

Request for Qualifications

Grand River Greenway Operational Planning for Indian Mounds Drive

Grand Rapids/Kent County, MI

Deadline:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. will receive proposals until June 6, 2025

Deliver Electronically to:

Andy Guy

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

aguy@downtowngr.org



DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.



KENT COUNTY
Parks

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., in partnership with Kent County and local municipal partners, invites qualifications from experienced planning, transportation and engineering firms to develop an Operational and Facility Transition Plan for converting Indian Mounds Drive, currently a shared-use corridor for both motorized and nonmotorized users, into a nonmotorized transportation and recreation facility.

Indian Mounds Drive is an approximately 4-mile road traversing from the southside of the City of Grand Rapids, through the City of Wyoming, to the City of Grandville. The local road runs parallel to Interstate 196 to the south/east and the Grand River to the north/west.

The project corridor sits directly across the Grand River from Kent County's Millennium Park. The corridor also connects to, and includes, the Kent Trails system and is situated in the emerging Grand River Greenway - a developing regional greenway that will provide a continuous nonmotorized "backbone connection" through numerous parks, communities and employment centers from Lowell to Lake Michigan.

Building on regional Greenway collaboration already underway, project partners seek consultant support services to assess the practical feasibility of, and a phased plan to, convert Indian Mounds Drive into a safe and attractive linear park and trail facility for recreational users, while maintaining the integrity of the local transportation network

This initiative aligns with the project partners' shared goals to:

- Reduce maintenance burdens and costs associated with illegal dumping, vandalism, camping, etc. along the Indian Mounds Drive corridor.
- Maintain access for Grand River recreational users such as the boating and fishing communities.
- Improve safety and user experience of the non-motorized regional trail system.
- Protect and enhance unique natural and cultural resources in the corridor.
- Maintain efficient motorized traffic circulation in the area and access to the facility for public services like highway infrastructure maintenance and emergency vehicles.
- Promote coordination and collaboration between various landowners and stakeholders
- Accelerate the movement to build out the Grand River Greenway.

The selected firm and/or team will work with the project partners, adjacent landowners and community stakeholders to deliver a comprehensive Operational and Facility Transition Plan for Indian Mounds Drive.

Background Information

Grand River Greenway

In Kent County, the Grand River Greenway is an emerging network of public parks and other civic amenities linked together by 50 miles of multi-use trails following the Grand River corridor from the City of Lowell on the County's eastern border, through Downtown Grand Rapids, to Millennium Park and Johnson Park on the west.

The development of the Greenway in greater Grand Rapids is coordinated by a network of public and private partners including Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., Kent County, several local units of local government along with private and philanthropic partners. Current and future capital

projects along the Greenway total over an estimated \$300 million of investment in parks, trails and other recreational assets anticipated over the next 5-10 years.

While many individual municipal plans have prioritized trails in the last decade, interagency coordination is now considerably increasing through Greenway-related organizing efforts in recent years. The following information is relevant background on the extensive planning, design and other work done to date related to the Grand River Greenway that's useful to inform this process:

- [Grand River Greenway Framework \(2025\)](#)
- Grand River Greenway Operations Maintenance & Activation Study (forthcoming, summer 2025)
- [Kent County Parks Master Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [City of Grandville Parks Master Plan \(2025\)](#)
- [City of Wyoming Parks Master Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [City of Wyoming \[re\]imagined Master Plan \(2021\)](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Parks Master Plan \(2022\)](#)
- [Ottawa County Parks Master Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [West Michigan Regional Master Trails Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [Lower Grand River Watershed Resilience Action Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [MDOT Grand Region Non-Motorized Plan \(2017\)](#)
- [Grand Valley Metro Council Active Transportation Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [Kent County Road Commission Strategic Plan \(2021\)](#)

Indian Mounds Drive

The project site encompasses 363 acres bounded by the Grand River, I-196, Wilson Avenue and Market/I-196 entrance/exit ramp, with a breakdown of 325 acres of public land and 38 acres of private property. Public landowners include Kent County, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and the cities of Grandville, Wyoming, and Grand Rapids. Private parcels host uses such as a radio tower, oil well, and highway billboard.

Historically the land was first donated to the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Boulevards, later transferred to the City of Grand Rapids, then to Kent County, and eventually divided between Grandville and Wyoming. Today, the area features 3.7 miles of riverfront trail, with maintenance responsibilities shared among the cities: Grandville manages 60%, Wyoming 20%, and Grand Rapids 20%.

Common management challenges on the site include illegal dumping, unauthorized camping, and wrong-way motorized traffic on the trail.

The Significance of the "Norton" Mounds Site

Also within the project site are a group of 11 indigenous burial mounds created during the Middle Woodland period approximately 2,000 years ago. Commonly referred to as "The Mounds," this location remains a significant cultural asset as the only surviving mound group in the lower Grand River Valley.

The Norton Mounds are listed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites (1957) as a National Historic Landmark (1965), on the National Register of Historic Places (1966), and as a Historic District of the City of Grand Rapids (1973).

The land where the Mounds are located is legally owned by the City of Grand Rapids. The Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) since 1936 has been the named steward of the Mounds. The GRPM's legal authority to manage the Mounds is explicitly described in a lease agreement with the City of Grand Rapids. As the local indigenous tribe, the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians serve as caretaker of the burial mounds.

