rapids. The tables below summarize the responses from all visitors.





## A3: THE ECONOMIC REGION

The economic region is defined as a five-mile radius from Sixth Street Park in downtown Grand Rapids (as shown in Figure 1). This radius includes 11 zip codes and covers the majority of Grand Rapids (see Figure A2-1 for the demographics of this region).<sup>12</sup>

**Figure A2-2:** Key statistics for the defined economic region

Demographics of the Economic Region (2023 Data Year)			
Population	262,883	Education	
Households	105,434	No High School Diploma	13.16%
Median age*	32.3	High School Graduate – No College	30.64%
Family size*	3.09	Bachelor's degree or higher	20.92%
Persons under 18*	19.5%	Income and Poverty	
Persons 65 years and older*	13.6%	Median household income*	\$70,258
Female persons*	50.9%	Per capita income*	\$33,953
		Poverty rate*	18.3%
		Top 5 Employment by Industry	
Race		Hospitals	13.7%
White	63.2%	Employment Services	7.3%
Black or African-American	14.2%	Food Service (Restaurants, etc.)	7.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.24%	Retail Trade	4.6%
Asian	3.31%	Other Real Estate	2.88%
Hispanic or Latino	13.63%	Economic Data	
		Economic Output	\$47B
Housing		Gross Domestic Product	\$24.8B
Median house value*	\$225,500	Total Employment	236,290
Homeownership rate*	54.4%	Personal Income	\$17.4B

## A4: ESTIMATING VISITOR SPENDING

<sup>12</sup> Data taken from IMPLAN. Data with an “\*” taken from the Census Bureau for Grand Rapids, MI (not the 5-mile radius).

As noted in Section 1.4.1, this study focuses on the economic impact generated by primary visitors to WOW. Based on survey responses, the average daily spending per person across all primary visitors was \$14.05, with local primary visitors spending \$7.92 and nonlocal primary visitors spending \$20.18 per person, per day (see Table A4-1).

**Table A4-1:** Spending per person, per day by primary visitors

Category	Local primary visitors	Nonlocal primary visitors	All primary visitors
Meals/Food Spending	\$3.84	\$7.15	\$5.50
Lodging	\$0.00	\$5.71	\$2.86
Retail/Other Spending	\$2.65	\$4.34	\$3.50
Transportation Spending	\$1.43	\$2.98	\$2.21
Total Spending	\$7.92	\$20.18	\$14.05

Applying these spending figures to the estimated number of visitor days results in approximately \$48 million in direct spending by all primary visitors, with 80% of this total attributed to nonlocal visitors (see Table A4-2).

**Table A4-2:** Total direct spending by primary visitors

Category	Local primary visitors	Nonlocal primary visitors	All primary visitors
Meals/Food Spending	\$4.7M	\$13.6M	\$18.3M
Lodging	\$0.0M	\$10.9M	\$10.9M
Retail/Other Spending	\$3.2M	\$8.3M	\$11.5M
Transportation Spending	\$1.7M	\$5.7M	\$7.4M
Total Spending	\$9.6M	\$38.4M	\$48.0M

## A5: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CASUAL VISITORS

As noted in Section 1.4.1, casual visitors are defined as individuals who were already in Grand Rapids for other purposes (e.g., family visits, business, or other events) but chose to attend WOW. Because their visit was not driven by the festival, their spending is generally excluded from the economic impact estimate. However, incremental spending—expenditures made specifically due to their participation in WOW—may still be considered economic activity supported by the event.

This study's preferred methodology is to calculate economic impact based solely on spending by primary visitors, both local and nonlocal, whose main reason for visiting Grand Rapids was to attend WOW. While this approach may understate the total impact—since some casual visitors likely increased their spending due to the festival—the collection of incremental spending data was beyond the scope of the visitor survey. Therefore, this report focuses exclusively on primary visitor spending. Casual visitor data is presented here for informational purposes only.

**Table A5-1:** Spending per person, per day by casual visitors

Category	Local casual visitors	Nonlocal casual visitors	All casual visitors
Meals/Food Spending	\$5.24	\$5.99	\$5.62
Lodging	\$0.00	\$2.79	\$1.40
Retail/Other Spending	\$2.15	\$2.81	\$2.48
Transportation Spending	\$1.26	\$1.41	\$1.34
Total Spending	\$8.65	\$13.00	\$10.83

**Table A5-2:** Total direct spending by casual visitors

Category	Local casual visitors	Nonlocal casual visitors	All casual visitors
Meals/Food Spending	\$3.3M	\$5.8M	\$9.0M
Lodging	\$0.0M	\$2.7M	\$2.7M
Retail/Other Spending	\$1.3M	\$2.7M	\$4.0M
Transportation Spending	\$0.8M	\$1.4M	\$2.1M
Total Spending	\$5.4M	\$12.5M	\$17.9M

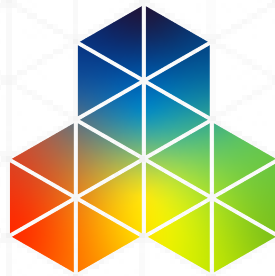
**Table A5-3:** Total annual economic impact of all casual visitors

All Casual Visitors	Direct Spending <sup>13</sup>	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added (GDP)	Output
Local Casual Visitors	\$3.8M	42	\$1.5M	\$2.3M	\$4.3M
Nonlocal Casual Visitors	\$9.5M	95	\$3.5M	\$6.3M	\$10.7M
Total economic impact	\$13.3M	137	\$5.0M	\$8.6M	\$15.0M

<sup>13</sup> The direct spending reflects the retail margins mentioned in section 3.1

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# ***Downtown Vitals Report***



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

*Published July 2025*

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### NEW BUSINESSES

**+1**

in June

**+11**

year-to-date

### STOREFRONT VACANCY RATES

**+1%**

vs. May 2025

**+13%**

vs. 2-yr avg.

### Q2 OFFICE VACANCY RATES

**10.4%**

in Q2 2025 vs. 9.8% in Q1 2025

### Q2 OFFICE RENTAL RATES

**\$22.52**

per square foot  
in Q2 2025 vs. \$23.00 in Q1 2025

### Q2 HOUSING OCCUPANCY

**+0%**

vs. Q1 2025

**+1%**

vs. Q2 2024

**+2%**

vs. Q2 2019

### MAY HOTEL OCCUPANCY

**+3%**

vs. Apr 2025

**-3%**

vs. May 2024

**+5%**

vs. May 2019

### VISITOR ACTIVITY COUNTS

**+1%**

vs. May 2025

**-3%**

vs. Jun 2024

**-3%**

vs. Jun 2019

### DAILY AVG EMPLOYEE ACTIVITY

**-6%**

vs. May 2025

**+7%**

vs. Jun 2024

**-10%**

vs. Jun 2019

### RESIDENT ACTIVITY COUNTS

**+5%**

vs. May 2025

**+9%**

vs. Jun 2024

**+19%**

vs. Jun 2019

### MAY DASH WORK RIDERSHIP

**-51%**

vs. Apr 2025

### MAY DASH CIRC. RIDERSHIP

**-4%**

vs. Apr 2025

### CURRENT ACTIVE INVESTMENT

**\$476M**

Storefront Business Openings | Updated June 2025

Reserve became **Allora Coastal Italian**  
QSR  
February

**The Cottage**  
Coworking Space  
March

**Kawa Sushi**  
Restaurant  
April

**Ashton** inside the BOB  
Bar  
March

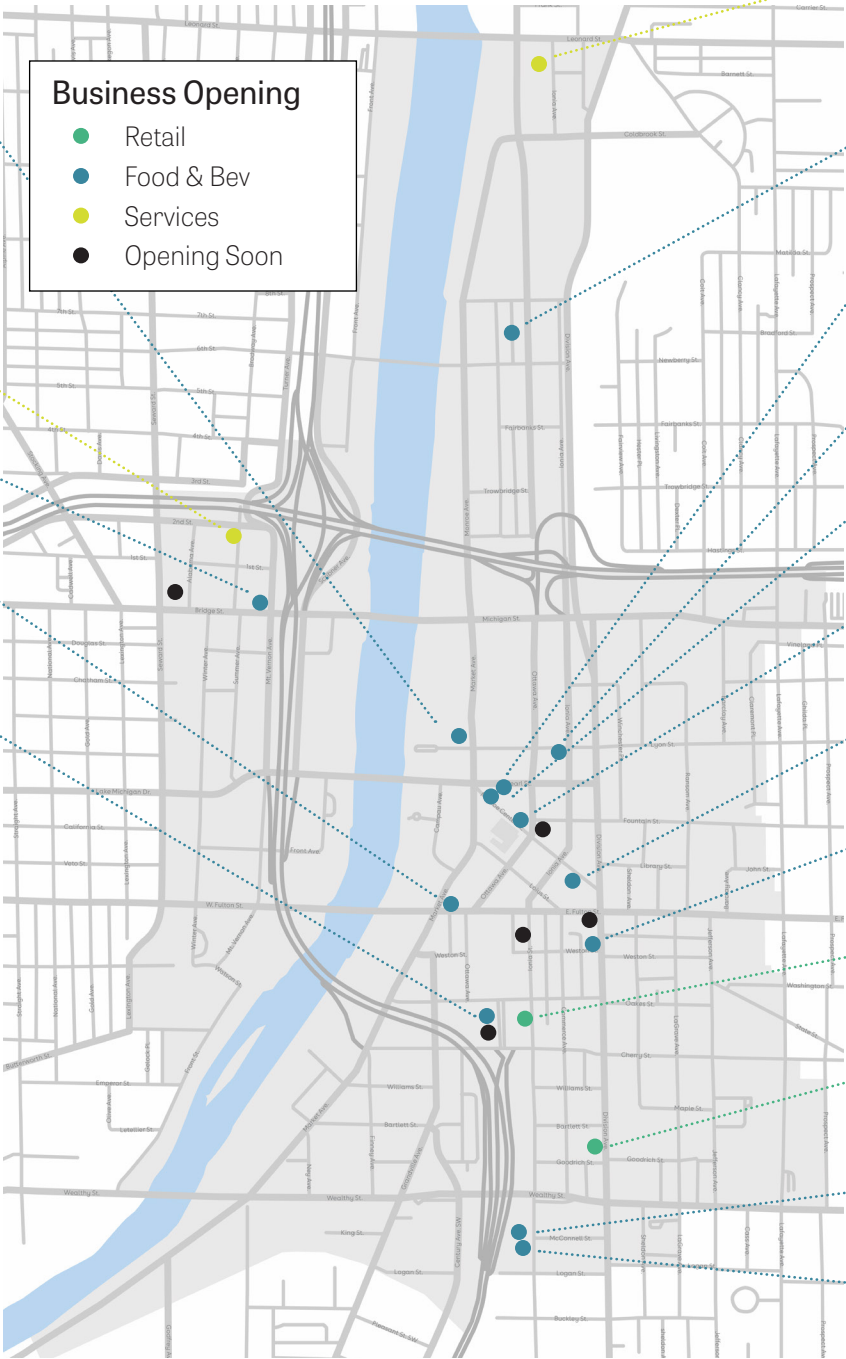
**Vel Sushi and Pho**  
Restaurant  
May

DDA Retail Innovation Grant

Fiscal Year	# of Businesses	Total Spent
FY2018	1	\$60,000.00
FY2019	1	\$45,000.00
FY2020	5	\$133,385.70
FY2021	5	\$109,333.00
FY2022	1	\$18,448.17
FY2023	6	\$167,894.00
FY2024	5	\$105,433.59
FY2025	8	\$213,067.00
Total	32	\$852,571.46

