

# Virtual Meeting Access

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Hello,

As many of you know, recent restrictions and mandates have been issued in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19. For this reason, and for the safety and wellbeing of our members and employees, we would like to continue to move GR Forward through virtual meetings.

We have decided to use Microsoft Teams for video/phone conferencing for all upcoming board and alliance meetings. Teams has many exciting features including screen sharing, recording, live captions, file sharing, and more. Below are instructions on how to access your upcoming virtual meeting.



## MICROSOFT TEAMS

1. It is recommended to download the App -
  - a. [Apple Devices](#)
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  - c. If you would prefer to use the web version, please [click here](#).
2. Once you have downloaded the app, [click here to access the March Goal 1 Teams meeting](#).

\* Note: If you do not have a Microsoft account, you can join as a *guest*.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please email [mmcdaniel@downtowngr.org](mailto:mmcdaniel@downtowngr.org). Thank you!

Best,  
Mandy



**Mandy McDaniel**  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

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<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/join-a-meeting-in-teams-1613bb53-f3fa-431e-85a9-d6a91e3468c9>



# AGENDA

## GOAL 1 ALLIANCE

### Board Members:

Eddie Tadlock • Elyse Mathos • Issac Degraaf • Janet Korn • Joe Elliot • Laura Cleypool • Lindsey Gadbois • Maleah Beatty • Mark Roys • Matt Chapman • Nolan Miller • Rachel Hood • Sergio Cira-Reyes • Ted Lott • Tom Hoving • Traci Montgomery • Corrinne Farleigh

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March 26, 2020

1:00 – 2:30 PM

29 Pearl Street NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approve Minutes – October 23, 2019
3. Approve Minutes – January 24, 2020
4. Approve Minutes – February 5, 2020
5. Project Update: Grand River Governance Concepting
6. Proposed FY21 Budget Discussion
7. Public Comment
8. Adjournment



# GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance & City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

## Joint Workshop

October 23, 2019

1. Call to order: Andy Guy called the meeting to order at 3:36 pm

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Present: Ted Lott, Matt Chapman, Nolan Miller, Traci Montgomery, Sergio Cira-Reyes, Drake Harper, Maleah Rakestraw, and Joe Elliot

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Absent: Rachel Hood, Janet Korn, Eddie Tadlock, Lindsey Gadbois, Mark Roys, Elyse Mathos, Isaac Degraaf, Tyler Kanczuzewski, Rob Hyde, Laura Cleypool and Tom Hoving

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Present: Kelli Jo Peltier, Lee Mueller (Friends of GR Parks Board), Kim Van Driel

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Absent: Javier Cervantes, Carl Johnson, Denavvia Mojet, Daniel Vannier, Ryan Waalkes

Others Present: Ciarra Adkins (City of Grand Rapids), Wendy Ogilvie (Grand Valley Metro Council), David Marquardt (City of GR Parks & Rec), Emily Aleman-McAlpine (Wege

Foundation), Connie Chung and Kate Collignon (HR&A Advisors), Kathy Blaha (Kathy Blaha Consulting), and Mark Miller, Andy Guy, Melvin Eledge, Sam Suarez, Marion Bonneaux and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff)

2. Grand River Corridor Revitalization Project Discussion

Mr. Guy welcomed various community stakeholders including members of the Parks & Recreation Board to join the Goal 1 Citizen Alliance today to discuss river restoration and revitalization governance ideas and strategies. HR&A consultants Kate Collignon and Connie Chung (along with Kathy Blaha of Kathy Blaha Consulting) have been hired to develop a governance and funding strategy for the river corridor restoration project. Ms. Collignon stated HR&A's initial work will focus on a market scan and identification of programming options along the corridor. She requested individual introductions around the room and suggested each person share his/her goals for this scope of work (key challenges and key opportunities for both programming and maintenance).

