

# AGENDA

## DGRI BOARD OF ADVISORS



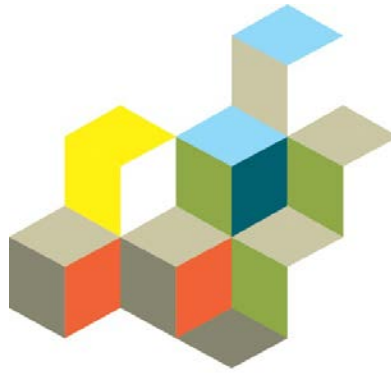
### Board Members:

Rick Baker • Mayor Rosalynn Bliss • Daryl Delabbio • Kayem Dunn • Howard Hansen • Brian Harris • Bob Herr  
Ray Kisor • Birgit Klohs • Brandy Moeller • Nikos Monoyios • Jon Nunn • Doug Small • Greg Sundstrom • Lynee Wells

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Wednesday, December 7th, 2016  
2:00 p.m. Meeting  
29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

- |   |               |        |
|---|---------------|--------|
| 1. Call to Order  |               | Dunn   |
| 2. Approve Minutes from August 17, 2016 DGRI Board Meeting (2:01)<br>(enclosed) | <i>Motion</i> | Dunn   |
| 3. DDA TIF and Development Plan Update (2:03)                                   | Info Item     | Larson |
| 4. State Legislative Update (2:13)  | Info Item     | Larson |
| 5. Calder Plaza Design Update (2:18)<br>(enclosed)                              | Info Item     | Kelly  |
| 6. Presentation: Destination Asset Study (2:33)<br>(enclosed)                   | Info Item     | Katz   |
| 7. President & CEO Report (3:18)  | Info Item     | Larson |
| 8. Board of Advisors Discussion (3:25)  |               |        |
| 9. Old Business   |               |        |
| 10. New Business  |               |        |
| 11. Public Comment  |               |        |
| 12. Adjourn   |               |        |



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

**Board of Advisors Meeting**

**August 17, 2016**

1. Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 1:32pm by Chair Kayem Dunn

2. Attendance

Present: Kayem Dunn, Howard Hansen, Bob Herr, Ray Kisor, Birgit Klohs, Brandy Moeller, Nick Monoyios, Jon Nunn, Doug Small, Greg Sundstrom,

Absent: Rick Baker, Mayor Rosalynn Bliss, Daryl Delabbio, Brian Harris, Lynee Wells

Others Present: Kristopher Larson (DGRI President & CEO), Murphy Ackerman (DGRI Office Manager), Dick Wendt, Tim Kelly, Andy Guy

3. Approve Minutes from May 5, 2016 DGRI Board Meeting

*Motion: Ray Kisor, supported by Howard Hansen, moved approval of the May 5, 2016 DGRI Board of Advisors meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.*

4. Member Priorities- Alliance for Investment

Mr. Monoyios gave an overview of the current priorities for the Alliance for Investment. Mr. Monoyios explained that the adoption of the GR Forward plan has helped to create a roadmap for goals and projects for the Alliance. Mr. Monoyios said he and Mr. Kelly are now working to identify how to work towards implementation. Mr. Monoyios shared the current work plan that the Alliance has developed for the current fiscal year projects, including: reevaluating the DDA's incentive programs and development tools, updates to Calder Plaza, and the improvements at Pearl Street. Ms. Klohs said she is impressed with the work done on Pearl Street. Mr. Larson thanked Mr. Monoyios for his continued effort to focus the Alliance on the goals of GR Forward. Mr. Larson reminded the Board that each meeting will include

report outs from the various interests represented around the Board to ensure that each member has a strong sense of how they contribute to the growth of Downtown. Ms. Dunn said this will also work to focus interests and goals around the goals of GR Forward.

5. DGRI Performance Measures Report

Mr. Larson explained that these measures emerged as a way to help demonstrate progress of the organization back to the community. Mr. Larson said he has worked closely with the Executive Committee to produce a set of fifteen (15) measurables that will help to inform annual reporting and benchmarks for the organization as a whole. Mr. Larson took a moment to introduce and explain each of the proposed measures. Mr. Larson said that some of the measures can be completed internally, such as Alliance composition and appointments, but other items like pedestrian counts will be completed through surveys and third party organizations. Mr. Larson said that this year will become the benchmark year, and then goals can be set for future years. Ms. Klohs asked how volunteers are selected for the measures, such as perception of sidewalk cleanliness. Mr. Larson said various stakeholders have expressed interest in being involved specifically from the Alliance for Livability. Mr. Hansen said he was very excited to see these measures presented at the State of our Downtown and is happy to see this work being completed.

6. President / CEO Performance Review Report

Ms. Dunn said the Executive Committee recently performed a performance review of Mr. Larson and asked Mr. Kisor, DGRI Board's immediate past chair, to share the results of the review. Mr. Kisor shared that the Executive Committee performed a review in conjunction with Mr. Larson performing a self-evaluation. Mr. Kisor shared that Mr. Larson met or surpassed all of his goals from the previous review and has performed at a high level of satisfaction to the Committee. Mr. Kisor said he is grateful for Mr. Larson's continued work and focus in Downtown and is continually impressed with all that DGRI is able to accomplish. Ms. Klohs asked if Mr. Larson receives a review from the DGRI Board as well as his staff. Mr. Dunn said this was not completed this year, but could be considered for future years.

7. President / CEO FY17 Performance Objectives

Mr. Larson said these performance objectives are a reflection of DGRI's continued effort to set achievable goals for staff and the organization that align with GR Forward. Mr. Larson took a moment to review each of the goals set forth for the coming fiscal year. Mr. Larson said these goals will then be translated into specific projects. Mr. Sundstrom asked if there were any current objectives that there are not yet measures for. Mr. Larson said the methodology has been finalized to create a baseline for each measure as well as desired outcomes and expectations. Ms. Klohs said she is pleased to see definitions for success surrounding these measures and believes it is important that the Board continues to communicate the big picture to the community. Ms. Dunn echoed Ms. Klohs and said it is a main objective of this Board to communicate our goals back to the community.

*Motion: Birgit Klohs, supported by Greg Sundstrom, moved to adopt the FY17 President & CEO*

*Performance Objectives for Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. Motion carried unanimously.*

8. Board Discussion: DDA Special Millage Capture

Mr. Larson said while working to amend the DDA's TIF and Development plan, one of the most noted concerns was the DDA's inability to opt out of special millage capture. Mr. Larson said as special millages become more common the complaint continues to arise. Mr. Larson said the DDA is working to amend its TIF plan to allow it to opt out of these special millages in an effort to be an example for good TIF reform in Michigan. Mr. Larson said after working under the guidance of legal counsel, language is being developed to identify and isolate what constitutes a special millage, then allowing the DDA to opt out of capturing those that fall under the definition. Mr. Larson said he is hopeful that this Board can provide a recommendation to the steering committee to incorporate this language. Mr. Larson said he is hopeful to have this amended in time to opt out of capturing the upcoming Zoo and Museum millage. Mr. Larson said staff has met with the City and the County and all parties agree that this will be a strong show of leadership to continue to relay to lawmakers what good TIF reform looks like. Mr. Wendt added that the DDA is able to amend its local TIF Plan without needing to go through legislation. Mr. Sundstrom asked if renewals will still be captured. Mr. Wendt said renewals will still be captured but the DDA could opt out of capturing the renewal increase. Mr. Nunn asked what the immediate implications would be for the Zoo and Museum millage. Ms. Dunn said the Zoo and Museum would receive 100% of the millage instead of the DDA capturing it. Ms. Dunn said a strong criticism of DDA's has been their inability to opt out of taking a portion of tax payer voted millages. Mr. Herr asked if the DDA Board will have the discretion to choose which special millages to opt out of. Mr. Wendt said the language of the TIF Plan will determine which can and cannot be opted out of. Ms. Klohs asked if Senator Horn has been involved in this conversation as he has been working on a bill regarding TIF districts. Mr. Larson said Senator Horn and his committee will be visiting next month, and this is an opportunity to demonstrate to them how Grand Rapids is leading in the TIF reform conversation.

*Motion: Bob Herr, supported by Ray Kisor, moved to recommend where legally permissible, encouraging the DDA TIF and Development Plan Steering Committee and the DDA Board to support amendments to the DDA TIF and Development Plan that would allow the DDA to not capture future special millages that meet the definition of special millages provided by DGRI's legal counsel. Motion carried unanimously.*

9. President & CEO Report  
DDA (8/10/16)

- Approved Streetscape Improvement support for New Holland Brewing project
- Approved BRIP support for Palace of India restaurant
- Consented to Liquor License for new market in Klingman building
- Consented to PILOT to support affordable housing at 12 Weston

DID 9/12/16



- Will receive updates on DID assessment law from City Attorney & Assessor

MNTIFA (8/10/16)

- Will consider adoption of FY17 Budget
- Will consider supporting parklet at Garage Bar

Alliances:

*INVESTMENT (8/9)*

- Chair: Nikos Monoyios, Long Range Planner @ The Rapid
- Working on Incentive Program modifications

*VIBRANCY (7/20)*

- Chair – Brandy Moeller, City of Grand Rapids
- Working Groups: Hospitality, Public Space Activation, Community Inclusion

*LIVABILITY (7/25)*

- Chair: Lynee Wells, Principal @ Williams & Works – Working Group Discussions;
- Participated in working session on Parks Master Planning

**DGRI Staff Highlights**

Events / Marketing / Communications

- Held weekend of Olympics Opening Ceremony event with WOOD TV8, 8/5 – 8/7
- Held Residential Stakeholder Event, August 2, 2016 @ Secchia Center
- Finalizing State of Downtown video production
- Held first 5 2016 Movies in the Park

Planning / Development

- Scheduled to host Senator Ken Horn & Senate legislative staff on TIF reform – Sep 13/14
- Preparing to release RFP for Bikeshare feasibility Study
- Developed draft food truck ordinance – held Town Hall July 20<sup>th</sup> @ LINC
- Partnering with Experience GR and Grand Action on Destination Asset Initiative
- Managing Lyon Square Schematic Design – City staff review Aug 24
- Next Public Meeting on Calder Plaza Design - 8/30
- Next TIF Plan Committee Meetings- 8/18, 8/19 – Possible Expansion area tours
- Preparing for new circulator service launch Sep 1!

10. Board of Advisors Discussion

Mr. Sundstrom thanked Mr. Guy and staff for their collaborative work with the City on the updated food truck ordinance. Mr. Sundstrom said he is impressed with the strategy and is confident that it will pass at City Commission. Ms. Klohs thanked staff for their leadership and forward thinking in regards to food trucks.

11. Old Business

None.

12. New Business

None.

13. Public Comment

None.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:04pm.



# Calder Plaza: A Plaza Full of Options

Presentation of Master Plan

November 9, 2016



## Project Sponsors:



## Consultant Team:

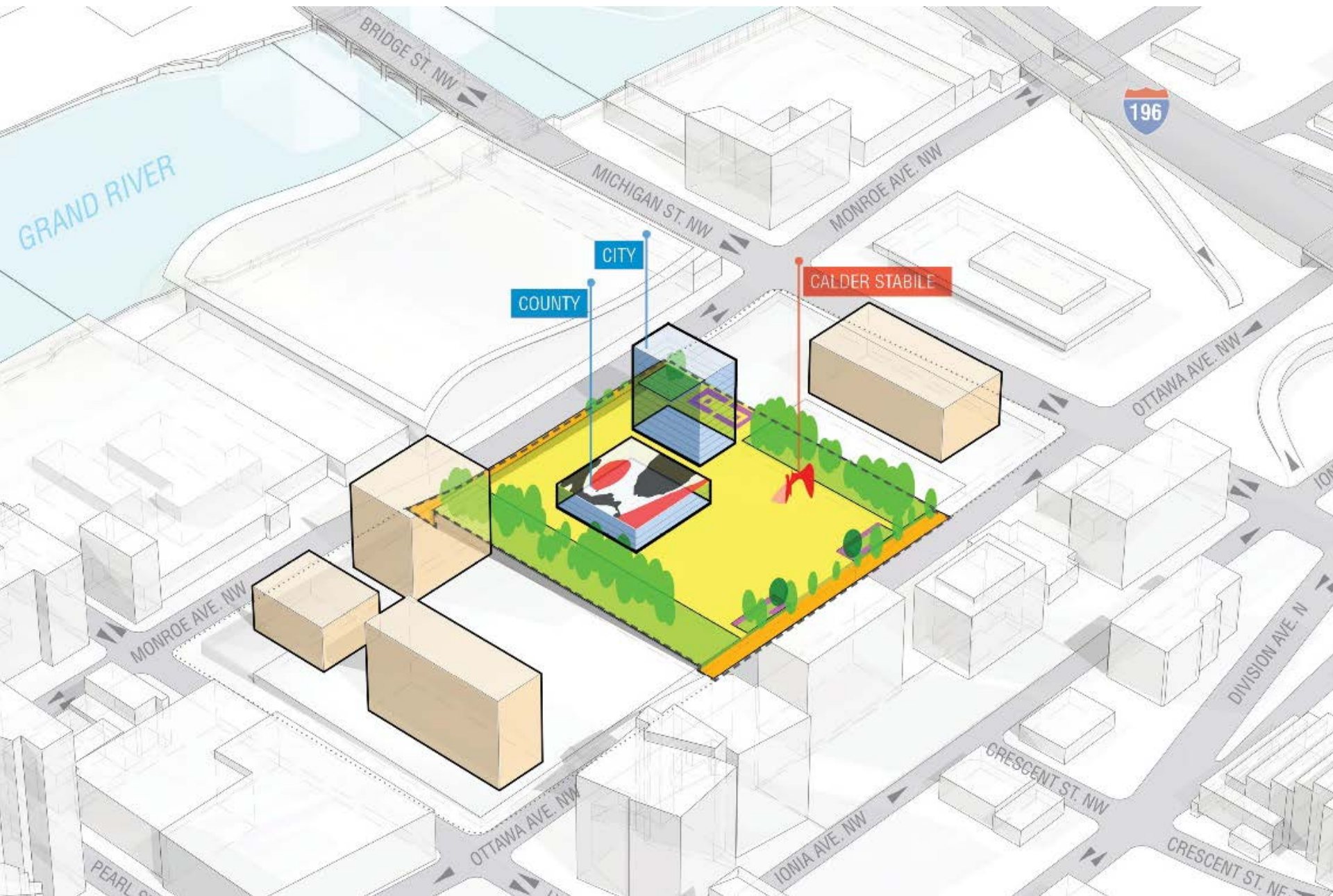
**DESIGNWORKSHOP**

MARLON BLACKWELL ARCHITECTS



CLL . Concept Lighting Lab, LLC.

