DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.

FY 2019 Recommended Budget

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

- Arena South Implementation

Installation of festoon lighting on Ionia Avenue in collaboration with building and business owners.

- Downtown Plan

Planning initiatives to further the goals of GR Forward. Proposed initiatives in FY2019 include:

  - Governance and Management Plan for the Grand River Corridor
  - Downtown Traffic Circulation Plan Update
  - Fulton Street Corridor Improvement Plan

- Grand River Activation

Contribution to complete the design and permitting for the restoration of the Grand River.

- Lyon Square Improvements

Funding to complete the construction of Lyon Square. Construction is anticipated to be funded through the issuance of public bonds, as well as through partner contributions.

- Parks Design

Completion of design for Downtown parks. In FY2019, funds will be used to complete the design of Lyon Square and Calder Plaza. In FY2020, it is anticipated design work will commence for Switchback and Heartside Parks.

- Downtown Speaker Series (NTI)

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

- Riverwalk Maintenance (NTI)

Funding to continue the seasonal upkeep of the existing Riverwalk.

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

- Affordable Housing Support

Continuation of the effort to affect affordable housing development in Downtown.

- Areaway Fill

Continued funding for the Areaway Removal Incentive Program. Program funds will be used cover existing obligations, and if needed to participate in projects to improve public safety through the removal of existing areaways.

- Building Reuse Incentive Program

Continued funding for the Building Reuse Incentive Program. Program funds will be used cover existing obligations, and to continue to assist property and business owners in the rehabilitation of buildings constructed pre-1950 in Downtown.

- Development Project Guidance

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

- Downtown Census

Update to existing Downtown census. DGRI has committed to updating the census on a biannual basis to better understand the changing dynamics of the Downtown resident, employee and visitor populations.

- Project Tax Increment Reimbursements

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 (i.e. Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program)

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.

- Weston Street – Sheldon to LaGrave Avenue

DDA participation in the City reconstruction project. DDA funding is to be used for project enhancements, including the brick street and lighting.

- 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.

Goal #3: Implement a 21st Century Mobility Strategy

- Accessibility and Mobility Repairs

Funding to implement recommendations from the Downtown accessibility audit conducted by the Disability Advocates of Kent County.

- Bike Friendly Improvements

Funding to continue the implementation of bike parking infrastructure throughout Downtown in partnership with MobileGR. A portion of funding is also anticipated to go toward the initiation of bike share.

- DASH North Shuttle Lease

Funding to help support the continued operation of DASH North, including proposed weekend and evening service.

- Grandville Avenue Area Public Improvements

DDA contribution to implement the vision established in the Grandville Avenue Area Specific Plan. Improvements will occur within the DDA boundary on Grandville Avenue, and will likely include pedestrian enhancements to improve the streetscape and walkability. The DDA will work with neighborhood stakeholders to help identify the implementation priorities.

- New Downtown Circulator Infrastructure

Investments in new infrastructure – including shelters and supporting amenities – to improve the ridership experience of DASH users.

- Public Realm Improvements

Investment in infrastructure to support the continued improvement of the public realm in Downtown, including trash cans and expansion of the piloted recycling program.

- Streetscape Improvements

Pedestrian enhancements along key Downtown corridors. Enhancements will include lighting, trees and safety elements to improve street crossings. Proposed projects for FY19 include:

  - Division Avenue: Fulton – Cherry Street
  - Newberry Street: Monroe – Division Avenue

- Sheldon Avenue: Fulton – Weston Street
- Michigan Street River Crossing(s)

- Wayfinding System Improvements

Funding to maintain the existing wayfinding system, and to initiate an overall to the system as recommended by the Streetspace Guidelines.

- Transportation Demand Management (NTI)

Continuation of transportation demand management efforts and programs. Funding will be utilized for outreach, education, and additional activities to support mobility options in and out of Downtown.

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

- Economic Development – M/WBE

Funding to implement the goals outlined in the GR Forward and DDA TIF and Development Plans to support the continued diversification of ground floor businesses in Downtown and ensure opportunities for those owned by women or minorities.

- Downtown Workforce Programming (NTI)

DDA contribution to Downtown Workforce Program helps to support programming and other efforts in order to connect with the downtown workers of Grand Rapids. This could include, but not limited to; Broomball Leagues, exercise and fitness classes, Relax at Rosa event series, Downtown workforce network program, Relax at Rosa event series, Lunch & Learn series, merchant events, and marketing initiatives.

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

- Downtown Marketing and Inclusion Efforts

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.

- Sheldon Avenue Public Improvements

Completion of pedestrian improvements, including new pavers, street trees and decorative lighting, along Sheldon Avenue from Fulton Avenue to Weston Street. The project will further the goal established in GR Forward to create a linear park that connects Cathedral Square to Crescent Park.

- Snowmelt System Capital Repairs

Continued capital repairs to the Downtown snowmelt system(s) to ensure efficient operations.

- State of the Downtown Event/Annual Report

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.

- Tree Well Fill

Continued investments in tree plantings and infrastructure to improve the downtown tree canopy and achieve the goals outlined in GR Forward.

- Urban Recreation

DDA contribution to Urban Recreation Programming for free outdoor fitness programming, outdoor walking and running tours and winter programming.

- 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 six Movies in the Park/Movies on Monroe events, World of Winter, Rosa Parks Ice-skating programming, Light Up Downtown, World Cup, Calder Plaza Anniversary, Event Management Program and a Volunteer Program.

- 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.

- Educational Partnerships Initiatives (NTI)

Contributions to further partnerships with education-based organizations to promote Downtown and the work Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

- 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 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 and LaughFest.

- Police Foot Patrols (NTI)

DDA contribution to providing added public safety via additional police foot patrol services along key entertainment corridors throughout the summer months.

- Public Space Activation (NTI)

DDA contribution to Public Space Activation helps to continue and expand upon the Pop-Up Performer Program, public games, public artwork programs, murals, activation grant program, food truck initiatives, parks programming, and 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 Program (NTI)

DDA contribution to Special Events Event Sponsorship Support Program will help to support events 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-May 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 Training Program will help to support 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.

- Stakeholder Engagement Programs (NTI)

Engagement activities for residents, employees and other stakeholders in FY2019.

- Winter Avenue Building (NTI)

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

- Ticketed Events: Police Services

DDA contribution for GRPD police services for ticketed special events include those located at Van Andel Arena and DeVos Place for pedestrian safety. Additional food patrol services are provided in entertainment districts throughout the warmer months.