



GR FORWARD PLAN UPDATE

RFQ Questions and Answers

August 13, 2025

1. *What are the key reasons for updating the plan? In other words, what are the specific items where the current plan is no longer providing sufficient direction?*

Many of the recommendations and implementation actions outlined in the current GR Forward Plan have been completed by DGRI and partners. Additionally, Downtown Grand Rapids has changed significantly in the last decade. The update is intended to create new principles and strategies with a focus on current and future Downtown trends to support continued implementation and success to build a welcoming and prosperous urban core. In short, DGRI needs updated strategic guidance for future investments, planning, and operations to maximize opportunities.

2. *How significant of an update are you wanting? Will all sections be revisited?*

Refer to question #1.

3. *It's our understanding that the GR Forward Plan has served DGRI and its partners well, with many significant projects illustrated in the plan either executed or moving toward implementation. That being said, is the intent of this assignment geared toward:*
 - a. *Updating the current plan to reflect this implementation and integrating input/content from more recent, relevant plans to establish new objectives within the established plan framework?*
 - b. *Or should this be a more robust update that takes a deeper dive into sections of the plan, providing a new grand vision, purpose, and goals?*

Refer to question #1. It is anticipated that this update will be closer to item a. It is not anticipated that a new vision or purpose needs to be established. Goals may need to be revisited and adjusted based on trends, analysis, and priorities established as part of the process.

4. *For "Project Approach," can you describe the preferred level of detail? For example, recognizing the page limit, would you prefer a descriptive paragraph for the major phases of the work envisioned, or would you prefer a description of phases along with significant tasks (more like a "scope")?*

Given that this is a request for qualifications, it is anticipated that a general level of project approach is included. Refined project scope is anticipated to occur once a short-list is created or a consultant is selected. For this submittal the project approach should address the five bullet points on page 2 of the RFQ and should convey the knowledge and skills required to satisfy the 6 bullet points on page 3 of the RFQ.

5. *For the "emerging trends/headwinds" analysis for housing, retail, and commercial development, do you envision this analysis to be a new comprehensive market assessment - including evaluation of competing markets - or a simpler evaluation of the assumptions underlying the original plan, how things have changed in the market place, and associated implications?*

DGRI does not envision a new comprehensive market assessment. The analysis of housing, retail, and commercial development should support an update to the existing plan's principles and strategies to support continued implementation and success in the next 10 years.

6. *The previous GR Forward planning effort focused on both the Downtown and the "River Corridor", which extended from Millenium Park to LMCU Ballpark and encompassed areas outside of the downtown (and even outside the city limits). Will the entire River Corridor be a focus of the plan for the update?*

The "River Corridor" is the focus of an adjacent DGRI partner – the Grand River Network (GRN). The "River Corridor" likely will not reach the levels of focus that are in the current GR Forward Plan. That said, the Grand River remains a vital asset within the Downtown and coordination with the GRN will be important to help inform this update.

7. *Given the varied boundaries of the DDA, DID, and Monroe North TIFA, and the more regional approach to recent DGRI-involved projects beyond Downtown, we would appreciate clarification on the physical extents of the project area as it relates to:*

- a. *Goal updates*
- b. *Data collection and market analysis*
- c. *Updates to general maps and conceptual plans already depicted throughout the document*

In general, the plan update should focus on the Downtown. This is generally considered the DDA boundary. Also refer to question #6.

8. *The previous GR Forward planning effort partnered with GRPS on its plans for Innovation Central and Public Museum High Schools. Are similar partnerships with GRPS or other entities envisioned for the update?*

Not at this time.

9. *We anticipate that the impact of ongoing projects like Acrisure Amphitheatre, Amway Stadium, and the Corewell administrative campus will be key drivers of the updated plan. How much should the consultant expect to engage with anticipated projects that are still in the planning and design phase, such as a large-scale development at Fulton and Market or MDOT's anticipated rebuild of the US-131/Wealthy Street interchange?*

It should be anticipated that the selected consultant will review and provide analysis and strategy regarding downtown development opportunities (at multiple scales) as part of the update. It should also be anticipated that potential large-scale transportation projects, like the Wealthy example, may also arise as part of the plan

update, but it is important to note that DGRI is not the lead on these mobility/transportation efforts, and will likely only play a supporting role. Refer to questions #10 and #11.

10. *The RFQ does not explicitly discuss transit/connectivity, but these topics are addressed in the original plan. Is there a desire for an updated assessment or reevaluation of transportation downtown? This information will help us evaluate the best makeup of our team.*

This can be best answered by understanding where Downtown was in 2015 versus 2025. While transit, mobility and specifically connectivity are important to the growth and vitality of Downtown, there are DGRI partners who now lead these efforts. The plan strategies should consider DGRI opportunities to provide a supportive role in these efforts.

