

AGENDA



GR Forward GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

Members:

Ace Marasigan • Alex Caceres • Attah Obande • Brandy McCallum • Brianna Vasquez de Pereira • Farida Islam • Jason McClearen • Jessica Ledesma • Jorge Gonzalez • Kara Wood • Kareem Scales • Kristian Grant • Mark Breon • Omar Cuevas • Scott Stenstrom • Tim Mroz •

February 19, 2019

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of December 4, 2018 and January 16, 2019 Meeting Minutes
3. FY2020 Budget Priorities Discussion
4. Discussion
5. Next Steps
6. Next Meeting – March 19, 2019
7. Adjournment



DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

Goal 4 Alliance

December 4, 2018

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 1:37 pm
2. Members Present: Rick Chapla, Jorge Gonzalez, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira and Omar Cuevas

Members Absent: Farida Islam, Catlindt Landrum, Jessica Ledesma, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearen, Scott Stenstrom, Elyse Marie Welcher, Kara Wood, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, Attah Obande, and Guillermo Cisneros

Others Present: Andy Guy, Tim Kelly, Kyama Kitavi, Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff), Alvin Hills IV, and Jamiel Robinson

3. Food Truck Ordinance

Mr. Guy gave an overview of the current Food Truck Ordinance as it was adopted two years ago on a temporary basis. As the pilot comes to an end in January, several recommended changes will be proposed to the City Commission along with the recommendation to make this ordinance permanent. The success of this ordinance can be seen by the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities and the significant boost of business operating hours in the public realm (from hundreds to thousands of hours). All of this while not negatively affecting restaurant business. (In the last two years 37 new restaurants were opened, 20 restaurants changed ownership, and only 10 closed.) Several proposed updates were suggested including the modification of the definition of mobile food business to accommodate push food carts. Another proposed change is to streamline business licensing in the Clerk's Office by moving from a fiscal year licensing to a calendar year licensing as well as provide the option for multi-year licensing. The noise level permitted by a food truck will to be updated to 80 decibels from 70 decibels but with an increase in noise level enforcement. We are in the process of looking for opportunities to run power to areas where food trucks are generally used (in order to help with generator power noise). We would also like to allow for one time use (event)

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permits. Rick Chapla asked if we have seen food drippings (grease) left by food trucks in areas of operation. Mr. Guy stated we require that each truck takes care of its own area; this is largely self-policed by the vendors. The GR Fire Department does participate in inspections for public safety while Mobile GR may ticket for inappropriate parking. Mr. Gonzales asked if there were progress updates to report. Mr. Guy responded we have data and will need some time to analyze but will be able to present that around the first of the year. Mr. Chapla asked if there were any downsides to this business expansion model. Mr. Guy stated we have not seen any. Mr. Chapla stated he is very surprised and excited by this update.

4. Small Business Conference

Kyama Kitavi introduced himself as the Economic Development Manager at DGRI. His focus will be on bringing business associations and economic support organizations together for natural collaboration in support of local business. Mr. Kitavi presented details on a city wide small business expo (conference) designed to organize our business ecosystem in a meaningful way. The proposed event would be an opportunity to engage with entrepreneurs (both recruiting and retaining downtown businesses) by providing educational support and encouraging technical support partnerships. Mr. Hills stated he will be representing The City of Grand Rapids and coordinating with the offices of Diversity & Inclusion, Economic Development and Special Events in seeking support for the success of this event. Mr. Gonzales asked when this conference may take place. Mr. Kitavi stated the expo could potentially take place in the spring or summer of 2019. Mr. Gonzales suggested coordination with the Start Garden 100, perhaps offering free registration for the top 10. Mr. Kitavi asked when the next ESO meeting will be. Mr. Gonzales stated January with the Start Garden Demo Day scheduled for July.

