



**DOWNTOWN**  
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

## FY 2022 Recommended Budget

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### Narrative

The following narrative document outlines priority project areas developed with the five GR Forward Goal Alliances over the past few months. Projects and funding represent commitments to on-going obligations, as well as existing, on-going, and new projects in the next fiscal year.

#### Goal #1 – Creating a Connected and Equitable River Corridor

- River Governance Incubation (LTI)

Support to advance on recommendations flowing from the work begun in FY20 to define a long-term organizational and funding strategy for Grand River corridor revitalization. In addition to continued project management support, this includes proposed investment to develop or support the following:

- A business plan, board development and other startup organizing efforts to establish the new river-focused entity.
- A community engagement program to support continued governance incubation. This investment proposes to build on the FY20-21 DDA-funded (FY20-21) community engagement work with the Community Catalysts/WMCAT.
- An equity framework plan that presents a shared definition around “equity” grounded in common goals, measurable outcomes and tactics.
- An impact analysis of the potential increased visitation/tourism benefits associated with a revitalized river corridor. This work builds on the initial benefits analysis conducted in FY21. Project partners will include Experience GR, Grand Rapids Public Museum and other corridor stakeholders.
- Research and fundraising services to help identify and strategize around capital and infrastructure funding opportunities.
- A Corridor Connections Plan that maps the strategic assets, identifies opportunities for broader collaboration and defines key projects to support river corridor revitalization from Riverside Park to Millennium Park.
- River-specific engagement and activation that help reconnect Grand Rapidsians to the Grand River socially, psychologically and recreationally. These efforts, organized in close collaboration with community partners, will support more informed and robust community participation in ongoing river planning and activation conversations. More specifically, efforts could include Kayak Crawls, River Walks and other activities that intentionally strive to invite people outdoors and around the river.

- Downtown Plan (LTI)

Planning initiatives to further the goals of GR Forward. Proposed initiatives in FY2022 include:

- GR>> updates
- Support for City Master Plan update on Downtown related recommendations

- River Edge Improvement (LTI)

Funds to support rehabilitation, improvement and expansion of the Grand River edge trail. More specifically:

- Repair of the existing concrete trail section from Louis Street to the Blue Bridge.
- Stabilization, access and safety improvements at Fish Ladder Park
- Access and safety improvements on City-owned property at Market and Wealthy Streets.
- Extend river trail north of Coldbrook including safety improvements across Leonard Street.
- Design support for trail/edge improvements at Grand Rapids Public Museum and GVSU Seidman College.

- Lyon Square Improvements (LTI)

Funds to reconstruct and significantly enhance the public park and alleyway.

- Downtown Speaker Series (NTI)

Funding to bring thought leaders in city building to Grand Rapids and advance key organization goals.

- Riverwalk Assessment (NTI)

Funding to evaluate and recommend improvements to the existing Riverwalk.

## Goal #2: Create a True Downtown Neighborhood Which is Home to a Diverse Population

- Development Project Guidance (LTI)

Funding for legal and staff time expended on behalf of facilitating development projects.

- Development Project Tax Increment Reimbursements (LTI)

Continued funding for the existing Development Support Program. Program funds will be used to further promote economic growth and development in Downtown by funding approved eligible expenses in new construction projects over \$5 million in new investment and in rehabilitation projects featuring over \$1 million in new investment. Proposed funding is to cover existing obligations, and to capitalize on new opportunities.

- Downtown Enhancement Grant (LTI)

Funding for the Downtown Enhancement Grant Program. Funds will be used cover existing obligations, and to continue to assist property and business owners in the rehabilitation of the

Downtown public realm. Funds are utilized to reimburse eligible activities, including installation of street furniture, snowmelt, and other public realm improvements.

- Heartside Quality of Life Plan Implementation (NTI)

Funding to implement recommendations from the Heartside neighbors and businesses during the Quality of Life process. Specific activities will be developed in collaboration with the Goal 2 Alliance and will align with recommendations from GR Forward.

- Stakeholder Engagement - Downtown Neighbor Network (NTI)

Support Downtown and Downtown adjacent neighbors that are connected, informed and empowered to improve Downtown living. Activities include:

- Communications and marketing of the DNN
- Regular events to connect stakeholders and bring together Downtown residents
- Continuing education and leadership trainings
- Advocacy around active and vital streets improvements with the Goal 3 Alliance

### **Goal #3: Implement a 21st Century Mobility Strategy**

- Accessibility and Mobility Repairs (LTI)

Ongoing collaboration with Disability Advocates of Kent County and Common Notice on the Collective Impact Strategic Plan to measure potential social impact and the Plan's successes in improving access for all. (Plan was funded in FY21 and will be presented to the DDA in May or June).

- Bicycle Friendly Improvements (LTI)

Funding to continue the implementation of Division Avenue Bikeway Phase 2, the continued design and planning for various separated facilities (Pearl, Ionia, Turner), the final connection of the bicycle lane on Monroe from I-196 to Michigan Street, and the further implementation of repair stands and bicycle parking in partnership with Mobile GR.