Traci Montgomery, Goal 1 member, stated she is interested in leveraging partners we already have to create something that makes sense for our community. Joe Elliot, Goal 1 member and resident of Riverhouse Condos, is interested in seeing increased access to the river and believes the maintenance piece is important. Sergio Cira-Reyes (member of Goal 1, Urban Core Collective and the Latino Community Coalition) stated he is excited to have conversations on access to the river and believes activity will bring communities of color to downtown. Lee Mueller, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, stated he is interested in involving the community in developing a governance framework that can be duplicated throughout the city. Drake Harper, Goal 1 member and resident of downtown, stated his interest is in preserving this natural resource and seeing a trail connection along the river. Maleah Rakestraw, Goal 1, stated she is excited to bring all the various partners together in a maintenance plan. Matt Chapman, Goal 1 and GR Whitewater, stated the goal is to determine the best governance model to ensure appropriate investments that are maintained for many years. Ciarra Adkins stated her role at the City of GR is to ensure economic and racial equity throughout the restoration project, providing opportunities for minority owned small businesses to participate in the process. Kelli Jo Peltier (Parks & Rec Advisory Board member, DNN Chair and resident of the Plaza Towers) stated she is excited to see this project transform our community. Nolan Miller, Goal 1 member and landscape architect, is passionate about design as it relates to social and physical barriers and stated he is interested to see how the community will shape the river and how it will be maintained. Emily Aleman-McAlpine, Wege Foundation, stated her goal with this and every project is to put on an equity and environmental lens from beginning to end. Wendy Ogilvie, Grand Valley Metro Council, stated she has been working on public engagement, youth programming, and has secured grant funding for the restoration of habitat on the lower stretch of the river. David Marquardt,

Director of GR Parks & Recreation, stated as the public land owner he is interested in making this a successful outcome for the community.

Ms. Collignon asked the group for their thoughts on programming opportunities. Specifically, what elements could help support maintenance needs/costs or help sustain long-term operations? Ms. Peltier suggested an amphitheatre which could be programmed with ticketed and non-ticketed events or rented out for private use. Mr. Mueller stated providing recreational opportunities would bring a wide range of people to the river. Mr. Cira-Reyes stated one of his concerns with recreational programming, in regard to earning revenue, is that cost may become a barrier to communities of color. He stated partnerships with local organizations to provide programming may bring more opportunity for those communities. Ms. Montgomery added, it is important to include minority business owners in those opportunities from an economic development standpoint. Mr. Elliot stated hosting free public events with food vendors (ex: Movies on Monroe) should be considered. He suggested hosting a discounted night for kayak rentals (perhaps sponsored by an organization) while operating food trucks. Mr. Marquardt agreed and stated coordinating Free Family Paddle nights at Riverside Park during Food Truck Fridays has been very successful and he would love to see that type of programming downtown. Ms. Adkins stated we need to incorporate the river into public educational programming from K-12 learning opportunities to specialized training. Mr. Chapman stated GRWW has been coordinating with some local organizations that partner with educational groups. Mr. Marquardt stated the Parks Department partners with GRPS each year to place 8<sup>th</sup> graders on the water for a paddling experience. Last year 1,000 youth participated, and he expects to see that program grow and expand in the future.

Ms. Collignon asked the group to share thoughts about access to the water front. Mr. Mueller stated there currently is very limited access. Ms. Rakestraw stated access points feel hidden. Mr. Cira-Reyes stated even communities that have access to the river (Roosevelt Park for example) are not connected to the rest of the river or downtown. Providing that connectivity would serve as a point of equity to the community making downtown feel less intimidating. Ms. Aleman-McAlpine stated equity does not have just physical barriers but social and cultural barriers that need to be addressed to provide true access. She stated culturally relevant spaces should be provided for diverse communities, including minority vendors or shop owners reflective of the community that utilize translated and interpretive marketing pieces and signage. Ms. Collignon asked how you would see equity embedded into the governance strategy. Ms. Aleman-McAlpine stated by having equity as a consistent part of the conversation. Ms. Adkins agreed, in order for equity to become a part of the culture, you need to lead with equity. She stated the City is implementing policy and procedures to ensure equity in the construction bid process. Mr. Cira-Reyes suggested seeking local minority expertise for intellectual capital.

Ms. Collignon asked if there were other considerations or ideas regarding governance. Mr. Harper suggested creating an artistic draw or access point unique to each community or cross section along the river. Mr. Cira-Reyes agreed we should incorporate culture into the architecture to be more reflective of each community. Mr. Elliot stated a linear park (connected trail) with wayfinding to join all these unique areas along the river could allow Grand Rapids to be experienced as a whole. Mr. Mark Miller stated he experienced this in Toledo, OH as a series of flags, statues, and artwork along the river represented various cultural organizations. He stated in a recent visit to Austin, TX he came across a building on the Riverwalk (owned by the Parks Department) that allowed private businesses to lease space to operate a coffee shop, brewery, sports club, kayak rental and other retail. At a high level we need to ask, who owns this asset? Who operates, activates and sustains it? How are we prioritizing minority business owners? Can we serve alcohol? Mr. Cira-Reyes suggested operating a river pool with low cost food vendors (careful to keep costs low bringing equity to the space). Ms. Montgomery suggested community lead groups maintaining, owning, or sponsoring different parks along the river. Mr. Elliot agreed that could create a pride of ownership. Mr. Cira-Reyes encouraged creating different zones along the river with designated organizations to host multicultural events each week. Ms. Aleman-McAlpine stated to ensure equity and diversity, locally owned and minority owned/operated businesses should have priority access. Ms. Rakestraw stated she loves the idea of financing river restoration projects through mitigation funds from private development projects. For example, if a developer can't meet tree canopy requirement, pay into a fund that mitigates the impact by supporting reforestation efforts elsewhere along the river. Mr. Mueller stated we need to ensure we are giving the community a voice when we talk about governance; being transparent about who manages these spaces is important. Mr. Cira-Rey stated an assessment should be placed on businesses that are directly benefiting from the improvements along the river to guarantee access to the community.

