

AGENDA



GR Forward GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

Members:

Ace Marasigan • Alex Caceres • Ana Jose • Attah Obande • Brandy McCallum • Brianna Vasquez de Pereira • Caylie Peet • Farida Islam • Jason McClearen • Jorge Gonzalez • Jono Klooster • Kareem Scales • Kristian Grant • Mark Breon • Omar Cuevas • Scott Stenstrom • Tim Mroz

January 21, 2020

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of November 19, 2019 and December 17, 2019 Meeting Minutes*
3. Introductions
4. 2020 Priorities Discussion
5. Other Business
6. Public Comment
7. Next Meeting – February 18, 2020
8. Adjournment

***Denotes Action Item**



Goal 4 Alliance

November 19, 2019

1. Call to order: Omar Cuevas called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

Members Present: Alex Caceres, Omar Cuevas, Ana Jose, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, Jorge Gonzalez, Jonathan Klooster, Kareem Scales, Scott Stenstrom, and Tim Mroz

Members Absent: Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearn, Attah Obande, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, Farida Islam, and Caylie Peet

Others Present: Alysha Lach White (Little Space Studio), Elizabeth Rosario, Andy Rosario (The Meat Up Gastropub), Gilma DeLaCruz and Edward DeLaCruz (Art Caribbean Fusion Cuisine), Alex Benda and Kayla Benda (Oh, Hello Co.), Christa Ferguson, and Kyama Kitavi and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff)

2. Approval of October 15, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Cuevas, supported by Mr. Mroz, motioned to approve October 15, 2019 Meeting Minutes. None opposed. Motion approved.

3. Retail Grant Proposals

Mr. Gonzales introduced via web conference, Nadia Brigham, co-owner (with her husband Shatawn Brigham) of GRNoir Wine and Jazz Room. She stated this company will leverage two of the most powerful communal essences in the world: wine and jazz, to bring people together for solid fellowship and communion in a powerful way. Ms. Brigham stated there is a growing movement around wine for millennials, woman, and people of color. Wine and Jazz both have the potential to be off-putting and inaccessible and GRNoir exists to cultivate interest and accessibility for both. Jazz can be accessed every night of the week with live acts 2-3 nights per week. Wine will be offered by the ounce, glass, flight or retail bottle and the business will be located at 35 S. Division. Ms. Jose asked how many employees they plan to hire in the first year. Ms. Brigham stated 5, for a total of 7 employees. Mr. Caceres stated in the resumes provided there is no experience specifically in the restaurant industry. Ms. Brigham stated both owners worked in the industry as teens; their team of strategic partners and advisors has over 60 years' experience collectively. Mr. Gonzales asked for her background on wine collecting and asked why they chose a concept focused on jazz and wine. Ms. Brigham stated jazz (it's

culture and history) provides the ability for people of color to express themselves in a powerful way. She stated GR*Noir* has developed a national and international network for knowledge and support to ensure authenticity in their business. Ms. Jose asked how intentional they will be in the procurement of wine from minority owned businesses. Ms. Brigham stated she has already begun work to highlight vineyards owned by women and people of color and will be very intentional to partner with them. Mr. Obande asked how the cuisine offering will differ from other restaurants downtown. Ms. Brigham stated they will have a limited menu to keep costs low; offerings will compliment wine consumption and include culturally relevant small plates.

Gilma DeLaCruz introduced herself and presented Art Caribbean Fusion Cuisine, a restaurant owned by her husband (Edward DeLaCruz) and herself. This new restaurant will be located at 57 Monroe Center and will share Caribbean skills, food, and culture with the community. Ms. DeLaCruz stated she started in the restaurant industry with her mother in the Dominican Republic and graduated from Secchia Institute in 2017. She currently owns a food truck in Grand Rapids, the only option for Caribbean food in Grand Rapids. Mr. DeLaCruz has over 20 years of management experience. Mr. Caceres asked if the food truck serves only Grand Rapids. Ms. DeLaCruz stated the food truck serves GR, Kalamazoo, Ionia, Wayland, and Wyoming. Their most popular item served is their empanadas and all food items are made from scratch, which sets them apart from other food trucks. Mr. Cuevas asked how their brick and mortar projections were calculated. Ms. DeLaCruz stated the calculation was based on food truck sales along with research from Grand Central Market and other area businesses to determine the customer base. Mr. Cuevas stated a \$500 budget for marketing will be used up very quickly. Ms. DeLaCruz stated this budget was based on the fact that this business was already set up and the clientele from the food truck will also support the restaurant (and vice versa). Mr. Gonzales stated this food truck is always very successful; they will also be receiving marketing support from Start Garden. Mr. Obande requested clarification on the location. Ms. DeLaCruz stated the owner of Grand Central Market is retiring, and his daughter just had a baby, so this family owned business was looking to downsize; Art Caribbean Fusion Cuisine will take over the café space of this location with the furnishings and equipment included in the lease. Ms. Jose suggested including a budget for equipment maintenance. Ms. DeLaCruz stated Rockford Construction agreed to maintain all equipment included in the lease. Mr. Caceres stated restaurants on Monroe Center will see a very different clientele than food trucks at a festival; he asked who their target client is and how will they be catered to. Ms. DeLaCruz stated the restaurant will be set up to serve dine in customers, carry out customers, and will offer ala cart items at the counter. People will also be able to experience the culture with music and a welcoming staff regardless if on a 30- or 60-minute lunch break. Mr. Obande asked what their relationship with Rincon is. Ms. DeLaCruz stated Rincon is owned by her mother and number one mentor; some menu items will be the same, but others tweaked to be a bit more modern. Mr. Stenstrom asked if they would still run the food truck. Ms. DeLaCruz stated, yes, generally the food truck is used for special events and catering during the winter. Ms. Jose asked when the restaurant would open. Ms. DeLaCruz stated they would take possession on December 1st, the health department will issue a license within six weeks and Art Caribbean Fusion Cuisine will be ready to open early 2020.