11. *Do you anticipate a need for a transportation consultant within the project team?*

Refer to question #10. Additionally, DGRI is relying on respondents to build project teams based on their understanding of the current Downtown Grand Rapids context and their expertise on previous Downtown planning and strategy efforts.

12. *In comparison to the previous effort, what level of community engagement are you wanting and along what timeline? (a similar question was asked multiple times)*

Community engagement is important to DGRI planning efforts, specifically in understanding perceptions and priorities for Downtown in the future. That said it is not expected that this plan update will reach the same level of engagement as the original GR Forward. Part of the intended community engagement for this update will include conversations about the current state of GR Forward goals, the Downtown, and the DGRI organization in an effort to openly explore new ideas and promote continued progress. DGRI will work with the selected consultant to refine community engagement during scope negotiation.

13. *Could you elaborate on the depth of public input and scale of the steering committee anticipated for this effort in comparison to the current GR Forward Plan?*

Refer to question #12. The steering committee is still being formed. It is anticipated that there will only be one committee (as opposed to the two that were part of the current GR Forward Plan) and that the committee will be approximately 15 to 20 stakeholders.

14. *Each of the goals in the current plan is accompanied with specific targets to be completed by 2025. Is there a place to see how the Downtown has performed against these goals?*

There is not currently a performance record that outlines implementation of the GR Forward Plan, however DGRI estimates that between 80% to 90% of the recommendations have been implemented.

15. *In addition to the information you have provided in the RFQ, it would be helpful to understand from your perspective what is working well downtown today and what is not. Can you articulate some concerns/priorities/opportunities that need to be addressed with this update?*

As the RFQ states there has been significant progress made to implement GR Forward over the last decade. This implementation should give good guidance regarding what is working today (and perhaps what is not). Additionally, many of the related plans help to give insight into current concerns, priorities, and opportunities in the City and Downtown. DGRI expects this planning process to identify current opportunities and priorities and provide strategic implementation guidance toward achieving these priorities.

16. *What type of firm do you think is best to prime the project (economic development, planning, urban design, other)?*

Refer to question #1 and the RFQ. As part of the qualification submittal it is expected that careful review of DGRI initiatives, programs and projects; the GR Forward Plan; and the Downtown and greater community context should be conducted to inform project approach and team composition.

17. *How will the GR Forward Plan update interact with the City's upcoming zoning ordinance re-write?*

It is anticipated that strategies and recommendations from the update will help to inform the zoning ordinance rewrite for the Downtown area. This is likely to be similar to how the current plan informed the current City zoning ordinance.

18. *Is there a budget or budget range for this project that you can share with us? (a similar question was asked multiple times).*

Since this is an RFQ, DGRI is not seeking a project budget to be submitted with the qualifications. Project budget will be negotiated as part of the scope negotiation with the selected consultant.

19. *The previous plan has provided good direction for the past 10 years. Does the incumbent have the inside track for this procurement or are you open to a new firm taking the lead role?*

This RFQ is an open call to all firms to solicit the best team to help create this update.

20. *Will the documents and data used to develop the current plan be made available to the awarded team in editable formats (e.g. spreadsheets, geodatabases, digital models, formatting files, etc.)?*

DGRI will provide what is currently available in our project archive.

21. *Is the 12-page limit single sided or double sided?*

The submittal is expected to be a PDF document, submitted via email. The PDF document should be no more than 12 pages total.

22. We support DGRI's desire to keep proposals concise. We want to put our best foot forward by sharing relevant project sheets and a solid Approach, presented in a graphically attractive proposal (e.g., with covers, table of contents, and relevant photos). Would you consider increasing the page limit??

Refer to question #21. DGRI understands the desire to elaborate on firm qualifications; however, we expect that consultants can convey what is needed to address the RFQ in 12 pages, so the page limit will not be increased. As the submittals are evaluated, or if interviews are conducted with short-listed firms, it may become necessary to request additional information.

23. *Will there be a more detailed RFP to follow this RFQ process?*

An RFP may be issued to short-listed consultants, or a preferred consultant may be identified without further requests for proposals, depending on the evaluation process after the qualification submittal.

24. *Is there a preferred timeframe for this project?*

The tentative project timeline is listed in the RFQ, with an anticipated project completion date in September 2026. As noted in the RFQ, this schedule may change based on scope negotiation with the selected consultant.