# CALDER PLAZA | CONTEXT





# CALDER PLAZA | CONTEXT



# OUR CHALLENGE

To create a world-class public space that...

leverages the space to its fullest potential

honors its cultural heritage

integrates its historic role as a governmental plaza

improves access and mobility

activates the space during all seasons

catalyzes future development

and creates iconic experiences

...for current and future generations.

# SCHEDULE

## MAY

*Project Kick-Off  
and Historical  
Research*

## JUNE / JULY

*Imagine the  
Possibilities:  
A burst of ideas  
from the  
community.*

## AUGUST

*Evaluate Options:  
An exploration of  
different  
opportunities and  
decisions.*

## LATE SEPTEMBER

*Steering Committee  
Review  
(2 Meetings)*

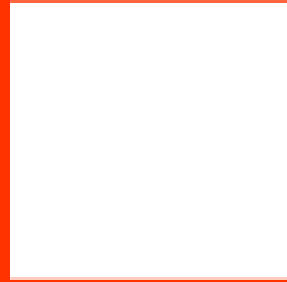
## TODAY

***Presentation of  
Preferred Alternative  
& Final Public  
Meeting***

## END OF NOVEMBER

*Final Concept Plan  
Documentation  
Complete*





*Imagining the Possibilities:  
Research*

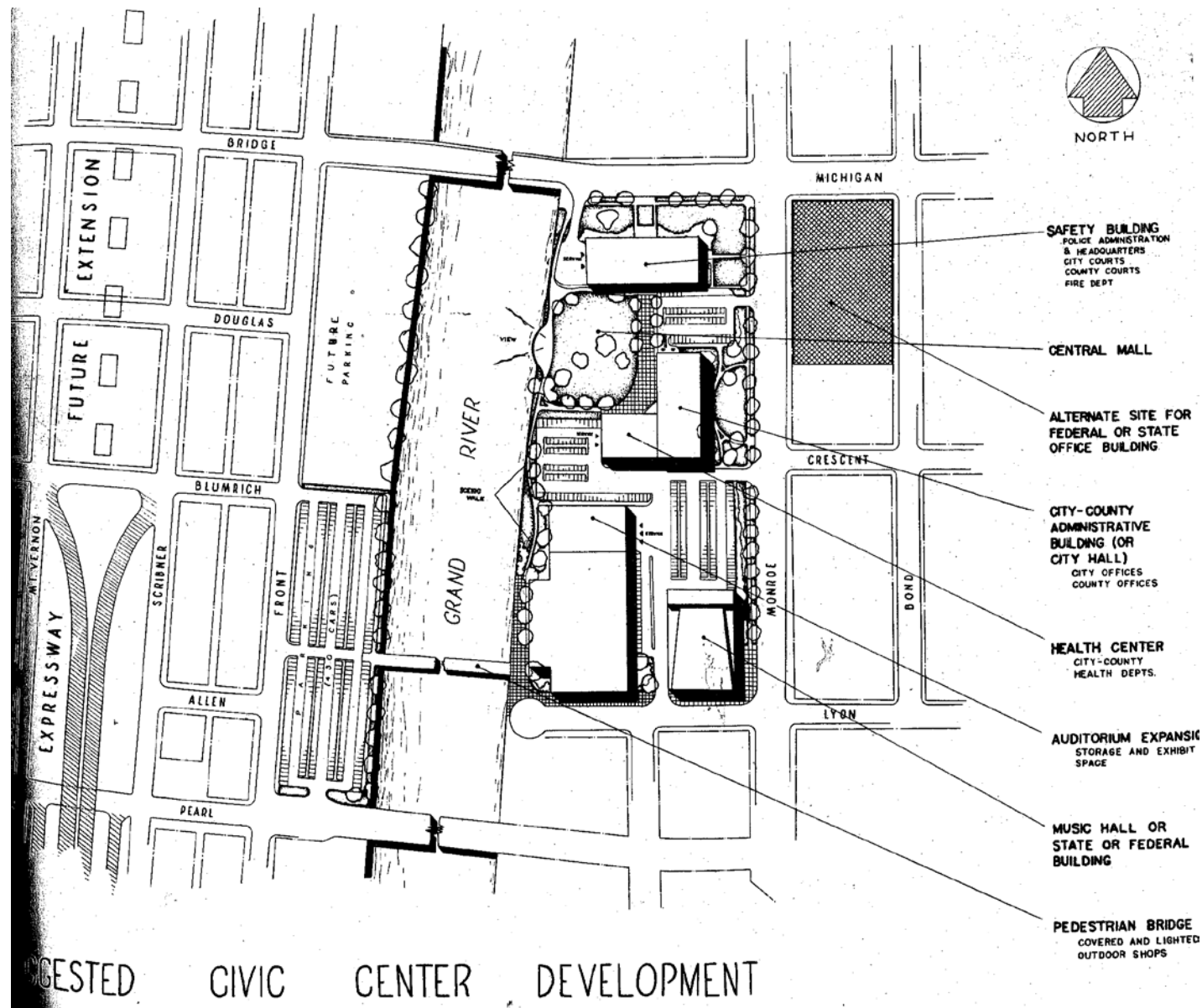


## PAST VISIONS

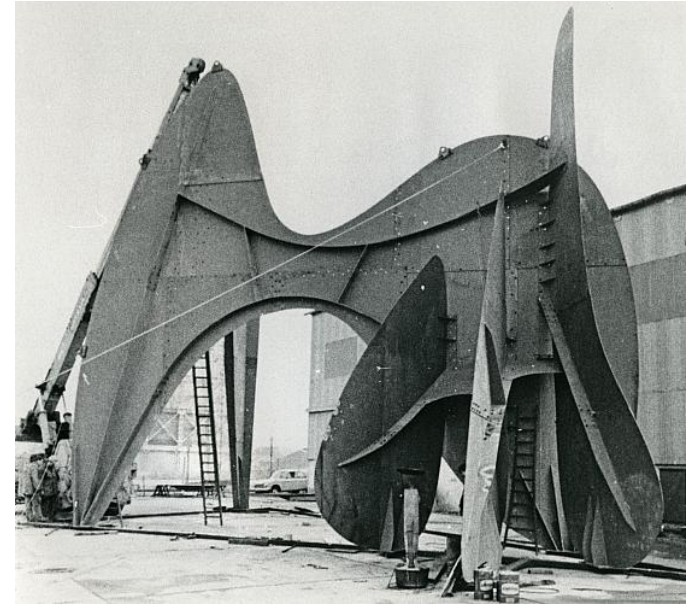
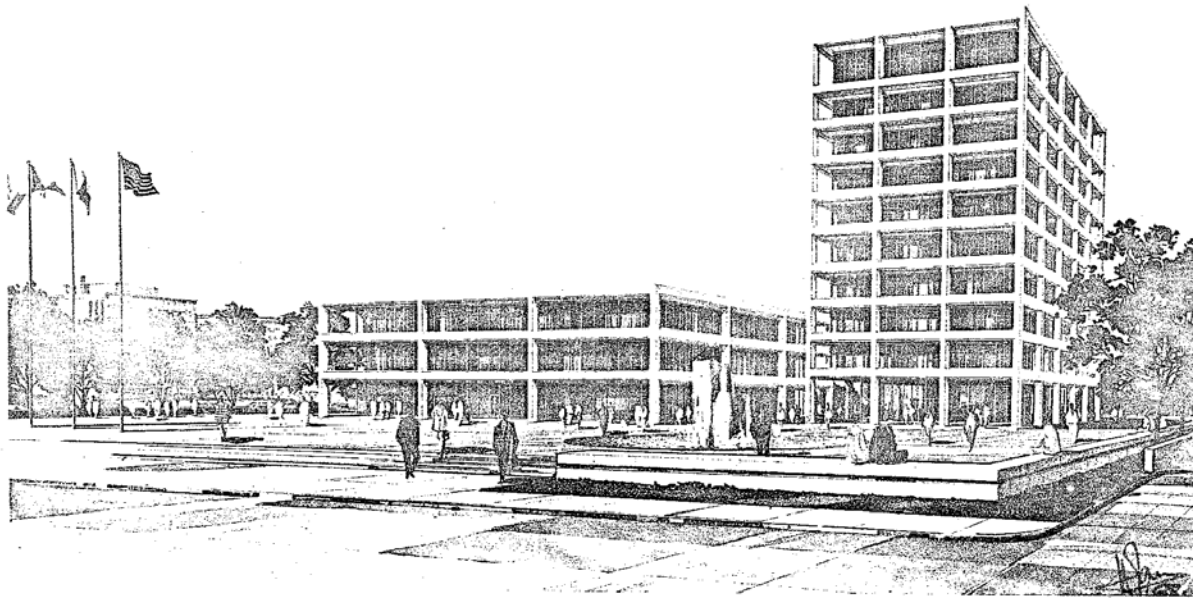




# 1956 VISION



# 1965 VISION





# RELEVANCE OF THE PLAZA



Festival of the Arts, 2002



Festival of the Arts, 2002



Siciliano's Big Brew Day, 2014



Fiesta Mexicana, 2012



Al Gore Campaign, 2000



Gus Macker Tournament, 1996



Gull Wing Group Convention, 2007



Laughing Fest, 2011



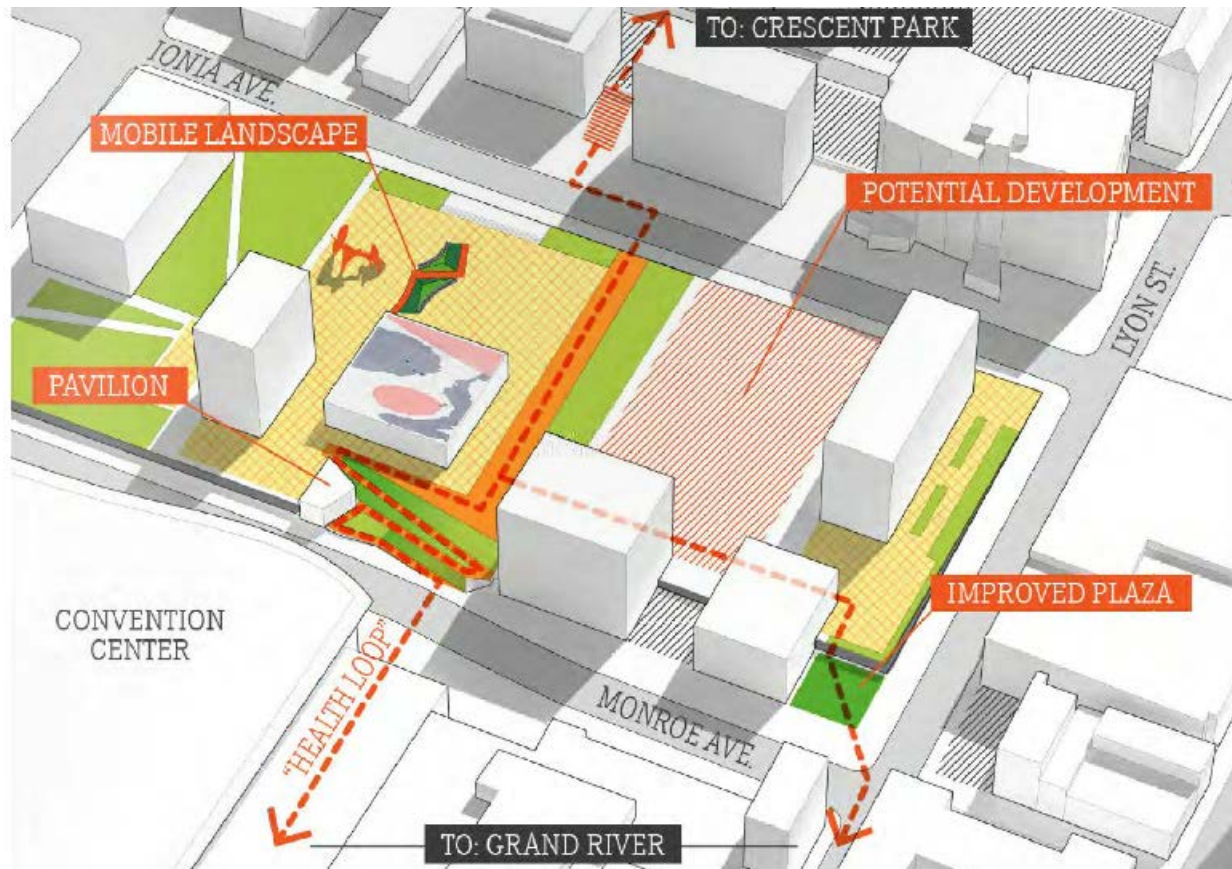
TODAY





*Imagining the Possibilities:  
Listening*

# GR FORWARD VISION



## ACCESS

- Physical Connectivity
- Visual Connectivity
- ADA & Lighting
- Integrate Health Loop

## ACTIVATE

- Mobile Landscapes
- Year-Round Activities
- Create Intimacy
- Establish a Human Scale

## ATTRACT

- Downtown Vitality
- Inclusiveness
- Economic Development
- Visitors for Tourism



# ACTIVATING CIVIC SPACE

CASE STUDY | SUNDANCE SQUARE, FORT WORTH, TX



Image source: MVL



# CATALYZING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

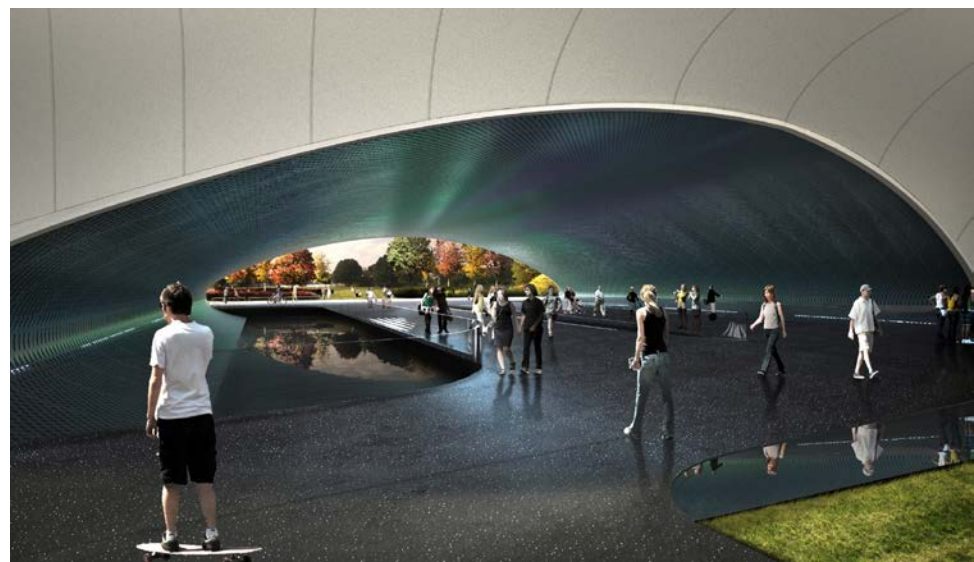
CASE STUDY | MILLENNIUM PLAZA, DENVER, CO





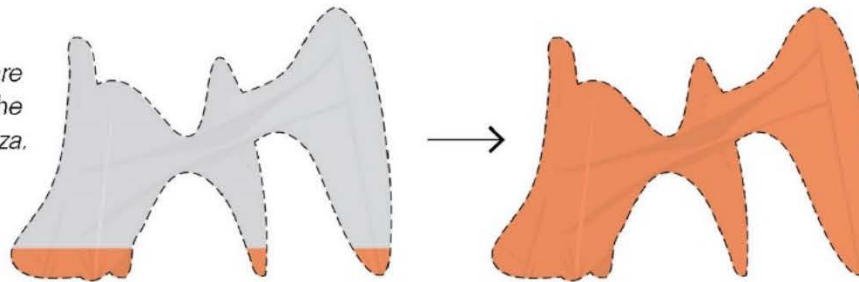
# CONNECTING THE CITY

CASE STUDY | PORTAL TO THE POINT, PITTSBURGH PA



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY \ EVENT #1

Only 10.74% of survey participants are satisfied or highly satisfied with the current design of the plaza.