Mr. Alex Benda stated Oh, Hello Co. and Oh, Hello Promo are two companies, owned by Alex and Kayla Benda, that will be moving into 40 Monroe. This location will be set up with a gift shop, a community center and a headquarters for the businesses. Ms. Benda stated Oh, Hello Co. started out exclusively as an online brand and became one of Etsy's top 5% shops in the first year. In 2016, they expanded offerings to promotional items and formed Oh, Hello Promo with a worldwide sales presence. Ms. Bender stated they are excited to now offer a brick & mortar space as early as mid-December (with a formal opening in January) and provide the community with a tangible space to interact (take classes) and shop for Grand Rapids wares. Mr. Bender stated the goal is to create a one stop gift shop for GR items including swag from local breweries and coffee shops, representing all of Grand Rapids; all shop employees will also be a certified tourist ambassador. The backroom space will be the headquarters for branded products and the community space will host classes (2-3 times per week) on business education or sip and paint and provide open meeting space. A laser cutter will also be on hand to make customized items on the spot. Mr. Caceres requested clarification on the business operations. Mr. Bender confirmed all business operations will take place at this location; this retail space on Monroe Center will be an expansion of the already well-established online business. He stated they are also able to leverage relationships with manufacturers to keep the storefront décor highly unique at a very low cost. Mr. Stenstrom asked what store hours and staffing would be. Ms. Bender stated the shop will be open 7 days a week with hours 11 am – 7 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 11 am – 8 pm Friday and Saturday, and Noon – 4 pm Sunday and Monday with 3 employees (1 full time and 2 temporary staff) as well as a full-time therapy dog. Mr. Obande asked about sales numbers and growth over the last 6 years. Mr. Bender stated sales on the Promo side have gone up 100% each year and could break \$1 million in 2019. Planner and stationary sales are annually \$300,000 to \$400,000. Mr. Kitavi added, in discussions with Monroe Center business owners, he has seen great excitement for this business to join the corridor.

Mr. Gonzales introduced Elizabeth and Andy Rosario. Ms. Rosario (an attorney and law firm owner) and Mr. Rosario (proprietor of Maya Mexican Bar and Grill in Wyoming) will co-own The Meat Up Gastropub, a restaurant and bar with Latin influence located in the old J. Gardella's Tavern. Ms. Rosario stated they will be revamping this 3-story bar to create a lounge with a Latin fusion menu including Argentinian cuts of steak and Peruvian tapas. She stated Chef Trimell Hawkins will help create the menu to include vegan meat options; sales projections were very conservatively based on the Wyoming restaurant. She expects the restaurant opening to be at the end of January. Mr. Gonzales asked for clarification on the purchase of the building. Ms. Rosario stated they purchased the restaurant and the building which is the oldest standing storefront in Grand Rapids. Some of the desired façade work will not be allowed due to the building's historic significance, though there will be a rooftop patio and elevator eventually installed. Phase 2 environmental testing found contamination which needs to be addressed and will cost \$25,000 – \$30,000 to install a venting system (required by the state). Mr. Stenstrom stated large restaurants are having issues with staffing and asked if they were planning ahead for high turnover. Ms. Rosario stated that is an industry-wide issue, but they plan to offer benefits to retain talent and maintain a family-oriented crew.

