



Item Number: 1



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

DATE: January 28, 2025

TO: Mark Washington, City Manager

COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole

LIAISON: Mark Washington, City Manager

FROM: Joel H. Hondorp, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office

SUBJECT: Resolution revising the existing Downtown Grand Rapids Social District to add three (3) locations to the commons area

In consultation with Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI), staff recommend adoption of the attached resolution that would adjust the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District by adding these three (3) locations to the commons area within the district:

- Ottawa Avenue NW, from Mason Street to Walbridge Street
- West Riverwalk from Bridge Street to 6th Street Bridge, including 6th Street Bridge
- East Riverwalk from 555 Monroe Avenue to Michigan Street

Social districts are areas designated by the City Commission as authorized by Michigan Public Act 124 of 2020, as amended, containing commons areas where purchasers may consume alcoholic beverages sold by multiple qualified Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) licensees who obtain an MLCC Social District Permit.

On July 21, 2020, in response to indoor occupancy restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Commission initially designated the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District (proceeding 90066).

On April 27, 2021 (proceeding 90744), June 1, 2021 (proceeding 90853), November 9, 2021 (proceeding 91204), and March 28, 2023 (proceeding 92457) the City Commission revised the designation of the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District. The purposes of those revisions generally were to improve the user experience, increase the number of potential business participants, simplify administration, and harmonize with other MLCC programs.

The rationale for adding each proposed location included in this item is as follows:

- **Ottawa Avenue NW, from Mason Street to Walbridge Street** – A new business has indicated to DGRI its interest in participating in the Social District.
- **West Riverwalk from Bridge Street to 6th Street Bridge, including the 6th Street Bridge** – this section of riverwalk connects the west side of Downtown to Monroe North and creates a connective loop at an important node between Bridge Street businesses, Monroe North businesses, and the Grand River. As extensive in-water and greenway work begin this year, incorporating additional riverwalk routes into the Refreshment Area network will reinforce and reintroduce the Grand River to residents and visitors alike.
- **East Riverwalk from 555 Monroe Avenue to Michigan Street** – like the west riverwalk, this section incorporates additional riverwalk routes into the Refreshment Area network. This section of riverwalk creates an additional connection between Downtown and Monroe North and (when combined with the new west riverwalk) forms a riverwalk loop on both sides of the Grand River between Michigan Street and the 6th Street Bridge.

A map of the revised Downtown Grand Rapids Social District, created by and in collaboration with DGRI, is attached to this agenda item.

City and DGRI staff will be available to answer your questions about the proposed resolution at the City Commission meeting on January 28, 2025. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Your COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE recommends the adoption of the following resolution revising the existing Downtown Grand Rapids Social District to add three (3) locations to the commons area.

WHEREAS:

1. Increasing the availability of outdoor dining space will help downtown and neighborhood business districts to thrive; and
2. Public Act 124 of 2020, as amended, empowers the City Commission to designate Social Districts with Commons Areas where purchasers may consume alcoholic beverages sold by multiple qualified Michigan Liquor Control Commission licensees who obtain Social District Permits; and
3. The City Commission designated the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District on July 21, 2020, and revised the designation on April 27, 2021; June 1, 2021; November 9, 2021; and March 28, 2023; and
4. Additional businesses and users near the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District would like to participate in the Social District, in these three (3) locations:
 - a) Ottawa Avenue NW, from Mason Street to Walbridge Street;
 - b) West Riverwalk from Bridge Street to 6th Street Bridge, including 6th Street Bridge;
 - c) East Riverwalk from 555 Monroe Avenue to Michigan Street; and
5. The City Commission has considered the potential impact of the proposed changes to the Social District on public health, safety, and welfare; therefore

RESOLVED:

1. That the Downtown Grand Rapids Social District containing a Commons Area is designated within the limits shown on the attached map; and
2. That the Commons Area within the Social District shall be as noted on the attached map with the City Manager, or designee, authorized to make minor reasonable adjustments to the limits of the Commons Area required by regulatory or operational requirements, or to safeguard the public health, safety, and welfare; and
3. That the Commons Area is contiguous to at least 2 qualified licensees; and
4. That signage shall be placed to define and clearly mark the limits of the Commons Area; and

5. That the City-approved Parklet seating areas shall remain as permitted (subject to permit modifications) within the Social District; and
6. That the management and maintenance plan for the Commons Area, including the hours of operation, shall be the same as for the corresponding Parklet seating areas; and
7. That the Commons Area shall be maintained in a manner that protects the health and safety of the community; and
8. That the Social District shall exclude premises authorized by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission under a special license during the effective period of the special license; and
9. That any conflicting provision of prior City Commission proceedings is hereby rescinded.

CORRECT IN FORM

DEPARTMENT OF LAW