**A PLAZA FULL OF POTENTIAL...**

## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS...

25

Steering Committee Members



40

Students from the Hispanic Center of West Michigan



AND...

Online survey responses



60

Key Stakeholders participated in **six focus group meetings**



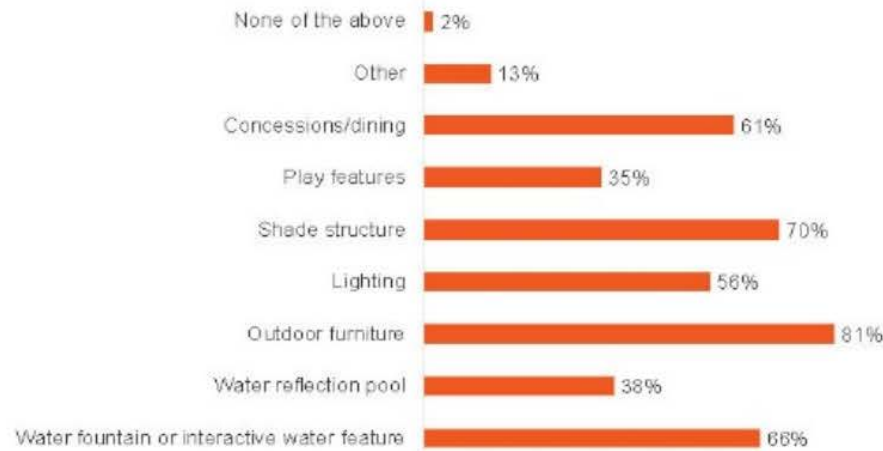
52

Participants at the public walking tour

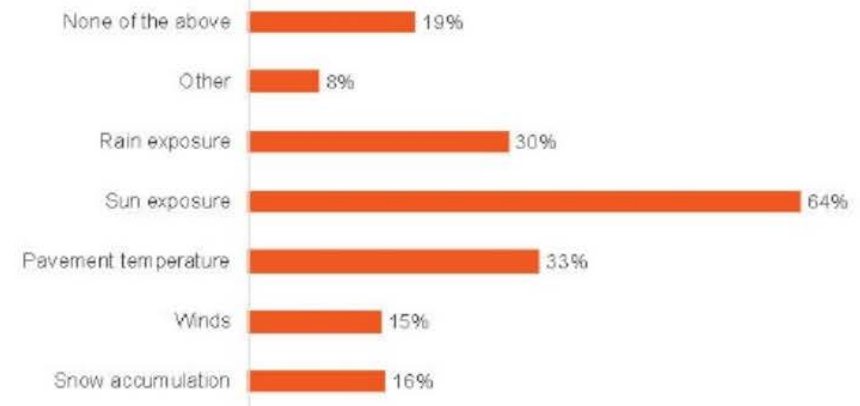


# WHAT WE HEARD: PROJECT FOCUS

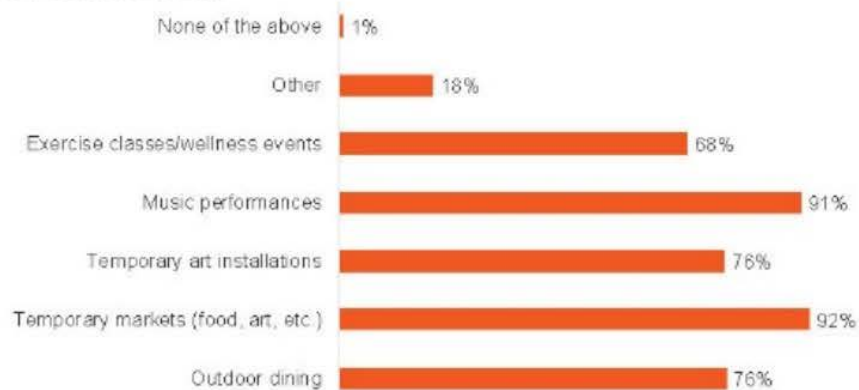
Are you interested in exploring the possibility of adding any of these elements to the Plaza?



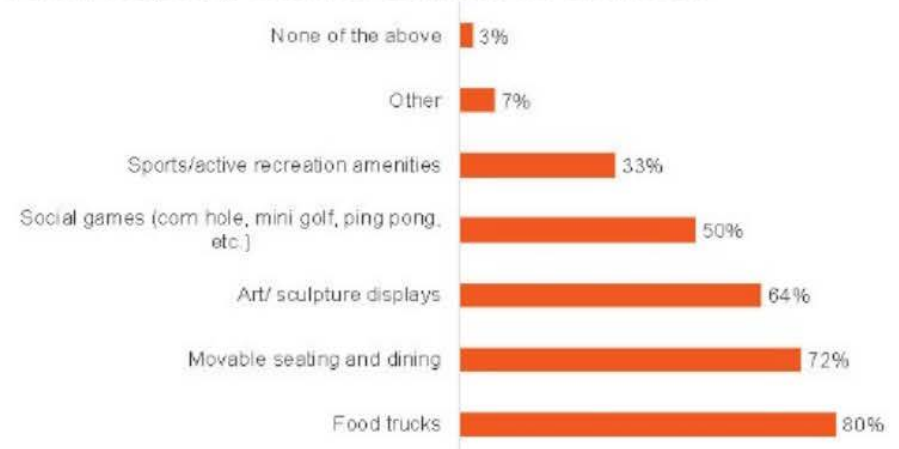
Which of these elements makes you most uncomfortable at Calder Plaza and needs to be addressed?



What types of events/activities do you feel are appropriate for Calder Plaza?



Which temporary or flexible elements are of interest?

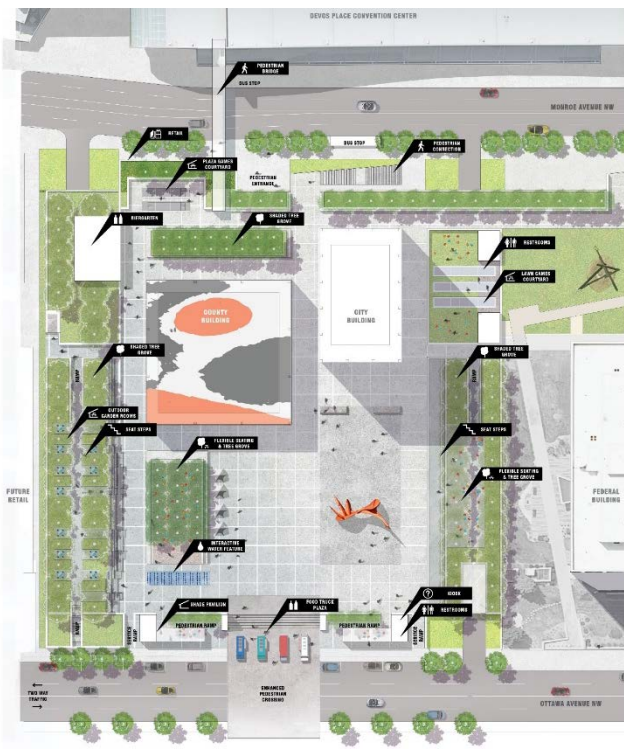




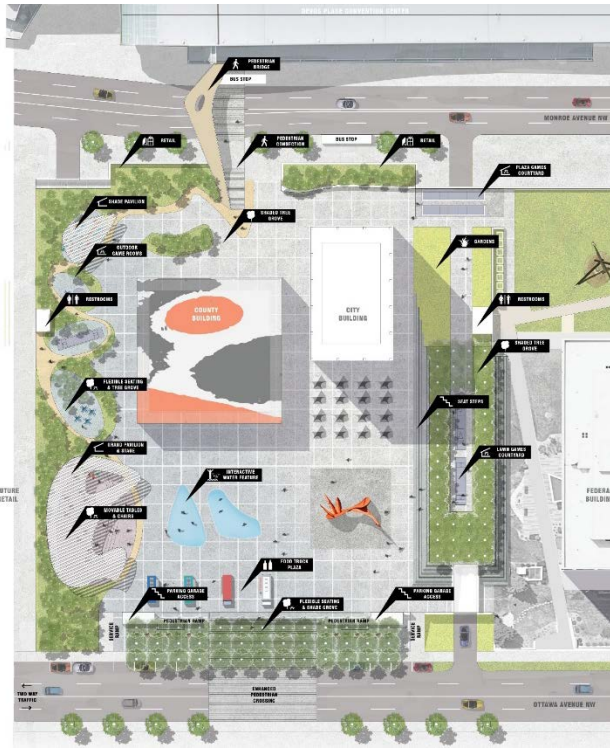
*Imagining the Possibilities:  
Initial Alternatives*



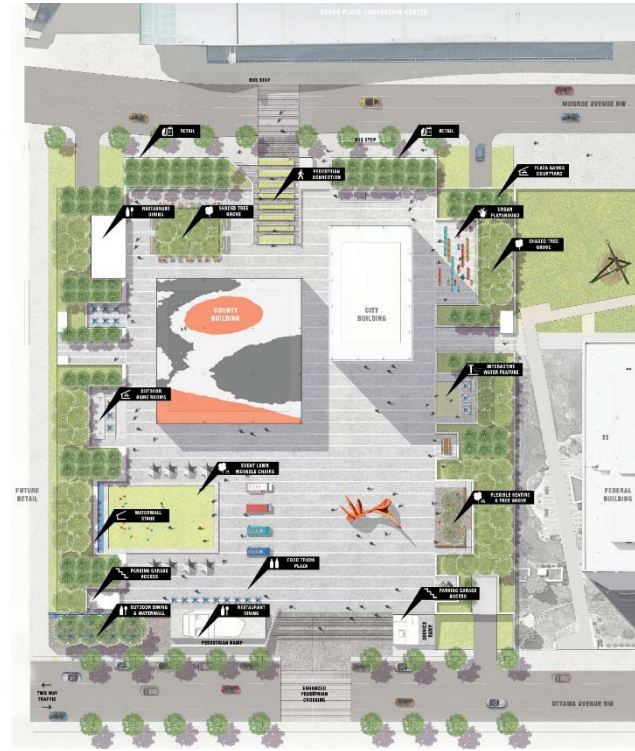
## CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES



## Modernist Lines



## Garden & Grove



## Urban Living Room





# EXISTING CONDITIONS





# MODERNIST LINES





# EXISTING CONDITIONS





# SCULPTURAL GROVE





# EXISTING CONDITIONS





# URBAN LIVING ROOM





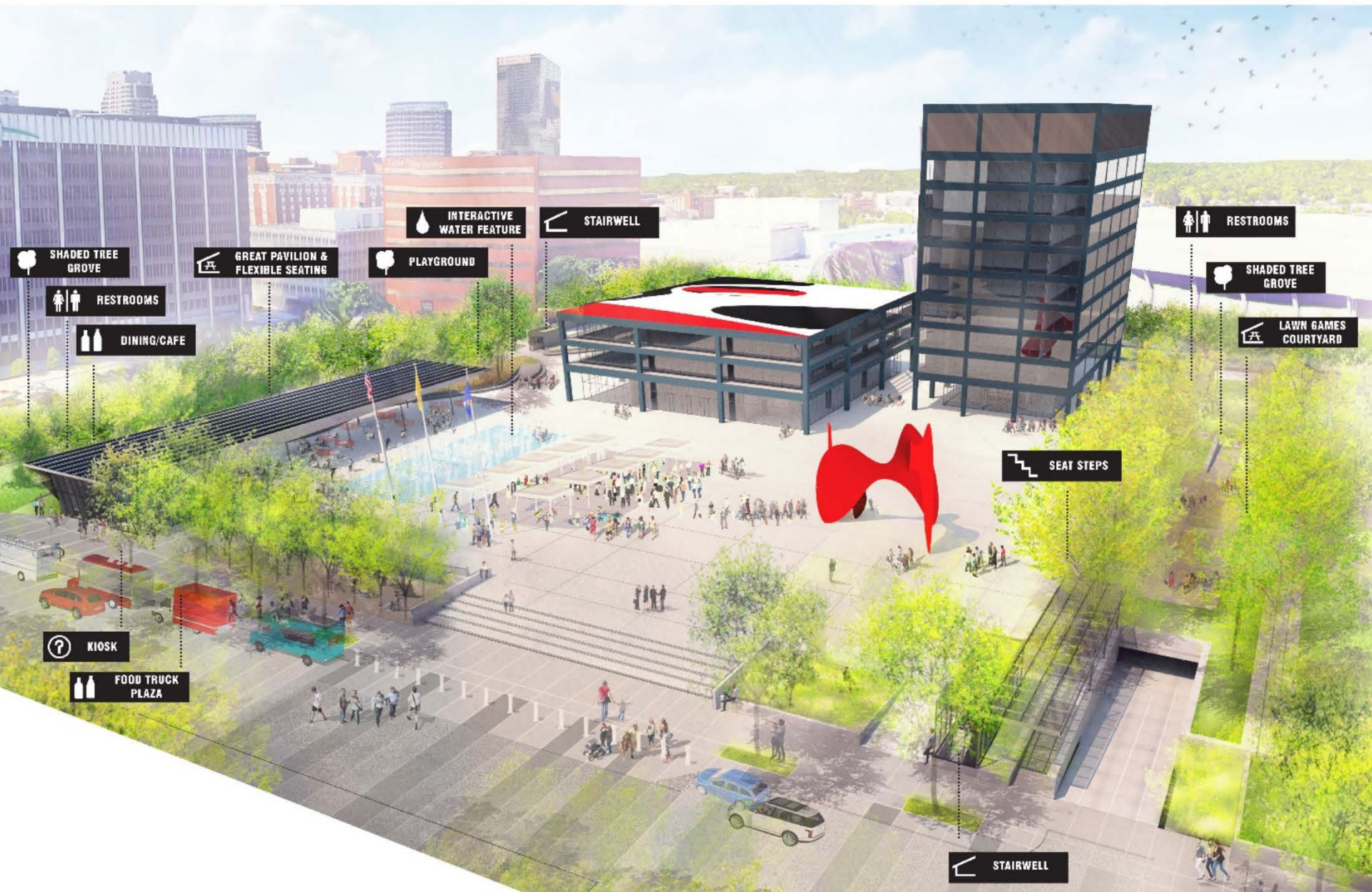
*Preferred Alternative*





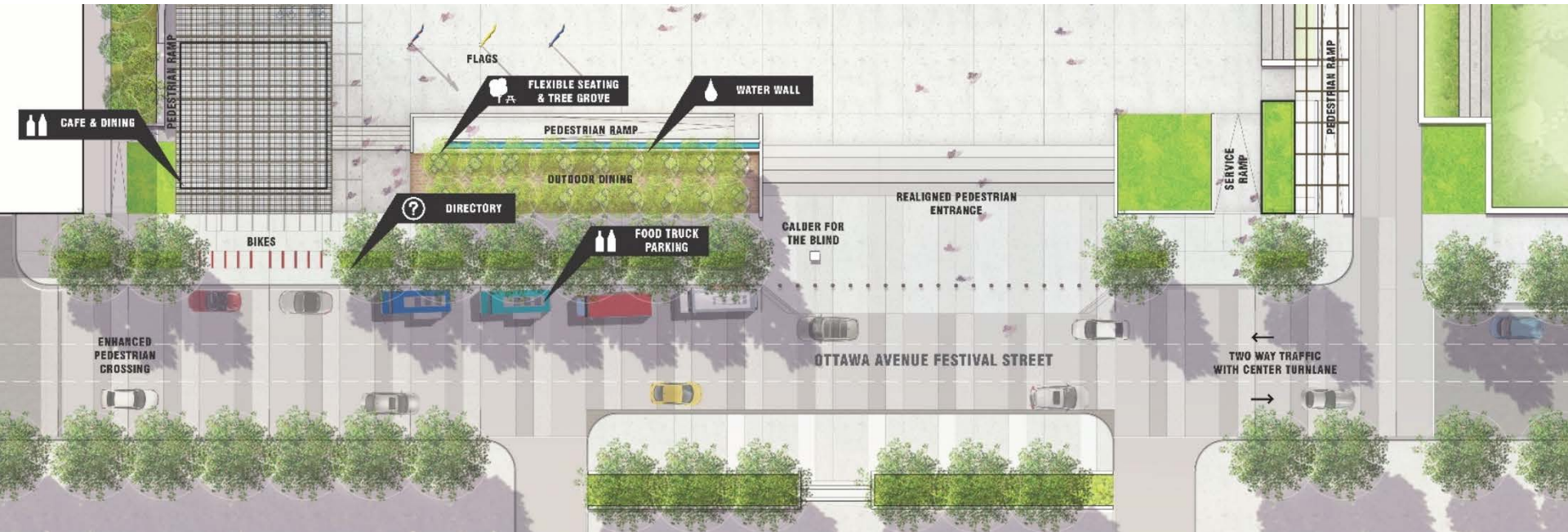


# MASTER PLAN | OTTAWA AVENUE VIEW



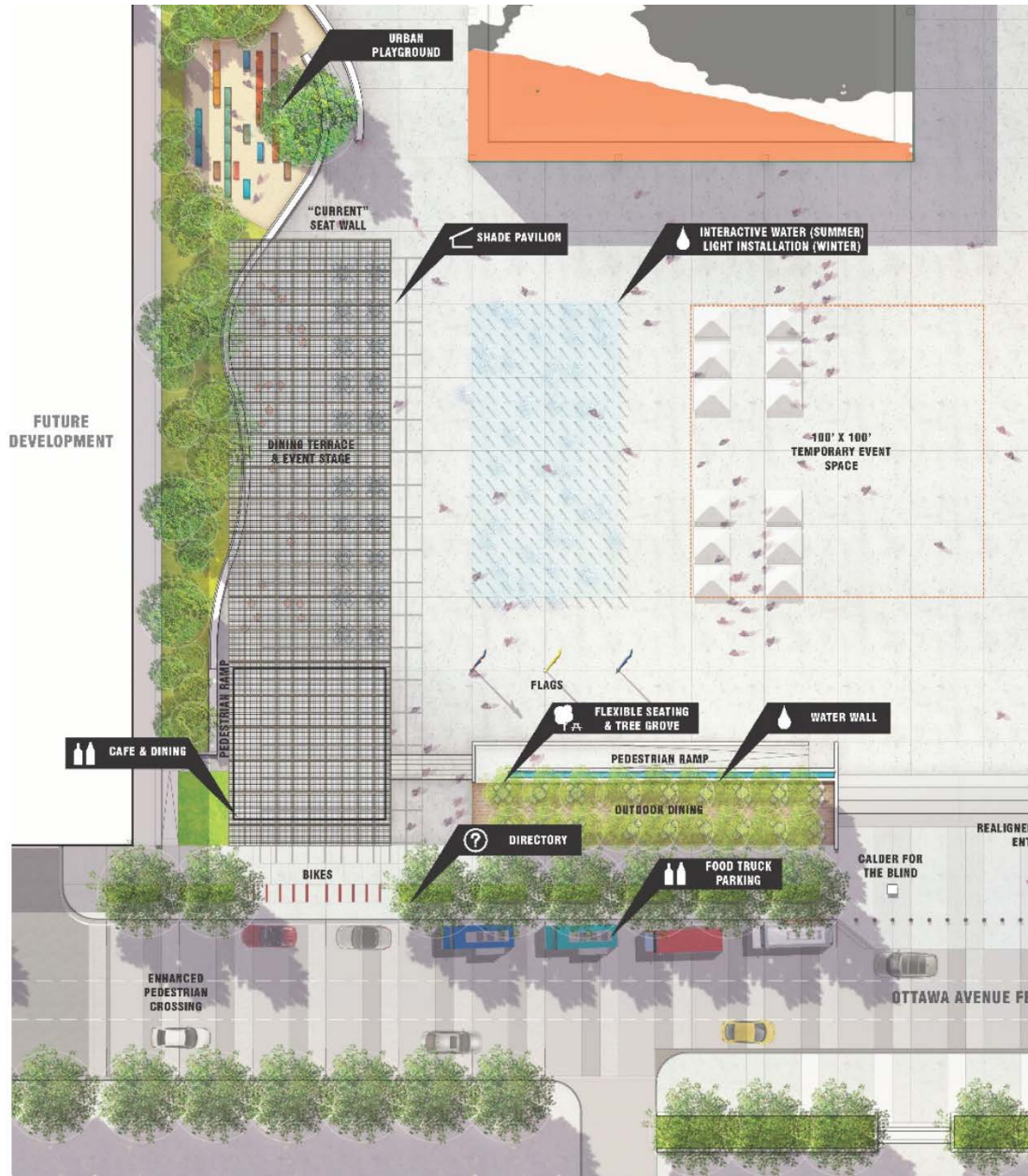


# MASTER PLAN | OTTAWA AVENUE ENLARGEMENT





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHEAST CORNER





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHERN EDGE (EXISTING)





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHERN EDGE (PROPOSED)



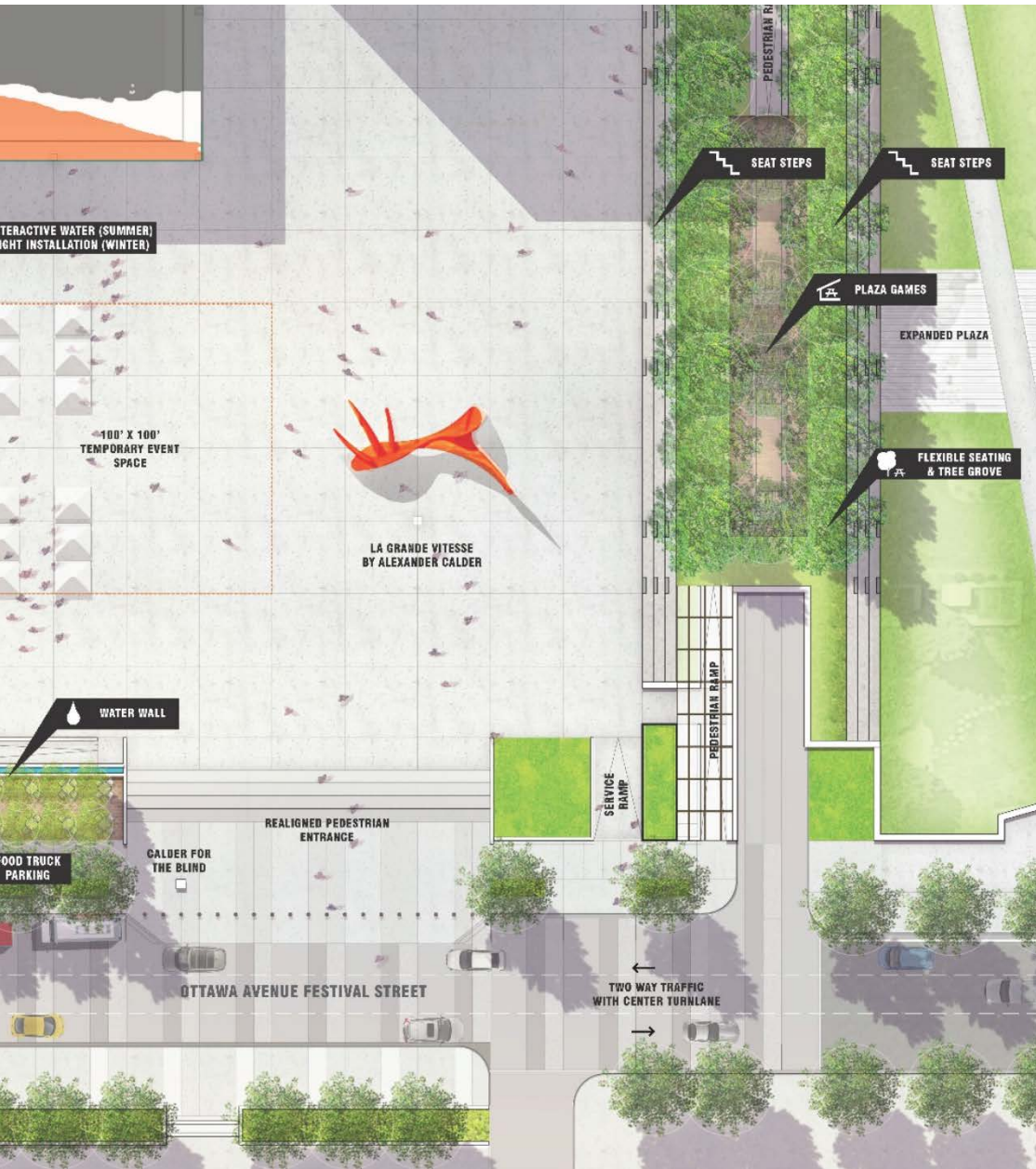


# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHERN EDGE (PROPOSED)





