

# City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Community Master Plan (CMP)

*The following questions or points of information were raised during the joint Planning Commission/City Commission meeting held on July 16. They also address comments and suggestions frequently asked at CMP meetings held in the five rounds of engagement.*

#### 1. What is a Community Master Plan?

##### a. What it is:

- i. *The blueprint for how a community grows and evolves set forth by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Commission*
- ii. *Builds community pride and defines a long-range vision for the future, typically 20 years*
- iii. *Describes the desired physical development of the community*
- iv. *Addresses topics such as population, economy, housing, transportation, facilities, and land use*
- v. *Integrates solid technical analysis with robust public input*
- vi. *Necessary for a valid Zoning Ordinance, which brings the Plan to life for the community*
- vii. *Complements and supports other planning documents*
- viii. *Has six goal areas, with accompanying objectives and recommendations, that include:*
  1. *Great Neighborhoods*
  2. *Vital Business Districts*
  3. *A Strong Economy*
  4. *Balanced Mobility*
  5. *Desirable Development Character*
  6. *Area Specific Plans*

#### 2. How will the plan be implemented?

*The CMP will be used daily by the City of Grand Rapids Government. The Plan becomes a steering mechanism for the organization. It will inform the City's internal five-year Strategic Plan and recommendation implementation will be prioritized through conversations with the City Commission. Those priorities will be integrated into departmental operations and may impact the following:*

- *Annual work programs and budgets*
- *Development decisions*
- *Capital plan*
- *Operational policies*
- *Economic initiatives*
- *Private development decisions*

#### 3. Relative to engagement, what efforts were made to engage the public?

*There have been five rounds of engagement between 2020 and 2024. Each had their own unique methods and activities that were equitable, inclusive, productive, and fun. A detailed summary of the engagement can be found in Appendix A. At a high level, the process:*

- *Engaged 4,793 participants*
- *Conducted engagement in a variety of locations throughout the city*

## City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions

- *Heard from people living in all three wards and a majority of neighborhoods*
- *Had good participation by all races and ethnicities*
- *Had a successful PR campaign that reached over 2.5 million people*

**4. What efforts were made to engage with the 18-24-year-olds and children?**

City Staff made concerted efforts to engage with this demographic. National statistics confirm that the 18-24-year-old age group is difficult to reach due to their lack of time, lack of interest, and transitory nature of their lives. To reach those younger than 24, staff made presentations and conducted activities with the Mayor's Youth Council on three occasions and a member of the council served on the CMP Steering Committee until she left for college. Staff also engaged high schools and college students, visited Parks and Recreation's day camps on multiple occasions, attended KidSpeak, and attended the GRow1000 celebration. Additionally, Neighborhood Facilitators, Community Connectors, and Neighborhood Organizations conducted youth related activities during the pre-planning and planning phases.

**5. What was the participation by Blacks/African Americans in round four, what were their ages, and where do they live?**

Black/African American, Number of Participants by Age

	<18 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 or over	Grand Total
Black/African American	54	2	16	14	13	20	17	136

Black/African American, Number of Participants by Ward

	I live outside of Grand Rapids	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Grand Total
Black/African American	9	12	15	62	98

**6. Does the plan intend to be more specific with some corridors where greater opportunity is seen for higher density development?**

*Yes, there are existing Area Specific Plans that will be carried forward that provide recommendations for areas with greater opportunity for higher density. Regarding this plan, there are specific details which can be found in the Vital Business Districts chapter (Recommendation 2.B.2), Strong Economy Chapter (Recommendation 3.B.1), and the Conceptual Development Framework including corridor references. Additionally, three ASPs were completed as part of this planning process. They were done for Creston, Butterworth and Southtown and their drafts can be found on our webpage at [bridgetoourfuture.com](http://bridgetoourfuture.com).*

## City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions

### 7. Will the plan be shared with other governmental agencies and other interested parties?

*Yes, the plan will be sent to the following entities for comment during the 63-day comment period.*

#### **Governmental Agencies, Utilities, and Railroads**

- City of East Grand Rapids Planning Commission
- City of Kentwood Planning Commission
- City of Walker Planning Commission
- City of Wyoming Planning Commission
- Grand Rapids Township Planning Commission
- Plainfield Township Planning Commission
- Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
- West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
- Kent County Board of Commissioners
- Kent Intermediate Schools Educational Service Center
- Superintendent, Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Kent County Road Commission
- Interurban Transit Partnership
- Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Department of Transportation Grand Region
- Mid-Michigan Railroad
- Central Michigan Railway Corporation
- DTE Energy Corporate Headquarters
- Consumers Energy Corporation
- Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Company
- Michigan Central RR Co
- Penn del Company
- Consolidated Rail Corp
- C & O RR

#### **Other Interested Parties** (including, but not limited to)

- Grand Rapids Urban League
- Great Grand Rapids NAACP
- Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce
- The Right Place
- Greater Regional Alliance of Realtors
- West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses
- Experience Grand Rapids
- Neighborhood Associations
- Corridor Improvements Associations
- Business Associations

## City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

### Frequently Asked Questions

8. **What does “the unique development character of Grand Rapids” mean? And do some of the recommendations within the plan serve to weaken that character?**

*Development character, as defined in the CMP, describes attributes of urban form and function, including the size and type of buildings and their relationship to the street, the surrounding street and block pattern, parking and access, and land uses. They encompass a range of conditions that can apply to places citywide. In this way, development character depicts appropriate future development patterns throughout the city. It reinforces existing patterns in some areas and supports changes to land use or development patterns in other areas. Development character does not weaken the character of the neighborhood because it is not a mandate for development or redevelopment but describes the City’s expectations regarding the use and character of future development. It will serve as the basis for the City’s future Zoning Ordinance update.*

