

# AGENDA

*GR Forward* GOAL 4 ALLIANCE



## Members:

Ace Marasigan • Alex Caceres • Ana Jose • 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

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April 16, 2019

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of March 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes\*
3. WMCAT Incubation Proposal
4. Budget Review
5. Discussion
6. Next Steps
7. Next Meeting – May21, 2019
8. Adjournment

**\*Denotes Action Item**



## Goal 4 Alliance

March 19, 2019

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm
2. Members Present: Attah Obande, Alex Caceres, Jorge Gonzalez, Omar Cuevas, Kareem Scales, Brianna Vasquez de Pereira, Tim Mroz, and Kara Wood

Members Absent: Farida Islam, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, Jason McClearen, Scott Stenstrom, Mark Breon, and Kristian Grant

Others Present: Ana Jose (The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), Kyama Kitavi, Stephanie Wong, Sam Suarez, Annamarie Buller, Mark Miller, Tim Kelly, Kim Van Driel and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff), Jamiel Robinson and Jonathan Jelks (Ambiance GR), Gina VanTimmeren (Gina's Boutique), Jill Devan (Apothecary Off Main), Abbey Fowler (The Paper Studio), Cheryl Powell (Grand Central Market), and Richard App (Nomad Gallery)

3. Approval of February 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes  
*Mr. Cuevas, supported by Ms. Wood, moved to approve February 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes as presented. None opposed. Motion passed.*
4. Ambiance GR – Retail Support Request  
Mr. Robinson introduced himself and Mr. Jelks as entrepreneurs and new business owners of Ambiance GR (a bar/restaurant concept opening soon in the Ledyard Building downtown). They requested support from this group to seek funding from the DDA for this exciting venture. Mr. Cuevas requested more information on this business model and their strategy for how to be successful. Mr. Robinson stated an Executive Summary could be provided. Mr. Jelks stated we have supportive partnerships and a synergistic strategy to execute a concept that is very welcome to downtown right now. Mr. Cuevas stated as a goal alliance we need to have a formalized process to vet out each proposal before it goes to the DDA in order for them to feel confident we are doing our due diligence. Mr. Jelks stated DGRI has the application. Mr. Cuevas apologized for us not having this internal process formalized but in order to provide consistency we need to determine a standardized process. Ms. Wood stated that for the Tamales Mary RFP the alliance board was presented with a one page summary and supplemental packets were provided for review prior to a presentation. Mr. Kitavi stated he will work on a formal application process for

future projects going forward. *Mr. Cuevas moved to support Ambiance GR's RFP application to be presented to the DDA. None opposed. Motion passed.*

5. FY2020 Project and Program Review

As we begin our budgeting process in determining priorities for Goal 4 in FY20, Mr. Kitavi stated he would like to discuss specific data resources and how they might be useful to downtown business owners as well as internal DGRI discussions and decision making. Examples include: a map of retail opportunities (list of current storefront vacancies), a directory of upcoming development projects that have potential retail space, and a historical vacancy database (in which we currently have for 2011 to October of 2018). Mr. Kitavi stated business owners might also find Pedestrian Counters a useful tool for tracking foot traffic in specific areas of downtown. He introduced Stephanie Wong, Project Manager at DGRI to provide more information.

Ms. Wong presented a Sidewalk Activity Report on ArtPrize 2017-2018 as an example of a downtown event. During the 19 day competition, 10 pedestrian counters and several bike counters were placed throughout downtown. Data collected from areas such as Ah-Nab-Awen Park, Blue Bridge, Monroe, and Rosa Parks Circle totaled 665,467 pedestrians in 2017 and just over 709,000 in 2018. Ms. Wong stated the difference year over year was possibly tied to weather or programming in a specific area. Mr. App (Nomad Gallery) requested the relevance of this information. Ms. Wong stated this is just an example of how this resource can be used to capture data. Ms. Jose agreed this information could be a resource for downtown business owners.

Mr. App stated this data is a moot point to area businesses if ArtPrize is no longer going to be held each year. Ms. Devon (Apothecary Off Main) stated she is concerned that the benefits of ArtPrize (where sales during the event bring in enough income for her to cover the cost of her annual lease) will be gone and she may have to leave downtown. She had no idea there was a Retail RFP that might offer support for her business and is excited to explore this option because she wants to stay. Mr. App stated one of the reasons he is present at this meeting is to address his concerns about the state of retail business in downtown Grand Rapids. He was surprised to discover Downtown businesses do not have a business association. Ms. VanTimmeren stated it is discouraging to hear that the DDA is putting money into more restaurants and bars when there is no retail downtown. Mr. App stated the businesses that are already downtown need to be enticed to stay before we introduce new opportunities. There is a lot of good business that happens downtown and when you walk down Monroe Center and fail to see bustling retail, it reflects poorly on the City. He stated the City doesn't think about downtown businesses and we want to work with you; our success is determined by the success of Grand Rapids. Mr. Devon stated advertising in Solace Magazine would be a powerful tool that she can't afford. She stated we all work with Experience GR and we know when the conventions are coming in. We are doing all the extra things and we don't know why the counts are down but they are for all of us.

