



Public Draft July 2024

BRIDGE TO OUR FUTURE

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN



2024

hold for adoption resolution

hold for adoption resolution

hold for adoption letter from Planning Commission

hold for Land Acknowledgement

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City would like to thank the following individuals for their commitment and dedication in assisting with the Community Master Plan initiative. Sharing your knowledge, thoughts and ideas rendered an invaluable service to your community. Additionally, the City would like to thank the many other community members who participated in Bridge to Our Future or simply expressed their support and enthusiasm for the effort.

SPECIAL THANKS

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COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

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TO BE UPDATED

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

hold for full list of participants

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

hold for full list of participants

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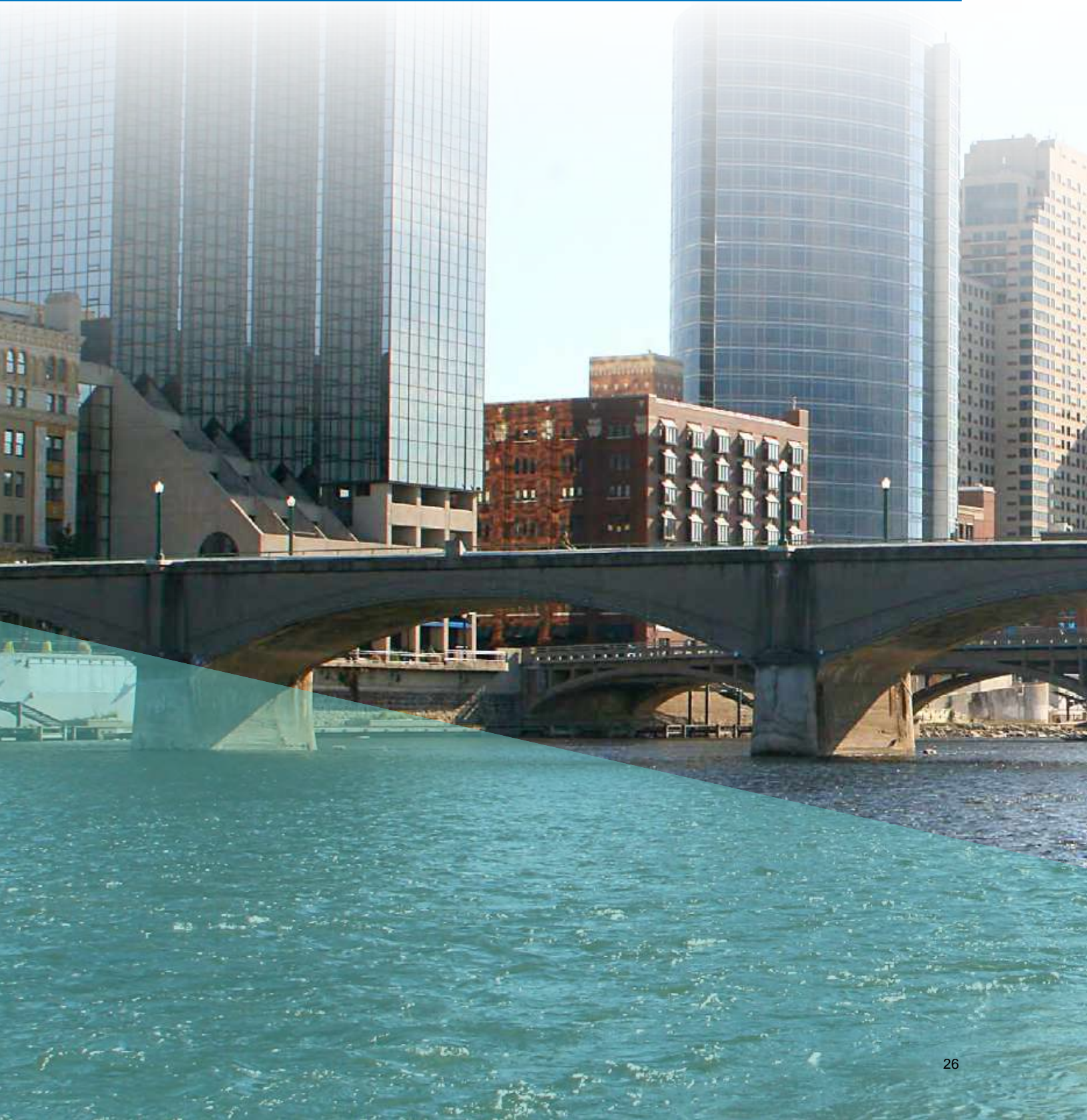
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INTRODUCTION



In fall 2022, the City of Grand Rapids launched Bridge to Our Future, a process to create a new Community Master Plan. The previous Master Plan was adopted in 2002 and has been updated in the years since, but new challenge and opportunities called for a new plan. Bridge to Our Future was a community-driven process that focused on engaging residents of all backgrounds throughout the city. The result is a plan that includes a community-generated vision statement, value threads, goal areas, and specific recommendations to guide the future physical development of the city. The Community Master Plan sets a long-term direction for the city's growth and development and serves as a guide for decision-makers and the community for future development.

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN?

A Community Master Plan is the blueprint for how a community grows and develops, set forth by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Commission. It is a statement of the community's character and defines a long-range vision for the desired future physical development of the community for the next 20 years. A Community Master Plan addresses a range of topics such as population, economy, housing, transportation, facilities, and land use. Cross cutting values such as equity, safety, and sustainability are woven throughout the plan topic areas. The plan integrates technical analysis with robust public input from residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders. Although the 2002 Master Plan has been updated since it was created, Grand Rapids faces new challenges and more opportunities to realize a better future. The Community Master Plan serves as the foundation of the Zoning Ordinance, and is described in more detail in the Desirable Development Character chapter.

WHY DOES GRAND RAPIDS NEED A NEW COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN?

To be effective, a plan must be periodically updated to account for changing conditions, new technologies, and other evolving factors. Since 2002, Grand Rapids has experienced many changes such as population growth, demographic and employment shifts, climate change effects, and a global pandemic. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act of 2008 emphasizes the importance of long-range planning by authorizing the creation of a Community Master Plan and requiring reviews of the plan every five years. The new City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan promotes coordination around development and redevelopment, protects and enhances community development character, and establishes the legal basis for zoning.

RELATION TO OTHER PLANS

This plan serves as the overall framework for growth within Grand Rapids. Some previous plans and studies that contain useful context are referenced within this plan where relevant. The recommendations in these plans remain relevant, regardless of explicit inclusion within the CMP. The table below indicates where significant planning efforts overlap with the chapter of the CMP.

RECENT PLANS

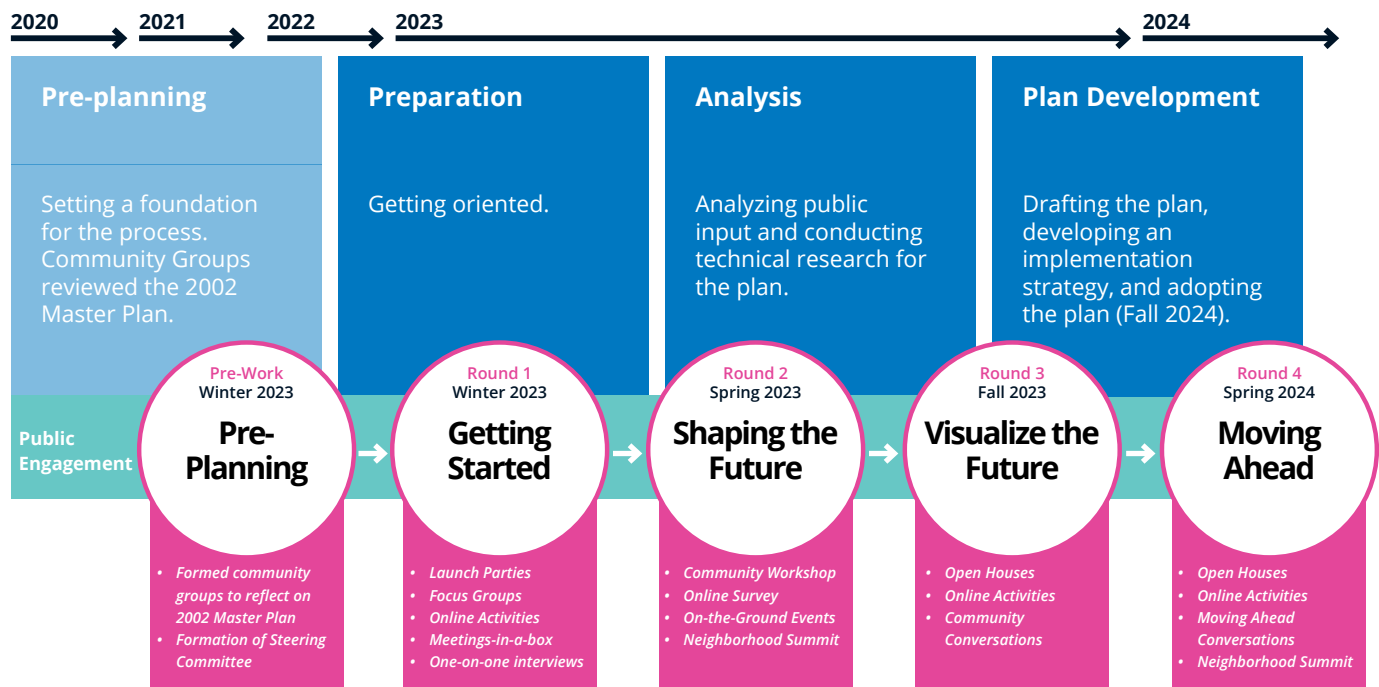
- Directly advances the goal
- Supports or reinforces the goal

	GOALS				
	Great Neighborhoods	Vital Business Districts	Strong Economy	Balanced Mobility	Desirable Development Character
Vital Streets Plan	●	●	●	●	●
GR Forward		●	●		
Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan		●	●	●	
Climate Action and Adaptation Plan	●	●	●	●	●
Bicycle Action Plan				●	
Area Specific Plans	●	●	●	●	●
GVMC Regional Transportation Demand Management Plan				●	
The Rapid Transit Master Plan				●	
The Right Place Strategic Plan		●	●		



PROCESS

The plan was shaped by data, existing conditions, and the experiences of people who live, work, and play in Grand Rapids. The process to create the plan followed the timeline below.



PRE-PLANNING

Before commencing the Community Master Plan process, the City of Grand Rapids conducted a review of the 2002 Master Plan with the community in 2020. Facilitators from neighborhood organizations, non-profit organizations, and other community groups, as well as interested residents, held four rounds of sessions with community members to review the plan. The groups discussed the successes of the 2002 Master Plan, and where improvements could be made with the next plan. The facilitators not only engaged over 500 community members in over 90 meetings but also did an outstanding job responding to pandemic challenges by hosting meetings virtually, distanced, or outside. The insight gathered during the robust engagement effort contributed to the development of the project scope and the planning process, as well as the formation of the Steering Committee.

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

The planning team generated a community profile using data from the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, the City of Grand Rapids, and other sources. The profile featured baseline information about existing conditions in Grand Rapids and was used to inform the planning process. The report covered demographic conditions and trends, the built environment, housing, employment, and prosperity. This data can be found throughout the plan chapters to support the recommendations. The full community profile is contained in the appendix.

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS

Populations that have historically been overlooked through traditional engagement approaches received special focus through a diverse team of Community Connectors. The Community Connectors that served came from a range of community members, they were trusted voices in the community that helped expand the reach of engagement efforts, and they were compensated for their work. The group was comprised of community leaders and activists representing non-profit organizations, community groups, and other organizations from across Grand Rapids. They provided facilitation and outreach support throughout the engagement process through small group meetings, community conversations, one-on-one interviews, and more. Snacks and meals were offered during the outreach events to encourage participation. Their partnership created a more direct exchange of information with residents and strengthened the relationship between the City and the community. The Community Connectors broadened participation in the process by doing engagement activities from each of the four rounds with their networks in their neighborhoods.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

The City of Grand Rapids has more than 30 neighborhood organizations, many of which were involved in the Community Master Plan process in a variety of ways. Some Neighborhood Organizations were represented on the Steering Committee, while others served as Community Connectors. Funded Neighborhood Organizations received additional Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money to host engagement activities in their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Organizations did everything the Community Connectors did and more. Their efforts helped spread the word to their residents about the process and allowed the public to become more involved about the Community Master Plan.

FOCUS GROUPS

A series of focus groups were conducted to supplement broader public engagement and generated more direct input on themes and topics important to the planning process. Focus groups were organized around topics such as career development, Economic Development, transportation, social services, housing, and more. Residents, professionals, and other experts in the topics participated in the discussions and provided critical insights.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Following the pre-planning phase, the City built a diverse Steering Committee with the Mayor appointing members of the committee with input from the City Commissioners. Additionally, individuals were selected to ensure representation reflective of the city as a whole across a number of factors such as ethnicity, gender, race, residency by ward, and sector. Once appointed, members of the committee helped the City hire a consultant team to write the new Community Master Plan for Grand Rapids by reviewing the Request for Proposals. Four members of the Steering Committee and one member of the Planning Commission also served on the interview panel, along with two City Planning staff members, to read and score proposals and interview and select the consultant team.

Once the process to write the Community Master Plan began, the Steering Committee informed the planning process and the plan's content. The committee served as community advocates for the plan, assisted with community outreach, and provided guidance and direction regarding the engagement process of the plan. The Steering Committee generally met consistently throughout the process, reviewing engagement materials and feedback, providing expert community knowledge, and advocating for the community. Members of the Steering Committee also acted as table facilitators at engagement and community events.

The Steering Committee was led by a Leadership Committee comprised of five individuals, selected by the group, with four serving as permanent members while one position rotated. The Leadership Committee met with staff and consultants on a regular basis to assist in generating agendas for the Steering Committee meetings, discuss ideas around engagement of the community, and address any special circumstances that arose.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The planning process included four rounds of community input opportunities that focused on engaging a diverse community. These events were intended to increase awareness of the process to promote open and transparent dialogue to easily participate. Community engagement was conducted concurrently with technical analysis on land use, economic conditions, and other topics. The engagement rounds moved from generative to responsive and each round of engagement built upon and affirmed the insight gathered from the previous round. A significant media relations effort expanded public awareness of these events and the CMP process. Cumulatively, the four phases of the community engagement campaign resulted in at least 24 news stories in print, radio, television and online outlets with an estimated reach of more than 4 million individuals. Regular email updates to subscribers, posters at local libraries, articles in WeAreGR, and promotional materials distributed by the Steering Committee supplemented this effort.

GETTING STARTED

ROUND 1: WINTER 2023

The City hosted three Launch Parties, one in each ward, and an online engagement campaign to generate excitement about the process. The activities at these events gathered ideas about development and the future of the city to help inform the direction of the plan. Participants were asked to dream big and share their ideas for the future of Grand Rapids. The events were widely promoted and open to anyone who cared about the future of Grand Rapids. The Launch Parties were designed to be fun and engaging for participants of all ages and backgrounds. The activities were replicated online for people who were unable to participate in person. To gain more participation, Community Connectors and Neighborhood Organizations conducted additional small workshops that mirrored the activities from the larger workshops. They also completed one-on-one interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the community's needs. Representatives from the City facilitated activities from the workshops in local high schools and college classes to generate input from students.

Activities

- Grand Rapids trivia
- Hopes and dreams cards
- Small group discussions
- Comments on Area Specific Plan areas
- Future housing mapping

 **730+** participants
4,000+ pieces of input



Public Meeting



Hopes and Dreams



Generating Big Ideas



Generating Big Ideas

SHAPING THE FUTURE

ROUND 2: SUMMER 2023

The second round of engagement took a deeper look at three important topics that emerged from the first round of community engagement. A workshop was held with an interactive approach to the topics of

- Land Use Planning for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation;
- Land Use Planning for Environmental Justice, Health, and Equity; and
- The 15-Minute City: Land Use, Housing, Mobility.

Representatives from the planning team and the City attended the City of Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit. They held one session on the 15-Minute City and another that combined the other land use planning topics. Participants in the workshop and at the Neighborhood Summit were also asked to provide feedback on the draft vision, values, and goals of the Community Master Plan, which were created using input gathered in the first round of engagement and additionally vetted by the Steering Committee. Community Connectors and Neighborhood Organizations hosted through Move and Talks, during which community members were invited to move through their neighborhood as a group and discuss and provide their feedback and ideas on topics such as housing, environmental justice, and health equity as they pertained to the neighborhood. City staff also engaged students at local high schools, and attended Parks and Recreation Department Summer day Camps and other city-wide events and festivals, including A Glimpse of Africa, to gather input from children and teens in the city.

DEFINED

PLANNING TEAM

The Planning Team included City staff and consultants with expertise in land use, transportation, economic development, sustainability, and community engagement.



Community
Move and Talk



Creating Complete
Neighborhoods



Public Meeting



1,800+ participants
2,500+ pieces of input



Creating Complete
Neighborhoods



35
Community
Move and Talk

VISUALIZE THE FUTURE

ROUND 3: FALL 2023

The third round of engagement focused on testing the goals and big ideas that were developed using the insight provided by the community in the previous rounds of engagement. A workshop was held in all three wards where the goal and one big idea from each chapter was presented. The participants completed a corresponding activity, covering topics such as Great Neighborhoods, Vital Business Districts, A Strong Economy, Balanced Mobility, and Desirable Development Character, where they were able to visualize outcomes of the plan and provide their feedback. For example, the Great Neighborhoods idea was centered around housing, and the activity asked for participants' thoughts on where accessory dwelling units, duplexes, and quadplexes should be allowed in the city. Each workshop opened with a special event. The first night featured a spoken word poetry performance from the Diatribe, the second night featured a panel put together by the Community Connectors and Neighborhood Organizations featuring individuals from community organizations, and the third night featured national-level public speaker and author Shane Phillips, who addressed strategies for housing affordability and access. Conversations were held in their respective communities, during which the display boards from the workshops were placed for review and participants held a discussion around the chapters from the Community Master Plan. Chapters based on their importance to the community were chosen, and Steering Committee members also held conversations to broaden the reach of the third round of engagement. City staff generated input from students and youth in the city by holding conversations in high schools and attending two tabling events at Grand Rapids Community College.



Public Meeting



Public Meeting

 **1,100+** participants
3,400+ pieces of input

Poetry
Performance

Public Meeting



Public Meeting

MOVING AHEAD
ROUND 4: SPRING 2024

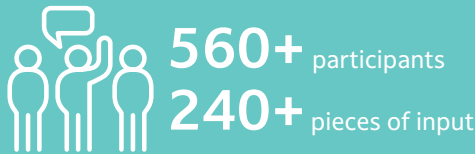
During the fourth round, one workshop was hosted in each of the three wards to share the draft recommendations for the plan. The workshops began with an open house showcasing the recommendations for each chapter of the plan. Participants reviewed the recommendations organized by chapter at their own pace using display boards and a corresponding worksheet with the planning team and consultants available to answer questions. During the second half of the workshops, participants dove deeper into a chapter of their choosing and had small group discussions to assign value threads to the recommendations. The Community Connectors, Neighborhood Organizations, and Steering Committee members hosted a roadshow of the display boards and facilitated Moving Ahead conversations around chapter recommendations.

TOTAL PARTICIPATION

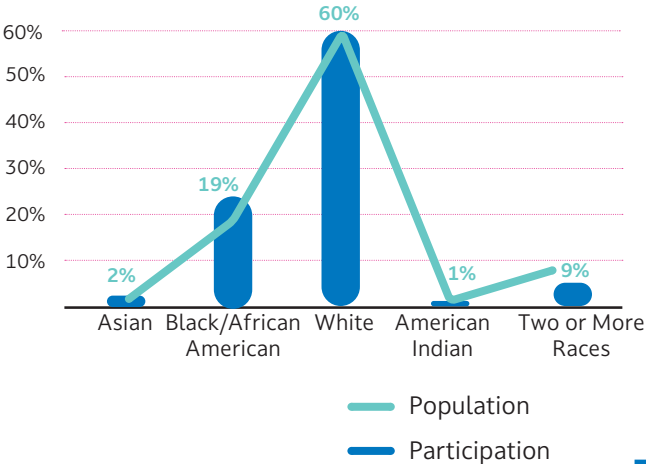
Total participation numbers reflect the pre-planning phase and all four rounds of engagement through the CMP process.

Engagement in each round was tracked using exist questionnaires. Participants were asked to provide basic information about their background, including age, race/ethnicity, and neighborhood. The representation of participants in each category was tracked against the overall percentage of the population of Grand Rapids, according to the US Census. This helped the planning team identify gaps in engagement and be more intentional about outreach efforts.

Across all rounds, the team engaged with people living in all three wards and every neighborhood. An additional 13% of participants reported living outside Grand Rapids. A complete breakdown of engagement participation is included in the Appendix of this plan.



Participation by Race (all rounds)



GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

PLAN FRAMEWORK

The Community Master Plan includes a vision for the future, values important to the community, and goals for the community to achieve. The plan framework provides an intentional path forward for the City of Grand Rapids and its partners.

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

The vision is an expression of the community’s future and was tested in Round 2 of public engagement.

In the next 20 years...

Grand Rapids aspires to build a sustainable city of inclusion, where people in all neighborhoods have the opportunity to live in safe and affordable housing, to move throughout the city in a variety of ways, to earn a living wage through meaningful job choices, and to gather together in vibrant spaces that celebrate our unique cultures and histories.

COMMUNITY VALUE THREADS


Values reflect, at a high level, what the community cares about. The value threads are woven throughout the plan chapters. Tagged recommendations indicate that recommended project, policy, or program directly advances that value.




Equity: Where all residents have access to resources that allow for opportunity, influence, and positive life outcomes no matter their starting point.



Safety: Where all people are secure and protected in all communities no matter where they live or come from, or what they look like.



Vibrancy: A variety of amenities, including arts, culture, and recreation opportunities, that activate and contribute to the energy of the city year-round.



Culture: Traditions and experiences that originate from one’s background and lived experiences and can be shared and celebrated with others.



Sustainability: Balancing growth, environmental stewardship, and well-being in a way that fulfills current and ongoing needs and opportunities of future generations.

COMMUNITY GOAL AREAS

Goals are desired outcomes expressed in simple terms. Each goal area is a chapter of the plan.

- 1. **Great Neighborhoods:** Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.
- 2. **Vital Business Districts:** A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.
- 3. **A Strong Economy:** An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. The Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage.
- 4. **Balanced Mobility:** A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.
- 5. **Development Character:** A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives are strategic direction that organizes the recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations include projects, policies, and programs to achieve desired outcomes.

1. GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS



Great neighborhoods are the foundation of the city. Historically, Grand Rapids was considered a highly affordable city for housing compared to other cities in Michigan and the United States. Grand Rapids has a long history of innovation in manufacturing that helped build a broad middle class, create vibrant neighborhoods, and provide residents with opportunities for homeownership and economic prosperity.

However, changing market conditions, along with other factors, have resulted in a lack of housing stock to serve current residents. Grand Rapids experienced a surge in housing prices starting in 2016 due to an increase in demand and a lack of available housing. Housing price growth accelerated with the pandemic as people increasingly sought out larger, single-family homes, due to public health mobility restrictions. Existing housing, which has been historically accessible for middle- and low-income families, is now insufficient to meet the needs of changing households and a growing city.

The recommendations in this chapter aim to remove barriers that prevent a neighborhood from appropriately evolving over time in response to local needs.

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

GOAL

Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive.

Grand Rapids' neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.

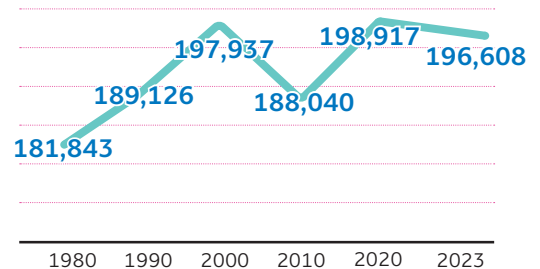
KEY TAKEAWAYS

PUBLIC INPUT

- **Grand Rapids needs more housing.** Housing scarcity and overall affordability were common themes throughout the Community Master Plan (CMP) process. During Round 1, 88% of participants identified housing as a key concern and specifically highlighted the need for more affordable housing and different types of housing.
- **There is a desire for more housing options.** Participants noted the need for more housing types and general support for more density, particularly along larger corridors and near jobs. They encouraged the creation of a variety of affordable housing options including apartments, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.
- **Housing and building quality vary throughout the city.** Large disparities in housing quality and maintenance were highlighted in comments from the community. Participants noted the need to upgrade older buildings, the lack of resources to maintain aging homes, and a desire to better reuse vacant or underused industrial sites. Participants also highlighted the need for landlord education and ongoing rental regulation. While these topics generally fall outside the land use scope of the CMP, they are linked to the availability of safe and stable housing.



Grand Rapids Population 1980-2020

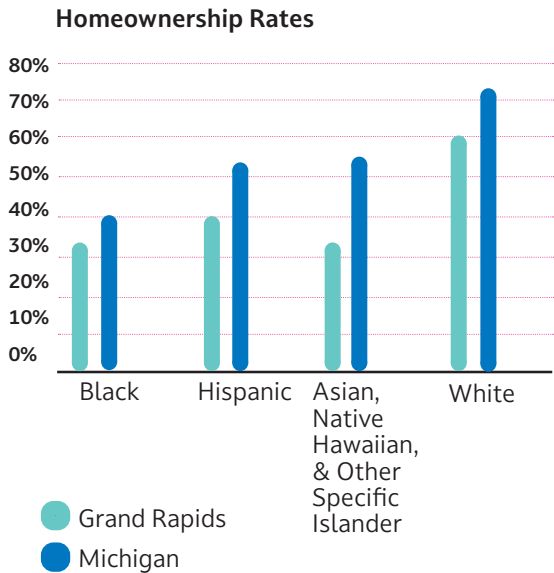
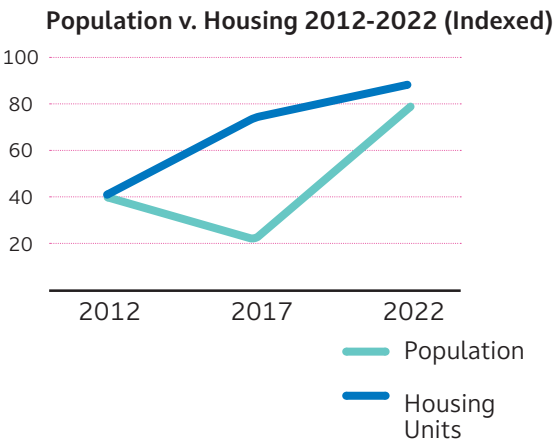


COMMUNITY PROFILE

- Grand Rapids sits within a county experiencing high population growth.** Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of its population. After a short period of decline (5% between 2000 and 2010), the population of Grand Rapids has recovered and is increasing, with new residents partly fueling the city’s growth. Additionally, the population of Kent County is expected to grow by about 27% (+169,000 people) by 2045. If Grand Rapids maintains its 30% share of county population, the city will grow to approximately 251,000 residents in that time. In the long term, Michigan is likely to be an attractive destination for climate migrants. In the shorter term, it is expected that Grand Rapids will need at least 14,000 housing units by 2027 to satisfy demand.
- Households are changing.** The number of non-family households is increasing at a faster rate than the decline of family households. A non-family household consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom they are not related. This means that it takes more houses to house the same number of people as in the past, and the housing needs of these populations vary greatly.
- Grand Rapids is growing more diverse, but there is a low rate of homeownership within historically marginalized communities.** Homeownership is one factor in social and economic stability in a changing economy. Those priced out of homeownership often end up renting. As rents fluctuate with the market, renters have less opportunity to build wealth, pay down debt, and save for retirement. While Grand Rapids is more diverse than the county and state, the homeownership rate for the Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations sit at approximately 35-40%, compared to a rate of over 60% within the white population.

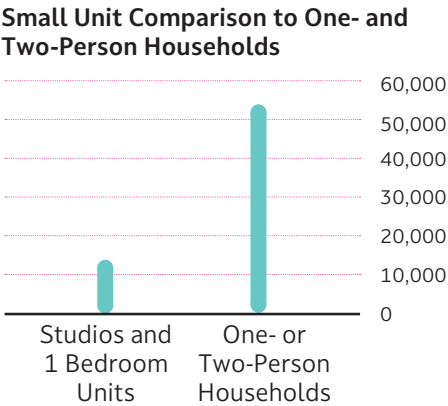
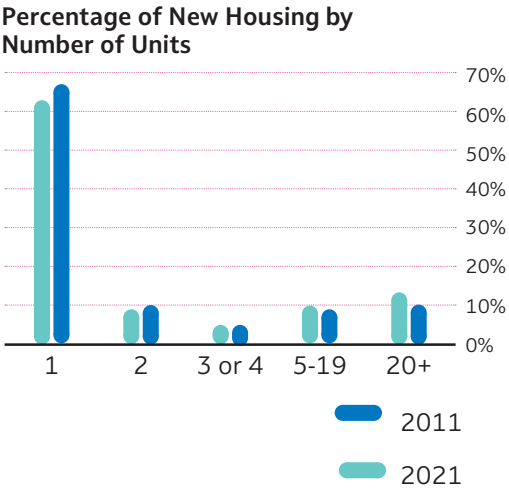
DEFINED
CLIMATE
MIGRATION

Climate migration is the movement of people due to climate or the effects of climate change. As disasters become more frequent and severe, and as the impacts of sea-level rise and extreme heat become more pronounced, it is increasingly likely that Americans will move away from vulnerable parts of the country.



GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

- **Single-family homes are the most common type of housing in Grand Rapids.** Almost half of the land area in Grand Rapids is residential, the majority of which is single-family. In areas with a tight housing supply, like Grand Rapids, there may be opportunities to improve affordability by developing new studio or one-bedroom units. These smaller units could be included in ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, or other structure types. In addition to being less expensive to develop than larger units, the development of smaller units could free up other units by encouraging more one- and two-person households to downsize to the smaller units. In 2022, there were 12,680 studio or one-bedroom units and 52,001 one- and two-person households in Grand Rapids (66% of all households).
- **There is a need for housing at all income levels.** The 2022 Grand Rapids and Kent County Housing Needs Assessment cites a need for 4,078 additional rental units priced for households at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI) and 1,934 owner-occupied homes priced for households at or below 80% AMI by 2027. There is also a need for new housing at market rate prices to ensure that older housing can remain affordable. Without enough new market rate options, people that can afford those higher price points outcompete others for the older, less expensive housing, which can drive displacement and gentrification.



THE NEED FOR HOUSING FOR ALL INCOME LEVELS

Many cities around the country have developed local housing strategies to address their growing affordability challenges. While expanding the supply of dedicated affordable housing is a critical component, research shows that allowing the broader housing market to respond to increased demand with new construction at other price points is also essential to address rising housing prices.

A study by the New York University Furman Center, titled "Supply Skepticism: Housing Supply and Affordability" concluded that adding new homes moderates price increases, making housing more affordable to low- and moderate-income families.

Housing submarkets (smaller parts of the housing market with similar characteristics, including price) are interrelated. Additions to the housing stock in one submarket can quickly affect prices and rents in other submarkets. For example, if a community does not have enough high-end housing, people searching for housing within that submarket may choose to stay in their current home longer, look elsewhere, or turn to somewhat less expensive housing, increasing demand for housing in the next submarket. Without new supply, the people who want to move to a neighborhood will bid up prices and rents of existing homes.

Building more market-rate housing will not solve the deep affordability challenges faced by low-income households, but by moderating overall housing prices through increased supply, efforts to reduce barriers to new market-rate construction can help minimize the gap between the price of available homes and what low-income households can afford to pay.



*Housing in
Grand Rapids*

HISTORY OF REDLINING IN GRAND RAPIDS

Across the United States, persistent economic and racial segregation means that residents in many different neighborhoods are receiving vastly different opportunities and resources. The causes of segregation are multifaceted, but government policies at the federal, state, and local levels have contributed in significant ways.

In 1937, the Homeowners Loan Corporation (HOLC) created risk maps for home financing for over 200 cities across the country. The risk maps created four color-coded categories, from A to D, into which neighborhoods were rated. Within Grand Rapids, six neighborhoods received A ratings, twenty received B ratings, twenty-eight received C ratings, and seven received D ratings (now referred to as red-lined neighborhoods based on the color used in HOLC maps). Residents of neighborhoods labeled C and D, or declining and hazardous neighborhoods, were primarily Black, immigrants, or ethnically diverse. The government agencies and mortgage lenders believed the presence of these homeowners would drive down property values in a neighborhood.

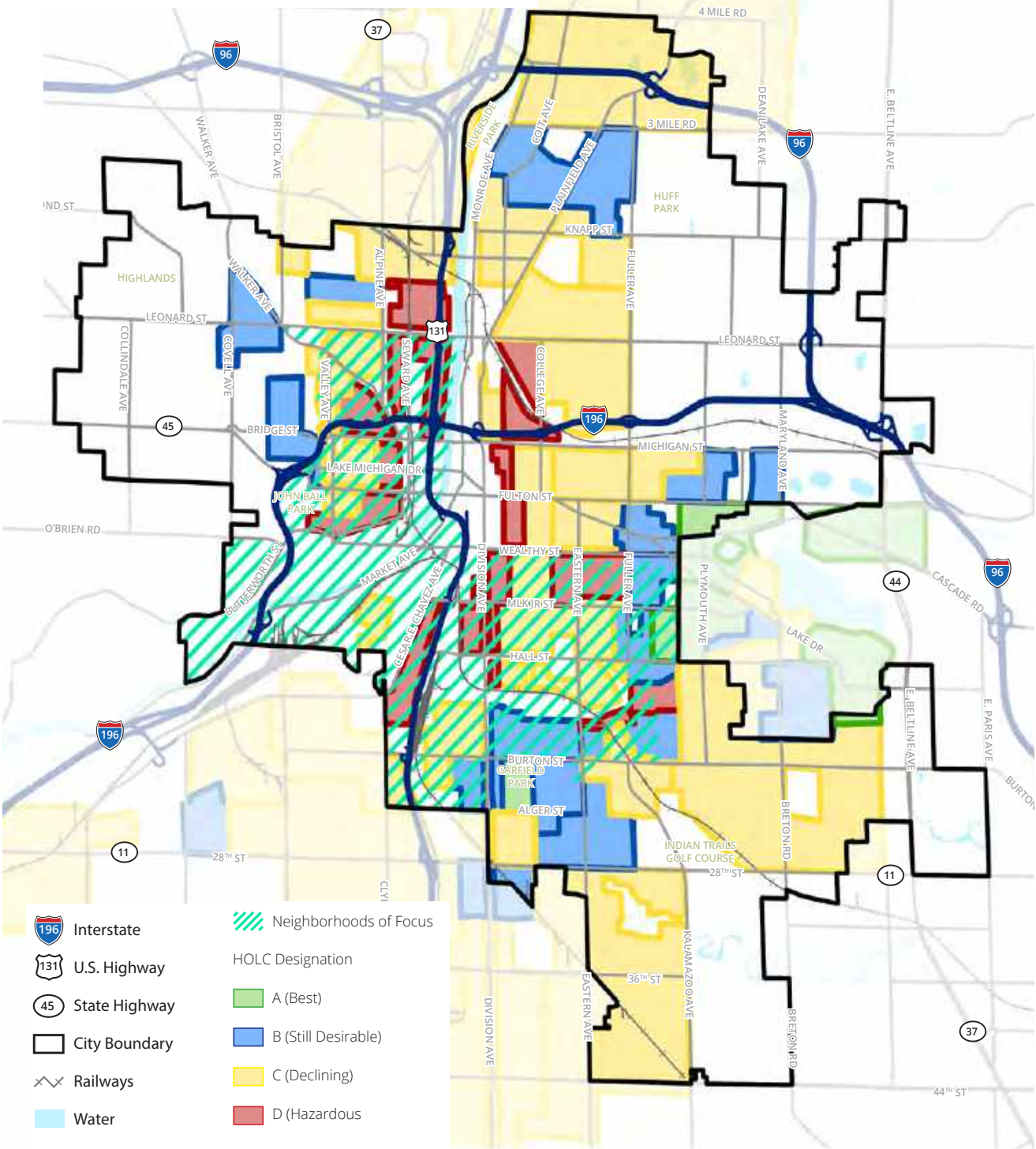
The HOLC, in partnership with the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and private banks, used these risk maps to deny home loans in communities impacted by redlining practices, even when the applicant may have otherwise been eligible for the loan. The FHA continued to use neighborhood composition in drafting its loan underwriting guidelines until 1949.

The policies were upheld by local governments who used the maps to direct funds and resources such as public water and sewer to higher-rated neighborhoods, while exclusionary zoning policies were often drafted in a manner that reflected the redlining of previous generations. The biased homebuying market kept Grand Rapids' neighborhoods mostly segregated for decades. A 1964 report from the Grand Rapids Urban League found that 88% of the city's Black families lived within five census tracts of land in the city.

The legacy of these policies continues today and has resulted in large disparities in resources and services while constraining residential choices. Due to systemic and historic inequities, including redlining, residents in Neighborhoods of Focus experience the most disparate outcomes in income, home ownership, and wealth accumulation compared to other Grand Rapids census tracts and the city as a whole. These neighborhoods are identified by the Grand Rapids Office of Equity and Engagement, and include the 17 census tracts in the near west and south side of Grand Rapids (hatched on the HOLC Map on the next page).

Reversing the impacts of redlining is a focus of the City of Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Community Master Plan. Policies in the CMP can help to ensure that neighborhoods deliver a rich set of opportunities by tracking disparities, directing investments in neighborhoods, and identifying opportunities for community partnerships.

HOLC MAP OF GRAND RAPIDS WITH CURRENT NEIGHBORHOODS OF FOCUS



CLIMATE CHANGE

While the City of Grand Rapids has been a leader in environmental sustainability, the impacts of climate change are being felt in Grand Rapids. To avoid the worst impacts, it's necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and plan for known changes and increased extreme weather. The climate change crisis is one of the City's top concerns.

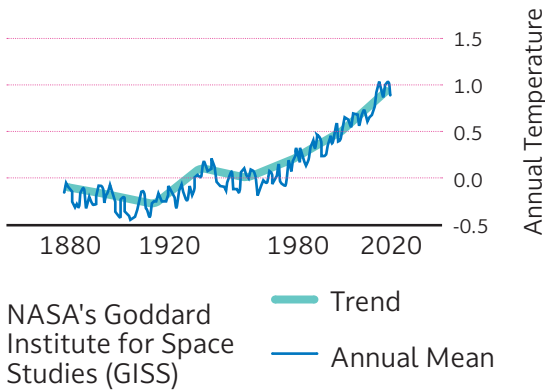
Climate change results in long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, mainly due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.

The Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA), in partnership with the City, created a summary of historic and projected changes in climate specific to Grand Rapids. This information is valuable in understanding what changes have already been experienced as well as the changes to still to come. Anticipated changes include increasing temperature, precipitation, and extreme weather events.

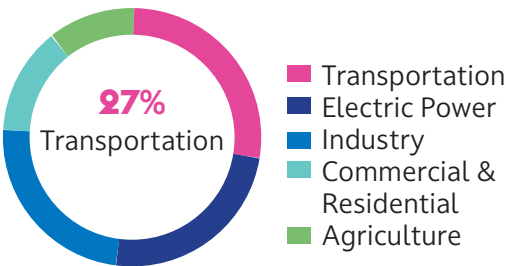
To combat these changes, the City of Grand Rapids adopted science-based targets in Fall of 2022. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of > 2,500 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. ICLEI was contracted to conduct internationally accepted methodology to measure community-wide emissions and calculate science-based targets (SBT) for emissions reductions. ICLEI recommended preliminary science-based targets of 62.8% per capita GHG reduction communitywide by 2030 from 2019 emissions, and 100% per capita GHG reduction by 2050 from 2019 emissions.

While City authority over non-governmental emission sources is limited, the City is pursuing this work to act as community leader in this space. The City of Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability collaborated with the Planning Department to emphasize environmental justice and climate mitigation and adaptation in the Community Master Plan. Recommendations in the plan intentionally address affordable housing and transportation equity to center the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Global Temperature Trend (Indexed)



Total U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector in 2020



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

OBJECTIVES

1.A CREATE COMPLETE AND STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS.

Complete neighborhoods provide a mix of housing types in close proximity to activity centers and corridors and give residents convenient access to daily needs, employment, recreation, and transportation options. Policies that support complete neighborhoods will assist residents in meeting their basic needs and improve access to amenities within their neighborhoods. The City of Grand Rapids has diverse neighborhoods with distinct identities. The sense of community in these neighborhoods is deeply tied to their location, and individuals should have the opportunity to stay in the neighborhoods they're connected to regardless of changes in their age, income, neighborhood, or other life circumstances. Mixed-income neighborhoods, that support a range of incomes and housing types, ensure that a balance is maintained between market-rate and affordable housing units. This helps to promote healthy, successful, and vibrant neighborhoods while ensuring stability. Infill development and redevelopment in line with the community vision in this plan offers opportunities to expand housing options, ensures sensitivity to the existing context or desired future built character of the neighborhood, and improves the quantity, quality, and access to amenities, transportation service, and open space.

1.B EXPAND THE VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES AND PRICE POINTS.

According to the 2022 Grand Rapids and Kent County Housing Needs Assessment, significant rental and for-sale housing gaps exist at nearly all price points. Meeting the needs of both current and future households will most likely include building multifamily, duplex, further defined on page 26, and other missing middle housing alternatives such as cottage courts, pocket neighborhoods, and small homes on small lots. Additional types of housing, especially accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes, can also create wealth-generating opportunities for residents. These additional units may be used as long-term rentals or multigenerational living spaces, and generally increase property values. These housing types can be compatible in scale with detached single-family homes and provide diverse housing options to meet the needs of different lifestyles and incomes.

1.C INTEGRATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

Climate migration is the movement of people due to climate or the effects of climate change. Grand Rapids is primed to be a “climate haven” or safe place for people to move to with a diverse job market, population growth, good schools, cultural offerings, comparatively moderate climate, and access to water. The City of Grand Rapids should adopt policies and regulations that incentivize practices such as energy reduction, renewable energy installations, rain gardens, green roofs, and protection of trees and vegetation to strengthen neighborhood resilience in the face of a changing climate.

DEFINED
COMPLETE
NEIGHBORHOODS


A mix of housing types in close proximity to centers and corridors that give residents convenient access to daily needs, employment, recreation, and transportation options. Complete neighborhoods are a desired outcome of a 15-Minute City approach, which makes travel across the city a choice, not a necessity, for meeting everyday needs.



VALUE THREADS


RECOMMENDATIONS

1.A CREATE COMPLETE AND STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS.

1.A.1 Regularly update the Grand Rapids and Kent County Housing Needs Assessment to guide creation and preservation of affordable housing.  Use the Housing Needs Assessment to set a subsequent target number of units for development and preservation. Connect existing organizations, programs, and tools that create and preserve quality affordable housing to residents and developers who would benefit from services already available.

1.A.2 Implement design guidelines that build upon existing neighborhood development.  Encourage development that responds to and enhances the general scale, character, and natural features of neighborhoods through regulation of design in new development. Consider building forms, scale, street frontage relationships, setbacks, open space patterns, landscaping, and architectural styles. 

1.A.3 Improve the relationship between higher-intensity and lower-intensity uses. Adopt zoning requirements that support transitions in building scale in locations where higher-density and higher-intensity development is adjacent to smaller-scale single-dwellings. This includes allowing missing middle housing types by-right as a transition between high-density mixed-use areas and low-density residential neighborhoods. Ensure new high-density and large-scale infill development incorporates design elements that soften transitions in scale and limit light and privacy impacts on adjacent residents. Landscaping, setbacks, step-backs, and other design elements should be considered in addition to the placement of zoning lines between districts to ease the transition.

1.A.4 Ensure public information about residential infill development is easy to access.  Ensure residents can access information on all infill development proposals over a certain size, including those approved administratively. Continue to use publicly accessible platforms as a central source of information on planning applications. Evaluate the Development with Us (DwUs) program and consider permanently funding the program.

1.A.5 Develop an anti-displacement strategy. Explore tools and strategies for protecting residents at risk of displacement. Tools included in the overall strategy may include:



- Support and coordinate holding land in reserve for affordable housing as an anti-displacement tool, and for other community development purposes. This may be accomplished with community land trusts or land banks.
- Increase efforts to make homeowners aware of programs that mitigate the impacts of rising property values on lower-income households, particularly in neighborhoods where housing costs are rapidly appreciating.
- Streamline the process to create condominium forms of ownership. This could include partnerships to provide construction financing and implement strategies that support sales. Consider working with local/regional banks to address Federal Housing Administration (FHA) requirements for condo ownership.

DEFINED

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

There are two main kinds of affordable housing: 1.) dedicated affordable housing units that come with binding rent and/or income restrictions to ensure it is occupied by low-income households and 2.) market affordable housing units that rent or sell at an affordable price but have no binding restrictions. Market affordable housing is generally affordable to households earning between 80-120% of the area median income. This chapter includes recommendations for both.

DEVELOPING AN ANTI-DISPLACEMENT STRATEGY

Rising rents or property taxes to a lesser extent, can make it difficult or impossible for residents to afford to remain in their homes. In many instances, displaced residents and businesses struggle to find comparably affordable locations that meet their needs and desires. The resulting housing instability and insecurity can adversely impact their overall well-being. To combat this displacement, localities can develop an anti-displacement strategy in neighborhoods experiencing rising rents and home prices. A key goal of an anti-displacement strategy is to maximize existing residents' choices about when or if they move, preserving their ability to stay in their homes and neighborhoods if they wish to do so.

Local Housing Solutions, managed and updated by the NYU Furman Center's Housing Solutions Lab, provides a four-pronged approach to creating this type of strategy:

- **Plan** ahead to identify the neighborhoods (or other areas) where action may be needed to preserve affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households.
- **Protect** long-term residents from the adverse effects of rising rents and home prices.
- **Preserve** existing affordable housing.
- **Produce** additional dedicated affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households.

Recommendation 1.A.5

1.A.6 Advocate for removal of state-level barriers to housing

affordability and stability. Advocate for and support legislation to amend state restrictions on inclusionary housing policies. Support policies that work to create permanently affordable housing and/or mitigate the impacts of market pressures that cause involuntary displacement.

1.A.7 Provide adequate resources to meet community needs. See that departments are adequately staffed to support the growing Grand Rapids community. Support the ongoing work of Code Compliance and other departments to assist historically marginalized property owners. Consider changing density and development patterns in response to metrics for City services and evaluate the need for additional infrastructure, specifically for public safety.

**1.A.8 Support efforts to provide small-scale developer training to residents.**

Support and help staff opportunities for Grand Rapids residents to learn the skills to become small developers, with a focus on how to build great places incrementally, to diversify who benefits from neighborhood development. Support efforts to provide or expand access to capital for homeowners and small-scale developers who want to build missing middle housing.

1.A.9 Work with the larger metropolitan community to provide safe, stable, and affordable housing options. Meeting the challenge of providing safe, stable, and affordable housing options for all income levels requires coordinated action and public-private partnerships. Coordinate plans and investments with programs that prevent avoidable, involuntary evictions and foreclosures. Participate in regional housing plans with neighboring cities and townships and Kent County.

**1.B EXPAND THE VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES AND PRICE POINTS.****1.B.1 Support programs that expand housing diversity based on income and housing types.**

Where there are opportunities, coordinate programs to encourage more mixed-income projects. Build/creative incentive tools and programs to promote the development of these balanced neighborhoods with a variety of housing choices on projects where tools to promote income-diverse developments are employed.

- Partner with the development community to identify the most impactful tools and current barriers related to delivery of

missing middle housing.

- 1.B.2 Allow a greater variety of housing types in low-density residential zone districts.** Ensure continued viability and regulatory compliance of naturally occurring affordable housing, preserve the existing supply of middle-density housing, and encourage development of new housing types. Allow duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and ADUs by-right in zoning districts where single-family housing is allowed.
- 1.B.3 Allow higher density residential in the Mid-Century and Modern Era neighborhoods.** In line with the Vital Streets Plan, increase density in neighborhoods where adequate transportation infrastructure is provided. Consider allowing up to six units on lots fronting Link Residential and Network Residential streets in all zones where single-family detached dwellings are permitted. New housing should align with the Future Character Map. For example, cottage clusters may be an appropriate solution for neighborhoods where large parcels are available for development.
- 1.B.4 Assess and reduce barriers to innovative housing solutions (such as modular construction, prefabricated materials, and new building methods).** Evaluate opportunities to facilitate development of tiny homes, modular housing, and co-housing, as well as innovative construction and delivery methods such as prefabrication, 3D printing, and other emerging technologies. Ensure innovative housing products meet basic development standards (e.g., setbacks, form) to ensure consistent development character within neighborhoods. Consider establishing a residential pattern book for innovative housing products, and working with local architects and residents to create a building permit template consistent with the pattern book that facilitates code review and approvals.
- 1.B.5 Continue to increase homeownership opportunities.** Current efforts to improve and strengthen affordability should be continued.
- Educate residents on home purchase down payment programs available to low- and moderate-income buyers and first-time homebuyers from the city and state.
 - Support efforts to leverage publicly owned land for affordable housing development. Coordinate across City departments to evaluate public lands for suitability for affordable housing development. Explore partnerships with other City departments to prioritize and set standards for use of publicly owned land for affordable housing.



THE BENEFITS OF MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

“Missing middle housing” refers to housing types that fall somewhere in between a single-family home and mid-rise apartment buildings such as townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes. Allowing missing middle housing can help municipalities, in neighborhoods dominated by single-family homes, increase the availability of less expensive housing types and support vibrant, walkable neighborhoods, while gently increasing density. These housing types are an important component of a diverse housing stock, which contribute to more inclusive and affordable neighborhoods.

Increasing the stock of missing middle housing requires a comprehensive approach to facilitate its development. There may be barriers to constructing these housing types related to zoning regulations, approval processes, developer capacity, and cost for homeowners and small scale developers. A complete strategy is one that makes missing middle development both allowable and feasible.

Missing middle housing types are compatible in scale with detached single-family homes. The next page shows some common missing middle housing types with a brief description of their design.

Learn more about the different missing middle housing types, template designs, and profiles of successful initiatives in the US and internationally at missingmiddlehousing.com

DUPLEX

A small- to medium-sized structure consisting of two dwelling units, either side-by-side or stacked one on top of the other, which face the street and have separate entrances.



FOURPLEX

A medium-sized structure which consists of four dwelling units, typically stacked with two on the ground floor and two above, that face a street and may be accessed through a shared entrance.



COTTAGE CLUSTER

A series of small, detached units arranged around a shared courtyard that is perpendicular to the street. The shared courtyard replaces private backyards.



TOWNHOUSE

A small- to medium-sized structure consisting of usually three to eight attached single-family homes placed side-by-side. Each townhome faces the street and are accessed by a private entrance.



Photos: Sightline Institute

THE USE OF PUBLICLY OWNED LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Even in strong markets, local governments, school districts, or other public entities with little undeveloped land, local governments may own underutilized properties with vacant buildings or buildings that are no longer useful for their original purpose. These properties often present an opportunity to expand the supply of affordable housing. Through development partnerships or sale of development rights, these sites may be redeveloped to better serve the community. Properties may be made available at no cost or a reduced cost to developers that commit to specific requirements or that agree to redevelop in a way that combines the original use (e.g., a school or a community center) with other community benefits like affordable housing.

High land costs can make it difficult to create new affordable housing for low- or moderate-income households, particularly in high-value, amenity-rich locations. In addition to redevelopment, local jurisdictions can also build considerations for affordable housing and other community-serving uses into the disposition process for surplus land and buildings. With this approach, sites are considered on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to prioritize affordable housing or another purpose. These decisions should be based on clear criteria—for example, proximity to schools, jobs, public transit, and other services—as well as characteristics that might make development for a specific purpose undesirable or difficult.

This approach may include sites that will continue to be used for their current purpose but could be developed more intensively, such as low-density buildings where additional floors could be added, or surface parking lots could be redeveloped.

Where a site has been determined to be inappropriate for residential use, or where the City, school district, or other public owner places a priority on receiving fair market value for the land, there are still opportunities to support affordable housing. City policy can require that a share of the proceeds from the sale of any publicly owned land be used to support affordable housing activities.

As a starting point, cities can create and maintain a surplus land inventory with key attributes of desirable parcels, making it easier to quickly identify sites that might be good candidates for affordable housing.

Recommendation 1.B.5

- 1.B.6 Support Community Development efforts described in the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County 2021 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.** The study examined the most common traits associated with strong neighborhoods to determine if barriers existed for certain groups or geographic areas in Grand Rapids and Kent County that might limit access to fair housing choice. Using this information, support and advocate for initiatives that provide access to housing for persons with disabilities, including those with mobility impairments, mental health challenges, and developmental and intellectual disabilities.



1.C INTEGRATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

- 1.C.1 Encourage modifications for new or substantially remodeled housing units that improve access for people with limited mobility.**



A house is visitable when it meets three basic requirements: one zero-step entrance, doors with 32 inches of clear passage space, and one wheelchair-accessible bathroom on the main floor. Connect residents and developers to organizations and programs experienced with home modification options and those that understand the needs of older or physically disabled people.

- 1.C.2 Continue to enhance community assets through additional investments, including but not limited to, green spaces.** Prioritize investments in free, equitable, and accessible community gathering spaces and public parks, especially in disadvantaged communities.



AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

According to the 2020 Census, one in six people in the United States were 65 and older, and Michigan is one of the most rapidly aging states in the country. AARP estimates that the number of Michiganders 60 years and older is growing by 50,000 each year.

The City of Grand Rapids 2021 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice reports that 2019 data shows 13.3% of Grand Rapids residents as being 65 or older, and 12.8% of Grand Rapids population have a disability. Ambulatory and independent living difficulties are the leading disabilities in Grand Rapids, which have a significant impact on an individual's transportation and housing options.

In January 2024, the Grand Rapids Age-Friendly Action Plan was formally approved by AARP, and Grand Rapids was renewed as a member of the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. This recognizes the features that make Grand Rapids livable for people of all ages are in the Community Master Plan recommendations.

1.C.3 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.

1.C.4 Support implementation of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP).

Participate fully in the actions recommended by the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, including the subsequent implementation plan or work program. Provide leadership on actions that impact critical systems and assets within the purview of the Planning Department. Use the greenhouse gas reduction goals set in the CAAP when evaluating updates to the CMP.

1.C.5 Improve accessibility to fresh foods throughout the community, with a focus on food deserts and economically challenged neighborhoods.

Promote full-service grocery stores that will increase access to fresh and affordable food in neighborhoods with less access. The zoning code should be reviewed, and amendments considered, that reduce upfront development costs and encourage local neighborhood-based businesses that can address food desert needs. Economic incentive options should be considered based on locational factors as opportunities arise. Support the priorities of the Kent County Food Systems Assessment & Plan related to the City of Grand Rapids, which includes priorities outlined by the City's Urban Agriculture Committee related to food accessibility.

1.C.6 Continue to support community gardens and promote an edible landscape.

Community gardens are an appropriate land use in neighborhoods and the City should promote an edible landscape on appropriate public properties, including parks. The Urban Agriculture Committee recommendations should be implemented regarding greenhouses/hoophouses, permit fees, composting, and farm stands. Consider code amendments that permit urban agriculture as a primary, accessory, or special/conditional use in all zoning districts to support urban agricultural practices on properties across the city.

1.C.7 Expand City programs to support sustainable housing.

Gaps in funding and eligibility for funding for retrofit projects can create barriers to regular housing maintenance. Support the pursuit of funding for weatherization, energy efficiency, and water conservation measures for all, especially lower-income residents, and small business owners, both in new construction and retrofits to existing buildings.

1.C.8 Continue to promote the use of green infrastructure on individual home sites. Support programs and funding sources that promote the use of green infrastructure. Public education on the benefits of rain gardens, native plants, and vegetation for stormwater management should be expanded.



1.C.9 Promote native plant use in home landscapes. Consider adoption of a Landscape Manual, referenced within the Zoning Ordinance, to capture evolving best practices and provide guidance for projects subject to landscaping standards. Evaluate recommended plantings and include plants that are suited for warmer climates, to account for the changing climate. Identify opportunities to promote technical assistance (e.g., Kent Conservation District, Michigan State University Extension, Wild Ones, etc.).



1.C.10 Continue to work towards the City's tree canopy goal. Trees help to offset the impact of greenhouse gases, provide shade, minimize the urban heat island effect, and contribute to a more comfortable walking environment. Implementation of this strategy will occur over time as the existing tree canopy is maintained and new development and infill provide additions through on-site landscaping. Tree replacement in publicly owned spaces and management of the urban forest are critical ongoing tree canopy priorities.



1.C.11 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.



1.C.12 Continue to encourage voluntary community benefits agreements. Encourage the use of voluntary community benefits agreements between developers, neighborhood groups, and the City. Work with projects receiving funding from public sources to ensure that impacted communities benefit from associated amenities, recreational facilities, and employment opportunities. Identify resources to support this strategy and establish a structure to enforce and implement agreements. Consider partnerships with organizations, such as Neighborhood Associations, that can support communities with resources, time, and/or expertise.



2. VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS



Business districts serve many vital roles. They are critical components of complete neighborhoods, where residents can find most of what they need in terms of goods and services nearby. They generate local growth and opportunities, vibrant neighborhoods, stronger communities, and more viable local businesses. In many cases, these districts also provide community gathering places and contribute to the identity of the surrounding community.

Neighborhoods and business districts depend on one another. People need close access to personal and essential services while businesses need a strong customer and client base to succeed. The recommendations in this chapter support essential elements and functions of vital business districts that will enhance them as anchors of complete neighborhoods.

VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

GOAL

A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods.

Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people of all ages.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

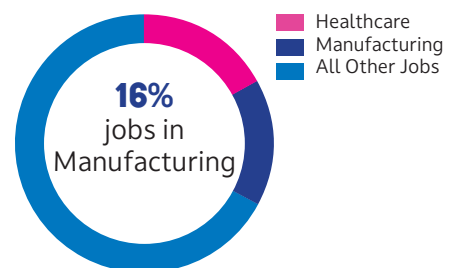
PUBLIC INPUT

- **Residents want to see better walkability and more public space.** Participants noted opportunities for public areas, green spaces, or amenities that benefit the community as a whole. There is general support for the creation of more pedestrian-friendly environments and walkable neighborhoods that increase economic activity, improve public health, and foster a stronger sense of community.
- **There is support for reduced parking in business districts.** Less emphasis on parking allows for the creation of more pedestrian-friendly environments. By minimizing parking requirements, cities can encourage higher-density developments, and reduce surface parking.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

- **Nearly 40% of Grand Rapids residents are either in management occupations or work in production or logistics occupations.** Health care and social assistance and manufacturing remain the two largest employment sectors by industry. Together, these sectors account for approximately 33% of employment.
- **Density is a significant driver of the local economy.** The City depends on taxable land to cover the costs of everything from infrastructure to emergency services, and a little over 10% of Grand Rapids' budget comes from property tax revenue. Land-use efficiency can be determined by taking the assessed value of a property and dividing it by the total amount of land it uses. As a result, overall, more compact developments produce higher revenues for cities than other patterns.

Major Employment Sectors



DENSITY AND REVENUE

More compact, infill projects produce higher revenues than other development patterns.

Suburban Development Pattern.

