



MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Tim Kelly, DGRI Planning Manager
DATE: Updated October 2015
SUBJECT: GR Forward Public Engagement Summary Facts

GR Forward is driven by a robust public consultation initiative. Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc (DGRI) – along with the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Public Schools and other project partners – designed and continues to advance a significant public information and engagement effort that's directly involving citizens, developers, businesses, non-profit and institutional partners, decision makers, and other stakeholders. The strategy broadens the reach of traditional public engagement efforts by deploying innovative methods and technologies.

This memo summarizes the community engagement action from project startup in April 2014 thru September 2015, during which time **over 4,400 citizens have participated in the GR Forward process.**

- **Consultant Selection: 2 committee meetings with a group comprised of 12 citizen members representing the following organizations:**
 - City of Grand Rapids Planning Commission
 - CWD Real Estate
 - Windquest Group
 - Grand Valley State University
 - City of Grand Rapids City Commission
 - 616 Development
 - Grand Rapids Whitewater
 - Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
 - Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority
 - Essence Restaurant Group
 - The Rapid
 - Grand Rapids Public School Board
- **GR Forward project steering committees: 4 comprised of 145 citizen members.**
 - Downtown Plan Steering Committee (32 members): 12 meetings
 - River Corridor Plan Steering Committee (78 members): 12 meetings
 - River Restoration Plan Steering Committee (22 members): 11 meetings
 - GRPS Museum School and Innovation Central High (13 members): 8 meetings



- **DGRI leadership network: reports to and roundtable discussions with the following groups:**
 - DGRI Board of Advisors (12 members): 4 meetings
 - Downtown Development Authority (9 members): 5 meetings
 - Downtown Improvement District (members): 2 meetings
 - Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority (9 members): 3 meetings
 - Alliance for Investment (23 members): 5 meetings
 - Alliance for Vibrancy (19 members): 4 meetings
 - Alliance for Livability (22 members): 5 meetings
- **Briefing City of Grand Rapids Commissions, Councils, and Advisory Boards:**
 - City Commission: 3 meetings
 - Planning Commission: 3 meetings
 - Parking Commission: 5 meetings
 - Parks Advisory Board: 3 meetings
 - Smart Zone Board: 2 meetings
 - Building and Brownfield Authority: 1 meeting
 - Urban Forestry Committee: 1 meeting
- **Mini-grants: \$30,000 to 12 neighborhoods voluntarily applying to support public outreach and participation.**
 - Black Hills Neighborhood Association
 - Cook Library
 - Creston Neighborhood Association
 - Disability Advocates of Kent County
 - Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders
 - Grandville Avenue Arts Center
 - Heritage Hill Neighborhood Association
 - John Ball Neighbors dba SWAN
 - LINC Community Revitalization, Inc.
 - Neighbors of Belknap Lookout
 - Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association
 - West Grand Neighborhood Association
- **Neighborhood consultations: 26 total citywide drawing ~450 sign-ins.**
 - 3 each with Belknap, Black Hills, Creston, Downtown, Heritage Hill, Roosevelt Park, SWAN/JBAN, West Grand
 - 1 Regional meeting each with neighbors in: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, Southwest Grand Rapids
- **Stakeholder Interviews: 30+ with representatives from such organizations as:**



- WMEAC
 - SMG Group
 - Frey Foundation
 - City of Grand Rapids City Commissioners
 - Huntington Bank
 - DDA Board of Advisors
 - DGRI Board of Advisors
 - Celebration Cinema
 - Orion
 - The Rapid
 - Grand Rapids Public Schools Staff
 - Grand Rapids City Staff
 - Grand Rapids Community Foundation
 - Experience Grand Rapids
 - Ellis Parking
 - Spectrum Health
 - Rockford Construction
 - Grand Rapids Whitewater
 - Colliers International
 - Start Garden
 - Attico Ventures
 - The Right Place
 - Greater Grand Rapids Bike Coalition
 - CWD Real Estate
 - 616 Development
 - Monroe North TIFA / Business Association
 - The Geek Group
 - Urban League
- **Focus groups: 13 to date on housing, diversity and inclusion, student life, and other key issues with representatives from the following organizations:**
- University Students: MSU, KCAD, GVSU, WMU/Cooley
 - Merchants: Downtown Market, Bartertown, Central District Cyclery, Barfly, Mayan Buzz, Autofixit
 - Social Service: Mel Trotter, Heartside Neighbors Collaborative Project, Degage, Catholic Charities of WM, Coalition to End Homelessness, HQ
 - Diversity and Inclusion (3 meetings): LINC, GR Community Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Kent County, Kellogg Foundation, Boy Scouts of America, Urban League, SMG, Experience GR, City of GR, Dyer Ives
 - River Art: GRAM, Huntington Bank, Meijer Gardens
 - Economic Development: LINC, GR Current, Neighborhood Ventures, City of GR