Mr. Kitavi stated the numbers in these proposals may change based on lease agreements but should be nailed down prior to the next DDA Meeting. Also, as a reminder, after approving the grant for Mel Styles we have paid out more than half of our \$200,000 budget. If we fully approve each of these proposals we will run up against our budget for this year. Since this program started, we will have allocated \$260,000 (\$60k last year) for 8 businesses downtown. As we move forward we will need to have further conversation on how to address build out costs and maybe separate restaurant and retail proposals. Mr. Kitavi stated he is comfortable taking any of today's proposals to the DDA though funding amounts may change and opened the conversation to the group. Mr. Cuevas stated multiple proposals have been approved with the understanding the numbers may change and is comfortable with that process. He then asked if we have the option to go over budget and approve all four proposals to their fullest requests. Mr. Gonzales stated he is in support of taking funds from another budget item to support these businesses. Mr. Kitavi stated this will need to be discussed and approved by Mr. Kelly and the board.

Mr. Stenstrom asked if anyone was worried that GRNoir had no direct experience in this industry. Mr. Mroz agreed that was a consideration though they sought heavy support from other organizations. Mr. Klooster and Mr. Gonzales agreed they have the support they need. Mr. Klooster asked if we have established whether or not these businesses would come downtown regardless of our funding. Mr. Kitavi stated most of these would not have come down or might have come later without our support. Mr. Cuevas stated we had considered a scoring mechanism based on need but decided to look at all options as a way to increase retail. We have taken an equity lens and we need a healthy retail.

Mr. Cuevas, supported by Mr. Stenstrom motioned to recommend all four proposals be approved for funding by the DDA. None opposed. Motion passed.

4. Next Meeting- December 17, 2019
5. Public Comment:
None
6. Adjournment:
Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 2:19 pm

Minutes taken by:
Amanda Sloan
Administrative Assistant
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



Goal 4 Alliance

December 17, 2019

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm

Members Present: Alex Caceres, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, Caylie Peet, Jorge Gonzalez, Kareem Scales, Tim Mroz and Attah Obande

Members Absent: Scott Stenstrom, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Ana Jose, Jason McClearen, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, Jonathan Klooster, Farida Islam, and Omar Cuevas

Others Present: Dante Villareal (GR Chamber), Alysha Lach White (Little Space Studio), Haley Stichman (The Dwelling Place), Laura Traxler, and Kyama Kitavi and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff)

2. DID Streetspace Assessment

Mr. Eledge introduced himself as the Operations Manager at Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. and stated as part of his work he has been developing a mechanism to grade the cleanliness of the sidewalks throughout the Downtown Improvement District. The DID Streetspace Assessment project seeks to measure stakeholder perception of the DID's impact on cleaning, beautification, and right of way maintenance. This data will help us identify where we are performing well, where we need to make improvements, and additional opportunities to enhance the downtown streetscape. Mr. Eledge stated we recruited volunteers (DGRI board members, downtown residents, business and property owners) to conduct on-site assessments of key corridors. Volunteers were asked to identify the presence of litter, cigarette butts, graffiti, infrastructure/amenities/greenspace and public right of way conditions.

The first corridor assessed was Ionia Ave from Fulton to Oaks with an average rating between Good and Moderate conditions. The presence of weeds and cigarette butts were the two most prevalent issues within this (and most every) corridor assessment. He presented photographs of some of the highlights that included dead trees, cracks in the sidewalks, graffiti and overgrown weeds. The assessment results along Monroe Center (from Monroe to Division Ave.) showed a similar rating with bulky items (construction debris) being a noticeable issue. Cigarette butts were visible everywhere (despite the presence of collection

urns) but the consensus overall was that the ambassadors were doing a great job taking care of the space. The next corridor assessed was Ottawa Ave (Michigan to Pearl) which noted a lack of amenities and greenspace but kept very clean. There were found to be multiple tripping hazards on the sidewalks due to missing bricks, tree grates, and insufficiently patched cement. On Bridge Street (from Scribner to Seward), volunteers found the area generally clean and well-kept but noted a lack of greenspace. The amenities present are a good start, but more are needed to provide a welcoming feel. The underpass was found to be very unwelcoming and contained a substantial amount of pigeon excrement on the sidewalk. S. Division Ave (from Fulton to Oakes) resulted in the poorest average score, though volunteers noted the overall feel was better than anticipated. The area was abundant in cigarette butts and weeds. Also, many sidewalks and crosswalks were found to be in dire need of repair.

Mr. Eledge presented the overall average scores, noting the total average to be between Good and Moderate. He stated we certainly do need to make improvements, specifically in regard to cigarette collection and weeds. Going forward, Mr. Eledge stated he has shared these observations with the Ambassador team which will examine and redefine priorities to better establish targets. He noted, not all of the issues observed are the duty or responsibility of Block by Block, so he will be providing relevant data to the City as well. Mr. Eledge stated he is pleased to have this baseline data and will continue assessments quarterly.