5. Contracting/Purchasing Committee

Mr. Kelly is asking for 2-3 volunteers from this alliance to join a committee that will review policy for the DDA in regards to contracts and purchasing procedures. Currently there is a lack of diversity and inclusion on the committee to determine the process. Mr. Chapla stated his organization is going through this process at The Right Place currently. He will share his draft with Mr. Kelly. Mr. Kelly will email the alliance with this request for volunteers.

6. FY19 Project and Program Review

Mr. Kelly reviewed the priorities that Goal 4 committed to in May for FY19 in order to determine areas of focus for the upcoming calendar year.

The Downtown Incentive Evaluation has been in development for several years. A contractor will be brought on in January or February in coordination with The City's Equitable Economic Development Plan. This process may take more than a year and something we contribute to in FY20.

Mr. Kelly stated our intention to continue with MWBE Support. So far, the Retail Incubation/Support Program has supported Tamales Mary with several other minority

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and women owned business enterprises still under evaluation. We would like to partner with existing providers to proactively advertise this program and increase participation. The small business expo Mr. Kitavi is planning will aid in this effort. Relax and Rosa is a Workforce Program marketed to the downtown workforce we wish to continue. Finally, Recruitment Efforts include marketing materials, in development, intending to broaden our city's national exposure for attracting investment. Mr. Kelly opened the floor for questions and comments regarding this list of priorities and asked if there were other opportunities for growth and development that this group wanted to pursue.

Ms. Vasquez de Pereira stated she would like to see a partnership with Kent County Kids, which works with at-risk children and provides employee development skills to parents. She attended a talent workshop at Amway, which was a great opportunity to highlight these programs and would like to see participation in more of these types of events. Mr. Kelly stated Embassy Suites will be hiring around 300 employees upon opening in March, which presents an opportunity to collaborate with a job fair event. Also, river construction presents long term (5 – 10 years) opportunities for tremendous growth and governance which is being discussed at a DGRI Board level. Mr. Chapla stated these employment undertakings are a big deal; employment challenges in bordering counties are real and bring opportunities to change how we do business. Mr. Kelly agreed there may be opportunities to collaborate with high school workforce preparatory schools (such as the GRPS Ottawa Hills High School Academy of Hospitality & Tourism) and community colleges to address the structural employment challenges that exist. Mr. Gonzalez requested we define at our next meeting who our collaborative partners should be and discuss specific actions that we can engage in.

7. Discussion:

Mr. Kelly stated that in order to increase active participation in this and other alliances, a survey will be sent in the near future via email to members requesting feedback. Jamiel Robinson, with Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses (GRABB), requested financial support to assist with occupying a downtown storefront location at 98 Fulton (former WMCAT space). GRABB supports black owned small businesses in Grand Rapids and would like to pilot programs specifically focused on downtown business growth in conjunction with the GR Forward plan to expand racially and ethnically diverse business owners in downtown. Mr. Robinson stated they have already seen success with offering concierge services and connecting entrepreneurs with opportunities but believe downtown offers increased potential, based on proximity. Mr. Kelly stated we would like to present this official proposal at our next alliance meeting in January and could potentially make a recommendation to the DDA in February.

8. Next Meeting- TBD

9. Public Comment:

None.

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10. Adjournment:

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 2:50pm

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

Goal 4 Alliance

January 16, 2019

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm.
2. Members Present: Omar Cuevas, Jorge Gonzalez, Guillermo Cisneros, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, and Kara Wood.

Members Absent: Farida Islam, Jessica Ledesma, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearn, Scott Stenstrom, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, and Attah Obande.

Others Present: Tim Mroz (The Right Place), Kyama Kitavi and Amanda Sloan (DGRI).

3. Approval of Minutes - December 4, 2018
No approval of minutes based on lack of quorum.
4. Small Business Conference
Kyama Kitavi presented an overview of his proposed small business expo to provide resources for small business development. This conference would focus on businesses in startup phase or ramping up from stage 1 to stage 2 to build momentum for their business either in downtown or in hopes of expanding downtown. The goal is to provide networking across the ecosystem with a focus on small business financing. The main vendors would be small business development organizations and entrepreneurial resource centers. Mr. Cuevas asked if an assessment was done to determine the needs for such an expo. The Hispanic Center holds monthly workshops; the GR Chamber offers events as well. Is this an event you believe is not currently being done or would this be a duplication of efforts? Mr. Kitavi stated this is an event unlike others being offered in that it will bring multiple organizations working toward the same goal together in one venue; business owners will be able to connect with providers from across the city in one place and stay abreast of all support options available.