Mr. Kitavi stated he would like DGRI to be a catalyst for these discussions. We are in the process of determining what role we can play in collecting data and providing to business owners for support. Mr. Cuevas agreed and thanked the business owners for sharing. Mr. Gonzalez stated there are a number of entrepreneurial support organizations present today that hear your concerns. Mr. App stated we need more people talking about businesses in order for them to stay downtown. Mr. Jelks stated he would like to see an organization that's responsibility it is to directly represent downtown businesses. Mr. Kelly stated that DGRI's Board of Advisors is

meeting on Friday and one of the priorities for the board is downtown retail. The first step is pulling together all the stakeholders to understand the challenges and then determine who makes the most sense to address each of these concerns. DGRI does want to play a role in determining what is most effective.

Mr. Kitavi stated it was not a coincidence that the businesses present today are core downtown business owners. Other neighborhood businesses have a business association or a chamber representing them which might be a better space for this conversation. Mr. Obande stated we need to figure this out if we are trying to be inviting to new businesses. Mr. Cuevas stated we should coordinate information on events for businesses downtown to provide actionable data. Ms. Jose stated \$700,000 is a lot of people to lose; we need to consider what other events or projects we can bring to Grand Rapids to replace ArtPrize attendance. Ms. Wood stated she appreciates what is happening on the residential front but believes we could put more into the budget for business. Ms. Wood thanked the business owners present for their input and encouraged them to continue to engage. Mr. Kitavi stated we are looking at all these priorities and taking recommendations into consideration moving forward. Mr. Gonzales stated this topic warrants time on the agenda at DGRI BOA for Friday. Mr. Kelly agreed.

6. Discussion

7. Next Meeting- April 16, 2019

8. Public Comment

9. Adjournment

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:58pm

Minutes taken by:

Amanda Sloan

Administrative Assistant

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.



## **West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology (WMCAT)**

**Proposed use of 98 E. Fulton St. Suite 202, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 in partnership with DGRI**

### **OVERVIEW**

The West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology (WMCAT) moved to a new location in August 2018 and its former location, 98 East Fulton St. Suite 202 in downtown Grand Rapids, is under lease until September 30, 2019. WMCAT is looking to partner with DGRI in a few different capacities in order to make use of the space during the remainder of the lease (between May 1, 2019 - September 30, 2019) by creating rentable pop-up shops and gallery space for local artists and creative businesses to sell their work. The space would also offer a rentable common area for small events and performances that would help drive foot traffic to the shops.

### **PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY**

The partnership between DGRI and WMCAT would prove to be mutually beneficial to both organizations' goals. In the GR Forward Plan; incubation was highlighted as a strategy to introduce entrepreneurs to doing business Downtown. The affordability of retail space was noted as a significant barrier as well as the lack of flexible facilities for companies that develop products. This is an opportunity to both activate an underutilized space as well as promote available vacant retail spaces and the resources available to support their transition such as the live/work spaces along S. Division and DGRI grant programs.

In addition to driving traffic downtown this will encourage more hyper-local retail options for visitors. The project would support WMCAT's focus on providing equitable access to opportunity within West Michigan by offering local artists and creative businesses a place to showcase and sell their work; highlighting some of WMCAT's social enterprise programming. The project would also support WMCAT as they fulfill their lease of the second-floor space. After initial conversations, joint marketing and communications efforts could also be made to create interest and buzz prior to opening and help drive foot traffic for the full duration of the project.

### **THE SPACE**

The floorplan of the former WMCAT space includes modern, bright and airy classrooms that would be revamped to house individual or combined retail spaces for artists and creative businesses in booth-like settings. The shops would be open for limited public hours during each week (see more below). The small event space located in the center of the floorplan would allow for small performances/events and increased foot traffic for the pop-up shops. The project would end by mid-September in order to give WMCAT time to move out of the space prior to the end of the lease.

## **ARTISTS/CREATIVE BUSINESSES**

Artists and creative businesses would contract a booth (or part of a booth) for either the whole length of time or a smaller period of time. A minimum commitment would be expected. Cost to each artist or business owner would be feasible and would help cover administration/management costs. WMCAT is researching fair costs for the industry and comparable pop-up shop projects. One-time or recurring events in the common area would be scheduled for open hours or possibly be held as private events, depending on management availability.