- DASH (2 meetings): 616 Development, Downtown Market, Art Prize, SMG, Community Foundation, Dyer Ives, The Rapid, Spectrum, Monroe North BA, GVSU, MSU, WMU/Cooley, GRCC, Ellis Parking, NOBL
- Parking (2 meetings): Bank of Holland, GVSU, Rockford Construction, Community Foundation, DT Residents, Ellis Parking, Planning Commission, 616 Development, MSU, Spectrum, Parking Commission, GRCC, NOBL
- Housing: SVG Real Estate, Dwelling Place, Rockford Construction, Orion, Downtown Residents, 616 Development, City Commissioner, Huntington Bank
- **Public open house**: 450+ visitors to a storefront space dedicated to GR Forward at 50 Louis Street from October – December 2014.
- **Public forums: 225 attendees.**
 - January 15, 2015: 150 participants
 - April 16, 2015: 75 participants
- **Survey of downtown residents, workers, and businesses: 376 respondents.**
- **Downtown resident event: 170 attendees.**
 - April 15, 2015
- **Collaborative mapping exercise**: Received 991 community-generated ideas, insights and comments on barriers.
- **Invited Organizational 75+ consultations:**
 - Business Representatives / Private Sector
 - Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce Board
 - Chamber of Commerce's Inside Grand Rapids Program (x3)
 - West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 - Heartside Business Association (x2)
 - Leadership Grand Rapids
 - Creston Business Association
 - Inside GR
 - Varnum LLP
 - Amway
 - Chamber of Commerce Moving GR Forward Event
 - What's Next
 - BLEND
 - Chamber of Commerce Emerging Leaders Program
 - Hello WM Intern Connect Program
 - JW Marriot Management Team



- Spectrum Health Recruiting Managers
- GR Business Breakfast
- Downtown Market Staff
- Rockford Construction (x2)
- Grand Action Executive Committee

Education

- Stepping Stones Montessori School (x2)
- GRPS Center for Economicology
- Grand Rapids Public School Board (x2)
- GVSU Environmental Planning Class
- Michigan Association of Planning Student Conference
- GVSU Master of Public Administration Class

Civic Organizations

- Grandville Avenue of the Arts
- Experience Grand Rapids Board of Directors
- Convention and Arena Authority Leadership Breakfast
- Convention and Arena Authority Community Inclusion Group
- Grand Rapids Initiatives for Leaders (GRIL)
- GR Rotary Club
- Grand Rapids Kiwanis Club (x2)
- Mayflower Explorers Group
- Greater Grand Rapids National Pan-Hellenic Council
- West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- West Michigan Environmental Leadership Luncheon
- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Board
- West Michigan Steelheaders
- SWAN/JBAN Annual Membership Meeting
- Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association Board
- LINC First Thursday
- LINC First Friday (x2)
- Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Board
- Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association Seniors Meeting
- Creston Neighborhood Monthly Board Meeting
- 616 Community Conversations

State Agencies

- Michigan Economic Development Commission
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority Managers Meeting
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Foundation / Philanthropy

- Dyer-Ives Foundation
- Frey Foundation
- Grand Rapids Community Foundation
- Sebastian Foundation
- Wege Foundation
- WK Kellogg Foundation

Accessibility and Transportation

- The Rapid Board of Directors
- Greater Grand Rapids Bike Coalition
- Disability Advocates of Kent County (x2)

Adjacent Communities

- City of Walker
- City of Kentwood
- City of Lowell City Council
- Alpine Township Board of Advisors
- Downtown Kalamazoo Inc.

