Downtown Grand Rapids 2024: Year in Review



Introduction | *Looking back on 2024*

Each month throughout the year, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) collects critical data and reports it to the community providing context on Downtown's growth and evolution. This regular reporting focuses on indicators that provide a holistic picture of the economic and experiential health of Downtown Grand Rapids. Metrics include office occupancy, retail activity, housing development, Downtown employment, residential population and visitation levels, among other vital statistics.

Industry standard tools such as CoStar Analytics and Placer.ai are utilized to create as accurate a representation of the on-the-ground conditions as possible. These reports are not intended to drive any specific narrative about the success or failures of any one initiative or investment, rather they are presented transparently to the community in order to build a factual foundation upon which critical conversations can be based.

The following year-in-review aims to provide insight into the higher level trends and direction of Downtown Grand Rapids. As the economic and employment epicenter of West Michigan, Downtown Grand Rapids is critical to the region's success. Economic growth and development play an important role in this success, as well as the overall "experience" of the place. The collection of vital statistics in this report seeks to quantify both areas (economic and experiential) to the extent possible so that DGRI, the City of Grand Rapids and myriad other organizations and individuals can work together to build and nurture a Downtown neighborhood that is vibrant, unique, growing and welcoming.

The data featured in this report are neither exhaustive nor perfect. At DGRI, we're always aspiring to deepen our understanding of the impacts of our work - good or bad. To that end, we are always open to ideas for improvement, new data sets to examine, new trends to focus on and feedback of all kinds. Please feel free to reach out or come by for a chat – we're always up for nerding out on city building...

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Ice skating at Rosa Parks Circle ice rink.

Office | *Office leasing activity in 2024*

Leases 2024	Sq Ft Leased	Type
161 Ottawa Ave NW	500	New Lease
161 Ottawa Ave NW	5,000	New Lease
99 Monroe Ave NW	7,826	New Lease
45 Ottawa Ave SW	9,986	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	385	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	1,546	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	293	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	276	New Lease
408 Broadway Ave NW	750	New Lease
100 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW	4,916	New Lease
146 Monroe Center St NW	428	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	794	New Lease
200 Monroe Ave NW	2,500	New Lease
161 Ottawa Ave NW	2,036	Renewal
13-17 Division Ave S	1,650	New Lease
146 Monroe Center St NW	940	New Lease
120 Ionia Ave SW	746	New Lease
25 Ottawa Ave SW	14,858	New Lease
99 Monroe Ave NW	17,159	Renewal
517-525 Ottawa Ave NW	5,254	New Lease
125 Ottawa Ave NW	799	New Lease
29 Pearl St NW	500	New Lease
45 Ottawa Ave SW	7,510	New Lease
77 Monroe Center St NW	3,409	New Lease
146 Monroe Center St NW	1,516	New Lease
29 Pearl St NW	900	New Lease
80 Ottawa Ave NW	354	New Lease
408 Broadway Ave NW	4,019	New Lease
333 Bridge St NW	672	New Lease
1140 Monroe Ave NW	6,280	New Lease
40 Pearl St NW	1,775	New Lease
333 Bridge St NW	247	New Lease
171 Monroe Ave NW	8,231	New Lease
220 Lyon St NW	500	New Lease
1140 Monroe Ave NW	1,696	New Lease
415 Bridge St NW	1,335	New Lease
19 La Grave Ave SE	1,000	New Lease
100 Michigan St NE	2,000	New Lease
435 La Grave Ave SE	1,100	New Lease
109 Michigan St NW	35,265	New Lease
146 Monroe Center St NW	2,370	New Lease
330 Ionia Ave NW	1,979	New Lease
161 Ottawa Ave NW	593	New Lease
220 Lyon St NW	2,893	New Lease
220 Lyon St NW	1,632	New Lease
440 Cesar E Chavez Ave SW	12,425	Renewal
40-50 Monroe Center St NW	4,195	New Lease
60 Monroe Center St NW	6,325	New Lease
632 Fulton St W	2,500	New Lease
15 Ionia Ave SW	1,688	New Lease

Company headquarters relocating or expanding to Downtown has clear benefits such as overarching economic growth, increased local tax revenue, job creation and increased real estate development. Equally important are the cultural effects that come from not only a growing workforce but specifically one that calls Downtown Grand Rapids home. Employees can help dictate the infrastructure needs of the urban core, reflected in demands on parking and transporation, as well dining, retail and service needs and basic streetscape amenities. All of these differ from the needs of visitors. Beyond vibrancy, business investment in Downtown strengthens the local identity of Downtown as the business and employment hub of West Michigan and encourages complementary growth in surrounding urban zones and neighborhoods.

*In 2024, **203,692 sq ft** of office were leased with an average of **11.5 months** on the market.*

10.2%
vacancy in 2024
compared to 14.1%
national average

$21.64
per sq ft rent in 2024
compared to $36.00/sq ft
national average rent

2.4
average term in years



MSU Doug Meijer Innovation Building's patio hosts a networking event.

Source: CoStar Analytics. Office leasing activity list is non-exhaustive.

Employee Activity | *Connecting the workforce to the Downtown ecosystem*

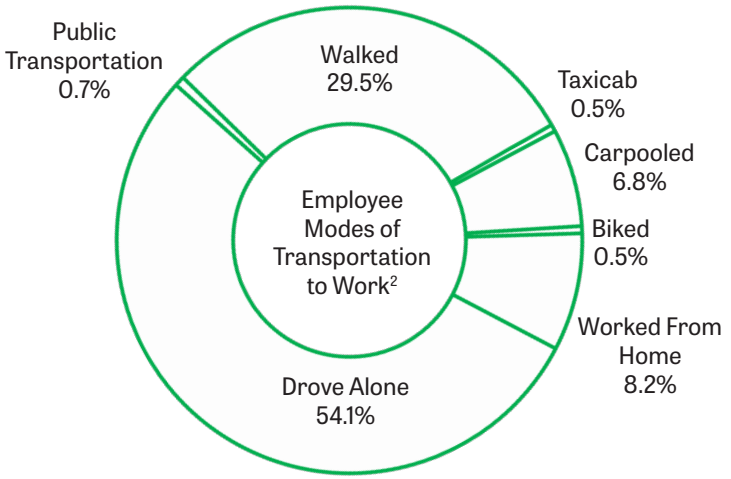
A healthy and vibrant population of Downtown employees is an essential part of the urban ecosystem and they are one of the largest drivers of daytime activity and local spending. Curated public spaces, safe and clean streets and a strong mix of food, beverage, retail and entertainment options all contribute to their experience, and in turn, their presence helps fuel the energy and economy of the area.

Demographics for employees working within a 0.5-mile radius of Pearl St & Monroe Ave:

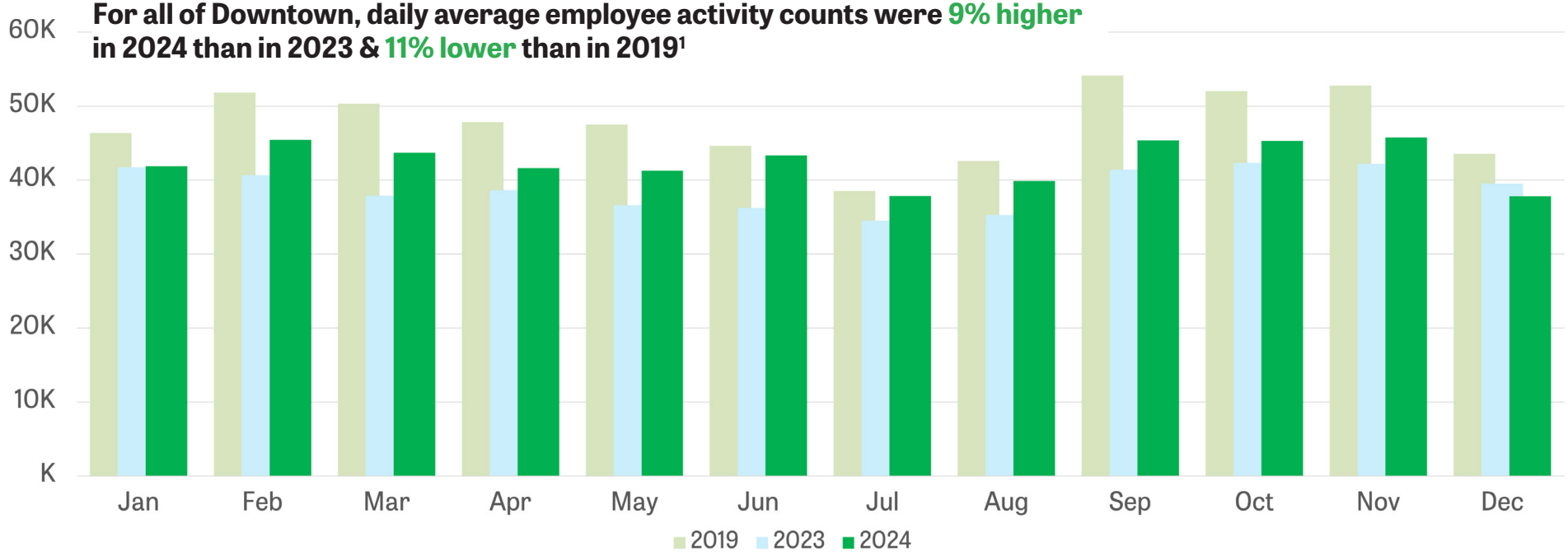
White	*74.9%*
Black	*4.1%*
Asian	*6.3%*
Hispanic or Latino	*3.7%*
Two or More Races	*5.7%*
Other	*5.4%*

81% non-family households
1.35 average persons per household
Average household income: $99,580.44

Within a 0.5-mile radius of Pearl St & Monroe Ave, a majority (54.1%) of employees drove alone to work.