Business Opening

- Retail
- Food & Bev
- Services
- Opening Soon



**Midwest Movement Collective**  
Expansion  
Fitness Studio  
April

**SILVA**  
Restaurant  
February

**Poke Tori**  
QSR  
January

**Morning Ritual**  
Café  
June

**Twisted Tap Distillery**  
Bar & Tasting Room  
April

The Macaron became **Sugar Bar**  
Food Retail & beverages  
February

**Garden District**  
Restaurant  
February

**OTONO Café** inside OTONO  
Café  
March

**Niksi**  
Soft Goods Retail  
February

**NIDO - The Urban Nest\***  
Soft Goods Retail & Event Space  
March

Pinktail Poke became **Rudy's Sub Shop**  
QSR  
February

**Go Vegan GR**  
Restaurant  
May

Source: Downtown Grand

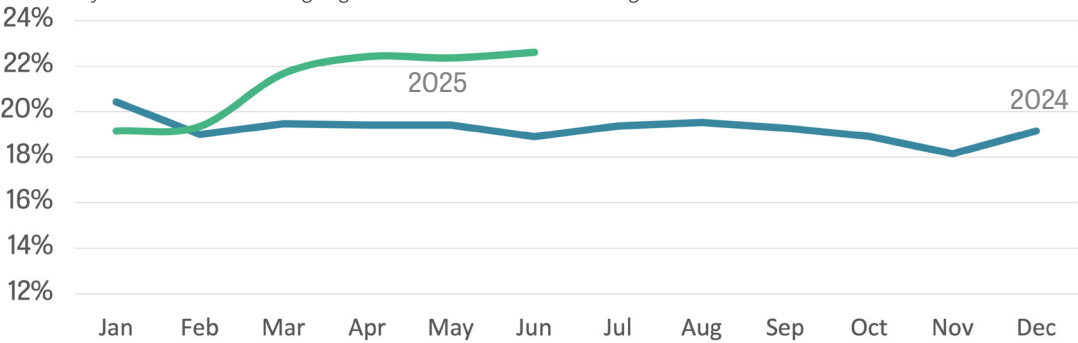


Storefront Vacancies & Recent Closures | Updated June 2025

12 storefront businesses closed  
in Downtown in 2025 so far

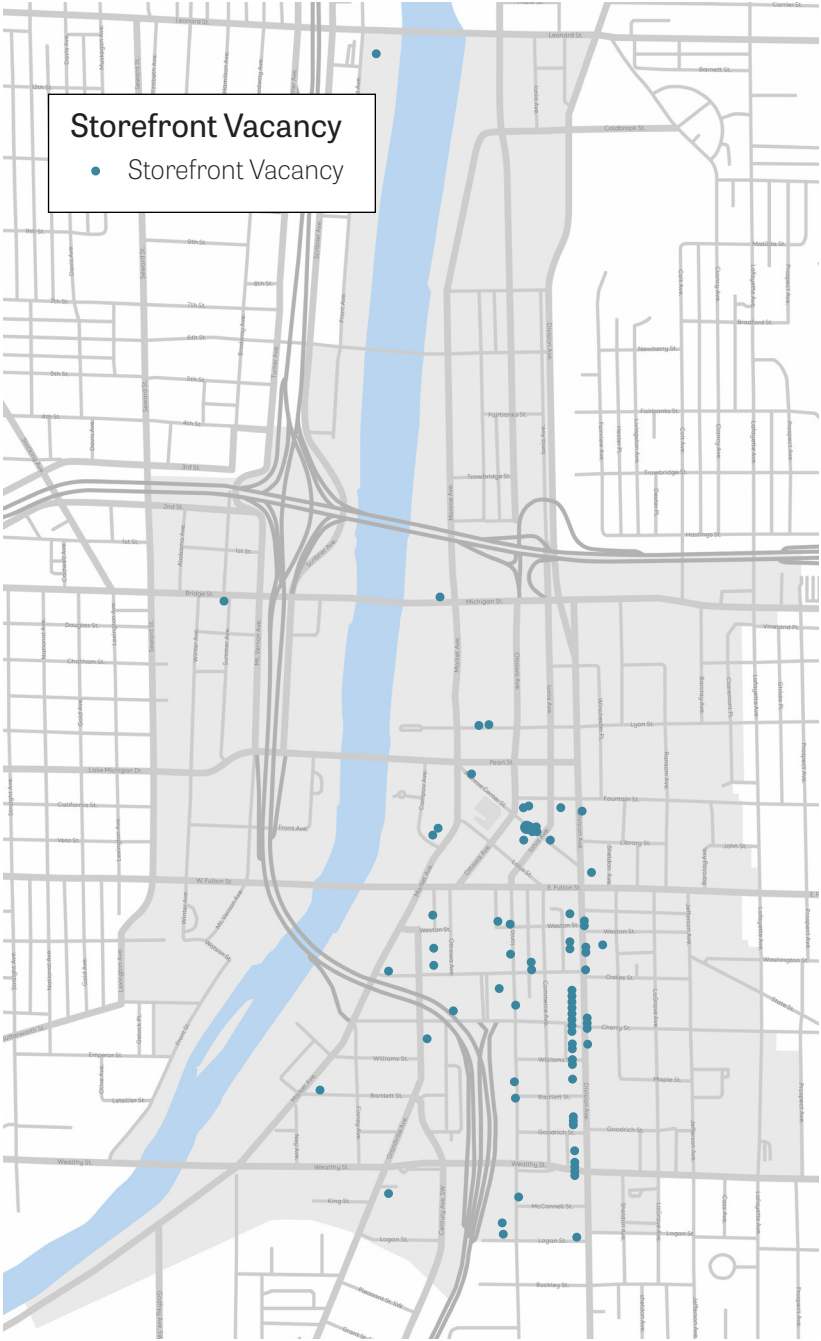
2025 Closures:  
75% Food & Bev  
0% Retail  
25% Services

Storefront vacancy was 23% in June 2025  
y-axis truncated to highlight month-over-month changes



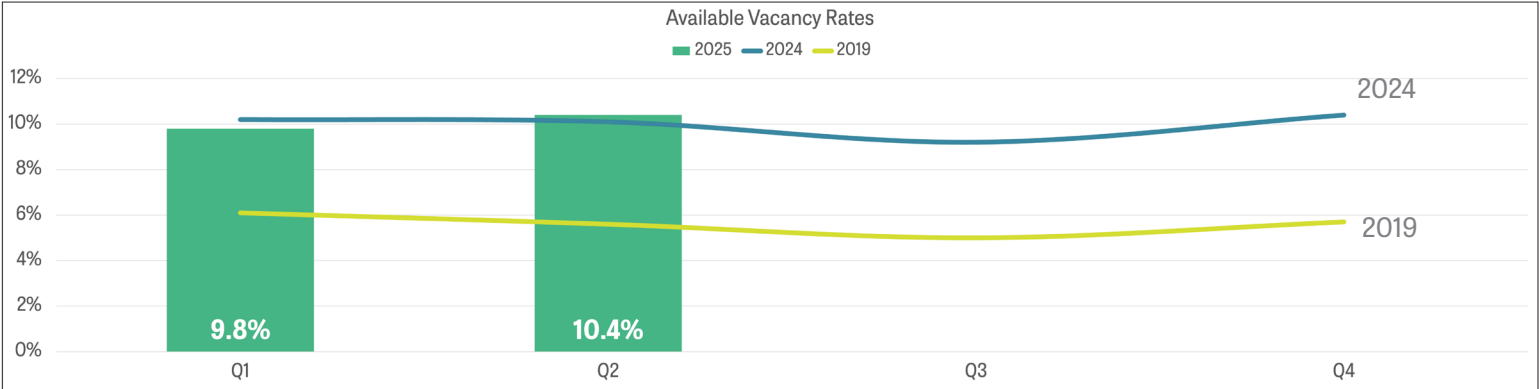
	Storefronts	Vacancies	Vacancy %	Sq Ft Available
Bridge Street	25	2	8%	9,920 sq ft
Center City	127	28	22%	113,414 sq ft
Monroe Center <sup>1</sup>	54 <sup>1</sup>	11 <sup>1</sup>	20% <sup>1</sup>	60,650 sq ft <sup>1</sup>
Fulton & Jefferson	21	1	5%	1,320 sq ft
Heartside: Division	102	43	42%	~150,268 sq ft
Heartside: Ionia	73	14	19%	~54,290 sq ft
Heartside: C. Chavez	13	3	23%	4,029 sq ft
Monroe North	29	0	0%	0 sq ft
Other	17	1	6%	3,960 sq ft
DISTRICT TOTALS:	407	92	22%	~ 341,269 sq ft

Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



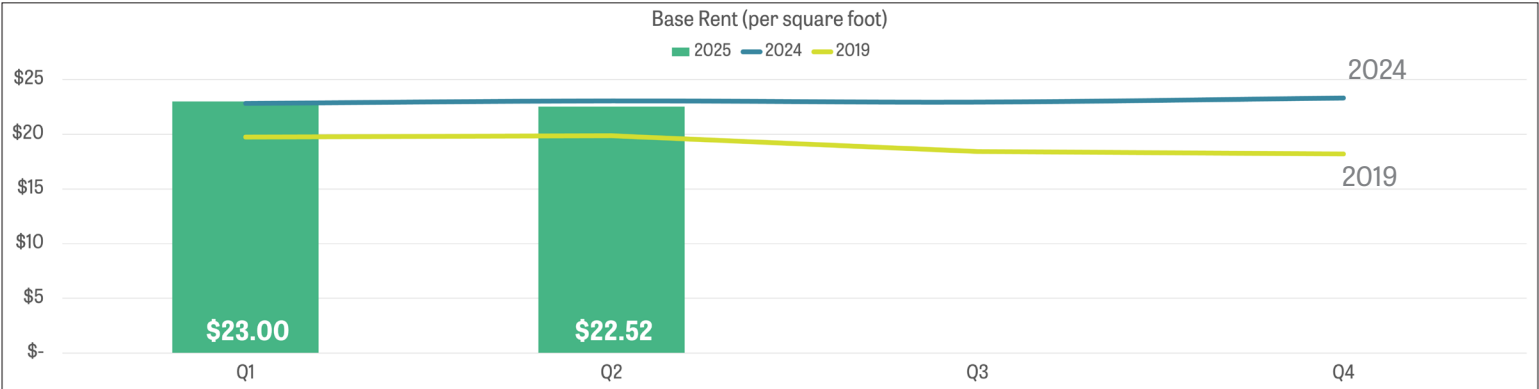
Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