# MASTER PLAN | NORTHEAST CORNER





# MASTER PLAN | NORTHERN EDGE (EXISTING)



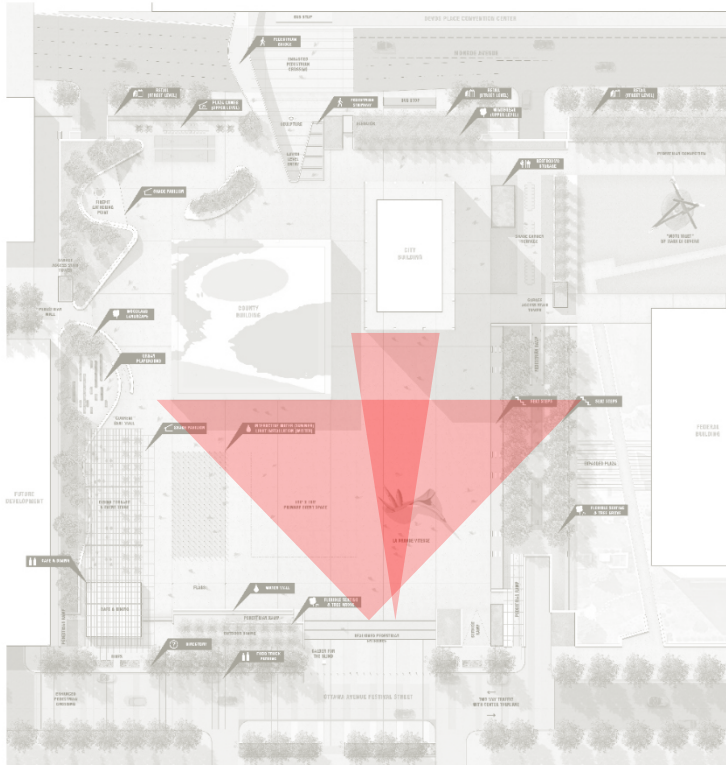


# MASTER PLAN | NORTHERN EDGE (PROPOSED)





## DIAGRAM | HISTORICAL INTENT

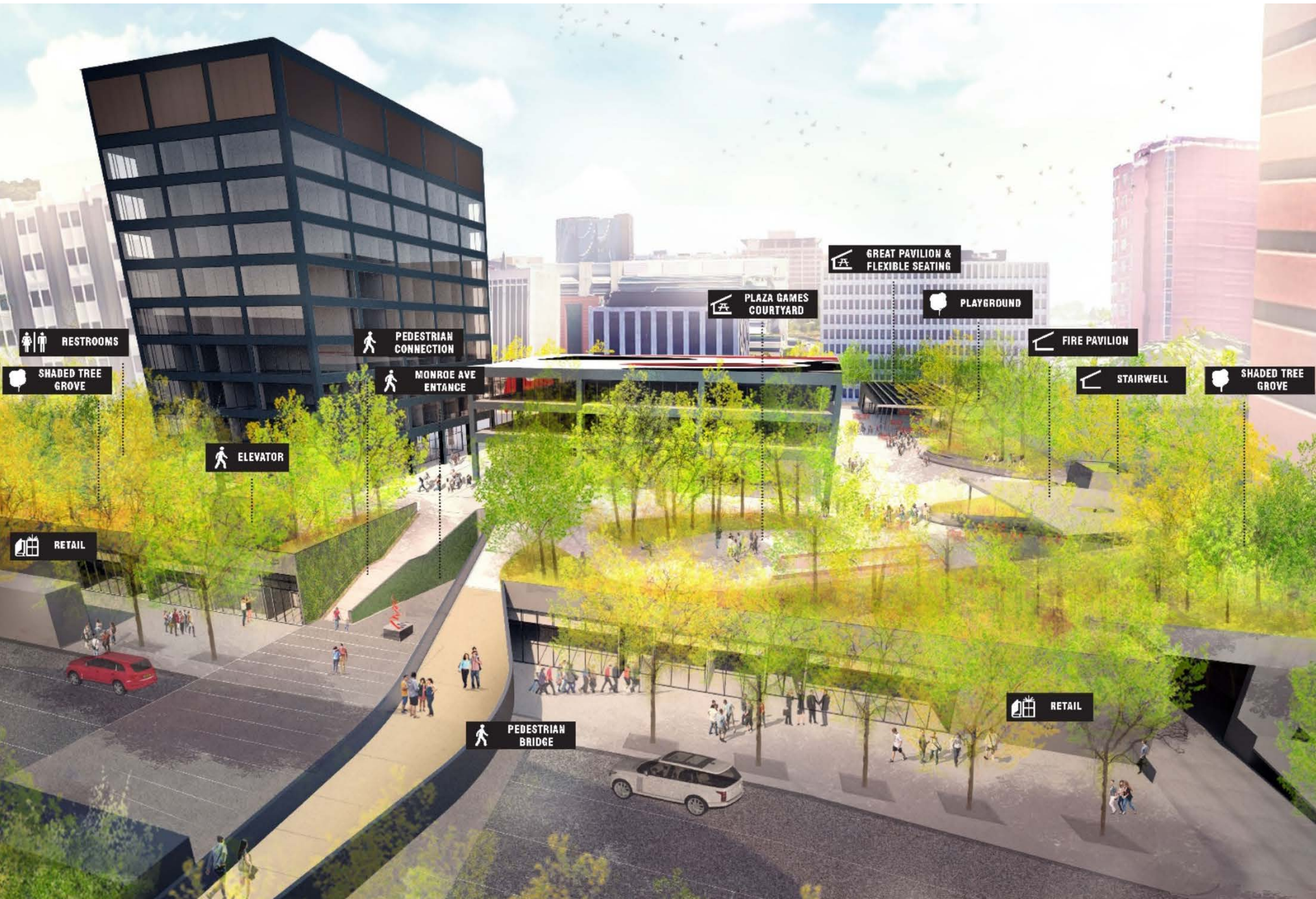


"This latest plan for the redevelopment of the plaza surrounding Calder's iconic sculpture *La Grande vitesse*, 1969, addresses the public's need to enjoy a more hospitable space as well as Calder's and SOM's modernist visions surrounding their respective masterpieces. The sight lines from the street onto the building and Calder's sculpture have been considered in the design, which I hope will reanimate this important public space for generations to come."

**Alexander S.C. Rower**  
President  
Calder Foundation, 11/4/2016

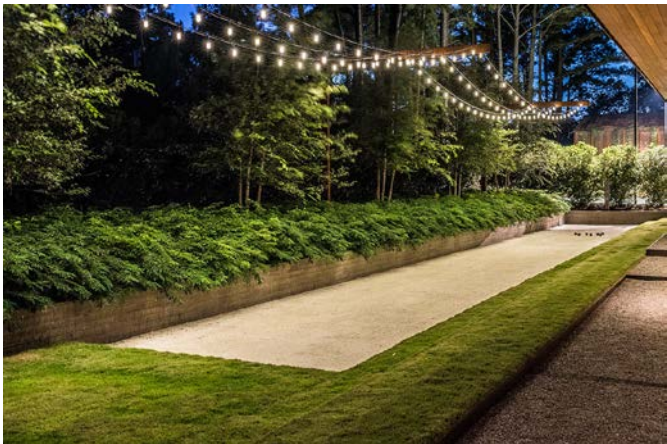


# MASTER PLAN | MONROE AVENUE VIEW





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHWEST CORNER





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHWEST CORNER





# MASTER PLAN | SOUTHWEST CORNER



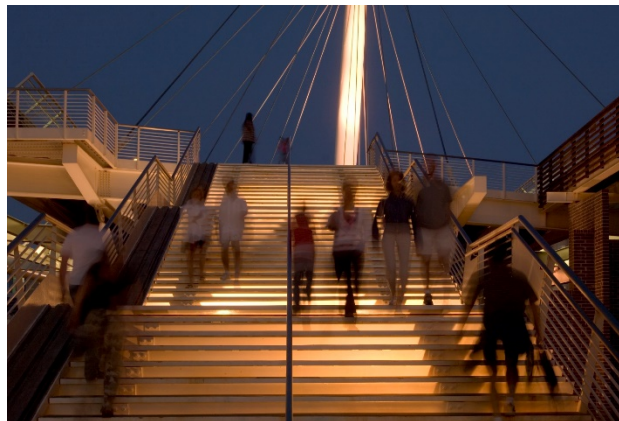
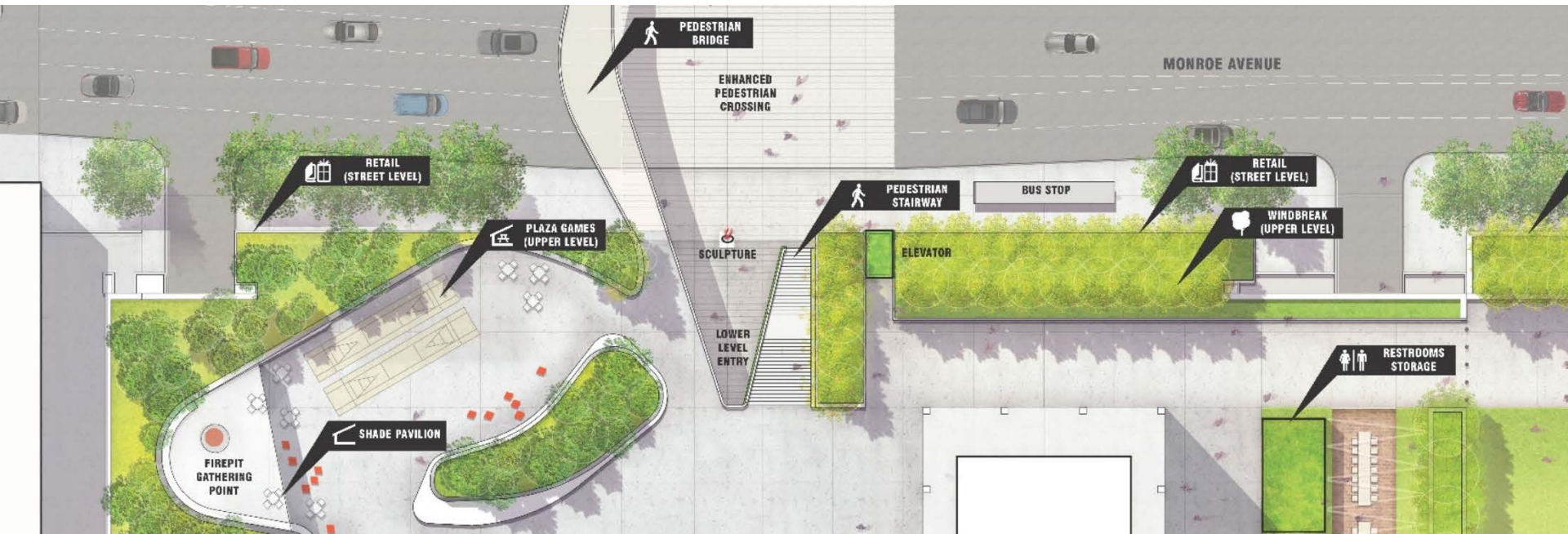


