

Virtual Meeting Access

Hello,

As many of you know, the Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is starting to make its way into West Michigan, and our hearts go out to all who have been affected by this outbreak. 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 the upcoming Alliance meetings. Teams has many exciting features including screen sharing, recording, live captions, file sharing, and more. Below are instructions on how to access the upcoming virtual Alliance meeting.



MICROSOFT TEAMS

1. It is recommended to download the App -
 - a. [Apple Devices](#)
 - b. [Android Devices](#)
 - 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 Team's 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. Thank you for your understanding and together we will get through.

Best,
Mandy



Mandy McDaniel
Administrative Assistant
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

29 Pearl NW, Suite 1
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
P: 616 . 719 . 4610

AGENDA



GR Forward GOAL 4 ALLIANCE

Members:

AJ Hills • Alice Jasper • Alex Caseras • Alysha Lach-White • Attah Obande • Brandy McCallum • Brent Case • Brianna Vasquez de Perira • Caleb Hollier • Caylie Peet • Heather Ibahim • Ingrid Miller • John Hendershot • Jono Klooster • Jorge Gonzalez • Kareem Scales • Omar Cuevas • Rick Muschiana • Ryan Bolhuis • Scott Stenstrom • Trevor Corlett • Tyler Peterson

March 17, 2020

3:00p – 4:00p

[Virtual Meeting - Click Here](#)

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of February 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes*
3. Retail Retention and Attraction Specialist (Rich App)
4. Data Presentation (Marion Bonneaux)
5. Downtown Business Association Roundtable Discussion
6. ESO Updates
7. Public Comment
8. Next Meeting – April 21, 2020
9. Adjournment

***Denotes Action Item**



Goal 4 Alliance

February 18, 2020

1. Call to order: Mr. Omar Cuevas called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm

Members Present: Alex Caceres, Ana Jose, Attah Obande, Caylie Peet, Kareem Scales, Omar Cuevas, Scott Stenstrom, and Johnathan Klooster

Members Absent: Ace Marasigan, Brianna Vazquez de Pereira, Brandy McCallum, Farida Islam, Jason McClearen, Jorge Gonzalez, Kara Wood, Kristian Grant, and Tim Mroz

Others Present: Alice Jasper (Local First), Alysha Lach White (Little Space Studio), Hailey Stichman (Dwelling Place), Heather Ibrahim (Dwelling Place), Danielle Williams (Amplify GR), John Hendershot, Tyler Peterson (Opportunity Resource Fund), Ingrid Miller (Uptown CIA), Kyama Kitavi (DGRI), Marion Bonneaux (DGRI), and Mandy McDaniel (DGRI)

2. Approval of Minutes

Johnathan Hendershot, supported by Ana Jose, motioned to approve January 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes. None opposed. Motion approved.

3. Retail Grant Discussion

Mr. Kitavi stated today's discussion is regarding the small business program through DGRI and the priorities that were set for the remainder of this year. Starting next month, we will begin the budget conversation for fiscal year 21. Six programs were created in 2018, with the Retail Grant Program being the most significant. Since this program started, 8 different business have been established Downtown and received \$298k in support. Of those 8 businesses, 4 are African American owned, 3 are Latino owned, and 1 is White/Caucasian owned. Moving forward, we would like to better define the program, how it has been effective, and discuss budget changes. Mr. Kitavi referred to the original Request for Proposal, included in the agenda packet, stating when initially started it was meant to be broad. It included incubation programs, buildout, and other support options. Over time, we restricted the program to pay half of the rent under a lease for 18 months. As we review the

retail program, the number of vendors that are pure retail is little compared to those that are food and beverage businesses. Today, the goal is to establish a clear definition of what retail is regarding this incentive and what impacts there would be of narrowing this definition.

Mr. Obande stated that we must be realistic on what Downtown will bear right now. We are heavy on food and beverage businesses, but the reality is there is a very specific retail market that will survive without a constant source of grant funding. Until more anchor retailers are downtown, it is pointless to focus only on retail businesses for this grant program.

Others provided comments and suggestions regarding the retention of businesses Downtown. It was recommended to check-in regularly with the current businesses/grant receivers for feedback. Mr. Cuevas stated Richard App is working with several different entities conveying a market study to help identify opportunities Downtown and help attract anchor businesses. This market analysis should be completed within 1 year. It was suggested by working with local businesses, it would be an opportunity to strengthen relationships by focusing on the business needs. This information would also be helpful to future businesses in the area by providing statistics and data of what has helped other businesses thrive.