- Streetscape Improvements: Zicla Transit Bulb #2 (LTI)

Building upon the success of the first Zicla transit bulb (Fulton and Sheldon), this funding will support the installation of a second Zicla. The yet to be determined location will be based on feasibility and the number of daily boardings at the stop. This project is in partnership with Mobile GR.

- Streetscape Improvements: DNN Active and Vibrant Street Demonstration Projects (LTI)

Funding to support tactical and temporary installations to test pedestrian safety priority projects as outlined by the Downtown Neighbor Network's Safer Streets Agenda.

- Streetscape Improvements: Pedestrian Crossing Enhancements (LTI)

Pedestrian-safety improvements including rapid flashing beacons in collaboration with Mobile GR at the following locations:

- Weston Street at Market Avenue (as part of Market reconstruction)
- Cherry Street at US131 (midblock crossing)
- Crescent Street at Division Avenue

- Streetscape Improvements: Pedestrian Countdown Signal Retrofitting (LTI)

In collaboration with Mobile GR this will complete the final 9 countdown signals in Downtown.

- Streetscape Improvements: Monroe Avenue Dedicated Transit Lane Study (LTI)

Funding to support traffic analysis and stakeholder engagement to determine feasibility of dedicated transit lanes on Monroe Avenue, from Fulton to Michigan. This work is in collaboration with Mobile GR.

- Streetscape Improvements: Ottawa Avenue from Michigan to Fulton (LTI)

DDA share of funding to complete the resurfacing of Ottawa Avenue.

- Streetscape Improvements: Furnishings (LTI)

Funding for pedestrian and human-scaled enhancements along key Downtown corridors. Ongoing enhancements will include seating, trash cans, banners, lighting, trees, and planters.

- Streetscape Improvements: Ped Counters and Placer.ai data (LTI)

Ongoing support of existing pedestrian counters and the use of Placer.ai data gathering to more accurately understand how people are using Downtown. This Placer.ai data is finer-grained and more accurate than the physical pedestrian counters and will work in tandem with them. This may also help Downtown businesses to better understand their patrons.

- Streetscape Improvements: Monroe North Spectrum ROW Improvements (LTI)

Funding to support street and right-of-way improvements related to Spectrum investments in Monroe North.

- Wayfinding System Implementation (LTI)

Funding to implement phase 1 deployment of the Downtown wayfinding system.

- DASH North Shuttle Lease (LTI)

Funding to help support the continued operation of DASH North and West.

- New Downtown Circulator Infrastructure (LTI)

Funding to purchase and install 4 to 5 new transit shelters in the Downtown. This is an ongoing project in collaboration with Mobile GR and The Rapid.

#### **Goal #4: Expand Job Opportunities and Ensure Continued Vitality of the Local Economy**

- Economic Development and Innovation: Retail Attraction and Incubation RFP (LTI)

Expand funds available to attract underserved and unavailable retail options Downtown. The overarching goal is to build a unique retail market and experience that expands opportunities for all, including attracting and serving an increasing diverse population. This is done through gap support for individual businesses as well as supporting space activation activities such as pop-up shops and incubations spaces geared towards retailers interested in doing business Downtown.

- Economic Development and Innovation: Doing Business Downtown: Business Education (LTI)

A program to provide support for continued education for downtown businesses. Educational opportunities will focus on challenges that downtown businesses face such as dealing with social service needs, managing downtown events, or contracting with DGRI or the City.

- Economic Development and Innovation: Downtown Business Association Support (LTI)

This funding will be used explicitly to support the Business Association's organizational support. What this means depends on the association but will be for events, marketing, and work that the Business Associations are doing themselves. Much will tie into the overall business development efforts such as the expo and seminar series.

- Economic Development and Innovation: Downtown Business/Retail Marketing (LTI)

Developing a branding/marketing strategy for downtown retail. A study on what is "Brand Rapids" would help inform market gaps and opportunity better informing where efforts should be focused. It would additionally allow for a more aggressive approach to promoting Downtown as a retail destination for both businesses and shoppers.

- Economic Development and Innovation: Research (LTI)

A study of current retail conditions by looking at vacancy rates/locations and leakage/gap analysis in order to set a baseline within the context of local regional and national conditions. This also would increase the internal capacity to maintain the relevancy and accuracy of the data to measure and track the impact of DGRI efforts and programs. Ongoing efforts would include a map/listing of retail opportunities, maintaining a directory of downtown retailers and economic statistics that impact general business decisions.