For all of Downtown, daily average employee activity counts were 9% higher in 2024 than in 2023 & 11% lower than in 2019[1]



1 Source: Placer.ai
2 Source: 2023 Census (ACS) via Placer.ai

Housing | *Reaching for critical mass*

Increasing housing options, along with increased density, within the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) area is vital for the broader health of the city for several reasons; providing housing options at all pricepoints is an important component of this calculated growth. Having a range of housing option price points fosters an economically diverse resident population, which in turn creates a strong business community that adjusts to the spectrum of backgrounds that it is serving. This diversity fosters a resilient and equitable community and helps attract and retain a wide range of talent. This reduces economic segregation, e.g. forcing lower income families away from Downtown and the amenities it offers, such as access to the river, centralized access to education and culture and even logistical elements such as reduced commute times. Critically, building housing at all price points addresses the housing shortage[1] by lowering competition for mid-tier units, which allows those units to be vacated for lower-income residents and also slows rent inflation across the market. This overarching shift in supply helps prevent displacement or overcrowding. Higher-end developments also generate property tax revenues, which get filtered back into the system to help support funding for affordable housing.

As property values rise in the core, property owners often renovate their buildings to align with the evolving landscape, while developers seek new opportunities in adjacent areas. The expansion of housing attracts complementary businesses, driven by the influx of workers and residents associated with new developments. Additionally, public infrastructure, such as transportation, roads, utilities and amenities benefit from increased usage, as well as the data gathered on residents' needs, enhancing the attractiveness and relevance of both the core and its surrounding neighborhoods for further development. Tax incentives or subsidies provided for core development can also free up resources, enabling developers to invest in nearby areas. Finally, growing the residential population in Downtown solidifies the area's position as a cultural hub, creating a spillover effect that positively impacts neighboring districts.



Studio Park Tower construction.

1 Read more about Grand Rapids' housing shortage from local experts at Housing Next: www.housingnext.org

Housing | *What is available Downtown?*

5,212 housing units Downtown

1,036 LIHTC[1] units available Downtown

70% estimated average composite AMI%

How to read this chart: This is a list of all of the multi-unit housing developments in the DDA. Alongside that are the total number of units per project, the total number of LIHTC units (if applicable) and the total number of condos (if applicable). Estimated average Area Median Income (AMI) % is modeled based on point-in-time rental data collection.[2]

Housing Project/Development	Total Units	LIHTC Units	Estimated AMI%
Chaffee Apartments	*8 units*	*8 units*	*Not Available*
The Lenox Apartments	*14 units*	*14 units*	*Not Available*
Goodrich Apartments	*18 units*	*14 units*	*Not Available*
Verne Barry Place	*116 units*	*116 units*	*30%*
Ferguson Apartments	*119 units*	*101 units*	*30%*
101 S. Division Lofts	*20 units*	*20 units*	*30%*
Calumet Flats	*16 units*	*16 units*	*30%*
Oroiquis Apartments	*27 units*	*27 units*	*30%*
Commerce Courtyard Apartments	*67 units*	*67 units*	*30%*
Metropolitan Park Apartments	*24 units*	*24 units*	*40%*
Klingman Lofts	*83 units*	*83 units*	*42%*
Weston Apartments	*15 units*	*15 units*	*44%*
Serrano Lofts	*190 units*	*190 units*	*45%*
Grand View Place	*68 units*	*68 units*	*45%*
Division Park Avenue Apartments	*30 units*	*30 units*	*50%*
Herkimer Apartments	*122 units*	*55 units*	*60%*
The Lofts	*59 units*	*55 units*	*68%*
The Globe Apartments	*110 units*	*88 units*	*77%*
20 Fulton E	*110 units*	*45 units*	*104%*
Martineau Apartments	*23 units*	-	*50%*
Loose Leaf Lofts	*34 units*	-	*51%*
Garage Bar Apartments	*4 units*	-	*53%*
240 Ionia Apartments	*48 units*	-	*55%*
Park Place Apartments	*40 units*	-	*61%*
Half Century Building	*20 units*	-	*62%*
205 South Division Apartments	*38 units*	-	*64%*
Grand Central Lofts	*32 units*	-	*64%*
The Southgate	*56 units*	-	*69%*
616 Lofts on Grandville	*17 units*	-	*71%*
One South	*22 units*	-	*71%*
Donovan Building	*15 units*	-	*71%*
City View Flats	*44 units*	-	*71%*
616 Lofts on Pearl	*14 units*	-	*72%*
Bridge Street Lofts	*44 units*	-	*72%*
Barley Flats	*40 units*	-	*73%*
Wealthy & Sheldon Lofts	*58 units*	-	*74%*

Housing Project/Development	Total Units	Condos	Estimated AMI%
Regency Flats	*6 units*	-	*74%*
616 Lofts at The Kendall	*10 units*	-	*75%*
26 Cherry St SW	*45 units*	-	*75%*
Iowa Flats	*27 units*	-	*77%*
Box Board Lofts	*173 units*	-	*78%*
234 Market Lofts	*188 units*	-	*79%*
616 Lofts on Ionia	*23 units*	-	*79%*
Ransom Towers	*153 units*	-	*80%*
Lofts on Alabama	*100 units*	-	*81%*
Lofts at 820 on Monroe	*86 units*	-	*81%*
Plaza Towers	*277 units*	*144 condos*	*81%*
The Morton	*77 units*	*4 condos*	*82%*
Waters Center Apartments	*44 units*	-	*87%*
The Rowe	*85 units*	*9 condos*	*87%*
The Gallery Apartments	*56 units*	-	*90%*
Firestone Lofts	*21 units*	-	*92%*
Venue Tower Apartments	*100 units*	-	*93%*
Icon on Bond	*114 units*	-	*94%*
Arena Place	*100 units*	-	*95%*
601 Bond Apartment Homes	*202 units*	-	*98%*
38 Commerce Building	*43 units*	-	*101%*
Studio Park Lofts	*106 units*	-	*101%*
Studio Park Tower	*190 units*	*25 condos*	*110%*
Homes at RiversEdge	*32 units*	*5 condos*	*118%*
Goodspeed Lofts	*1 unit*	*1 condo*	*Not Applicable*
Gotham Lofts	*4 units*	*4 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Boardwalk Condominiums	*235 units*	*235 condos*	*Not Applicable*
The Fitzgerald	*57 units*	*57 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Minnhaar Building	*6 units*	*6 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Forslund Condominiums	*19 units*	*19 condos*	*Not Applicable*
52 Monroe Center Condos	*4 units*	*4 condos*	*Not Applicable*
The Peck Building	*12 units*	*12 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Monroe Terrace Condominiums	*30 units*	*30 condos*	*Not Applicable*
City View Condos	*30 units*	*30 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Front Row Condominiums	*9 units*	*9 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Brickway Condominiums	*9 units*	*9 condos*	*Not Applicable*
65 Monroe Condominiums	*10 units*	*10 condos*	*Not Applicable*
River House Condominiums	*205 units*	*205 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Landmark Lofts	*36 units*	*36 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Cherry Street Lofts	*8 units*	*8 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Lofts at Tannery Row	*13 units*	*13 condos*	*Not Applicable*
Bicycle Factory	*12 units*	*Student Housing*	*Student Housing*
Secchia Hall	*81 units*	*Student Housing*	*Student Housing*
Winter Hall	*170 units*	*Student Housing*	*Student Housing*
McKay Tower	*19 units*	*1 condo*	*Not Available*
Peterlein Apartments	*6 units*	-	*Not Available*
Cornerstone Place Apartments	*6 units*	-	*Not Available*
Plank Road Lofts	*4 units*	-	*Not Available*
14 Williams	*10 units*	-	*Not Available*
Lofts @ 5 Lyon	*175 beds*	-	*Not Available*
16 Williams	*6 units*	-	*Not Available*
Kelsey Apartments	*12 units*	-	*Not Available*

1 Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are provided to developers to incentivize building - and maintaining - affordable housing units.

