<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voices &amp; Visions Summary Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TIM AALSBURG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARYLE ABENDROTH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRACE ACHTERHOF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYNN AFDENDOULIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTIN ALLEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCESCA AMARI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARL ANDERSEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAURA ANDREA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DORETHA ARDOIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RENEE ASHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRIS ATWATER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID AUSSICKEr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN BAAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARA BAAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALT BAGBY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEAN BAHLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYLLIS BALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID BARNEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERNIE BARRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREG BEGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICTOR BILL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINDA BESSEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMA LEE BIRNIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN BIRNIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAIG BLACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEPHEN BLAHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARA BISKLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOM BLAUFORD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILLIAM BLESSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA VERNE BUCKLEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD BLODGETT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LYLE BOATMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R BOATMAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID BOEHM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDWARD BOLT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANCES BOND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANDY BOND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRETTCHEN BOUWMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN BOWEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILLIAM BOWLING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LARRY BRATSCHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOANNA BRAUN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL BRIGANTE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARLES BREHOF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORMA BRINK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOB BROWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUKE BROWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATRICIA, BROWN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THANKS to all those who took time to participate in Voices & Visions!

ANDREA MAITNER
JOYCE MAKINEN
DAVEY MALLORY
KELLY MARKOW
DEAN MARTIN
DAVID MARTY
SHEILA MARZOLF
STAN MAST
FITA MAY
CHARLES McALLUM
LIZ MCCORMICK
MIKE MCDANIELS
HERBERT McCOY
PATRICIA McCORGE
ROB MCKEON
MIKE MCCLELLAND
ROBERT MEEKER
RICHARD MEHLER
LEWIS MERWEATHER
MARY MILANO
STEVE MILLER
GRETHE MINNHAAR
MIKE MOHAN
SUE MOHOREK
MICHELLE MONTESANO
DENNIS MOORE
RICHARD MORRISON
LEIGH MURRAY
DAVE NEDERHOED
CAROLYN NELSON
TIM NELSON
PAUL NELSON
TOM NEMITZ
RICK NEWBERRY
DAVID NEWTON
NOLA NIELSEN
CRAG NOBELIN
STEVE NOHEL
TOM NOBEL
JEFF NOURST
WAYNE NORLIN
PATRICIA O'CONNOR
KEITH ORBEN
YVONNE ORLEMAN
JUAN OLIVAREZ
SIMON OPPENHUIZEN
JOHN OTT
PAM PATTON
BOB PATULLO
JIM PAYNE
VIRGINIA PEARCE
JEFF PEREZ
SHIRLEY PERKINS
DAN PERRELLA
LISA PERRELLA
THERESA PETKO
STEVE PERPIONT
RICHARD PLATTE
MARK POLDRMAN
CHUCK POST-HUMUS
DICK PRADET
PATRICK PULHAM
BARBARA RAAYMAKERS
DONALD RAAYMAKERS
LYNN RABAUT
ROBERT RAZ
JUDY RAZMUS
JONNY RUSH
BARB SACKAS
LINDA SAMUELSON
ROB SANCHEZ
JANET SANDERS
EMILY SANDSON
MANY SAVAGE
KATRIN SCHILLING
ROB SCHMITT
JACK SCHWAB
TERRY SCHWITZER
PAUL SCHEPMA
DAVID SEAMON
LES SEANON
LAURIE SELINGER
MARGARET SELIGER
SHEILA SELINER
T.J. SELINER
MARY SEMYOR
BONNIE SHIKE
FRANCES STEWART
VICKI STEWART
LUCY STONEHAM
SANDRA STRAUER
JAMES STREEFE
EDWARD STRONG
DENNIS STURTEVANT
RICHARD SUSAN JR
DONNA SUSMUL
DICK TAVER
ALLIE THOMAS
MARY THOMAS
TOM TIMPA
SHARON VANDERWILP
RONALD VANSILTON
DICK VAUGHAN
SHERYL VENNEMA
ERIC VIESTO
KON VOGT
HAROLD VORHIES SR
VIRGIL VADE
ELIZABETH WAITE
JOHN WALLMANN
ALLEN WALTERS
GLENN WARNER
GLENN WARNER
SOPHIA WASHINGTON
DEBBIE WATCOCK
WILLIE WDEE
WILLIE WELLS JR
TOM WESIBOTT
TY WESSON
DARRYL WEST
R.D. WEST
JOHN WESTRA
IRENE WISMA
MARIA WILCOX
DENNIS WILJAN
KARIS WILSON
STEVE WILSON
JIM WINTER-TROTUWA
CRIGC WINSNER
JOHN WISNIEWSKI
RICK WITHER
CASS WINDERSGREN
BOB WOODROCK
GABRIEL WORL
SHARON WOOST
SHARON WENTSCH
DAVE YOUNG
JOE ZAINAE
KIMM ZAMARRON
GEORGE ZIMMERMAN
NED ZIMMERMAN
DER ZONDERVAN
GRANT ZONDERVAN
MIKE ZUZAK