## **CURRENT COMMUNITY INTEREST**

WMCAT comes with a small group of local artists already interested in investing in their own pop-up shop during this time period and are looking at pricing ideas for use of the space. WMCAT also has interest from the Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses (GRABB) to engage small black-owned businesses, and the Urban Core Collective (UCC) to help promote the idea. See below for further ideas regarding partnerships and possible paying artists, creative business owners and entertainers.

## **MANAGEMENT**

An onsite manager would help facilitate artists, rentals, customers and be available in-person, online and via phone. WMCAT would identify this person and the cost associated.

## **MEASURING SUCCESS**

WMCAT proposes measuring success through:

- Overall traffic in the space
- Number of rentals and events in common area
- Number of artists/creative businesses engaged in pop-up shops
- Number of partners within the community engaged in the project
- Tracking diversity of:
  - Art and creative businesses (black-owned businesses, student, LGBTQ+, etc.)
  - Events (Comedy, music, cultural, literary, etc.)
  - Age, Race and Gender (Attendees, artists, event performers, partners)
  - Event attendance
  - Pop-up shop traffic
- Customer and attendee feedback regarding experience in the space

Information will be gathered through on-site and email surveys, and monitoring traffic within the space.

## **TIMELINE**

May 1, 2019 - September 15, 2019

### **Pop-Up Shop Hours of Operation:**

Thursday	4:00pm - 9:30pm
Friday	4:00pm - 10:30pm
Saturday	10:00am - 10:30pm (*if no evening event, shops close at 6:00pm)

## **NEXT STEPS**

WMCAT and DGRI to define expectations for a possible partnership. Consider what each organization would need in order to move forward.

## **IDEAS FOR PARTNERS/ARTISTS/EVENTS**

DJ's  
Film series  
Fashion/Kendall - partner  
Local First - partner  
GRABB  
Graped Out  
Trans Brunch  
Heartside Gallery and Studio partnership or pop-up shop  
Pride Center  
Treetops Collective  
Cultural dinner event  
Emilie Ecklund  
Derrick Hollowell  
UCC  
WMCAT student art

# GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

## Create a True Downtown Neighborhood that is Home to a Diverse Population

### FY20 Projects for Goal 4 Alliance

This is a list of projects and initiatives prioritized for the budget items for Fiscal Year 2020 which runs from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. The brief descriptions are not meant to be all encompassing but rather to serve as a high level overview of the particular project.

#### Retail Attraction and Incubation RFP (\$250,000)

Funds available to attract underserved and unavailable retail options Downtown. The overarching goal is to build a unique retail market and experience that expands opportunities for all as well as attracting and serving an increasing diverse population. This is done through gap support for individual businesses as well as supporting space activation activities such as pop up shops and incubations spaces geared towards retailers interested in doing business Downtown.

#### Business Resource Fair/Expo (\$15,000)

Half day event featuring as many small business resource providers; from technical assistance providers and alternative financing. A place where those we are looking to have those looking to do business downtown are able to begin to explore more in-depth resource options. This event will also be used as promotion for DGRI business programs and events

#### Doing Business Downtown Seminar Series (\$10,000)

A more focused series of panel's, talks and discussions on what it takes to do business downtown and some of the unique challenges that downtown businesses face such as dealing with social service needs or capitalizing on or managing downtown events. Starting off this will be quarterly with additional topics being more intentional conversations of general business resources such as contracting with DGRI or the City and or marketing strategies.

- This would cover refreshments for attendees and possible compensation for panelists or speakers.

#### Downtown Business Association Support (10,000)

This funding will be used explicitly to support the Business Association's organizational support. What this means depends on the association but will be for events, marketing and work that the Business Associations are doing themselves.

<b>Downtown Business/Retail Marketing (\$150,000 - \$200,000)</b>
Developing a branding/marketing strategy for downtown retail. A study on what is Brand Rapids would help inform gaps and where money would best be utilized (~100K?). Suggested publications that we regularly advertise in highlighting shopping districts in downtown (~\$20K?).

<b>Research (\$100,000)</b>
A study of current retail conditions by looking at vacancy rates/locations and leakage/gap analysis in order to set a current state base line within the context of local regional and national conditions. Internal capacity to maintain the relevancy and accuracy of the data would then be used to measure the impact of DGRI efforts and programs. The on going tracking of trends will include a map/listing of retail opportunities, maintaining a directory of downtown retailers and relevant statistics that impact general business decisions.