- **Leadership Luncheons: 4 round table discussions involving approximately 100 civic leaders:**
 - November 20, 2015: Planning with Bold Vision
 - December 4, 2014: Economic Development and Equity
 - January 15, 2015: Performance Based Governance
 - February 12, 2015: Welcoming Civic Love Through Open Engagement
- **Public Speaker Series: 4 events featuring leaders on:**
 - November 20, 2015: Planning with Bold Vision
 - December 4, 2014: Economic Development and Equity
 - January 15, 2015: Performance Based Governance
 - February 12, 2015: Welcoming Civic Love Through Open Engagement
- **Internet: ~3,250 views/month on a project specific website supported by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.**
- **Planners in public spaces: ~150 people engaged at ArtPrize, Movies in the Park, and other events.**
- **E-Newsletter of updates and insights: 77 distributed with a weekly reach of approximately 300 people.**



- Media: Dozens of print/radio/web/TV clips generated by a concerted earned/paid/ethic media strategy.

4,400+ total participating residents, businesses, community leaders and organizations leading up to start of the formal public comment period in July 2015.

Formal Public Comment Period Engagement Schedule July – Dec. 2015

July

- July 2, 2015: DRAFT GR Forward Plan Submitted
- July 8, 2015: DDA Board
- July 9, 2015: DGRI Board of Advisors
- July 9, 2015: Windquest Group
- July 15, 2015: Social Service Executive Committee
- July 15, 2015: River Restoration Steering Committee
- July 23, 2015: Planning Commission
- July 23, 2015: Diversity and Inclusion Meeting at Grand Rapids Community Foundation
- July 27, 2015: Alliance for Livability
- July 29, 2015: Rockford Construction

August

- August 12, 2015: Public Comment Period Begins
- August 11, 2015: Alliance for Investment
- August 12, 2015: MNTIFA Update
- August 17, 2015: Open House #2 @ DGRI
- August 17, 2015: Library Exhibits
- August 26, 2015: Disability Advocates of Kent County
- August 27, 2015: Heartside Business Association Update

September

- September 1, 2015: NAI Wisinski
- September 8, 2015: Alliance for Investment
- September 8, 2015: Neighbors of Belknap Lookout
- September 10, 2015: Parking Commission
- September 11, 2015: GVSU Administrators
- September 16, 2015: Alliance for Vibrancy
- September 17, 2015: Experience GR Staff



- September 17, 2015: Heritage Hill
- September 21, 2015: GVSU Old Learners
- **September 22, 2015: 42 Day Comment Period Ends**
- September 22, 2015: Creston Neighborhood
- September 23, 2015: SWAN/JBAN
- September 23, 2015 – October 11, 2015: ArtPrize Video
- September 23, 2015: Mobility Tour with Downtown Stakeholders
- September 24, 2015: Bliss for GR
- September 28, 2015: Alliance for Livability
- September 29, 2015: Black Hills
- September 29, 2015: DAKC Accessibility Tour
- September 30, 2015: Amway Corp
- September 30, 2015: WGVU West Michigan Week

October

- October 1, 2015: GR Rowers
- October 1, 2015: DAKC Accessibility Tour
- October 2, 2015: LINC First Friday
- October 3, 2015: Ferris State University Faculty
- October 5, 2015: East Grand Rapids City Commission Update
 - October 6, 2015: Robert S' Radio Show "Pulse of the City" on 94.9 WYGR
 - October 6, 2015: Grandville Art Academy / Roosevelt Park
 - October 7, 2015: Disability Advocates of Kent County
- October 9, 2015: Monroe North Business Association
- October 15, 2015: Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- October 16, 2015: Chamber of Commerce Event with Outpro and Black Women Connect
- October 20, 2015: 3rd Ward Event hosted by Commissioner Lenear and Commissioner Lumpkins
- October 20, 2015: Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses
- October 21, 2015: NAACP
- October 21, 2015: Endless Opportunities
- October 22, 2015: Grand Rapids Association of Realtors
- October 22, 2015: Planning Commission
 - October 22, 2015: Convention and Arena Authority Community Inclusion Group Event
- **October 23, 2015: 73 Day Comment Period Ends**



November

- November 3, 2015: Downtown and River Corridor Steering Committees meet to recommend the plan with edits incorporated from public comment
- November 9, 2015: DGRI Board of Advisors
- November 11, 2015: DDA Board
- November 11, 2015: MNTIFA Board
- November 12, 2015: Planning Commission and Public Hearing

December

- December 15, 2015: City Commission