
GRAND RIVER NETWORK

EQUITY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

BOARD BRIEFING – FEBRUARY 2023

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EQUITY FRAMEWORK ADVISORS

REFRESHER ON WHO WE ARE



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Water Infrastructure



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Racial Equity Frameworks



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Community Engagement



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Equitable Economic Development



REVIEW: EQUITY FRAMEWORK INTEGRATION

HOW DOES THIS FIT INTO GRAND RIVER NETWORK?

In GRN's Own Words (per 2022 Strategy Brief):

- **GRN Purpose:** Unite community voices to advocate for enhancing the river's ecological, economic and social benefits, ensuring its legacy as the core of the city and region's enjoyment and prosperity.
- **GRN Mission:** Working to create a world-class River for All by developing, activating and stewarding the Grand River as a place that enriches our community well-being.
- **GRN Core Value (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion):** We center our work on the idea that the riverfront belongs to everyone and can be a model for community-driven, equitable development and access to opportunity. We strive to engage with, and learn from, a diversity of individuals and communities and work to shape solutions that directly address inequities.
- **Business Plan Summary:** Engage community to define equitable outcomes and raise awareness of the river vision.

Task at Hand (per business plan):

Complete an **equity framework** to help guide river corridor revitalization that defines common language and goals, strategies and performance metrics.



REVIEW: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & FEEDBACK LOOP

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO FOR EIGHT MONTHS?

Ten workshops

completed, in English and Spanish, live and digital, traditional focus group, large format gathering, videography in "StoryCorps" model, facilitated charettes. Additional online surveys deployed and aggregated. Asked for validation of concepts, strategies, actions, and outcomes desired.

62 interviews

completed, each acknowledged in Framework. Helped define achievable outcomes.

Public Workshops
(target 6-8)

Feedback Loop
(digital, SMS, live, bilingual)

Advisory Board
(9-15 members)

Implementation Interviews
(target 30)

15-member board selected, **six oversight meetings convened**; members have driven additional outreach to intensify connection to hard-to-reach multicultural segments; Editorial and survey subcommittees. DGRI and City actively supported process. **Board has unanimously endorsed the Framework** and leads the document with a cover letter.

Build Awareness & MarCom Assets.

Public events, all-day tabling (6)
Grand River Voices brand assets
GRV Website, Bilingual (1,600+ visitors)
Facebook Page (760+ followers, 11,500+ impressions)
SMS Text Thread (180+ members)
Email Bulletin (265+ contacts)
Street Posters w/ QR (7 languages)
Spanish language media coverage



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WHAT HAS OUR ENGAGEMENT YIELDED?

“We confidently state this document is a community-led, credible, and implementable strategy for achieving greater regional equity in conjunction with pending investments into the Grand River Corridor.”

- Stakeholder Advisory Board, Statement of Endorsement



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WHAT HAS OUR ENGAGEMENT YIELDED?

The 85-page Framework itself is a working definition of River Equity.

- Vision & Values Statement
- Six thematic Goals, honed into 15 common sense Strategies
- Hundreds of recommended actions and metrics
- 42 Priority Outcomes to set our sites upon
- Recommendations for near-term implementation

*The document also includes much of the homework upon which an Equity Framework relies: an historical background section to set the local context for intentional investment, documentation of the deep engagement process underlying the recommendations, a glossary of key terms that may not be familiar to all, as well as appendices and acknowledgements to those involved.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: COMMUNITY-ENDORSED GOALS

**Goal 1:
Equitable Economic Development**

**Goal 4:
A Healthy River and Community**

**Goal 2:
An Accessible River**

**Goal 5:
Engaged, Supported Youth**

**Goal 3:
An Inviting, Inclusive River**

**Goal 6:
Implementation and Accountability**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: STRATEGIES SUPPORTING THE GOALS

Goal 1:

Equitable Economic Development

- Create quality jobs and career pathways through river programs and policies
- Support the sustainability and expansion of small, local, and BIPOC businesses
- Leverage river-related policy to catalyze community economic development and stabilize neighborhoods

Goal 2:

An Accessible River

- Improve and expand equitable connections to the river
- Create vibrant and open public spaces

Goal 3:

An Inviting, Inclusive River

- Provide free and low-cost, culturally-relevant programming
- Create and sustain a safe, welcoming river

Goal 4:

A Healthy River and Community

- Continue to monitor water quality, restore habitat health, and incorporate green stormwater infrastructure
- Work with communities to continue advancing environmental justice

Goal 5:

Engaged, Supported Youth

- Create opportunities for youth to explore and play
- Create opportunities for youth to learn and work
- Foster youth agency and leadership