9. **How does the plan support women and minority-owned businesses?**

*The Plan, while having not specific language about women and minority-owned businesses, does reference and support other City plans, policies, and procedures that do. Examples include such plans as the Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan and the Community Development Department’s Neighborhood Investment Plan. Additionally, the Office of Equity and Engagement promotes community workforce, and supplier diversity in the procurement of goods and services, including construction of city infrastructure, buildings, and grounds.*

10. **Will there be goals to obtain the best mix of rental and home ownership availability in the city, and the best mix around area median income availability? And what does the plan say the needs are now and as the city grows?**

*The 2022 Housing Needs Assessment indicates a need for approximately 14,000 units of housing in the City of Grand Rapids. The Plan suggests a need for housing, both rentals and owner-occupied units, at all income levels. The Great Neighborhood Chapter references the [Housing Needs Assessment](#) and the need for updating and monitoring it frequently. Focus on the appropriate mix and AMI availability will be an on-going discussion between the Planning Commission and City Commission. Additionally, the recent approval of Housing Text Amendments within the City’s Zoning Ordinance, and further updates recommended by the CMP, will provide greater flexibility and ease of development.*

11. **How does the plan address environmental sustainability?**

*Sustainability is a value thread that is woven throughout the plan topic areas and is described as, “balancing growth, environmental stewardship, and well-being in a way that fulfills current and ongoing needs and opportunities of future generations.” The plan reinforces the work done by the Office of Sustainability in the setting and adoption of science-based targets to combat climate change. Recommendations in the plan intentionally address affordable housing and transportation equity to center the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.*

12. **Is solar being considered?**

*The Great Neighborhoods Chapter of the Plan (Recommendation 1.C.11) states the following:*

**Support facilities that locally generate energy.** *Support a distributed model for renewable energy production and distribution. Work with utility providers to address the need for and inclusion of on-site solar and wind production, micro-grid and neighborhood-based storage and distribution, electric vehicle charging stations (public and privately located), and similar measures as the renewable energy landscape continues to evolve.*

## City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 13. How does the plan suggest that we invest in pedestrian safety?

*The Balanced Mobility Chapter has a goal of a transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Further, the Plan states that street design should prioritize safety. Residents strongly support street design measures that reduce crossing lengths, increase visibility for and of pedestrians, and lead to an overall improvement in pedestrian safety.*

#### 14. How does the plan suggest that we invest in and sustain vital business districts?

*The Vital Business Districts Chapter has a goal of a network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Further, the Plan states that vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people of all ages. Additionally, increasing the capacity of the City's Corridor Improvement Authorities to have meaningful impact in their districts will be an on-going initiative championed by the City's Economic Development Department.*

#### 15. How does the plan address Neighborhoods of Focus?

*Neighborhoods of Focus (NOFs) are the census tracts in the near west and south side of Grand Rapids in relation to downtown. Due to systemic and historic inequities, residents in NOFs experience the most disparate outcomes in income, educational opportunities, home ownership, and wealth accumulation compared to other Grand Rapids census tracts and the city as a whole. The Plan calls for the City of Grand Rapids to strive to eliminate inequities, by investing in these areas. NOFs are highlighted in the conceptual development framework, which directs priorities for development in tandem with the future development character types.*

#### 16. What does the plan say about the future of downtown?

*The Plan recognizes that the growth of the downtown is vital to the vibrancy of the city and region. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is the authority that sets the vision for the development within the DDA boundaries. The CMP supports and complements the DDA vision. The CMP suggests that the community will foster a downtown district that features a vibrant mix of businesses, diverse housing options, and entertainment or recreation amenities with a unique character. Exciting new developments such as the river restoration, amphitheater, and soccer stadium are all examples of the types of improvements that the CMP encourages and supports. The GR Forward Downtown & River Action Plan, adopted in 2015, called for increasing the downtown residential population to 10,000 people. The CMP suggests evaluating and updating this number to significantly increase the goal.*

#### 17. How does the Plan relate to the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan?

*The Great Neighborhoods Chapter of the Plan (Recommendation 1.C.3) states the following:*

***Ensure an equitable distribution of public parks and recreational facilities.*** *Work to create a connected network of parks, natural areas, and waterways that is accessible to all residents. Support the Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, which provides neighborhood priorities and outlines areas of the city that are historically deficient in municipal parks facilities. Support acquisition of parkland in these park-deficient areas and efforts to activate these spaces in culturally relevant ways to help improve a sense of security for adjacent residents. This includes creating programs and projects that ensure the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all residents.*

*The plan also reiterates the goal of providing a park within a 10-minute walking distance of all people. That is the metric that Parks and Recreation Departments, through National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and Trust for Public Land, have developed as the measurable goal for park access since 2017.*

## City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan Frequently Asked Questions

### 18. What are the goals and recommendations related to a Strong Economy?

*The Strong Economy Chapter has the goal of an economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. Grand Rapids' economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone has the opportunity to access and earn a living wage.*

### 19. How can I provide input into the Plan?

*It is anticipated that the plan will be released at [bridgetoourfuture.com](http://bridgetoourfuture.com) for a 63-day public comment period on Wednesday, August 14, pending actions by the Planning Commission on August 8 and City Commission on August 13. Hard copies will be placed at libraries. If you wish to receive a hard copy, please contact Sarah Itani at [sitani@grand-rapids.mi.us](mailto:sitani@grand-rapids.mi.us). The webpage will feature a survey form to submit your comments.*

*In addition, both the Planning Commission and City Commission will hold meetings to discuss the recommendations and also public hearings. This is an opportunity to appear before each of those bodies to provide comments. Additional information about the Planning Commission and City Commission meetings and public hearings will be forthcoming.*

Revised: 8/8/24 at 12:30 p.m.