Ms. Collignon asked what partnerships should be explored. Mr. Harper stated local Michigan based businesses should be prioritized over national chains. Mr. Cira-Reyes stated Kent County should be a significant investor. Others suggested DEQ, MDOT, Friends of GR Parks, Kent County Parks Foundation. GRPS, universities downtown, neighborhood centers, Priority Health, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and other health/wellness organizations. Ms. Peltier suggested neighborhood associations can help connect local neighborhoods to the river. Mr. Cira-Reyes suggested Pure Michigan and organizations that would host large entertainment or sporting events that specifically fundraise for the river. Mr. Nolan Miller suggested the GR Social Sport Club could host less competitive events with an opportunity to create activity programming and cleanup engagement efforts. Ms. Collignon asked if there were any other thoughts to add. Mr. Harper stated safety and positive interaction with youth should be a

priority in this process. Mr. Elliott agreed safety and security are important. Lighting in the area should make visitors feel safe and comfortable; there should also be the presence of security (GRPD or Ambassadors), especially initially.

3. Next Meeting- TBD

Mr. Guy stated our next meeting still TBD will be held in December or early January.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 pm.

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



# GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance

February 5, 2020

1. Call to order: Andy Guy called the meeting to order at 11:32 pm

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Present: Ted Lott, Matt Chapman, Nolan Miller, Traci Montgomery, Sergio Cira-Reyes, Drake Harper, Eddie Tadlock, Elyse Mathos, Isaac Degraaf, and Laura Cleypool.

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Absent: Joe Elliot, Janet Korn, Lindsey Gadbois, Maleah Beatty, Mark Roys, Tyler Kanczuzewski, Rob Hyde, Tom Hoving, and Rachel Hood.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Present: Daniel Vannier, Lee Mueller (Friends of GR Parks Board), and Kelli Jo Peltier.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Absent: Kim Van Driel, Javier Cervantes, Carl Johnson, Denavvia Mojet, and Ryan Waalkes.

Others Present: Ciarra Adkins (City of Grand Rapids), Connie Chung and Kate Collignon (HR&A Advisors), Kathy Blaha (Kathy Blaha Consulting), and Mark Miller, Andy Guy, Melvin Eledge, Sam Suarez, Marion Bonneaux and Mandy McDaniel (DGRI Staff)

1. Welcome and Agenda Review

Ms. Collignon stated today we would like to review some of the options we have for generating a sustainable funding stream (for operations and maintenance), start to think about governance and associated partnerships, and outline a benefits case to be sure we are capturing all of the group benefits you have been thinking about. She provided a review of key themes established in previous meetings which include: prioritizing intentional equity practices, recognizing that Phase I of the Grand River Corridor Restoration and Revitalization



should begin with focused and achievable tasks, the recognition that corridor improvements will support development and programming to generate value, that our entire region should be involved, and the common desire to leverage the strengths of existing organizations as we build a governance model. Ms. Collignon stated goals for today include introducing the narrative around the project's local and regional benefits, discuss funding strategy options for operations and maintenance (O & M), review and solicit feedback on funding strategy options, examine governance case studies, and provide feedback on potential governance scenarios.

2. Overview Draft Benefits Framework

Ms. Collignon stated one of the categories of benefits we aim to deliver through investments is the quality of life for residents in the region which increases the ability to attract and retain talent. The enhancements of providing open space and unique recreation opportunities would in turn provide economic activity with both onsite job generation, ongoing maintenance positions, and other small business growth. Grand River Corridor improvements will enhance real estate values in the area and spur new development. Fiscal benefits are then realized through an expanded tax base (from increased property values and new development) for Grand Rapids and Kent County. She stated a fundamental driver is ensuring everyone in the community benefits from this fiscal growth. Incorporating principles into corridor improvements such as procurement, small business development support, and workforce development programming will increase inclusive and equitable access to economic opportunities. Improvements along the riverfront will also complete missing links in key regional connectivity. Creating a continuous path from Grand Rapids to Lake Michigan increases visitation and tourism based on new attractions and accessibility to the broader offerings of West Michigan. Both riverway and riverfront improvements provide potential environmental benefits by restoring natural systems, preserving natural habitat, and strengthening flood resilience. And ultimately, these improvements will create increased health benefits through expanded recreation opportunities.

