

# AGENDA



## DGRI BOARD OF ADVISORS

### Members:

Stephanie Andrews • Monica App • Rick Baker • Shaun Biel • Charles Burke • Jorge Gonzalez • Brian Harris • Mayor David LaGrand • Nikos Monoyios • Doug Small • Eddie Tadlock • Randy Thelen • Al Vanderberg • Mark Washington • Kara Wood • Rick Winn

---

September 18, 2025 2:00p  
29 Pearl Street NW (DGRI Offices)

- |   |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|
| 1. Call to Order (2:00)                                   |        | Harris |
| 2. Approval of June 26, 2025 Minutes (2:01)<br>(enclosed) | Motion | Harris |
| 3. 2026 Key Performance Indicators (2:05)<br>(enclosed)   | Motion | Kelly  |
| 4. 1615 Monroe Avenue Request (2:15)                      | Motion | Guy    |
| 5. Grand River Greenway Update (2:25)                     | Info   | Guy    |
| 6. East Riverfront MOU (2:40)<br>(enclosed)               | Motion | Guy    |
| 7. Public Relations Agreement (2:45)<br>(enclosed)        | Motion | Guy    |
| 8. GR Forward 2.0 Update (2:55)                           | Info   | Kelly  |
| 9. President & CEO Report (3:05)                          | Info   | Kelly  |
| 10. Board Member Discussion (3:10)                        | Info   | Board  |
| 11. Public Comment (3:15)                                 |        |        |
| 12. Adjournment (3:20)                                    |        |        |



Board of Advisors Meeting  
June 26, 2025

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:02 pm by Chair Brian Harris.

Attendance:

Members Present: Stephanie Andrews, Shaun Biel, Charles Burke, Jorge Gonzalez, Brian Harris, Doug Small, Eddie Tadlock, Randy Thelen (arrived after agenda item #2), Monica Steimle-App, Al Vanderberg (arrived after agenda item #2), Mark Washington, Rick Winn (arrived after agenda item #2)

Members Absent: Rick Baker, Mayor David LaGrand, Nikos Monoyios, Kara Wood

Others Present: Tim Kelly (President & CEO), Jessica Wood (Legal Counsel), Lauren Suidgeest (Recording Secretary), Catlin Whittington (ArtPrize), Rebecca Krenz (Downtown Ambassadors Manager), and Andy Guy, Melvin Eledge (DGRI Staff).

2. Approve of Meeting Minutes

*Motion: Member Steimle-App, supported by Member Burke, moved to approve meeting minutes from March 20, 2025. The motion carried unanimously.*

3. FY2026 Budget

Kelly began the FY2026 budget discussion with reminders of the basic organizational structure of DGRI, as well as the geographic boundaries of the DID, DDA and MNTIFA. He presented highlights of the proposed FY2026 budget, noting budgeted expenditures of:

- \$33.85 million for DGRI
- \$13.58 million for the DDA
- \$1.46 million for the DID
- \$2.25 million for the MNTIFA

Chair Harris inquired if the \$33.2 million dedicated to the Greenway was all grant funding. Kelly confirmed yes and noted that about 90% of DGRI's budget is Greenway and that once the Greenway's grant-funded work is complete, DGRI's overall budget will decrease significantly.

Additional budget considerations include costs associated with the 1615 Monroe property, with plans to finalize an easement agreement with the City so debt payments on the property can commence.

Kelly also reported on the ongoing spending down of funds for Lyon Square and the MEDC grant allocated for large-scale events.

Kelly concluded by sharing the current budget request and five-year forecast, noting that only the FY2026 budget requires approval at this time.

During the FY26 budget conversation, questions were addressed about the administrative funding for DGRI. This funding is provided directly by the DDA, DID and TIFA, as initially outlined in the City Agreement. It was recommended that the budget sheets reflect the personnel and overall operations of DGRI.

*Motion: Member Winn, supported by Member Vanderberg, moved to approve and adopt the FY2026 DGRI Budget. The motion carried unanimously.*

4. Block by Block Agreement

Eledge and Krenz presented the proposed renewal of the contract with Block by Block (BBB) for Ambassador services, noting that DGRI has been contracting with BBB since 2013.

Eledge explained that in late 2024, DGRI staff issued an RFP for its Beautification, Maintenance and Placemaking services program. The RFP was sent directly to established, known firms that typically provide these kinds of services as well as firms publicly listed on the International Downtown Association (IDA) website. On March 3rd, DGRI staff received 3 qualified proposals.

DGRI staff and sub-committee members reviewed the proposals and provided feedback and recommendations to staff as to the quality and content of the responses received. The sub-committee decided to continue working with the current contractor, Block by Block, who was once again the standout candidate.

While there are no significant changes in the new contract, Eledge mentioned the planned replacement of a truck. Additionally, they highlighted that two resident-focused ambassadors, added two years ago under a separate contract, are now incorporated into the main agreement to streamline operations.

Krenz provided an overview of ambassador activities, sharing that she has been part of the team since 2013 and assumed management responsibilities in 2018.

Hospitality & Helping

- 841 Social Service & Emergency Calls
- 3,605 Interactions with Downtown Residents
- 346,122 Pedestrian Assists

Cleaning & Beautification

- 48,897 Flowers Planted
- 383,350 Pounds of Trash Removed
- 9,335 Snow Clearances
- 95,570 Cigarette Butts Recycled
- 7,231 Graffiti tags & stickers removed

Member Vanderberg inquired about how interactions with the public are tracked, and Krenz explained that Ambassadors use an app developed specifically for Ambassador programs across the country to log interactions and tasks.

Member Burke inquired whether the anticipated arrival of new large venues or events would increase the workload and costs associated with the Ambassador program. Eledge responded that BBB is paid a flat rate based on the estimated number of service hours needed, and any

unused hours in a given month can be carried forward, allowing for flexible deployment of the team. He noted that ensuring adequate staffing levels was a key focus during the RFP process.

Eledge clarified that the contract is split between the DDA and DID and the request today is for DGRI Board approval for the renewal, as DGRI holds the contract.

Chair Harris asked whether BBB is performing well, to which Krenz replied affirmatively, describing BBB as a growing organization.

Chair Harris also shared a positive personal experience, stating that he was once assisted as a motorist by the Ambassadors and expressed appreciation for the team's work.

*Motion: Member Burke, supported by Member Winn, moved to approve the Agreement with Block by Block for continued provision of the Downtown Ambassador and Clean Team Programs. The motion carried unanimously.*

5. Grand River Greenway Update

Guy provided an update on the Grand River Greenway projects, beginning with a brief overview of the decision-making history that has shaped the use of Greenway funds to date. He recapped the Greenway Priority Plan approved by the Board in December 2024, noting that while \$1.1 million remains undesignated for a specific project, those funds are allocated and simply awaiting a final decision on where they will be directed.

Guy highlighted several active projects, including progress at the Grand Rapids Public Museum, ongoing work on the Fulton to Wealthy segment, and recent commencement of the Millennium Park project, which features an adaptive mountain biking trail.

Guy explained that multiple projects are in the process of finalizing design and construction documents and preparing to go out for bid. There is eagerness to see bid results and assess how market conditions may impact costs, as some projects may require additional funding.

Member Winn inquired about the organization's confidence in fully expending funds by the end of 2026, to which Guy confirmed that all projects are currently on track for expenditures in fall or late fall of 2026, although he cautioned there is little margin for error and expressed hope for a dry winter and minimal spring flooding.

Chair Harris asked about contingency plans if issues arise, and Guy assured the Board that contingency planning is underway. He emphasized that the Greenway funds must be spent, and while many projects have additional funding mechanisms in place, the primary focus remains on deploying Greenway dollars as efficiently as possible.

6. Indian Mounds Planning

Guy presented the request funding for consultant services to explore the feasibility of converting Indian Mounds Drive, currently a shared-use corridor for both motorized and nonmotorized users, into a nonmotorized transportation and recreation facility.

Building on regional Greenway collaboration already underway, DGRI, Kent County and several other project partners propose to engage consultant support services to assess the practical feasibility of, and a phased plan to, convert Indian Mounds Drive into a safe, attractive linear park and trail facility for recreational users while maintaining the integrity of the local transportation network. This initiative aligns with the project partners shared goals.

Funds for this project were recommended by the Grand River Network and budgeted in the Grand River Greenway Investment Priority Plan approved by the DGRI Board in December 2024.



Member Andrews shared that she rides the trail nearly every weekend and described it as a great asset. She asked what the project funding would be used for. Guy responded that a significant portion of the work will focus on developing conceptual plans to transition the corridor to non-motorized use, with the goal of having visuals ready to share early next year.

Member Andrews emphasized the importance of ensuring that people are not displaced as the project advances. She voiced support for the initiative overall but stressed the need to remain mindful of its broader impacts.

*Motion: Member Winn, supported by Member Steimle-App, moved to authorize funding in an amount not-to-exceed \$250,000 to conduct a feasibility study and develop an operational plan for Indian Mounds Drive. The motion carried unanimously.*

7. ArtPrize Liquor License Request

Kelly explained that DGRI has access to 12 special event liquor licenses. Two of these licenses have already been used, and ArtPrize has requested the remaining licenses for upcoming ArtPrize 2025 events.

Whittington provided an update on ArtPrize, reporting 1,217 registered artists, 179 registered venues, and 415 connected entries so far for this year.

Signature ArtPrize events will take place on Fridays, including the Opening Celebration, Halftime Show, and Awards Ceremony. A major attraction called Arborialis, an immersive art maze at 555 Monroe, will run for most of the festival and sell tickets to help generate revenue. Other highlights include Biophilia, another immersive exhibit, and educational programs featuring field trips, school curriculum and community workshops. Whittington also announced that ArtPrize has secured space at 40 Pearl for the ArtPrize Clubhouse, which will host services like a concierge, artist lounge, volunteer center, media hub and merchandise sales.

Liquor licenses are requested for:

- Opening Celebration - September 19 @ Rosa Parks Circle
- Arborialis - Friday through Sunday on both weekends
- Halftime Show – September 26 @ Sixth Street Park

Member Burke questioned the plan for the remaining two licenses if only ten have been allocated. Whittington noted they could explore additional opportunities if the Board granted permission to use all ten.

Chair Harris inquired about the DGRI Board's role in the decision-making process, and Kelly explained that while DGRI holds the licenses and doesn't have to use them, Board approval is required to allocate them.

Member Winn asked why eight licenses were needed for three events, prompting Whittington to explain that each venue requires its own license, as a single organization cannot hold two licenses for separate locations on the same day. Whittington also noted that some partner nonprofits will hold licenses for certain event spaces.

Legal Counsel Wood asked what consideration was being given to how the beer gardens interact with already existing Social Zones and cautioned against liquor being brought in and out of the delineated areas. Whittington confirmed that they are taking precautions by utilizing fencing and security to ensure guidelines are followed.

Member Burke asked if either ArtPrize or DGRI carries the insurance for these events, and both Whittington and Kelly explained that DGRI and ArtPrize are effectively the same entity in this context.

Chair Harris asked about projected revenue from the eight licenses. Whittington shared that revenue depends on pricing, recalling that last year's revenue was \$4,000 through a third-party vendor, though overall gross revenue reached \$16,000 before significant fees were deducted. Whittington added that beyond direct sales, the biggest value lies in sponsorship opportunities, as sponsors are often eager for brand exposure through beverage service.

*Motion: Member Vanderberg, supported by Member Small, moved to approve the resolution authorizing the submittal of the Special License Application to the MLCC. The motion carried unanimously.*

8. GR Forward 2.0 Update

Kelly provided an update on GR Forward 2.0, clarifying that no action was needed at this time and the purpose of this item was simply to bring the Board up to speed. He reminded the group that the original GR Forward Plan was approved ten years ago as a ten-year plan, and it is now time to begin the update.

Kelly noted that most of the projects identified by DGRI in the initial plan are either completed or currently underway. He explained that the upcoming process will not be as extensive as the first round, given that DGRI is now well-established and has strong connections in the community.

While the core goals of the plan are expected to remain largely unchanged—focusing on priorities like the river, Downtown housing, mobility, and activation—there may be one or two new goals added.

Kelly emphasized the importance of maintaining robust community engagement, which will remain a central part of the process, even if the methods for gathering input evolve.

The effort will begin with forming a steering committee, and Kelly expressed interest in creating a selection committee to help choose the consulting team. He shared that a steering committee of about 25 to 35 members is ideal and encouraged Board members to suggest individuals who might be interested in participating.

A tentative schedule has DGRI aiming to release an RFQ next month, hire a team in September, and begin work in the fall.

Chair Harris inquired about the anticipated cost, and Kelly estimated it at around half a million dollars and noted this is a significantly lower cost than the 1.0 Plan.

Chair Harris added that it is crucial for the community to have a strong influence on the process and the future of downtown development.