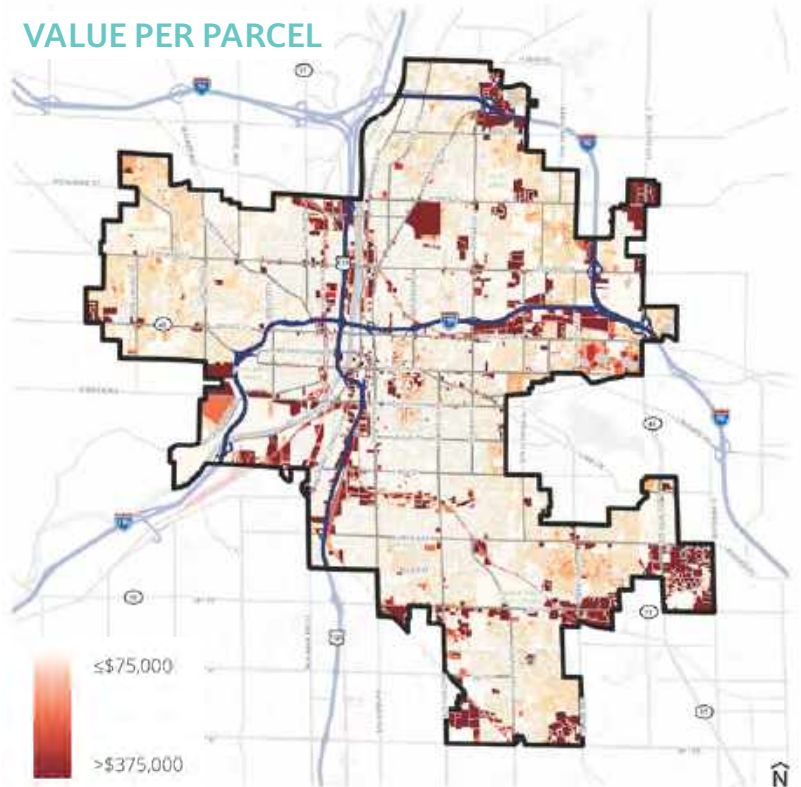
Large lots with frequent curb cuts, buildings set far away from the street, and parking in front creates a suburban development pattern that prioritizes the automobile and large-scale development.



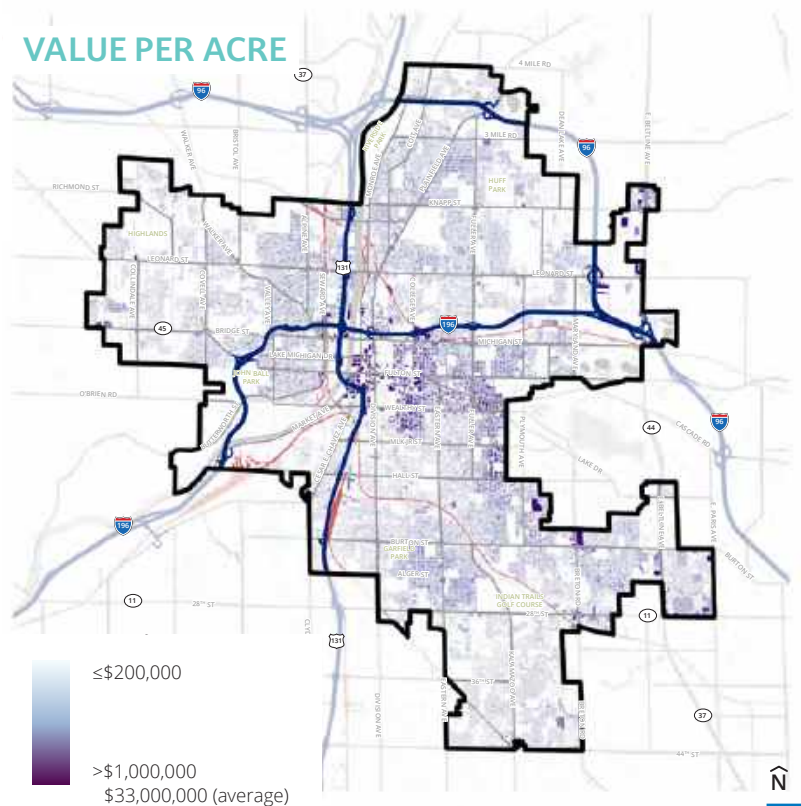
Urban Development Pattern. Narrow lots with alleys, buildings that are close to the street, and parking that is hidden behind the building work together to create a high-value development pattern that supports walkability.



VALUE PER PARCEL



VALUE PER ACRE



- **The Grand Rapids area is ranked 9th among US large metros for small business employment.** According to the US Census, over half of Grand Rapids workers (50.4%) were employed by small businesses in 2020. Grand Rapids was home to 19,092 small businesses, defined by the Census Bureau as having fewer than 500 employees.

OBJECTIVES

2.A SUPPORT COMPACT ACTIVITY CENTERS THAT PROVIDE A MIX OF USES.

Business districts range in scale from downtown Grand Rapids to small neighborhood centers that provide local access to services. Vital business districts anchor complete neighborhoods with retail stores, civic amenities, housing options, health clinics, daycare centers, employment centers, plazas, parks, senior centers, or other public gathering places. The Community Master Plan supports a range of business districts across the city to enhance local, equitable access to services.

2.B IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF ALL BUSINESS DISTRICTS.

Business districts and corridors vary in character, services provided, and primary purposes. The CMP recommendations work to enhance the function of business districts to improve neighborhood livability and accessibility to create a more walkable and inclusive city.

2.C BROADEN AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL SERVICES, AMENITIES, AND CULTURAL ASSETS.

Policies that strengthen and expand cultural and neighborhood assets can bring vitality to these districts. Stable and thriving districts celebrate and promote neighborhood assets, create a sense of inclusion, and give new and long-time residents more vibrant places to work, shop, play, learn, and do business.

TOP 10 CITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT

1. New Orleans-Metairie, Louisiana
2. Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, Florida
3. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
4. Providence-Warwick, Rhode Island-Massachusetts
5. New York-Newark-Jersey City, New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania
6. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, California
7. Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, Oregon-Washington
8. Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls, New York
9. **Grand Rapids-Wyoming, Michigan**
10. San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, California

VALUE THREADS

CULTURE



EQUITY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



VIBRANCY



RECOMMENDATIONS

2.A SUPPORT COMPACT CENTERS THAT PROVIDE A MIX OF USES.

2.A.1 Update the zoning ordinance to encourage density in areas that serve residents and businesses. Evaluate the zoning within areas designated as "Activity Centers" on the Future Character Map to ensure the assigned districts match characteristics discussed in the Plan. Activity Centers are mixed-use areas, typically along transit corridors or major roadways, that provide, or aspire to provide, access to goods, services, dining, entertainment, and residential options. Continue to zone these areas to provide a broad range of services and higher-density housing to support a critical mass of demand for commercial uses and more walkable access for customers.

2.A.2 Direct dense development downtown and in areas and corridors served by regional transit routes. The GR Forward Downtown & River Action Plan, adopted in 2015, called for increasing the downtown residential population to 10,000 people. Evaluate and update this number to significantly increase the downtown population goal. Increased density, particularly concentrated downtown and along major corridors, can set the stage for future transit improvements such as a Bus Rapid Transit or light rail. Coordinate land use with broader regional transit efforts, such as The Rapid Transit Master Plan, to ensure that enough land is available to accommodate projected growth. Consider setting minimum Floor Area Ratio (FAR), residential densities, and/or number of stories on sites within a certain distance of regional transit routes to ensure these areas are developed to an appropriate density.

2.A.3 Support infill development at an appropriate scale. Infill development is critical to building commercial areas and neighborhoods to create vibrant mixed-use places. More intensive infill is appropriate in the downtown, along major road corridors, at key intersections, and adjacent to other development concentrations. Infill developments should be compatible with the surrounding character. Such developments can support local neighborhood businesses, reinforce walkability, are an efficient use of land, create additional housing opportunities in neighborhoods, and reduce traffic impacts.

2.A.4 Support taller commercial buildings in commercial districts. Consider raising the maximum height of commercial buildings in the MCN and MON neighborhood classifications and NOS district to encourage densification in these commercial districts. Mixed-use approaches to these new buildings are supported as well.

2.A.5 Update the zoning ordinance to address the impacts of continued growth on business districts. Regularly evaluate the Zoning Ordinance to respond to changing trends and pressures on business districts. This may include:

- additional guidance for self-storage facilities when integrated within active-use buildings,
- additional guidance on fulfillment centers, gas stations, and other auto-centric uses,
- amenity requirements (e.g., bike rooms, locker rooms, showers, electric vehicle charging station, or package lockers), and
- more expansive and flexible temporary use allowances in commercial mixed-use zone districts to activate underutilized sites.

2.B IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF BUSINESS DISTRICTS.

2.B.1 Require a plan to encourage people to use modes of transportation other than driving alone when large developments are proposed within nodes identified on in the Conceptual Development Framework. Transportation and parking demand management encompasses a variety of strategies to encourage more efficient use of the existing transportation system and reduce reliance on the personal automobile. Consider requirements for new development or alterations to buildings over a unit count threshold to provide a TDM plan. Provide a standard agreement in lieu of a custom plan to account for emerging and first time developers.

DEFINED

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

The development of new housing or other buildings/uses on scattered vacant sites in a built-up area.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM) IN PORTLAND, OR

TDM is the practice of providing residents, employees, and visitors information and incentives to walk, bicycle, ride transit, and carpool while discouraging drive-alone trips. TDM strategies have several benefits including subsidized transit passes, bike commute reimbursements, and providing encouragement information to residents and employees.

There are several benefits that come along with TDM strategies including reduced transportation costs and enhanced mobility options for residents, mitigation of neighborhood parking impacts, and greenhouse gas emission reduction citywide.

As part of a zoning code update, the City of Portland adopted a new TDM requirement that applied to a subset of development within the newly designated Commercial/ Mixed Use Zones. A development in this zone that includes more than 10 new dwelling units and is close to transit is required to have a TDM Plan approved prior to the issuance of a building permit.

There are two options for a developer to meet the TDM Plan requirement:

1. **Pre-Approved TDM Plan.** This administrative option requires a financial incentive equivalent in value to an annual transit pass per unit, due at building permit issuance. Owners/developers are required to provide transportation options information and an annual survey to their residents to assess the impact/relevance of the options provided.
2. **Custom TDM Plan.** This option requires an applicant to develop a TDM Plan and implement approved TDM strategies. Plans are approved through a discretionary land use review process and the plan must demonstrate how the TDM strategies will contribute to achieving the City’s mode share and residential auto ownership targets in order to be approved.

These TDM Plans are meant to prevent, reduce, and mitigate the impacts of the new development on the transportation system, neighborhood livability, safety, and the environment while providing safe and efficient mobility options.

Recommendation 2.B.1

REIMAGINING AUTO-DOMINATED CORRIDORS

Across the United States, cities are looking for ways to become more attractive to investors, competitive for new businesses, livable for residents, and exciting to visitors. They aspire to be vibrant, equitable, and sustainable places, with a mix of uses and a variety of transportation options.

However, nearly every community across the country is challenged by the presence of automobile-centric commercial corridors. These corridors typically feature a wide road with multiple lanes; high-speed traffic; nonexistent or limited transit service; buildings separated from the street by large parking lots; a lack of trees and vegetation; and sidewalks that are narrow, in poor condition, interrupted with driveway curb cuts, and unbuffered from the travel lanes. In Grand Rapids, these corridors include Plainfield Avenue, 28th Street, and E Beltline Avenue.

Streets with large parcels and many property owners do not develop all at once. Changing an auto-dominated corridor takes time and coordination and infrastructure improvements, land use policies, and sustainable financial support are all important elements for success. The zoning code is particularly important. Sections of the corridor may be better situated to support residential, while key intersections are ideal for concentrated commercial areas. This prevents over-zoning from happening as denser development starts taking place. Further, capital improvement programs that upgrade infrastructure for large sections of the corridor can help prevent the disconnection that results from piecemeal redevelopment.

Example: Columbia Pike in Arlington County, Virginia stretched more than three miles, lined with drive-through restaurants and banks, convenience stores, and strip malls. In an effort to change the character of this major road, the County adopted two codes designed to kick-start development. Within the codes are requirements for street planning and standards for building envelopes, streetscapes, and architecture. For example, within commercial areas, buildings are required to have street frontage, first-floor retail space, and built-in bicycle amenities. The Columbia Pike Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Area was also established as a funding mechanism. The TIF dedicates 25% of incremental new tax revenue generated by new development and increasing property value to affordable housing along the corridor. Columbia Pike is now the busiest bus transit corridor in Virginia, with bus lines that have increased ridership and frequency and that connect to the nearby transit station. The corridor also features two walking loops, “bike boulevards” on adjacent streets, bike racks, and six bikeshare stations.

BEFORE

Before code changes, strip malls and other developments along auto-dominated corridors catered to drivers.



Photo: Urban Land Institute



Photo: Urban Land Institute

AFTER

Parking relocated from the front to the back of developments helps create a better environment for pedestrians and bicyclists, while roadway improvements create safer space for people.

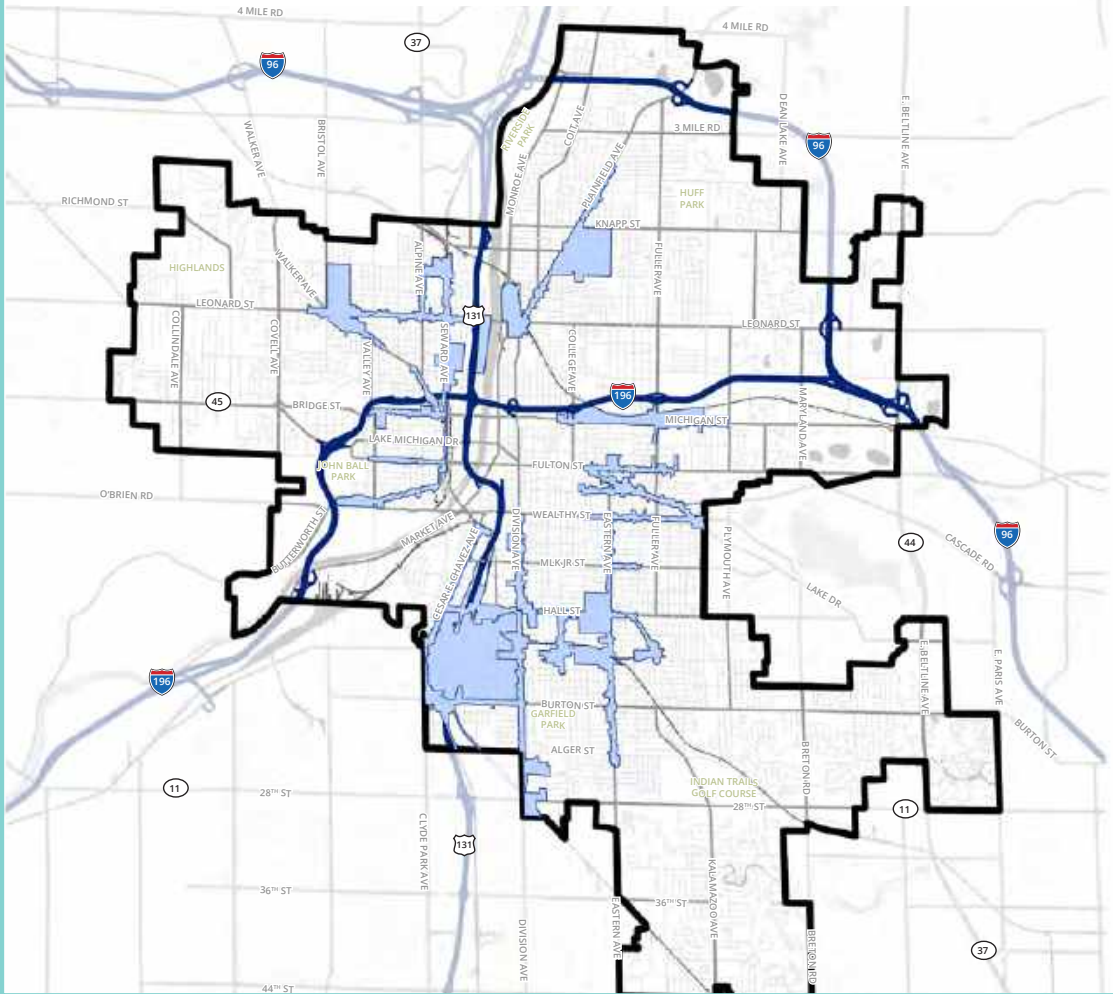


Photo: Urban Land Institute



Photo: Arlington County

AREAS COVERED BY CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITIES



Recommendation 2.C.2

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITIES

The purpose of the Corridor Improvement Authority Act (Public Act 208 of 2005) is to help communities plan for and fund improvements along a corridor. The overall goal is to help support economic development and redevelopment of this area. Once created, a Corridor Improvement Authority may hire a director, establish a tax increment financing plan, levy special assessments, and issue revenue bonds and notes. The CIA Board is made up of local business leaders that make decisions about investments within the corridor.

2.B.2 Set maximum block sizes within Activity Centers identified on the Future Character and Land Use Map.



As sites redevelop, introduce new connections, including streets, to break up large blocks. Consider additional incentives for walkways, landscaping, and plazas on sites over a certain size in Activity Centers. These incremental changes would apply to auto-dominated areas, such as 28th Street SE and Plainfield Avenue NE, and help to improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation and access to available transit.

2.C BROADEN AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL SERVICES, AMENITIES, AND CULTURAL ASSETS.

2.C.1 Evaluate strategies to protect significant community structures.



Encourage the adaptive reuse of significant community structures, such as former schools, meeting halls, and places of worship for arts, cultural, and community uses that continue their role as anchors for the community.

2.C.2 Increase the capacity of the City's Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIA) to have meaningful impact in their districts.



A CIA uses tax increment financing (TIF) dollars to make capital improvements within established commercial districts and can be a powerful tool to use the community's voice to guide and shape the success of business districts. As the existing CIA's revenues increase, they will have increasing opportunities to make impactful investments and should be provided with the necessary administrative and technical support to leverage these opportunities.

2.C.3 Continue to support private sector investments in green infrastructure.



Support the Grand Rapids 2030 District and similar public-private programs. The city-wide initiative brings the public and private sectors together for common goals: carbon drawdown, increased marketability, and community vibrancy. Provide grants to private entities to offset the costs of third-party verifications like LEED and Energy Star.

2.C.4 Continue to support public art championed by community organizations.



Enhance the public realm and encourage cultural expression and placemaking in activity centers, residential neighborhoods, parks, and other public spaces.

3. A STRONG ECONOMY



Grand Rapids is the economic hub of West Michigan and manufacturing remains the heart of the local economy. Grand Rapids, or the region, is home to some of the nation's largest industry concentrations in metals, plastics, biopharmaceuticals, medical devices, production technology, automotive manufacturing, office furniture production, and food processing. Grand Rapids also boasts one of the fastest-growing medical device and life sciences clusters in the U.S. along the Medical Mile. With more than 20 colleges and universities in the region, there is a wealth of local talent to grow and diversify the economic base of the city.

As Grand Rapids continues to experience growth, the recommendations in this chapter support a strong and resilient economy with diverse opportunities to find or create a job that is appealing and provides a livable wage. The recommendations in this chapter support the City's vision while advancing and building upon the work of local and regional economic development organizations like The Right Place.

A STRONG ECONOMY

GOAL

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.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

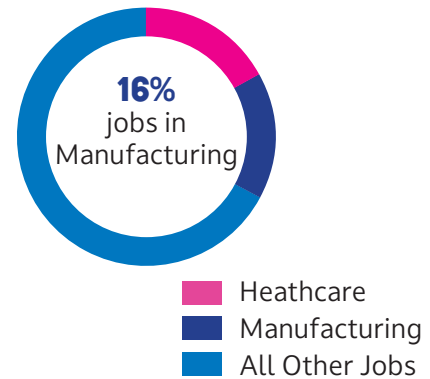
PUBLIC INPUT

- **Residents in Grand Rapids often look outside the city for employment opportunities.** Many people make employment decisions based on the perceived availability of job opportunities. Residents noted a desire for more career advancement opportunities and professional growth. Notably, nearly 60,000 Grand Rapids residents leave the city for work, while approximately 30,000 people both live and work in the city. Over 93,000 people commute to the city for work, demonstrating that city is the heart of the larger economic region.
- **Manufacturing requires a balanced approach.** Many residents emphasized the importance of manufacturing for job creation, economic diversity, and noted the historical significance of industry in Grand Rapids. There was general support for cleaner industries and accessible public transportation options to employment centers.

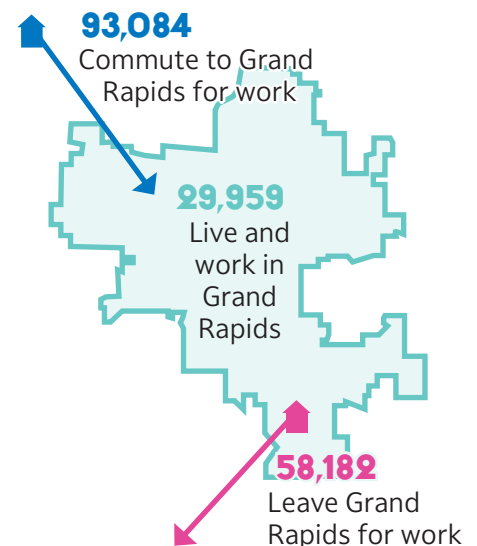
COMMUNITY PROFILE

- **Grand Rapids' workforce has become increasingly diverse.** Between 2009 and 2019, the percentage of the workforce comprised of Black, Asian, and Hispanic workers increased for each group. However, a racial income gap persists between white workers and most BIPOC groups, with Black workers earning approximately 33% less than the average median income across all groups.

Major Employment Sectors

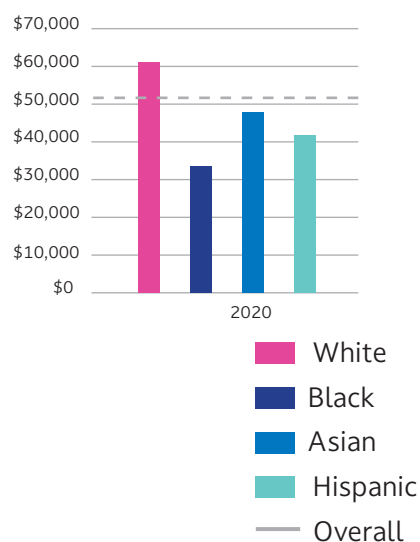


Employment Inflow/Outflow

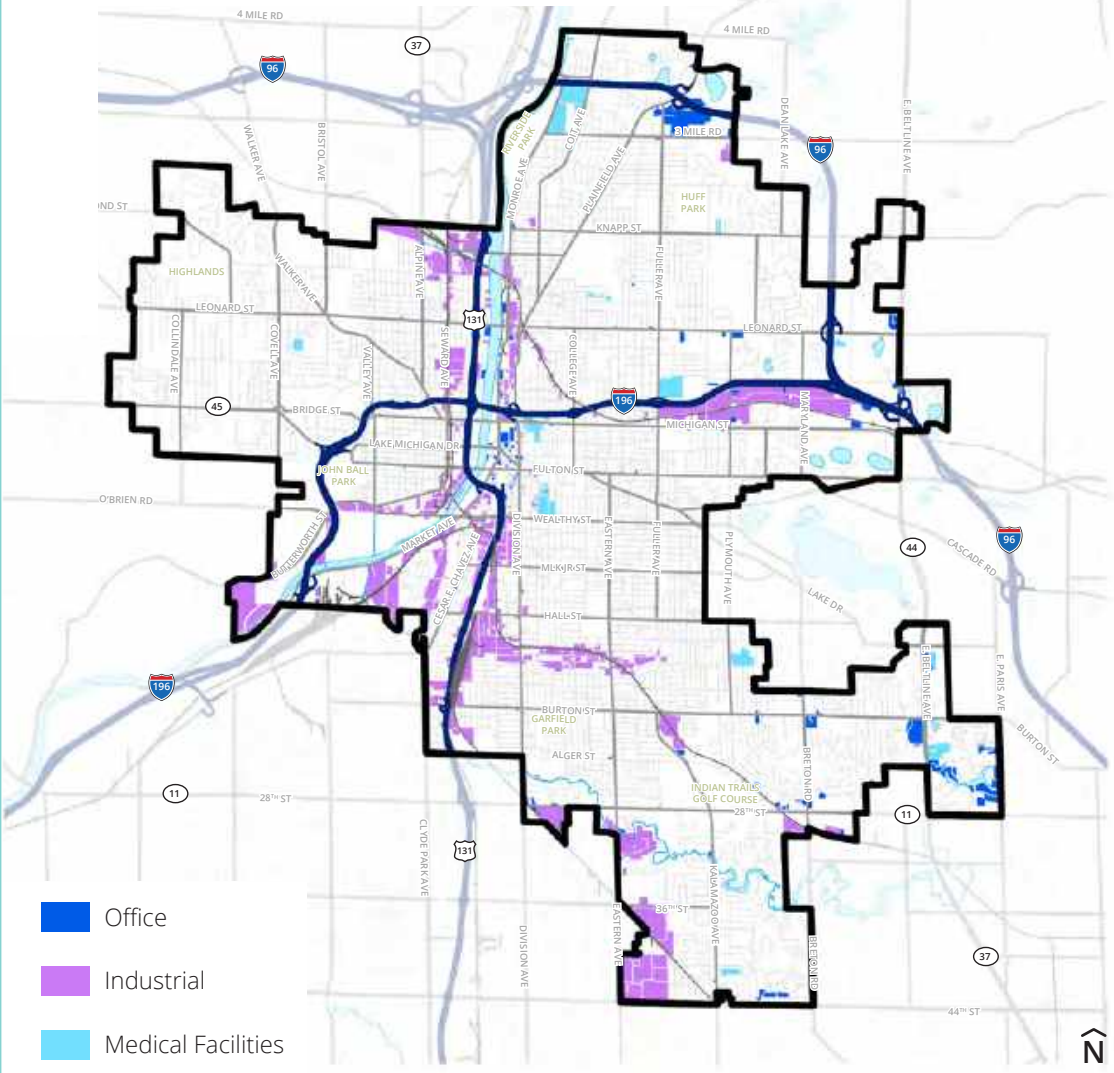


- **BIPOC workers are under-represented in sectors that provide higher-wage, entry-level positions with opportunities for advancement.** Successful economic development, that both attracts new talent and supports development of the workforce that is already in Grand Rapids, will need to build on the strategic direction for equitable growth set in that plan.
- **Hourly wages have not kept pace with the cost of living.** Currently, 49% of households in Grand Rapids are below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold, which includes households that have incomes above the federal poverty level but struggle to afford basic necessities (healthcare, food, housing, childcare, etc.). This is due in part to the gap between the living wage and the average wage. There is a need to grow industries that provide living wage jobs in alignment with the education and skills of the community while working to increase the education and skills of the community.
- **Traditional industrial land is limited.** Grand Rapids has approximately 6% of its total land zoned for industrial uses. Industrial areas tend to house a lot of jobs, and include sites that house manufacturing or other production, along with warehouses and logistics functions. Many traditional large-scale uses like this operate best near highways and rail lines, and where utilities are available or easily built. However, not all industrial uses have the same impact on the surrounding areas as heavy manufacturing or large distribution centers. Some businesses, like bakers, small-batch brewers, or other makers with larger operations, may seek out similar physical spaces but could be located throughout the city.

Median Income by Race/Ethnicity



EXISTING EMPLOYMENT LAND USES



INDUSTRIAL LAND

Industrial is integrated along key corridors and covers 6% (1,750 acres) of Grand Rapids, primarily located along the river and major roadways. The areas on this map are determined based on the use designation maintained by the City of Grand Rapids Assessor's Office. These areas offer unique opportunities for future redevelopment, with limited land availability, relocating industry within the city would require careful consideration. Once industrial land has been converted to other uses, it is nearly impossible to get back.

OBJECTIVES

3.A INCREASE THE DENSITY OF HIGH-WAGE JOBS AND DECREASE THE WAGE GAP IN GRAND RAPIDS.

A healthy economy supports the creation of living wage jobs for a growing and increasingly diverse population. Currently, hourly wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living. Therefore, citywide prosperity will depend on smart approaches to economic growth, neighborhood development, and small business development. Land use strategies must address the increasing overlap between commercial, industrial, and professional or creative services sectors to provide broader employment opportunities citywide.

3.B ENSURE A WIDE RANGE OF RESIDENTS CAN ACCESS JOBS.

Grand Rapids has a significant number of jobs and employment centers that can only be accessed by car. Strategies to support mixed-use, walkable development at select transportation nodes and corridor intersections across Grand Rapids can support access to jobs for a wider range of residents. There is strong evidence of valued, walkable, self-contained urban environments, in supporting office-based employment uses that can house business firms. Additionally, coordinating land use with transportation system investments can help provide convenient access to existing jobs that are not currently or conveniently serviced by transit.

There is also the reality of the growing hybrid/remote work economy. It is becoming increasingly critical to ensure that the city has the infrastructure necessary for people to participate in this sector of the economy. Equitable distribution of high-speed internet and its supporting infrastructure needs to evolve over time for Grand Rapids to stay competitive. This would allow existing residents to fully participate in the global economy no matter where they live and make Grand Rapids even more attractive to remote workers.

3.C BALANCE ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH PRIORITIES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

A healthy environment is vital to protect a quality of life that attracts and retains businesses and the employees. New strategies are needed to expand capacity for employment growth while also meeting environmental objectives. Truck intensity and access, proximity to housing and workforce, and environmental considerations must be considered in choices about the location of employment uses. Industrial sites should not pose health and safety risks to occupants or surrounding neighborhoods, and efforts to maintain and improve the capacity, affordability, and viability of industrial uses need to ensure that environmental resources and public health are also protected.