Mr. Kitavi stated businesses funded by the grant must give a report 6-12 months within occupancy, but that timeframe could be changed to more of a formal process. He asked board members how they felt about narrowing and defining retail? A more targeted approach would focus on key commercial corridors (referring to the Targeted Commercial Corridor Map); these are the areas of focus to create more business and generate foot traffic. Mr. Kitavi asked do we narrow the program based on what we are funding or based on the geographic location?

Ms. Lach stated the dynamic of what we are looking for could change this time next year. It may be a good idea to be specific to who we market to and how we communicate with those business owners. We should encourage people to apply but mention there is emphasis on retail.

Mr. Kitavi stated the program is currently on a first come, first serve basis and the current proposal process takes about 2 months for approval. Instead of reviewing proposals as they are received, would it be beneficial to review them on a quarterly basis? As it stands right now, if someone applies and falls within our overall footprint, we can fund it. Luckily, everyone who has applied are located within the corridor.

Mr. Hendershot suggested to help focus on one area opposed to businesses coming to us with their proposed locations, we list the vacant storefronts that are available through the

program. Many agreed and liked the idea of focusing on the vacant locations rather than the type of business for this program.

Ms. Lach stated as someone who has previously entertained the initial drafts of this proposal, she feels like what would have supported me better is instead of restrictions there were more of a specific language around the categories of businesses. We could also look for nonprofits that function as social enterprises that work well as retail. There might be specific ways to help each group within the proposal process. Also, she agree with putting emphasis on vacant storefronts rather than restricting the proposal. She would have benefited greatly if the dynamics of the area that she was trying to start a business in was better known

Mr. Kitavi stated he will continue moving forward with the program but re-evaluate the marketing piece. Something we will have to touch base on later is the incubation piece.

4. Public Comment

None

5. Other Business

Mr. Kitavi stated 6 volunteers have signed up for the business expo. If anyone is interested in helping with the small business expo planning, contact Mr. Kitavi.

Mr. Gonzalez commented that new alliance members should read GR Forward, and Mr. Kitavi suggested that new member orientation would be a good refresher for everyone.

6. ESO Updates

Ms. Ibrahim, from the Dwelling Place, stated they are experiencing a lot vacancy on Division Avenue and are focusing on marketing the spaces that are available. Ms. Jasper, from Good for Michigan, stated she is working on the Good for Michigan Awards on May 7th at the Listening room. Ms. Lach White, CEO of Little Space Studio, as of yesterday her co-working space is available. South Division has a lot of vacancies, and as an anchor business we are super passionate about the community and open to talk about the neighborhood at any time. Ms. Williams from Amplify GR has 35 acres of commercial space that is available now and within the next year for anyone looking to relocate to the southeast side. Mr. Scales, with New York Life, stated March 14th kicks off their financial Literacy series workshops for entrepreneurs and 1st time home buyers.

7. Next Meeting – March 17, 2020 at 3 pm

8. Mr. Cuevas Gonzalez adjourned the meeting at 3:59 pm

Minutes taken by:
Mandy McDaniel
Data and Information Specialist
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Downtown Business Association Roundtable Notes

Goal 4 has been reconstituted especially considering new board members, and the retail grant program needs to be more effective and targeted moving forward. DGRI doesn't really control all of the conversations revolving around retail landscape downtown but it does contribute to all of them and likes to step in early to find the collaborators that can be involved. This suggests that the business associations should be involved in those conversations as well.

With regard to a business directory and mapping those businesses, the DGRI website exists but is in need of an update. Some organizations noted that they would be interested in linking to the DGRI website since they may not have the capacity to do so on their own website. We might as well use a tool that is already in place.

We should be more intentional with regard to our marketing efforts surrounding the retail corridors downtown. Uptown does a concierge tour annually - perhaps downtown should as well. It would be beneficial to the retail corridors themselves but also to the hotels since we would likely provide them information on the corridors that would keep their narrative consistent across downtown hotels. We would also finally be involved in that narrative and be able to push it in the direction we want. This conversation includes: considering print pieces, who should be at the meetings (just head concierges), how often they occur, and what conversations with hotel leadership look like.

Another potential event that downtown business associations could host is an open house. HBA is happy to help organize tour locations and suggest having a theme (for e.g. women-owned businesses) as this historically has been a successful element. Additionally, a business association and neighborhood association mixer could be a great way to combine forces with other entities in downtown.

There was an open invitation to the Heartside annual meeting on May 28th from 11:30-1.

Concerning the decimation of information, there was a conversation around possibly creating a newsletter (similar to the DNN) especially concerning road closures, upcoming infrastructure projects, new businesses. People have the necessary contacts to extract that vital information it's all about sharing it so that everyone is able to benefit.

Lastly, we should invite someone from the Hotel District (maybe Ashley?) and Richard App to these meetings as they have stakes in these conversations as well as resources and valuable ideas.