10.4%  
vacancy in Q2 2025  
vs. 9.8% in Q1 2025



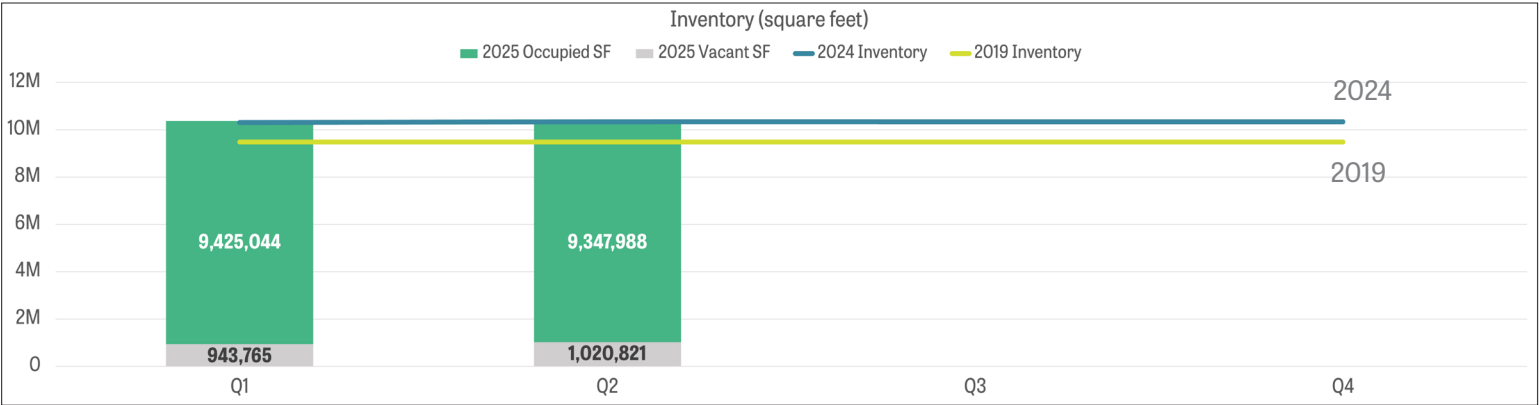
Source: CoStar

\$22.52  
per sq ft in Q2 2025  
vs. \$23.00 in Q1 2025



Source: CoStar

10.4M  
square feet of office  
space inventory



Source: CoStar

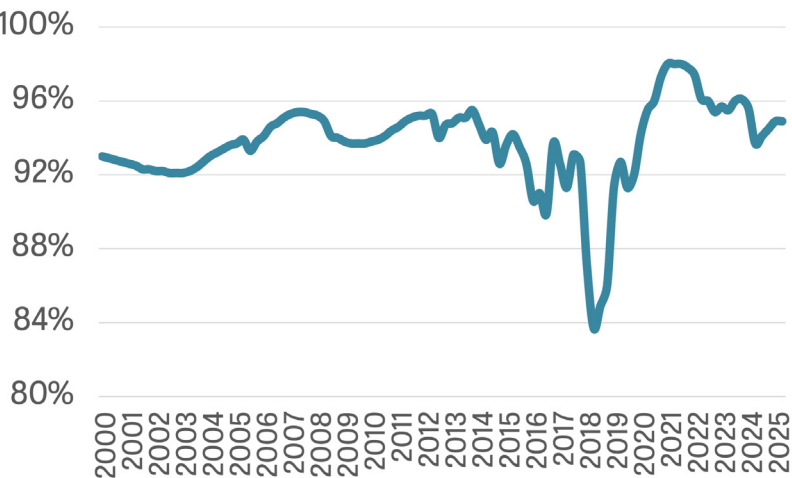
94%  
occupancy  
Q1 2025

172  
units under  
construction

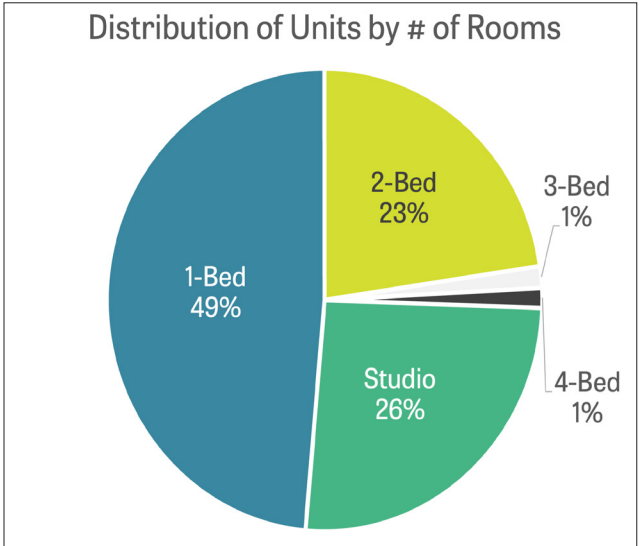
1,965  
units in pipeline

Housing occupancy was 1% higher in Q2 vs. Q1 2025

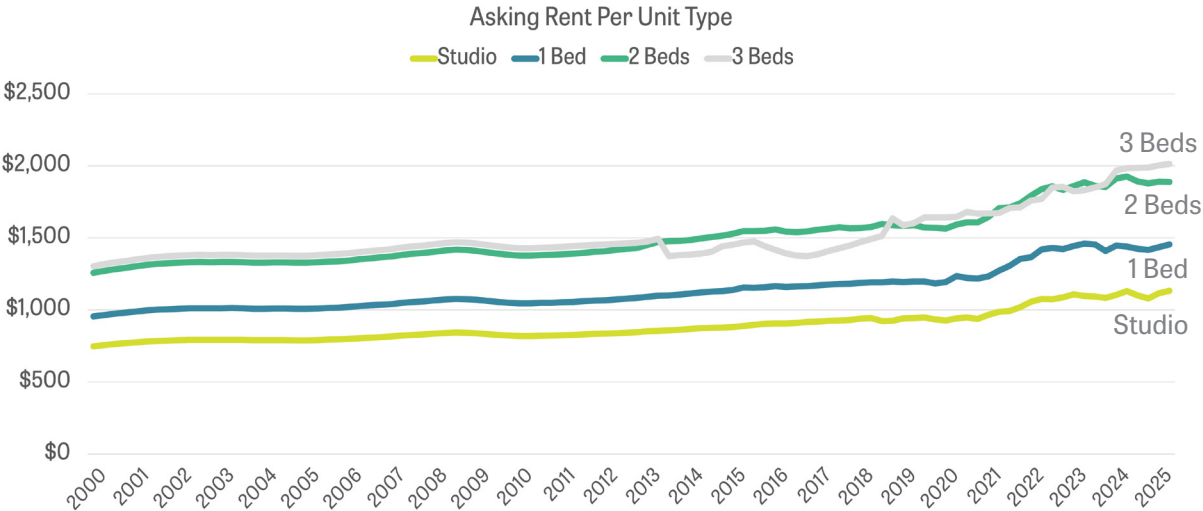
y-axis truncated to highlight quarter-over-quarter changes



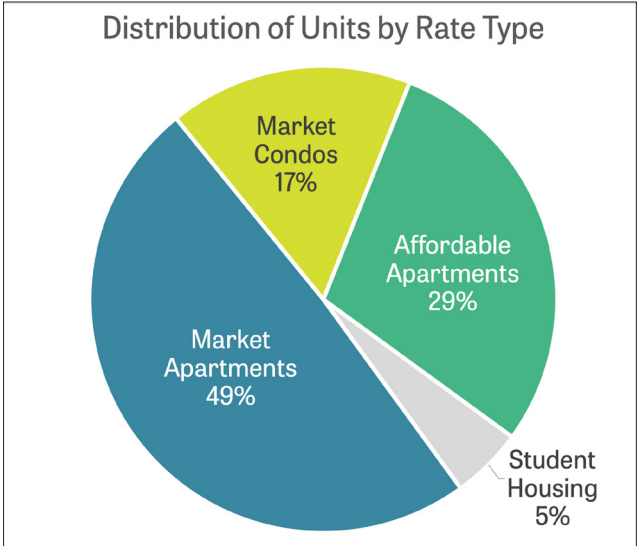
Source: CoStar



Source: CoStar

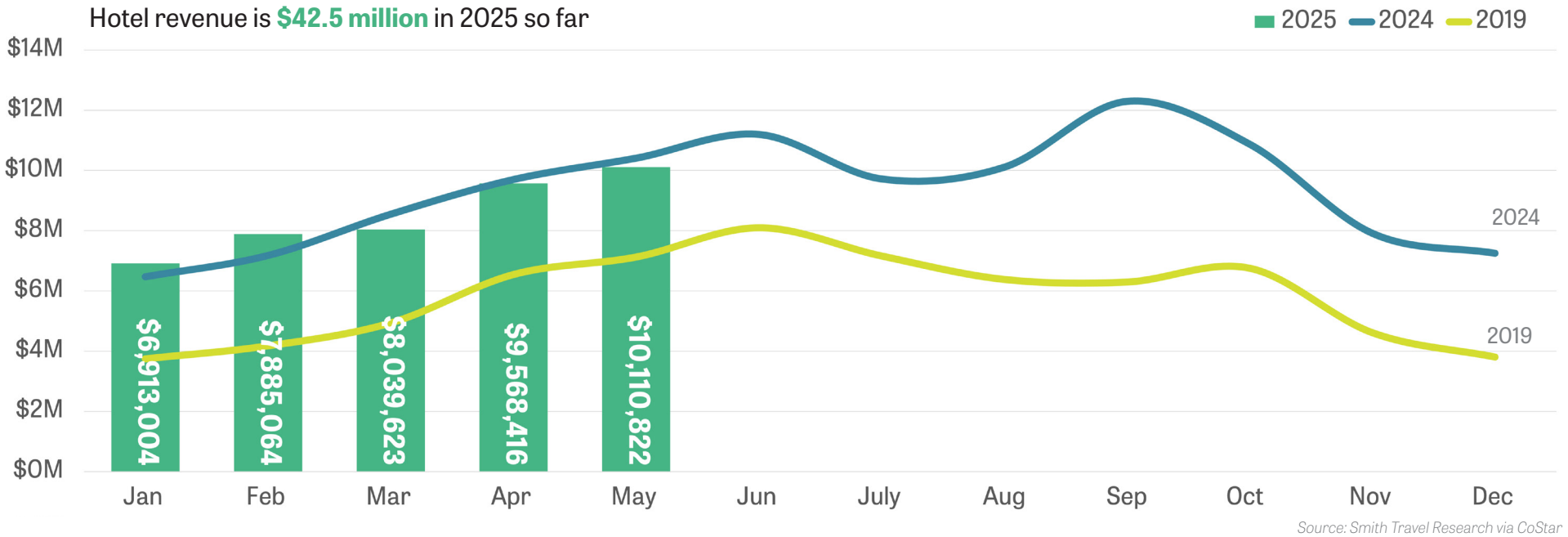
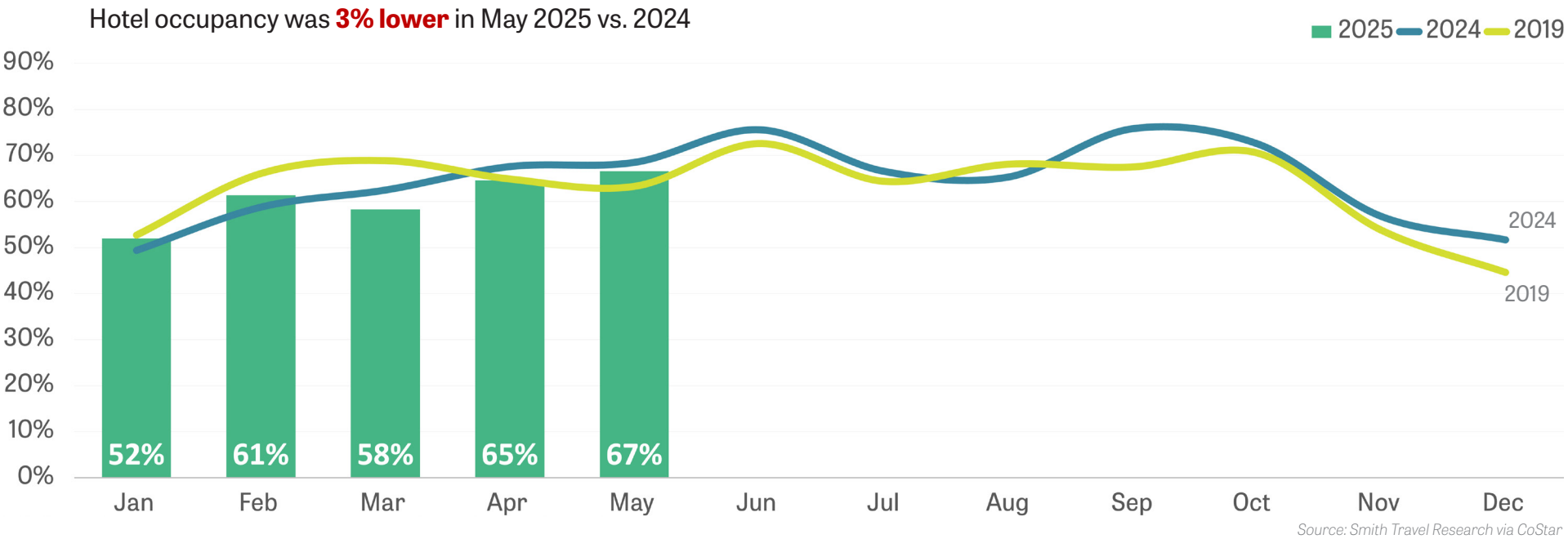


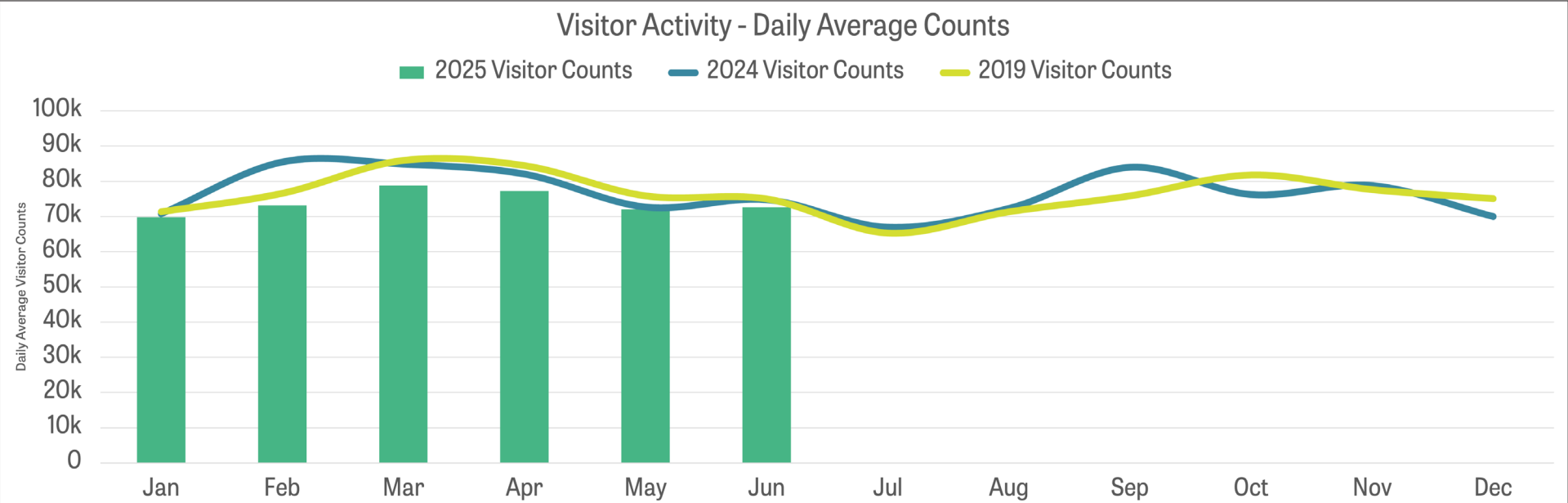
Source: CoStar



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Hotel Occupancy | Updated May 2025