VALUE THREADS

CULTURE



EQUITY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



VIBRANCY



RECOMMENDATIONS

3.A INCREASE THE DENSITY OF HIGH-WAGE JOBS AND DECREASE THE WAGE GAP IN GRAND RAPIDS.

3.A.1 Support efforts to grow the greater Grand Rapids region into a major tech hub of the Midwest. Capitalize on the momentum of the growing technology sector and support City efforts to align training of the local workforce with the labor market. Coordinate efforts with The Right Place and other regional entities on Greater Grand Rapids Tech Strategy, which calls for 20,000 new tech jobs over the next 10 years. Specifically, facilitate efforts to create redevelopment-ready sites for new renewable energy industries to locate or relocate to Grand Rapids, while also working to remove physical and digital barriers to make Grand Rapids a destination for high tech jobs.



3.A.2 Encourage the growth of the life sciences industries in and near the Medical Mile. The growth of life science and medical research in Grand Rapids and western Michigan overall is reaching a level of critical mass where more commercial lab development may become feasible. Evidence from several key life science clusters suggests that proximity is an important location determinant as it facilitates staff movement between clinical, academic, and research roles. Supporting this growth can take the following forms:



- Ensure life science research and development is a by-right use in zoning districts near the Medical Mile.
- Set minimum lot sizes to better accommodate life science uses that require large building footprints.

3.B ENSURE A WIDER RANGE OF RESIDENTS CAN ACCESS JOBS.

3.B.1 Identify key commercial corridors and neighborhood centers for reinvestment and future planning work. Analysis in the Community Profile determined that there are significant income density differences across the city. These differences have implications for the ability of certain areas to support robust commercial corridors.

Efforts may include prioritizing updates to Area Specific Plans in Neighborhoods of Focus, areas experiencing significant growth and change, or those with limited outside investment. Auto-dominated corridors with potential for more density, such as 28th Street SE and Plainfield Avenue NE, should also be considered a priority. Area Specific Plans should lead to focused efforts and dedicated resources to improve infrastructure and building conditions on a district scale, potentially leveraging the resources of the Corridor Improvement Authorities.

3.B.2 Evaluate reuse of obsolete industrial properties for other



purposes. Industrial buildings and land are a limited resource in Grand Rapids, and the suitability to reuse these large sites for research and development or medical uses may put pressure on their overall availability. Reuse should undergo a high level of scrutiny relative to property size, building age, supporting infrastructure investment, truck intensity and rail access, proximity to housing and workforce, and environmental considerations to ensure land remains available for employment uses. Ensure the criteria aligns with the intended future character of these areas by including parcel size, utility infrastructure, major thoroughfare access, potential to buffer from conflicting uses, and proximity to transit among other factors in the evaluation and approval of non-industrial uses in industrial zones. Reuse of existing industrial buildings should not pose health and safety risks to occupants or surrounding neighborhoods. Industrial property along the riverfront may be best suited for other uses (e.g., housing and mixed-use).

- Clearly define industrial use to accurately represent the character of these places.
- Identify the differences between industrial manufacturing and warehousing or logistics uses and their implications for truck traffic when considering use changes.
- Consider the implications of the insertion of new uses into industrial areas and the inadvertent potential to constrain industrial uses in the future due to noise, smoke, truck traffic, and other impacts.

3.B.3 Reposition underutilized commercial retail properties to support



non-retail businesses. Expand the allowable uses in areas with commercial and retail sites that might be better suited to a wider range of employment land options, including research and development and light manufacturing that doesn't impact nearby residential uses (e.g., 28th Street SE).

THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF LIFE SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT

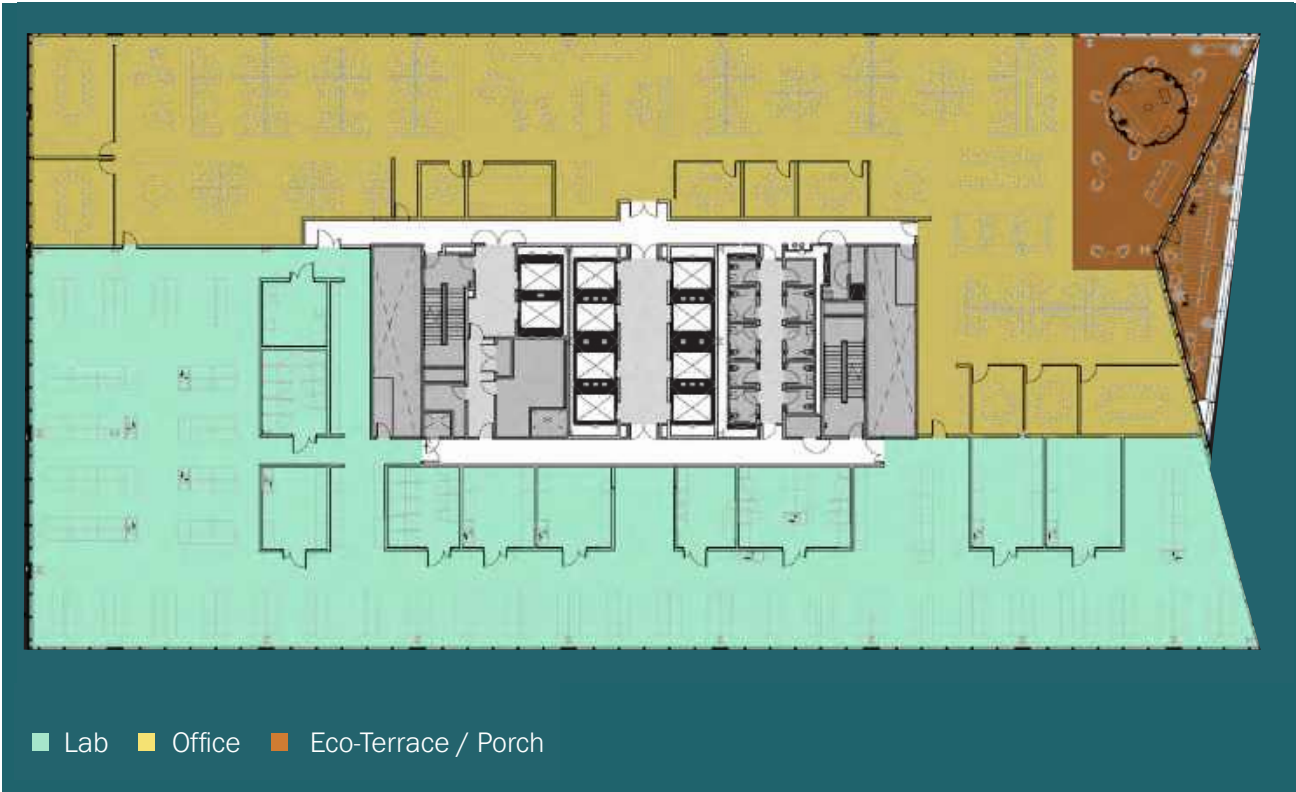
Life science is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. The life science industry can be a key driver in Grand Rapids' vibrant economy and employment opportunities. Although there are variations in the definition, the "life sciences" generally refers to organizations and firms dedicated to improving human, animal, and plant life. It includes private, non-profit, and public institutions specializing in a wide set of interdisciplinary fields, including biotechnology, medical devices, and other related disciplines. It is distinct, although closely tied, to the healthcare industry, where medical care is directly provided in clinical settings.

Many life science developments have arisen in proximity to academic medical centers and other academic research programs due to the growing collaboration between corporations and academia. The proximity to academic medical centers and other academic research also provides a pipeline of talent for companies and institutions that are focused on recruitment of young professionals.

There are design challenges unique to life science buildings, such as large floor plans, higher floor-to-floor ceiling heights, and mechanical and operational needs. Science buildings also require a much greater level of service than office buildings with frequent large vehicle deliveries. Co-locating these services decreases the impact on nearby infrastructure and creates efficiencies for institutions.

Example: The 1.48 million-square-foot buildings in the Schuylkill Yards Development in Philadelphia are being developed adjacent to Drexel University, University of Pennsylvania, and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, within walking distance to the city center and the city's landmark cultural institutions. This proximity to academic research and clinical care promises to attract gene therapy startups and other life science stalwarts. Key to the development and design was applying the appropriate base building criteria for these unknown tenants and creating flexibility for right-sized lab suites for different users.

EXAMPLE: SCHYUKILL YARDS



33' WIDE COLUMN
BAY SPACING



60/40 LAB TO OFFICE
RATIO DAY ONE

15 FOOT FLOOR-TO-
CEILING HEIGHTS



EXTRA FLOOR
LOADING CAPACITY



LARGE, FLEXIBLE 39K
RSF FLOORPLATES



EMERGENCY POWER
GENERATION



Photos: Schuykill Yards
(Brandywine Realty Trust)

3.B.4 Consider a hybrid business use category within Innovation**Districts identified on the Future Character and Land Use map.**

Hybrid business models are commonly found in the craft brewery industry in Grand Rapids where production, retail, and food service are co-located on a single site. Similar examples exist for a range of consumer product businesses, particularly entrepreneurial businesses, where a single integrated business model may exist but does not fit within existing use categories. Clear and simple regulation of these uses can encourage innovative entrepreneurial activity. Consider restructuring and refining use categories within the zoning ordinance to focus on impact to ensure industrial areas are preserved for business that makes things and employs people.

3.B.5 Evaluate, monitor, and enhance broadband access across the city.

Continue to support the provision of high-speed, reliable, and affordable fiber internet service to residents and businesses. Promote the advantages of “dig once” opportunities to coordinate the installation of underground fiber and/or conduit whenever the ground is open for other construction projects. Monitor and track progress of broadband infrastructure build-out, and work with the local broadband service provider to assess service area gaps.

C. BALANCE ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH PRIORITIES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.**3.C.1 Grow more jobs within the city that are near the workforce.**

Coordinate with other City departments to maintain data on job production, sectors, and locations. Utilize this information in review of large-scale projects. Encourage the development of jobs in the city that are accessible to people with a range of skill sets, affected by factors such as, (education and training), neighborhoods (transit), and at different points in their careers.

3.C.2 Promote the green economy.

The City should consider ways to promote the green economy, including support for local innovators and low-impact industries that incorporate a special recognition program (e.g., Green Spot Program, City of Columbus, Ohio, recognizes local businesses and households that fulfill certain commitments that support the local green economy).

3.C.3 Amend the zoning ordinance to reduce the impact of industrial uses on surrounding areas.

The City should consider code amendments that differentiate between light industrial and heavy industrial zoning districts. Implementing two industrial districts and

INNOVATION DISTRICT

Over the past several decades, urban economies have evolved at a rapid pace. Manufacturers have shifted their operations, and the model of economic development that relies on recruiting one big company or single industry has often proven to be inequitable and unsustainable. Cities are now seeing a new generation of small, local makers and manufacturers develop sustainable ways to make a middle-class living. These producers are the bakers, small-batch brewers, woodworkers, and artists that make cities unique, support the creation of new sustainable jobs, and increase the city’s tax revenue. These hybrid/small-scale businesses help create thriving places, with local business ownership opportunities and well-paying jobs that other business types can’t fulfill, to create more inclusive economic opportunities.

“Artisan zoning” is an approach to land use and development that provides space for small-scale manufacturers that produce little to no vibration, noise, fumes, or other nuisances, meaning they can fit within a wide variety of industrial, commercial, and even residential districts. Recommendations within this chapter would open up land not currently zoned for industrial to semi-industrial uses. This versatility allows a range of commercial, industrial, and office activities within one building and could allow for a growing business to centralize their operations. Examples include design and print facilities, wholesale supply businesses, restaurants and sidewalk cafés, microbreweries or wineries, or veterinary clinics. This flexibility may lead to more vacant buildings being occupied and more tax revenues to support city services.

Example: Indianapolis began overhauling its zoning ordinance in 2012, with special emphasis on increasing high-paying jobs, using the surplus of vacant properties, and decreasing the mileage traveled by residents. The Division of Planning created two new designations, Artisan Manufacturing and Artisan Food and Beverage, which allowed small manufacturers to start working in non-industrial areas. It also included a blight-fighting provision that allows artisan manufacturers to work in buildings in certain land use categories that have been vacant for five years, making artisan manufacturing the most easily permitted form of manufacturing throughout the city. Reactivating these spaces has increased the property value and, in turn, the tax revenue for the city, and they now provide affordable spaces for start-up companies with a uniqueness that reflects the city’s history.

THE POTENTIAL FOR REUSE

Grand Rapids has opportunities to convert some of its excess commercial land, such as sections of 28th Street SE, to flexible mixed-use industrial areas. While some of this land may be best suited for higher-density commercial or housing, it will be important to keep some of these employment areas in job-focused uses. Factors such as the use of vans versus trucks, frequency of deliveries, and the ability to use buildings, should all be considered in the incremental development of these areas.

Example: In Raleigh, North Carolina, a shopping center with a former Kroger grocery store was renovated and became the Midtown BioCenter, featuring 80,000 square feet of lab and manufacturing space and 20,000 square feet of office space. Midtown BioCenter created space for a lab or biomanufacturing user to locate and operate alongside retail, office, and residential, within one mile of a major interstate, and at a lower price than similar developments located in the region's suburbs. This use would have otherwise looked for space within a more industrial area, but with its low-impact operations, gave a new purpose to an empty big box store in an underutilized commercial area.

Recommendation 3.B.3



Photo: CBRE

directing heavy industrial uses to specific zones could reduce the impact on nearby residential areas and help to address long-term and historic environmental impacts while responding to the needs of a changing economy. Continue to require site improvements that buffer these uses from residential areas, including tree planting, planted screening, and landscape setbacks, as well as, review and update relevant City ordinances that address noise impacts. Consider requiring all developments containing industrial uses to be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

3.C.4 Continue brownfield remediation and redevelopment efforts.

Brownfield sites include properties with environmental contamination or functionally obsolete buildings. They may require mitigation or environmental clean-up and should be reintroduced into the economic cycle to maximize development opportunities that benefit the surrounding community. City programs and policies should continue to provide such support, with an emphasis on projects in Neighborhoods of Focus.

4. BALANCED MOBILITY



The continued growth of Grand Rapids and the larger metropolitan region has increased travel demand and the level of interaction between people walking, bicycling, taking transit, driving, and delivering goods. The City's ability to accommodate demands on the street is challenged by the physical constraints of the existing infrastructure and public rights of way, with the little room Grand Rapids has for new road capacity, it is not always feasible to widen existing streets. Therefore, existing streets and sidewalks must be used in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Grand Rapidsians deserve a transportation network that supports a diversity of modes and is safe, reliable, efficient, and affordable.

The recommendations in this chapter support the City's vision while advancing and building upon recent planning in the Vital Streets Plan, Bicycle Action Plan, Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan, The Rapid's Transit Master Plan, and Grand Valley Metro Council's Transportation demand Management (TDM) Plan to promote consistency and ensure coordination between transportation initiatives and land use policies. These actions complement the overall goal to deliver a complete and viable mobility network that sustains Grand Rapids.

BALANCED MOBILITY

GOAL

A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable.

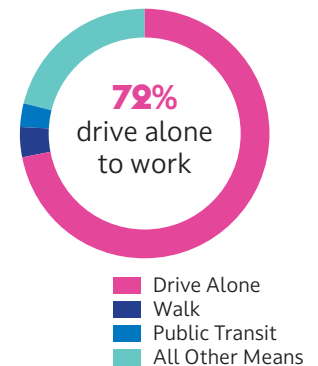
Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

PUBLIC INPUT

- **Grand Rapids has the potential to improve upon existing bicycle facilities.** Feedback on elements of a potential mobility toolkit emphasized the need for enhanced bicycle connectivity, particularly on major roads. Participants stressed that painted lines are insufficient and advocated for physical protection to improve bicyclist's safety. Many people expressed the desire to use bicycles for daily trips but feel deterred by current conditions.
- **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.

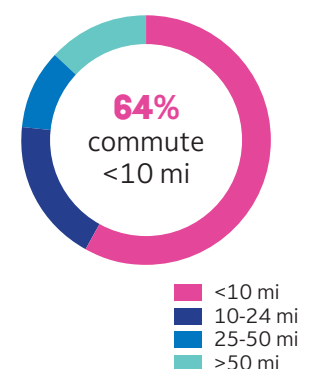
Share of Commute Modes



COMMUNITY PROFILE

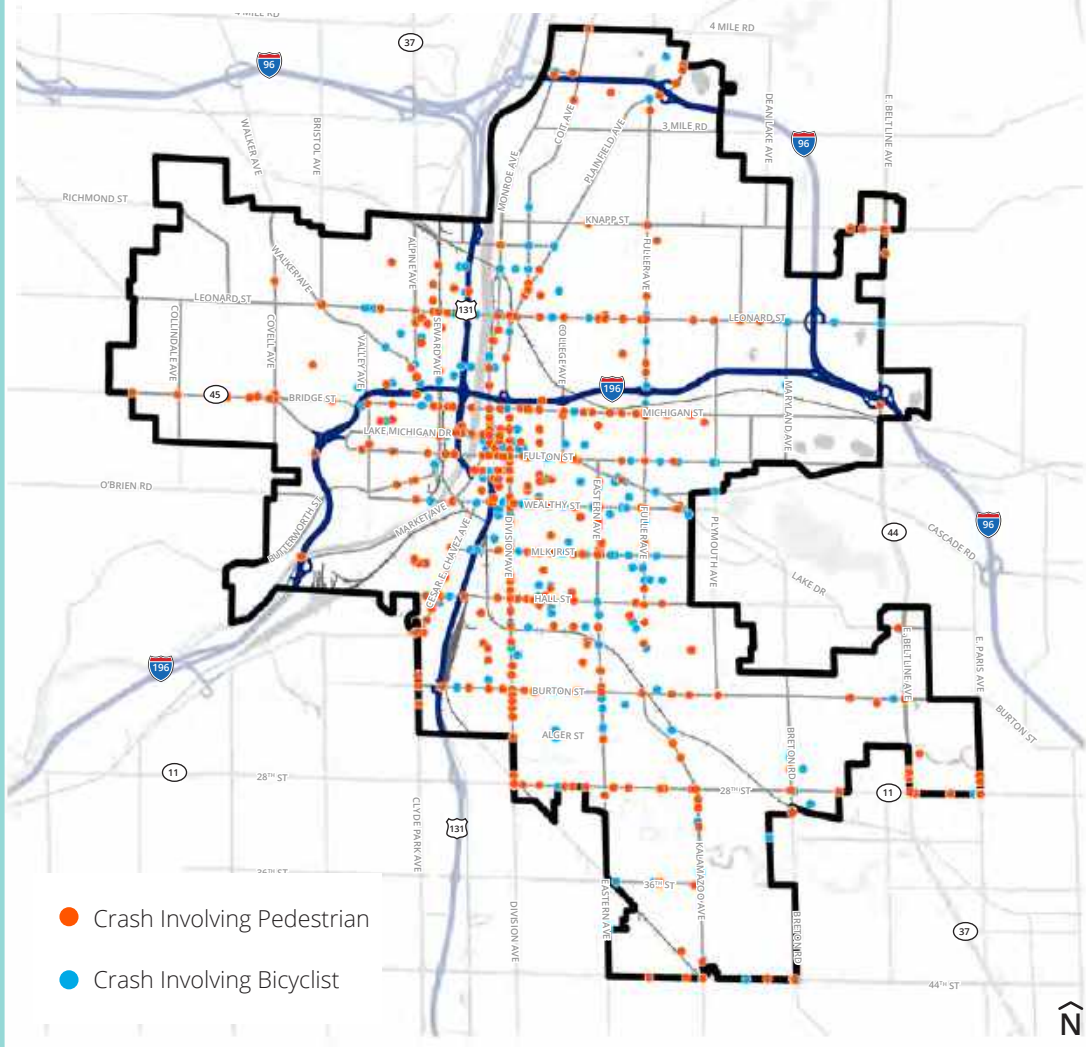
- **Most of the Grand Rapids workforce commutes by car.** According to the American Community Survey (2022), 5% of Grand Rapids residents walk or bicycle to work, 3% take public transit, and 9% carpool. Regardless of mode of travel, most residents (84%) have a commute lasting less than 30 minutes. This trend has increased over the last 15 years, with the number of people commuting more than 50 miles decreasing over that period. This may indicate that more people are living closer to where they work or that they have the flexibility to work remotely.
- **Transportation costs are high.** On average, 20% of a household's annual income in Grand Rapids is spent on transportation costs, higher than the national average of 16% (Center for Neighborhood Technology H+T Affordability Index). Transportation costs include the cost to own, maintain, and use a personal vehicle, and the cost of using transit. People who live in location-efficient neighborhoods—compact, mixed-use, and with convenient access to jobs, services, transit, and amenities—tend to have lower transportation costs.

Average Commute Distance to Work



- Almost half of all serious injuries and fatalities resulting from traffic crashes occur in areas of higher need.** Between 2018 and 2022, 58 people were killed and 563 people were seriously injured in traffic crashes in Grand Rapids (Michigan State Police, 2022). According to the Vital Streets Framework equity evaluation, areas with high need makeup 10% of the city, but nearly half of the traffic crashes resulting in serious injury or death occurred in these areas.

BICYCLIST AND PEDESTRIAN CRASHES



USING CRASH DATA

Crash data is used to identify locations with safety issues and assist in the prioritization of safety projects or programs competing for limited resources. Combining data with roadway and traffic volume information to identify locations and safety improvements with the greatest potential for reducing crashes.

OBJECTIVES

4.A DESIGN AND MAINTAIN STREETS THAT ARE SAFE FOR ALL ROAD USERS.

Fatal or disastrous traffic crashes are preventable, and by acting on street design, maintenance and operations, policy, education, and enforcement, Grand Rapids can create and maintain a network of streets that are safe for everyone. Grand Rapids has the opportunity to leverage new funding programs (e.g., the United States Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All program), new priorities at the federal and state levels (e.g., the National Roadway Safety Strategy and Michigan Department of Transportation's goal to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries), and new policy and design tools that are proving effective in peer cities to accelerate its response to roadway safety.

4.B SUPPORT VIABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT ARE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE.

Supporting a variety of affordable and accessible transportation options is imperative to ensuring all residents have the means to get where they need to go regardless of income or physical ability. Transportation, including public transit, must adapt to changing demographics and the shifting ways in which people work, live, and move over time. These changes, and the funding required for all modes, will not come from one organization. Success will require collaboration between The Rapid, the City, Kent County, surrounding municipalities, non-profit and for-profit organizations, employers, and residents to champion new multimodal infrastructure and policies aimed at keeping options affordable and accessible. Planning streets for a variety of users, not just cars, can strengthen mobility overall and create a robust transportation landscape for every Grand Rapids community.

4.C COORDINATE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS.

Land use and transportation are intrinsically linked. The types of land uses and their intensities will impact the number of people traveling to and from each destination and their travel patterns. Where different land uses are located impacts the distance people must travel. Details that may seem entirely related to the site, such as where the front door is located, whether there is dedicated parking, and where that parking is located, can have a significant impact on how people travel to and from the site and therefore the surrounding transportation network. Conversely, elements of the transportation network such as street design and the availability of mobility services (e.g. transit, bicycle/scooter share, and car share), can complement land use decisions and site design to support a community's broader goals. Finally, encouraging transit-oriented development (TOD) practices and coordinating development with transportation decisions will foster and maintain a more sustainable future than the expansion of urban sprawl.

DEFINED

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Transit-oriented development (TOD) creates compact, mixed-use communities near transit where people enjoy easy access to jobs and services.

VALUE THREADS



RECOMMENDATIONS

4.A DESIGN AND MAINTAIN STREETS THAT ARE SAFE FOR ALL ROAD USERS.

4.A.1 Improve intersections and corridors with the most serious and fatal traffic crashes. Creating a safe transportation system for all road users requires prioritizing safety in resource allocation. Grand Rapids should take systematic, coordinated action in identifying and responding to safety issues while proactively designing spaces to mitigate safety risks using the Vital Streets Plan.

- Institutionalize a crash review committee to assess safety hazards and dangerous driving behaviors by reviewing serious injury and fatal crashes and trends. This responsibility could be assigned to existing City bodies, such as representatives from Engineering and Mobile GR.
- Establish best practices for applying countermeasures based on location conditions. Continue to coordinate safety improvements with other planned projects, particularly at locations with known safety issues.
- Integrate safety improvements into planned development review.
- Proactively identify safety enhancements near schools, older adult living facilities, and transit stops. Seek grant funding, such as Safe Routes to Schools, to support safety improvements.

4.A.2 Address high-crash intersections and corridors through quick-build interventions. Quick-build installations, where practical, work to address safety concerns using paint, signs, or other low-cost materials that are easier and faster to install or remove than more permanent materials, using existing City staff and materials. The quick-build installations, as determined by City staff, should be upgraded to permanent features over time through development and routine roadway projects.

SAFETY TOOLKIT

The tools included below are mostly engineering or physical interventions to make streets safer for all users, with a particular emphasis on people walking and biking.

WALKING

Curb extensions, or bump-outs, extend the sidewalk and align with the parking lane. Curb extensions reduce crossing distances, slow turning vehicles, and improve pedestrian visibility. In the long-term, curb extensions can be installed using paint, bollards, and/or planters.



BUS RIDING

A bus bulb is a curb extension that extends the sidewalk to align the bus stop with the parking lane. This allows buses to serve transit stops without leaving the travel lane and is helpful in areas where buses have difficulty merging into traffic, or where passengers require a dedicated waiting area.



BICYCLING

Quick-build protected intersections separate people biking from motor vehicle traffic by setting back the bikeway from turning cars and using corner islands to encourage slower turns. They improve visibility of people biking and create clearer expectations for all users' behavior using signs, paint, pavement markings, flexible bollards, or planters.



WALKING

Driveway access interrupts sidewalk continuity and introduces conflict points for pedestrians and vehicles. Access management as a policy controls the location, spacing, and design of driveways. Good access management can limit the presence of driveways, particularly redundant ones, to maintain safety.



4.A.3 **Provide citywide education and engagement about mobility projects and issues.** Community education and engagement are important ways to build transparency, accountability, and trust.

- Partner with community organizations to provide education and engagement to residents about safety improvements, such as dangerous driving behaviors, as well as mobility projects and infrastructure, and policy initiatives.
- Work with the Office of Equity and Engagement to institutionalize and expand upon best practices for equitable engagement within transportation projects.

4.B **SUPPORT VIABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT ARE AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND MEET COMMUNITY MEMBERS' NEEDS.**

4.B.1 Make strategic investments in bicycle facilities. The Bicycle Action Plan lays out a vision for a complete bicycle network throughout the City of Grand Rapids, progress continues to be made to build bikeways, concentrate investment in developing a well-connected citywide network of bike facilities. Bike facilities should be designed for people of all ages and abilities to comfortably ride, which may necessitate physically protected bike facilities on streets with higher speeds and more cars. Maintain the Vital Streets Framework equity evaluation to serve as a framework for project prioritization within Ward and track projects by areas of higher need. Coordinate plans and investments with community leaders and nonprofits to ensure changes to the streetscape meet the needs of a variety of residents, employees, and business owners, among others.



4.B.2 Support shared mobility models to increase transportation choices. With the emergence of new modes and services such as pooled ridesharing, peer-to-peer car sharing, and bicycle/scooter share programs, there is significant opportunity to serve more neighborhoods and provide first- and last-mile connections. Continue to support shared mobility models to strengthen the overall connection between modes of transportation and explore partnerships that promote these services.



4.B.3 Promote electric bicycle and vehicle ownership. Continue to fund and install publicly accessible vehicle chargers in the public right-of-way and in public parking lots and garages.



- Establish an incentive program for residents to purchase bicycles, including electric bicycles.
- Evaluate the distribution of publicly accessible charging opportunities and establish a target for charging stations by area, factoring in residential and employment densities, and demographics, to project demand.

DEFINED

FIRST- AND LAST-MILE CONNECTIONS

This term describes the beginning or end of an individual trip made primarily by public transportation. On either end of a public transit trip, the origin or destination may be difficult or impossible to access by a short walk. The trip from a destination to public transit is called the first mile connection, and the trip from public transit to a destination is termed a last mile connection.

- Ensure zoning requirements for privately owned off-street parking lots and decks require the installation of a minimum number of chargers based on the number of parking spaces. The minimum requirement may be tailored to address the demands of different land uses.

4.B.4 Support programs that encourage travel options other than personal vehicles.



Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs are a set of policies, strategies, and initiatives designed to optimize the use of transportation infrastructure and services, reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and enhance overall transportation efficiency. Continue to participate in Grand Valley Metropolitan Council's (GVMC) regional TDM working group and work to implement the actions of the GVMC Regional TDM Plan. Program elements could include strategies that:

- Manage demand through pricing tools, such as demand-based parking pricing, parking cash-out programs, and employer subsidies for commutes via transit, walking, and biking.
- Encourage the use of more efficient modes of transportation through site design and development, including indoor and outdoor bicycle parking requirements, and siting guidelines that emphasize multi modal access.
- Develop programs to support employees who carpool, walk, bicycle, or use transit to access jobs, such as providing adequate facilities like bike storage, showers, and changing rooms, implementing carpool rewards programs, and fostering a culture of sustainability.
- Provide resources on the City's website about elements of a TDM program, common strategies and tools, and TDM best practices. Collaborate with GVMC to include resources and templates for establishing TDM programs.

4.B.5 Support collaboration between businesses, organizations, and communities to expand commute options.



In areas of dense employment without robust public transportation, such as the employment node at 44th Street and Eastern Avenue, work with employers to create Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) to identify and deploy transportation options that meet the specific needs of the employees' travel patterns. A TMA can provide transportation services targeted to a specific geography—for example, by coordinating a park-and-ride program or providing a shuttle service between a transit-oriented node and employment node. TMAs often operate as non-profit organizations sponsored by employer dues or service fees, but their creation can be supported by staff resources from their host municipalities.