# MASTER PLAN | NORTHWEST CORNER

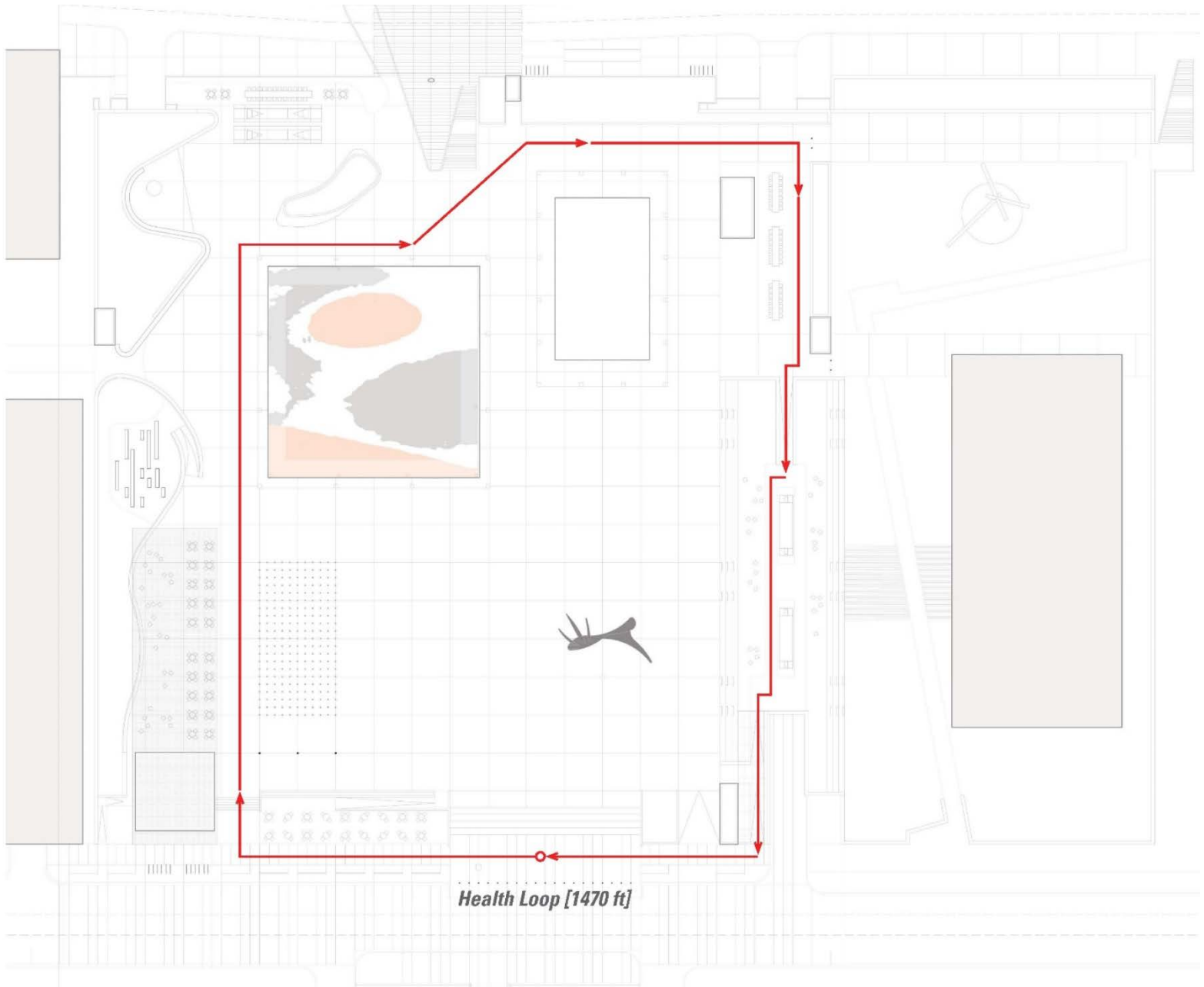




# MASTER PLAN | MONROE AVENUE ENLARGEMENT

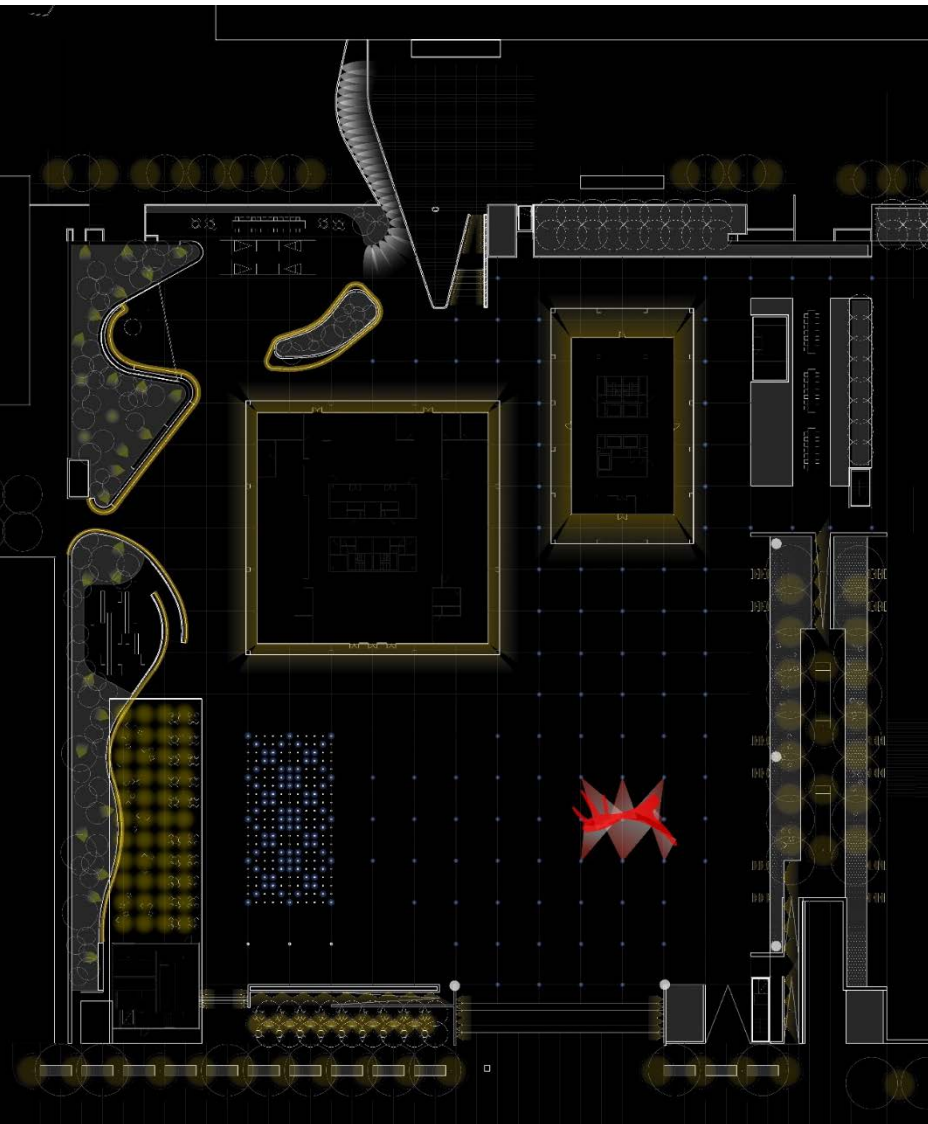


# DIAGRAM | HEALTH LOOP

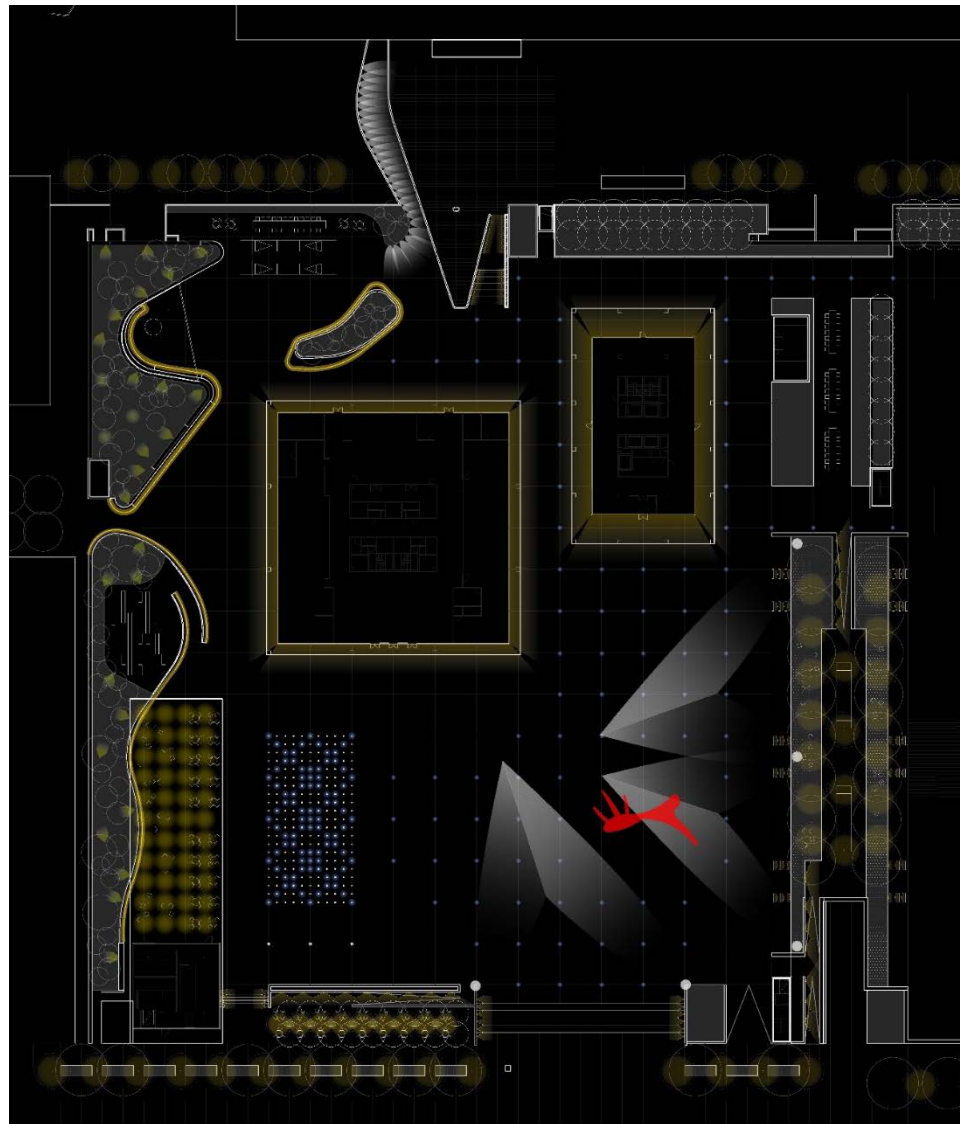




# DIAGRAM | LIGHTING

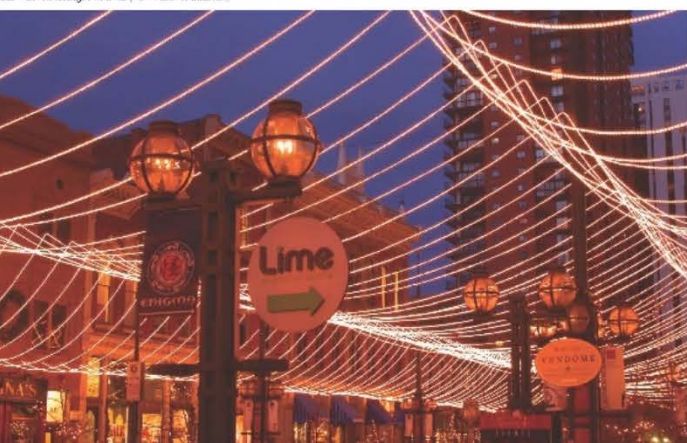
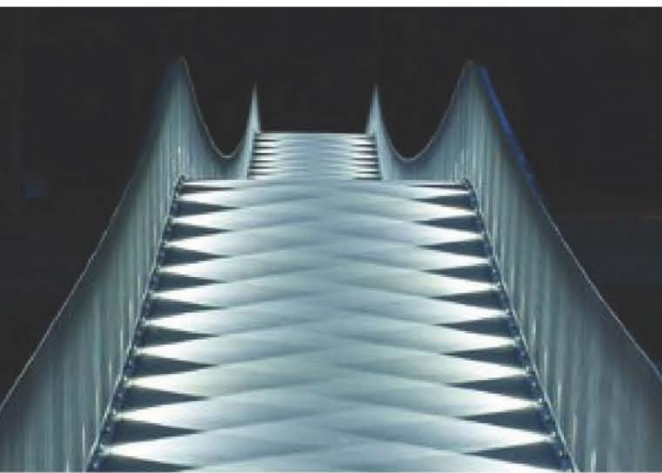


Summer



Winter

# DIAGRAM | LIGHTING





# DIAGRAM | MATERIALS & PLANTING



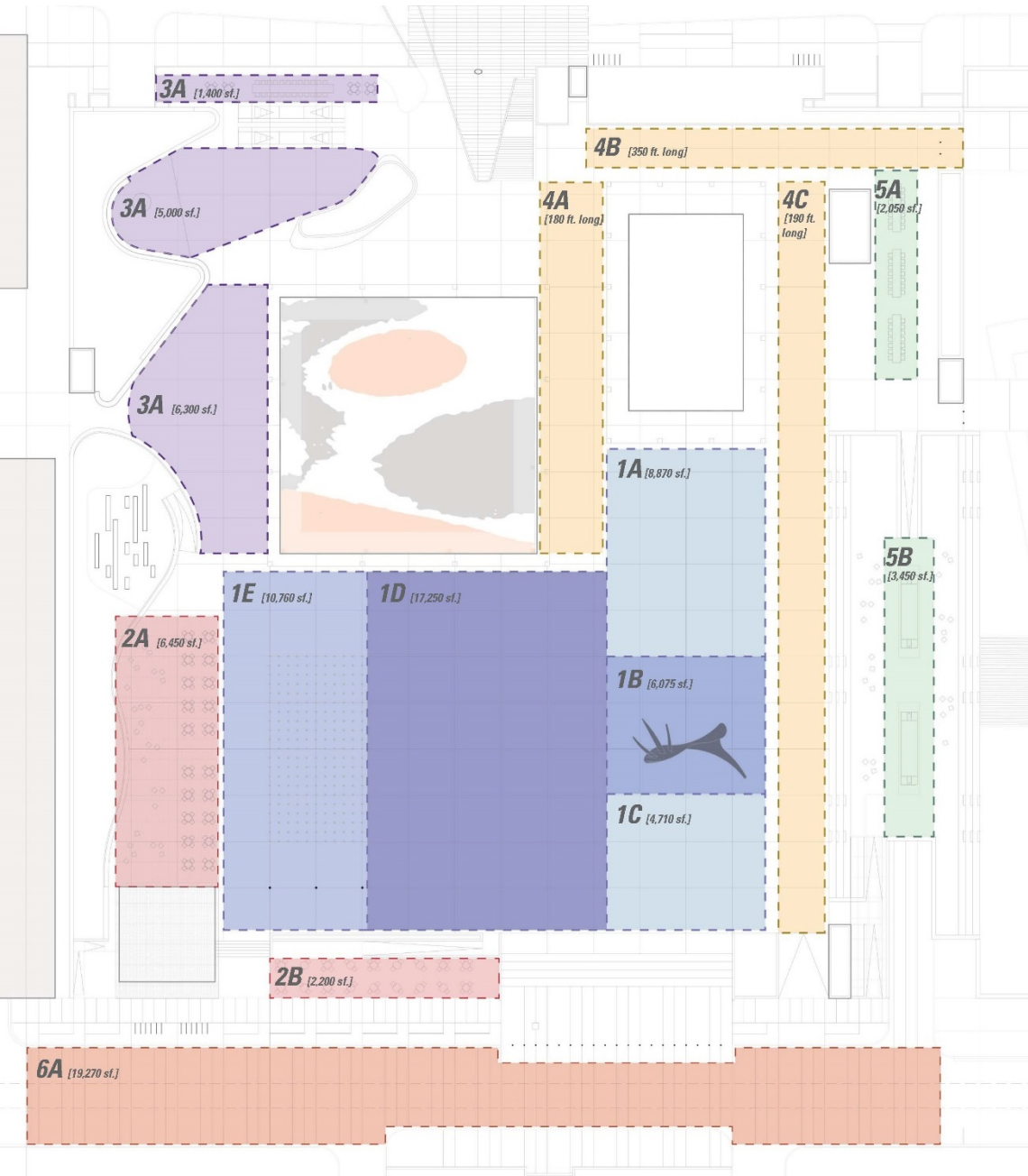
Design by HERR SCHUDDT; Photo by HERR SCHUDDT (ASLA)



Photo by HERR SCHUDDT; Photo by HERR SCHUDDT (ASLA)



# DIAGRAM & OVERVIEW | PROGRAMMING





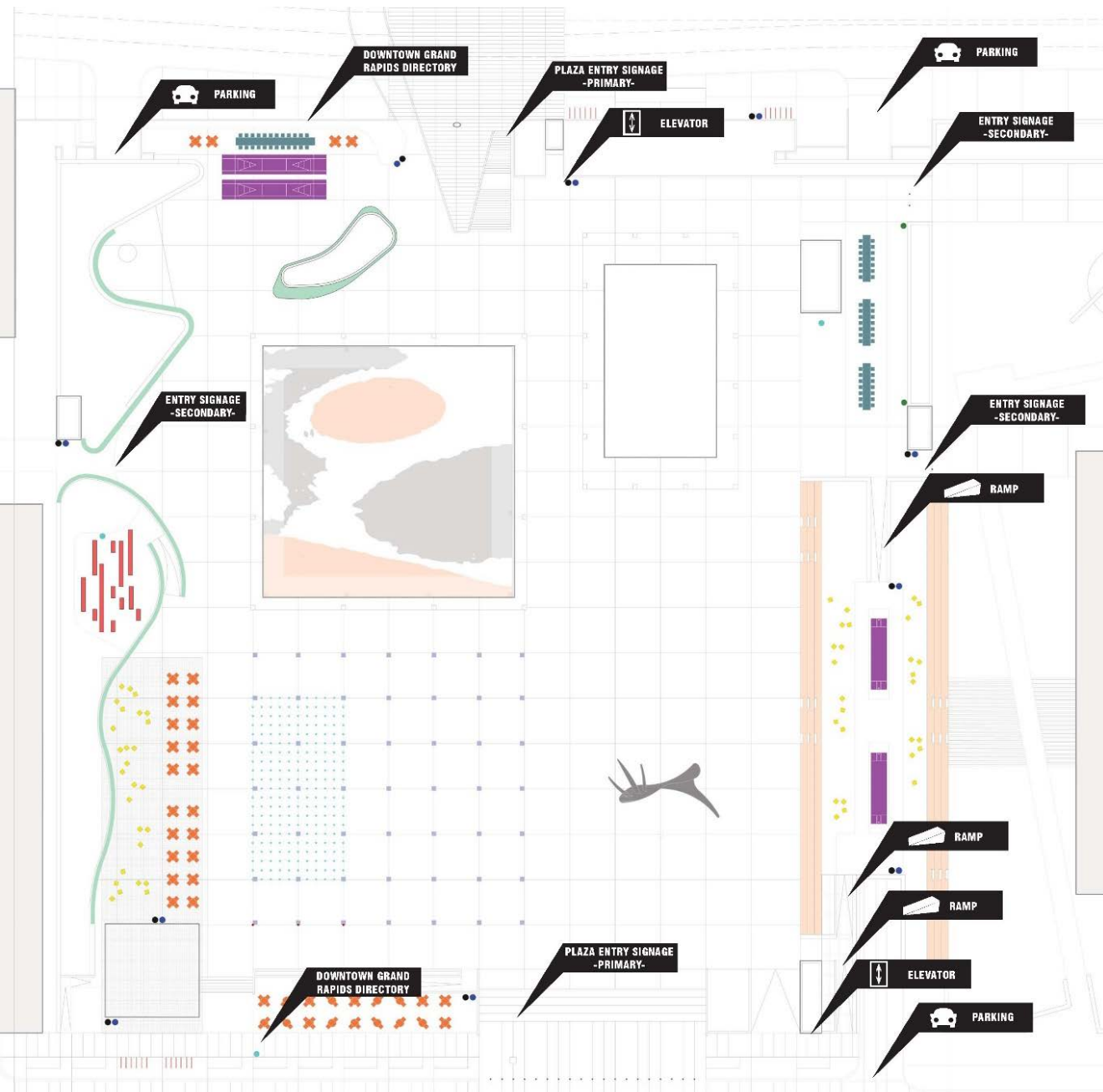
# DIAGRAM | PROGRAMMING

Event Space ID	Space Description	Area or Dimensions	Usable Space (75%)	Non-usable Space (25%)	10 sf/person	15 sf/person	25 sf/person	Assumptions/Notes
1	Main plaza space	37,150	27,863	9,288	2,786	1,858	1,115	1A + 1B + 1C + 1D + 1E
1A	Plaza between sculpture and building	8,870	6,653	2,218	665	444	266	
1B	Sculpture area	6,075	3,645	2,430	365	243	146	Assumes 60% usable, 40% non-usable because of sculpture, not suitable for events with large setup, or limited tented events
1C	Between sculpture and	4,710	3,533	1,178	353	236	141	
1D	Entry plaza	17,250	12,938	4,313	1,294	863	518	Entry plaza can be served as an extension to 1E and 2A
1E	Water Feature Plaza	10,760	8,070	2,690	807	538	323	Water feature can be turned off for events and setup, 1E can also be served as an extension of 2A
2A	Informal Seating	6,450	4,838	1,613	484	323	194	
2B	Entrance Seating	2,200	1,650	550	165	110	66	
3A	Long table seating	1,400	1,050	350	105	70	42	Informal events (minimal setup)
3B	Plaza Space	5,000	3,750	1,250	375	250	150	Informal events (some setup allows), can be used with 3C
3C	Plaza Space by building	6,300	4,725	1,575	473	315	189	Informal events (some setup allows), can be used with 3B
4A	Space between buildings	180' long	135	45	10 tents	n/a	n/a	Assumes 14 lf per 10' x 10' tent
4B	Linear space along east edge of plaza	350' long	263	88	19 tents	n/a	n/a	Assumes 14 lf per 10' x 10' tent
4C	Linear space below bosque	190' long	143	48	10 tents	n/a	n/a	Assumes 14 lf per 10' x 10' tent
5A	Long table seating	2,050	1,538	513	154	103	62	Informal events (minimal setup), area may be reserved for private use
5B	Game area	3,450	2,588	863	259	173	104	Informal events (minimal setup), area may be reserved for private use
<b>Totals</b>		<b>74,515</b>	<b>54,975</b>	<b>19,540</b>	<b>5,498</b>	<b>3,665</b>	<b>2,199</b>	Excludes linear areas (4A-C)