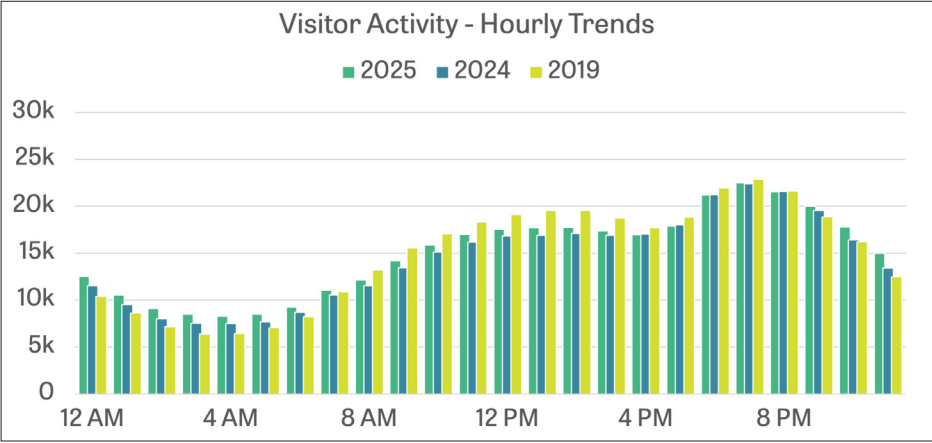


Source: Placer.ai

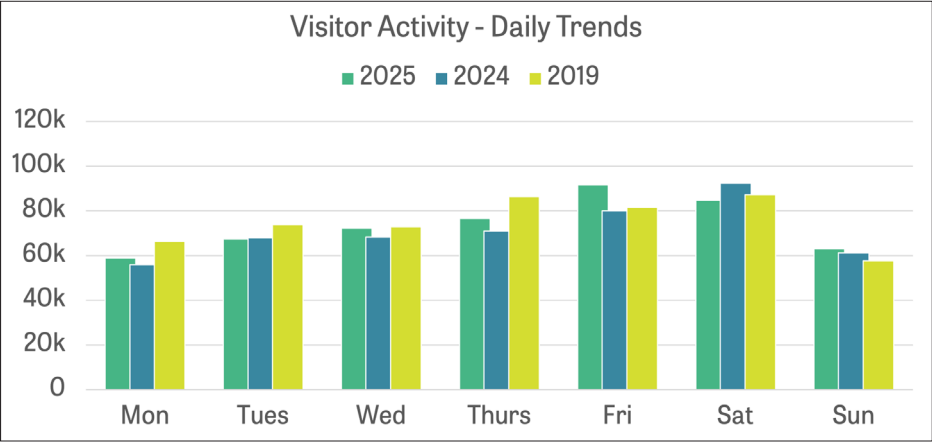
**1%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. May 2025

**3%**  
decrease  
June 2025 vs. June 2024

**3%**  
decrease  
June 2025 vs. June 2019

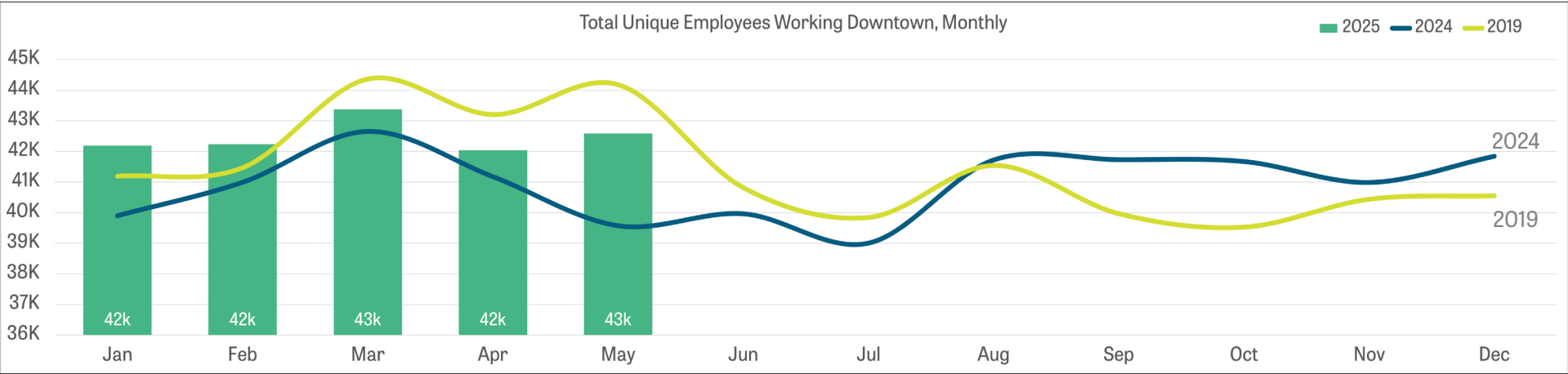


Source: Placer.ai

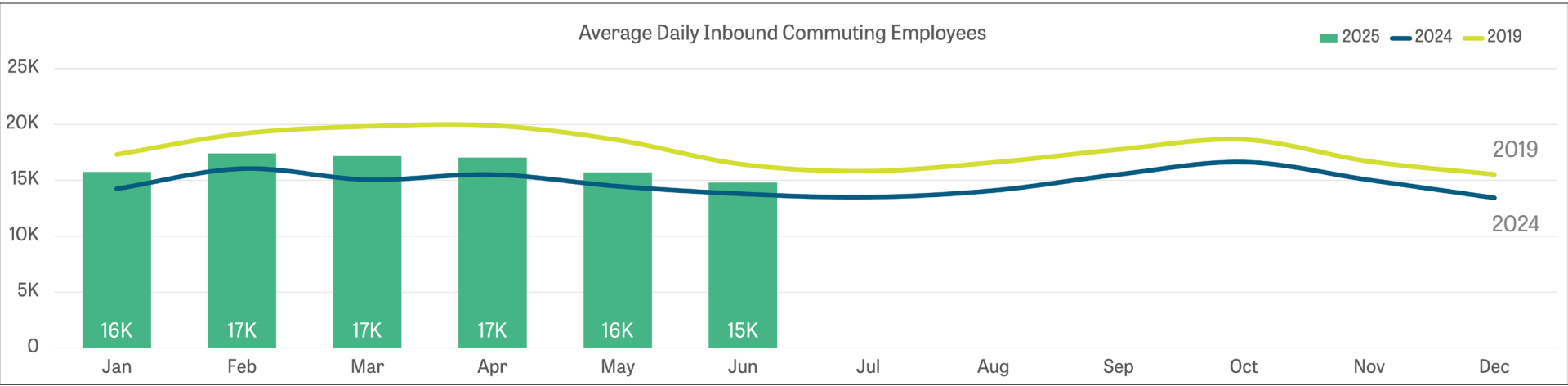
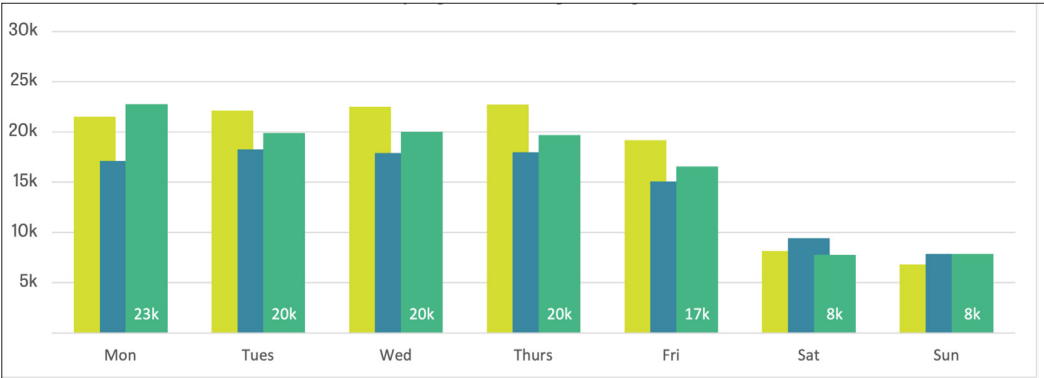


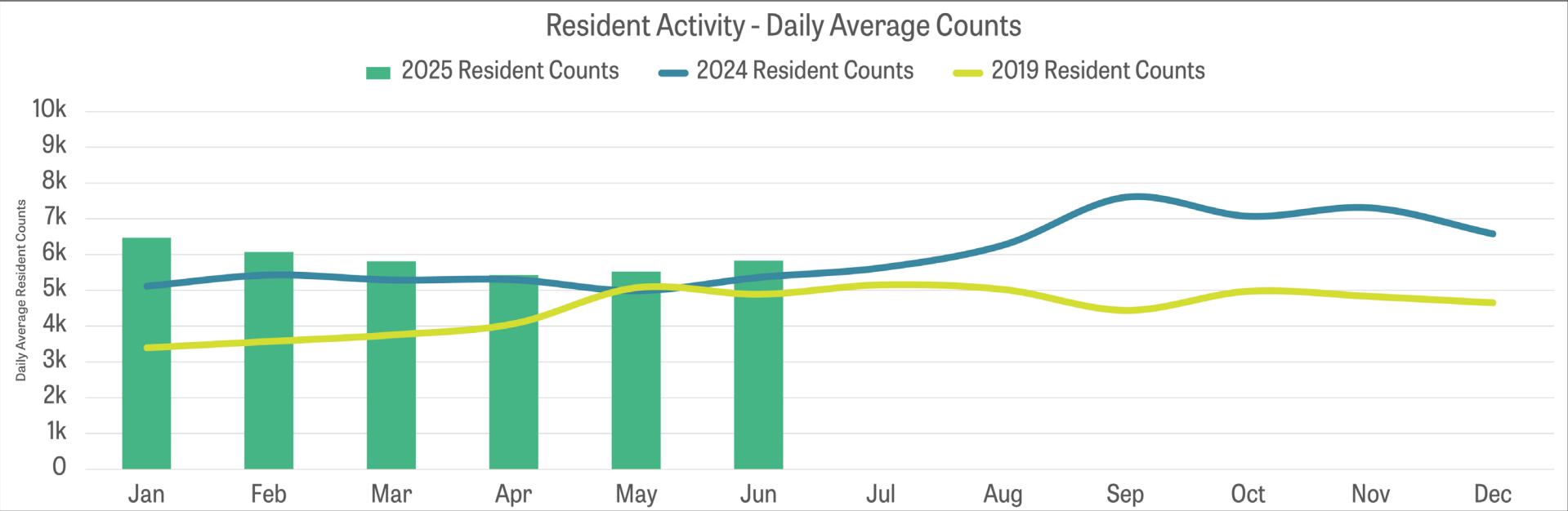
Source: Placer.ai

DDA Employee Activity Tracking | Updated June 2025



The graph **below** indicates the daily average number of Downtown employees that are inbound commuters, i.e. how many employees are working in the district that commute from outside the district on a daily basis. Employee activity fluctuates daily due to schedules, remote work practices, etc The DGRi team will continue to enhance the reporting on this audience type based on the new methodology employed by Placer.ai.