9. President & CEO Report

Kelly gave the following updates:

- Malina Anderson was hired as the Greenway Communications Specialist.
- Melvin, Marion and Nancy traveled to Cleveland for the IDA board meeting and gave a presentation.
- DGRI toured the amphitheater site, which is progressing well and looking great.
- The soccer stadium project is moving forward.
- Lyon Square is on track to be done next week; will have a proper opening in July.
- The DDA approved funding for permanent projection mapping infrastructure at Lyon Square. The installation will support year-round, customizable projections and will be completed after the park opens.
- Canal Park had its groundbreaking at the end of April, and construction is now underway.
- The DDA approved funding to support the redesign of Calder Plaza to align with the City's deck replacement project.
- Sunset Cinema is taking place every Saturday evening at Studio Park.
- Relax at Rosa is currently underway through Sept 11.
- The Downtown Farmers Market is operating every Wednesday through October 1, though some weather-related disruptions have occurred.
- Return to the River, a large-scale public art event, is scheduled for August.

10. Board Member Discussion

City Manager Washington emphasized a comment from Member Steimle-App about the importance of supporting businesses impacted by construction, particularly those along the river projects. He noted that businesses near Canal Park have expressed concerns and stressed the need to ensure that, especially during events like ArtPrize, messaging highlights downtown amenities and businesses to maintain their visibility despite ongoing construction.

Chair Harris asked if there was anything more that could be done to minimize disruption, and Kelly responded that proactive communication is key. He noted the importance of clear signage to let people know that businesses remain open during construction.

11. Public Comment

None.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:18 pm.

Minutes taken by:  
Lauren Suidgeest  
Recording Secretary



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 18, 2025

TO: DGRI Board of Advisors

FROM: Tim Kelly, AICP  
DGRI President & CEO

SUBJECT: **Item #3 – FY26 Performance Measures**

### **I. Performance Indicators**

In FY2017 the DGRI Board of Advisors adopted a set of key performance indicators intended to help inform the overall performance and health of Downtown. The indicators are tracked on an annual basis and reflect respective priorities of the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Improvement District, the Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority and were informed by GR Forward and other community planning efforts. Comparative data from FY17 – 25 is attached for your review.

While it is recognized some of the indicators are outside of DGRI's direct control, tracking and comparing the trends each year does give some measure of the overall economic, social, and environmental health of Downtown. To continue the year-over-year comparisons, no change is proposed to the performance indicators for FY26. With the planned update to GR Forward happening this year, it is expected that the key performance metrics will be re-evaluated as well. ***However, if there are additional metrics that would be beneficial to the Board to assess in the coming year, staff welcomes that input.*** As an example, given the changing nature of office use, the Board may wish to track office vacancies more closely. Similarly, hotel room stays may also be of interest given they serve as an indicator of visitor activity. For additional information on potential metrics, linked here is the [Executive Summary of the International Downtown Associations Vitality Index](#) (2019).

### **II. Key Projects**

In addition to the performance indicators, each fiscal year a set of projects are selected that when implemented will underscore DGRI's commitment to implementing GR Forward (Plan). Given the Plan has a wide-ranging vision that will require collaboration to achieve, projects are selected from across the six goals that will help grow confidence within the community that DGRI and our community partners are committed to delivering on the promises in the Plan and capable of implementing the priorities. In addition, projects are selected that can be completed in the upcoming fiscal year and that will have some conclusive result, whether a capital project, a design document or plan, a committee being formed, or some other tangible measure.

The key projects for FY2026 are as follows:

1. Finalize the scope of work, form a Steering Committee and initiate the process to complete an update to GR Forward.
2. Continue to advance design and construction of Grand River Greenway projects – including at 201 Market, Leonard to Ann and the Oxford Trail - to deploy the \$55M grant from the State of Michigan.
3. Initiate construction at Van Andel Arena Alley and finalize the Memorandum of Understanding for future activation and maintenance.
4. Finalize the implementation strategy for the Bridge South plan, including for development of the tower adjacent to the Amway Soccer Stadium to allow construction to commence in 2026.
5. Successfully deliver signature events, including World of Winter 2026 and Return to the River.
6. Complete implementation of the updated Downtown Wayfinding system.
7. Finalize plans and complete construction of pedestrian safety projects, including at the Jefferson Avenue and State Street intersection near the GRPS Museum School.
8. Coordinate with the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County to finalize plans for the re-design of Calder Plaza.

### **III. Leadership and Advocacy Agenda**

DGRI is uniquely positioned to harness the power of partnerships to achieve community goals and inspire a best-in-class approach to city building. Accomplishing specific, targeted advocacy endeavors will expand on the organization's credibility as a can-and-will do agent for change and progress. For FY26, ten key policy and advocacy items at the local, state, and federal level were selected that will help further the goals for Downtown and the entire community. Those recommended priorities are as follows:

#### Advocacy Objectives:

1. Coordinate with Grand River Network to develop a strategy for additional fundraising to implement and sustain the Grand River Greenway.
2. Determine strategy for Art Prize after 2025.
3. Support the delivery and grand opening of the Acrisure Amphitheater as well as the Amway Soccer Stadium.
4. Successfully manage the renewal of the Downtown Improvement District.
5. Support the delivery of additional housing units in Downtown, including through Agreements with the City of Grand Rapids Brownfield Authority.
6. Coordinate with property owners and stakeholders to implement recommendations from the Downtown Retail Strategy (2022) to improve ground floor occupancy and vibrancy.
7. Support the ongoing efforts to provide services focused on cleanliness and safety in Downtown, including through the work of the Downtown Ambassadors.
8. Help advance key Downtown redevelopment projects, including on City owned property at Coldbrook and at 201 Market on the sites surrounding the Amphitheater.
9. Participate in the upcoming review of the DASH service to determine how to best position it as a Downtown mobility option.
10. Identify opportunities to bring State and Federal funding to support implementation of Downtown projects – including the City's application to the Michigan Talent Partnership for the Hill and River Network.
11. Continue to monitor TIF legislation discussions in the State legislature.

**Recommendation: Approve the FY2026 Performance Measures, Key Projects and Leadership and Advocacy Agenda.**

	FY2025	FY 2024	FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2019	FY 2018	FY 2017
<b>Facilitating Investment</b>									
Tax Increment Value	\$ 11,639,133.00	\$ 10,615,341.00	\$ 9,522,202.00	\$ 8,793,112	\$ 8,066,635	\$ 7,284,426	\$ 6,664,106	\$ 6,543,477	\$ 5,927,709
% Change (over prior year)	10%	11%	8%	9%	11%	9%	2%	10%	0%
DDA/TIFA Pledge	\$ 30,400,000.00	\$ 20,600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ 600,000	\$ -	\$ 2,348,385	\$ 2,167,851	\$5,350,000	\$ 5,000,000
Total Development Under Construction	\$ 471,900,000.00	\$ 353,000,000	\$ 335,500,000	\$ 318,000,000	\$ 127,800,000	\$ 166,007,349	\$ 81,200,000	\$139,100,000	\$ 138,000,000
DGRI Funding to Private Investment	\$ 16	\$ 17	\$ 559	\$ 530	\$ -	\$ 71	\$ 37	\$ 26	\$ 26
<b>Mobility</b>									
Pedestrian Counts Increase @ ArtPrize (compared to prior year)	AP: -2%	AP: 7%	AP: 19%	AP: 37%	N/A	BGR: 14%	P1: 23%	AP: 26%	AP: 38%
Pedestrian Count Increase @ WoW (compared to prior year)	WoW: -6%	WoW: 1%	WoW: 9%	WoW: 20%	WoW: 26%	WoW: 25%	WoW: 16%	WoW: 1%	SD: -1%
<b>Livability</b>									
Units Delivered	248	0	0	44	66	172	270	459	449
Total # of Households	5,149	4,901	4,901	4,901	4,857	4,791	4,619	4,349	3,890
Units Under Construction	172	248	248	-	-	-	-	-	-
Units in development planning	1,945	1,218	1,171	1,293	807	137	172	376	527
Household Affordability Mix (Market/Income Restricted)	69% / 31%	67% / 33%	67% / 33%	67% / 33%	70% / 30%	70% / 30%	69% / 31%	69% / 31%	66% / 34%
<b>Inclusion and Participation</b>									
<b>Demographically Representative Leadership - Boards and Alliances</b>									
White	85%	85%	85%	-	72%	75%	70%	65%	-
Black	7%	7%	7%	-	14%	13%	14%	16%	-
Hispanic or Latino	8%	8%	8%	-	8%	8%	8%	10%	-
Mixed Race	-	-	-	-	3%	2%	4%	5%	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	2%	2%	4%	4%	-
<b>Age</b>									
20-24	0%	0%	0%	-	4%	3%	3%	-	-
25-34	7%	7%	7%	-	37%	37%	47%	-	-
35-44	31%	31%	31%	-	41%	42%	32%	-	-
45-54	37%	37%	37%	-	9%	9%	8%	-	-
55-64	10%	10%	10%	-	9%	9%	10%	-	-
<b>Gender</b>									
Male	54%	54%	54%	-	50%	53%	46%	-	-
Female	46%	46%	46%	-	50%	47%	54%	-	-
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>									
Heterosexual	90%	90%	90%	-	91%	91%	90%	-	-
LGBT	10%	10%	10%	-	9%	9%	10%	-	-
<b>Marketing Communications and Vibrancy</b>									
<b>Social Media Followers</b>									
Twitter (X) Audience	11,400	11,700	11,600	11,900	11,700	11,700	11,300	-	10,000
Twitter (X) Growth	-3%	1%	-3%	2%	-	-	-	8%	24%
Facebook Audience	72,000	60,000	51,000	46,143	39,256	29,235	25,094	-	19,000
Facebook Growth	20%	18%	11%	18%	34%	17%	N/A	12%	62%
Instagram Audience	46,000	41,400	30,900	27,800	25,300	18,200	11,600	-	4,300
Instagram Growth	11%	34%	11%	10%	39%	-	-	36%	97%
TikTok Followers	3,714	2,226	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TikTok Growth	67%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Safe, Clean and Beautiful</b>									
<b>Sidewalk Cleanliness</b>									
Umbrella Escorts, Directions and Other Assists	346,122	374,857	153,666	123,536	84,903	167,555	195,494	270,139	-
Trash Removed (lbs)	383,350	457,425	434,325	381,575	365,275	528,325	544,200	390,400	312,575
Plants and Flowers Planted	48,897	44,304	45,938	45,321	44,832	33,265	21,000	-	-
Crosswalks, Parking Meters, and Fire Hydrants Cleared of Snow	9,335	4,177	16,535	10,090	8,285	11,641	9,850	-	-
Weeds Pulled	374,586	263,415	190,393	95,856	131,625	128332	37,803	12,043	11,400
Instances of Graffiti Removed	7,231	5,714	3,415	2,943	2,276	-	2,102	-	-
Cigarette Butts Removed & Recycled	95,570	183,000	177,500	430,068	131,250	442,990	411,810	532,078	173,000
<b>Percentage of Tree Canopy</b>									
# of Trees Planted by DGRI & Partners	191	397	308	55	214	169	100	201	378

Total #	6,157	5,966	5,569	5,261	5,206	4,992	4,823	3640	3136
Goal of 10%	10.99%	10.65%	9.94%	9.39%	9.30%	8.91%	8.61%	6.50%	5.60%
<b>Acres of Parkland / 1,000 residents</b>									
Total Park Acreage	40.49	40.12	40.12	38.51	38.51	38.51	38.51	38.09	37.79
Estimated Total Residents (1.5 persons * HH)	7,723	7351.5	7351.5	7351.5	7,286	7,187	6,929	6,524	5,835
Acres/1,000 Residents	5.2	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.6	5.8	6.5
<b>DGRI Efficiency Measures</b>									
<b>% of DID Budget Returned as Direct Services and Improvements</b>									
Direct Services & Improvements to Downtown	87%	87%	87%	88%	87%	87%	83%	89%	87%
Supported Administration & Overhead	13%	13%	13%	12%	13%	13%	17%	11%	13%
<b>Public Resources Leveraged</b>									
DGRI Investment into Infrastructure Projects	\$ 33,097,877.00	\$ 12,770,562	\$ 8,831,550	\$ 2,388,162	\$ 1,188,567	\$ 3,282,916	\$ 3,297,936	\$1,330,000	\$ 1,300,000
Funding Leveraged	\$ 24,308,438.00	\$ 13,646,946	\$ 5,467,798	\$ 5,981,242	\$ 5,237,929	\$ 6,549,468	\$ 7,203,154	\$6,200,000	\$ 6,200,000
ROI into Public Facilities (per \$1)	\$ 0.73	\$ 1.07	\$ 0.62	\$ 2.50	\$ 4.41	\$ 2.00	\$ 2.18	\$ 4.66	\$ 4.77
<b>Speed of Project Implementation</b>									
Completed Projects	6 of 9	7 of 9	6 of 9	10 of 11	9 of 10	7 of 11	7 of 9	12 of 17	6 of 7





## MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 18, 2025

TO: DGRI Board of Advisors

FROM: Catherine Zietse  
Grand River Greenway Program Manager

SUBJECT: **Item #6 - East Riverfront MOU**

This memo requests Board authorization to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Grand Rapids to utilize grant funds from the Revitalization and Placemaking Program (awarded to Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.) for the East Riverfront project (managed by the City of Grand Rapids).

In 2023, DGRI entered a subgrant agreement with the Right Place to utilize funds from the Michigan Economic Development's Revitalization and Placemaking (RAP) grant program for the Van Andel Alley placemaking project.