4.B.6 Continue to invest in transit stop amenities.

Strategically invest in transit stop amenities, such as shelters, real-time arrival information,

lighting, and enhanced pedestrian crossings across The Rapid network, especially at facilities that do not meet ADA requirements and the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), experience high ridership, and serve as important route connections or key community destinations. The quality of transit stops is an important driver of bus ridership and customer satisfaction, and impacts safety, particularly for more vulnerable populations. They should be comfortable places to wait, surrounded by safe and accessible walking conditions. Transit stops should also be coordinated with alternative modes of transportation as part of a mobility hub, wherever possible.

4.B.7 **Work with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to**



address highways where they create barriers to, safe walking, bicycling and transit access. Inventory highway over/underpasses, interchanges, and access roads that create barriers to easy and safe pedestrian and bicycle access, particularly to transit facilities. Address problematic barriers, such as sidewalks below overpasses, with improved infrastructure and streetscape elements such as sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, artistic features, and wayfinding.

4.C **COORDINATE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS.**

4.C.1 **Reduce minimum parking requirements to support compact growth**



patterns. Allow vehicle parking reductions or eliminations as an incentive to encourage infill development, especially when located on a transit route or on streets that identify pedestrians as priority users in the Vital Streets Plan. Allow by-right reduction in parking in more situations and expand the opportunity to waive parking regulations to more development situations. Pair these changes with efforts to preserve and ensure housing affordability, enabling those who depend on and benefit from transit the most to benefit from these policies.

4.C.2 **Limit the size of surface parking lots.**



Minimize the impact of surface parking lots downtown and in business districts by setting maximum sizes on modified lots. This could be regulated by impervious areas or the number of parking spaces. Consider restricting the creation of new surface parking to prioritize space for people.

4.C.3 **Establish mobility hubs at key nodes of activity including neighborhood nodes, employment centers, and transit-oriented destinations.**

Mobility hubs should bring together a variety of mobility options in close proximity to enable easy connections between modes, this can include transit stops, bicycle or scooter share, carshare, and electric charging stations. Pursue interdepartmental and stakeholder partnerships to identify ways to build on mobility hubs, such as co-locating near or providing information about services.

Recommendation 4.C.1

PARKING REFORM

Most cities, towns, and counties establish in their zoning code a minimum number of off-street parking spaces for development, such as 0.5 parking spaces per bedroom. The purpose of parking requirements is to ensure that new residents and businesses have a dedicated place for their vehicles and avoid negative spillover effects on the surrounding area. However, this one-size-fits-all parking requirement often results in an excess supply of parking spaces that negatively impacts people walking, biking, and using other multi-modal devices, by prioritizing vehicle access and infrastructure over safe places for people.

Paved parking areas also contribute to the urban heat island effect and accumulate pollutants that run off into local waterways. The provision of excess parking may also lead to increased emissions and energy consumption by encouraging car trips over alternative modes.

Parking requirements themselves can make development projects more expensive, particularly when land prices are very high or where expensive underground or above ground parking structures are needed to fit the required number of spaces. By eliminating parking requirements, cities can help lower the cost that would be passed on to a future owner or tenant and free up space for additional units and/or amenities.

Across the country, cities are eliminating required parking for new buildings and new businesses in existing buildings. The reforms, along with policies that manage street parking, help to reduce car dependency, create public and green spaces, and lower housing costs.



Photo: Feed and Folly

In the photos above, the zoning code required 35 parking spaces for a restaurant in this building in Fayetteville, Arkansas. With limited land to provide the required amount of parking, it sat vacant for 40 years. Then the parking requirement was eliminated, making it more feasible for a business to open in that space.

4.C.4 Develop comprehensive curbside management guidelines that address loading zones, drop-off/pickup zones, on-street parking, and bicycle/scooter parking. Demand for curbside space has shifted with the emergence of new modes of transportation and trends in how people travel, shop, and connect with services. The Equitable Economic Development & Mobility Strategic Plan acknowledged that curb space is in high demand and that goals-driven prioritization is necessary. Building on this recommendation, develop a context-sensitive curb use priorities framework and comprehensive guide to curbside management in coordination with other City departments. The guidelines should:



- Provide direction to practitioners on which activities (e.g., safety, access, loading, mobility, storage, place making) to prioritize based on street typologies (as established in the Vital Streets Plan).
- Designating the placement of loading zones, pick-up/drop-off zones, on-street parking, EV charging, bus bulbs, bicycle facilities, parklets, and bicycle and scooter parking.

4.C.5 Consider modes of travel other than cars in the development review and approval process. Ensure that development projects and their site designs support community goals by incorporating multimodal considerations (e.g., door placement or parking location) into the project development review process, with particular attention to safe access. Adopt a definition of corridor capacity and evaluation that considers multimodal transportation, rather than simply vehicle throughput and delay. Incorporate this as an expectation in corridor studies and work with developers in the development review processes to find the best outcomes for multimodal objectives.



4.C.6 Ensure new developments maintain walkable and bikeable roadway networks with appropriate access to transit. Grand Rapids' roadway network has a tight grid of streets that facilitates walking and bicycling trips by minimizing trip length and enabling direct connections. Future developments should maintain that framework and build convenient networks that connect to the existing street grid to ensure walkable and bikeable neighborhoods. Consider adding language to the zoning code to encourage shorter block lengths, in addition to the current maximums noted, and guidelines or targets for connectivity.



4.C.7 Support implementation of the Vital Streets Plan. As land use context changes over time, review and modify the street types and mode emphasis overlays in the Vital Streets Plan, with input from City staff. Continue to evaluate street typologies and recommend changes to the Vital Streets Plan as development progresses under the CMP.



5. DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER



Managing the community's physical environment, both built and natural, is a critical aspect of the Community Master Plan. This chapter provides guidance for the physical development of Grand Rapids. The future land use component in this chapter serves as the foundation for the city's zoning regulations. This element also substantially influences the CMP's other topics, particularly transportation, housing, and economic prosperity.

The development principles in this chapter provide additional guidance for desired development outcomes. Building upon the intent described in the principles, the development framework map depicts general locations where future development is encouraged. This diagram portrays a high level view of anticipated development concepts detailed in the Plan.

DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER

GOAL

Grand Rapids will have a strong sense of place through high quality design.

New development will improve or support the existing built fabric of each neighborhood.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

PUBLIC INPUT

- **There is support for integrating more housing types.** Round three of public engagement specifically asked about comfort with housing types other than single-family homes in residential areas. The results showed significant support for accessory dwelling units in all neighborhood types and all locations. There was similar support for duplexes everywhere. Just under half of round three participants supported triplexes or quadplexes in all locations. However, people were largely comfortable with these housing types being located along primary streets and near business districts.
- **There is a desire to preserve and create places that strengthen quality of life.** When asked about design, many people pointed to bulk and height as being important to the development in their neighborhood. People generally wanted to see new buildings that fit with the scale of existing homes. However, residents are open to unique architectural designs that allow for creativity and innovation. Many comments highlighted quality materials as the most important thing to emphasize in the design of new buildings.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

- **Neighborhoods are currently categorized into three unique types.** The Zoning Ordinance, which regulates land use and development standards, defines three types of neighborhoods, Traditional, Mid-Century, and Modern Era. Each neighborhood type allows for a variety of uses from mixed residential to office to commercial.
- **Industrial land is currently integrated along key corridors.** Industrial land today covers six percent (1,750 acres), primarily located along the river and major roadways. Included in these industrial areas are a number of brownfield sites, or properties that are contaminated, blighted, or functionally obsolete. These sites may present unique environmental factors for redevelopment.

DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Development principles describe the intent about “how” (general character) and “where” (conceptual location) growth and development in Grand Rapids should occur. They provide additional guidance for desired development outcomes and reflect a variety of themes that include the quality, appearance, pattern, character, and character of development. These principles are supported by the Future Character Map, which depicts the locations where certain concepts apply through character types.

Our Grand Rapids community will...

1. Ensure the development process incorporates residents' needs to maintain a safe, equitable, and healthy neighborhood environment.
2. Preserve and enhance the uniqueness of each neighborhood's history including physical landmarks and lived experiences.
3. Serve as stewards of the environment through development decisions that integrate natural features and climate considerations.
4. Provide desirable housing options at a broad range of styles, price levels, and occupancy types that complement established neighborhoods.
5. Focus development that integrates mixed-uses (residential, commercial, civic, institutional, office, etc.) at key locations to serve adjacent neighborhoods.
6. Connect places such as neighborhoods, mixed-use districts, employment centers, and other activity centers with opportunities to walk, bike, drive, and access public transit.
7. Cultivate community-based placemaking through infill and redevelopment that complements the form, scale, design, and cultural histories of the surrounding area.
8. Foster a downtown district that features a vibrant mix of businesses, diverse housing options, and entertainment or recreation amenities with a unique character.
9. Feature access to the Grand River through strategic development opportunities and preservation efforts.
10. Maintain the City's financial health through efficient use of infrastructure, strengthening employment centers, and expanding development incentives.

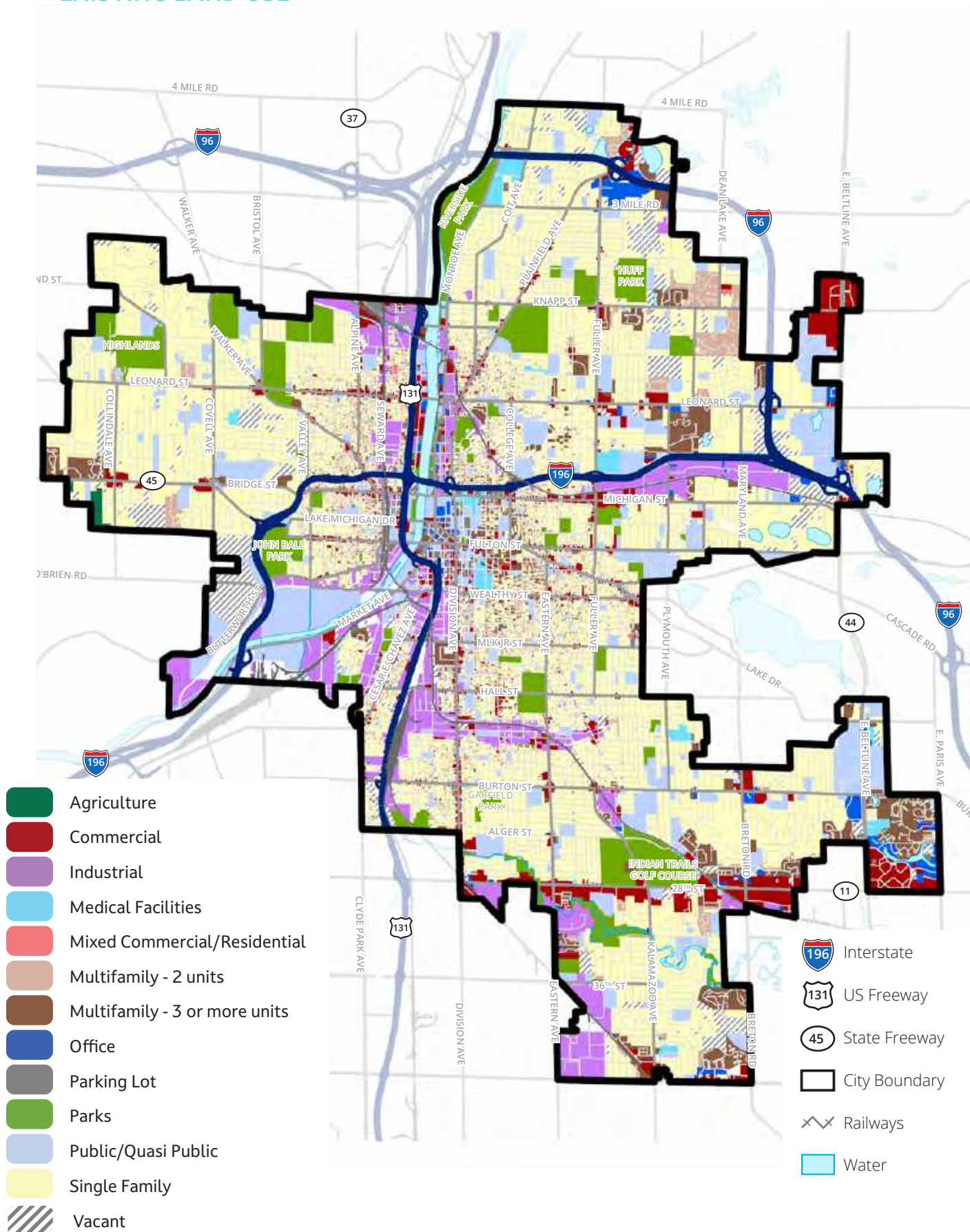
EXISTING LAND USE MAP

Determining desired future land use changes in Grand Rapids required first developing an understanding of current land use and development patterns

The existing land use descriptions establish a baseline for how the City's land is allocated. The categories represent a snapshot of the community at this moment. The following categories have been applied to properties across the City for the purposes of the existing land use analysis:

- **Agriculture.** Land used for the production of animal or plant life, cultivation, livestock, and pastures that can range in lot size across the City.
- **Commercial.** Land used for retail, restaurants, shopping centers, auto-oriented businesses, mixed-use developments, and other similar uses.
- **Industrial.** Land used for light to moderate manufacturing, warehousing, research and development, logistics uses, and other similar uses.
- **Medical Facilities.** Land used for medical offices and facilities.
- **Mixed-Commercial/Residential.** Land with both commercial and residential uses on a single parcel.
- **Multifamily - 2 units.** Land used for residential areas with two or more dwelling units on a single parcel. This includes duplexes and single family homes with accessory dwelling units.
- **Multifamily - 3 or more units.** Land used for residential areas with three or more dwelling units on a single parcel.
- **Office.** Land used for general office buildings.
- **Parking Lot.** Land used for the off-street parking or storage of vehicles.
- **Parks.** Land used for public parks, protected conservation areas, cemeteries, designated open spaces within neighborhoods, and private or semi-public recreational areas such as golf courses.
- **Institutional.** Land used for government buildings, schools, universities, churches, community organizations, non-government community uses, and other similar uses.
- **Public/Quasi Public.** Land used for public safety facilities, schools, places of worship, and other public land not used for parks.
- **Single-family.** Land used for an individual detached, residential dwelling unit on a single parcel that can range in lot size across the City.
- **Vacant.** Land that is currently undeveloped, without a predominant use or primary building.

EXISTING LAND USE



CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Conceptual Development Framework is a complement to the Future Character and Land Use Map, and illustrates where investment should be prioritized to support existing and possible future nodes of activity. Node are places that have a mix and concentration of residential, commercial, and public uses. They are either currently or have the potential to be walkable and economically diverse and to provide safe and convenient access to shops, amenities, and services. Nodes are connected and enhanced by significant corridors.



Neighborhood Nodes are central to residential neighborhoods or areas of businesses. These mixed-use areas are primarily neighborhood-serving but may have a regional draw. They provide residents with access to businesses, services, and amenities within a short walk of their home. Neighborhood nodes are intended to include a mix of commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses. Allowing for increased residential density within a short radius (quarter-mile) of neighborhood nodes is important for supporting existing and future development.



Transit-Oriented Nodes are located along major transit routes. These districts are intended to contain a diverse mix of businesses that could have a regional and/or local draw and are designed to provide a range of housing choices within a ten-minute walk. Transit-oriented development is a significant solution to climate change as it creates dense, walkable communities that significantly reduce the need for driving and energy consumption.



Employment Nodes host a mix of employment opportunities either within the node or in the surrounding areas. These nodes encourage growth within areas that support regionally significant concentrations of non-retail employment including institutional, office, and industrial centers. There may be opportunities for high- and medium-density residential, retail, and supporting services.



Neighborhoods of Focus (NOF) 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 City of Grand Rapids strives to eliminate inequities, by investing in these areas.

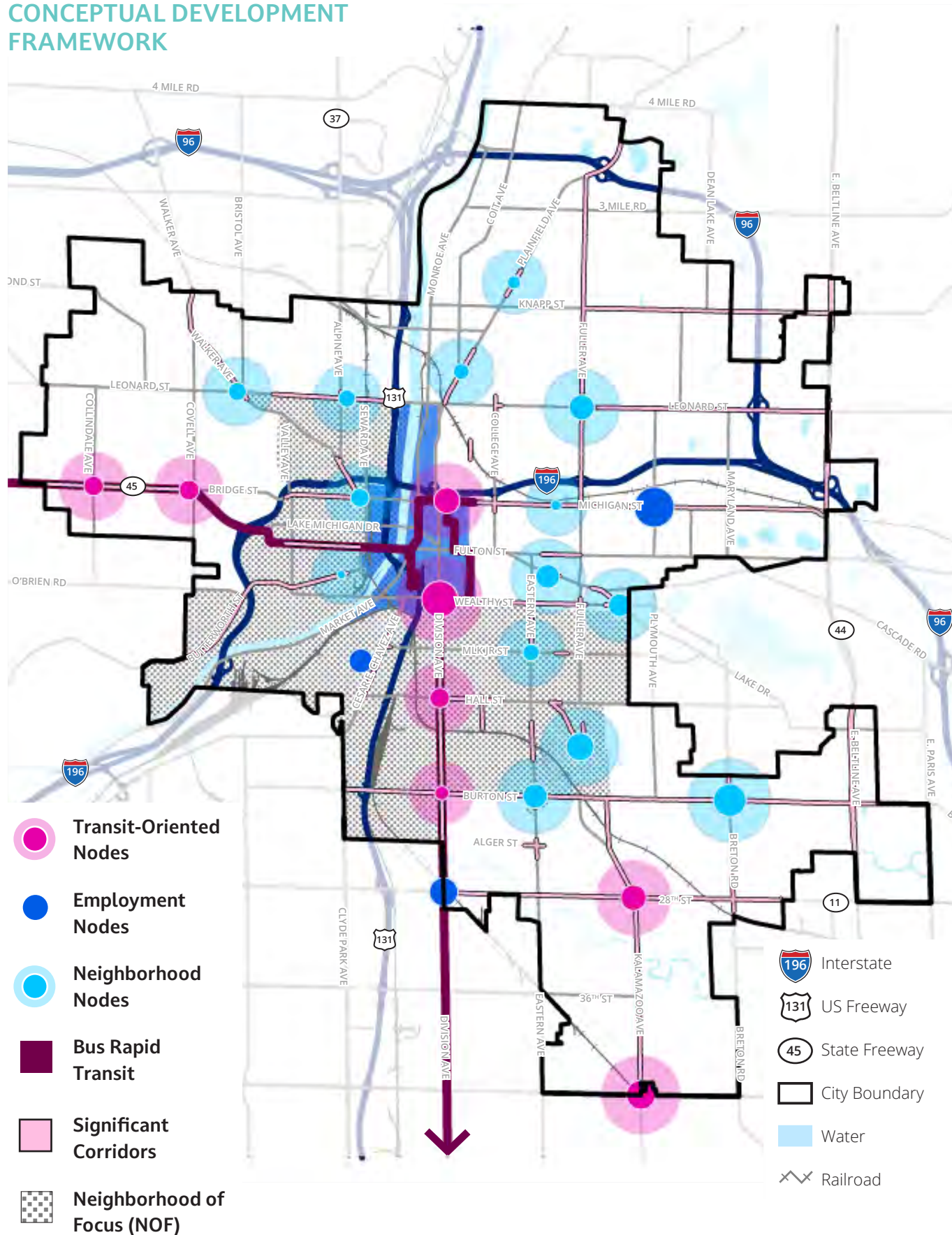


Significant Corridors are important connectors along which safety and access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-car modes should be prioritized. These corridors are designated Crosstown Connectors and Neighborhood Business in the Vital Street Plan (VSP). They connect residents to important places in the community and increased residential density is encouraged. Enhancements to support this density may include investments in sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle facilities, traffic calming, street trees and lighting, in line with guidance in the VSP.

NOTE

The location and size of each node is diagrammatic, and illustrates its relative development intensity. The shaded circle represents a quarter-mile radius from the edge of the node.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

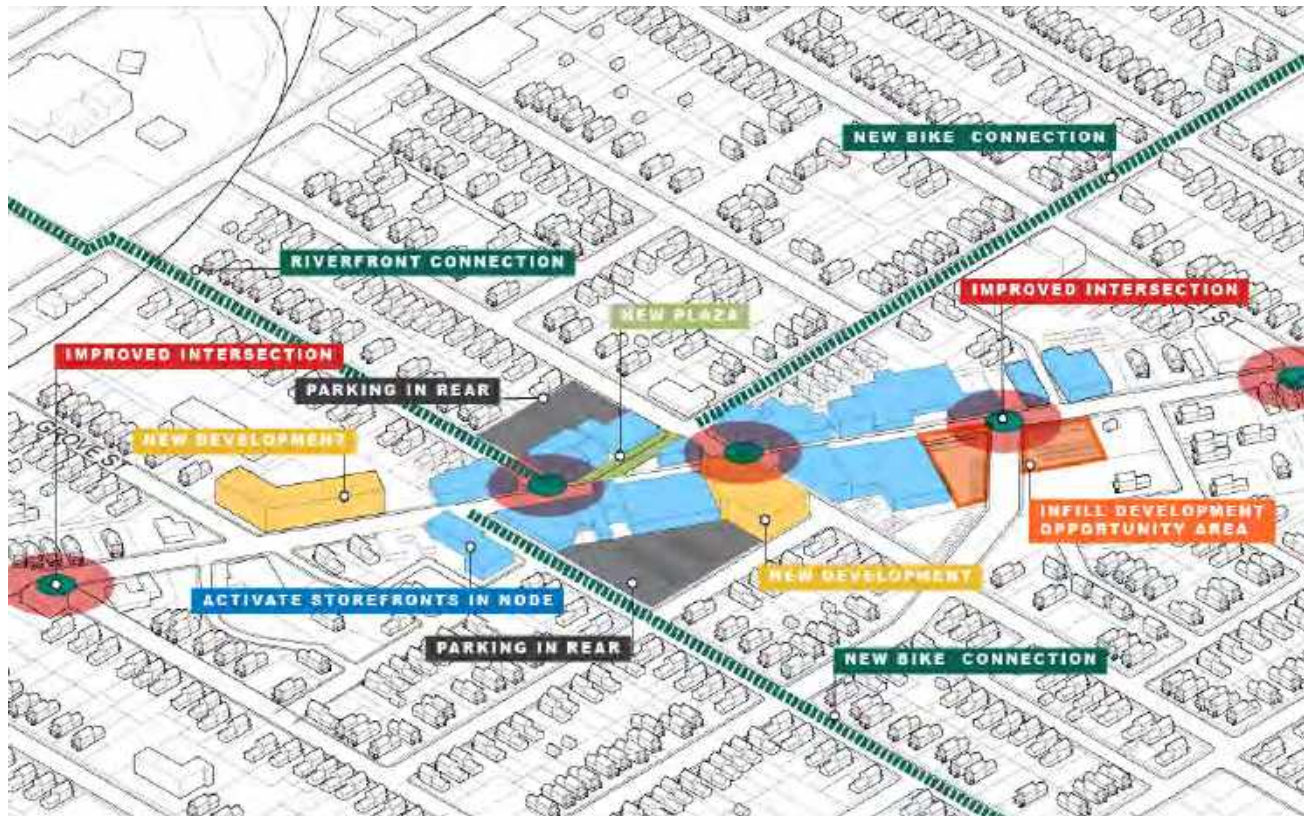


NEIGHBORHOOD NODES

Nodes are places where people and transportation routes congregate and converge. They are typically pedestrian-friendly areas where high concentrations and a wide variety of residential, employment, retail, and other uses are located. The examples below relate to the Area Specific Plans adopted with the CMP.

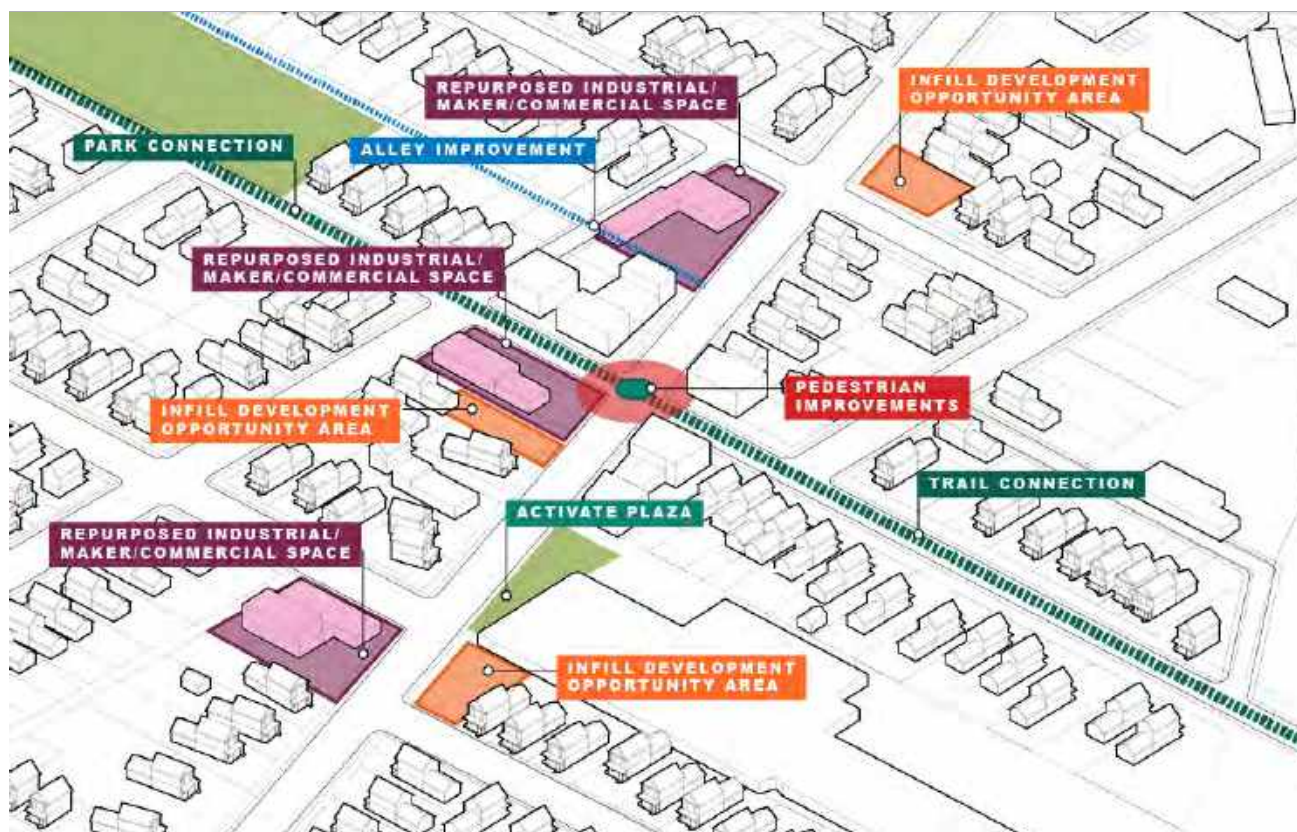
ESTABLISHED

Some neighborhood nodes are well established centers of activity. Improved intersections, new public spaces, and stronger connections to the surrounding neighborhood should be emphasized in new development.

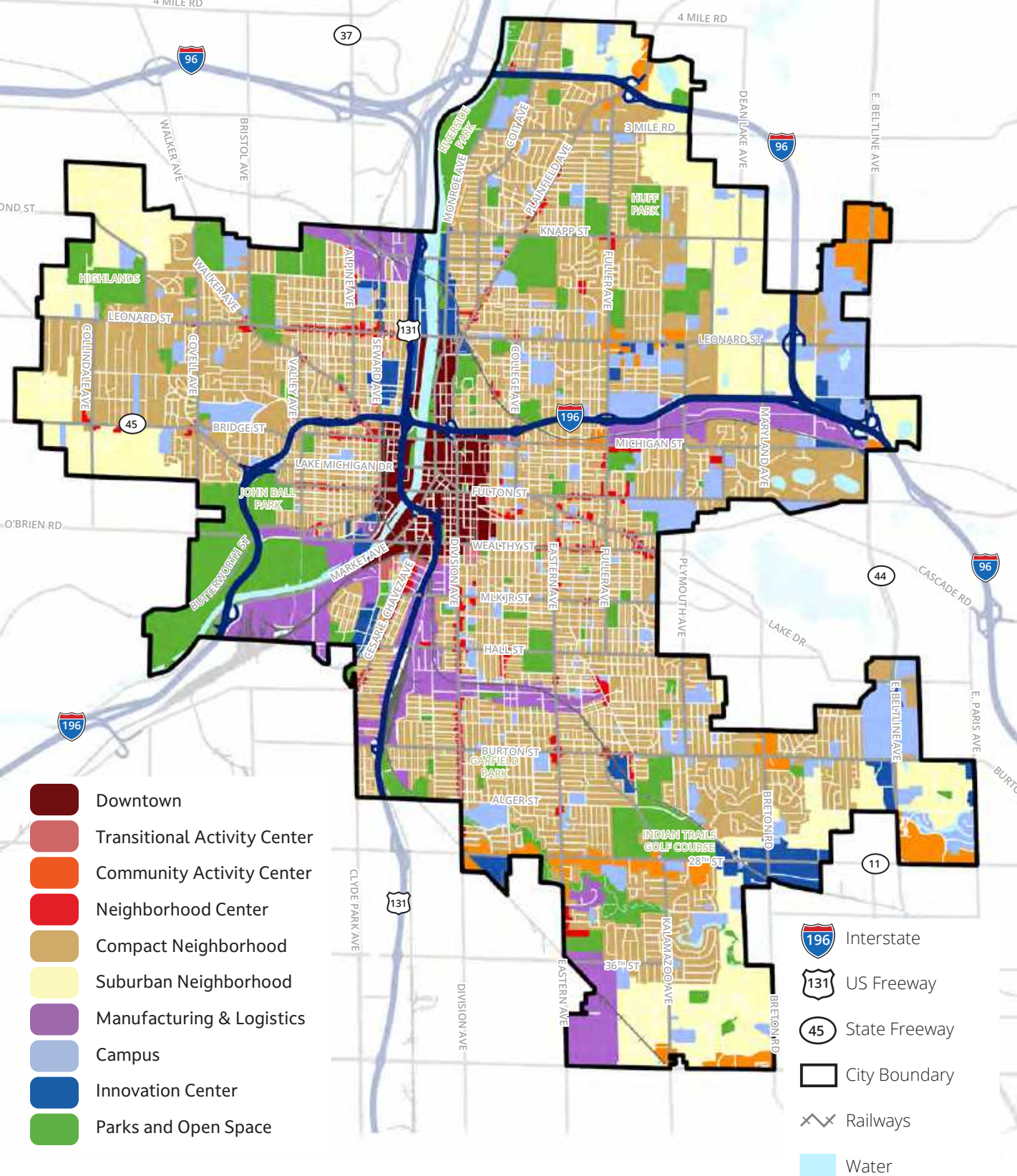


EMERGING

Other neighborhood nodes are just beginning to emerge. Strategic infill of underutilized lots, active uses along the street, and new neighborhood-serving uses should be prioritized through new development and modifications to existing buildings.