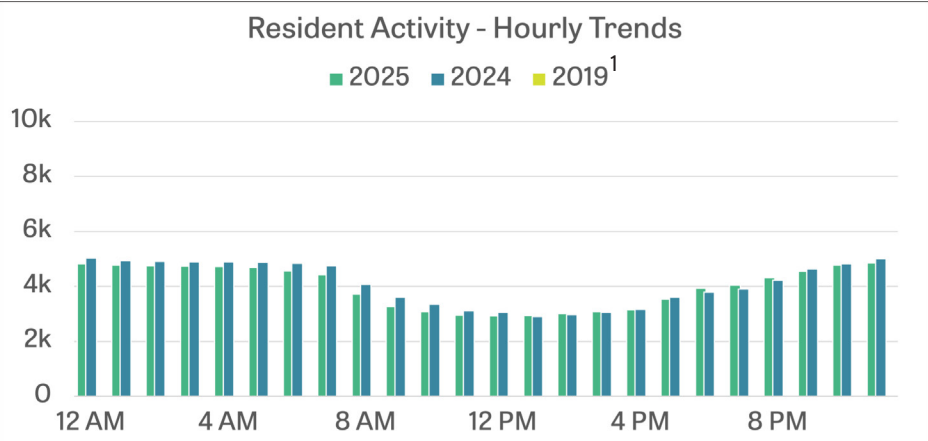


Source: Placer.ai

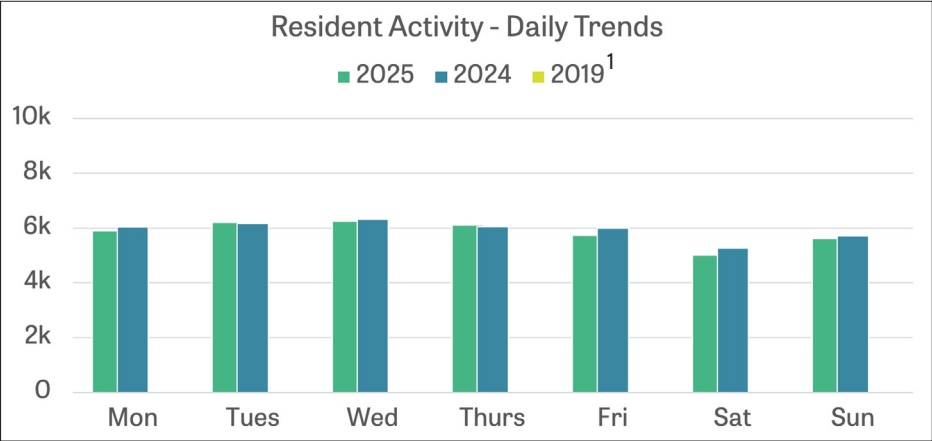
**5%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. May 2025

**9%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. June 2024

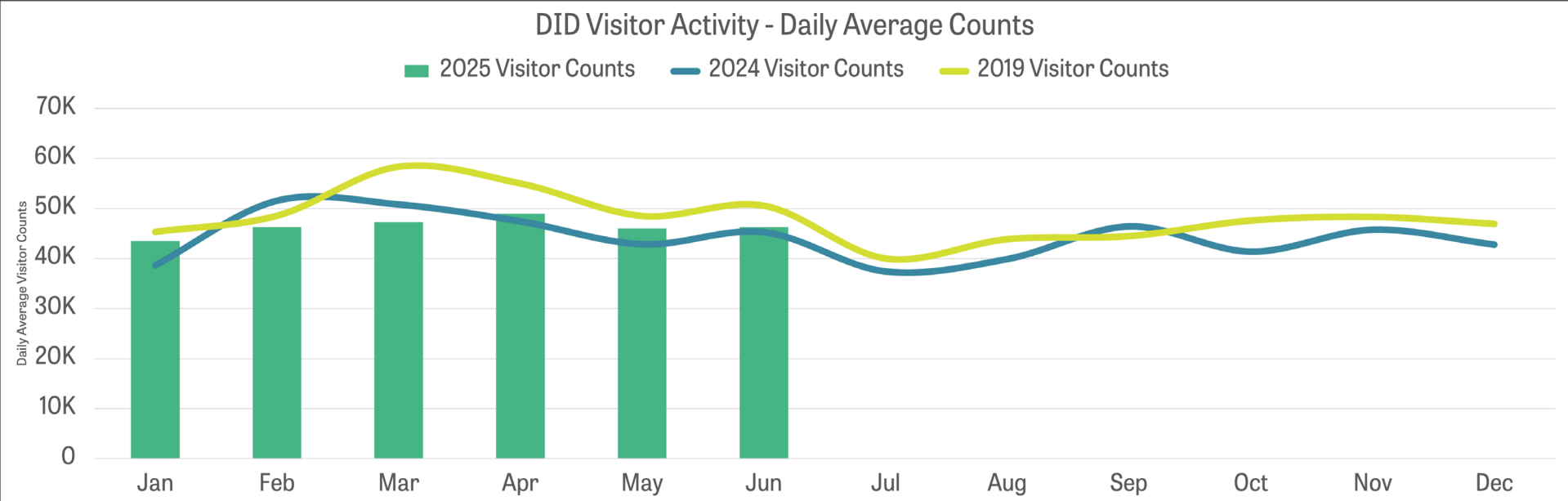
**19%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. June 2019



Source: Placer.ai



Source: Placer.ai

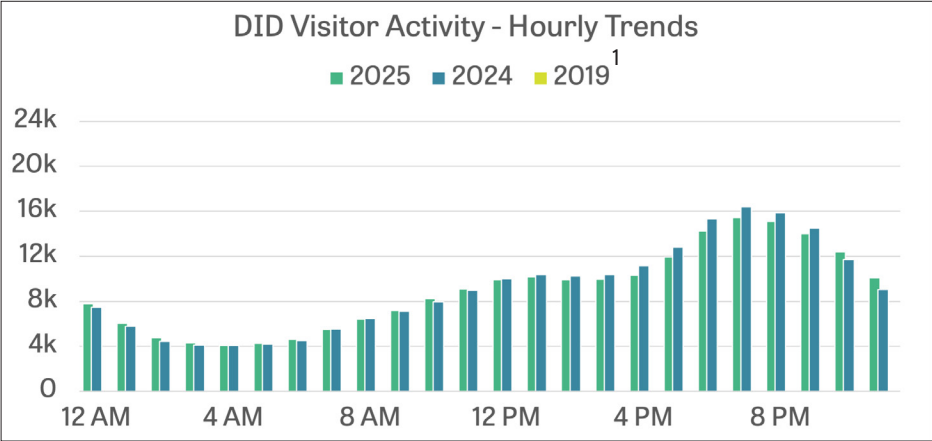


Source: Placer.ai

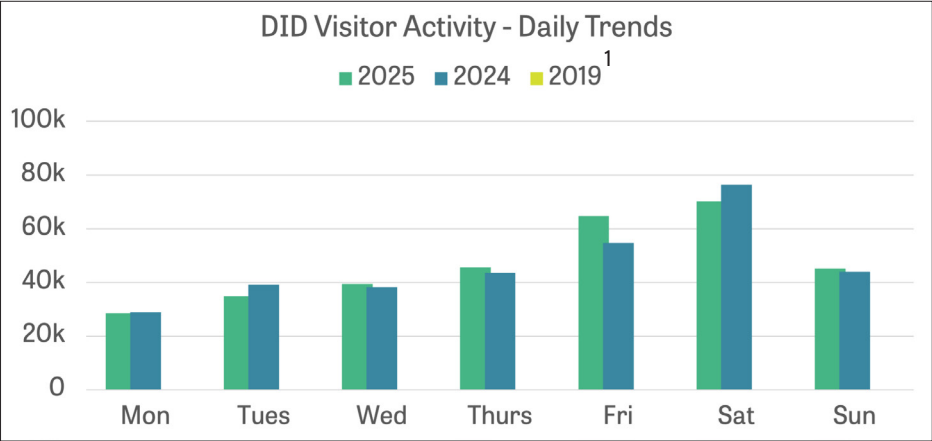
**1%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. May 2025

**2%**  
increase  
June 2025 vs. June 2024

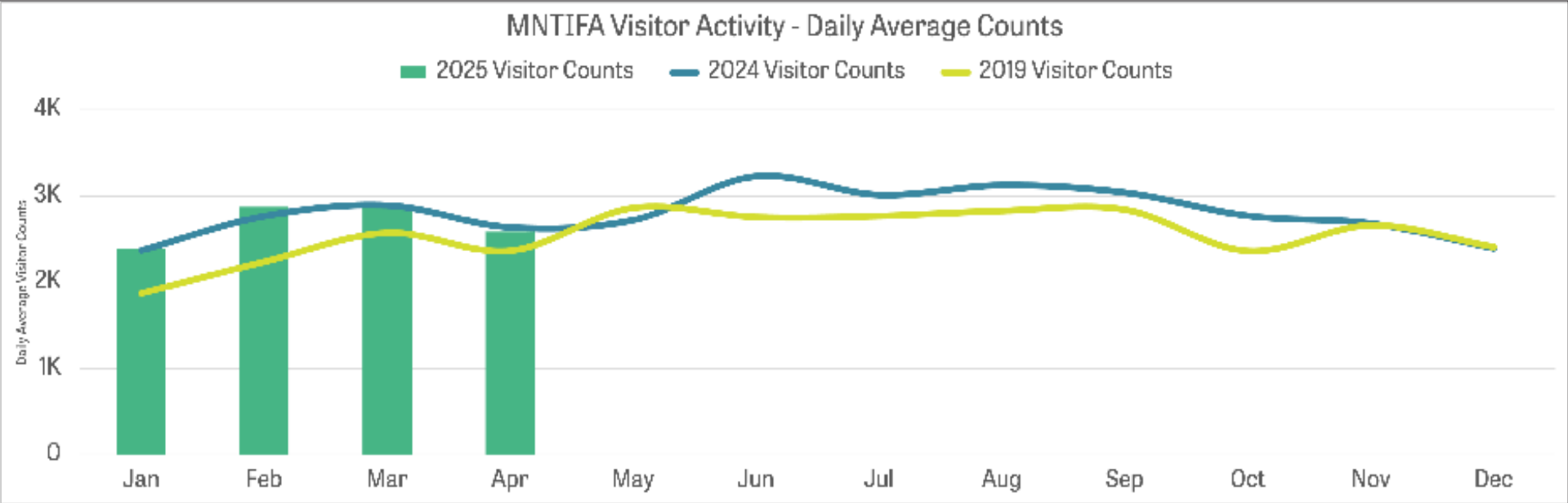
**8%**  
decrease  
June 2025 vs. June 2019



Source: Placer.ai



Source: Placer.ai



Source: Placer.ai

10%

decrease

Apr 2025 vs. Mar 2025

2%

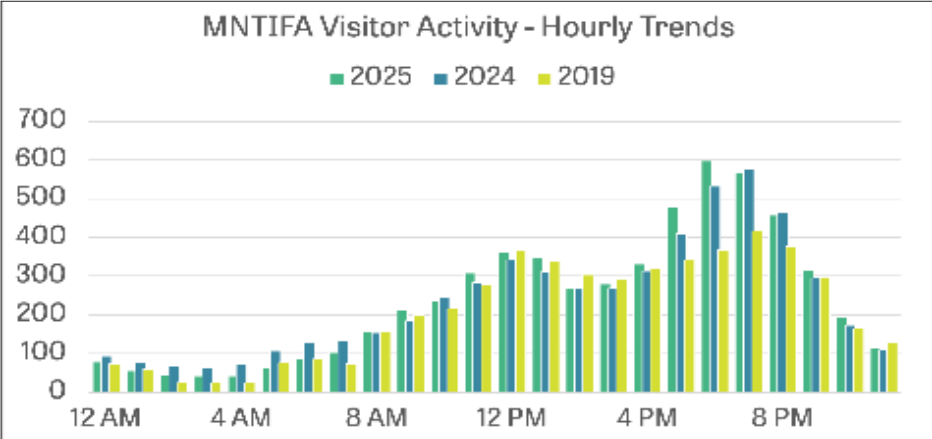
decrease

Apr 2025 vs. Apr 2024

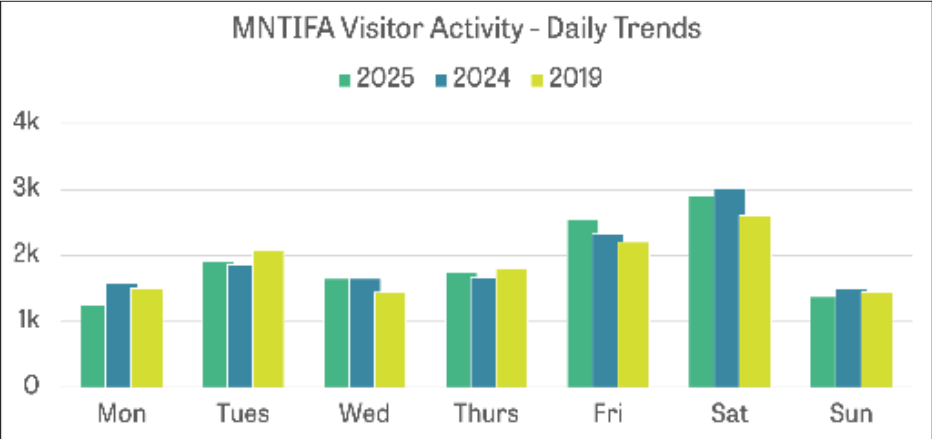
9%

increase

Apr 2025 vs. Apr 2019



Source: Placer.ai



Source: Placer.ai

## Downtown Ambassador Statistics | Updated June 2025

	June 2025	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	2019 YTD
Graffiti Removals	470	2,450	2,795	689
Lbs of Trash Removed	25,050	132,350	156,725	189,725
Snow Removals	-	6,402	5,569	5,569
Weeds Abated	53,411	74,416	150,820	27,325
Business Contacts	278	2,341	4,108	1,118
Pedestrian Assists	6,849	87,035	185,823	110,081
Mobility Assists	13	322	2,311	875
Total Ambassador Banked Hours as of April:				401.75
Total Resident Ambassador Banked Hours as of April:				224.25

Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



## Current Construction & Development | Updated June 2025

### 1 Lyon Square Reconstruction

anticipated completion: July 2nd, 2025

\$12,000,000 investment

### 2 GRPM River's Edge Work

anticipated completion: August 2025

\$12,000,000 investment

### 3 Acrisure Amphitheater

anticipated completion: Spring 2026

+190 parking spaces

+825 jobs

\$214,500,000 investment

### 4 111 Lyon Residential Conversion

anticipated completion: Spring 2026

+140 housing units

-125,000 sq ft of office space

\$50,000,000 investment

### 5 974 Front Redevelopment

anticipated completion: Spring 2026

+32 housing units

+20,000 sq ft of office space

\$12,800,000 investment

### 6 Amway Soccer Stadium

anticipated completion: Spring 2027

+104 jobs

\$175,000,000 investment

### 7 Corewell Parking Lots

anticipated completion: TBD

+40 parking spaces

929

new jobs

230  
parking spaces

172

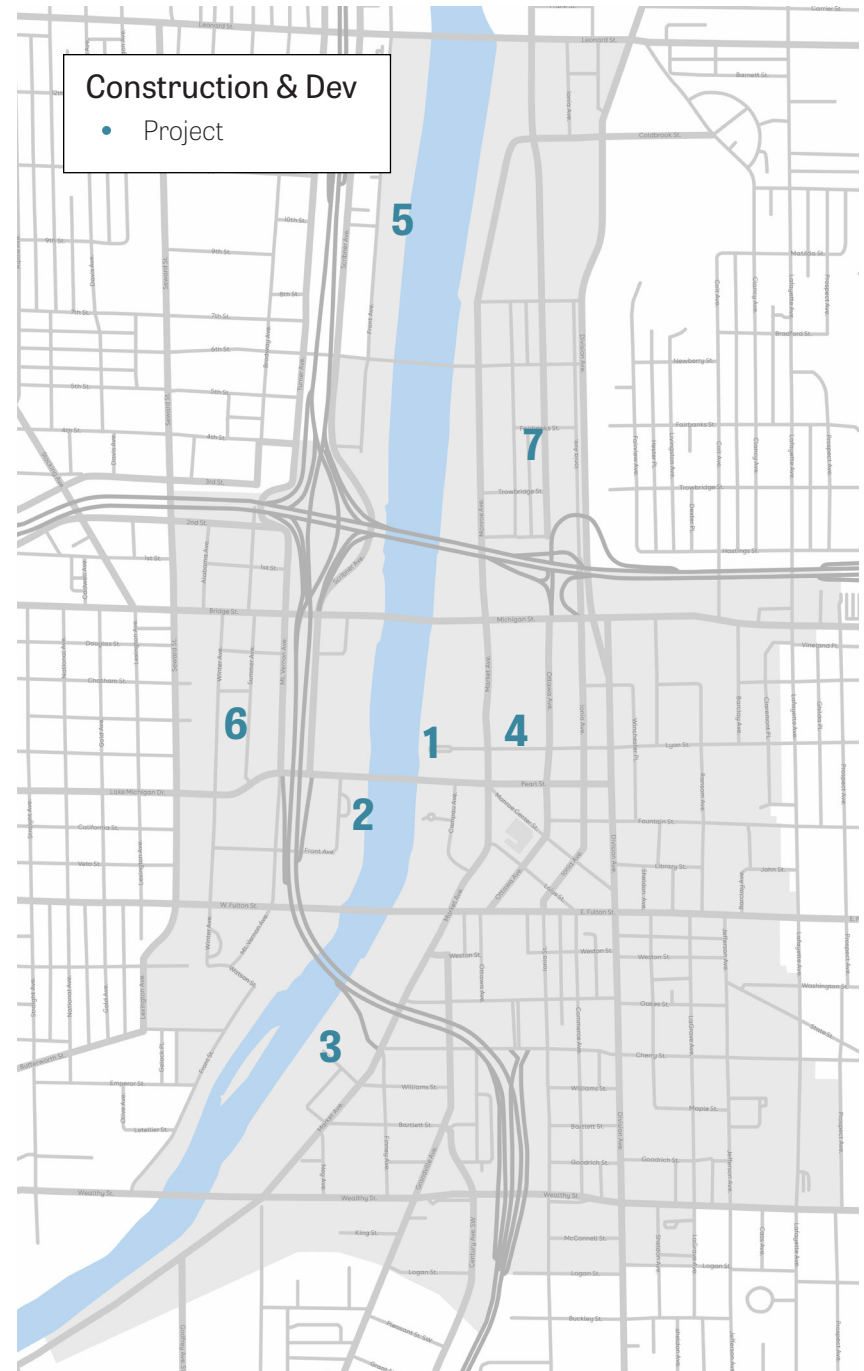
housing units

\$476M

in investment

-125k

sq ft of office space



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

# Grand River Corridor Revitalization Progress | Updated May 2025

48

acres of park improvements

20

miles of trail improvements<sup>1</sup>

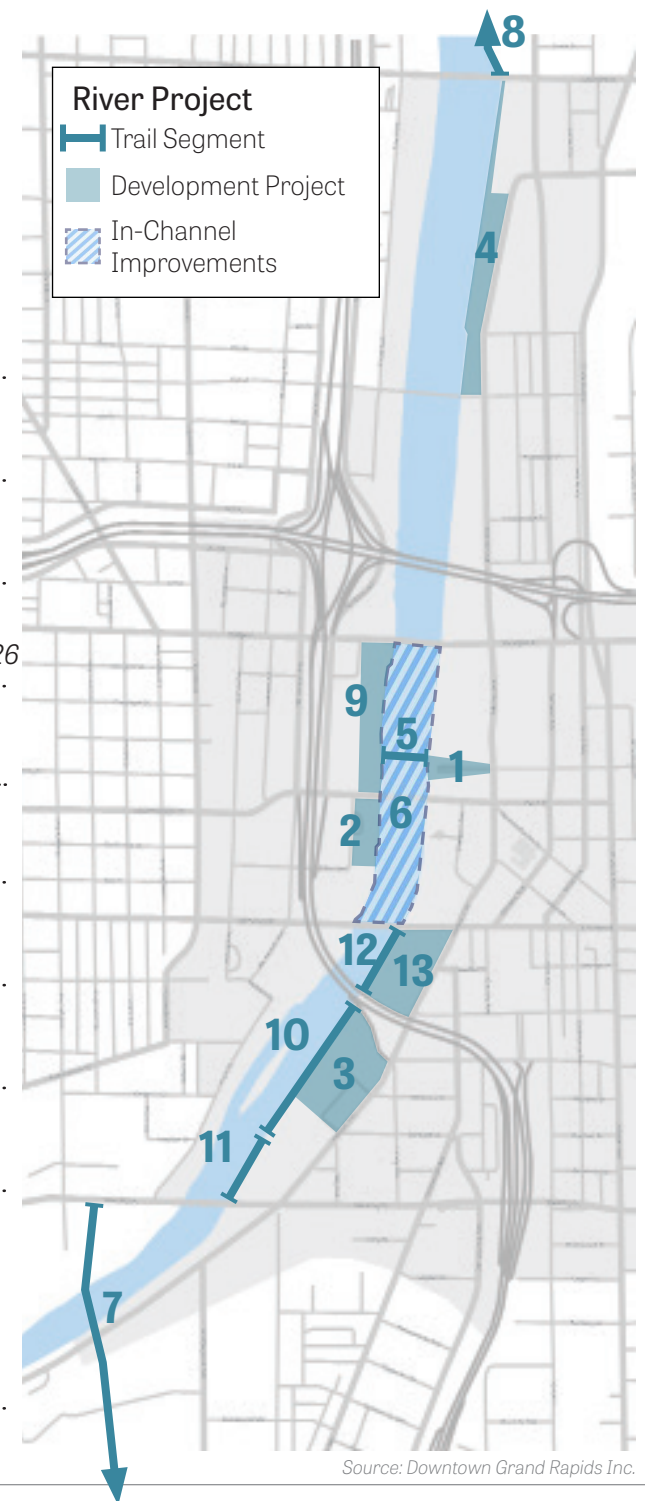
\$62M

total DGRI investment (DDA, MNTIFA, ARPA)

\$1.7B

total private river-adjacent investment

1	Lyon Square	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Complete!
2	GRPM River Edge Improvements	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. Nov 2025
3	Acrisure Amphitheater	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. May 2026
4	Canal Park	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. Summer 2026
5	Gillett Bridge	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. Sept 2025
6	Lower Reach In-Channel Improvements	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction TBD	Completion
7	Oxford Trail	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction est. Sept 2025	Completion
8	Edges Trail, Leonard To Ann	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction est. August 2025	Completion
9	Ah-Nab-Awen Park	Planning	Design	Permitting TBD <sup>2</sup>	Bidding	Construction	Completion
10	Edges Trail	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion
11	US-131 to Railroad					Construction	est. Oct 2026
12	Railroad to Wealthy						TBD
13	Fulton to US-131						TBD
13	Fulton & Market	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

For more information, visit: <https://grandriver.network/upcoming-projects>

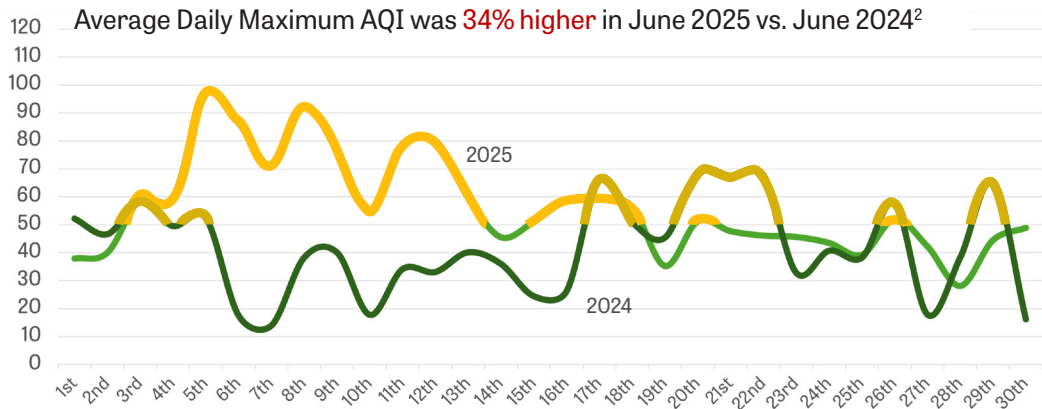
1 - Includes 16 miles of ARPA-funded Kent County greenway trail, White Pine Trail to Ada

2 - Ah-Nab-Awen Park construction is dependent on Lower Reach in-channel improvements timing.

Air Quality Monitoring | Updated June 2025

**What is AQI?** The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses the Air Quality Index (AQI) to measure air pollution levels of both ozone and particulate materials. You'll sometimes see air quality issues described on your local news using AQI. AQI measures five major air pollutants known to be hazardous to our health: ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particulate pollution.<sup>1</sup>

- 0 - 50** Perfect. Poses no health risks.
- 51 - 100** Acceptable but can be problematic for at-risk individuals.
- 101 - 150** Unhealthy for sensitive groups.
- 151 - 200** Healthy individuals will begin to feel effects. Sensitive groups may feel unwell.
- 201 - 300** Very unhealthy air for everyone. Stay indoors.
- 301 - 500** Highly unhealthy air for everyone. This is a dangerous situation.