- Economic Development and Innovation: Downtown Workforce Program (NTI)  
Events and programs to engage the Downtown workforce.
- COVID Economic Relief Program (LTI)  
Funding to support the economic recovery associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Goal #5: Reinvest in Public Space, Culture and Inclusive Programming**

- Downtown Marketing and Inclusion Efforts (LTI)  
The DDA's contribution to Downtown Marketing helps support communications that promote Downtown events and programming initiatives to Downtown stakeholders, residents, businesses, and customer audiences. This includes but is not limited to paid advertising, the production of marketing collateral, and ongoing maintenance and enhancements of a digital media platform that serves more than 85,000 users and reaches tens of thousands more.
- Downtown Tree Plantings (LTI)  
Investments in the urban tree canopy to achieve the canopy goals for Downtown.
- Parks Design (LTI)  
Final funding to complete Lyon Square designs.
- Public Realm Improvements: Van Andel Arena Alley Design and Partial Construction (LTI)  
Funding to complete professional services for the design and construction documentation of the Van Andel Arena alley from Fulton to Oakes. This is phase 2 of the plaza design and reconstruction. The budget also includes funding for early construction efforts.
- Public Realm Improvements: Portland Loo 2 (LTI)  
Funding to purchase and install a second Portland Loo on Ionia Street near Van Andel Arena.
- Public Realm Improvements: Switchback Park and River Connections Planning (LTI)  
Funding to provide a comprehensive plan for the design of connections to and from Belknap Hill, the Grand River, Monroe North, and Downtown.
- Public Realm Improvements: Transportation Corridor Study (LTI)  
Funding to study transportation corridors within downtown in support of GR Forward and the City Master Plan.

- Public Realm Improvements: Coordinated Transportation and Safety Education (LTI)

In collaboration with Mobile GR, this funding will support a priority item of the Downtown Neighbor Network's Safer Streets Agenda that relates to public traffic safety education.

- Public Realm Improvements: Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle (LTI)

DDA share of the reconstruction of Ecliptic at Rosa Parks Circle expected to begin in May 2021.

- State of the Downtown Event/Annual Report (LTI)

DDA contribution to the State of the Downtown Event/Annual Report helps to support the programming activities and production for the annual event as well as the costs to support the marketing medium for DGRI's annual report.

- Urban Rec Improvements (LTI)

Funding for place management programs will include support for the pop-up dog park, parklet, dog waste and cigarette urn bins, trash receptacles, beautification, Calder Plaza, and equipment storage.

- Bridge Lighting Operations (NTI)

DDA contribution to Bridge Lighting Operations helps to support electricity and maintenance for lighting on the Indiana Railroad Bridge (Blue Bridge) and the Gillett Bridge.

- DGRI Event Production (NTI)

DDA contribution to DGRI Event Production contributes to the support of World of Winter which contributes to a two month-long festival with various programming and events. This will also cover efforts for alley activation events and programming, Chalk It Up, Silent Disco, and scavenger hunts.

- Diversity and Inclusion Programming (NTI)

The DDA's contribution to Community Relations and Engagement helps support efforts to create a more welcoming and inclusive Downtown, attract and serve more multicultural audiences and strengthen community ties in and to the Downtown neighborhood. This work includes but is not limited to event support and production, program sponsorship and partnership building to advance the collective vision of Downtown for the benefit of the entire community.

- Downtown Ambassador Program (NTI)

Funding to extend the hospitality contract with Block by Block and continue deployment of the Downtown Ambassadors.

- Experience Miscellaneous (NTI)

Funds not currently associated with projects but that provide the opportunity to take advantage of unforeseen projects, partnerships or initiatives that arise during the fiscal year.

- Holiday Décor Program (NTI)

DDA contribution to Holiday Décor Program helps to support the DDA's investment towards lighting and decorating the downtown during the winter and holiday season. This continued support will allow DGRI to continue to decorate the downtown with the replacement of existing decoration investments.

- Major Event Sponsorship (NTI)

DDA contribution to Major Event Sponsorship helps to support Downtown signature events like ArtPrize, Water Festival and Confluence.

- Project and Fixed Asset Maintenance (NTI)

Funding for ongoing maintenance of DDA owned infrastructure.

- Public Space Activation (NTI)

DDA contribution to Public Space Activation helps to continue and expand upon the Pop-Up Performer Program, public games, winter programming, public artwork programs, murals, Activate This Place placemaking grant program, alley activation, food truck initiatives, projection mapping installations, parks and river related programming, as well as other enlivening interventions that help create an ambiance at atmosphere within the downtown.

- Rosa Parks Circle Ice Skating (NTI)

DDA contribution to Rosa Parks Circle Ice Skating helps to support skate rink operations including operations of the Zamboni, maintenance and upkeep of the rink.

- Special Events Grants – Seasonal Event and Programming Sponsorship Program (NTI)

DDA contribution to Special Events Event Sponsorship Support Program will help to support events and programming happening within the downtown that are seeking event support and that align with the community goals that were voiced through the Special Events Optimization process finalized in FY15. This program will help us to free and open to the public events that happen during Oct-Apr events to help encourage GR Forward goal of creating a 4-season city.

- City of Grand Rapids Office of Special Events Support (NTI)

DDA contribution for The City of Grand Rapids Office of Special Event (OSE) support financially helps maintain and run the office's management in order to schedule, process and permit events looking to host an event within The City of Grand Rapids.

- Special Events Training Program (NTI)



DDA contribution to Special Events Management Training Program will help to support four educational workshops for events training in order to help assist event planners and producers to successfully plan and manage an event within the downtown and the City of Grand Rapids.

- Winter Avenue Building (NTI)

Funding for annual maintenance needs at the DDA owned building on Winter Avenue.