Our apologies to those whose names we may have inadvertently omitted.
Acknowledgements

City Commission
John H. Logie, Mayor
George Heartwell, Third Ward
James Kozak, First Ward
Lewis Meriwether, Third Ward
Linda Samuelson, Second Ward
Roy Schmidt, First Ward
Sharon Worst, Second Ward

Downtown Development Authority
Thomas J. Weshowski, Chair
Robert Buffham
John Canepa
David Cassard
Katherine Kuhn
John Logie
Patricia O'Connor
Judy Rose
Casey Wondergem

Working Committee of the DDA
David Cassard, DDA
Bruce Cheadle
Beverly Drake
Dick Morton
Vern Olson
Judy Rose, DDA
Robert Steketee
James Streeter
Thomas Weshowski, DDA

Downtown 21 Coordinating Committee
John Logie, Co-Chair
Katherine Kuhn, Co-Chair
John Canepa
David Cassard
Arend Lubbers
Charles McCallum
Diana Sieger
Milt Rohwer, Staff

Institutions and Neighborhoods Task Force
Arend D. Lubbers, Chairperson
Diana Sieger, Vice Chairperson
Grace Achterhof
William Blessing
Bill Byl
Dick Calkins
Charles Deihl
Diane De Vries
David Doyle
Beverly Drake
Jeffery Grotsky
John Hair
George Heartwell
Rebecca Hoffman
Jim Kadlecek
Craig Kinnear
Ron Lefau
John Logie
Faite Mack
Don Maine
Harold Marks
Paul Nelson
Dave Newton
Juan Olivarez
Shirley Perkins
Judy Rose
Roy Schmidt
Margaret Sellers
Fred Vandenberg
Ron VanSteeleland

Urban Center Task Force
David Cassard, Chairperson
Martin Allen
John Baab
David Barney
William Bowling
Robert Buffham
Valentino Cuillo
Kayem Dunn
Michael Ellis
Lynn Francis
Patricia Gardener
Robert Groeters
Joanna Hainer
Katherine Kuhn
Mike McDaniels
Steve Nobel
David Smith
Craig Kinnear, Staff

Convention, Culture and Entertainment Task Force
Charles McCallum, Chairperson
Bruce Brown, Vice Chairperson
Martin Allen
Timothy Chester
Paul Dreher
Don Maine
David Marty
Nancy MacCartney
Richard Platte
Chuck Royce
Peter Smith
Judith Sobol
Joseph Tomaselli
Casey Wondergem
Connie Frazier, Staff
Design Studios West, Inc.
Andrew Bush
Donald Brandes
Joel Freedman

Partners for Livable Communities
Robert McNulty

Dr Evan Vlachos, Futurist
Richard Louv, Author & Journalist
Nick Wolterstorf, Author

Aves Inc.
Linda Gubitz
Jim Markle

Inwords Inc.
Ron Koehler
Bill Holm
Cindy Sharp
Barbara VanderKallen

Michigan Message Center, Holland
24-Hour HotLine

Special Thanks To:
Grand Center
Grand Rapids Art Museum
Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce
Grand Rapids Public Library
Public Museum of Grand Rapids
Warner, Norcross & Judd

Project Manager
Sheila Mast

Administration
Kurt Kimball
James H. Knack
William F. Hoyt

Graphic Design
Chris Gray

Planning Staff
Jay Fowler
Dave Jensen
Keith Larson
Marv Lummen
Kurt Mai
Ken Schilling
Margaret Shackelton
Valencia Thompson

Media
Jon Koeze, GRIN
GRTV Staff

Printing
Jack DeYoung

Summary Report
July, 1993
Voices & Visions is sponsored by the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority.
# Table of Contents

Preface .................................................................................................................. 9