2 Rentals rates were manually collected throughout 2024. Data may vary over time.

Public Infrastructure Projects | *Creating safer & more vibrant spaces for all Downtown users*

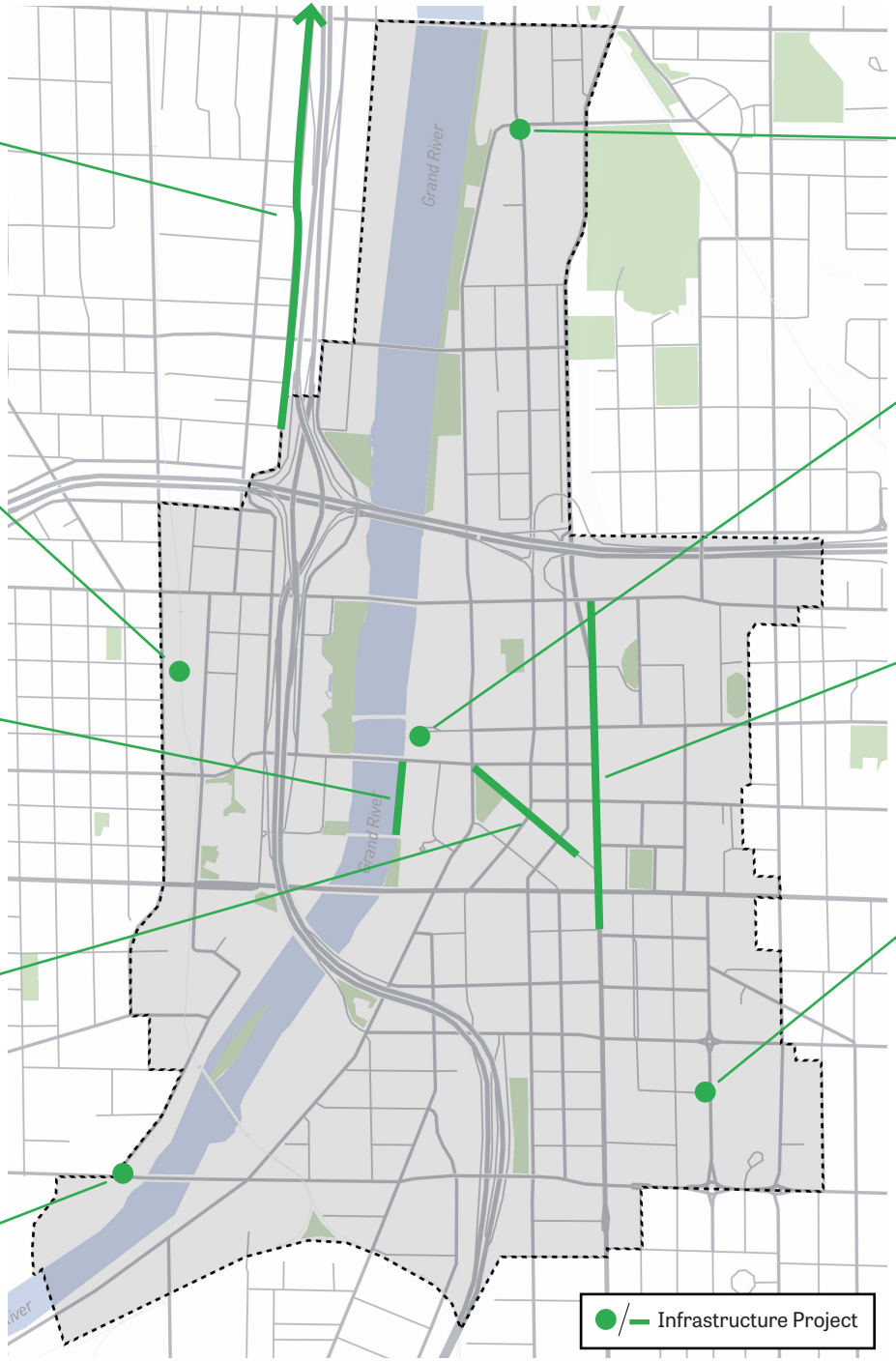
Turner Ave Bikeway
Between Ann St and 4th St, the City of GR converted one vehicle travel lane into a separated two-way bikeway, connecting Downtown to Ann St on the Westside.

Las Canchas Public Space
Las Canchas futsal courts continued to thrive in activity, the Downtown Community Garden hosted its first season, along with the Farmers Market - all three spaces transformed an underutilized parking lot.

JW Riverwalk
Improvements including bank stabilization, new plants and universal access progressed as part of work on the river's edge.

Monroe Center Benches
DGRI added 23 new benches to Monroe Center, increasing accessibility and inclusivity, encouraging social interaction and creating a more aesthetic and inviting atmosphere.

Wealthy Street ZICLA
The installation of this cost-effective, sustainable, flexible and attractive modular bus boarding platform marked GR's 3rd ZICLA.



Coldbrook Intersection
The City of GR converted an intersection to a roundabout, improving safety and enhancing vehicular traffic flow in an area that serves as a gateway into Downtown.

Lyon Square
+10 years in the making, the work on this public plaza commenced to create a vibrant, modern and inviting space.

Division Ave Work
Utility replacement and relocation from Fulton St to Michigan Ave in preparation for a full reconstruction in 2025. This work added bulb-outs - increasing pedestrian safety - as well as street parking.

Jefferson Ave
Pedestrian safety, traffic calming and landscaping improvements were made to the stretch between Cherry St & Wealthy St.

Also...

- *Installation of wayfinding signs continued all across the district.*
- *Interactive games were added throughout City Center*
- *Countless art pieces were introduced or rejuvenated.*

Turner Ave Bikeway: https://www.weareprogressive.com/projects/turner-avenue-resurfacing-and-bike-lane

City of GR construction projects: https://www.zicla.com/en/projects/
ZICLA: https://www.zicla.com/en/projects/



Lyon Square - open to the public - in the fall of 2024.



Aerial imagery of curb extensions and work at Fulton St & Division Ave.



New benches installed on Monroe Center.



Aerial imagery of Jefferson Ave streetwork.



Turner Ave Bikeway .



Children enjoying life-sized chess at Rosa Parks Circle.



The Community Garden at Las Canchas in full bloom.



Coldbrook roundabout facing north.

Construction & Development | *Projects in and around the DDA*

Notable Projects in the DDA

1 - Corewell Health Center for Innovation and Transformation
$110,000,000 investment
303,000 sq ft of office space
1,090 spaces in 5 lots & 2 decks
room for 1,800 employees

2 - Wealthy & Sheldon Lofts
all-electric building
$16,500,000 investment
58 market-rate housing units
2,400 sq ft of commercial space
30 spaces + bike parking

3 - Studio Park Tower
$62,000,000 investment
190 market-rate housing units:
165 apartments & 25 condos

4 - Corewell Health Ambulatory Building
$20,300,000 investment
240,000 sq ft of office space