June 2025 Recap

**June 28**  
**Medical Mile**  
**20.27**

Best AQI Day

**Medical Mile**  
**36.14 avg**

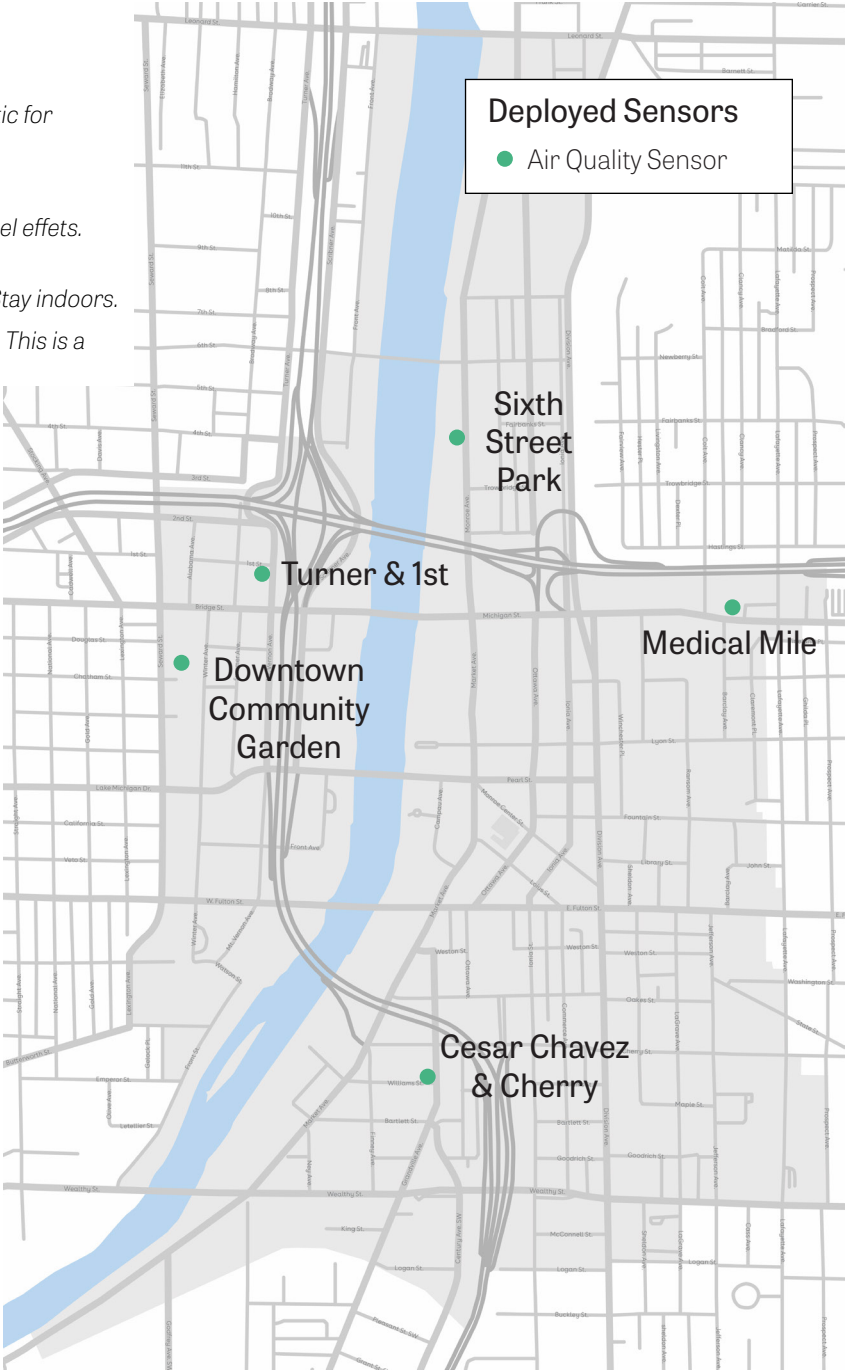
Best Average June AQI

**June 5**  
**Sixth Street Park**  
**109.83**

Worst AQI Day

**Community Garden**  
**65.59 avg**

Worst Average June AQI



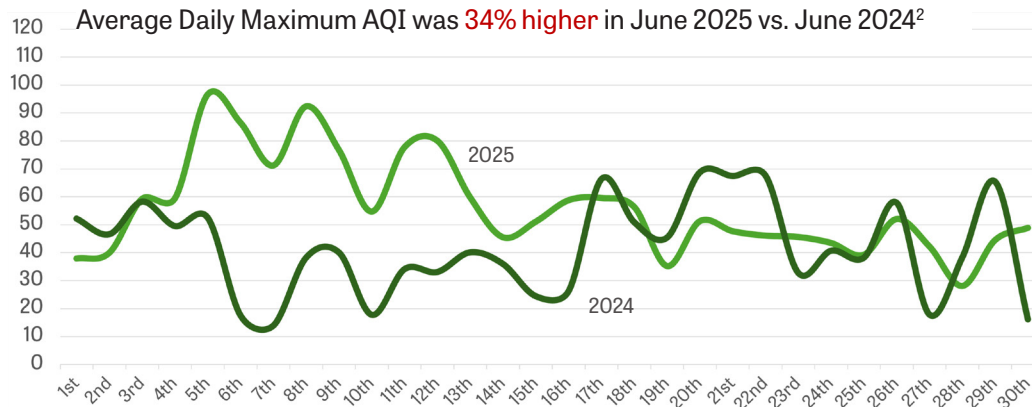
Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

2 - 2024 counts do not include Downtown Community Garden location as it was not deployed at the time.

# Urban Environmental Conditions | Updated April 2025

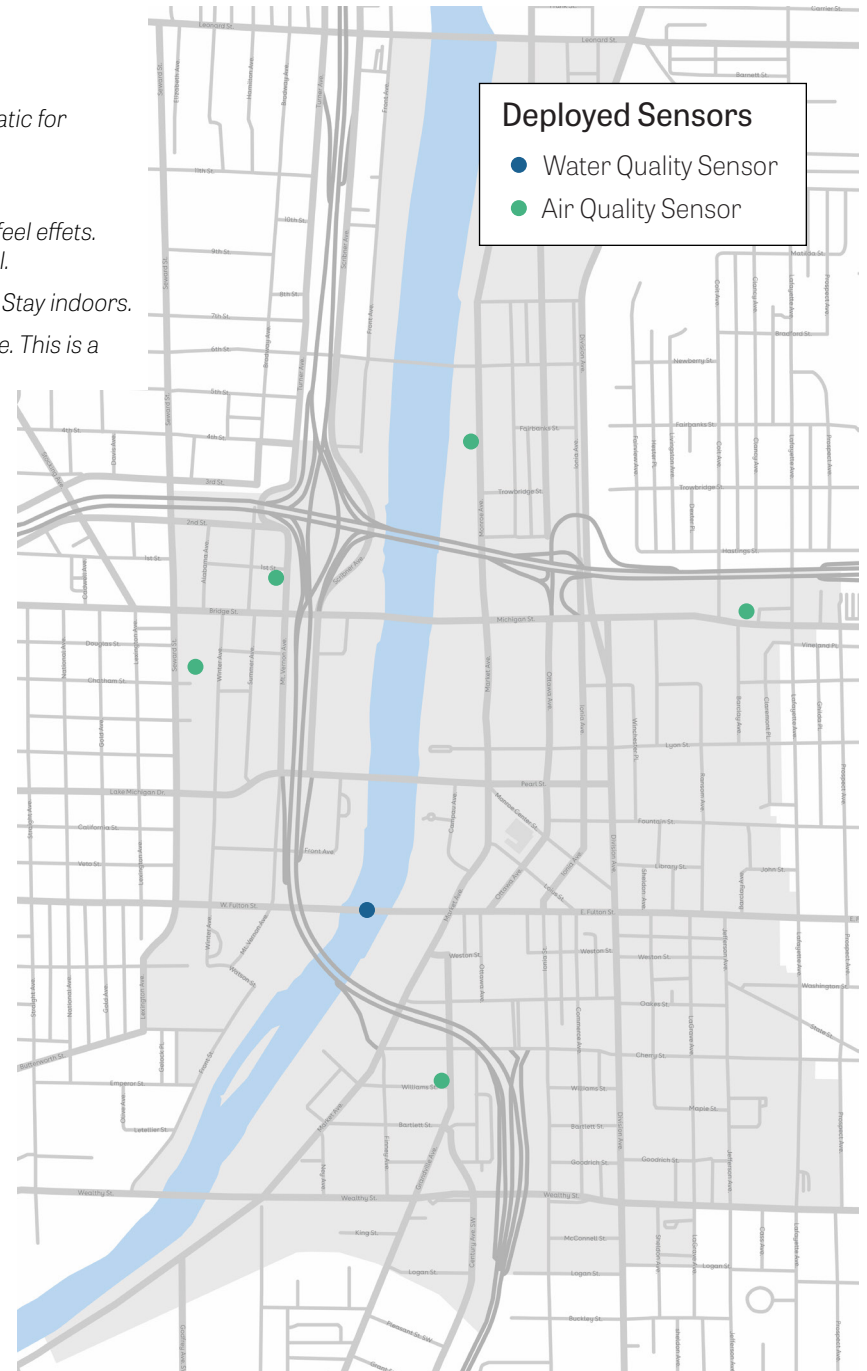
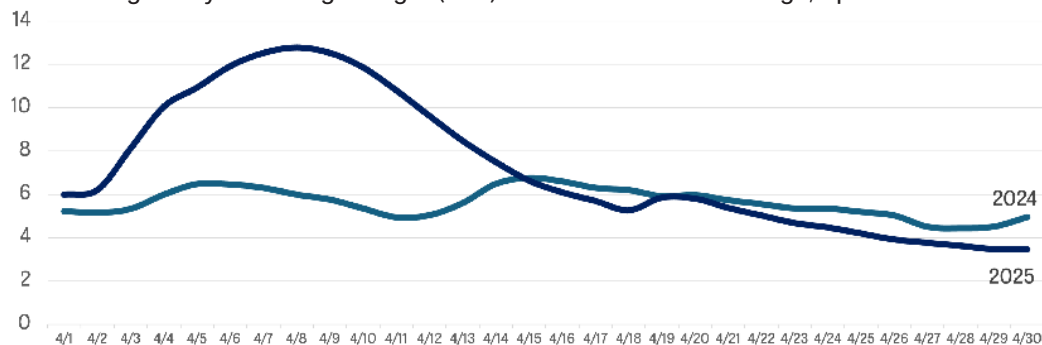
**What is AQI?** The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses the Air Quality Index (AQI) to measure air pollution levels of both ozone and particulate materials. You'll sometimes see air quality issues described on your local news using AQI. AQI measures five major air pollutants known to be hazardous to our health: ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, and particulate pollution.<sup>1</sup>

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- 201 - 300** Very unhealthy air for everyone. Stay indoors.
- 301 - 500** Highly unhealthy air for everyone. This is a dangerous situation.



**Gage height** (also known as stage) is the height of the water in the stream above a reference point. Gage height refers to the elevation of the water surface in the specific pool at the streamgaging station, not along the entire stream. Gage height also does not refer to the depth of the stream. Measurements of gage height are continually recorded by equipment inside a gagehouse on the streambank.<sup>3</sup>

**Average Daily River Gage Height (feet) at the Fulton Street Bridge, April**



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



# DASH 3.0: Circulator Ridership | Updated May 2025

DASH Circulator operates Monday - Sunday on one route with two directions (Clockwise and Counterclockwise).