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 11

* Chapter 1...A People Place ............................................................................. 17
  Combine Efforts to Expand and Promote Downtown Arts and Entertainment Activities ........................................... 18
  Combine Arts Marketing ......................................................................................... 18
  Expand Evening & Weekend Activities ................................................................... 19
  Create a Youth Activity System ............................................................................ 19
  Seek Local-Public Funding Support for the Arts .................................................. 20
  Create a Shared Auditorium .................................................................................. 21
  Make the Arts More Visible in Downtown .............................................................. 21
  Create Downtown Artist Spaces .......................................................................... 21
  Expand Storefront Art Galleries .......................................................................... 22
  Make Downtown “Pedestrian-Friendly” ................................................................ 23
    Re-design Pedestrian Walkways & Monroe Center .............................................. 23
    Make Downtown Feel Safe for Everyone ............................................................. 23
  Provide Housing in Downtown Buildings ............................................................ 24

* Chapter 2...A Growing Place ........................................................................... 27
  Make The Public Sector a Partner ........................................................................ 28
    Establish One-Stop Help for Downtown Developers ........................................... 28
    Improve Coordination of Institutional and Neighborhood Planning .................. 28
    Expand DDA’s Boundaries ................................................................................. 29
  Bring Private and Nonprofit Groups Together ...................................................... 30
    Create Shared Offices for Downtown Organizations .......................................... 30
    Expand Support and Involvement in Business Recruitment and Retention Efforts ........................................ 30
    Building Pride in Downtown ............................................................................... 31
    Establish a Presidents’ Council for Educational Institutions ............................. 32
    Organize a Downtown Partnership ..................................................................... 32
    Consolidate Review Processes for Health Care Institutions ............................ 33
**Table of Contents**

- Build Necessary Support Services ................................................................. 33
- Create a Child Care System for Downtown ...................................................... 33
- Put More Downtown Shuttles on the Road ...................................................... 34
- Make Heartside a Better Place to Live and Work ........................................... 35

♦ Chapter 3...A Place to Be Proud Of ................................................................. 37
- The Greening of Downtown ........................................................................... 38
- Develop Incentives for Private Sector Reuse of Older Buildings .................. 38
- Implement a Trailblazing Sign Program .......................................................... 39
- Create a Downtown Lighting Program ............................................................ 40
- Clean-up Downtown ....................................................................................... 40
- Create Positive, Forward-Looking Building and Development Guidelines ........ 41

▲ Chapter 4...A Place for the Future ................................................................. 43
- Create a Library Beyond Walls ..................................................................... 44
- Coordinate Convention Center & Arena Plans with the Arts & Entertainment Community ................................................................. 44
- Create a Shared Health Care Management Institute in Downtown .............. 45
- Create a Partnership for Conflict Management in Transition Areas .............. 46
- Build the Regional Bus System of the Future ............................................... 47

Conclusion .......................................................................................................... 49

Index .................................................................................................................... 50
This document is a summary report to the community from Voices & Visions, the community planning process for downtown Grand Rapids. The following pages review the work completed thus far and describe the more than 30 specific actions proposed by Voices & Visions.

Most of these actions are already being worked on. Some will take up to 10 years to complete. Taken individually, the proposals represent specific public and private strategies and actions for downtown growth and development. Taken together, the proposals complement and support one another to form a comprehensive agenda for change.

Consider this document a snapshot of where we are now, as well as a vision of what downtown should be a decade from today. It is not intended to be read and then relegated to a bookshelf. This is a living document — a guide, if you will, for the people, organizations, and institutions who must work together to remake downtown Grand Rapids...into the place YOU want to be.
The Voices of the People Shape Visions for Downtown

Voices & Visions is giving new direction to an old friend - downtown Grand Rapids. How do we know downtown needs something new? Because we asked, and the people of metropolitan Grand Rapids told us so.

What Is Voices & Visions?

Voices & Visions is a planning process set in motion in 1990 by the City of Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority. Its charge was to discover what we needed to make Grand Rapids grow and prosper in the 21st century. As it proceeded with its work, Voices & Visions attracted national attention and created some local controversy - as well as deep commitment and enthusiastic support. That's often how it is with something new.

And, indeed, Voices & Visions - both the plan and the process is something new.

What makes Voices & Visions different?

It's about PEOPLE - their needs, values, and beliefs.