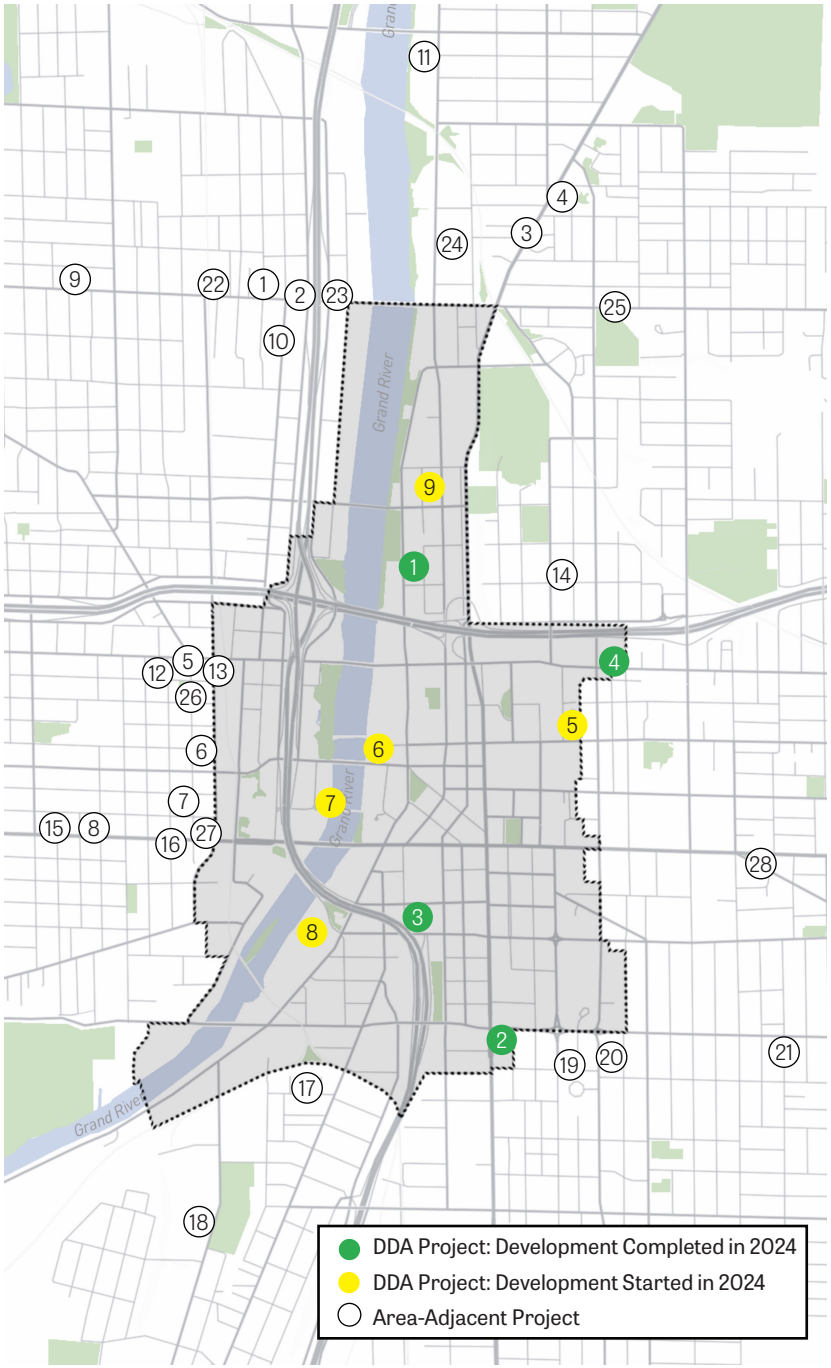
5 - Corewell Health Parking Structure
989-space parking deck

6 - Lyon Square Redevelopment
$12,000,000 investment
improved park space

7 - GRPM Renovation
$50,000,000 investment
improved river + trail access

8 - Acrisure Ampitheater
$214,500,000 investment
190 spaces + bike parking
7,000 fixed seats + 5,000 lawn seats

9 - SILVA
$16,500,000 investment
60,000 total sq ft
23-space parking deck

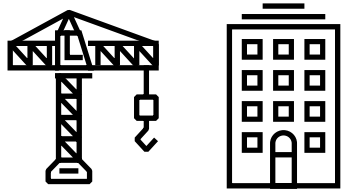


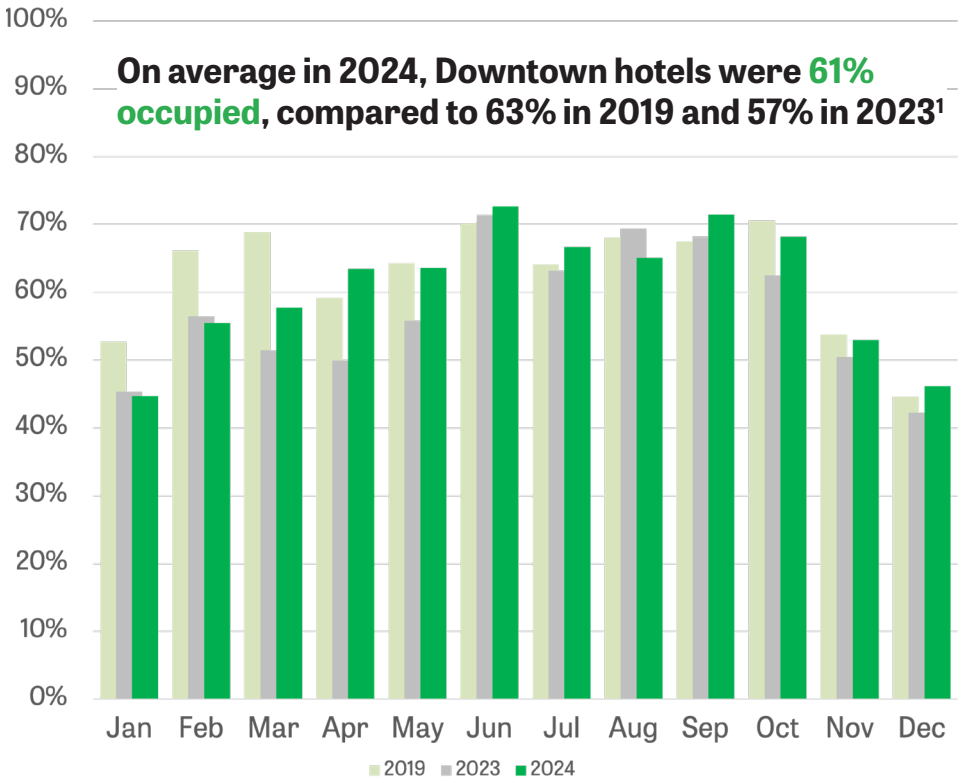
Notable Area-Adjacent Projects

Complete
1 - DeVries Showroom: 6,000 total sq ft
2 - Interphase Interiors/Haworth Inc.: 23,000 sq ft office
3 - Lofts on Grove: 110 housing units
4 - The Current: 72 housing units
5 - The Blue Jay: 6 boutique hotel rooms
6 - 153 Seward: 5 housing units
7 - Lexington School Apartments: 39 housing units
8 - The Anthony: 8 housing units

Under Construction
9 - Leonard Apartments: 55 housing units
10 - 510 Leonard: 3 housing units
11 - Baker Furniture Factory: 200+ housing units
12 - Former Duthler's: 148 housing units
13 - Bridge Street Bar: 2,500 sq ft commercial retail
14 - Union Suites on Coit II: 52 housing units
15 - Fulton & Deloney: 9 housing units
16 - The Annex: 23 housing units
17 - Pleasant Hills: 27 housing units
18 - Factory Yards: 467 housing units
19 - Joan Secchia Children's Rehab Hospital
20 - Wealthy & Prospect: 18 housing units
21 - 680 Wealthy: 8 housing units

In Planning/Announced
22 - 555 Leonard: 28 housing units
23 - Brann's Development: 102 housing units
24 - Display Pack: 526 housing units
25 - Sun Title Office Building: 181 housing units
26 - Bridge Street Food Truck Court: 30,630 sq ft
27 - West Fulton Lofts: 106 housing units
28 - Fulton & Lake Drive: 8 housing units





Continuing to grow Downtown's inventory of hotel units is critical as it reflects the city's committment to growing as a recognizable destination for not only overnight guests attending the growing array of sporting events and entertainment options, but also cements itself as a viable option for larger conventions. ***Visitors*** *- sometimes known as temporary residents - are important for Downtown as they strongly impact the economy through their support of local businesses, their contributions to cultural exchanges, innovation and cultural diversity and their natural and novel use of public infrastructure. This behavior supports local services and helps highlight gaps and needs, and the increase in visitors signals desirability of a thriving space and fosters future investment, which in turn creates a stronger future for Downtown. Providing temporary residents with infrastructure, amenities and specifically welcoming overnight stays enhances all of the positive influence visitors can have, as well as potentially converting visitors into future residents.*



A crane on site at the Amway Grand Plaza.

1 Source: CoStar Analytics

River Revitalization | Downtown as the hub

Work along the Grand River continues as allocated ARPA funds[1] catalyze various projects in the corridor. Establishing Downtown Grand Rapids as the hub for activity on the Grand River has important environmental implications and anchors Downtown as a destination for new residents and prospective workers and enterprises, and of course visitors to the city and region.