Due to a variety of project complications, the Van Andel Alley project will not meet grant timelines and RAP grant funds were approved to be reallocated to the East Riverfront project. An amended subgrant agreement was signed with the Right Place in July 2025.

The East Riverfront project is creating a new 4.5-acre public space and river edge trail adjacent to the Acrisure Amphitheater. Initial bids received by the City in February 2025 were significantly over the engineering estimate, requiring some amenities such as swinging benches, pavers and catenary lighting to be removed. The funding provided to DGRI through the RAP grant will allow these important placemaking items to be added back into the scope of work.

While DGRI and the City of Grand Rapids have partnered on all phases of the project to date, the City holds the construction contracts. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding establishes that the City will meet all RAP grant requirements for the East Riverfront project and that DGRI will reimburse the City for additional scope items using RAP grant funds.

**Recommendation: Authorize the President/CEO to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Grand Rapids for RAP grant funding towards the East Riverfront project.**



## MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 10, 2025

TO: DGRI Board of Advisors

FROM: Andy Guy, COO

SUBJECT: **Item #7 – Public Relations Agreement**

This memo requests authorization to execute a contract for public relations services to support communication and outreach efforts associated with Grand River Greenway activities.

Staff presents the recommendation after issuing a Request for Qualifications and carefully reviewing submissions from several firms specializing in strategic communications. Following the evaluation of qualifications and reference checks, staff identified Sabo PR as the preferred firm. Sabo brings deep and relevant experience in place-based initiatives, effective public information campaigns and multi-channel media strategy.

The Grand River Greenway is one of our community's most significant projects. As construction milestones advance and new public amenities come online, effective proactive communications – coordinated with river corridor partners – is essential to build awareness, generate excitement and foster confidence in the transformative investment underway.

Ensuring consistent, accurate and engaging communications will strengthen support among residents, businesses, funders and civic leaders.

The selected firm will assist with, among other things, developing key messages, event planning and execution and media relations. The proposed contract falls within budget allocations approved for Goal 1 and Grand River Greenway activities. Engaging Sabo PR will support staff in delivering a high-quality, professional communications program that reflects the scale and importance of this community investment.

### RECOMMENDATION:

- Authorize the President/CEO or his designee to execute a contract with Sabo PR for an amount not-to-exceed \$40,000 per year for public relations services in support of Grand River Greenway activities.



# ***Downtown Vitals Report***

*Published September 2025*



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

*Return to the River Festival attendees in August*



NEW BUSINESSES

**+2**

in August  
+13 businesses this year so far

STOREFRONT VACANCY

**22%**

in August  
-17 businesses this year so far

OFFICE VACANCY

**10.4%**

in Q2  
vs. 10.1% this time last year

OFFICE BASE RENT

**\$22.52**/sqft

in Q2  
vs. \$23.05 this time last year

HOUSING OCCUPANCY

**+1%**

vs. last quarter  
+1% vs. this time last year

HOTEL OCCUPANCY

**-2%**

vs. last month (June)  
+12% vs. this time last year

VISITOR ACTIVITY

**+7%**

vs. last month  
-5% vs. this time last year

DAILY EMPLOYEE POPULATION

**-8%**

vs. last month  
+2% vs. this time last year

RESIDENT ACTIVITY

**-5%**

vs. last month  
-10% vs. this time last year

DASH CIRCULATOR RIDERSHIP

**+4%**

vs. last month (June)  
+21% vs. this time last year

DASH WORK RIDERSHIP

**+17%**

vs. last month (June)  
-4% vs. this time last year

CURRENT ACTIVE INVESTMENT

**\$475M**



# Storefront Business Openings | Updated August 2025

Reserve became **Allora Coastal Italian**  
Restaurant - February

**The Cottage**  
Coworking Space - March

**Kawa Sushi**  
Restaurant - April

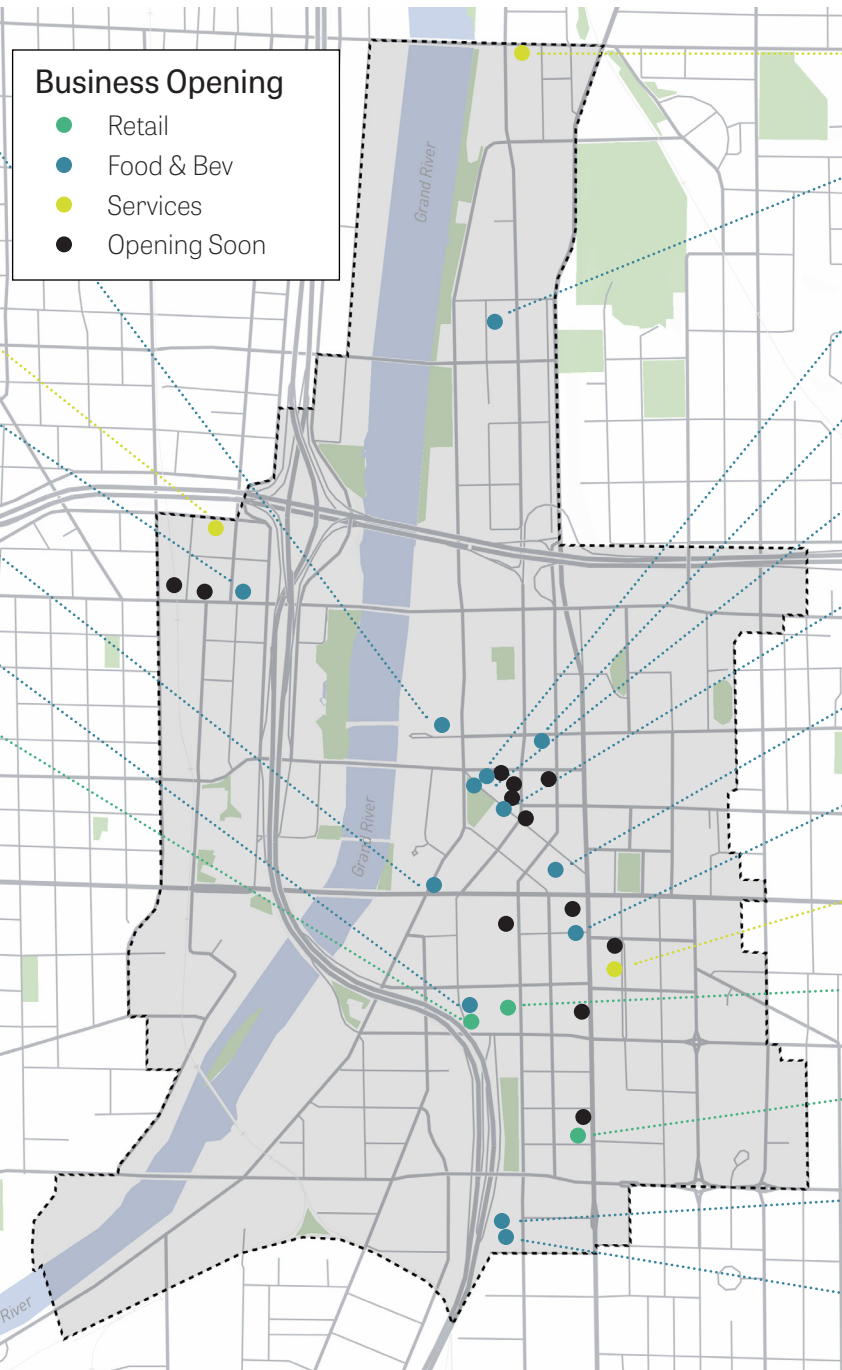
**Ashton** inside the BOB  
Bar - March

**Vel Sushi and Pho**  
Restaurant - May

**Earthly Refillery**  
Soft Goods Retail - August

## 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>\$852,571.46</b>



**Midwest Movement Co.** expansion  
Fitness Studio - April

**SILVA**  
Restaurant - February

**Poke Toki**  
QSR - January

**Morning Ritual**  
Café - June

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

Le Macaron became **Sugar Bar**  
Food Retail & Beverages - February

**Garden District**  
Restaurant - February

**OTONO Café** inside OTONO  
Café - March

**Ladies Literary Club** reopened  
Community Space & Café - August

**Niksi**  
Soft Goods Retail - February

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

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

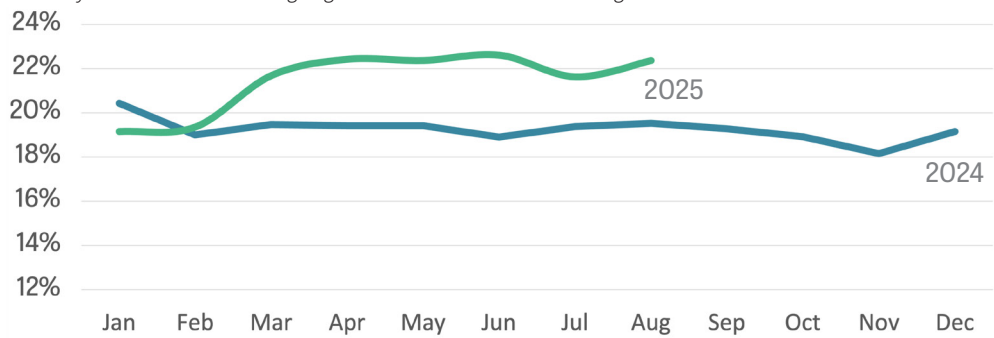
**Go Vegan GR**  
Restaurant - May



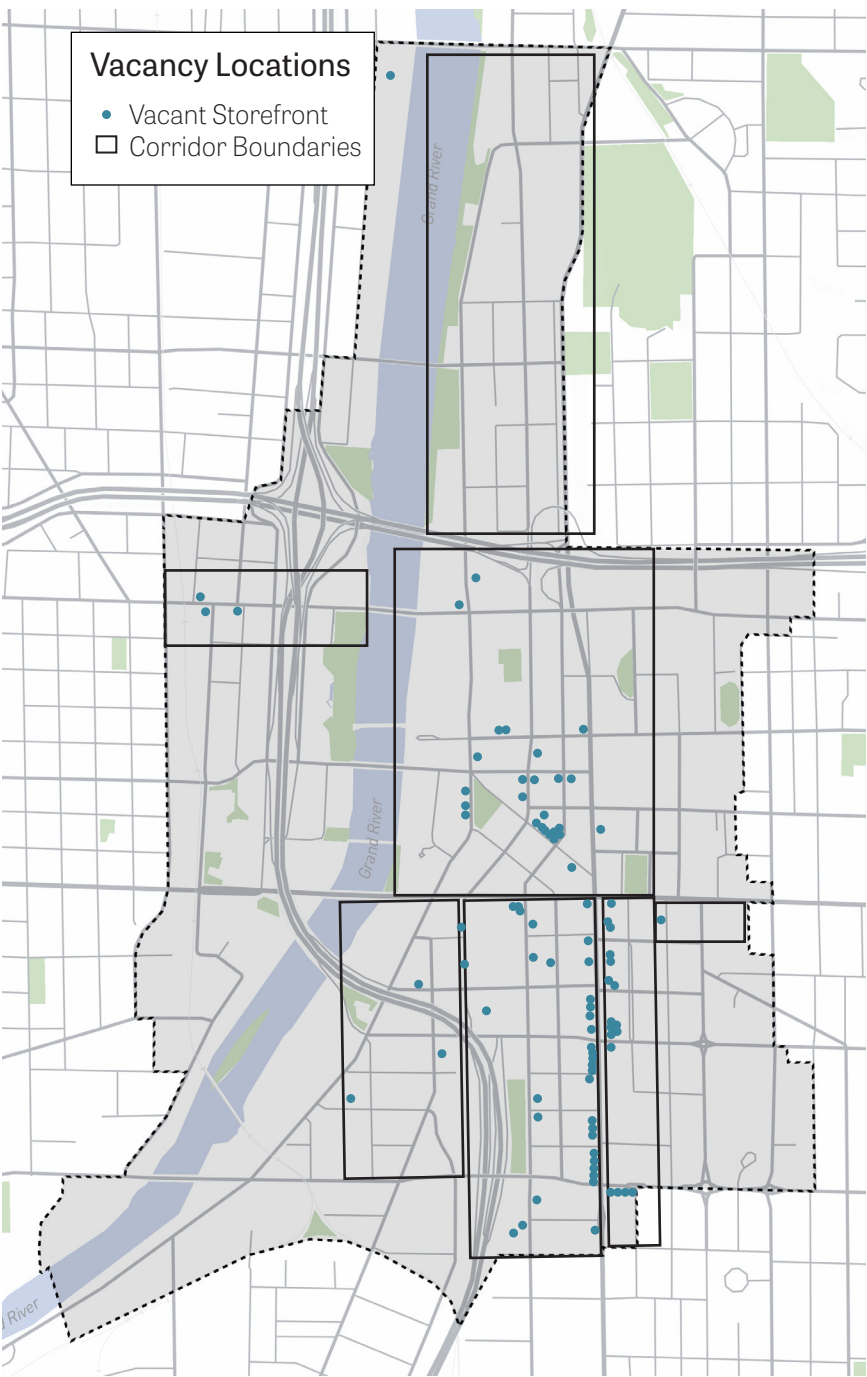
**17 storefront businesses closed**  
in Downtown in 2025 so far  
71% Food & Bev - 12% Retail - 18% Services