## Street Level

Event Space ID	Space Description	Area or Dimensions	Useable Space (75%)	Non-usable Space (25%)	10 sf/person	15 sf/person	25 sf/person	Assumptions/Notes
ST	Street	16,675	12,506	4,169	1251	834	500	ST1 + ST2, can be used as a "standalone", or an extension of the plaza for large events
ST1	Street plaza	10,000	7,500	2,500	750	500	300	Ideal for food trucks, or other large setup
ST2	Street plaza extension	6,675	5,006	1,669	501	334	200	
<b>Totals</b>		<b>16,675</b>	<b>12,506</b>	<b>4,169</b>	<b>1,251</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>500</b>	

# DIAGRAM | WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE/FURNISHINGS



-  Linear Bench
-  Integrated Public Stairs
-  Moveable Chairs/Tables
-  Moveable Chairs
-  Games
-  Tent Tiles
-  Removeable Bollards
-  Playground
-  Bike Racks
-  Trash and Recycling Cans
-  Water Fountain and Bottle Filling
-  Dog Waste Bag Dispenser



## NEXT STEPS

*Provide Comments via Survey Cards or [www.downtowngr.org](http://www.downtowngr.org) next week*

*December 2016*

*Final Master Plan Booklet Complete*

*Winter 2017*

*Budgeting Discussion*

*Spring 2017*

*Development of Technical Documents*

*Spring 2018*

*Construction*







# Grand Rapids **DESTINATION ASSET STUDY** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

December 5, 2016







December 5, 2016

Mr. Jon Nunn  
Grand Action  
120 Lyon Street NW  
Grand Rapids Michigan 49503

Dear Mr. Nunn:

We have completed the study process and preparation of a draft of the Executive Summary for the Destination Asset Study for Grand Rapids. As we initiated the research for this Study, it was very apparent that the level of professionalism and passion in the community for moving Grand Rapids forward was significant. Organizations that have contributed greatly to this effort include Grand Action, Experience Grand Rapids, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., the city's Economic Development Department, the Right Place, Inc., City and County representatives, the various foundations supporting the destination, and many others too numerous to mention. It has been our pleasure to work with over 125 individuals representing nearly 100 organizations that have contributed to the process of developing this Study.

The Destination Asset Study for Grand Rapids will serve as a valuable tool in helping to shape a vision for future development, identifying opportunities to distinguish and elevate the market within the visitor industry. The recommendations presented herein cannot be implemented by a single entity or agency. In fact, participation from a variety of public and private sector entities will be necessary to realize the potential of Grand Rapids in the visitor industry economy.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance and cooperation we have been provided in the completion of this Executive Summary and would be pleased to be of further assistance in the interpretation and application of our findings.

Very truly yours,

CSL International

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

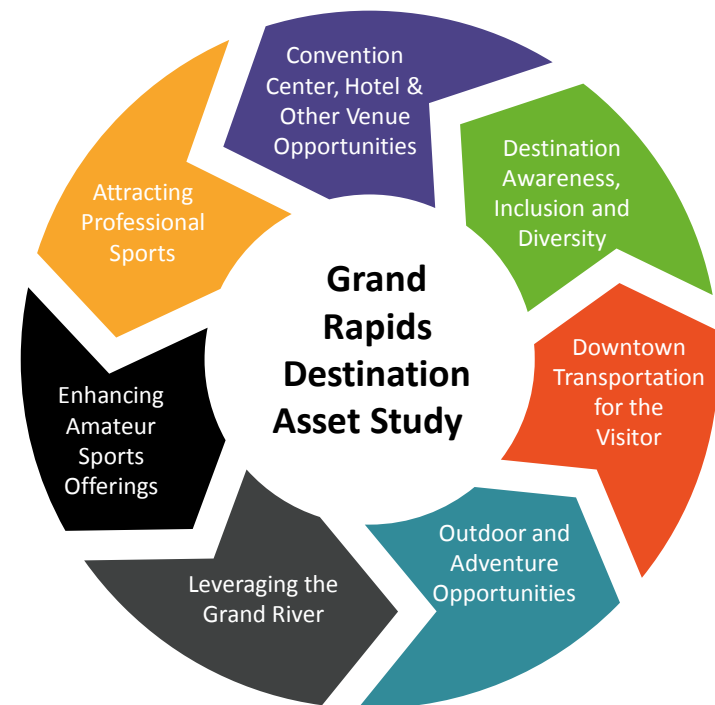
We know that ultimately, over time, a city can grow in its desirability and appeal to residents, businesses and visitors. It can elevate beyond its existing peer city set to reach a higher level. Conversely, through neglect, poor management and lack of vision, it can slide into a pattern of decay. We also know firsthand through our outreach to business, hospitality, elected and other leaders in the community that decay will not be tolerated, and that visionary planning will always be at the forefront for Grand Rapids.

This Destination Asset Study, commissioned by Grand Action, will serve as a valuable tool in helping to shape this vision, identifying opportunities to distinguish and elevate the market within the visitor industry. The Destination Asset Study has been developed around several key principals.

- Recognize and build on the significant development that has taken place in Grand Rapids over the past 20 years.
- Incorporate the direction established by various important planning studies that have recently been conducted.
- Provide a thorough evaluation of existing attractions, hospitality assets, event facilities and other elements that influence visitation to the market.
- Be inclusive, reach out to a broad cross section of hospitality, economic development and other community stakeholders.
- Develop visionary and aspirational findings that leverage existing research and development progress in order to guide future action.

Conventions, Sports & Leisure (CSL), was tasked with formulating and recommending strategies to gain market share in the tourism sector, increase hotel bookings and drive exposure to new markets for both the leisure and group markets. Based on existing and new in-depth research, a foundation was built to support a blueprint that sets forth destination development goals for the next five years and beyond.

This Executive Summary is organized into the following areas of recommendation.





These areas of recommendation have been identified as a result of extensive field research encompassing input from over 125 individuals representing nearly 100 organizations within the Grand Rapids community. A listing of these individuals and organizations is presented at the end of this Executive Summary. In addition, the extensive research that currently exists focusing on development in Grand Rapids has been considered, including GR Forward, Longwoods Travel USA Grand Rapids Visitor Report, Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan, research for Calder Plaza enhancement, and other relevant studies. A summary of specific areas of recommended focus is presented below.

### **Convention Center, Hotel and Other Venue Opportunities**

Current occupancy data suggest that future expansion of the DeVos Place Convention Center (DVP) should be considered a mid-term priority, versus an immediate need. As occupancy increases, a future DVP expansion should target an increase of 50 percent additional sellable event space, adding approximately 115,700 square feet of exhibit, meeting and ballroom area.

An expansion of this magnitude could require a footprint of approximately 2.5 to 4.0 acres. We have identified two potential options for possible expansion sites adjacent to the existing DVP. These include the location of the current post office (across Michigan Street to the north) and bridging Monroe Avenue (to the east toward Calder Plaza).

Development costs for an expansion adding approximately 115,700 sellable square feet could approximate \$83.3 million. This assumes

173,500 built square feet (including support space) at a hard construction cost of \$400 per square foot and an additional 20 percent for soft costs, furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Given the challenging site conditions and significant lead time common for these types of projects, consideration should be given to retaining convention center architects in the very near future to develop conceptual plans for future DVP expansion.

Additional hotel inventory will likely help attract events to the existing DVP, and will be required to support any future expansion. We recommend a near-term Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process for the development of a new hotel attached or adjacent to the DVP. Between 350 and 500 rooms should be targeted.

We also recommend that the Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention/Arena Authority continue its policies and procedures of actively investing in maintaining and upgrading Van Andel Arena.

### **Attracting Professional Sports – USL Soccer**

The United Soccer League (USL) is the third tier of professional men's soccer and began its inaugural season in 2011. Currently there are 29 teams in the league with plans to grow to 40 teams by 2020.

Grand Rapids' DMA population of approximately 2 million ranks 20th among the existing USL markets, suggesting a viability for a franchise in Grand Rapids (DMA population focuses on a broad region, more reflective of potential sports attendance draw than metro area population measures).

The average number of fans per game during the USL 2015 season was approximately 3,220, nearly 1,300 less than the average attendance of Grand Rapids FC (GRFC) games during the same season. Seating capacities among soccer-specific stadiums average approximately 8,000.

Representatives of the USL have noted that Grand Rapids is an ideal market for a potential expansion for their league. In speaking with League representatives as well as local stakeholders, we believe the USL lends the greatest opportunity for Grand Rapids to further penetrate the professional sports market.

We recommend that a soccer-specific stadium analysis is conducted to determine particular sizing elements, stadium features, ideal locations, financial performance, and funding partnership options.

If all of the necessary steps are taken, we believe that Grand Rapids can successfully attract and support a USL franchise and create a new brand for itself as a professional sports market.

### **Enhancing Amateur Sports Offerings**

According to US Youth Soccer, the state of Michigan has one of the largest and fastest growing youth soccer participation levels in the country. As a major international sport, amateur soccer also has the effect of drawing families from the community with very diverse cultural backgrounds.

In order to accommodate the needs of local Grand Rapids organizations as well as large non-local tournaments, serious consideration should be given to the development of a field sport tournament complex. A recommended complex program of space for Grand Rapids will include 12 to 20 multi-sport fields, lighting for all fields to maximize utilization periods, and parking capacity for a minimum of 75 spaces per field. A site allowing for 4.5 to 5.0 acres per field will be needed, and costs for such a complex are estimated at approximately \$20 million. A thorough market, financial and economic impact study should be completed to further define program, site, event level, financial and other elements of the project.

### **Leveraging the Grand River**

The plans described in GR Forward fully capture the vision for an active, urban water feature, including kayaking, fishing and boating. Over time, the River experience in Grand Rapids can become a primary focal point for visitors of all types – leisure, visiting family/friends, and even convention attendees. With a five-year timeline for many of the initial investment and development initiatives, the GR Forward plan for restoration of the River should be aggressively supported and pursued by the public sector, foundations and the private sector.

Further, it is important for leadership, both public and private, to recognize the need to continue River asset development, creating an ease of access for the visitor that is often lacking in other urban locations with river features. Specific initiatives that should be undertaken to create this ease of access are described below.



### River Destination Center

In order to facilitate convenient visitor access, serious consideration should be given to creating what we refer to as a River Destination Center. This would serve as a type of visitor and interpretive center, inclusive of a retail component; facilitation of kayak, canoe, paddle board and other watercraft rental; bike rental; River interpretive space; food service; personal item locker or storage space; and other functions.

In order to be effective, the Center must be located very close to Lyon Square. A portion of the existing Exhibitors Building, owned by the Amway Hotel Corporation, could provide such space. The building corner closest to Lyon Square at the River is currently vacant, however discussions are underway with prospective office tenants. We recommend immediate discussions with owners to explore the viability of securing approximately 3,000 to 5,000 square feet of space in the building, and the possibility of creating a more open storefront towards the River.

### River Access Points

GR Forward has identified several points north of downtown that could provide river access for kayaks, canoes, paddle boards and other watercraft. For convenient visitor access, we suggest a location at Coldbrook and the River be used for a primary entry point, with the recent Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Strategic Masterplan highlighting a buildout scenario for this area. The Coldbrook location is envisioned as a demonstration site to help guide future River access point development.

In addition, access at Lyon Square and the city-owned site near 201 Market Avenue should be focused on. Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) and various planning partners is currently in the conceptual planning stages for the Lyon Square site. Portions of the 201 Market site should be developed in a fashion similar to the Coldbrook site with public River access and a connection to the River trail system. Landscaped pedestrian access from 201 Market to Founders Brewery and other area hospitality establishments should also be developed to enhance the overall River and hospitality experience.

### Visitor Mobility and the River

It will be critical to facilitate ease of transportation for the visitor to key access points on the River north of downtown. The visitor can then use kayak, canoe or other modes to traverse south to one of the designated exit points, either at Lyon Square or 201 Market. To reach the northern access points, the use of bike rentals combined with the redevelopment of Riverside pathways will be critical.

In addition, DGRI is researching a downtown bike share program that would include a station at Lyon Square and other points along the River. Consideration should also be given to a combined bike/kayak/canoe share system. Such a program is currently under consideration in Minneapolis.

We also suggest incorporating the DASH system into a visitor-oriented River transportation system. Visitors could access the DASH shuttle at the River Destination Center (or other areas downtown on a defined visitor spine), reach key put-in points, traverse the River, and exit at various locations, also serviced by shuttle.

## Outdoor and Adventure Opportunities

Primary opportunities for capturing a greater share of the outdoor and adventure market revolve around establishing a first class interconnected trail system. The following initiatives should be considered to both reinforce existing planning direction, and to add several elements that can create and market accessible product serving the visitor industry.

### Develop a Visitor-Friendly Set of Trail Heads

For a visitor, it can be challenging to easily access key points of an interconnected trail system. Downtown Grand Rapids offers a highly unique potential for a series of urban visitor access points to a major regional trail system. We therefore recommend a program of investment in key urban trail access points or trail heads that would include clear signage (tied to a consistent trail-wide signage system), restroom facilities, kiosks with information and maps, and in some cases (River Destination Center, for example) a staffed presence. Development of the signage and kiosks also offers an important opportunity to introduce unique and authentic public art components.

### Develop a Unified and Interactive App and Social Media Approach for Outdoors and Adventures

We recommend that a comprehensive trail App be developed for Grand Rapids and the surrounding areas. Such an App could serve several critical functions.

- Providing an interactive map of trail routes, including a trail rating system similar to those used for alpine skiing (black diamond, blue, green, etc.).

- Real time weather conditions along the various trails.
- Any trail closures or trails under construction.
- Ability to create itineraries for an entire day or stay that can combine trail rides, whitewater activities, nightlife and other activities.
- Social media links providing the opportunity to upload pics and video, sharing destination experiences to a broad on-line audience.

Experience Grand Rapids could also consider utilizing social media interaction to accumulate images of visitors at destination attractions to be used in marketing efforts.