***48 total acres** of park improvements*

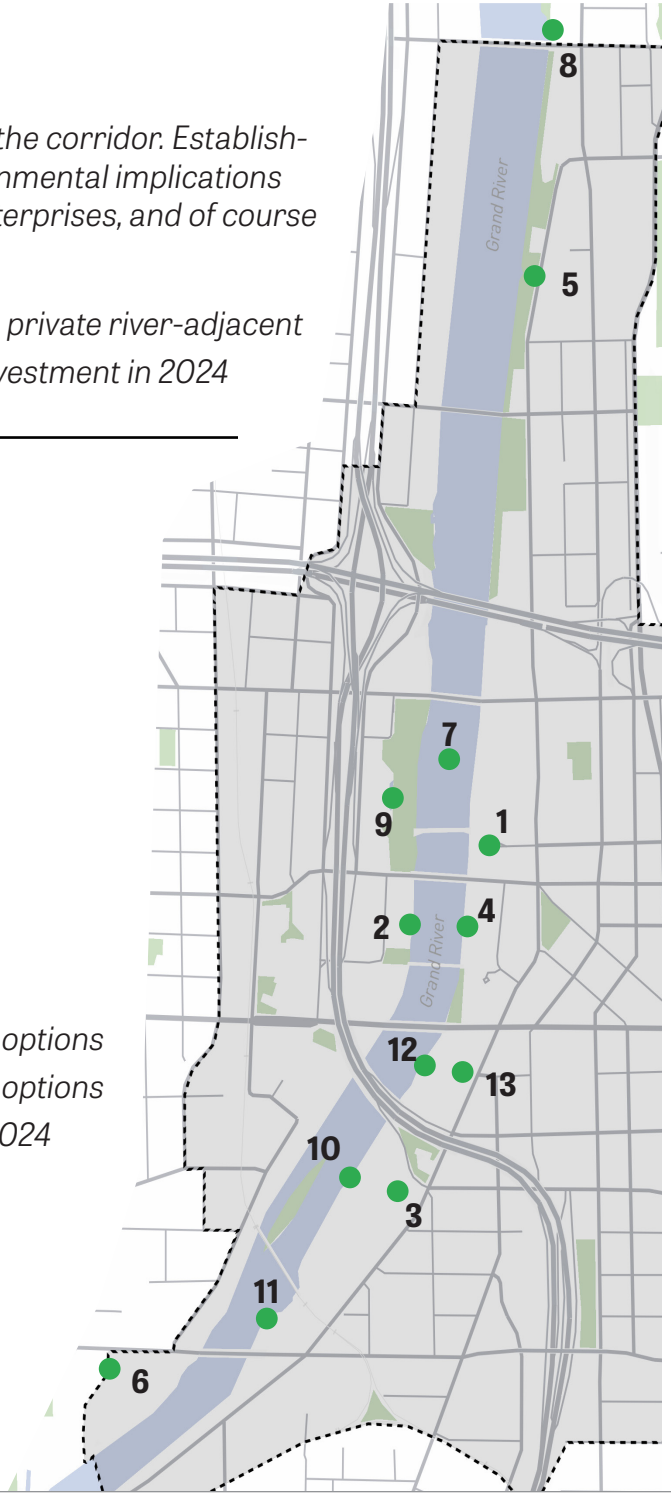
***20 total miles** of trail improvements[2]*

***$62M** in DGRI investment (DDA, MNTIFA, ARPA) in 2024*

***$1.7B** in private river-adjacent investment in 2024*

	River Corridor Projects	2024 Timeline Milestones
1	*Lyon Square*	*Finished river edge overlook in fall*
2	*GRPM River Edge Improvements*	*Construction continued*
3	*Acrisure Ampitheater*	*Construction began May 2024*
4	*Edges Trail: Blue Bridge to JW*	*Construction began summer 2024*
5	*Canal Park*	*Completed design & fundraising*
6	*Oxford Trail*	*Completed engagement & design*
7	*Lower Reach: In-Channel Improvements*	*Received permit* ★
8	*Edges Trail: Leonard to Ann*	*Continued design & planning phases*
9	*Ah-Nab-Awen Park, Phase 1*	*Continued design & planning phases*
10	*Edges Trail: US-131 to Railroad*	*Completed design & submitted permits*
11	*Edges Trail: Railroad to Wealthy*	*Continued conceptual design & phasing options*
12	*Edges Trail: Fulton to US-131*	*Continued conceptual design & phasing options*
13	*Fulton & Market*	*Introduced to the community summer 2024*

2024 Highlight: *EGLE permits were received for in-channel improvements for the lower reach of the river, which includes a highly anticipated restoration of the river's rapids. This milestone gets the project closer to providing new and important outdoor recreational opportunities as well as new ecological enhancements to the river's environment.*



1 In 2022, the State of Michigan awarded DGRI $55 million in ARPA funding. For more information, visit: https://grandriver.network/upcoming-projects

2 Includes 16 miles of ARPA-funded Kent County Greenway Trail, White Pine Trail to ADA.

Lyon Square Report Card | *Approaching riverfront projects with an equity lens*



Apprentices learning along the Grand River.



Contractors working on the pavillion at Lyon Square.

Total construction spend ..... **$10.3 million**

Total # of local businesses involved in the life of the project **14**

% of MBE, WBE, DBE & MLBE contractors receiving river work ..... **30.03%**[1]

# of seasonal jobs created (construction) ..... **10 apprentices through Rockwell Earthworks**

# of workers trained through workforce development partnerships ..... **69** *(2023)*

% of workers hired successfully retained from training programs **70%**

With work continuing at Lyon Square as one of several projects on the Grand River corridor, DGRI is integrating workforce development in public space projects through the Grand River Workforce Collaborative. DGRI partnered with nine community organizations to provide training and employment opportunities, specifically for disadvantaged groups.

The initiative prioritizes recruiting from neighborhoods near the Grand River, focusing on those with lower incomes and higher unemployment rates, particularly among Black and Hispanic communities. This approach expands workforce resources, training and employer connections, which helps individuals build careers while providing employers with skilled talent and workforce solutions, supporting regional economic growth.

The apprenticeship model is comprised of 3 key partners:
DGRI • West Michigan Works! • GRCC MTEC
Learn more at: grandriver.network/economic-opportunity

More on workforce development: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Equitable-Workforce-Development-in-Disinvested-Places.pdf

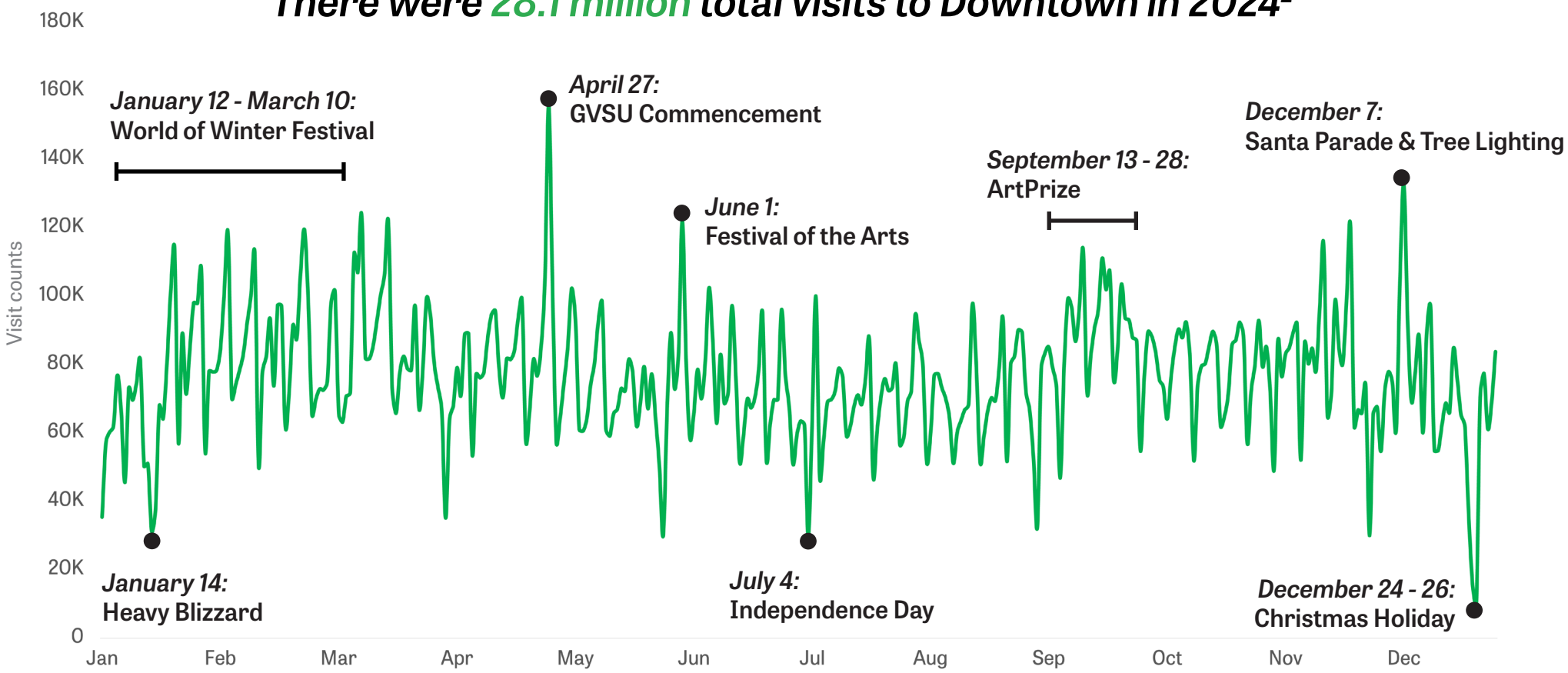
1 Total construction cost was taken from original contract and would not include project increases during construction.