Storefront vacancy was 22% in August 2025

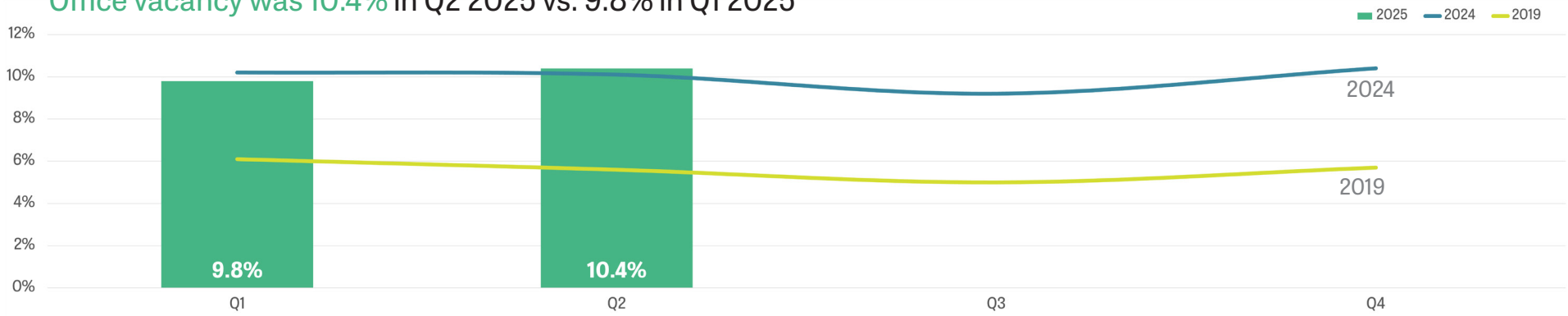
y-axis truncated to highlight month-over-month changes



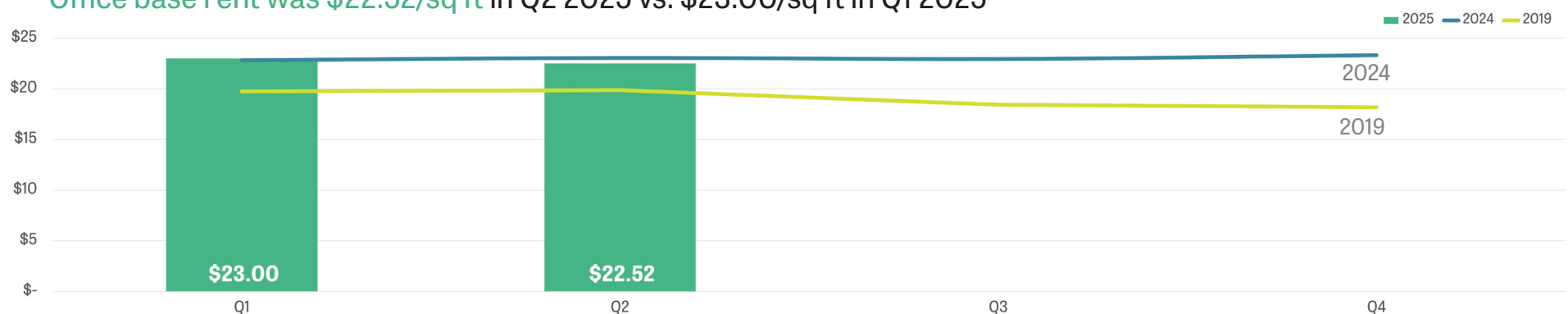
	Storefronts	Vacancies	Vacancy %
Bridge Street	25	3	12%
Center City	127	26	20%
Monroe Center <sup>1</sup>	54 <sup>1</sup>	10 <sup>1</sup>	19% <sup>1</sup>
Fulton & Jefferson	21	1	5%
Heartside: Division	102	42	41%
Heartside: Ionia	73	15	21%
Heartside: C. Chavez	13	3	23%
Monroe North	29	0	0%
Other	17	1	6%
DISTRICT TOTALS:	407	91	22%



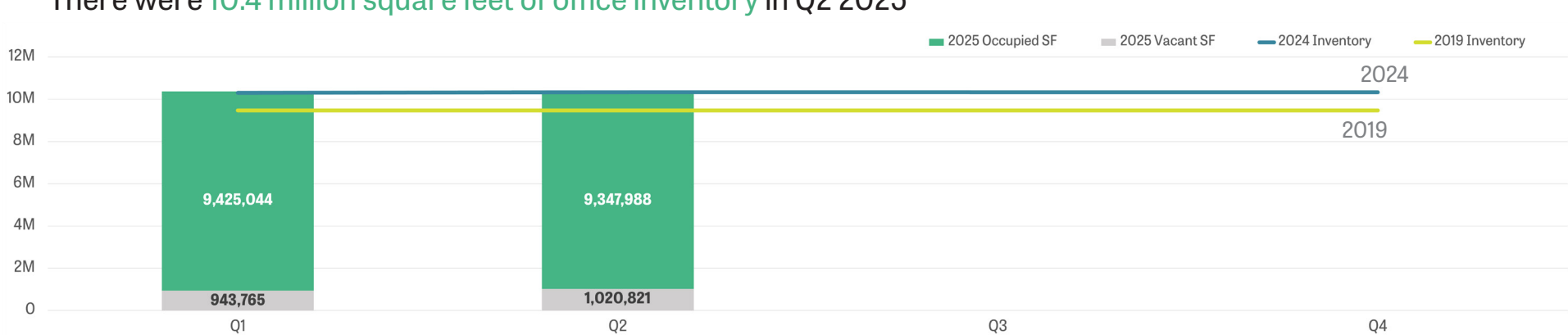
Office vacancy was 10.4% in Q2 2025 vs. 9.8% in Q1 2025



Office base rent was \$22.52/sq ft in Q2 2025 vs. \$23.00/sq ft in Q1 2025

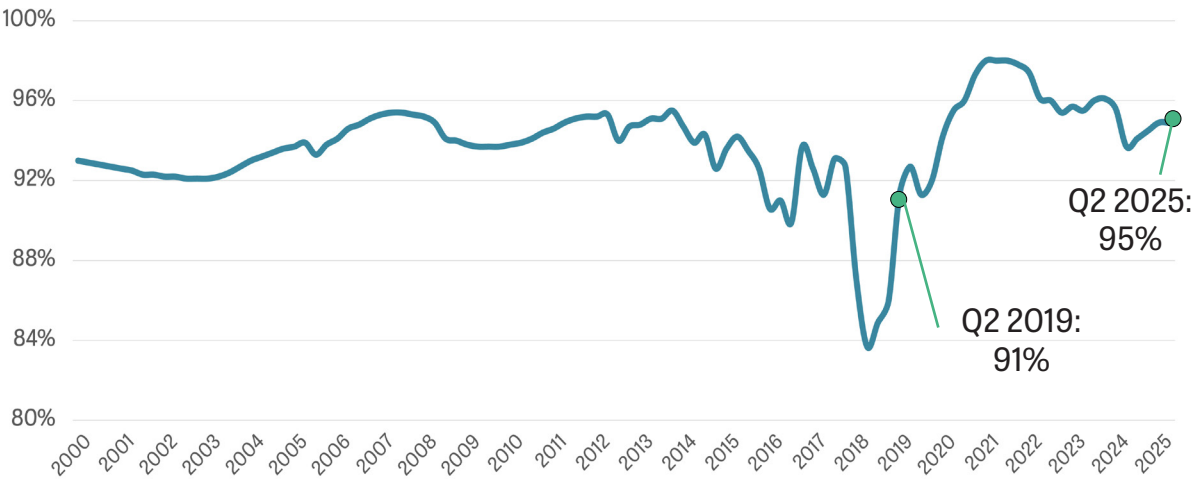


There were 10.4 million square feet of office inventory in Q2 2025



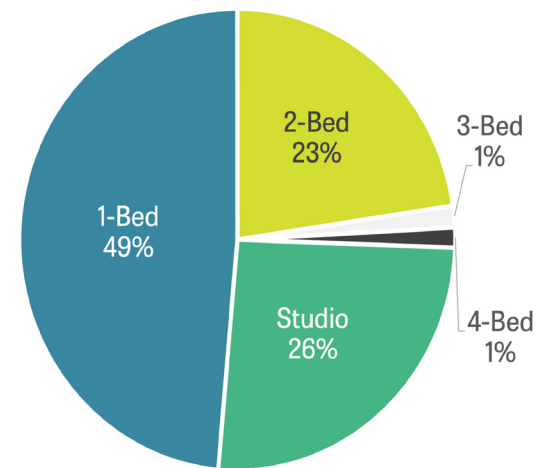
Housing occupancy increased +4% vs. Q2 2019; +1% vs. Q1 2025

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



Source: CoStar

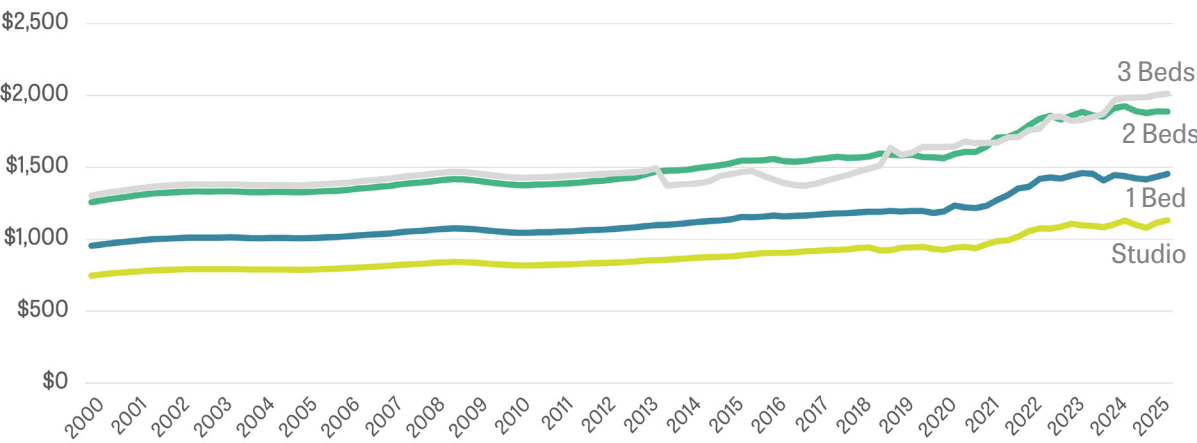
Distribution of Units by # of Rooms



Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

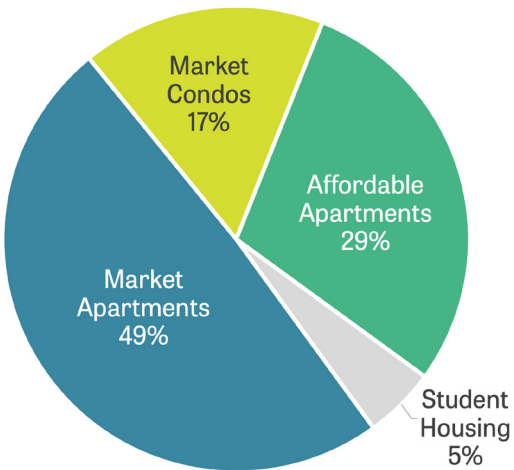
There are **175** units currently under construction and **1,945** in the planning & development pipeline