Voices & Visions was launched with the realization that traditional planning methods do not embody the needs and desires of the people. So we turned the planning process upside down. We built the proposals around a metropolitan consensus, not on the advice of a few professional planners and consultants. We asked the people who live in the community to develop their own ideas, and then we challenged downtown's leaders to run with them, refine them, and work together to make them happen.

Yes, downtown Grand Rapids has seen many plans. But in the past, we always created plans that had to be "sold" to the community and downtown stakeholders after a few leaders told us what downtown should be. The people were told - never asked - how "the City" would change the physical face of downtown. Our citizens were never before asked what they need, what they feel is important to hang onto, and what must be changed. They were never asked what values and beliefs they would like to see reflected in their downtown and their children's downtown.

Voices & Visions did ask, so the proposals have special meaning and importance. They embody the experience, wisdom, and thought of those who care about downtown and want it to be a great place for themselves and their families, now and in the future.

In short, Voices & Visions gave the pencil back to the people.

How Was This Done?

Voices & Visions brought the community together in working sessions, citizen forums, task forces, discussions and debates to share ideas and participate in setting downtown's new course for the future.

From all over the metropolitan area, citizens shared their hopes, dreams and desires for downtown Grand Rapids. Voices & Visions organizers also recognized that, after all, if downtown is to become a place where people want to be, every citizen in the Grand Rapids area should be given the chance to contribute to its future.

And contribute they did! Nearly 500 people from throughout the metro area volunteered over 3500 hours and participated in meetings. These people came from Ada, Allendale, Caledonia, Cascade Township, Coopersville, East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Hudsonville, Kentwood, Lowell, Rockford, Spring Lake, Walker and Wyoming. And many (thousands) more used the 50 Voices & Visions suggestion
boxes located throughout the metro area, called the Voices & Visions 24-hour HotLine to give comments and get information, wrote letters to the Voices & Visions organizers, or responded to a special Grand Rapids Press insert to test the results of early meetings and discussions.

Once the people's visions for downtown were heard, a number of task forces refined the visions into concrete proposals. The task forces were made up of interested citizens as well as representatives of the businesses, organizations, and institutions who will turn the visions into reality. Out of this inclusive process came specific proposals and practical plans of action. The process also helped forge the partnerships that are so vital to carry out the actions.

**What Were the Results?**

Voices & Visions produced proposals – more than 30 of them – that will change downtown and make sure it becomes the place people want to live, work, and play, no matter what their interest, age, income or background.

And Voices & Visions has already brought together many downtown organizations, institutions, businesses, and individuals who are now committed to carrying out those actions.

The proposed actions were born from the consensus of many. They embody the values we, as a community, hold dear. They challenge us to change, yet preserve our heritage. They call us to bold action, yet have the patience to talk and plan. Above all, the proposals reflect a desire by the people to make downtown a place for people – to design a downtown that is economically stronger, more useful and more fun.

Some people have asked why there are more than 30 Voices & Visions proposals. Why not limit the proposals to a few “major” actions that are easily explained, highly visible, and have immediate impact?

There is no “silver bullet” that will resolve the complicated issues downtown must face. We must heed the voices of the community that said downtown must see many changes before
it will have the broad appeal of a true gathering place -- a place where people and families want to come, again and again.

Downtown is complex, and change is not easy. An effective plan must address many individual issues while recognizing that the issues intertwine and affect one another. For example, a plan that calls for more housing in downtown buildings must also remove the financial and code barriers that currently make reuse of older buildings impractical for developers. At the same time, downtown must be an attractive place to live, so the housing plan's success depends on the success of other plans, such as expanded entertainment and cultural activities, enhanced lighting, more green space, a better pedestrian system, and other improvements.

What Happens Next?
We must draw on the community's strength, just as we have throughout the Voices & Visions planning process. Because the plan is complex and comprehensive, people must continue to work together. Downtown developers, the arts community, city officials, business leaders, colleges, health care institutions, and all other downtown stakeholders must cooperate and be committed to translate the proposals into actions.

For instance, we need a quality, affordable child care system for downtown. But it won't just happen, and one person or organization can't do it alone. Human service agencies, colleges, day care providers, businesses, and others must come together, use the Voices & Visions proposals as a framework, and put together the resources to build the system.

The team spirit of Voices & Visions must continue. And always, the visions of the people must stay in focus.