FUTURE CHARACTER



FUTURE CHARACTER MAP

The Character Map expresses the City’s intent for where and how Grand Rapids should use its land in the future with a particular focus on the character and qualities of development. Each type 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, the Future Character Map 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.

The map is a tool for the City to guide decisions about future land use and development over time. 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 potential future zoning ordinance updates and will be implemented through the administration of the City and various public and private development decisions.

-  **DOWNTOWN**
-  **TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER**
-  **COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER**
-  **NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER**
-  **COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD**
-  **SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD**
-  **MANUFACTURING & LOGISTICS**
-  **CAMPUS**
-  **INNOVATION CENTER**
-  **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

NOTE

This element of the Community Master Plan is implemented through the City’s Zoning Ordinance. Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use and the intensity of development, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Each property in the city is assigned to a zoning district. There may be more than one appropriate zoning category for a particular future land use character category.



IMPLEMENTING FUTURE CHARACTER

The Future Character and Land Use Map is ultimately implemented through the city's Zoning Ordinance. Grand Rapids will evolve with new development as zoning code revisions responding to the goals of the CMP are adopted. Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. Each property in the city is assigned to a zoning district. There may be more than one appropriate zoning category for a particular future land use category. For example, there is one "industrial" future land use category, but there may be two or three industrial zoning districts to account for various intensities, activities, and contexts.

Beyond zoning, the character types and design guidelines in this chapter provide additional flexibility and adaptability by encouraging buildings that are responsive to their physical context, supportive of pedestrian-friendly streets, and are designed with materials that will last. These will be considered when land use decisions are evaluated with respect to how they conform to the direction in the Community Master Plan.

Describing neighborhood character requires a qualitative assessment. The Character Types in this chapter identify some of the defining features of different areas of the city that will influence design responses in new development. It is not an exhaustive list of features to consider. Public input, Area Specific Plans, and context-specific implementation of the CMP can help ensure the city evolves in line with the Development Principles.

The table below distinguishes between the role of the Community Master Plan's Future Character and Land Use Map and the Zoning Ordinance

DEFINED CHARACTER

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.

COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN	ZONING ORDINANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describes intended future land use and development characteristics• Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide)• Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be “in accordance with” the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today• More specific and detailed than the Plan• Legal document: departure from zoning requires either an Administrative Departure or a Special Land Use

DOWNTOWN

INTENT

Promote a dense development pattern focused on the close proximity of services, a diversity of uses, and dynamic building styles.

LAND USE

- Many buildings contain multiple uses with restaurants or retail on the ground floor and office space or residential units above.

BUILDING FORM

- Predominantly mid- or high-rise with commercial, institutional, multi-family, or a mix of uses.
- Buildings are located close to the street frontage with streetscape elements and designed with active ground floor uses to support a vibrant pedestrian environment.

OPEN SPACE

- Built open spaces such as parks, plazas, courtyards, and outdoor recreational facilities.
- The visual impact of utilities on the public realm and open space is minimized, particularly within the "no pole" areas defined by City Ordinance.

MOBILITY

- The transportation network supports a "park once" environment defined by a grid street pattern composed of short, walkable blocks.
- Mobility hubs with transit stations, pick-up and drop-off areas, bike parking, and micro-mobility options are provided.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICT

- City Center

EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER

INTENT

Provide a connection between downtown and the surrounding residential or commercial areas and transition the intensity of the downtown development pattern to adjacent areas.

LAND USE

- Many buildings contain a mix of uses such as retail, office, and residential while others may be single-use office or housing.

BUILDING FORM

- Predominantly mid-rise buildings.
- Buildings are typically located close to the street frontage. Some may have setbacks large enough to accommodate active street-level uses, such as outdoor dining.

OPEN SPACE

- Built open spaces such as parks, plazas, courtyards, and outdoor recreational facilities.

MOBILITY

- Defined by a grid street pattern composed of blocks that are similar or slightly larger than those in the center.
- Transit stations, pick-up and drop-off areas, bicycle parking and bicycle share, and micro-mobility options are provided.

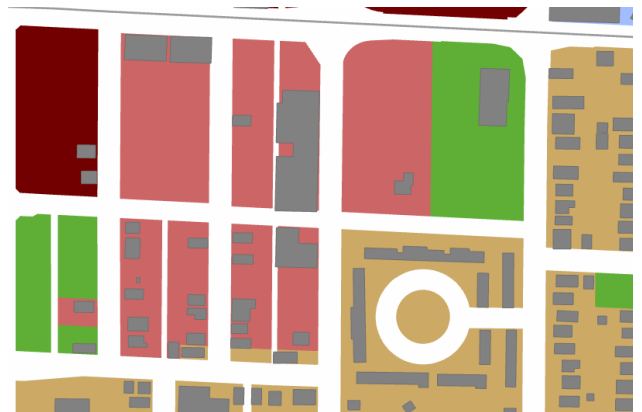
APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Transitional City Center
- Transit Oriented Development

EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: URBAN CENTER



COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CENTER

INTENT

Provide places to live, work, and shop around key intersections and along corridors, to create well-connected, walkable places within a 15-minute walk, bike, or transit trip of surrounding neighborhoods.

LAND USE

- Many buildings contain a mix of uses such as retail, office, and residential with a few that may be single-use office or housing.
- These may currently include shopping centers or “big-box” stores along major corridors that are intended to redevelop with more density.
- These areas have the potential to become less auto-oriented through incremental development and improved multi-modal infrastructure.

BUILDING FORM

- Predominantly low- to mid-rise with commercial, institutional, multi-family or a mix of uses.
- Buildings are designed with active ground floor uses to support a more vibrant pedestrian environment along corridors.

OPEN SPACE

- Built open spaces such as parks, plazas, courtyards, and outdoor recreational facilities.

MOBILITY

- Typically located at or near key intersections or on major corridors with transit service.
- The street network is or will redevelop to be well-connected, with walkable connections along streets and between destinations.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Commercial
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

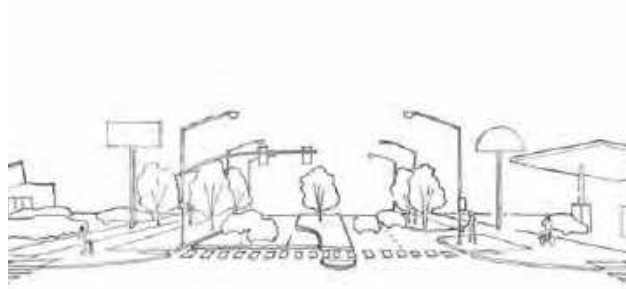
EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: CROSTOWN CONNECTORS



NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

INTENT

Reinforce a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment in a compact area and promote a mix of small-scale retail, service, entertainment, civic, office and residential uses to enhance the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods.

LAND USE

- A variety of retail buildings, restaurants, and personal services at a local, neighborhood scale are provided within nodes and corridors.

BUILDING FORM

- Typically low-rise buildings. Taller mid-rise buildings are located at corners.
- Buildings are designed with active ground floor uses to support a vibrant pedestrian environment.

OPEN SPACE

- Built open spaces may include plazas, patios, courtyards, small parks, and greenways.

MOBILITY

- Directly accessible from nearby neighborhoods to encourage walking and cycling, and to support the concept of a complete neighborhood.
- The street network is well-connected, designed to slow traffic, and includes complete pedestrian facilities.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Traditional Business Area
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Transit Oriented Development

EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS



COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD

INTENT

Create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities while enhancing the desired physical characteristics of the City's existing neighborhoods.

LAND USE

- A mix of housing with small office, commercial, religious, and other civic uses integrated at intersections or along major streets, including those designated as Network Residential in the Vital Streets Plan.

BUILDING FORM

- Characterized by a mix of housing such as small-lot single-family, ADUs, townhomes or duplexes, and small multi-family buildings.

OPEN SPACE

- Privately-owned yards and recreation spaces, plazas, courtyards, rooftop decks, small parks, and natural open spaces.

MOBILITY

- Well-connected and dense street network with short blocks that accommodate walking, cycling, and transit use.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Low-Density Residential
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

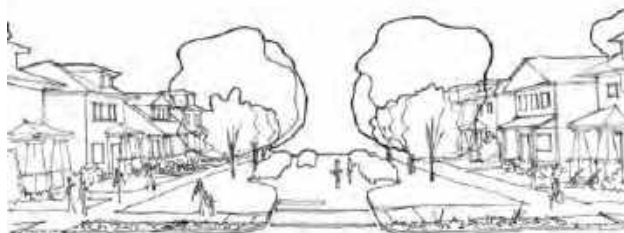
EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL



SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

INTENT

Build on the established development pattern, consisting predominantly of low-density residential development, to evolve these areas into more walkable neighborhoods with new housing types.

LAND USE

- Primarily low-density housing.
- Compared to Compact Neighborhoods, these areas have a more uniform housing pattern with larger average lots and longer blocks.

BUILDING FORM

- Characterized by a range of housing sizes and styles, including duplexes and accessory dwelling units.
- Lots are typically larger than in Compact Neighborhood areas.
- Larger apartment complexes with shared open spaces are also common.

OPEN SPACE

- Private yards and built common areas are typical.
- Public open spaces such as small parks and natural open spaces are also common.

MOBILITY

- New development should support a well-connected local street network that provides safe and direct access to neighborhood destinations and helps disperse vehicle traffic.
- Cul-de-sacs or curvilinear streets are common. Additional connections for vehicles, as well as people walking and bicycling, should be provided as redevelopment occurs.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Mixed-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

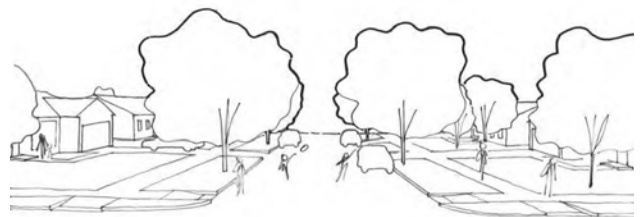
EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL



INNOVATION CENTER

INTENT

Accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground floor uses abutting public streets to promote compact, walkable areas.

LAND USE

- Academic, government, religious, or unique community-focused uses located across the city.
- These may also include office, research and development, studios, light manufacturing, hotels, multi-family residential, retail, restaurants, and services.

BUILDING FORM

- Building form varies depending on the needs of the primary user, resulting in a range of building types and sizes.
- These areas may include older industrial structures that have been adaptively reused or retrofitted to include small retail, commercial, or maker spaces.
- New buildings are designed with active ground floor uses.

OPEN SPACE

- Open spaces such as plazas, patios, and courtyards may include landscaping.
- Public spaces such as small parks and natural open spaces are also common.

MOBILITY

- Streets serve all travel modes with frequent pedestrian crossings, medians, and refuges.
- Transit stations, pick-up and drop-off areas, bike parking and share, and micro-mobility options should be provided.

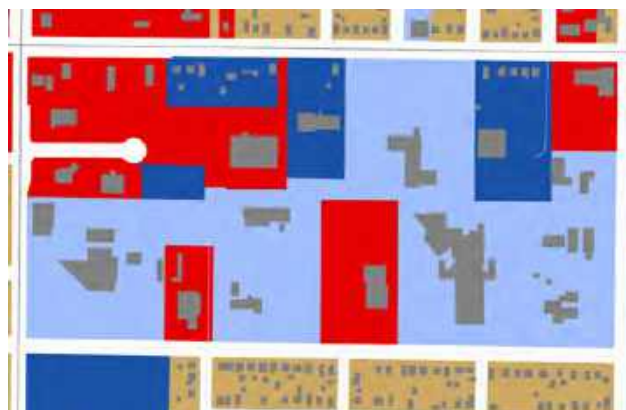
APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Transitional City Center
- Commercial
- Transit Oriented Development
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Planned Redevelopment

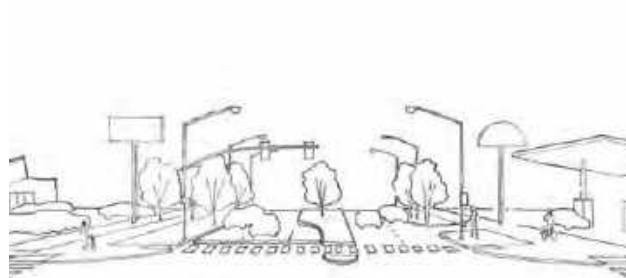
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CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: CROSSTOWN CONNECTORS



MANUFACTURING & LOGISTICS

INTENT

Allow for a wide range of types, services, and wage levels in sectors such as production, manufacturing, research, distribution, and logistics while preserving the character and integrity of adjacent land uses.

LAND USE

- Primary uses include manufacturing, research and development, warehousing, distribution, and other similar uses.

BUILDING FORM

- Characterized by large, often single-story buildings on large parcels set back from the street.

OPEN SPACE

- Recreational facilities, picnic areas, walking trails, patios, and courtyards provided on individual sites for use by employees.
- Landscaping should be incorporated as a buffer between different land uses.

MOBILITY

- Typically located along rail corridors or interstates. Streets and sites prioritize access for motor vehicle and truck traffic.
- Where possible, transit stations, bike parking and bike share, and micro-mobility options should be provided.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Industrial Transportation
- Commercial
- Planned Redevelopment

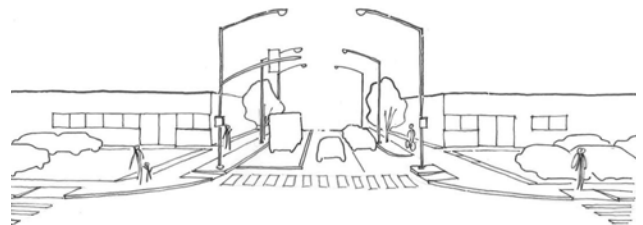
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EXAMPLE PATTERN



CONNECTION TO THE VITAL STREETS PLAN: MAKER/INDUSTRIAL



CAMPUS

INTENT

Campus areas are often master planned and include a variety of administrative, professional, educational, civic, religious, athletic or recreational, and medical office uses.

LAND USE

- Defined by larger, campus-like settings that promote a safe and attractive environment through consolidation of driveways, increased pedestrian connections, and robust landscaping.

BUILDING FORM

- Characterized by a wide range of development characteristics to match the operational needs of the organization.
- Typically larger footprint buildings with multiple stories offering flexible space for organizations.
- Sites are developed with large, shared parking areas adjacent to buildings with large setbacks from the street.

OPEN SPACE

- Lawns, passive landscaped areas, park space, and natural open spaces are common.
- Improved open spaces such as plazas, courtyards, and outdoor recreational facilities may also be appropriate.
- Private plazas and pocket parks may serve as amenities for employees.

MOBILITY

- Typically located along at least one major street with an internal street network that encourages walking and biking, particularly where sites are located near transit routes and stops.
- Streets may be publicly or privately maintained.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Institutional Campus
- Transit Oriented Development
- Planned Redevelopment

EXAMPLE CHARACTER



EXAMPLE PATTERN



PARKS & OPEN SPACE

INTENT

Accommodate natural parks or park-like settings and preserve identified open space land and uses from development pressures, including portions of the Grand River or other environmental areas.

LAND USE

- Support a variety of the city's parks and recreation programming.
- Open Space may range in scale from small community gardens or natural areas integrated into neighborhoods to large, regional parks.

BUILDING FORM

- Building sizes vary depending on the purpose of the building and the setting, but are typically small and low-rise.
- Buildings may be necessary to support or service recreational and educational facilities.

OPEN SPACE

- Open space is the primary element in this character type and is integrated throughout the city and includes both passive open spaces and active park facilities and schools.

MOBILITY

- Internal transportation networks typically consist of pedestrian and bicycle paths, but may include driveways and low-speed streets to provide access to internal facilities.

APPROPRIATE ZONING DISTRICTS

- Open Space

EXAMPLE CHARACTER



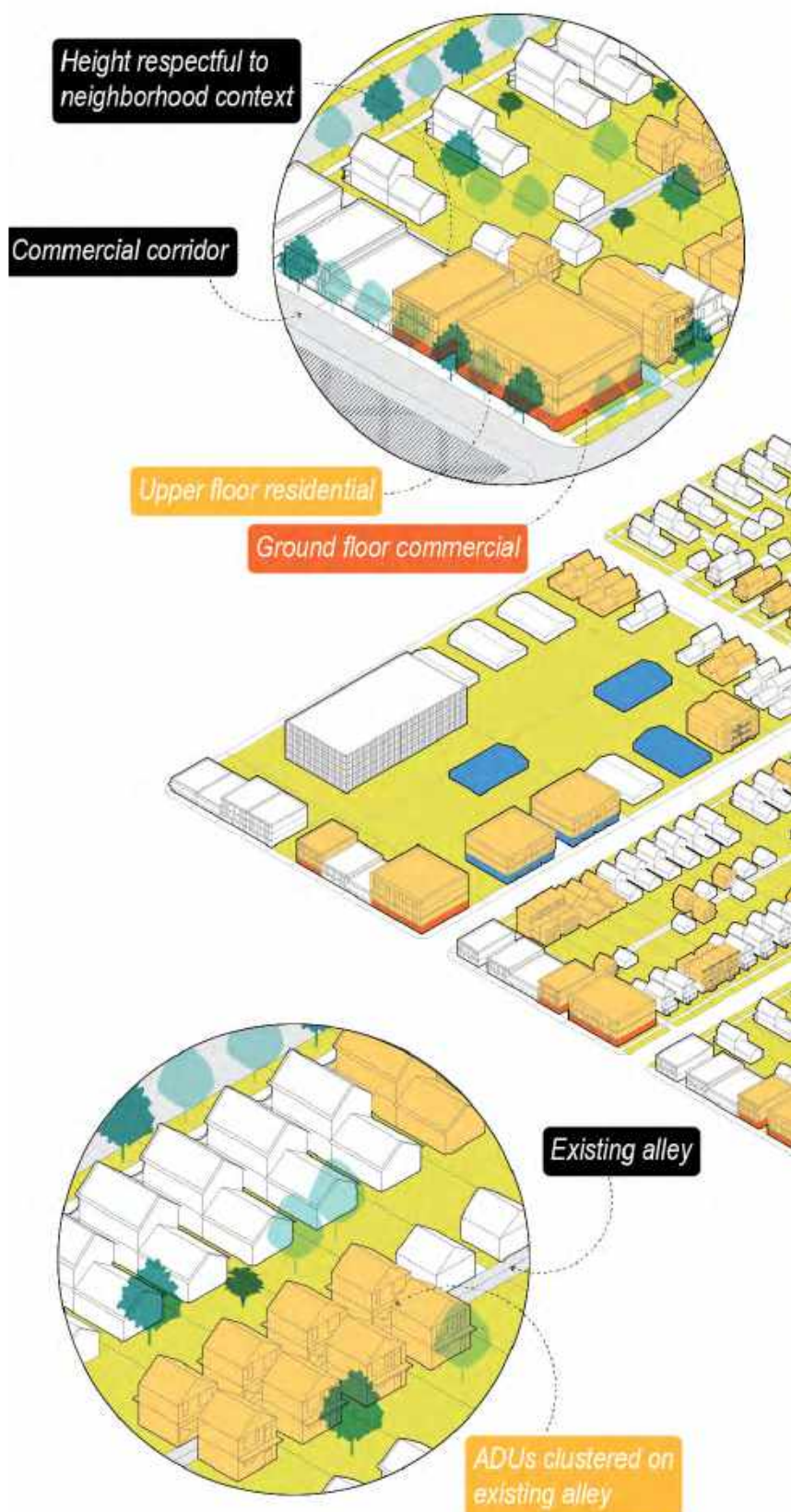
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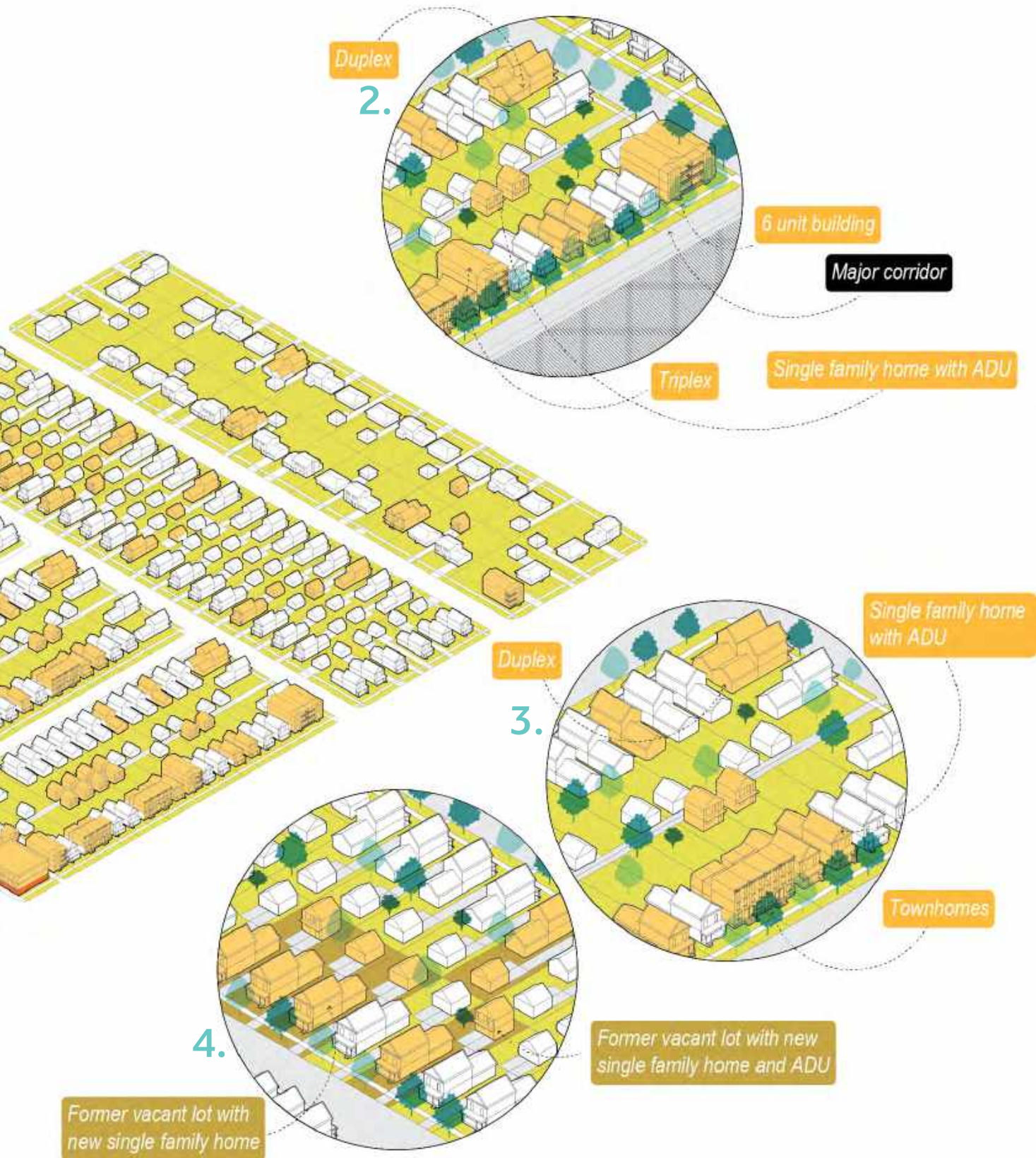


FUTURE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Change is an inevitable part of cities. Whether a city is growing, shrinking, or evolving, change is happening all the time. Through this change, Grand Rapids will enhance the identity of existing neighborhoods by intentionally directing development, limiting displacement, and cultivating community-driven placemaking that elevates the quality and resilience of places. Based on the recommendations in the Great Neighborhoods chapter, Grand Rapids' neighborhoods will prioritize development in the following ways:

1. Support neighborhood nodes with new mixed-use development.
2. Allow for denser housing on key corridors.
3. Allow for a variety of housing types within neighborhoods.
4. Infill vacant lots with development that enhances neighborhood identity.
5. Build new accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in line with neighborhood patterns.



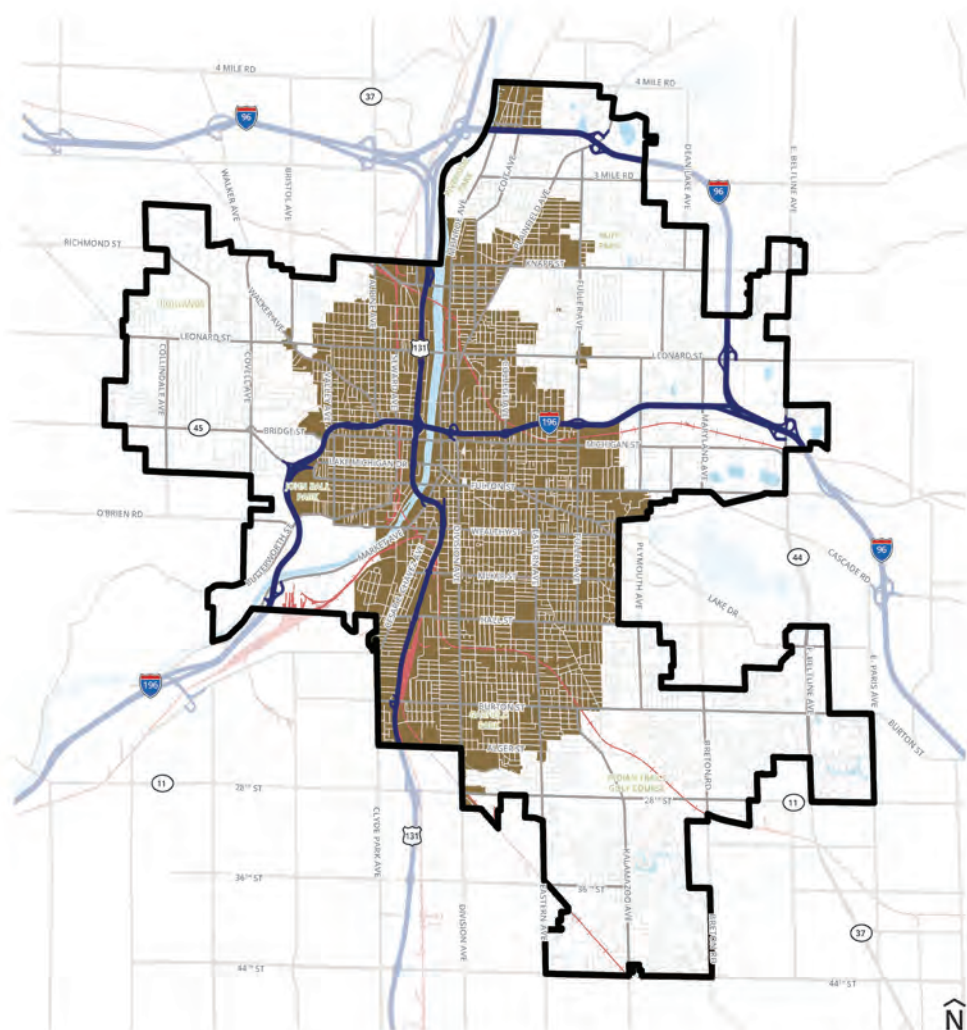


NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS

Grand Rapids can be characterized as having three distinct residential neighborhood geographies—Traditional Neighborhoods, Mid-20th Century Neighborhoods, and Modern Neighborhoods. These classifications were established with the 2002 Master Plan and are reflected in the adopted Zoning Ordinance. These classifications provide additional direction within the residential character types.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Developed prior to the automobile era, these neighborhoods were designed to provide residents with a variety of commercial, institutional, and residential options within a short walking distance. Diversity in building size and use enhances the vitality of these neighborhoods. These neighborhoods include housing options such as single-family homes, duplexes, small multi-family buildings, and apartments above storefronts.



Traditional Neighborhood built environment characteristics include:

- A pattern of small blocks, alleys, and a connected street grid system;
- Smaller building footprints on smaller sites with variable lot sizes (in contrast to the uniformity of newer subdivision housing development) ;
- Human-scaled buildings with high-quality exterior materials;
- Front building walls oriented parallel to the street;
- Well-defined building entries and windows constituting at least 50% of the street-facing wall;
- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit orientation, with provision of on-street parking and off-street surface parking areas that are located behind commercial buildings; and
- Integrated residential and nonresidential land uses located in the same building or in proximity to one another without extensive buffering.