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Kara Wood stated that previously The Lowe Foundation facilitated an asset mapping exercise that identified gaps for small business resources in Grand Rapids, which at the time was micro-loan funding. The ecosystem for small businesses has changed over the years and it would be helpful to determine what the current needs are.

Mr. Cisneros stated one of his concerns with encouraging members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to venture downtown is the lack of a support system. Can applications be made available in Spanish? Will the city provide and lead efforts to attract black or Latino business owners during an incubation period? Mr. Kitavi stated business owners applying for the Retail Incubation RFP (which is specifically available to strengthen and diversify the mix of Downtown retail offerings) often cannot determine how to apply the grant funds because they can't quite figure out even *where* to do business. Mr. Cisneros stated these businesses need help building a 3 year plan in order to be successful. Ms. Wood suggested a possible resource for that situation would be SCORE. GRABB also has a mentor/counselor program to assist businesses.

Mr. Gonzalez stated he sees this expo as a complimenting event and not duplicating. This will promote downtown in line with Goal 4 of the GR Forward Plan to recruit and retain more minority owned businesses downtown. This may mean showcasing Start Garden, The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Local First, and/or The Right Place. If someone is considering coming to downtown, but hesitant, this conference could provide the resources needed to encourage those next steps.

Mr. Cisneros stated the panelists for this event will be very important. Tim Mroz agreed; topics such as what it is like doing business downtown, how it can be done and what the costs would be should all be discussed (Downtown Business 101). Ms. Wood and Mr. Gonzalez agreed. Ms. Wood asked for an update on the Retail Incubation RFP. Mr. Kitavi stated we funded Tamales Mary's food truck and license registration. We have also received applications from Mosby's Popcorn and a number of other businesses. Ms. Wood stated she would love to include the prospective from these small businesses in this event. Mr. Cuevas asked what the actual content would look like. The group would like to see topics such as downtown real estate, financing, and failure rate statistics. Luna and MeXo restaurant owners would be good representatives to bring to the conference as well. Those businesses have found additional income sources with catering, experience dining, and sales at the Downtown Market in order to maintain a restaurant. Mr. Kitavi stated his plan was to host a half day event and would be open to creating a planning committee to work out more details. Mr. Cuevas offered his assistance in planning and suggested offering a series of 2 hour events that is concentrated on a few specific topics and takes place quarterly. Perhaps all topics will be covered throughout the year but those seeking specific information need not attend all. Mr. Cisneros suggested creating handbooks for business owners on specific topics.

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5. DDA Contracting/Purchasing Committee

Kyama stated the goal of this process was to craft a DGRI policy for evaluating contracts and hiring services to ensure diversity in its vendor and services pool. It is still early in the process but we will continue to see updates.

6. FY2020 Budget Priorities Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated we need to decide by May what our requested budget to the DDA will be for FY20. He would like to see the creation of a Downtown Business Association; currently downtown businesses are not represented in a specific body. As other items come to mind, please bring those to the group for consideration. Mr. Gonzalez stated it is up to us a committee to promote the RFP opportunities to small businesses. As we start to consider budget items for the upcoming year he would like committee members to think about applicants for the RFP process as well.

7. Discussion

You should have received a survey regarding your participation with this alliance. Mr. Kitavi stated he would like to hold meetings more frequently (monthly) in order to gain continued input and feedback on RFP applications and the Small Business Conference.

8. Next Steps

New proposed alliance members will be presented to the DGRI Board of Advisors for approval within the next few meetings.

9. Next Meeting- TBD

10. Adjournment:

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:59 pm.

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.