Average asking rent per unit increased +9% vs. Q2 2019; +1% vs. Q1 2025



Source: CoStar

Distribution of Units by Rate Type

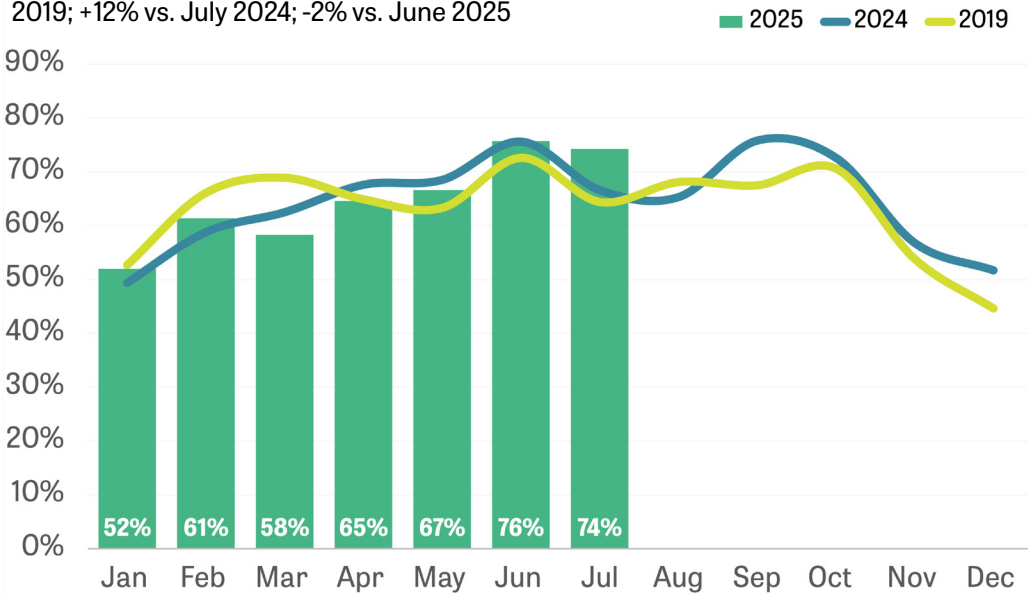


Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



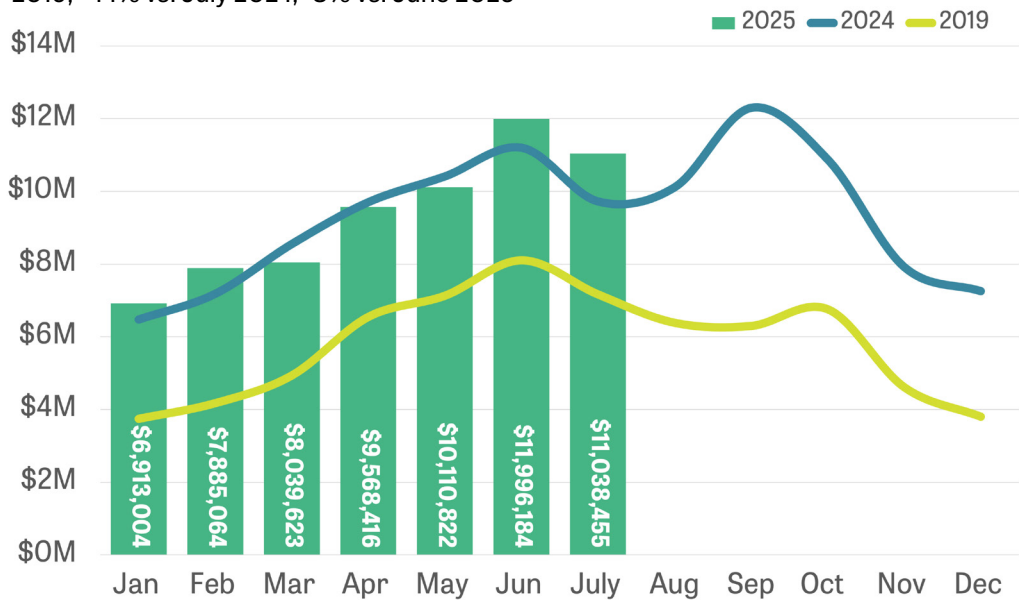
Hotel Occupancy | Updated July 2025

Hotel occupancy increased +15% in July 2025 vs. July 2019; +12% vs. July 2024; -2% vs. June 2025

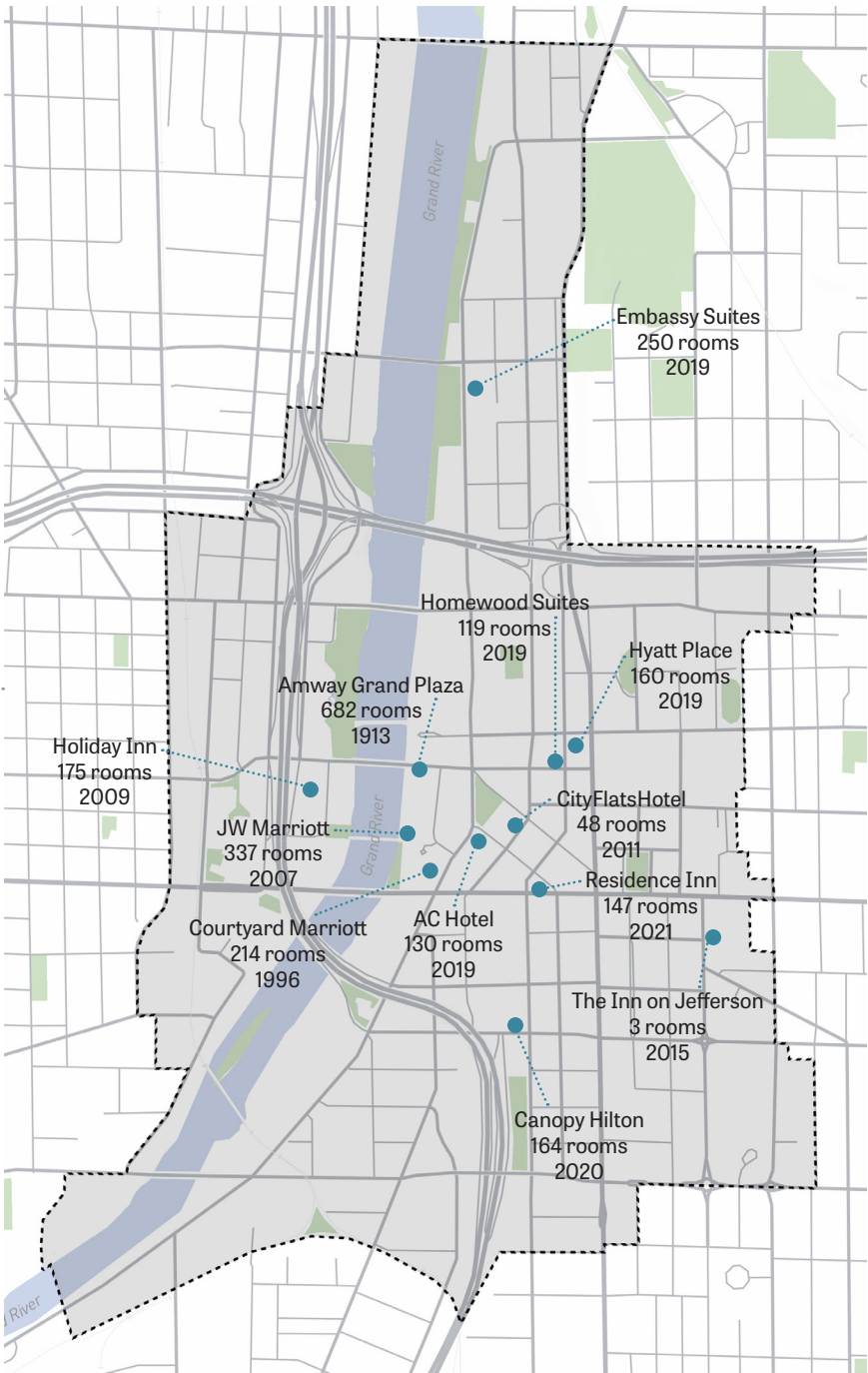


Source: CoStar

Hotel revenue increased +54% in July 2025 vs. July 2019; +14% vs. July 2024; -8% vs. June 2025

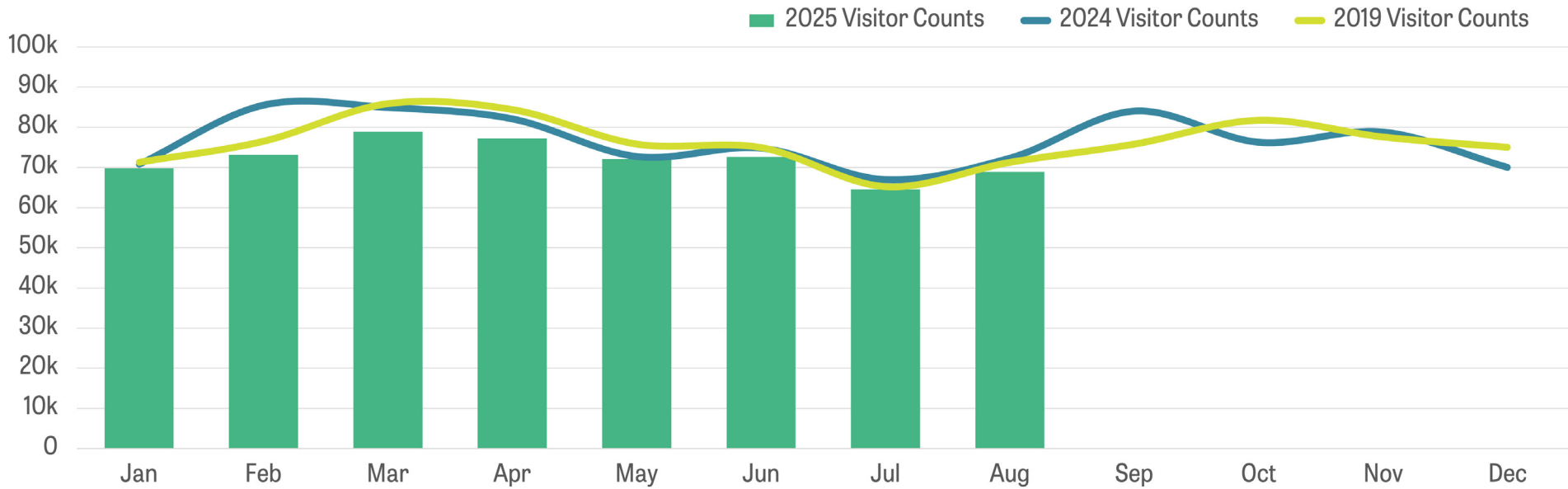


Source: CoStar

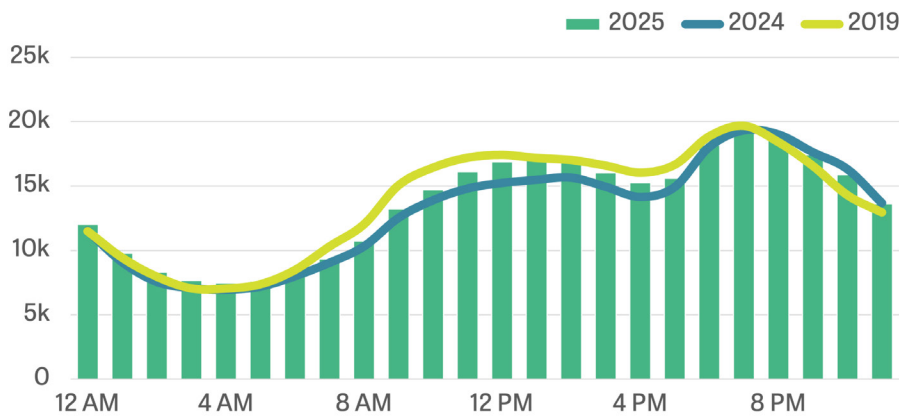


Source: Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

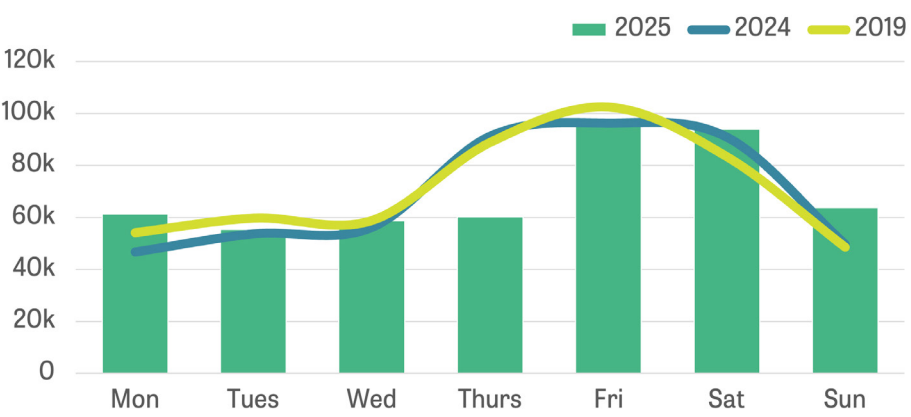
Daily average visit counts increased +7% in August 2025 vs. July 2025; -5% vs. August 2024; -3% vs. August 2019



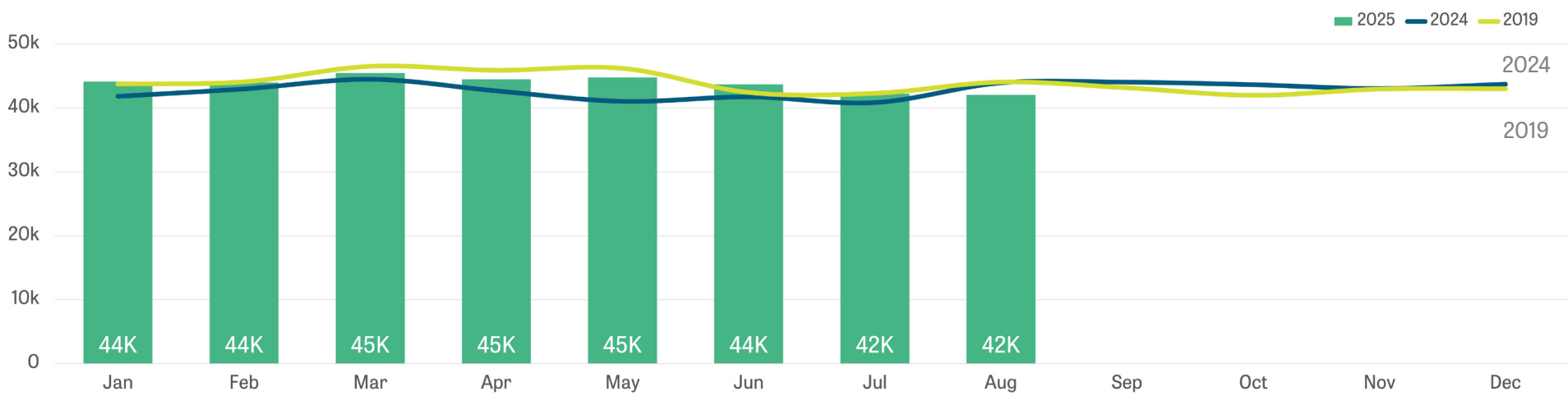
From 5 PM - 11 PM daily average hourly counts decreased -0.3% in August 2025 vs. August 2024; +1% vs. August 2019