Well-defined building entries and windows.

Provision of on-street parking.

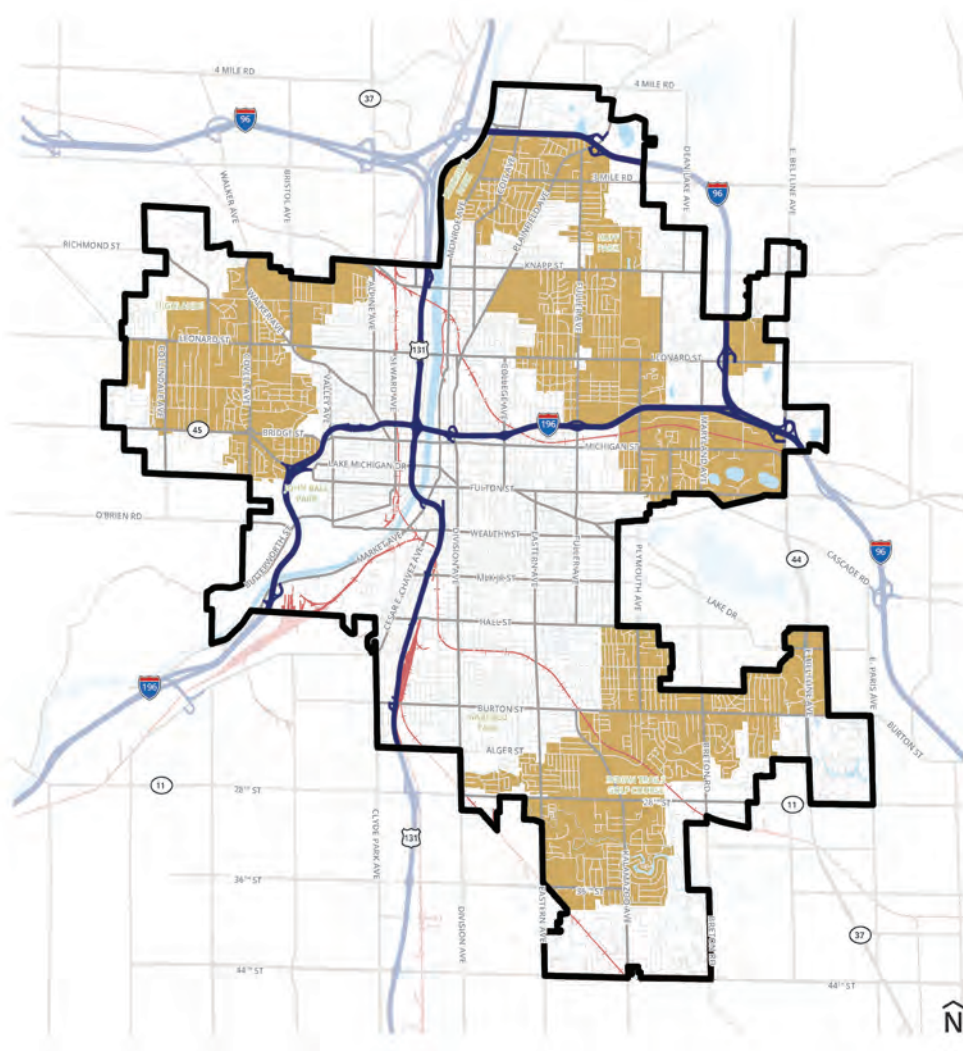
Pattern of small blocks and alleys.

Front building wall oriented parallel to street.



MID-20TH CENTURY NEIGHBORHOODS

These neighborhoods reflect the transition in American society after, and slightly before, World War II towards an automobile-dependent development pattern. Homes in this period were generally built between 1936 and 1979. These residential neighborhoods have a more spacious feel with larger lots and buildings located further from the street. Many homes were built on existing lots, platted before their construction. Streets and neighborhoods are less connected; and land uses are segregated from one another, including separation of apartment buildings from single-family housing. More intense commercial and institutional uses are found on highly visible corners and along heavily traveled traffic corridors in strip developments.



The characteristics of the built environment of a Mid-20th Century Neighborhood include:

- Curvilinear streets with sporadic cul-de-sacs or alleys;
- Larger uniform lot sizes with generous building setbacks;
- Some mixed uses integrated within a neighborhood, but uses generally segregated;
- Pedestrian and automobile-oriented streetscapes that include sidewalks and limited parking in the front of buildings;
- Building entries predominately oriented to the street; and
- Simplified building articulation and massing.



Larger, uniform lot sizes with generous setbacks.

Pedestrian and automobile oriented streets with sidewalks and limited parking.

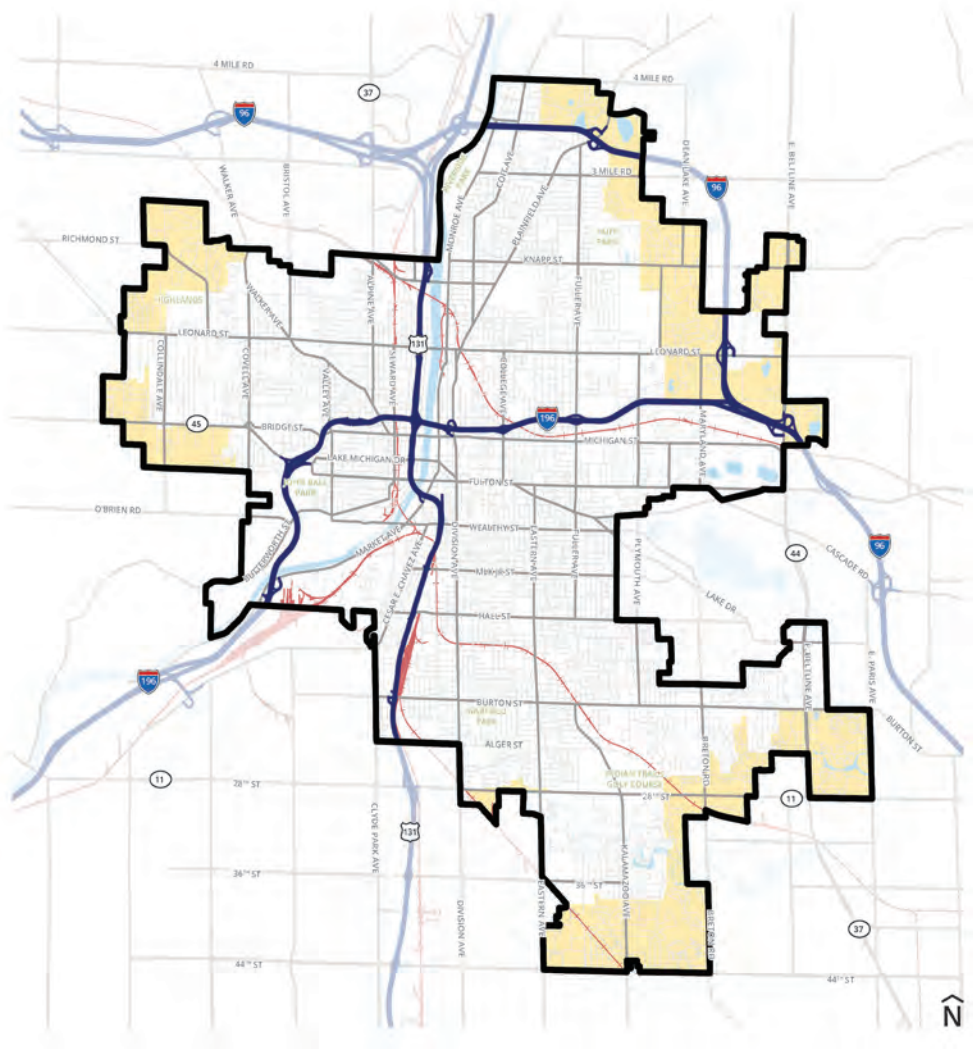
Simplified building articulation and massing.

Building entries oriented to street.



MODERN ERA NEIGHBORHOODS

These neighborhoods represent the most recent trends in home building and neighborhood planning. Many homes in these neighborhoods were built after the 1980s. These neighborhoods have been developed with uses separated from one another; housing is located in one area with commercial in another. Major roadways connect these uses to each other and often require driving between destinations. Street and neighborhood connectivity is less evident and the presence of sidewalks is often limited.



The characteristics of the built environment of a Modern Era Neighborhood include:

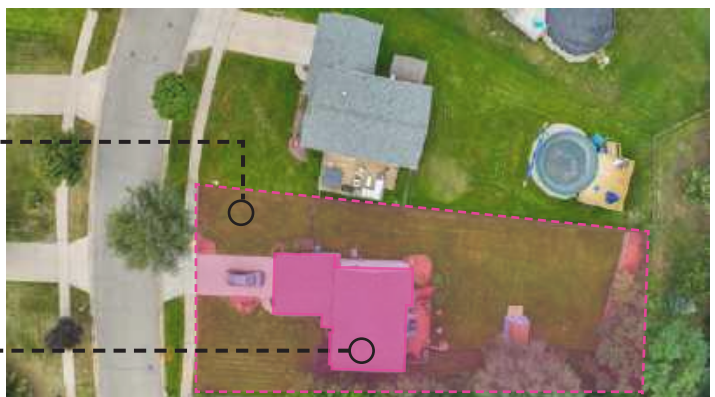
- Larger lots and deeper setbacks in residential areas.
- Single-family homes, apartments, office complexes, and shopping centers that are segregated.
- Building entrances often oriented away from the street.
- Prominent garages, driveways, and automobile-oriented streetscapes.
- Multiple roof forms or complex massing.



Strong automobile orientation with less prominent sidewalks and no marked crosswalks

Large lot sizes with deep setbacks

Segregated single-family residential land use



DESIGN GUIDELINES

Grand Rapids has an identified need for additional housing of all types and at all price points. In order to meet the demand for housing, all neighborhoods must allow for some change. The goal of the Guidelines is to ensure new development complements neighborhood patterns and character as density increases, by providing guiding principles for new construction and significant alterations. They support the construction of compatible, pedestrian oriented, and high-quality housing in Grand Rapids neighborhoods.

The Housing Guidelines do not provide customized recommendations for every neighborhood. They provide recommendations for developers, the public, City staff, and other decision makers on using context to drive design and approvals and should be used in coordination with Area Specific Plans.

The guidelines do not demand a certain design aesthetic, nor do they dictate materials. By encouraging best practices, the guidelines aim to provide a framework that allows for new types of development to occur in a way that is compatible with existing development. As the city grows and changes, its needs will continue to evolve. These guidelines attempt to allow for flexibility and innovation in policy, building, and site design.

DESIGN TENANTS

Compatible

Build on the context of the place and advance the vision of an applicable Area Specific Plan.

Pedestrian Oriented

Contribute to an active and inclusive public realm.

High Quality

Design resilient and visually interesting buildings.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- 1

Build on the local identity and aspiration of the place (site, block, or neighborhood).
- 2

Relate to the local architectural and development patterns.
- 3

Provide transitions from public to private spaces.
- 4

Provide usable spaces for social interaction.
- 5

Minimize the impact of parking areas and utilities.
- 6

Carry out a clear design idea.
- 7

Utilize resilient, sustainable, and durable materials.
- 8

Integrate features that create visual interest.

1 **Build on the local identity and aspiration of the place (site, block, or neighborhood).**

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Integrate materials, building proportions, setbacks, entry features, and architectural details and patterns found within the area into new development and building alterations.
- Relate to significant or iconic community structures and spaces, such as historic or cultural resources, civic amenities, natural areas, bridges, and boundaries.

2 **Relate to the local architectural and development patterns.**

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Minimize differences in scale between existing and new development with dormers, upper-level step-backs, and compatible roof forms.
- Relate to aspects of neighboring buildings through architectural style, roofline, detailing, fenestration, color, or materials.
- Use trees and landscaping to enhance the building design and fit with the surrounding landscape context.
- Maintain consistent setbacks, continue patterns of entries, windows, and vernacular features.
- Provide landscaping, porches, and multiple unit entries at an interval that relates to existing development. This can effectively ease transitions between new, denser development and existing, less dense development.

3 **Provide transitions from public to private spaces.**

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Buffer ground floor residential units with generous landscaping to provide privacy for residents.
- Use vertical separation (balconies or porches) to soften the street edge and provide semi-public spaces for social interaction.
- Provide setbacks consistent with the immediate context.
- Utilize landscaped setbacks and entry sequences that reflect nearby residential patterns.

4 **Provide usable spaces for interaction.**

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Design porches to provide usable outdoor space. The height and depth should accommodate comfortable outdoor seating or play space.
- Design multi-unit development to include publicly visible gathering and play spaces in accessible locations. The focus in design should be on access and usability for residents.
- Outdoor spaces should be appropriately scaled for the use and neighborhood context and integrate features for year-round use.

5 Minimize the impact of parking areas and utilities.

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Choose locations for vehicular access that minimize conflict between vehicles and non-motorists to the greatest extent practicable.
- Locate garages behind the rear wall of the house and take vehicle access from alleys where possible.
- Place mechanical units and utility connections away from the street-facing facades and provide appropriate full-height screening complementary to the building architecture and materials.

6 Carry out a clear design idea.

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Design buildings such that their primary functions and uses can be readily determined from the exterior.
- Create a well-proportioned base, middle, and top to the building in locations where this is appropriate, particularly along primary neighborhood corridors.

7 Utilize resilient, sustainable, and durable materials.

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials.
- Ensure that all facades are attractive and well-proportioned through the placement and detailing of all elements. Consider projections, fenestration, materials, and any patterns created by their arrangement.
- Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.
- Select durable and attractive materials that will age well in the local climate, taking special care to detail corners, edges, and transitions.
- When possible, design the project so that it may be deconstructed at the end of its useful lifetime, with connections and assembly techniques that will allow reuse of materials.
- When possible, design for flexible uses over time so that buildings can be more easily converted as preferences and market factors evolve.

8 Integrate features that create visual interest.

Strategies to meet this guideline:

- Add depth to facades where appropriate by incorporating facade articulation, window depth, and material fenestration.
- Incorporate street-facing decks on upper stories of multi-family buildings to provide private open space visible to the adjacent street.
- Ensure coherent placement of window shape, size, depth, and patterning.

6. AREA SPECIFIC PLANS



The CMP provides a city-wide vision of how to direct and manage land use change in the community. In some instances, a more detailed approach is required to ensure appropriate consideration is given to detailed issues. Area specific planning provides the opportunity to more closely examine a particular geographic area of the city and tailor appropriate recommendations to the needs of area residents, businesses, and property owners.

These plans provide a closer analysis of an area than a city-wide Master Plan by establishing more specific uses and building types, roadway alignments and design treatments, and necessary public facilities and amenities needed to make a neighborhood, mixed use area, or business district a success.





They can also serve as a catalyst to organize neighborhoods, increase citizen technical skills, and attract desired private sector investment. To be effective, area specific planning efforts must be collaborative, involving residents, business organizations, institutions, City representatives, property owners and/or developers. This collaborative effort results in detailed plans that balance varied interests and build on the recommendations in the CMP.

AREA SPECIFIC PLANS

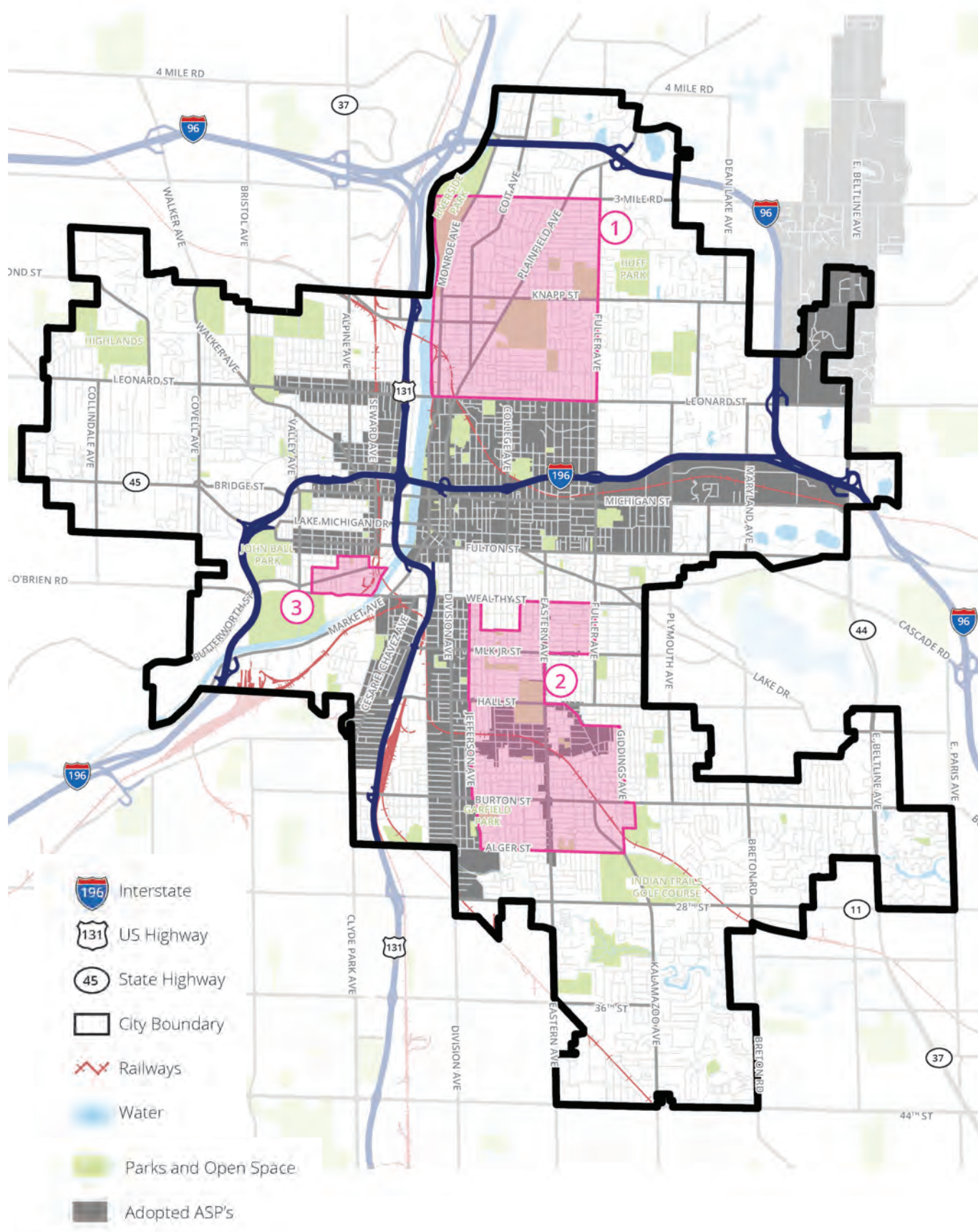
An Area Specific Plan (ASP) is a neighborhood-specific framework intended to guide future improvements and investments in areas such as land use, zoning, transportation, and neighborhood character. To date, the City has completed 11 ASPs. Three additional ASPs will be adopted in conjunction with the Community Master Plan (CMP) in the Butterworth, Creston, and Southtown neighborhoods. The initiatives within each of these ASPs are aligned with the larger citywide vision in the CMP.

The ASPs align with the CMP and lay out strategies at a more granular level to show how the larger vision and goals are accomplished in response to the specific needs of communities.

The goal of an ASP is to provide recommendations that address the needs and aspirations of people living, working, and building community in a particular geographic area. As a result, community input and an understanding of existing neighborhood conditions are the foundation of every ASP. Engagement efforts include community meetings aimed at shaping the direction of the plans.

-  MASTER PLAN ASPs
-  1 CRESTON NEIGHBORHOOD
-  2 SOUTHTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD
-  3 BUTTERWORTH AREA

AREA SPECIFIC PLAN LOCATIONS



CRESTON

ASP OVERVIEW

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

The Creston Area Specific Plan is bounded by the Grand River, Three Mile Road, Fuller Avenue, and Leonard Street.

LAND USES

Creston is primarily a residential community with industrial areas along the rail lines and Monroe Avenue, and a commercial street in Plainfield Avenue which bisects the neighborhood diagonally.

DEFINING FEATURES

Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include Riverside Park, Kent Country Club, the Plainfield commercial district, and the Grand River.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The engagement process for the ASPs included two rounds of in-person public meetings to present findings from the existing conditions analysis, share initial ideas, and gather community input.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- More housing options, including affordable and “missing middle”.
- Support for higher density along Plainfield and the riverfront, with lower density and ADUs in the inner neighborhood.
- Consider environmental impact of new development.
- Increase commercial activity and growth while supporting existing businesses.
- Include low-income housing and encourage local homeownership.
- Develop design guidelines that complement neighborhood character.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE**

- Prioritize and enhance safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure, especially along major corridors.
- Preserve and improve public access to the riverfront.
- Increase bike and pedestrian-friendly connections, amenities, and more active recreation spaces.
- Improve public transit and reduce congestion.
- Increase greening and use of native plants.
- Activate vacant storefronts and underutilized open spaces as plazas for events and community gatherings.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A COLLECTION OF RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES UNITED BY PLAINFIELD AVENUE

Creston proudly proclaims itself as the largest neighborhood in Grand Rapids. Plainfield Avenue is the connective tissue and de facto meeting place that unites this large geography and creates a cohesive community. Because of this vital role, investments in the corridor that improve connectivity, support businesses, and provide new housing will have a significant impact on the surrounding community.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS EXPERIENCING THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF INVESTMENT SEEN IN DECADES

Apartment buildings under construction are just a few of the visible signs of the major investments currently taking place in Creston. Coupled with proposed development projects along Monroe North, Creston is poised to benefit from the new residents and businesses that will soon call the neighborhood home. Building off this momentum will be critical for Creston to leverage investments that help meet neighborhood goals.

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO CREATE A MORE VIBRANT AND CONNECTED RIVERFRONT

The industrial nature of Creston's riverfront is rapidly changing. Proposed investments seek to further transform the neighborhood away from industry to a more residential mixed-use character. Finding the right balance between support for long-term businesses and encouraging residential development and new format businesses will help to create a vibrant riverfront district that maintains its unique character.

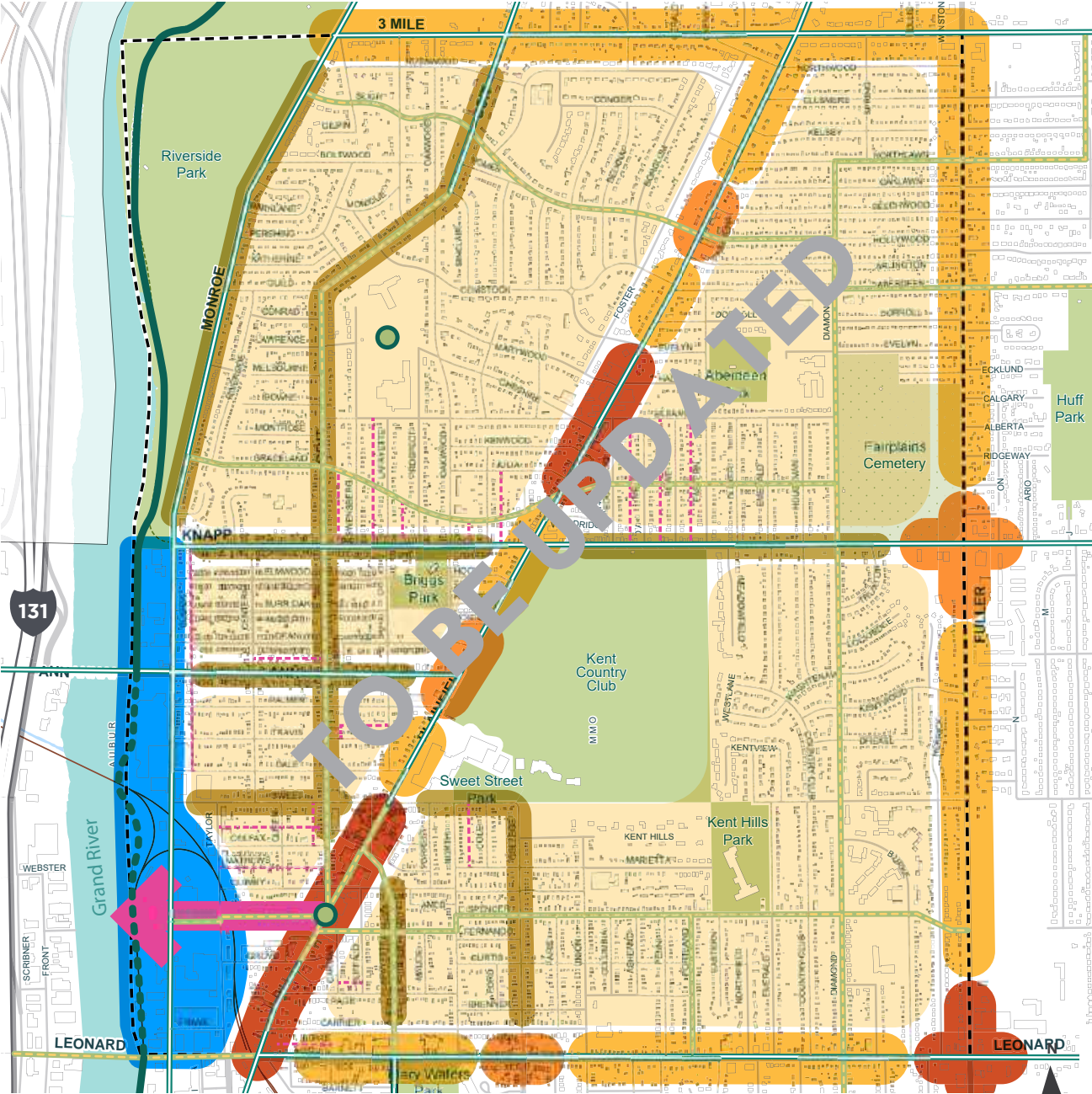
MOST PARKS ARE ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND CONNECTIONS CAN BE CHALLENGING

Riverside Park, Huff Park, Ball Perkins Park, Highland Park, and Belknap Park are some of the crown jewels of the Grand Rapids park system and are located adjacent to Creston. The burgeoning trail network along the Grand River will soon connect Creston to neighborhoods north and south with a safe, off-street connection. Finding opportunities to not only improve these assets but better connect the community to them will advance the quality of life for Creston residents.

PLAINFIELD AVENUE IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING, YET RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS ARE STATIC.

Zoning along the Plainfield Avenue commercial district and the riverfront allows for a variety of densities and housing types. Within Creston neighborhoods, there are few opportunities for redevelopment due to the lack of vacant properties and single-family zoning. To create more diverse housing options and address affordability issues, Creston must look at ways to add housing units within its single-family residential neighborhoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASEMAP



- Innovation District

Neighborhood Hub

Primarily Single Family Residential District

Transit Corridor / Network Street

Open Space Improvement
- Existing Alley

Existing Bike Lane

Proposed Bike Lane

Important River Connection

Existing Trail

Proposed Trail

Area Boundary

RECOMMENDATIONS

AFFORDABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

1. Allow for denser housing on key corridors.
2. Allow for a variety of housing types in single-family districts.
3. Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) within the neighborhood.
4. Support existing homeowners and renters.

A LIVELY AND UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD (A.K.A KEEP CRESTON FUNKY)

5. Redevelop the riverfront as an Innovation Center.
6. Support neighborhood nodes with new mixed-use development.
7. Target storefront/facade repairs in neighborhood nodes.

SAFER, WALKABLE STREETS

8. Improve pedestrian and cycling connections on Plainfield Avenue.
9. Add bicycle infrastructure throughout the neighborhood.

REVITALIZED AND CONNECTED OPEN SPACES

10. Create a plaza where Coit Avenue meets Plainfield Avenue.
11. Better connect Plainfield Avenue to the riverfront along key streets.
12. Work to complete the Grand River trail through the neighborhood.
13. Focus on greening residential portions of Plainfield Avenue.
14. Establish a community vision for a redeveloped Riverside Middle School park space.
15. Boost Creston's Climate Resilience.

SOUTHTOWN

ASP OVERVIEW

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

The Southtown Area Specific Plan is bounded by Wealthy, Lafayette, Pleasant, Union, Fuller, MLK, Eastern, Hall, Kalamazoo, Adams, Giddings, Burton, Oakfield, Kalamazoo, Alger, and Jefferson.

LAND USES

Southtown contains pockets of residential neighborhoods bounded by commercial streets on the major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Industrial uses line the freight rail corridor that cuts through the neighborhood.

DEFINING FEATURES

Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include Pleasant Park, Oakhill Cemetery, Garfield Park, and the commercial corridors on Division, Madison, and Eastern.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The engagement process for the ASPs included two rounds of in-person public meetings to present findings from the existing conditions analysis, share initial ideas, and gather community input.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Prioritize housing affordability and increase the range of affordable housing options.
- Support for ADUs and lower density development.
- Support for increased density and mixed use development along key corridors, while prioritizing affordability.
- Consider incremental development and ease of housing regulations to support sustainable, equitable development.
- Prioritize design guidelines, energy efficiency upgrades and quality of construction.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE**

- Prioritize investment in public transit, biking, and pedestrian pathways over parking.
- Integrate amenities such as bus shelters, benches, and green spaces into multi-family developments to enhance community interaction and livability.
- Celebrate and enhance the unique character of key neighborhood corridors as community assets.
- Preserve and enhance neighborhood parks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

SOUTHTOWN IS A COLLECTION OF RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS CORRIDORS, ALL WITH THEIR OWN IDENTITY

Southtown is made up of no less than seven neighborhoods. While united by common commercial corridors and public spaces, each neighborhood is unique with its own challenges. It is important to consider the nuance of each neighborhood when crafting collective strategies.