3. Potential Funding Strategies Presentation & Discussion

Ms. Chung presented initial estimates for a high-level discussion on conceptual level funding opportunities. She stated significant capital investment is required to realize the improvements envisioned for rapid restoration, parks, trails, and other development. Funding streams are also required for the O&M of the riverway, parks and trails, streetscape connections, and equity and inclusion initiatives that specifically support access for all. She stated the plan to build out 53 acres of parks and 6 miles of trails (bringing us to 90 total acres of parks and 9.5 miles of trails) in addition to the \$50,000 estimated in-channel costs, will carry an estimated cost ranging from \$10 – 15 million (\$12.5 million) per year. The actual costs will depend on our level of aspiration on activation, programming, design, and implementation.

Ms. Chung stated a typical approach of revenue sources to fund O & M include a combination of real estate value capture, public funding, earned revenue, and grants and contributions. Regarding real estate, we start by looking at three key city-owned sites along the riverfront that could generate value to support O & M: Coldbrook, 555 North Monroe, and 201 Market Ave. The total annualized land value is estimated to be between \$3.7 - 4.7 million from these sites with \$1.7 - 2.6 million total annual city and county payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) in year 20. Public funding through the DDA's tax increment structure is conservatively estimated to be \$2.8 million over 20 years from the significant development generated by improvements on the Grand River Corridor. She noted Monroe North TIFA and GR Parks & Recreation might be potential partners/funding sources as well as the Grand Rapids Hotel/Motel tax capture which is estimated at \$11.4 million. Ms. Chung stated another GR parks millage could generate \$1.2 million and a county-level millage an additional \$3.4 - 5.7 million in year 20. She stated establishing a Recreational Authority (like that of Northwest Ottawa Recreation Authority) could provide the opportunity to capture up to 1 mill in taxes. We could choose to create or expand an assessment district or implement an increase in the beer excise tax. Also, a new local sales tax, which would require state legislation and a constitutional amendment, could generate up to \$2.6 million. Earned income (from concessions, fees and permits) may not be a tremendous revenue source but important for activation and programming support. Philanthropy could play a key role especially in the first 1-5 years while other sources slowly accumulate value.

Ms. Chung presented a potential revenue "stack" noting a variety of different ways the sources can be arranged but include baseline city funding, earned income, DDA Increment, and real estate annualized value. She stated this estimate shows a gap of \$2.2 million which is unlikely to be bridged by philanthropy each year. A more diversified approach would recognize the corridor as a regional asset that draws on funding from county sources (hotel/motel tax and citywide millage). Either way, a phased approach of adding revenue sources as riverfront improvements grow over time, would culminate in a diverse funding stack with public, earned, and value capture sources. At Phase 0, you have current parks funding which goes to maintain existing parks. Phase I includes initial buildout; as you build up capacity and value, you have some earned income but are heavily reliant on philanthropy. As your funding needs start to grow in Phase II, DDA increment grows, there comes the potential to start capturing countywide funds, and real estate becomes a major contributor.

4. Governance Purpose, Principles Presentation, & Discussion

Ms. Blaha stated there is enormous context around the nation for what we are trying to accomplish here with commonalities that can inform our governance strategy. She stated cities like Detroit, LA, and New York are trying to figure out gentrification within public parks and realize this moral (and business) imperative requires a stacked and changing set of

revenue strategies. She stated we need to think about not only the people that we want to serve and reach, but also the people we need at the table to serve them and to make us smarter and powerful enough to build the constituency capable of going after those funding sources. She noted this large public infrastructure project is different than many others and requires a blending of engagement, inclusion, and entrepreneurial savvy.