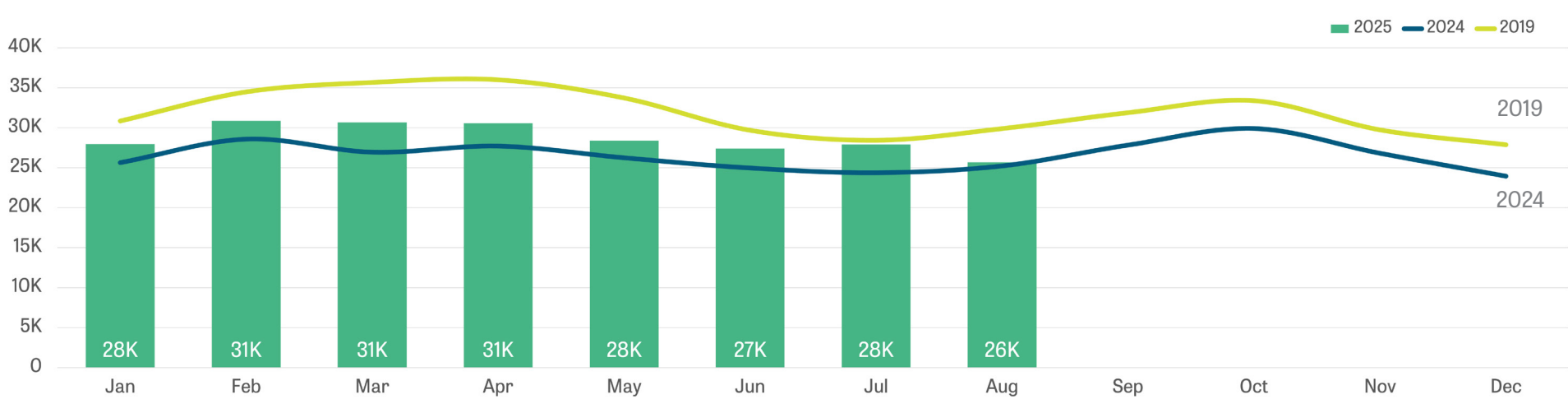
Saturday average daily counts increased +3% in August 2025 vs. in August 2024; +13% vs. in August 2019



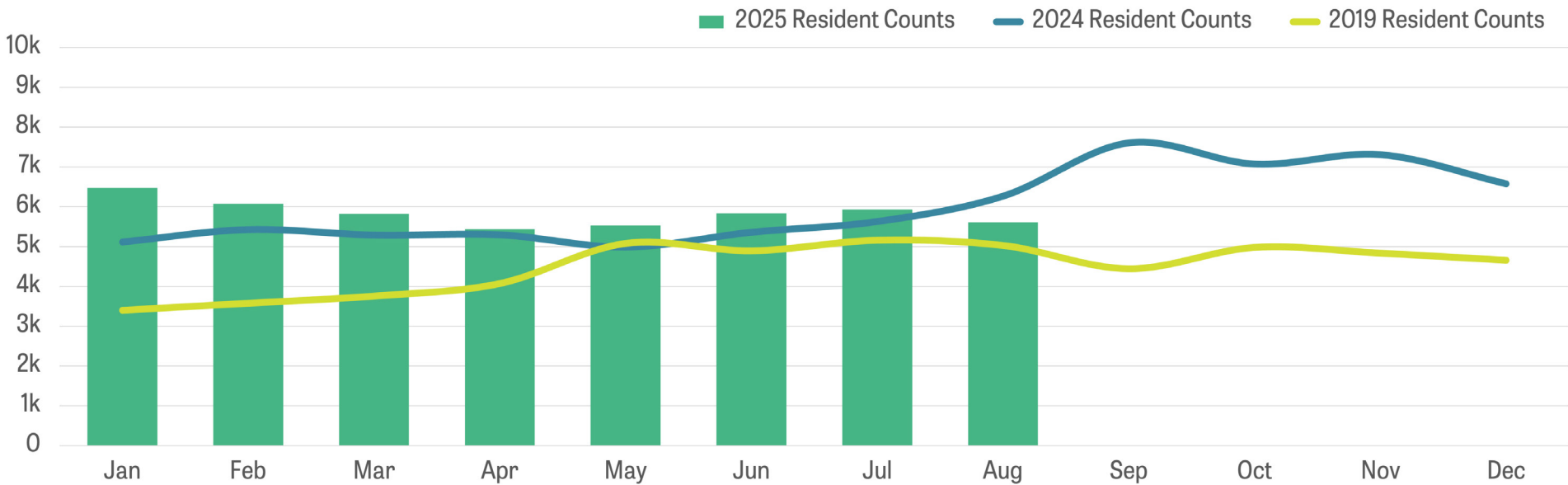
Unique employees decreased **-0.4%** in August 2025 vs. July 2025; **-5%** vs. August 2024; **-3%** vs. August 2019<sup>1</sup>



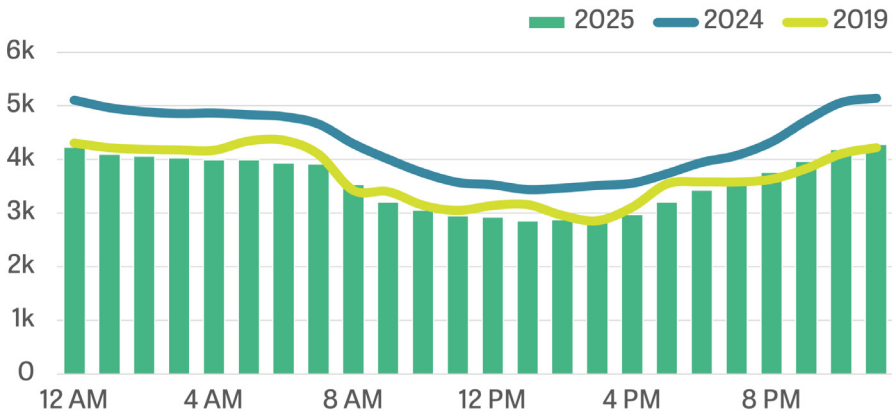
Average daily workforce decreased **-8%** in August 2025 vs. July 2025; **+2%** vs. August 2024; **-14%** vs. August 2019<sup>2</sup>



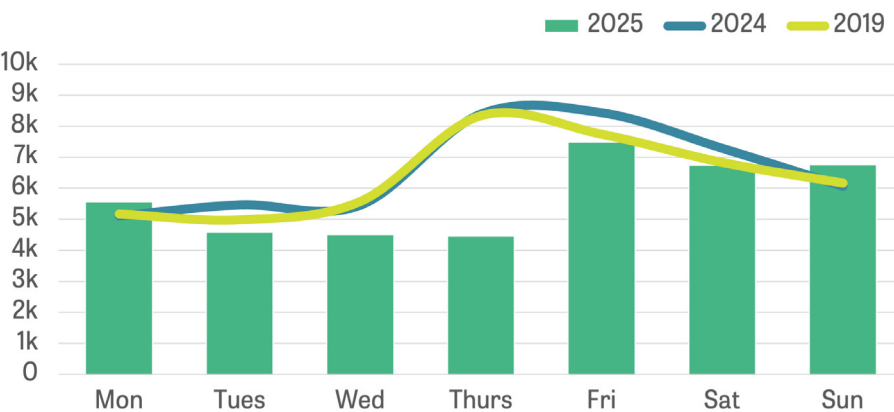
Daily average resident counts decreased -5% in August 2025 vs. July 2025; -10% vs. August 2024; +12% vs. August 2019



Overall daily average hourly counts decreased -17% in August 2025 vs. August 2024; -3% vs. August 2019



Weekday average daily counts decreased -47% in August 2025 vs. August 2024; -47% vs. August 2019





## Downtown Ambassador Statistics | Updated August 2025

	August 2025	2025 YTD	2024 YTD	2019 YTD
Graffiti Removals	416	3,136	4,373	1,275
Lbs of Trash Removed	34,350	200,350	243,600	301,775
Snow Removals	-	6,402	5,569	8,036
Weeds Abated	28,542	134,572	338,264	113,507
Business Contacts	274	2,877	5,826	1,448
Pedestrian Assists	13,620	107,453	243,986	132,481
Mobility Assists	40	405	2,856	1,045
Total Ambassador Banked Hours <sup>1</sup> as of July:				1,179.50