The Grand River Bands are an essential stakeholder in this process. Any final recommendations and implementation plan flowing from this process must prioritize and work to advance practices aligned with responsible stewardship of this highly significant and spiritual cultural site.

- [Norton Mound Site: Description & History of a Prominent Cultural National Historic Landmark \(2003\)](#)
- [Norton Mound Group National Historic Landmark Cultural Landscape Management Plan \(2007\)](#)

Scope of Work

The consultant scope of work for this project includes:

Site Analysis

- Archival research to compile a narrative and visual history of the corridor.
- Review current road configuration, land use and mobility patterns.
- Compile existing data on traffic counts (motorized and non-motorized), crashes, near crashes, etc. and perform additional counts as needed.
- Identification of access needs, including easements and other legal requirements for emergency vehicles, Michigan Department of Transportation, Kent County Road Commission, Members of the Michigan Public Service Commission, private property owners, recreational boat facilities, etc.
- Compile existing ownership records for right of way and surrounding parcels in the study area, as well as any existing easements.
- Review relevant regulatory and policy considerations, including the forthcoming Grand River Greenway Operations & Maintenance Strategy.

Engagement

- Working in tandem with local partners, create a community engagement plan to understand the range of user needs and ideas for the corridor to inform recommendations.
 - Specific user groups include cyclists, anglers, and indigenous communities
 - The Engagement Plan will likely be phased with initial engagement focused on technical details with project partners and later engagement focused on the at-large public and potential park and trail users.

Scenario Development

- Create and analyze at least three scenarios for phased conversion with varying timelines and degrees of intervention.
 - Scenarios will evaluate opportunities for stronger non motorized connectivity to broader Grand River Greenway, adjacent recreational elements, neighborhoods, business districts, etc.
- Evaluate traffic rerouting and network connectivity impacts.
- Develop implementation budgets for each scenario
- Determine a preferred recommendation.

Design & Operations Framework

- Determine trail standards (universal accessibility, width, material, shoulder) and phasing plan for nonmotorized trail upgrades.
- Explore and propose design treatments for the non motorized facility, including the number, type and location of supporting amenities (parking, restrooms, seating, waste receptacles, etc.)
- Explore and propose opportunities for expanded recreation and river access along the trail
 - Develop 4-6 schematic/conceptual designs of key trail segments and potential recreational amenities to support stakeholder engagement and review.
 - *NOTE:* Trail and park design should balance recreational access with the long-term preservation and site management of indigenous burial mounds, and advance recommendations that align with and support previous stewardship plans.
- Explore and propose landscape solutions to enhance flood management, environmental restoration and resiliency.
- Propose any recommended operational protocols additive to the forthcoming Grand River Greenway Operations and Maintenance Strategy. This could include enhanced security, flood management or other protocols.

Implementation Plan

- Given practical feasibility, determine the appropriate process for conversion of the roadway to a non-motorized facility in compliance with all state and local regulations
- Analyze and recommend any land transfer/access agreements that may be needed between municipal facility owners.
- Develop timeline and phasing for potential conversion and facility upgrades.
- Detail scope items and budget estimates for all facility upgrades.

Local partners believe that, with a strong implementation plan, this project is potentially a strong candidate for funding through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership, among other prospective grant opportunities. To support anticipated future fundraising efforts, this process and final deliverable must be executed in a way that strategically supports potential future grant requests to key federal and state agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Grand Valley Metro Council, etc.

Deliverables

- Transition plan of transportation facility, including ownership arrangements
- 4-6 schematic/conceptual designs of trail segments for stakeholder review
- Implementation plan for improvements and ongoing maintenance

Proposal Submission

Responses to this request for qualifications should be no longer than 10 pages. The proposal should include the following information:

- A summary of project understanding including any observations on particular project expectations, opportunities or challenges.
- A firm overview and identification of proposed project team members.
- A description of experience in completing this type or related work, including specific examples and project references.
- A proposed project schedule, description of your project management philosophy and approach towards completing this work.
- A summary of hourly rates and/or professional fees to perform the requested services. A full budget is not required at this time.
- Additional information. Please present any relevant data or information which you consider pertinent to the project and selection process.

Responses should be submitted in digital format to Andy Guy (aguy@downtowngr.org).

Consultant Selection

Project partners will evaluate all responses to this opportunity and may conduct interviews with short-listed facilitators and/or firms. The basis for evaluation will include:

- Qualifications and capacity to perform the work.
- Relevant planning, transportation, public space design, management and operations experience.
- Demonstrated experience with relevant state and federal grant programs, specifically Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership.
- Experience working with diverse stakeholder and user groups to reach common, practical solutions.
- Understanding of local ambition and context.
- Rates and fees.
- Professional excellence.
- Quality of communication.

Project Schedule

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ● May 16, 2025 | – RFQ Issued |
| ● June 6, 2025 | – Qualifications Due from Interested Applicants |
| ● June 20, 2025 | – Notice of Award |
| ● July 1, 2025 | – Commence Project |
| ● July 31, 2026 | – Submit Key Deliverables |