She presented case studies on select organizations including the Memphis River Parks Partnership, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Austin Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, and Washington, D.C. Bridges Across the River. Memphis Riverfront has been open to the public for 20 years with little funding from the city (in the form of a tourism zone sales tax) hosting no more than a few festivals per year. Two years ago, they expanded the board, determined to redesign the site, increased programming and engagement with expanded ambassador presence, and developed an equity plan. These changes spurred a \$70 million capital investment campaign attracting local and national philanthropy. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy was launched with philanthropic funding which still makes up a large portion of their O&M budget. This private entity manages easements of mostly private (some city) space. The conservancy board originated with 9 people and quickly grew to 46 board members and 60 committee members with very aligned vision from elected officials to regional trail representatives. Detroit started programming to build a constituency before the conservancy was built. The City of Austin decided it needed a non-profit project partner and created the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy with a very detailed memorandum of understanding (MOU) for design and activation. The first of three annual festivals began as community engagement (alongside fundraising) built the framework for a master plan. Their phase I project, Waterloo Park (and amphitheater), was chosen for its gathering space capabilities which furthers community development and public engagement efforts. The conservancy focuses on capital investment at the same time as economic development planning and very project specific engagement. Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR) is the organization initiating the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge project in D.C. which started as an idea in 2011 and 2013 launched 3 years of community engagement. This project will connect Anacostia (a community with a 46% poverty rate) to the very affluent Capitol Hill. \$1 million was raised for design charrettes, an economic impact study was commissioned, an equitable development task force created, the Olin park design process began, and then an equitable development plan for housing, workforce and business attraction was created. BBAR partnered with Urban Land Institute to raise \$50 million in housing support, create a CLT, and develop social equity strategies before a single shovel has touched the ground. Ms. Blaha stated they have done a lot of work prior to construction to ensure they know where they are going, and the right people are at the table. At this time, D.C. has committed to funding half of the project with the private sector to fund the rest.

Ms. Blaha stated there are commonalities in these case studies that are important considerations for us today. The first is conservancy leadership. Everyone recognizes the fact that we have a very complex set of revenue sources to manage which constitutes the need for flexible and nimble leadership. This facilitator will integrate all stakeholders, start planning, and be the communication vehicle. Equity planning is front and center in all these initiatives, embedded in goals, plans, and implementation. Economic development planning is key to managing and leveraging equitable impact and understanding the impact zone. Community engagement is vital to creating alignment and meeting the needs of stakeholders. Relentless engagement and robust activation start with getting people to the river by creating a gathering place. The role of philanthropy is important, especially for initial programs, as we build capacity for community organizations to enable participation. Broad partnerships are important both morally, to be inclusive, but also essential to obtain the support needed from various funding sources.

Ms. Blaha stated some of these parks are just coming on board, but a lot of their funding sources are not coming from the city. Detroit receives \$200,000 in kind with the bulk of funding from philanthropy. Austin collects funds from philanthropy, events, and an assessment district. She noted, regardless of each of their funding stacks, all these organizations have MOUs with their city to manage O&M and support planning and zoning.

Ms. Blaha stated Grand Rapids already does have experience with public private community leadership and suggested this same concept be tweaked to create a Grand River Nonprofit. The purpose of this organization would be to provide consistent community leadership to implement the vision, provide effective ongoing project management, coordinate with stakeholders, redevelop publicly-owned riverfront properties, raise capital and funding as needed, and develop parks and trails in the corridor. She stated the governance principles include: flexibility to support multiple stakeholders and functions, diverse composition, leadership capable of implementing the River for All vision, transparency and accountability, robust fundraising, ability to evolve over time, strong project management and operations capability, ability to align stakeholders, ability to foster equity inclusion, independent authority and resources, sustaining advocacy for River for All vision, and sustainable River for All constituency. She then presented a Grand River Governance Structure web graphic displaying a non-profit (conservancy) at the center as the managing entity with organizations and their potential roles branching out. Community partners support engagement and guidance, DDA (funding and planning), City (development and management partner), County (regional vision), GRWW (rapids), and DGRI for startup support. The structure could include standing committees for finance, development, marketing/communications, and community advisory with ad hoc task committees for planning, redesign, operate/maintain, and engage/activate.

Ms. Blaha presented a case study lesson evolution and stated much of the planning and activation work still needs to be done. That work will flow into a redevelopment and construction period, then operations and maintenance. The entire time coordination, planning, marketing and communication will be ongoing. She stated the partners for each step evolve based on capabilities.

Ms. Blaha provided a list of next steps to develop governance and stated we are ready to confirm the necessity for a conservancy. We need to define a mission and purpose, determine founding board membership, develop a 1-3-year business plan, have a strategy for startup resources, outline agreements with the City, DGRI, and others as needed, and formalize a relationship with the Goal 1 Alliance.

Mr. Lott stated it was important to continue to push for alternate funding sources even those that would require State modifications, for example sales tax on transit. Ms. Collignon stated before you can build political momentum, first you need to demonstrate to the public what the value of the park is for them. It is important to get people excited and not be dependent on those long-term sources.

Mr. Mueller asked how do we ensure that the new organization is connecting and coordinating effectively with efforts within other parks to maintain investments in areas outside of the river's corridor? Ms. Blaha stated everyone should be working together based off needs. It will also require a lot of effort in community engagement. Major cities, including Memphis, create park councils and/or hire a Community Engagement Officer to help create those connections.

