



# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

## GR Forward Plan Update

ISSUED: July 28, 2025

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: August 29, 2025 by 5pm eastern



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.



Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) seeks a multi-disciplinary consultant team to conduct an update to the existing 2015 GR Forward Downtown & Grand River Plan for Action. The update is intended to continue the positive momentum and build upon the successes of GR Forward while providing strategic guidance for at least the next 10 years.



## BACKGROUND:

The [\*GR Forward Plan\*](#) is DGRI's current community plan and investment strategy to support the next generation of growth and investment in Downtown Grand Rapids and transform the Grand River into a distinct asset. GR Forward was driven by robust public engagement that directly involved citizens, non-profit and institutional partners, developers, businesses and decision makers. The 20-month plan development process involved 360 events and engaged over 4,400 citizens.

[\*DGRI\*](#) is a non-profit organization responsible for city building and place management in the urban core of the City of Grand Rapids. DGRI serves as the singular management entity for the combined operations of the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Downtown Improvement District (DID) and Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority (MNTIFA).



## **PROJECT SCOPE:**

In light of the significant progress made to implement GR Forward's recommendations over the last decade, it is time for an update to the Plan. This update is not being done to reinvent GR Forward, but instead to update the existing Plan's principles and strategies with a focus on understanding current trends/headwinds and supporting continued implementation and success in the next 10 years to continue to build a welcoming and prosperous urban core. This will be accomplished via the following activities/deliverables:

- Engaging the community to understand perceptions and priorities for Downtown in the decade ahead. As part of the conversation this is an opportunity to educate the community on the current state of GR Forward goals, Downtown and DGRI (and the associated tools) and openly explore new ideas to promote continued progress.
- Updating a summary of emerging trends (housing, office, etc.) via data collection and market analysis that reveal key issues and opportunities facing Downtown.
- Providing strategic guidance and recommendations for short-, middle- and long-term investments, planning and operations to maximize opportunities for continued public and private sector priorities in Downtown Grand Rapids by updating strategies for achieving goals. This investment guidance will become DGRI's work plan by helping to inform budget priorities and should help to inform further transformational investments.
- Best practice analysis of downtowns and downtown management organizations around the country including a review of funding mechanisms to achieve goals.
- Establish metrics, key performance indicators and help guide resource allocation.

The selected consultant team will work closely with DGRI and selected stakeholders during the planning process. Additionally, the team will need to work collaboratively with a Downtown Plan Steering Committee that will include individuals from a variety of Downtown stakeholder groups, including residents, business and property owners, non-profit representatives, adjacent neighborhood organizations, artists, event organizers, educational and cultural institutions and governmental representatives.



Interested firms should carefully review current DGRI initiatives, programs, and projects; the GR Forward Plan; and other relevant plans (refer to below) to inform their project approach, proposed team composition and qualifications submittal. Evaluation criteria for submitted qualifications will include the following:

- Qualifications and capacity to perform the work.
- Experience with and understanding of Downtown Grand Rapids and the greater Grand Rapids community.
- Relevant planning, engagement and analysis experience.
- Rates and fees.
- Professional excellence.
- Quality of submittal.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

RFQ issued: **July 28, 2025**

RFQ questions due: **August 8, 2025, by 5pm eastern time**

Questions answered: **August 13, 2025**

Qualifications due: **August 29, 2025, by 5pm eastern time**

Evaluation of qualifications and interviews (if necessary): **September 1 - September 19, 2025**

Notice of selection and scope negotiation: **September 22 - October 24, 2025**

Commence project: **November 2025**

Submit key deliverables: **September 2026**

*Indicated schedule is tentative and may change based on submission evaluation, selection process and project scope negotiation. DGRI may adjust schedule as needed depending on these and other factors.*



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## QUALIFICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

Qualification submittals shall be in PDF format and not exceed 12 pages (inclusive of any covers, etc). Submittals shall be 8 1/2 inches x 11 inches in portrait or landscape format. Submissions shall include the following:

- Cover Letter
- Firm(s) Overview and Key Personnel
- Relevant Downtown and Urban Experience, including analysis and strategy
- Project Approach
- Proposed Team and Roles
- Rate and Fee Structure (*this is not a fee for the project, just firm(s) rate structure*)
- References (3 minimum)

*DGRI reserves the right to waive any informalities or minor defects or reject any and all submissions.*

## SUBMISSION:

Questions and qualification submittals shall be submitted via email to:

Mark Miller AIA AICP

Managing Director of Planning and Design, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

[mmiller@downtowngr.org](mailto:mmiller@downtowngr.org)



DGRI'S COMPLETED VAN ANDEL ARENA PLAZA



## RELEVANT PLANS SINCE 2015:

Grand River Art Plan (ongoing)  
Grand River Greenway Operations and Maintenance Plan (ongoing)  
Grand River Greenway Regional Interpretation Plan (ongoing)  
[\*Grand River Greenway Vision & Framework for Action\*](#) 2025  
[\*Kent County Strategic Plan\*](#), 2025  
The Rapid's Transit Master Plan, 2025  
[\*City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan\*](#), 2024  
[\*Grand River Corridor Equity Framework\*](#), 2023  
[\*City of Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Master Plan\*](#), 2022  
[\*City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan\*](#), 2022  
[\*The Rapid's Division United Plan\*](#), 2021  
[\*Bridge South\*](#), 2020  
[\*City of Grand Rapids Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan\*](#), 2020  
[\*Kent County Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan\*](#), 2019  
[\*City of Grand Rapids Bicycle Action Plan\*](#), 2019  
[\*Downtown Streetspace Guidelines\*](#), 2018  
[\*City of Grand Rapids River for All Opportunity Sites and Trail Design Guidelines\*](#), 2018  
[\*Viva la Avenida Area Specific Plan\*](#) (adjacent neighborhood), 2017

## ADJACENT ORGANIZATIONS AND AUTHORITIES:

[\*Uptown GR Inc\*](#) (Corridor Improvement Authority & Business Improvement District)  
[\*Southtown Corridor Improvement Authority\*](#)  
[\*West Side Corridor Improvement Authority\*](#)  
[\*North Quarter Corridor Improvement Authority\*](#)  
[\*Michigan Street Corridor Improvement Authority\*](#)  
[\*South Division-Grandville Corridor Improvement Authority\*](#)



DGRI'S LAS CANCHAS FUTSAL COURTS



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