**1 GRPM River's Edge Work**

*anticipated completion: November 2025*

\$12,000,000 investment

**2 Bamboo Cowork Phase 1**

*anticipated completion: Q4 2025*

\$3,100,000 investment

**3 Acrisure Amphitheater**

*anticipated completion: Spring 2026*

+190 car 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 Clipper Lofts**

*anticipated completion: Spring 2026*

+35 housing units

+20,000 sq ft of office space

\$12,800,000 investment

**6 Early Childhood Center @ Rapid Central Station**

*anticipated completion: 2026*

\$7,900,000 investment

**7 Amway Soccer Stadium**

*anticipated completion: Spring 2027*

+104 jobs

\$175,000,000 investment

**8 Corewell Parking Lots**

*anticipated completion: TBD*

+40 car parking spaces

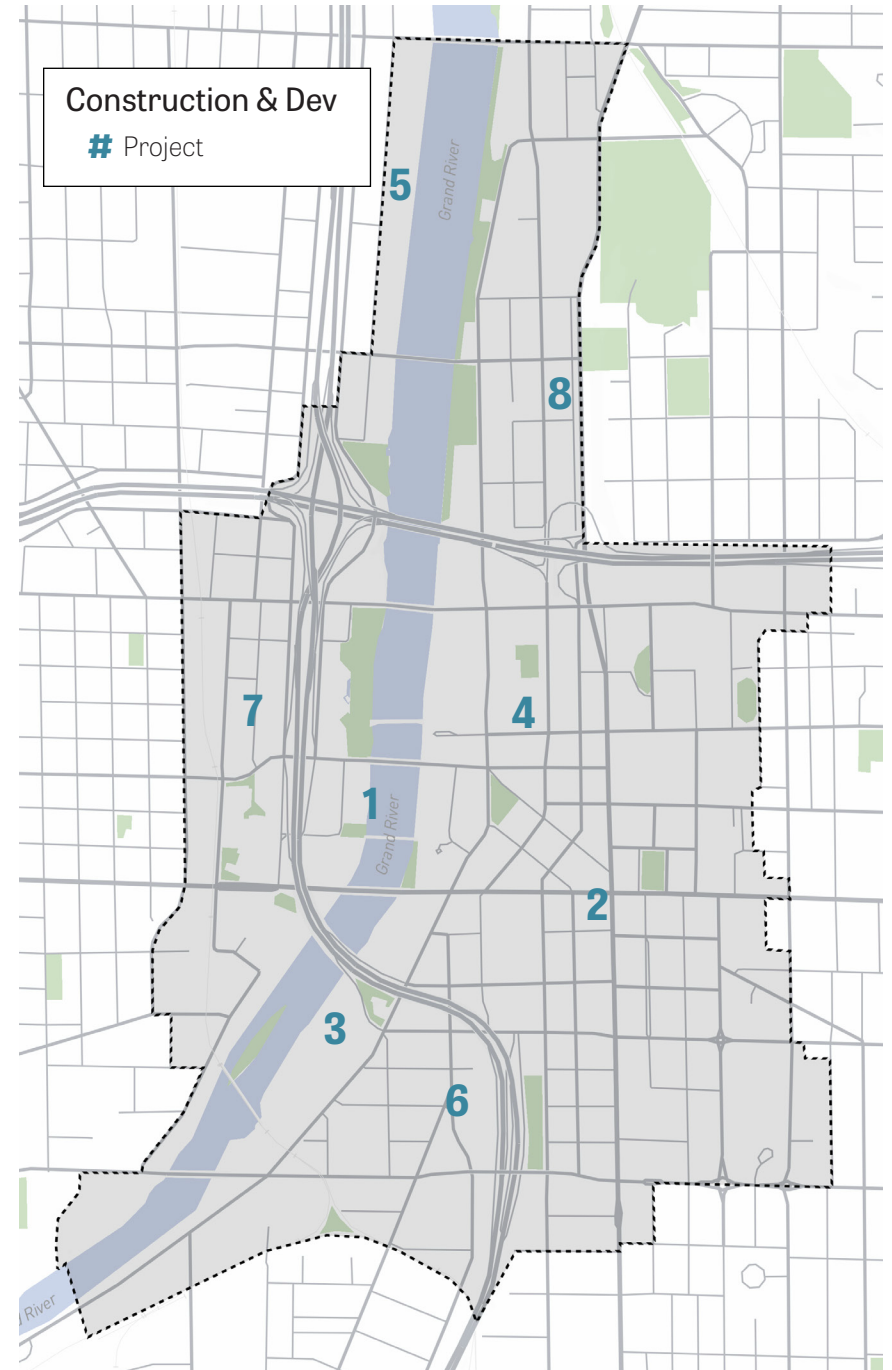
**\$475M**  
in investment

**230**  
car parking spaces

**175**  
housing units

**929**  
new jobs

**-125k**  
sq ft of office space



48

acres of park improvements

20

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

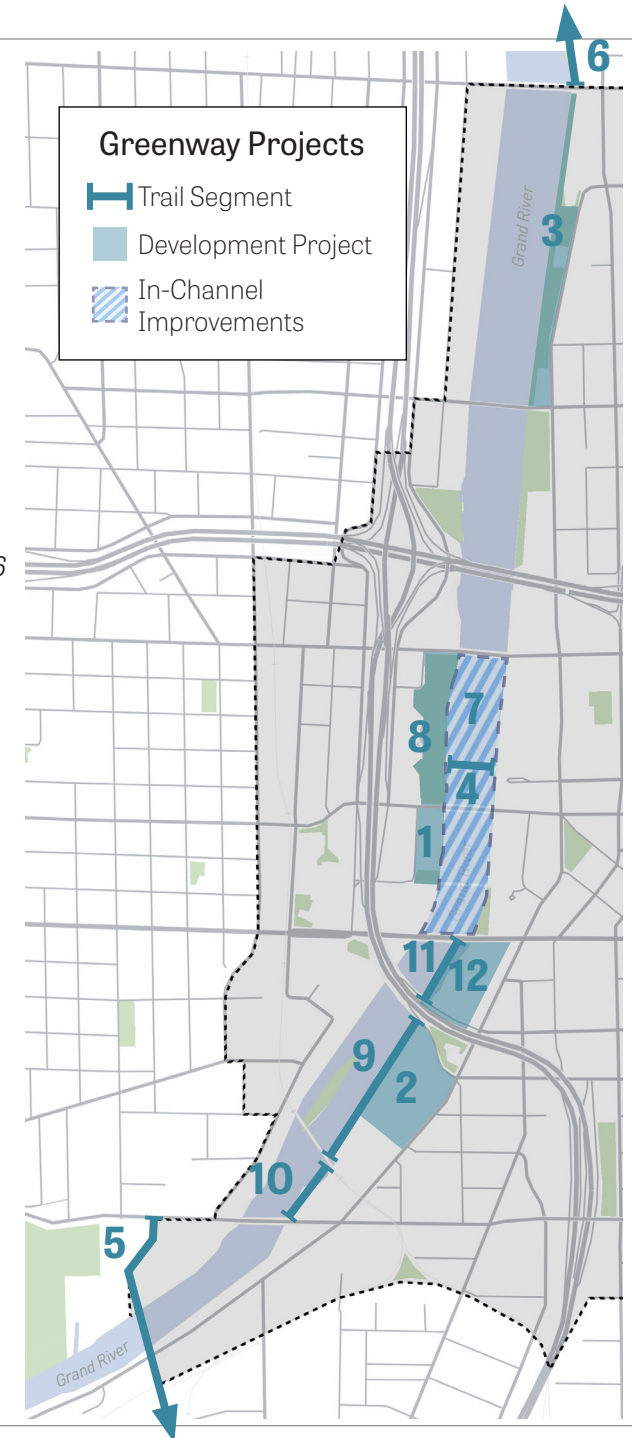
\$62M

total DGRI investment (DDA, MNTIFA, ARPA)

\$1.7B

total private river-adjacent investment

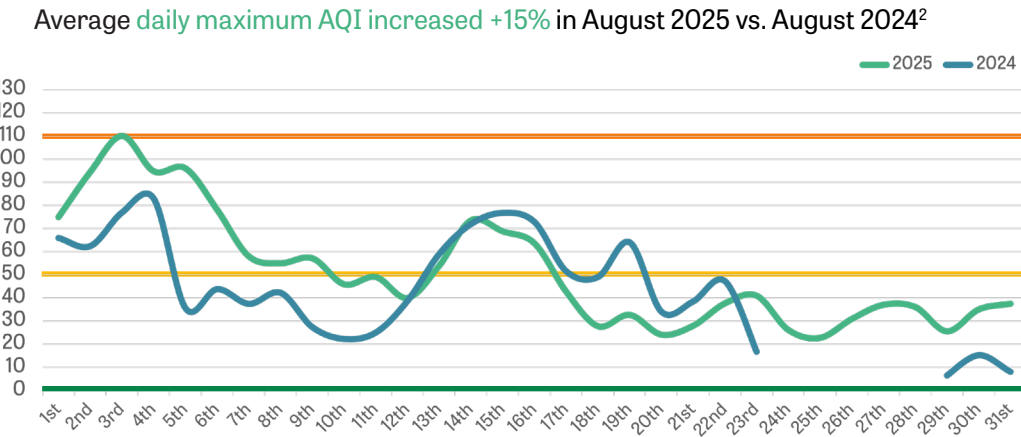
1	GRPM River Edge Improvements	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. Nov 2025
2	Acrisure Amphitheater	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. May 2026
3	Canal Park	Planning	Design	Permitting	Bidding	Construction	Completion est. Summer 2026
4	Gillett Bridge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





**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.



August 2025 Recap

**August 20**  
**Medical Mile**  
**17.31**

Best AQI Day

**August 3**  
**Community Garden**  
**132.28**

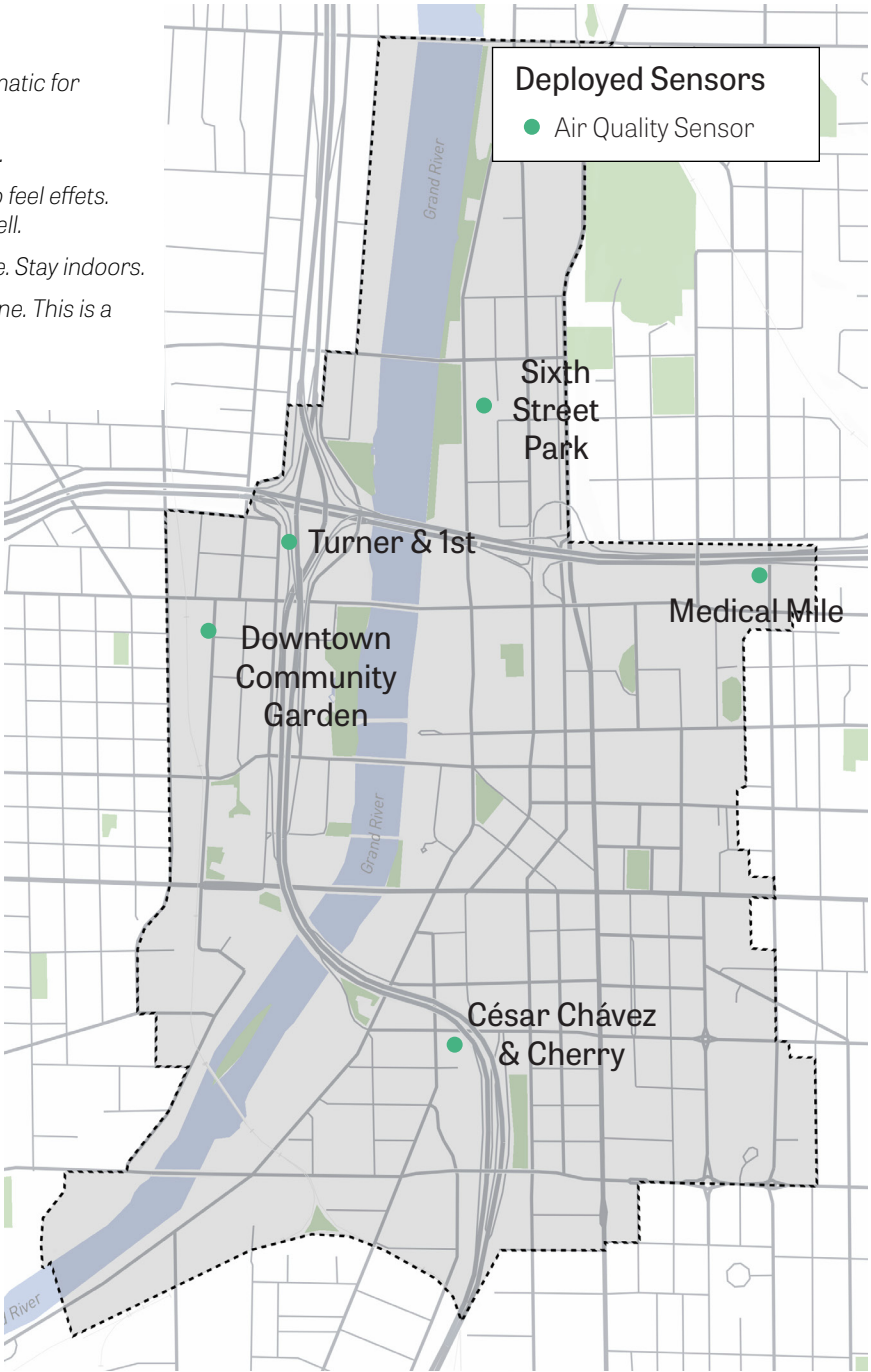
Worst AQI Day

**Medical Mile**  
**35.15 avg**

Best Average  
August AQI

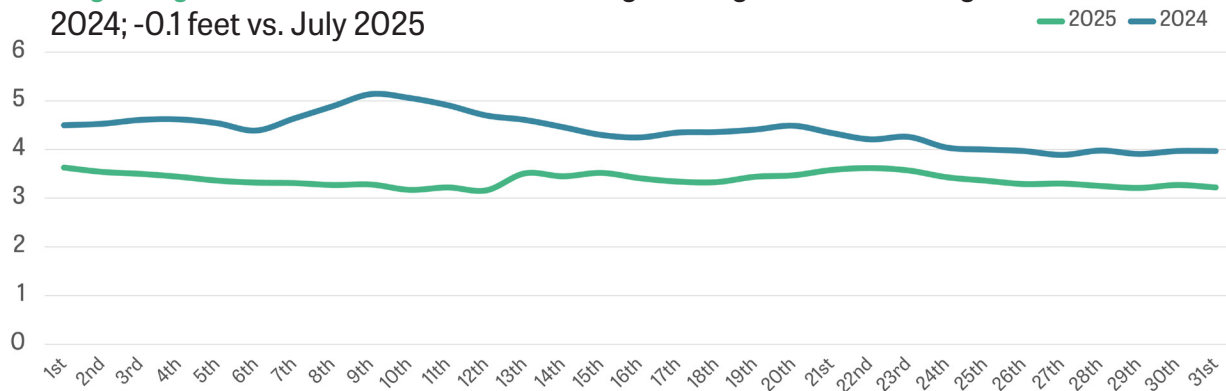
**Community Garden**  
**58.68 avg**

Worst Average  
August AQI





**Gage height decreased 1.02 feet** on average in August 2025 vs. August 2024; -0.1 feet vs. July 2025

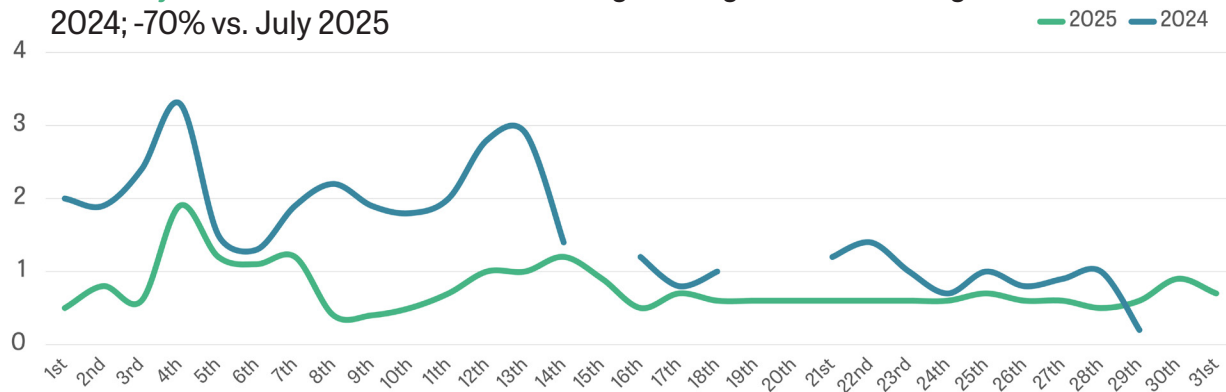


**What is gage height?** Gage height is the distance (or height) of the water surface above the streamgage datum reference point. Gage height is often observed as it relates to landmarks as well as historical data.<sup>2</sup>

**Why it matters:** Gage height is a parameter used to measure water quantity. It is a key indicator in predicting floods, determining flow and informing decisions around infrastructure and water management.