5. Next Meeting- TBD

Mr. Guy stated our next meeting is still TBD.

6. Public Comment

None

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Minutes taken by:  
Mandy McDaniel  
Administrative Assistant  
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



# GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance & City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

## Joint Workshop

January 24, 2020

1. Call to order: Andy Guy called the meeting to order at 12:33 pm

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Present: Ted Lott, Matt Chapman, Nolan Miller, Traci Montgomery, Sergio Cira-Reyes, Drake Harper, Maleah Rakestraw, Eddie Tadlock, Isaac Degraaf, Lindsey Gadbois, and Rachel Hood.

GR Forward Goal 1 Alliance Members Absent: Janet Korn, Mark Roys, Elyse Mathos, Tyler Kanczuzewski, Rob Hyde, Laura Cleypool, Joe Elliot, and Tom Hoving

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Present: Kelli Jo Peltier, Lee Mueller (Friends of GR Parks Board), Kim Van Driel.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Board Members Absent: Javier Cervantes, Carl Johnson, Denavvia Mojet, Daniel Vannier, Ryan Waalkes

Others Present: Stephanie Adams, Alyssa Rickman, Steve Faber, David Marquardt (City of GR Parks & Rec), Andy Guy, Melvin Eledge, and Marion Bonneaux.

2. Presentation: Organizational Models Working Group Report

Mr. Faber stated that this presentation is really the outcome in parallel to the work that happened with GR Forward and the steering committee that got put together, which was a group of stakeholders that came together to look comprehensively at what the river project at the time, especially as it was the whitewater project. This group was charged with looking at organizational models especially based on what is there and available now as well as other options that should be considered. The work plan that identified the functions and tasks, relevant examples, existing assets and capacities, identifying options and recommendations. Identifying assets and capacities was missed when originally worked on and the group should really have been able to focus on it, in retrospect. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy was really the main model used and so visioning stemmed off of that. Other important components in the conversation included planning and maintenance. It costs almost six times as much to operate an acre of land Downtown as opposed to not (which amounts to about \$25,000-\$30,000) specifically because of its larger range and number of amenities but it's hard to convince neighborhoods why that spending difference exists. Programming was another task as well as developing and authorizing that programming, especially regarding who does it and how do they do it. Identifying assistance and partnership and instilling a stewardship aspect. A big component is educational so as to help people understand why this development matters, especially to the community that they belong to. The group must look at capital improvements but also long-term funding. When we looked at other models, they were making huge endowments and people always said that they didn't put enough money and didn't think large enough about how much money this was all going to take. It shouldn't be underestimated, and it is difficult to raise this money but because of that it needs to be considered. Are there other funding tools that we haven't looked at yet in our county or city? We wrote some letters of intent to see if there was interest coming from groups to engage in this project and then made a series of recommendations based on these outcomes. Mr. Marquardt explained that the National Land Trust has been good at acquiring lots of land and recently has been looking at doing more urban work and bringing in resources for people who need it. Mr. Lott asked what the resistance was to use this group. Ms. Hood said that this had to do with the steering committee seeing that this group operates on a large scale and how in Grand Rapids things are very 'grow your own path' so things had to be resolved internally before we could look at the larger organizational issue. Mr. Faber added that the assumption was that they were going to bring a lot of resources and expertise from outside of the community, but we could find that from inside the community. Additionally, there were cautionary tales from other people especially when it comes to ownership and defining who owns what. Ms. Hood stated there are a lot of partners in this space but that it always remains