Activity | *Visitors from outside the district*

Visitors come to Downtown Grand Rapids for a variety of reasons, whether it is to dine, shop, go to events, visit cultural and arts institutions, engage in public spaces, interact with a vibrant urban center or simply explore something new. The reality is that visitation to Downtown has not just grown, it has evolved, mirroring the urban core's development and progression. Cultural institutions, along with the popular festivals and public events, are contributing to Downtown's growing reputation as a dynamic destination. When that is layered that on top of the expansion of public amenities and infrastructure, the visitor experience is heightened and repeat visits can be seen.

Feet on the street: *World of Winter kicked off the new year by drawing visitors from near and far to Downtown during a season when many families typically stay indoors. Van Andel Arena[1] kept Downtown buzzing, driving foot traffic to businesses with a steady lineup of sports games, concerts and live events. For the first time, the beloved Gentex Santa Parade merged with the city's tree lighting celebration. Now a nighttime event, the parade filled Center City's streets and concluded at a packed Rosa Parks Circle, solidifying its place as a new Downtown tradition.*

There were 28.1 million total visits to Downtown in 2024[2]



1 Van Andel Arena has a seated capacity of 12,000.

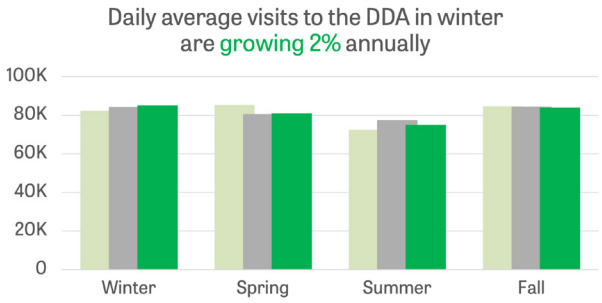
2 DGRI employs Placer.ai, a location-based analytics company, to extrapolate activity in Downtown. Find out more at: https://downtowngr.org/our-work/reports-studies

Programmed Public Space Activation | *Showcasing spaces for public use*

*The 58-day **World of Winter Festival** promotes a four-season Downtown, encouraging visitors to experience public spaces and activities in creative ways while engaging with Downtown businesses and amenities during a slower, colder time of year. It also provides event planners with opportunities to transform unconventional spaces into unique experiences, drawing in both residents and visitors.*



Silent Disco-ers at Calder Plaza during World of Winter.



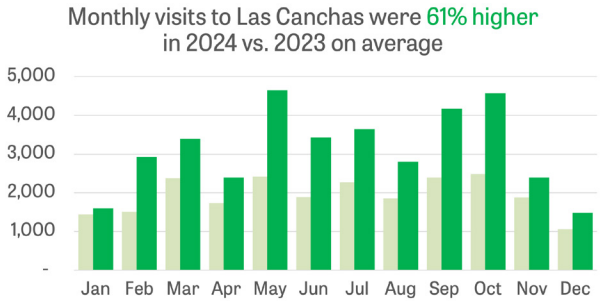
*Reimagining underutilized spaces, such as vacant or underused parking lots, helps reclaim them for public benefit. **Las Canchas** continues to thrive as a community space, where successful summer futsal activations have sparked organic use during unprogrammed hours. Similarly, the **Downtown Community Garden** at Las Canchas grows both produce and community connections through planned and spontaneous gatherings. Additionally, Las Canchas now hosts the **Downtown Farmers Market**, a developing initiative that is responding to community food access needs.*



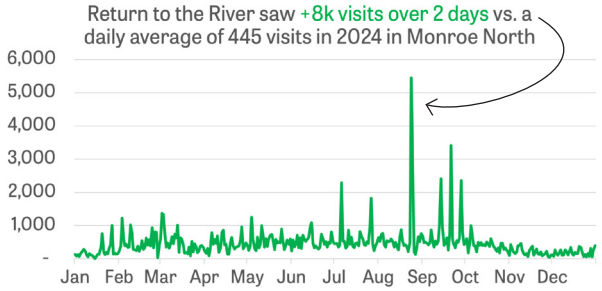
Euro Cup watch party held in the parking lot at Las Canchas.



Parking lot yoga during Return to the River.



*The 3rd annual **Return to the River Festival** exemplifies how programmed events can reconnect people with public spaces. Through art, activities and events along the riverfront, the Festival highlights the accessibility of green spaces and river access available year-round.*

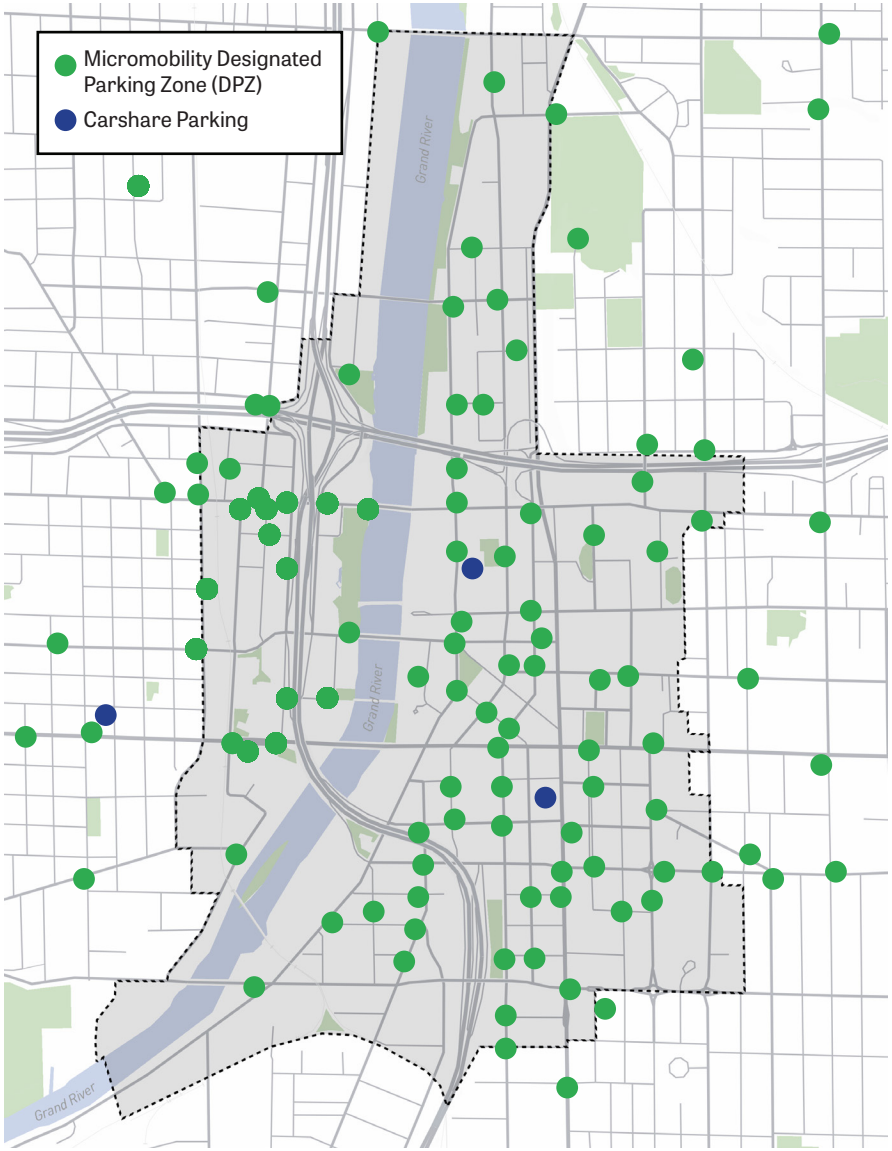


*Downtown employees are a vital part of the area's daily population and thus **Relax at Rosa** remains a staple event, offering lunchtime entertainment on Thursdays throughout the warmer months. This recurring event gives Downtown workers a chance to unwind and enjoy their surroundings in a refreshing, engaging and creative way, fostering a deeper connection to the space around them. It also serves as an attraction tool for in-office work Downtown.*

World of Winter: https://worldofwintergr.com
Las Canchas: https://www.facebook.com/lascanchasgr
Return to the River: https://downtowngr.org/announcements/2024/08/return-to-the-river-2024
2024's Relax at Rosa lineup: https://downtowngr.org/announcements/2024/04/relax-at-rosa-2024

Mobility Spotlight | *Shared transporation options*

In October, Mobile GR, the transporation department of the City of Grand Rapids, launched DART GR (Drive Around Town Grand Rapids), an EV CarShare program providing 6 plug-in electric vehicles for use in the city. The program consists of $5/hour rentals, providing access to a new, affordable transportation options for its users. Two of those vehicles were placed Downtown.





A DART car cruising past Downtown.


Users enjoying a stroll on Lime micromobility.