What Will Keep Us On Course?
Early in Voices & Visions, participants put onto paper those principles which people felt were important in guiding us as we work to achieve to our envisioned downtown. These guiding principles, along with others stated throughout the planning process, form a type of "constitution":

Introduction
CONSTITUTION FOR DOWNTOWN GRAND RAPIDS

WE, THE CITIZENS OF THE GRAND RAPIDS METROPOLITAN AREA, BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING TO BE IMPORTANT FOR OUR DOWNTOWN TO BECOME WHAT WE WANT AND WILL WORK HARD TO ACHIEVE:

 mái DOWNTOWN IS THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEART OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA.
It should reflect and represent the best of our community, West Michigan. Downtown should reflect the traditional values of respect for quality, integrity, honesty and commitment. Downtown should reflect the rich ethnic, cultural and social diversity of the region. It should clearly be an integral, interdependent part of the city and the region.

 mái DOWNTOWN GRAND RAPIDS IS FOR EVERYONE.
Our downtown should be inclusive and open to all people. It should be a place where people from all walks of life may choose to live, work and play, together and with dignity.

Our downtown must be the community of communities, appealing to all citizens, life styles and life stages. Downtown must be barrier-free and physically safe and accessible for all.

 mái DOWNTOWN OF THE FUTURE SHOULD INCLUDE THE BEST OF OUR PAST.
As physical changes and improvements are made to downtown, the heritage and history that connects us all, and connects us to our past, must be preserved and enhanced for future generations. Older downtown buildings should be preserved and reused wherever possible.

 mái DOWNTOWN IS A PLACE FOR PEDESTRIANS.
People should enjoy walking in downtown Grand Rapids. Walking should be an opportunity to take in the sights and sounds of a big city downtown – only more beautiful, cleaner, of a more human scale without skyscrapers blocking the sun, and without so much traffic and exhaust fumes.

Downtown should be a place where you can walk to most everything; and want to. Walking in downtown should be a pleasant experience, regardless of the time of day or the season. And, the walking environment should be barrier-free, so all can enjoy it.

 mái DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN MUST PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
The river, the hill and the valley are all natural resources of the downtown, to be protected, and enhanced where possible. Views of, and from, these geographic features are important in our future development and use of downtown.

The quality of the air we breathe and the river water running through downtown matters to those who want to live, work or play here. We must work together to improve each element and its role in our changing downtown.

 mái DOWNTOWN REFLECTS AND CELEBRATES OUR COMMUNITY’S DIVERSITY.
Diversity should be a priority for downtown business and community leaders. As the single location representing the wide variety of people and interests in the metropolitan area, downtown Grand Rapids is becoming more and more of a center of diverse interests, tastes, activities and life styles.

In the future, efforts must be made to ensure that our community’s diversity is proudly reflected, displayed and celebrated in our downtown. Downtown can no longer be the single-dimensional central business district of earlier eras. Downtown Grand Rapids should, instead, emerge as the cosmopolitan urban center for West Michigan.
**Downtown Decision-Making Must Remain Open and Inclusive.**

Decisions for the future of downtown must continue to be based on consensus building and an open, inclusive process rather than exclusive and closed.

One of the preliminary vision statements produced early in the Voices & Visions process stated: *In the future, Grand Rapids will move closer to its vision through a policy and decision-making PROCESS, which involves all levels. By implementing an open system of equal access to all groups and individuals, decisions made will be understood. Through a commitment to excellence with integrity, the process of policy and decision-making will capture the loyalty and support of the citizens.*

**Downtown Must Be Economically Strong.**

A key to the long-term health and vitality of downtown is its ability to attract and retain businesses. The public sector must join the private sector in making downtown an attractive, preferred location for a variety of businesses, their customers and their employees.

**Downtown Must Be "User-Friendly"**

People should be able to use downtown with ease. Downtown must not be intimidating or confusing. Signage must be clear and helpful. Lighting must be appealing and reassuring. Transportation must be convenient and easy-to-use. There must be places to stop and rest.

**To Achieve Our Envisioned Downtown Grand Rapids, We Must:**

- Design downtown...Don't just let it happen.
- Do things right...If something's worth doing, it's worth doing right.
- Work together...to make downtown
  "The Place I WANT to Be."
What Do We Do To Get There?
Working Together, We'll Make Downtown Grand Rapids...

A Growing Place
A People Place
A Place to Be Proud Of
A Place for the Future

These simple statements convey the four (4) major strategies we, as a community, will use to make sure that, in the next ten years or so, downtown will become...

"The Place I Want to Be."