**Learn more here:** [https://waterdata.usgs.gov/blog/gage\\_height/](https://waterdata.usgs.gov/blog/gage_height/)

**Turbidity decreased -52% FNU<sup>3</sup>** on average in August 2025 vs. August 2024; -70% vs. July 2025

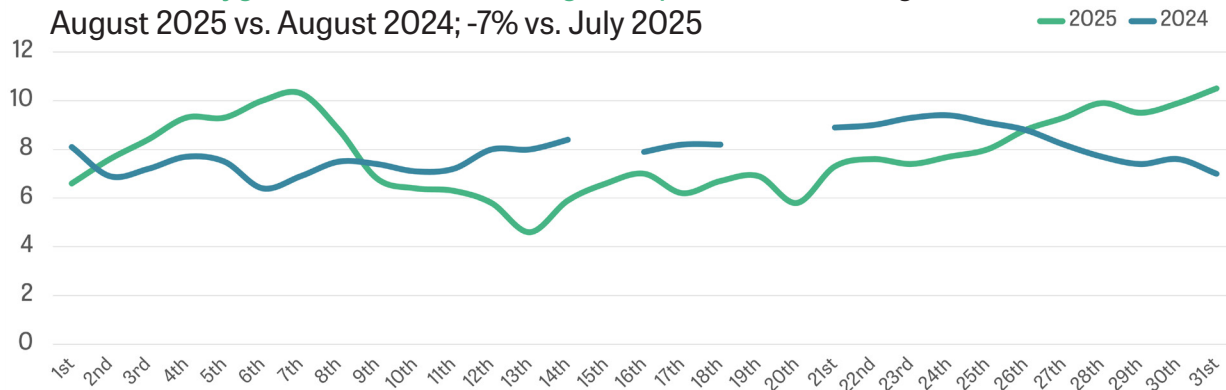


**What is turbidity?** Turbidity is the measure of relative clarity of a liquid. The higher the intensity of scattered light, the higher the turbidity.<sup>2</sup>

**Why it matters:** Increased sedimentation and siltation can occur, which can result in harm to habitat areas for fish and other aquatic life. Particles also provide attachment places for other pollutants, notably metals and bacteria. Thus, turbidity readings can be used as an indicator of potential pollution in a water body.<sup>2</sup>

**Learn more here:** <https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/turbidity-and-water>

**Dissolved oxygen decreased -1% milligrams per liter** on average in August 2025 vs. August 2024; -7% vs. July 2025

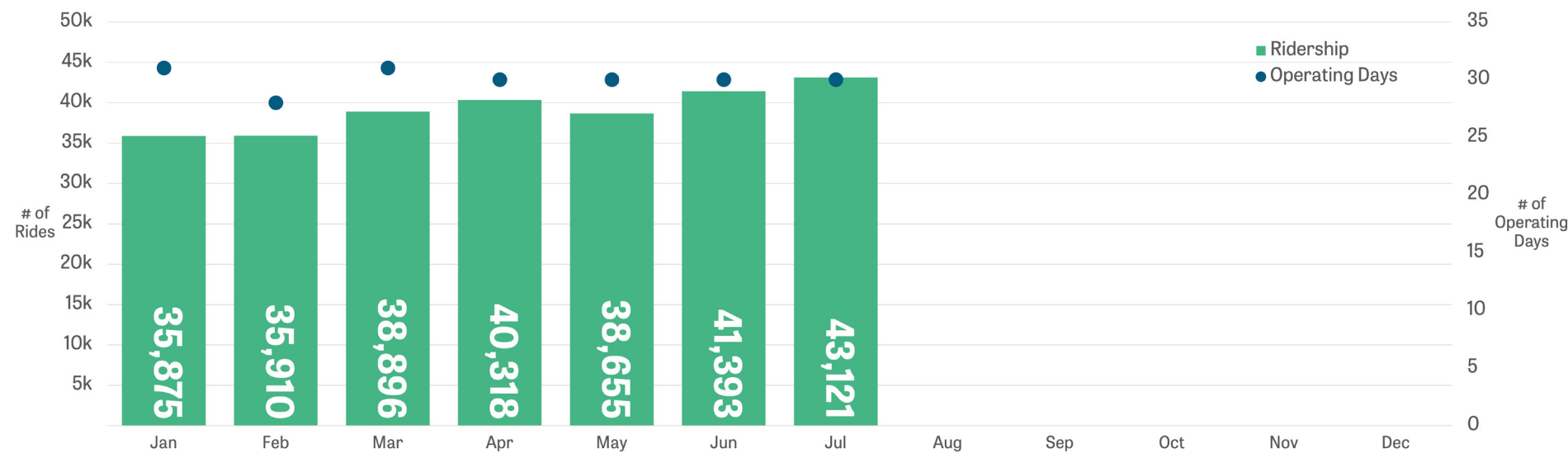


**What is dissolved oxygen?** Dissolved oxygen is a measure of how much oxygen is dissolved in the water - the amount of oxygen available to living aquatic organisms.<sup>2</sup>

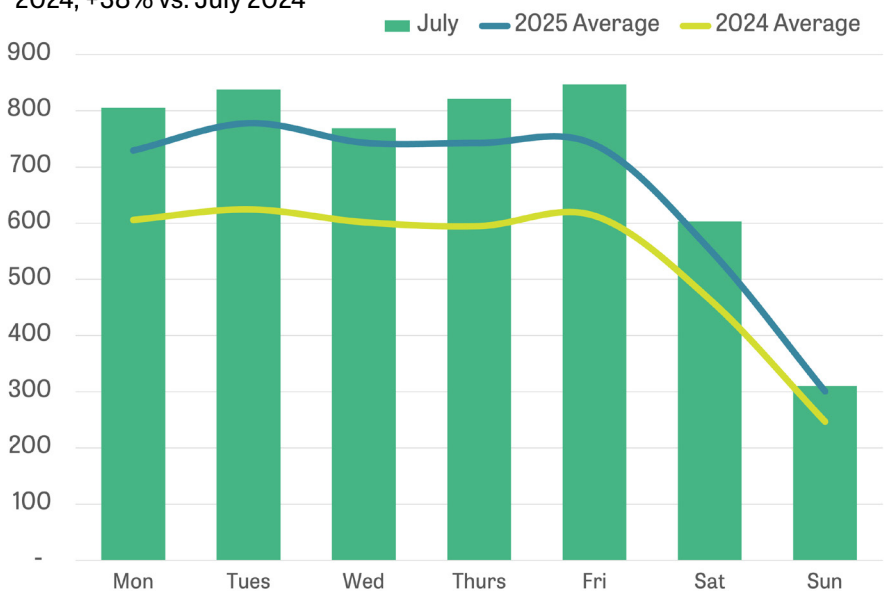
**Why it matters:** Fast-moving streams and rivers hold more oxygen, while stagnant waters hold less. When excess organic matter decays, bacteria use up oxygen, leading to eutrophication, i.e. low-oxygen conditions that can kill aquatic life.

**Learn more here:** <https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/dissolved-oxygen-and-water>

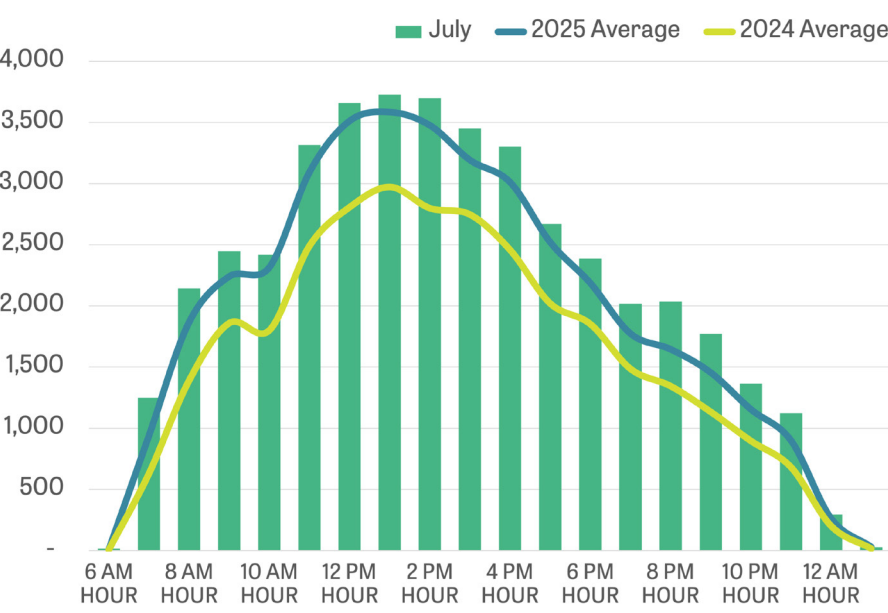
DASH Circulator ridership increased +4% in July 2025 vs. June 2025; +21% vs. July 2024; -27% vs. July 2019



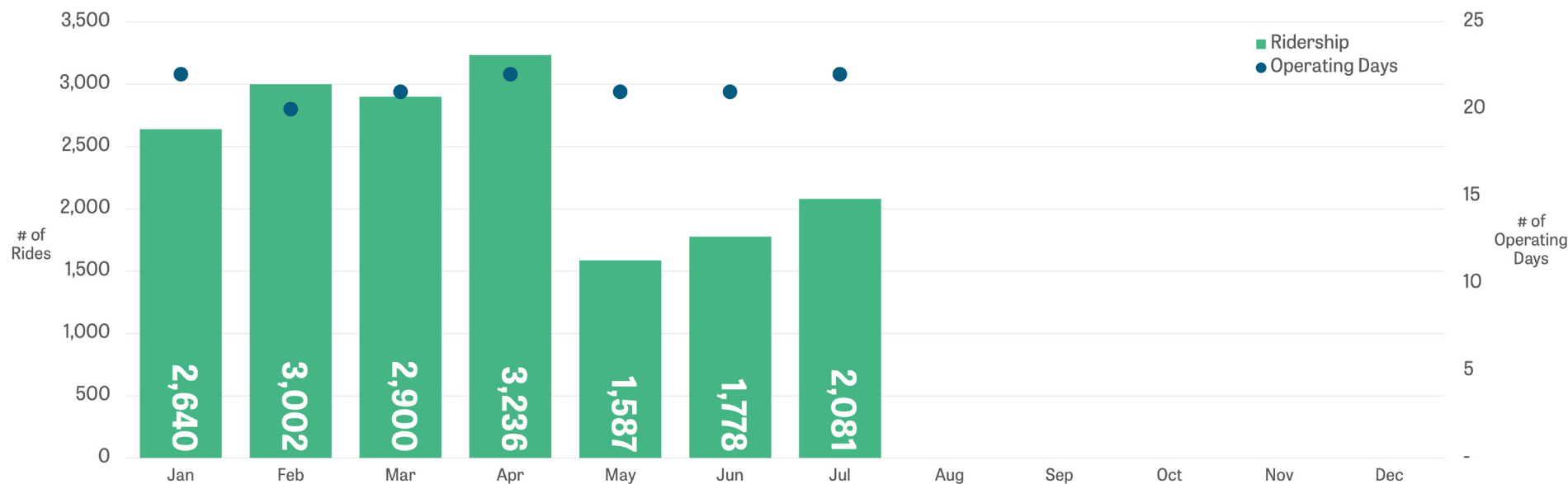
Friday average DASH Circulator ridership increased +15% in July 2025 vs. July 2024; +38% vs. July 2024



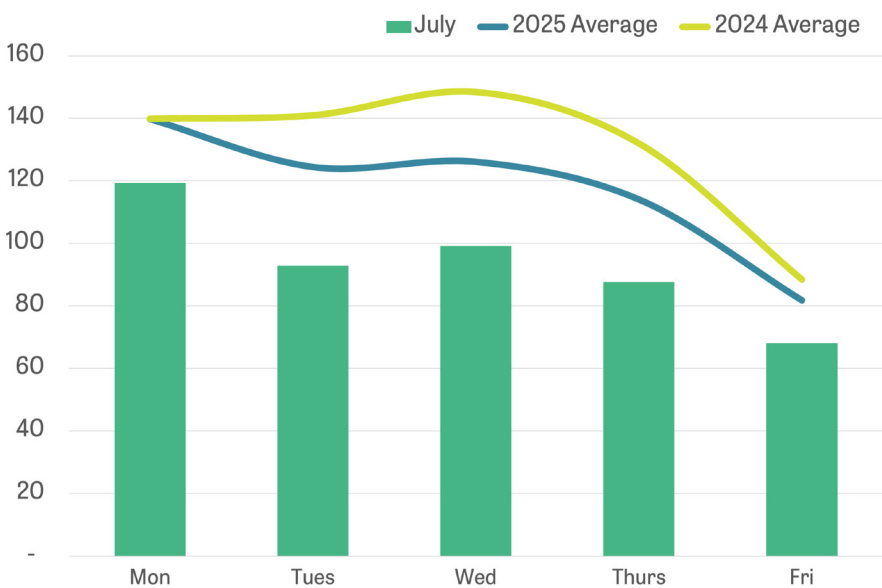
33% of DASH Circulator ridership occurred before noon



DASH WORK ridership increased +17% in July 2025 vs. June 2025; -4% vs. July 2024



Wednesday DASH WORK ridership decreased -15% in 2025 vs. 2024



34% of DASH WORK ridership in July occurred between 7 AM - 9 AM