a question who emerges to the front. There is a lot of money involved and lots of interest in being the tip of the spear but not a lot of appetite to deal with that tension and those issues. Mr. Faber added that we were coming out of a time where we didn't have a Parks Department and so there was a void of passage at that time. Ms. Adams inquired about the land conservancy for the highlands. Ms. Hood noted that there wasn't really a huge presence from them but there was acknowledgement that they could play a role. Whether it is a multijurisdictional effort or something that is only happening in Grand Rapids changes what partners we bring to the table and what capacities we need. Mr. Faber continued that there were some additional recommendations made about outreach and coordination, which included questions about what the function is of this group to make sure it continues to engage the whole community, and how we ensure those connections and investments in the whole community. We put together some recommendations based on governance and it came to the fact that this group would act independently with some other people assisting. It was envisioned that this would transform itself into some sort of conservancy over a couple of years. There a bit of a gap because of role transition, but there was always this idea that a new city committee would be formed around this. All that to say that the missing part is figuring out what local capacity looks like, what organizations need a more significant spot around the table, and what were some of the barriers that we should have addressed. Mr. Guy commented on the major points of change, which include a change in mayor and city manager, and growth of capacity there in the department. Mr. Lott asked Ms. Hood what she thought are the right answers to those questions we didn't answer. Ms. Hood stated that local capacity was looked at really hard and that neither she nor Mr. Faber have moved away from that position, and that we should not step away from the opportunity to do something so specifically local and Grand Rapidian. This will enhance our broader regional goals around regional activity beyond the river activity. Mr. Guy added that the current consultants are very different in their capacity to analyze things, which has emerged as a local priority, defining governance structure by plugging in local players and look at investment that makes sense. This is an alliance of dozens of community members that are all working together, especially when bridging existing assets together. Ms. Montgomery asked where we were at with all of this to which Mr. Guy responded that we have been trying to do this as a community for almost 100 years, giving as an example a newspaper article from the 1970s which depicted the same sentiment and narrative that we are using today. After many conversations it seems like we are relatively in agreement about the need for a new entity to take over this work. We aren't entirely sure what the structure of this body might be, whether it's a recreational authority or what the levels of partnerships are. The new language used shows that this project isn't like an arena or convention center but rather is a community asset and behaves different in that fact. Because of this, it's important to note the community aspect in the language for a public-private community partnership. This entity will keep the vision throughout potential issues as the years pass, and keeping the vision alive, even 100 years from now. We must ask



how a potential governance structure will help support any capacity coming from any of the partners involved in the project. We must also focus on exactly how we are going to raise capital and get funding for implementation. We are only still understanding how much all of this is going to cost and finding out where the funding will be coming from. One option of which is looking creatively and redevelopment of city owned properties. And then we must of course look at maintenance so that we are able to sustain the investments that we are making along the corridor. Ms. Montgomery stressed the opportunities we are missing right now with the possible redevelopment of city owned property, especially considering that property values will increase and transition along the potential river corridor. Every time that we fail to do this, we are giving away hundreds of thousands of dollars that we could be capturing to invest in this work. We must move as quickly as possible to set up this entity so we can start capturing this money, and that this can happen regardless of whatever umbrella corporation because of this looming plateau of property value growth.

It will help us achieve our goals in the community, like elevating the organizations already doing the work locally, creating something new that brings us to a new level of capacity locally, enhancing quality of life and growing economic activity, and will lift up the entire region. Keeping with this vision will entail a lot about facilitating and collaboration locally as well as raising capital and funding for implementation. Mr. Faber noted how there was a lot of fear around how quickly the project could grow in costs, and that there's work to try and segment the project out into dry and wet to make it more approachable but even with that methodology the numbers were quickly moving from millions to billions in terms of what it was going to actually cost. When you're looking at overtime maintenance and what projects aren't on our radar yet it's easy to get to those numbers quickly. Getting our arms around how big the task is important and we also need to be diligent about changing goals and responsibilities and becoming comfortable with the possibility of said responsibilities changing. These things are going to be a combination of policy and investments and changes on both of this. Mr. Lott asked what the barriers are for setting up the district to which Mr. Guy responded that it depends on what kind of district you want to set up. There are a lot of questions to be answered in order to figure out what kind of district to set up but perhaps the more important one is to figure out how to capture public investment and to be able to put that back into the system, like construction and maintenance. Mr. Faber geography is part of the question: how big can we make the district before it is intolerable to people because then you can capture more income or more increment or more property tax but there's obviously a threshold to where that district must end. Ms. Hood suggested an amendment containing two or more districts instead of just one. The first could focus on the downtown components, the hardscape, the River For All boundaries and GR Forward boundaries while the other is regional in scope and incorporates river corridor issues that are happening in Ottawa County as opposed to what's happening in downtown Grand Rapids. Ms. Adams asked what the

conversations, if any, are with the County parks. Ms. Hood responded that we must formalize the investment and contributions and moved to Mr. Marquardt who added that they are still operating without a director and that the superintended and deputy county administrator are comanaging the department. There is potential to consider a partnership like this, whether it is system-wide or within set boundaries; it is worth testing the waters. Ms. Hood discussed the possibilities of the work that State and local parks could do with examples of some contributions in the past, but emphasized that the Financial resources trust fund is the key tool through which the state would be involved especially when it comes to additional greenspace or park space or anything in transition, and that this would be specific to properties that could be facilitated by regional and local entities. Ms. Gadbois noted that many of the improvements that are already going on haven't adopted the River For All guidelines and asked for a status update on this. Mr. Marquant answered that the guidelines were only adopted by City Commission this month and will need to be integrated into the Parks masterplan.