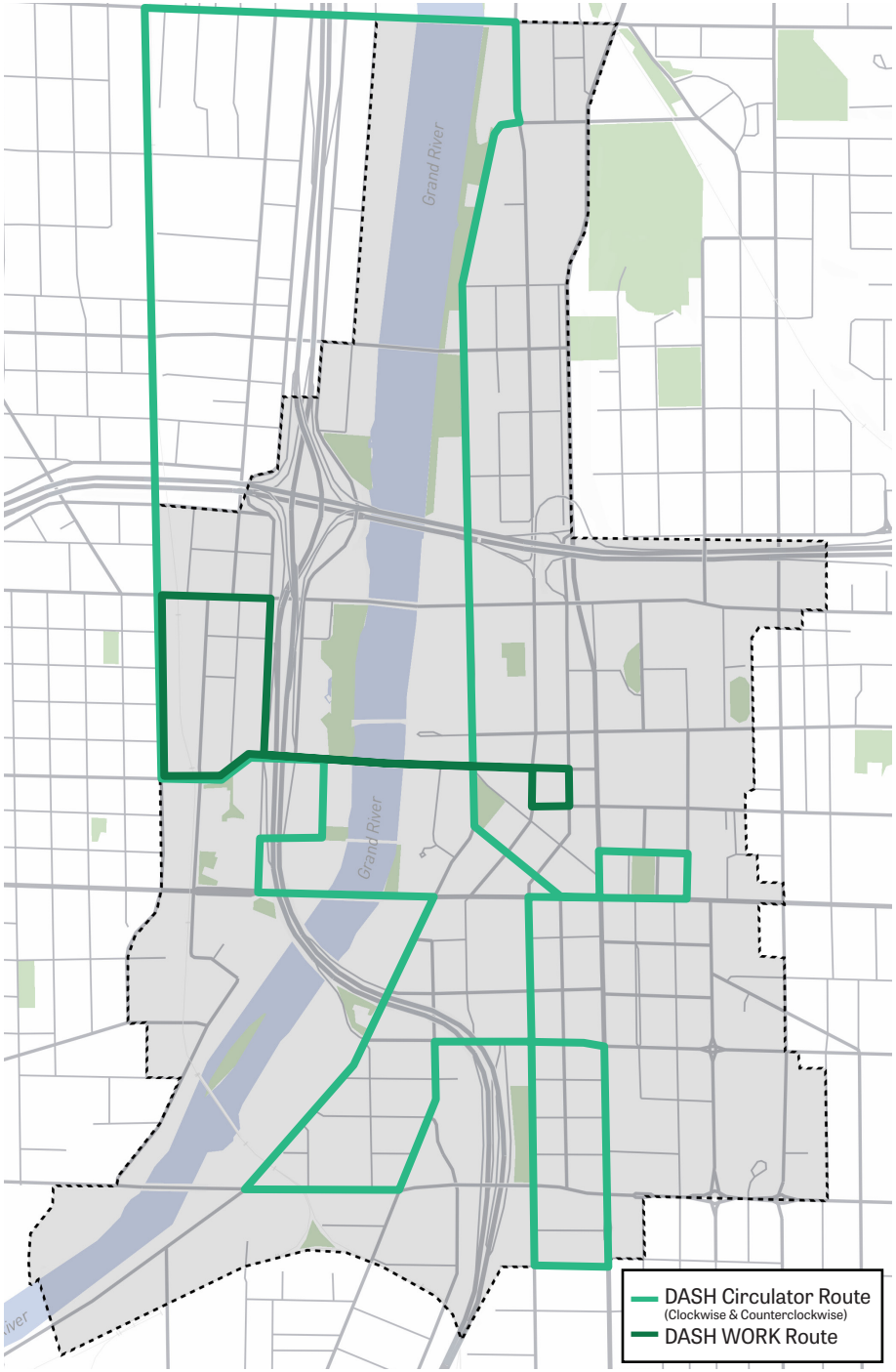
By the numbers: *In 2024, the two Downtown locations - Government Center Ramp & Weston and Commerce Ramp - saw 178 trips. This equates to 1,880 hours of use and 7,727 vehicle miles driven[1]. On average, trips lasted 45 miles.*

The City's bike and scooter share program, affectionately refered to as 'micromobility' also managed by Mobile GR, continues to thrive in the city as well as Downtown. In 2024, 43% of trips originated in Downtown, while 41% of trips ended in Downtown. For comparison, Downtown is only 4% of the square footage of the City of Grand Rapids[2].

Why it matters: *Providing affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly transportation options not only addresses equity concerns outlined in the City's Community Master Plan[3] but also enhances the overall urban experience for those living, working and visiting Downtown. By promoting alternatives to personal vehicle use, these efforts contribute to safer, healthier and more connected communities.*

1 Period: October 17, 2024 - December 31, 2024.
2 The Micromobility program covers 27% of the City's land area (~12 sq miles)
3 View the City's the Community Master Plan here: https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Programs-and-Initiatives/Community-Master-Plan

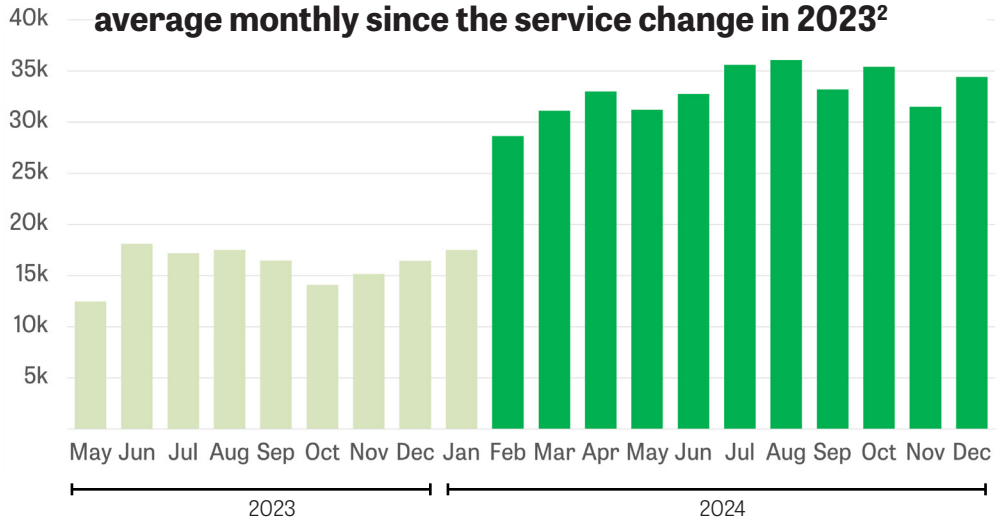
Mobility Spotlight | *Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH)*



The DASH completed 11 months of service in its 3.0 interation, which added Mondays and Tuesdays thus providing daily service 7-days-a-week. The bi-directional circulator loop connects parking amenities and multiple business districts to Downtown.

In order to address the reduction of direct service across the river, DASH WORK is an option for employees who park at the Westside lots to get to their offices in Center City. This service continues to run during the business hours of the work week and expanded to include continuous service from 6:30 AM - 6:30 PM, enhancing access and use.

DASH daily average ridership has increased 2% on average monthly since the service change in 2023[2]



Above are the total monthly rides for DASH 3.0, not adjusted for operating days. The data suggests that increasing operating days and hours, as well as frequency, increases ridership. Although this correlation may seem evident to some, it can be inferred that more frequent and reliable service makes the experience for riders more predictable and therefore approachable, leading to not only higher overall ridership but likely more sustained users.

There were 380k DASH rides in 2024, with an average of 1,071 a day[3].

1 Service was not expanded to full-time until the end of January 2024.
2 Source: The Rapid ITP (the agency in charge of DASH operations).
3 Only counting operating days.