Goal 6:

Implementation and Accountability

- Invest in a dedicated nonprofit for the River Project
- Build broad endorsements for the River Equity Framework
- Build social infrastructure to support the river ecosystem, including an ongoing feedback loop, transparency, and accountability mechanisms



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1:

Equitable Economic Development

- Local hire goal of 30% of total work hours on City and County river contracts
- Targeted hire (BIPOC I, low-income, and underemployed communities) goal of 20% of total work hours on all City and County river contracts
- Double the number of MLBEs on the City and County bench in 24 months
- MLBE, WBE, MBE or BIPOC spend goal of 30% of all City and County river contracts
- Integration of equity framework into City, County, township, and other planning documents
- Updated river planning overlays to codify key framework goals



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: AN ACCESSIBLE RIVER

Goal 2: An Accessible River

- 40 miles of new bike lanes, off-street trails, and public transit connections to the river
- 1,000,000 unique river visitors by 2025, and an average of five (5) visits annually by Kent County residents
- 20% increase in active transportation and transit users accessing the river
- 100% of all undeveloped river's edge protected for public access
- New public shoreline access on previously inaccessible shoreline
- 50 acres of new and renovated riverfront park spaces in the urban core in 10 years
- 200 acres of new riverfront park spaces across Kent County in 10 years
- Provision or transfer of dedicated ceremonial river space for indigenous tribal communities
- 100% all redevelopment projects ADA accessible and universally-designed



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: AN INVITING, INCLUSIVE RIVER

Goal 3: An Inviting, Inclusive River

- 350 events at the river per year, with an emphasis on community and cultural themes
- 3,000 hours of measurable river activation annually
- Demographic breakdown of river event attendees that mirrors regional demographics
- 35 new educational, art, and safety installations along the shoreline by 2025
- Public Wellness facilities every half-mile along the river trail or bike path from Millennium to Riverside Park
- Annual riverfront cleanliness indices that show year-over-year (YOY) improvement
- 90% of all Kent County Youth aged 7-18 can swim, or have the opportunity to take (or have taken) a water-safety class
- Repeal of ordinance prohibiting swimming in the river as soon as health & safety conditions allow
- 100% of visitors feel safe and welcomed at the river



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: A HEALTHY RIVER AND COMMUNITY

Goal 4: A Healthy River and Community

- Production of a public river report card with water quality and other key indices
- Reintroduction of sturgeon to Grand River
- Reintroduction of native Grand River Plants
- 40% tree canopy coverage along the river corridor
- All new public and private projects incorporate green stormwater infrastructure or traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) practice
- Actively enforced local, state, and federal laws to protect and promote clean water
- Partnerships with Southside communities to clean adjacent river and tributaries, achieving equity in regional water quality



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: ENGAGED, SUPPORTED YOUTH

Goal 5: Engaged, Supported Youth

- 150 annual field trips to the river from low-income and communities of color
- Annual River Youth event planned by, and for, local youth
- Every student in Kent County takes a course on Environmental Studies that reviews concepts like stormwater, pollution, climate change, and ecosystem balance using the Grand River as a case study
- Deepen educational opportunities via STEM Greenhouse, Grand Rapids Public Museum, GREEN, or equivalent programs
- 300 summer “river ambassador” or “river entrepreneur” internships for youth per year
- Creation of River Youth Advisory Council of diverse representation
- 10,000 river posts per year on youth-preferred social media
- “It’s my River” video competition



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PRIORITY OUTCOMES: IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Goal 6:

Implementation and Accountability

- Investment in a diverse organization whose sole focus is the river project, which adopts the Equity Framework, and acts as advocate and implementer
- Endorsement of the Equity Framework by key municipalities, civic institutions, business leaders, community advocates, and general population
- Establishment of an independent stakeholder body to review progress on river equity goals and publicly issue findings and recommendations



GRAND RIVER NETWORK: NEXT STEPS

ENDORSE, EMBED, ADVOCATE, ENGAGE, IMPLEMENT

1. Publicly endorse and adopt the Framework goals as part of GRN vision.
2. Walk the talk. Embed equity outcomes into GRN governance and structure. Initiate implementation plans to drive Framework strategies.
3. Advocate to other institutions, including those you represent, to endorse the Framework alongside GRN and seek ways to implement.
4. Take custody of the GRV MarCom assets and develop a robust two-way engagement plan that creates a stakeholder feedback loop.
5. Start now. Incorporate priority outcomes into current project implementation planning and encourage others to do the same.



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BOARD DISCUSSION

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