### Interactive Mapping

Consideration should be given to mapping the Grand Rapids destination by partnering with companies that are highly experienced in destination-mapping using drones, satellite imaging and handheld cameras to fully capture a city or landscape on video in order for internet users to view the destination in intricate detail online. Visitors could be encouraged to access the website and preview their whitewater experience, hiking route, biking trail, sky diving and other regional experiences. After their trip, visitors could give their friends an enticing firsthand look at where they adventured in Grand Rapids. The software can also be linked to social media web pages such as Facebook and Twitter.



## Downtown Transportation for the Visitor

In developing recommendations for visitor oriented transportation, we have focused on routing and equipment, as discussed below.

### Visitor Routing

We recognize that the routes for DASH and the Silver Line have just been refined and consolidated. Rather, it would therefore be difficult for us to recommend a further near term modification. It would be prudent to operate the current routes for a period of time to assess their effectiveness. However, consideration should be given in the near term to extending hours of operation to the weekends to better accommodate downtown visitors.

In the longer term, consideration should be given to creating a distinct DASH route or spine that can be considered a “visitor circulator”, running on a simple, consistent route connecting a majority of downtown visitor assets. A visitor-oriented route would help to reduce the element of complication that many visitors associate with a typical public transit system. The specific visitor route taken could include a spur along Bridge Street to capture the emerging entertainment in this area.

At some point, consideration could also be given to extending this circulator to add a segment heading north to the Coldbrook River access site to facilitate the visitor access to River activities, and south to the 201 Market site, location of a previously recommended exit point for kayak, canoe and other water craft.

### Equipment

We also suggest that the type of equipment used in the downtown area be evaluated, particularly if a new visitor oriented circulator route is established. There are numerous options for a more tourism-oriented trolley that involve diesel or hybrid vehicles. Another option that has emerged nationally is an all-electric option. Proterra, a firm based in California, has developed an all-electric bus in 35 foot and 40 foot lengths.

The cost to acquire this type of equipment can vary, generally between \$350,000 and \$500,000 for a diesel vehicle, and approximately \$1.0 million for the electric vehicle. With five new trolleys, the initial purchase could be as high as \$1.75 million for diesel, and \$5.0 million for all electric.

### Getting Outside the Transportation Box

While a bus, trolley, light rail and other such systems are highly prevalent in the U.S. for visitor and resident transportation, numerous markets internationally have developed or are exploring the development of a highly efficient cable transportation system. Studies of such a cable or gondola system have taken place for Chicago as well. A formal proposal for development of this type of system is currently under consideration.

While further research into this concept would be needed, the opportunities provided by such a system in Grand Rapids could include the potential to add a destination attraction, connecting key downtown and nearby assets; the ability to move visitors along the River; and the ability to connect Medical Mile to the downtown core.

Ultimately, this type of cable system should be considered a longer term, conceptual option for Grand Rapids, while at the same time recognizing that if the ridership and financial aspects of such a project were to solidify, it could eventually represent both a viable transportation asset for visitors and residents, and an attraction on its own.

## **Destination Awareness, Diversity and Inclusion**

The recommendations described above are designed to enhance the visitor-oriented assets in Grand Rapids, helping to elevate the community in terms of regional, national and even international presence. In addition to asset development, it is important to grow destination awareness by leveraging marketable uniqueness, focusing the destination brand and broadening its reach.

### Measure Destination Awareness

The Grand Rapids destination brand awareness has expanded over the past decade as evidenced by tourism growth, national recognitions, economic investments and the city's improving ability to attract talent. Consideration should be given to measuring destination awareness among potential visitors in key target markets, and developing data on perceived strengths and weaknesses. This information would help to inform both future destination marketing efforts as well as strategic destination asset investment.

### Outdoor Recreation expanded in Destination Marketing

Destination marketing efforts should be expanded to provide greater emphasis of both the current outdoor recreational assets and the future

proposed enhancements. The uniqueness of the Grand Rapids regional outdoor and adventure assets (particularly with white water and enhanced trail connectivity) can enhance destination appeal and help to generate visitor growth. Emphasizing regional partnerships can further enhance the ability to attract outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

### Stressing Authentic - A Diverse and Inclusive Approach

Travelers are becoming more interested in experiencing a destination from the perspective of a local. And with consumer's trust of promotional messaging declining, marketing efforts should consider leveraging local authentic stories that focus on the neighborhoods and experiences that are unique to Grand Rapids. This could involve development of an innovative marketing social media platform for locals to provide unique and creative stories that showcase their neighborhoods in ways impactful to visitors. This initiative could effectively showcase diverse areas of the community, empower residents to participate in destination marketing efforts, and provide content that could potentially be used to inform future destination marketing efforts.

### Apprenticeship/Scholarship/Mentorship

There are numerous efforts that have been or are being undertaken in the community to support the advancement of minority youth into the hospitality industry. For example, the Grand Valley State University Hospitality and Tourism Management Department just launched the Richard A. Winn Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association Endowed Scholarship that supports minority access to hospitality and tourism education.



Consideration should be given to formalizing an apprenticeship and mentorship initiative, bringing high school and college students into various hotel, restaurant and other hospitality businesses on a multi-month basis to experience all aspects of the hospitality industry work experience. An initiative to pair prospective participants with willing businesses should be undertaken, results of this effort should be carefully tracked, and modifications and enhancements undertaken as the program evolves.

#### Recruiting and Training Efforts

Discussions are underway led by Grand Valley State University to explore a hospitality training and recruitment effort. This could be modeled on a similar program established in Washington D.C. This type of program should emphasize both entry level employment opportunities, and opportunities to simultaneously gain higher level education in areas of the hospitality industry that can provide for career advancement.

#### Hospitality Incubator

There are numerous organizations using a variety of tools in Grand Rapids to attract restaurant, retail and other hospitality businesses to the downtown area. As the level of diversity in the downtown Grand Rapids hospitality business ownership community is fairly limited, consideration should be given to targeting some of these efforts to attract minority-owned businesses. Tools can include low interest loans, storefront improvement grants, fee waivers, business planning assistance and related efforts.

### **Development Cost, Timing and Funding Options**

#### Conceptual Cost Factors and Project Timing

The conceptual project costs for the primary visitor industry recommendations presented herein are based on our experience with other similar projects, comparable project costs, per-unit data where appropriate and discussions with representatives in the particular sectors. *It is important to note that the cost estimates developed for this Plan do not include land assembly or demolition.*

We have also developed a general timing outline for the various projects recommended herein. The scheduling is conceptual in nature, but provides an indication of near versus long term priorities for destination asset development.

Our timeline assessment focuses on three time periods: the next two years, years three to five, and years six to ten. For each time period, we discuss the types of project planning that should be undertaken, and the asset construction/development that should take place. The cost and timing information is presented in the following exhibit.

## Summary of Project Descriptions, Costs and Timing

	Project Description	Conceptual Costs	Year 1 to 2	Year 3 to 5	Year 6 to 10
Public Facility Opportunities	DeVos Place	Added 115,000 square feet of sellable space - mid term priority. \$83,000,000	DeVos Place Conceptual Site and Program Planning - retain national convention center architect. Develop land acquisition plan.	Conduct feasibility for DeVos Place expansion.	Finalize site and architectural plans for DeVos Place expansion. Begin construction.
	Hotel Development	Conduct RFQ process for new hotel development. \$50,000	Develop and issue RFQ, evaluate responses.	Initiate development of new hotel adjacent/connected to DeVos Place	
	Amateur Sports	15 to 20 rectangle fields with necessary amenities. Site area (with parking) of approximately 5.0 acres per field. \$20,000,000	Market and Financial Planning Study for Developing Large-Scale Amateur Field Sports Venue - Retain national expert in this field.	Initiate development of Amateur Sports Complex	
	Professional Soccer	USL professional soccer stadium with necessary amenities. Site area minimum of 6.0 acres excluding parking. \$40,000,000	Market and Financial Planning Study for Attracting USL Soccer - Retain national expert in this field.	Initiate development of USL (or NASL) soccer stadium.	
Leveraging the Grand River	Restoration	Initial project to restore the rapids. \$35 million to \$40 million	Continued Planning and Fundraising for River Restoration Project.	Initiate River Restoration Project.	
	Visitor Assets	Development of River Destination Center, Coldbrook site and bike paths. \$30 million to \$35 million	Continue architectural planning for Destination Center, access sites and bike paths.	Initiate Destination Center, access point development and selected pedestrian/bike paths.	
	Commercial	Extensive public/private development of overlooks, River trails, hospitality business, public art and other features. Undetermined		Continue to develop planning and funding for River island, overlooks, River trails and commercial development.	Continue to implement River investment plan, focusing on public access/overlooks and River trails, and on restaurant, retail and other commercial development - ongoing effort.
Transportation	Acquisition	Five to seven trolley busses, either diesel or all-electric. \$350,000 to \$1.0 million per vehicle		Research viability of new visitor-oriented DASH route and new equipment. Acquire new visitor-oriented trolley/bus equipment.	
	Operations	Incremental annual operating costs. \$100 per hour, 6,570 hours per year, less cost savings from reduced DASH needs. Negligible			
Outdoor & Adventure	Trail Heads	Five to ten defined urban trail heads with amenities. \$1.25 million to \$2.5 million		Conduct architectural and landscaping work for urban trail heads. Initiate development of urban trail heads. Launch new outdoor/adventure app and social media initiative.	
	Marketing	Incremental annual costs to market outdoor and adventure. \$100,000			



As noted above, estimated costs for the River restoration project range between \$35 million and \$40 million. Costs for development of Lyon Square between Monroe Avenue and the River, development of the Coldbrook site as a visitor asset, and widened bike path access between these points are estimated at between \$30 million and \$35 million. These estimates are certainly subject to change as planning moves forward, but is used for purposes of this Study. The types of future public and private commercial investment in River assets not part of estimated costs could include a new Park Island and City Island feature that creates public spaces within the River to be used for events, enhanced River access, park space and other community and visitor uses.

Estimates of project costs for eventual DeVos Place expansion are based on per-square-foot costs of \$400 applied to the targeted expansion program and a 20 percent soft cost factor. This budget should also allow for modest upgrades to existing space.

Costs for amateur sports, USL stadium and amphitheater projects are based on research of other similar projects and our work in markets looking to develop these types of assets.

Costs to acquire equipment for a new visitor-oriented trolley route are based on published information and discussions with transportation representatives in markets that have acquired these types of vehicles. Costs for trail head development are based on discussions with architects and planners familiar with these types of investments.

From a timing perspective, the next two years should focus on extensive planning for recommended destination asset investment, as

well as consideration of various destination marketing initiatives designed to increase brand exposure.

In years three to five, various planning initiatives should continue, and physical development of various assets should proceed. This includes development of a new USL soccer stadium, amateur sports complex, River restoration, urban trail heads and acquisition of new visitor-oriented trolley equipment.

In years six to ten, potential expansion of DeVos Place and continued investment in River assets should be considered.

#### Grand Rapids Organizational Involvement

We have assessed each of the recommended asset development initiatives from the perspective of the types of local organizations that should be involved in planning and implementation. This assessment is summarized on the following page.

### Summary of Projects and Participating Organizations

Project Type	Participating Organizations
Hotel Development and DeVos Place Expansion Planning	Experience Grand Rapids SMG Convention/Arena Authority Grand Action
Amateur Sports Complex	West Michigan Sports Commission Experience Grand Rapids Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Kent County Parks
USL Stadium Development	Experience Grand Rapids SMG Convention/Arena Authority Grand Action DGRI
River Restoration	DGRI GR Whitewater City of Grand Rapids Grand Action Experience Grand Rapids The Right Place, Inc.
River Entry/Exit Points and Paths	DGRI GR Whitewater City of Grand Rapids Grand Action Experience Grand Rapids
Downtown Transportation	Mobile GR and Parking Department DGRI The Rapid - Interurban Transit Partnership Grand Action
Outdoor Asset Development	DGRI Experience Grand Rapids Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Kent County Parks

As noted in the adjacent exhibit, numerous organizations should actively participate in destination asset planning and development, with an extensive role for Grand Action, Experience Grand Rapids and DGRI. We also assume active city and county participation, and certainly there are other organizations that will contribute to the planning and development for each of these project areas.

### Sources of Project Funding

There are numerous sources of funding used in communities throughout the country for major visitor industry public project investment. Several of these include the following.

- Hotel tax revenues (currently in place for Grand Rapids)
- Tax increment financing (currently used in Grand Rapids)
- Prepared food and beverage taxes
- Car rental taxes
- Local option sales taxes
- Corporate sponsorships
- Foundation and other grant funds (major source of funds in Grand Rapids)
- State and Federal funding

As the planning process moves forward, consideration should be given to leveraging these types of revenue sources to create sufficient funding for project development and operations.



## ASSET/INTERVIEW LIST

Asset Visits & Interviews	Interviews (continued)	Interviews (continued)
DeVos Place/ DeVos Performance Hall	Amway Grand Plaza Hotel	Iron/Osteria Rossa
Downtown Market	ArtPrize	JW Marriott
Gerald R. Ford International Airport	Convention Arena Authority	Kendall College of Art and Design
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum	CWD Development	Kent County - Administrator/Board Chair
Grand Rapids Art Museum	Destination Consultants	Kent County Hotel Advisory Board
Grand Rapids Public Museum	DeVos Family Foundations	Land and Company
Grand Rapids Whitewater	DGRI Ambassadors	The Apartment Lounge
John Ball Zoo	Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.	McAlvey, Merchant & Associates
Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park	DP Fox Sports	Mercy Health - Saint Mary's
Millennium Park	Ellis Parking	Michigan Trails System
Van Andel Arena	Essence Group	Michigan Travel Commission
	EXGR - Diversity Advisory Committee	MSU College of Human Medicine - Secchia Center
<b>Downtown Surrounding Neighborhoods Visits</b>	Experience GR Customer Advisory Board	Orion Construction
Arena District	Experience Grand Rapids	Pioneer Construction
Arts/ Education District	Ferris State University/ Kendall College	Republic/Rockwell
Bridge Street/ West Side	Frey Foundation	Reserve
East Hills	Gerald R. Ford International Airport	Rockford Construction
East Town	Gilmore Group	Saugatuck/Douglas CVB
Heritage Hill	Grand Action	SMG
Medical Mile	Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce	Spectrum Health
Wealthy Street	Grand Rapids Community Foundation	Steelcase Foundation
Cherry Street	Grand Rapids Griffins	The Rapid
Creston	Grand Rapids Mayor/City Manager	The Right Place
	Grand Rapid Parking Service	Van Andel Institute
<b>Interviews</b>	GRCC-Secchia Culinary Institute	Wege Foundation
616 Development	GVSU- Hospitality	West Michigan Sports Commission
Amway Restaurant Collection	Hispanic Community/Chamber of Commerce	Western Michigan Whitecaps
Amway Corporation Events Department	Holland CVB	