

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 •

March 19, 2019

3:00p – 4:00p

29 Pearl Street, NW Suite #1

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of February 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes*
3. Ambiance GR – Retail Support Request*
4. FY2020 Budget Priorities Discussion
 - Pedestrian Counters Presentation – Stephanie Wong
 - Downtown Business Support
5. Next Steps
6. Next Meeting – April 19, 2019
7. Adjournment

***Denotes Action Item**



Goal 4 Alliance

February 19, 2019

1. Call to order: Jorge Gonzales called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm.
2. Members Present: Alex Caceres, Jorge Gonzalez, Scott Stenstrom, Ace Marasigan, Brandy McCallum, and Brianna Vasquez de Pereira.

Members Absent: Farida Islam, Jessica Ledesma, Jason McClearen, Mark Breon, Kristian Grant, Attah Obande, Tim Mroz and Kara Wood.

Others Present: Donte Villarreal for Omar Cuevas, Kyama Kitavi, Mark Miller, and Amanda Sloan (DGRI Staff).

3. Approval of Minutes - December 4, 2018 and January 16, 2019
Ace Marasigan, supported by Scott Stenstrom, motioned to approve minutes. None opposed. Motion passed.
4. FY2020 Budget Priorities Discussion
Kyama Kitavi provided a list of projects that he is currently working on in order to confirm Goal 4 Alliance budget priorities for FY20: The Business Resource Expo, Downtown Seminar Series, support of Downtown Business Associations, streamlining the process and promotion of Retail RFP (and other economic development programs), and developing a guide for small business ecosystem navigation. Goal 4 Alliance has a current budget of \$60,000 to support WMBE (retail incubation) and another \$150,000 of general funds to be allocated for FY20. He stated this MWBE Support is still a pilot program and likely the \$60,000 amount will grow in future budgets. Mr. Kitavi asked the group if these projects were on point and if there were other actionable items that should be considered.

Mr. Marasigan stated he would like to foster support of the Monroe Center Business Association.

Ms. Vasquez de Pereira would like to see a retail activities map to provide a visual presentation of business opportunities throughout downtown. Ideally this would be printed in multiple languages and provide a connection with social services.

Mr. Gonzalez stated there were not many RFP submissions last year. He emphasized the need to promote and push awareness of this opportunity for minority and women business owners. He suggested the RFP be translated into Spanish and promoted on Spanish radio.

Donte Villarreal suggested we offer incubation funds to services (not just retail) based businesses. We might also consider creating space for pop up shops and temporary retail options. Ms. McCallum suggested we review what businesses are doing downtown to determine how we can provide assistance. Mr. Stenstrom agreed and asked how we can support businesses that are already downtown to be more successful. It would be great to know what is working and what isn't working for downtown business. Mr. Gonzalez stated parking downtown is always a complaint whether that is a real or just a perceived issue. There is also a density issue for businesses as overhead is much greater and there is simply not enough vibrancy downtown. Mr. Kitavi stated we do have opportunity and by keeping foot traffic downtown we may see a change in the density conversation. Mr. Gonzalez agreed. Monroe Live, for instance, brings many Latinos together downtown but after the event everyone leaves. If people were aware of venues in the area that were open the vibrancy would continue to spread.

Ms. McCallum stated another important aspect to vibrancy is public transportation. The more people that use it, the more vibrant downtown can be. Most people do not realize how easy and cheap it is to get from one end of downtown to the other. Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Marasigan agreed. It is important to collaborate with other organizations and continue to promote the DASH.

Mr. Caceres stated the business ecosystem is a huge priority. He asked if there is a central institution or individual that can explain all the moving pieces to a new business owner. Mr. Gonzales stated there was a document on Start Garden's website to assist but it is now obsolete. That tool also doesn't cover the entire ecosystem. Mr. Kitavi stated this is one of his priorities. The small business resource fair would be a starting conversation about doing business in Grand Rapids and provide a comprehensive list of entrepreneurial resources. Mr. Caceres stated small business owners are simply trying to understand how to do business. Mr. Gonzalez stated different organizations are focused on assisting businesses at different stages of development (ideation, incubation or expansion) or are industry specific. It would be great to have one entity to assist all business owners in any stage of business. Mr. Marasigan agreed. Ideally we would have one listing of every resource available and someone to help navigate a business through that.

Ms. McCallum asked if the Top 10 Start Garden businesses should be a focus for us to support. Mr. Gonzalez stated the question “how can we help bring you downtown?” is being asked to all of the top 100 ideas. This year, especially, Start Garden is being intentional about encouraging businesses to open space downtown and addressing the hurdles that may be present. Mr. Gonzalez stated the small business resource fair being held in the fall will be perfect timing to capture the Demo Day winners from Start Garden in August.

5. Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated the DDA contracting and purchasing best practices discussion is still ongoing. DGRI has put together a focus group to build a policy on purchasing for the DDA in order to become intentional in utilizing diverse vendors and contractors.

6. Next Steps

7. Next Meeting- March 19, 2019

8. Adjournment:

Jorge Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:57 pm.

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