This issue was raised about privately-owned land across the corridor, which Ms. Hood commented on highlighting models across the country such as in San Francisco where many of the large-scale developments there have private parts with public spaces built into them. Thus there are models that we can look to if we were to have a private purchase of a significant property, in the development agreement there is a public space component as well as a TIF capture, and possibly that space can be maintained by the property. This is possible if we find the capacity, the skill and the tools. Mr. Guy entertained the question of what we can govern and what we have control over. Property acquisition is certainly on the list of things to do. Mr. Faber questioned how we crank up the urgency on this stuff, since a lot of these models that we are looking at were direct responses to things literally falling apart and it would be advantageous to figure it out fast because if we don't and we don't stay on top of trends and potentials we will miss out on possible opportunities. Mr. Guy brought us back around to say that we are currently at a conceptualization process and we need to get to an agreement around what the concepts are so that we can move into a formation of a process so we can begin to do some work, and so we need to draft principles for developing this governance structure. This includes creating a flexible model that is coordinating several community actors, that it is an independent authority of resources although how the body gains its authority remains a question. The idea of coordination is a recurring theme: if we're thinking about some leadership around redevelopment of publicly owned sites or others, how does this entity do its work to solidify inclusion. Fundraising is also a constant theme and is likely to grow over time as we grow the work. These are all part of a kind of preview of what the consultant must work on so these issues are being addressed and will be brought back to this body for more contemplation. Ms. Montgomery asked if there were any parallels to the Essential Needs task force, not knowing what their funding capabilities were but acknowledging that

they had similar verticals for the things we also need to do for the people in our community and that organizations with similar verticals should come together to work on shared issues together. Mr. Mueller added that we need to be cautious of the layers that get built up and how to connect it back to the leaders. When looking at this project and the coordination of multiple stakeholders and people involved, it's hard to see a connection between how community input gets implemented in the process. Mr. Cira-Reyes agreed and reiterated the sentiment noting that it becomes very easy to apply certain activities that matter to communities and community members and noting that as value and discarding things that are not. Ms. Adams pointed out that we are trying to figure out all at once but that it seems necessary to figure out capacity for fundraising right now. The question gets asked all of the time about where the fundraising will come from and when it is going to happen and that there aren't answers to that right now. Ms. Rakestraw added to that saying that there needs to be a body that can answer questions from the community regarding how they can help or simply to get their voices heard. Is there a distinction from the public standpoint between 'all things river' and 'all things parks?' Ms. Adams noted that no one can go into the river without going through a park.

Mr. Guy re-acknowledged Ms. Adams' question about money, stating that it really is the other half of the conversation that we will continue to talk about with the consultant when they return. What the revenue options are do indeed inform governance and how the body organizes itself to correctly leverage that money in a transparent and appropriate way. He handed out a worksheet that was meant for the group to engage in an exercise comparing what it thought was best for the community and workshopping those ideas down to present them to the consultant. What is the answer to what is the Grand Rapids/Kent County/West Michigan way to go about this project and process? How do we look at points of impact and answer questions about value and connectivity? How do we consider the zones of influence that the investments in the project will eventually have? How do we consider all of those things and then attribute roles of things that need to happen to that? This includes but is not limited to planning and design, community engagement, policy, various fundraising types, construction, maintenance, safety and security elements, education, and programming and activation. Mr. Faber added that we need to keep our eye on the water quality element; none of this matter if you can't go into the water. The partner or leader on this might not be evident right now but it's a critical component that needs to be considered. A conversation about CSO separation followed and some best practices were shared including a federal grant that is available for landowners to help run off problems along the watershed, but overall there is still issues about how to clean our water especially with administrative leadership going against these efforts. Mr. Cira-Reyes noted how even though it might be difficult we should consider how this river project could be used positively and that there are stewardship potentials as well as gauging potentials with regard to cleaner water in

the future especially as the river becomes a value add for the community along its entire corridor. Maximizing that component allows it to reach beyond and change behaviors.

Mr. Guy passed out another document that was a memo written by Daniel Tellalian who was the architect behind the River LA revitalization on his observations while he was here. There are some thoughtful stuff in there that we can consider as we move forward: he understands a lot of the pressure points as well as the importance of community to the effort. Additionally, the River LA index will be shared out because it contributes well to the conversation about using the river as a gauge and it sets a high bar about executing on core principles especially considering accountability.

3. Alliance Member Discussion
4. Next Meeting: February 5, 2020, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
5. Public Comment  
None
6. Adjournment  
The meeting adjourned at 1:57 pm.

Minutes taken by:  
Marion Bonneaux  
Data and Information Specialist  
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.