Mr. Kitavi asked for clarification on the corridors chosen. Mr. Eledge stated these are the most visible to people walking or driving downtown. Mr. Mroz noted a theme through all 5 corridors was left over construction debris and asked how that is permitted. Mr. Eledge stated ambassadors can address these messes once we confirm the job is completed (and the City will address with the contractors), but those incidents should be reported to 3-1-1. Mr. Obande asked for next steps based on this data. Mr. Eledge stated this data helps inform us of the gaps that we see downtown. For example, we have a goal to reach a 10% canopy level and are working with Friends of GR Parks to plant additional trees and care for the trees we have so less need to be replaced. Mr. Mroz suggested DGRI reach out to businesses with this update. Mr. Kitavi agreed, specifically to those on Monroe Center.

3. 2019 Review/2020 Discussion

Mr. Kitavi provided a high-level recap, referring to the FY20 Projects for Goal 4 Alliance handout, of the work accomplished by the Goal 4 Alliance in 2019, to set the discussion for how to improve upon goals in 2020. Last week, the DDA approved funding support for 3 businesses: Oh, Hello Co., GRNoir, and Art Caribbean Fusion. Mr. Kitavi noted he is still coordinating with The Gastropub Meat Up to determine an appropriate support request that falls within our remaining budget. He stated of the \$200,000 Retail Attraction and Incubation Grant program budget this year, so far \$178,385 has been allocated to support 6 new businesses opening downtown. The program has provided a total of \$238,385 for 7 businesses made up of: 4 black owned businesses, 3 Latino owned businesses, and 1 white owned business (out of 16 formal proposals presented). Mr. Kitavi stated the DDA Board has suggested we determine success measurements as we move forward and would like to focus on the

creation of new business downtown, increasing diversity, job creation, and the longevity or sustainability of each business. At this point, as available funds have dwindled, Mr. Kitavi suggested the group take a pause on this program to evaluate and tweak going forward. Perhaps we choose to separate retail business support from food/beverage business or leverage rent versus build out support. He stated new alliance members for 2020 will include some property owners, business owners, and others in the industry of supporting entrepreneurship and would like to include their input on these programs.

Mr. Kitavi stated the Small Business Expo went well this fall and planning will start early January for the next. Collaboration with the Neighborhood Business Alliance and Start Garden should provide increased impact as we plan to capitalize on their signature events.

We had discussed hosting business seminars or trainings as a seminar series, though sponsorship or support for other organizations doing this work (The GR Chamber and Downtown Market) may be more appropriate at this time.

The Monroe Center Business Association has officially been created. We are attending this and other (Heartside Business Association, Monroe North, and Stockbridge) association meetings to support and engage with them. One topic being discussed is the S. Division construction project and how that impacts business. We intend to get more regular engagement by including business owners on this Alliance as we move forward in 2020.

Mr. Kitavi stated we continue to discuss what our role should be in Downtown Business/Retail Marketing as we collaborate with the GR Chamber to develop a strategy. We are currently working with Happy PR to bring attention to the success of our Retail Attraction and Incubation Grant program.

This year, to support research efforts, we created the Retail Vacancy Map and business resource palm card with the intent to provide a welcome package in the near future (with resources and other pertinent information) to new businesses downtown.

Mr. Gonzales stated in the process of developing GR Forward, one goal was to introduce 5 minority owned businesses to downtown in 10 years. In our efforts to attract and retain business downtown, we have already brought 7 in just in 18 months! Our challenge for 2020 will be to hone in on this process. Mr. Scales suggested we discuss how to retain these businesses moving forward, specifically on Monroe Center. Dante Villareal stated the Chamber, in partnership with the City and DGRI, will be hiring a full-time person charged with the attraction and retention of retail downtown. Part of this scope of work will include a studying the opportunities on main corridors, advocating for resources for these businesses, and working with brokers to develop a pipeline of strong retail.

4. Other Business
None

5. Public Comment

Haley Stichman, The Dwelling Place, introduced herself and informed the group that they are facilitating a Heartside Economic Development work group that meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month. The area of concentration is S. Division from Fulton to Wealthy and one event they hosted was a vacant space tour to highlight co-working spaces available and other retail opportunities. Ms. Stichman stated she is looking forward to connecting with others to further support entrepreneurs in her effort to change public perception of this area.

Alysha Lach White echoed Ms. Stickman's sentiments and stated she believes the key to success is having several anchor businesses in the area. As the continue to develop business and community advocates, please pop into a work group to see what we are doing.

6. Next Meeting- January 21, 2020

7. Adjournment

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:58 pm.

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.