Small Businesses | *Navigating a challenging landscape*

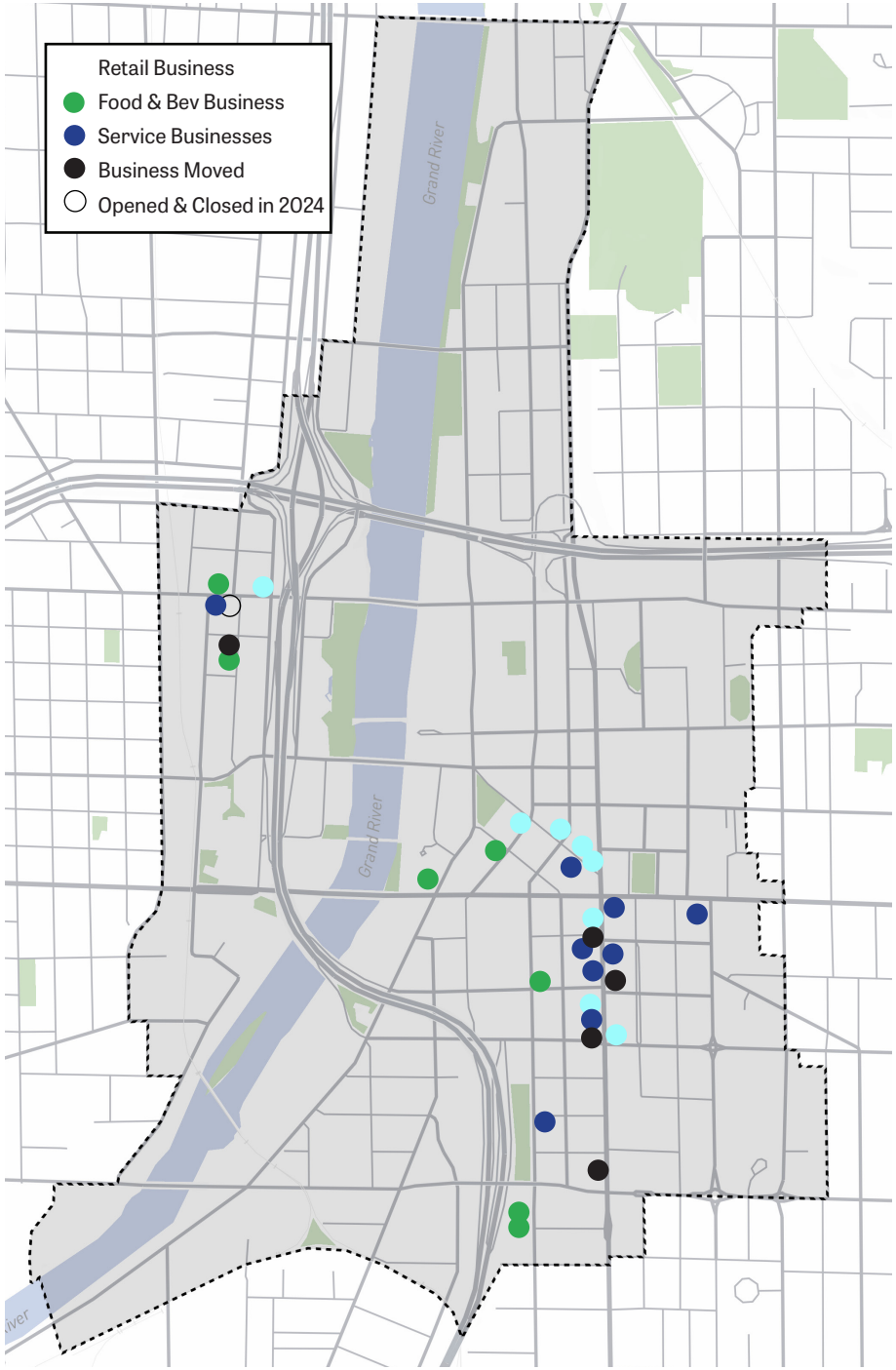
In 2024, Downtown saw many businesses changing their operations to better suit their customers and therefore improving their own sustainability in the market. Specifically on South Division, shops like ***Zabház***, ***Celebrate Life Home Goods*** *and* ***OTONO*** *all relocated to different parts of South Division.* ***Daniel Gracie*** *also relocated from South Division to Stockbridge. Some businesses made investments in their existing spaces, such as* ***House Rules Board Game Lounge*** *building out a new kitchen.*

Other businesses used their current space for new purposes, such as Purpose Training Studio opening ***Euphoria Wellness*** *in part of their space, Broadleaf Westside shifting to Shake Party and then again to* ***Broadleaf Underground*** *and bringing on* ***Taqueria Chilango*** *as a food partner, and Reserve closing to refresh their space into a new concept* ***Allora****, to open in 2025. Jolly Pumpkin also tried their luck at shifting to new concept* ***Pide & Stick****, although with less success.*

2024 Highlights: *The opening of* ***Shinola Detroit*** *at the intersection of Division and Monroe Center helped further the goal of establishing anchor tenants at the ends of the retail corridor. The opening of* ***Cellar Bird Bookstore*** *on Bridge Street filled a notable gap, as the return of a Downtown bookstore has been requested in multiple surveys over the past five years*[1]*.*

DGRI Impact: *7 Downtown shops opened in 2024 with direct financial support from DGRI's* ***Retail Innovation Grant***[2]*, totaling $195,306.59. DGRI also provides funding for pop-up marketplace events in Downtown as well as collaborative marketing initiatives between multiple Downtown businesses.*

Why it matters: *Small businesses are a significant driver of local economic growth. They create jobs, generate revenue and contribute to the city: their very existence creates community and grows the vibrancy of Downtown for visitors, employees and residents. Moreover, local businesses are one of the main drivers of neighborhood identity. They support local talent and foster culture and engagement in community at a micro scale.*



1 Downtown Grand Rapids regularly surveys its neighbors about retail needs; the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce has surveyed and found similar insights.

2 Find out more about the Retail Innovation Grant here: https://downtowngr.org/business-support/business-grants

Downtown Ambassadors | *Providing a welcoming, clean and safe environment*



Ambassadors posing in the Skywalk.



Ambassadors clearing snow on Bridge Street.

Activity	*2024*	*vs. 2023*	*vs. 2019*
Incidents of Graffiti Removed	**7,172**	**+25%**	**+282%**
Pounds of Trash Removed	**376,725**	**-18%**	**-22%**
Incidents of Snow Removed	**8,994**	**+113%**	**-27%**
Weeds Removed	**374,524**	**+42%**	**+192%**
Business Contacts	**7,890**	**-22%**	**+292%**
Pedestrian Assists	**327,009**	**-10%**	**+95%**
Mobility Assists	**3,399**	**-11%**	**198%**
Incidents of Maintenance	**29,202**	**+27%**	**+25%**
Flowers Planted	**48,897**	**+10%**	**+47%**
Cigarette Butts Recycled	**95,750**	**-48%**	**-78%**
Residents Engaged	**3,605**	*N/A*	*N/A*

The Downtown Ambassadors are a dedicated team of professionals that provide cleaning, hospitality, beautification, maintenance and safety services to keep Downtown clean, beautiful and welcoming all year. Their duties include providing directions and information to pedestrians, connecting people to social services, sidewalk sweeping, power washing, graffiti abatement, trash removal, engaging Downtown residents and much more to support the needs of Downtown business and property owners. These services are made possible through funding from the Downtown Improvement District with support from the Downtown Development Authority.

1 Downtown Ambassadors track these and other statistics in the Block by Block Smart System. Each statistic is geo-coded and time stamped. Find out more on the Ambassadors: https://downtowngr.org/our-work/projects/downtown-ambassadors and the Downtown Improvement District at https://downtowngr.org/about/did

Closing statements

The data strongly suggest that Downtown Grand Rapids continues to grow and change rapidly.

Office vacancy continues to trend below the national average. Employment levels are growing but remain below pre-pandemic levels. Demand for housing remains high and new housing construction continues at an accelerated pace. Infrastructure and greenspace investments seek to make Downtown safer and more livable. Visitors continue to pour in and contribute to economic activity. Local entrepreneurs are finding creative and collaborative ways to carve out unique and sustainable businesses. Massive investments on the riverfront and surrounding opportunity sites will soon change the landscape and skyline of Downtown for generations to come.

These indicators are a testament to the progress we've made as a community to not only adapt to a "post-pandemic" world, but also to strategically invest in people and places that make Downtown authentic, unique and competitive on the national scale. Looking forward, DGRI will continue to collect and share data that can inform efforts to build on this progress.

Downtown Grand Rapids is well positioned for future growth. The ongoing work to build a place that is vibrant and welcoming to everyone will require widespread collaboration across the city. It is critically important that the entire Grand Rapids community's vision for Downtown and feedback for improvement are meaningfully incorporated into development plans and city building efforts.

Specific to DGRI, our work is guided by GR Forward, the Downtown Master Plan that was informed by the entire community and adopted by the Grand Rapids City Commission in 2015. As this 10 year plan approaches the end of its intended timeframe, DGRI will work with community partners and residents to update the vision and strategic goals for Downtown Grand Rapids. This work will be collaborative, transparent and focused.



A scene from the Grand Rapids Asian Pacific Festival.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the boards of the Downtown Development Authority, The Downtown Improvement District, the Monroe North Tax Increment Financing Authority, as well as DGRI's Executive Committee, Board of Advisors and Citizen Alliance for their continued trust and efforts in moving GR Forward.

For more information or data inquires, please visit downtowngr.org or contact info@downtowngr.org

Data Sources

AHC Hospitality
Block by Block
Bureau of Labor Statistics
City of Grand Rapids
City of Grand Rapids Mobile GR Department
CoStar Analytics
Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
Placer Labs, Inc. (Placer.ai)
The Rapid Interurban Transit Partnership
US Census Bureau
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A bird's eye view of Downtown at dusk.