4%

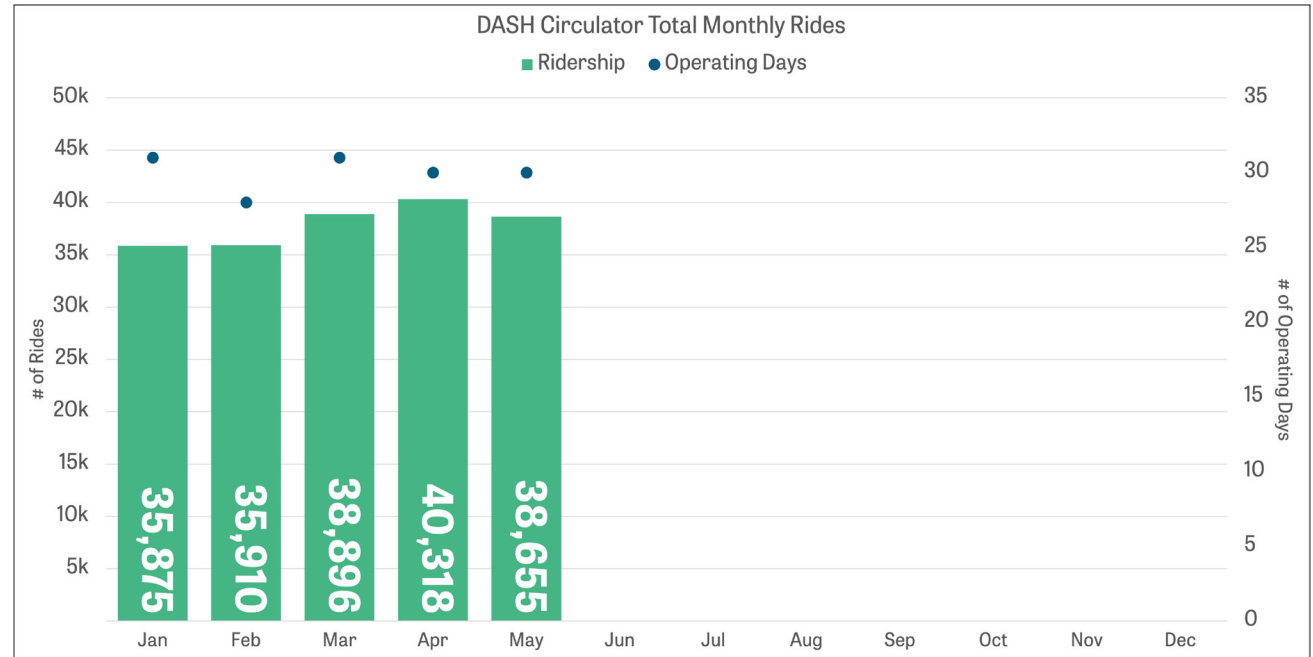
**decrease** in ridership  
May 2025 vs. Apr 2025

24%

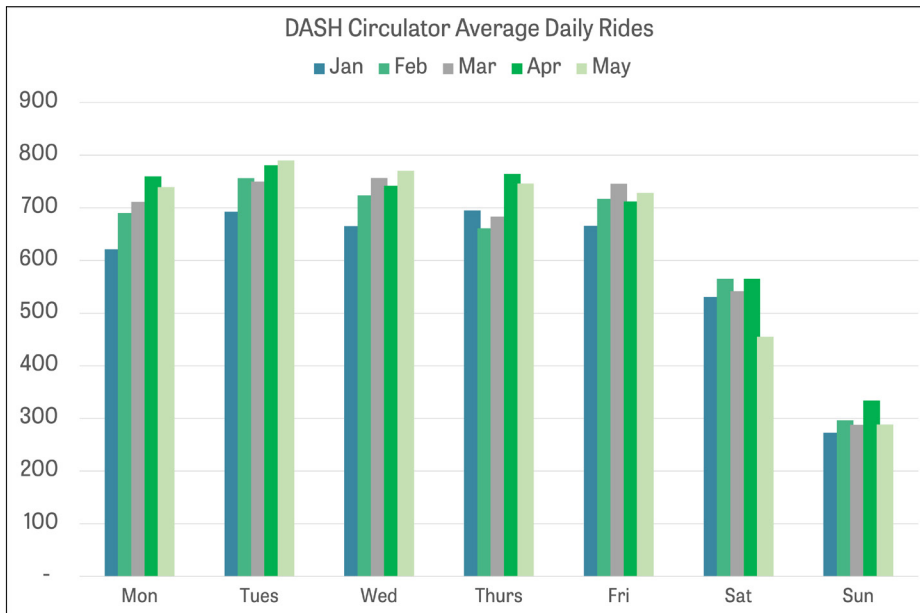
**increase** in ridership  
May 2025 vs. May 2024

33%

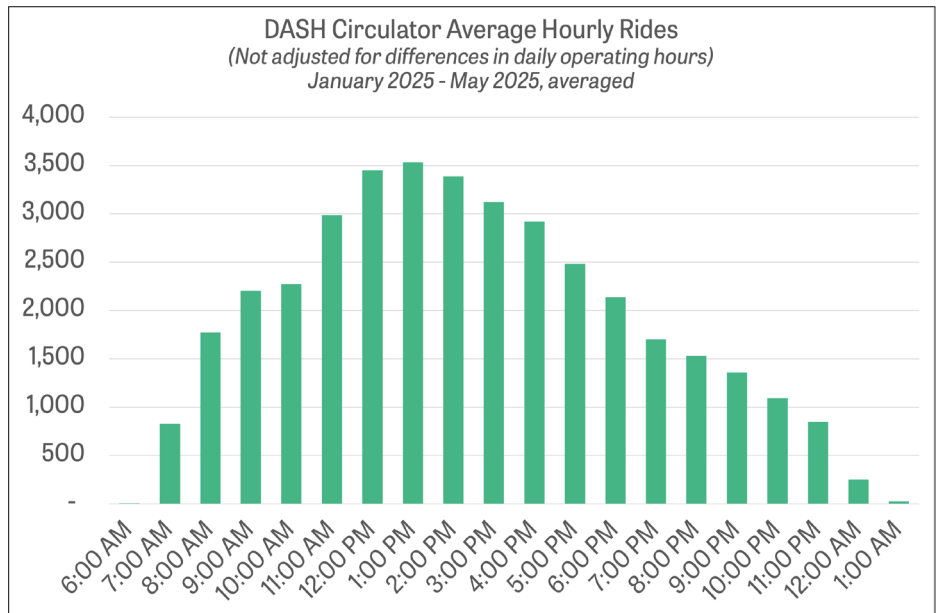
**decrease** in ridership  
May 2025 vs. May 2019



Source: The Rapid



Source: The Rapid



Source: The Rapid

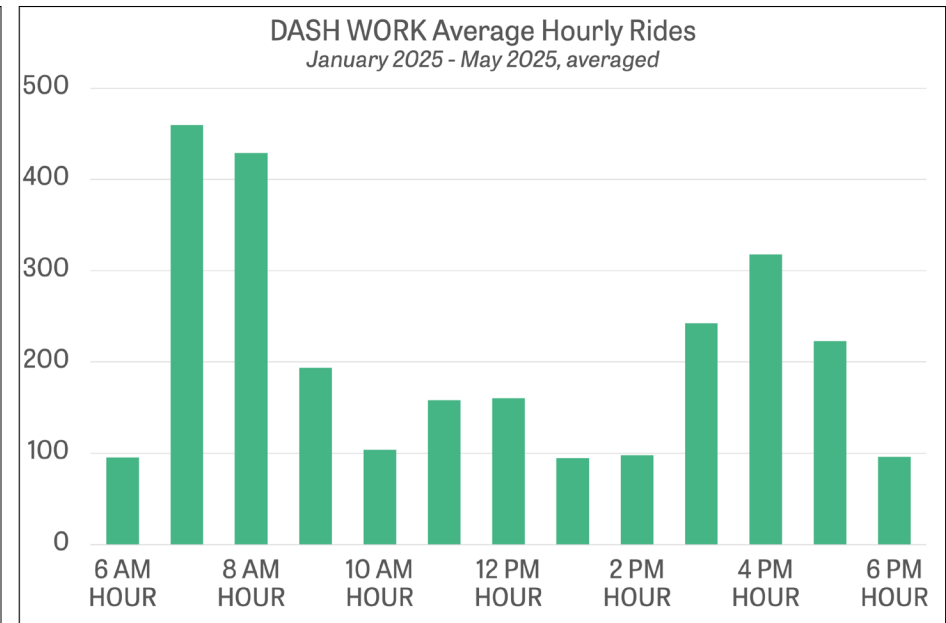
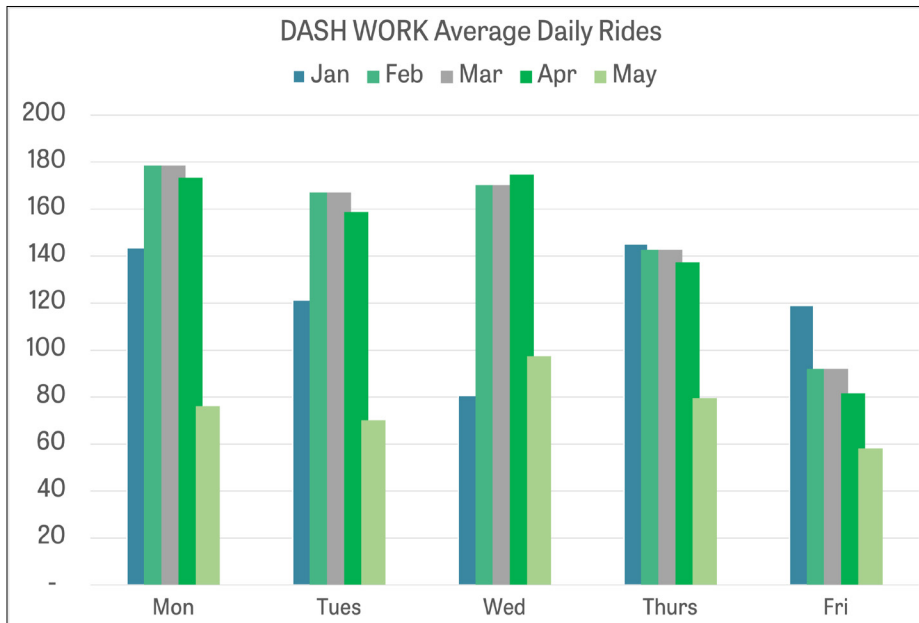
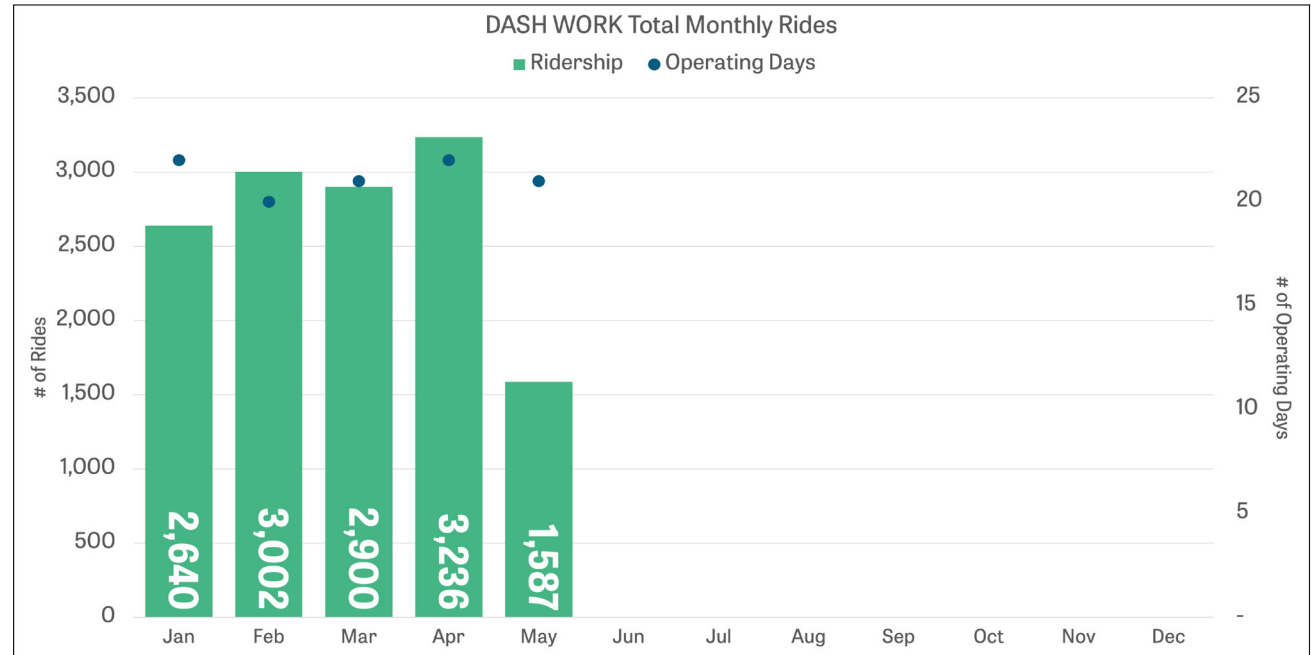


# DASH 3.0: WORK Ridership | Updated May 2025

DASH WORK operates Monday - Friday, 6:30 AM - 6:30 PM, primarily servicing Downtown employees that park in Areas 7 & 9.

51%  
**decrease** in ridership  
May 2025 vs. Apr 2025

30%  
**decrease** in ridership  
May 2025 vs. May 2024



Source: The Rapid