PROXIMATE TO DOWNTOWN AND WITH VACANT LAND, SOUTHTOWN IS FEELING DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

Due to its proximity to Downtown, Southtown is susceptible to many of the same development pressures and investment continues to move south. The high concentration of vacant properties compounds the issue as they are easier to redevelop. New investment could provide many benefits to a neighborhood that has experienced decades of disinvestment, but it will be important that those who benefit are those who need it most.

HOUSING COSTS ARE A MAJOR ISSUE FOR RESIDENTS

Many of the existing residents in Southtown are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Renters are more susceptible to price increases which is an issue in a neighborhood that is disproportionately represented by renters compared to the city. Homeowners are often no better off with an older housing stock that is difficult and expensive to maintain. Finding ways to make housing more affordable for both renters and homeowners will be a particular priority for Southtown.

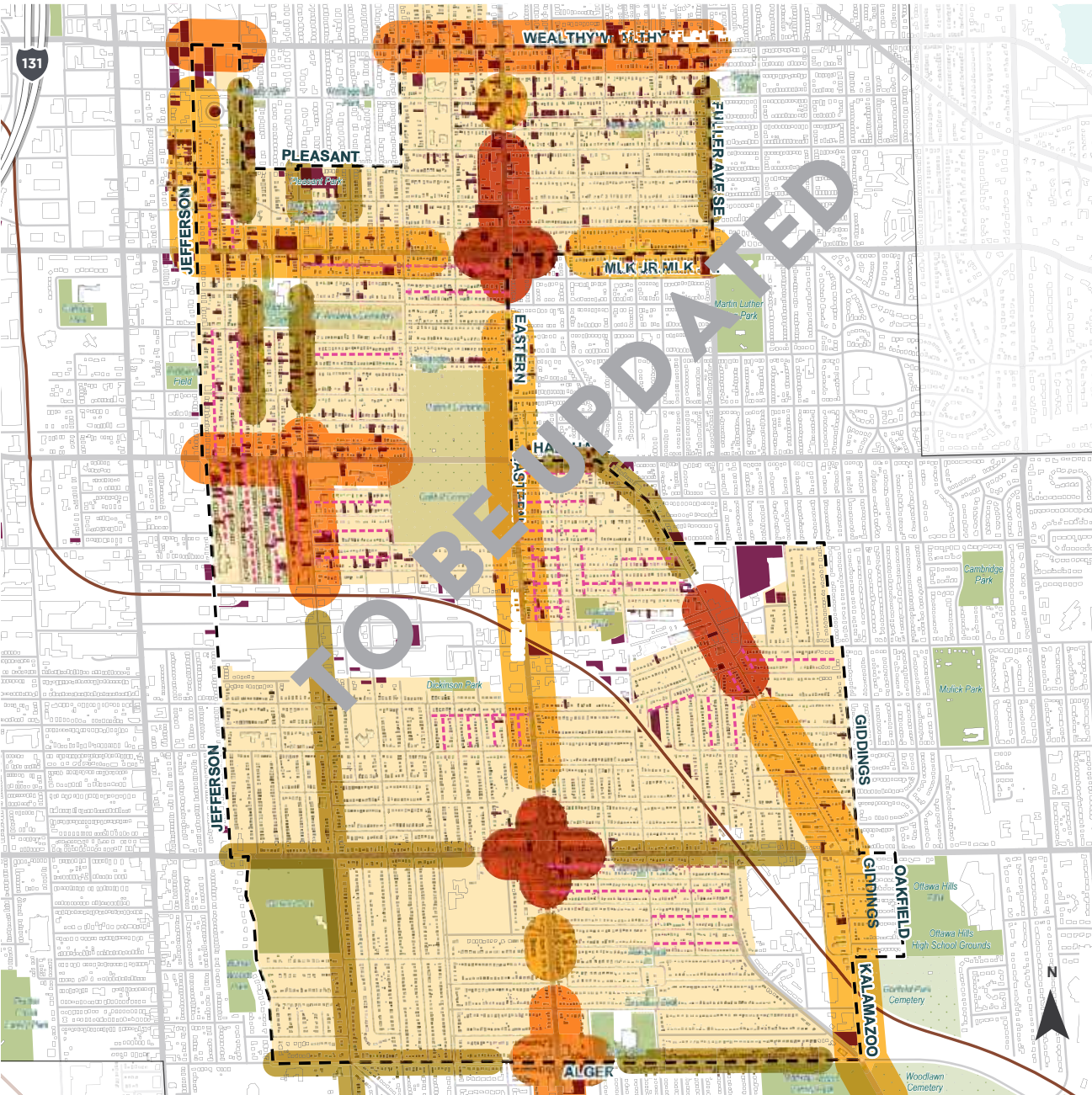
EXISTING RESIDENTS NEED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Many Southtown residents have lived in the neighborhood for decades and experienced its highs and lows. As new investments take place, it will be important for the long-term residents to be able to benefit. Protections need to be put in place to keep residents in their homes and improve directly from investments by others.

THE DESIGN AND SCALE OF NEW DEVELOPMENT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The City classifies Southtown development patterns as both traditional and mid-century and the existing building types help to give each neighborhood their own unique character. As development moves in, it will be important for any new buildings to consider the adjacent context to be good neighbors and not detract from the sense of place.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASEMAP



- Vacant Land
- Neighborhood Hubs
- Primarily Single Family Residential District
- Transit Corridor / Network Street
- Existing Alley
- Area Boundary

RECOMMENDATIONS

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

1. Explore partnerships to build affordable housing on underutilized properties.
2. Support and expand a Community Land Trust.
3. Allow for denser housing on key corridors.
4. Allow for a variety of housing types in single-family districts.
5. Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) within the neighborhood.

A COMMUNITY BUILT BY ALL FOR ALL

6. Home Repairs Programs.
7. Preserve existing affordable housing.
8. Develop mechanisms to protect residents from displacement.
9. Create pathways for residents to provide input on new development.
10. Support training for resident-led small-scale development.

PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE

11. Support neighborhood nodes with new mixed-use development.
12. Support improvements to bicycle facilities, transit facilities, and pedestrian crossings.
13. Implement design guidelines for large lot infill that build upon existing development regulations.
14. Identify vacant lots to be activated as green space.

BUTTERWORTH

ASP OVERVIEW

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY

The Butterworth Area Specific Plan is bounded by Watson, Lexington, Butterworth, Front, Wealthy, Marion, Park, and Deloney.

LAND USES

Butterworth contains a mix of industrial uses along the river and existing rail corridors, a commercial corridor on Butterworth Street, and traditional residential neighborhoods.

DEFINING FEATURES

Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include the GVSU Pew Campus, the Grand River, Westtown Commons Park, the Padnos scrap yard, the former Butterworth Landfill, and regional trail connections.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The engagement process for the ASPs included two rounds of in-person public meetings to present findings from the existing conditions analysis, share initial ideas, and gather community input.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
FUTURE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- Support for higher density along key corridors, while preserving low density in established residential areas.
- Engage the community to preserve the interests of current residents.
- Prioritize high-quality construction and design guidelines in new development.
- Increase housing options for a wide range of household sizes and income levels, and add handicap-accessible units.
- Streamline housing development regulations for development, with a focus on ADUs.

**COMMUNITY PRIORITIES ABOUT
INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE**

- Strengthen Butterworth as a shopping corridor and commercial hub.
- Prioritize safe bike and pedestrian infrastructure, especially protected bikelanes.
- Improve public spaces to serve multiple users, including families, students, local businesses, and employees.
- Increase public access to the riverfront, maintenance and quality of green spaces, and public amenities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

THE RIVERFRONT IS POISED TO CHANGE IN THE COMING YEARS

With direct access to rail, the Grand River, and the citywide landfill (in operation from 1950 to 1973), Butterworth flourished as an industrial district for decades. The closure of the landfill and the changing nature of transportation led Butterworth to lose its edge as an industrial district with only a few legacy businesses remaining today. Plans to grow the GVSU Pew Campus into former industrial land and continued investments in the higher-tech industrial sector highlighted by Grand River Aseptic will cause the district to continue to change.

NEIGHBORHOOD IS FEELING THE PRESSURE OF THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Historically an affordable landing spot for a working-class immigrant population, Butterworth is now suffering the same housing affordability issues that much of the City of Grand Rapids is experiencing. As a neighborhood adjacent to downtown and within walking distance of GVSU's Pew Campus (and the thousands of students enrolled there), Butterworth has felt the problem more acutely.

BUTTERWORTH STREET IS IN A STATE OF TRANSITION

Butterworth Street serves many purposes for the neighborhood and the West Side: it is a neighborhood commercial corridor serving local needs; a light industrial center with auto repair shops and other similar uses; a residential street; and a heavily used truck route for major industrial uses outside of the neighborhood including the Coca-Cola bottling plant and the City of Grand Rapids Refuse Yard. Determining how all of these uses coexist will be important for the neighborhood to determine.

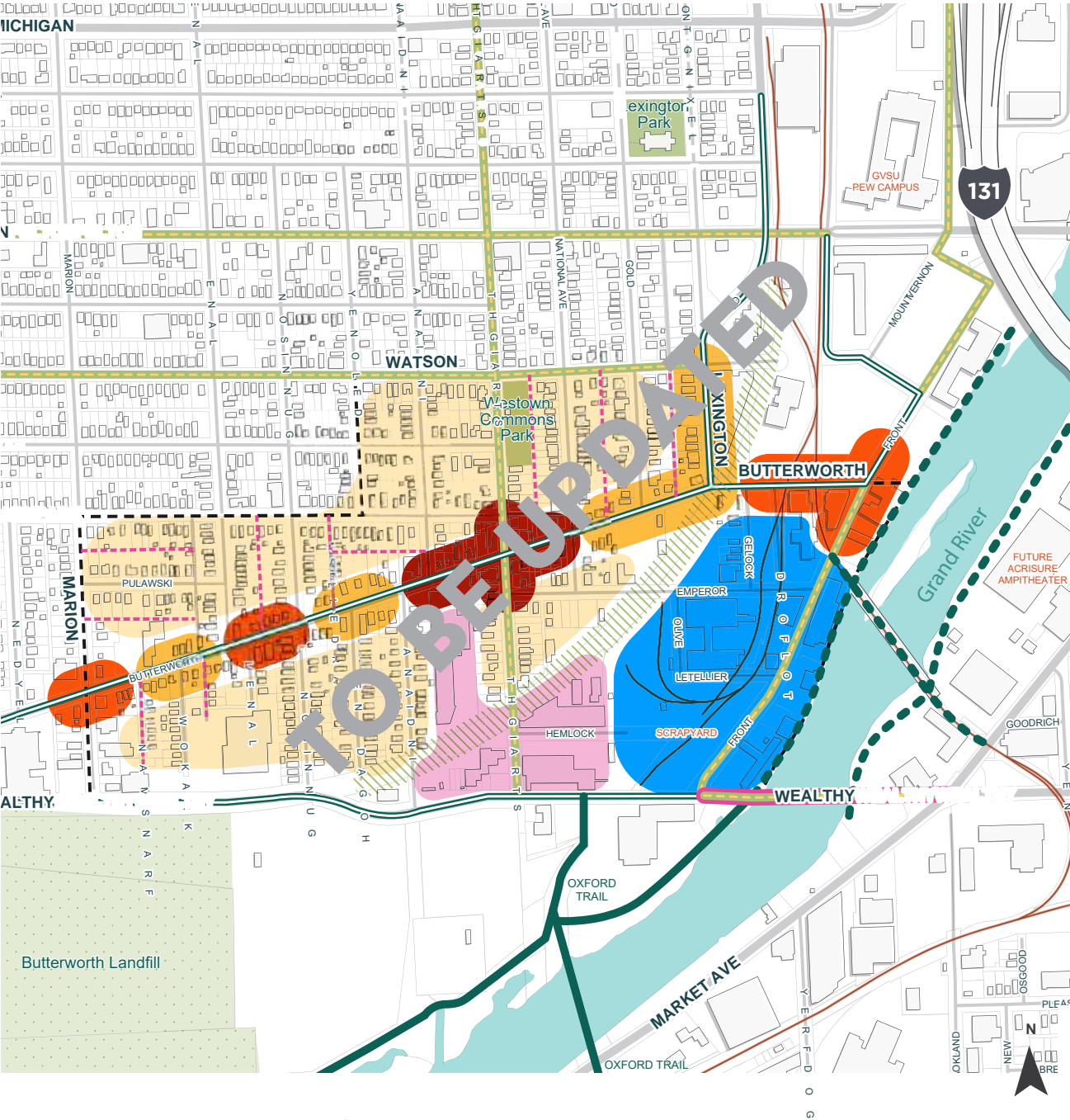
THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS A HUB FOR THE REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

Butterworth sits at the crossroads of numerous regional trail connections, including the Grand River Trail, Kent County Trails (with connections to Millennium Park), and the Oxford Trail (with future connections to the Plaster Creek Greenway). Investments to the existing network to help fill in gaps as well as enhanced trail accessibility will improve the neighborhood for future generations of Butterworth residents.

MAJOR PROJECTS WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Some of the largest investments in Grand Rapids are happening adjacent to Butterworth. The proposed Acrisure Amphitheater will transform the former city street maintenance yard across the Grand River into an outdoor music venue, trail, and public space. A proposed new soccer stadium will replace the DASH surface parking lots north of Lake Michigan Drive into a multipurpose sports facility. The expansion of the GVSU Pew Campus with new residential and academic buildings will bring additional buildings and people to what are now parking lots. All of these investments will impact the future of Butterworth and may spur smaller-scale investments in the neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASEMAP



- Innovation District
- Art/Maker District
- Primarily Single Family Residential District
- Neighborhood Hub
- Transit Corridor
- Green/Open Space
- Existing Alley
- Existing Bike Lane
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Proposed Bike/Bridge Improvement
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Area Boundary

RECOMMENDATIONS

SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Allow for denser housing on key corridors.
2. Allow for a variety of housing types in single-family districts.
3. Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) within the neighborhood.
4. Support existing homeowners and renters.

A VIBRANT AND THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY

5. Redevelop the riverfront as an Innovation Center.
6. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings with an art/maker focus.
7. Support Butterworth Street as a neighborhood-serving corridor.

SAFER, WALKABLE/BIKEABLE STREET

8. Improve Butterworth Street for pedestrians and bicyclists.
9. Improve alleys as an alternative pedestrian network and community space.
10. Improve existing trail and bicycle connections within the neighborhood.

BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS & HEALTH, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

11. Explore additional programming and ongoing stewardship of Westtown Commons.
12. Identify new public space opportunities in the neighborhood.
13. Increase the tree canopy as the Innovation District develops.

IMPLEMENTATION

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Bridge to Our Future Community Master Plan should be used on a daily basis as public and private decisions are made concerning development, redevelopment, capital improvements, and other land use decisions affecting Grand Rapids. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Plan.

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMS AND BUDGETS

Individual departments, administrators, boards, and commissions should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets.

DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Administrative and legislative approvals of development proposals, including rezoning's, should be a central means of implementing the Plan. Decisions by the Planning Commission and City Commission should reference relevant Community Master Plan recommendations. The zoning code and related regulations under the authority of the Planning Department should be updated in response to what is presented in the Plan.

CAPITAL PLAN

The City should align the Capital Plan with the recommendations of the CMP. Proposed projects should be reviewed and prioritized to ensure adequate funding for capital projects and maintenance, particularly in the City's business districts.

ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

Economic development programs should be reviewed to ensure they support the recommendations of the Plan wherever possible.

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS

Property owners and developers should consider the goals and strategies of the Plan in their land planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will use the Plan as a guide in their deliberations on zoning matters

and development analysis. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and complement the plan’s recommendations.

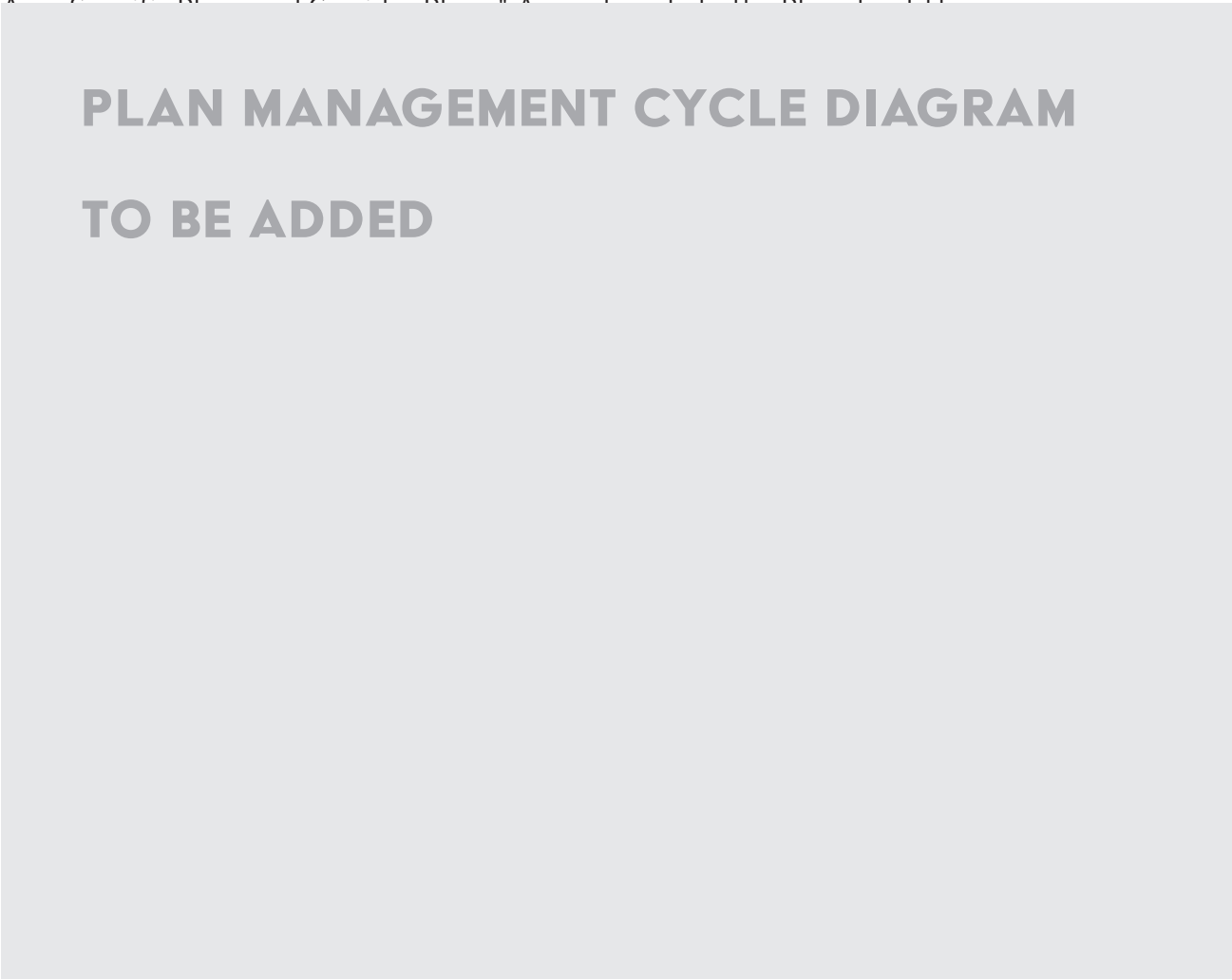
PROPOSED PLAN MANAGEMENT CYCLE

MONITORING

The Plan should be monitored on a regular basis for implementation effectiveness and relevancy. As referenced previously, annually in the development of departmental work programs, budgets, and capital improvements planning. A formal review of the Plan's accomplishments and relevancy should occur within five-year intervals.

UPDATING

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act provides the legal basis for the master plan. The act outlines requirements for the preparation, content, public review, adoption and regular review and update of the plan. The update should be considered at least every 5 years. There may be circumstances that warrant formal amendment of the Plan, including adoption of the



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table summarizes the Plan's actions. The table is organized by chapter and objective. For each action, the table indicates the type of recommendation, its status, and whether it aligns with or supports a specific Value Thread.



VALUE THREADS



Equity: Where all residents have access to resources that allow for opportunity, influence, and positive life outcomes no matter their starting point.



Safety: Where all people are secure and protected in all communities no matter where they live, come from, or look like.



Vibrancy: A variety of amenities including arts, culture, and recreation opportunities that activate and contribute to the energy of the city year-round.



Culture: Traditions and experiences that originate from one's background and lived experiences and can be shared and celebrated with others.

Sustainability: Balancing growth, environmental stewardship, and well-being in a way that fulfills current and ongoing needs while not compromising the needs of future generations.



ACTION CATEGORIES

Regulations: Actions that could be implemented through the Framework zoning ordinance update or other updates to city ordinances.



Capital Project: Physical improvements to city facilities and infrastructure.

Program: Programs or initiatives that may require some ongoing city support or participation.



Policy: Direction used on an ongoing basis to guide city decisions.



ACTION STATUS



Ongoing: currently occurring on a repeating basis

Initiated: begun, but not yet complete

Future: to be initiated

TIMEFRAME

S Short-term (1-5 years)

M Medium-term (5-10 years)

L Long-term (10-20 years)

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
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1 GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

1.A CREATE COMPLETE AND STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS.

1.A.1	Regularly update the Grand Rapids and Kent County Housing Needs Assessment to guide creation and preservation of affordable housing.				
1.A.2	Implement design guidelines that build upon existing neighborhood development.				
1.A.3	Improve the relationship between higher-intensity and lower-intensity uses.				
1.A.4	Ensure public information about residential infill development is easy to access.				
1.A.5	Develop an anti-displacement strategy.				
1.A.6	Advocate for removal of state-level barriers to housing affordability and stability.				
1.A.7	Provide adequate resources to meet community needs.				
1.A.8	Support efforts to provide small-scale developer training to residents.				
1.A.9	Work with the larger metropolitan community to provide safe, stable, and affordable housing options.				

1.B EXPAND THE VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES AND PRICE POINTS.

1.B.1	Support programs that encourage housing diversity based on income and housing types.				
1.B.2	Allow a greater variety of housing types in low-density residential zone districts.				
1.B.3	Allow higher density residential in the Mid-Century and Modern Era neighborhoods.				

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
1.B.4	Assess and reduce barriers to innovative housing solutions (such as modular construction, prefabricated materials, and new building methods).				
1.B.5	Continue to increase homeownership opportunities.				
1.B.6	Support Community Development efforts described in the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County 2021 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.				
1.C INTEGRATE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.					
1.C.1	Encourage modifications for new or substantially remodeled housing units that improve access for people with limited mobility.				
1.C.2	Continue to enhance community assets through additional investments, including but not limited to green spaces.				
1.C.3	Ensure an equitable distribution of public parks and recreational facilities.				
1.C.4	Support implementation of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP).				
1.C.5	Improve accessibility to fresh foods throughout the community, with a focus on food deserts and economically challenged neighborhoods.				
1.C.6	Continue to support community gardens and promote an edible landscape.				
1.C.7	Expand City programs to support sustainable housing conditions.				
1.C.8	Continue to promote the use of green infrastructure on individual home sites.				
1.C.9	Promote native plant use in home landscapes.				
1.C.10	Continue to work towards the City's tree canopy goal.				
1.C.11	Support facilities that locally generate energy.				

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
1.C.12 Continue to encourage voluntary community benefits agreements.					

2 VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

2.A SUPPORT COMPACT CENTERS THAT PROVIDE A MIX OF USES.

2.A.1 Update the zoning ordinance to encourage density in areas that serve residents and businesses.					
2.A.2 Direct dense development downtown and in areas and corridors served by regional transit routes					
2.A.3 Support infill development at an appropriate scale.					
2.A.4 Support taller commercial buildings in commercial districts.					
2.A.5 Update the zoning ordinance to address the impacts of continued growth on business districts.					

2.B IMPROVE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF BUSINESS DISTRICTS.

2.B.1 Require options to encourage people to use modes of transportation other than driving alone when large developments are proposed within nodes identified on in the Conceptual Development Framework.					
2.B.2 Set maximum block sizes within Activity Centers identified on the Future Character and Land Use Map.					

2.C BROADEN AND ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL SERVICES, AMENITIES, AND CULTURAL ASSETS.

2.C.1 Evaluate strategies to protect significant community structures.					
2.C.2 Increase the capacity of the City's Corridor Improvement Authorities to have meaningful impact in their districts.					

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
2.C.3 Support private sector investments in green infrastructure.					
2.C.4 Continue to support public art championed by community organizations.					

3 A STRONG ECONOMY

3.A INCREASE THE DENSITY OF HIGH-WAGE JOBS AND DECREASE THE WAGE GAP IN GRAND RAPIDS.

3.A.1 Support efforts to grow the greater Grand Rapids region into a major tech hub of the Midwest.					
3.A.2 Encourage the growth of the life sciences industries in and near the Medical Mile.					

3.B ENSURE A WIDE RANGE OF RESIDENTS CAN ACCESS JOBS.

3.B.1 Identify key commercial corridors and neighborhood centers for reinvestment and future planning work.					
3.B.2 Evaluate reuse of obsolete industrial for other purposes.					
3.B.3 Reposition and repurpose commercial properties to support non-retail businesses.					
3.B.4 Consider a hybrid business use category within Innovation Districts identified on the Future Character and Land Use map.					
3.B.5 Evaluate, monitor, and enhance broadband access across the city.					

3.C BALANCE ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH PRIORITIES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

3.C.1 Grow more jobs within the city that are near the workforce.					
3.C.2 Promote the green economy.					

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
3.C.2 Amend the zoning ordinance to reduce the impact of industrial uses on surrounding areas.					
3.C.3 Continue brownfield remediation and redevelopment efforts.					

4 BALANCED MOBILITY

4.A DESIGN AND MAINTAIN STREETS THAT ARE SAFE FOR ALL ROAD USERS.

4.A.1 Improve intersections and corridors with the most serious and fatal traffic crashes.					
4.A.2 Address high-crash intersections and corridors through quick-build interventions.					
4.A.3 Provide citywide education and engagement about mobility projects and issues.					

4.B SUPPORT VIABLE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS THAT ARE AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND MEET COMMUNITY MEMBERS' NEEDS.

4.B.1 Make strategic investments in bike facilities.					
4.B.2 Support shared mobility models to increase transportation choices.					
4.B.3 Promote electric bicycle and vehicle ownership.					
4.B.4 Support programs that encourage travel options other than personal vehicles.					
4.B.5 Support collaboration between businesses, organizations, and communities to expand commute options.					
4.B.6 Continue to invest in transit stop amenities.					
4.B.7 Work with Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to address highways, barriers to safe walking, bicycling and transit access.					

Action	Value Threads	Category	Status	Timeframe	Responsibility
4.C COORDINATE LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS.					
4.C.1	Reduce minimum parking requirements to support compact growth patterns.				
4.C.2	Limit the size of surface parking lots.				
4.C.3	Establish mobility hubs at key nodes of activity including neighborhood nodes, employment centers, and transit-oriented destinations.				
4.C.4	Develop comprehensive curbside management guidelines that address loading zones, drop-off/pickup zones, on-street parking, and bicycle/scooter parking.				
4.C.5	Consider modes of travel other than cars in the development review and approval process.				
4.C.6	Ensure new developments maintain walkable and bikeable roadway networks with appropriate access to transit.				
4.C.7	Support implementation of the Vital Streets Plan.				

TO BE UPDATED PRIOR
TO BE ADOPTED

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Affordable Housing. There are two main kinds of affordable housing: 1.) dedicated affordable housing units that come with binding rent and/or income restrictions to ensure it is occupied by low-income households and 2.) market affordable housing units that rent or sell at an affordable price but have no binding restrictions. Market affordable housing is generally affordable to households earning between 80-120% of the area median income.

Area Specific Plan. These plans provide a finer grain of analysis than a city-wide Community Master Plan and may be prepared for a block, a neighborhood, a business district or a larger area. They may be undertaken in response to a development proposal or as a proactive planning study. Area specific plans establish a specific mix of uses and building types, roadway alignments and design treatments, and necessary public facilities and amenities needed to make a neighborhood a success, standards and guidelines that ensure continuity with the valued characteristics of existing development to be retained are also provided.

Board of Zoning Appeals (Zoning Appeals Board). An official board whose principle duties are to hear appeals and, where appropriate, grant variances from the strict application of the zoning ordinance.

Brownfield. Brownfields sites include properties with environmental contamination or functionally obsolete buildings. The definition is broad and can cover an entire industrial zone or a single abandoned building, a massive hazardous waste dump or spillage from a corner dry cleaning shop.

Building Form. The configuration or shape of a building influenced by its massing, height, proportion, and scale relative to the surrounding context.

Building Setback. A required separation between a lot line and/or right-of-way line and a building or structure. The building setback varies by zoning district and may include a minimum, and in some cases, a maximum distance.

Capital Improvement Projects. Any building or infrastructure project that will be owned by a governmental unit and purchased or built with direct appropriations from the governmental unit, or with bonds backed by its full faith and credit, or in whole or in part, with federal or other public funds, or in any combination thereof. A project may include construction, installation, project management or supervision, project planning, engineering, or design, and the purchase of land or interests in land.

C-D

Character. 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.

Climate Migration. The movement of people due to climate or the effects of climate change. As disasters become more frequent and severe, and as the impacts of sea-level rise and extreme heat become more pronounced, it is increasingly likely that Americans will move away from vulnerable parts of the country.

Community Master Plan. A comprehensive, long-range guide for future growth and physical development in a community. A community master plan is used to examine physical development issues. State enabling act requires a valid zoning ordinance to be based on an adopted community master plan. The purpose of the plan is to promote public health, safety and general welfare as well as quality of life.

Complete Neighborhoods. A mix of housing types in close proximity to centers and corridors that give residents convenient access to daily needs, employment, recreation, and transportation options. Complete neighborhoods are a desired outcome of a 15-Minute City approach, which makes travel across the city a choice, not a necessity, for meeting everyday needs.

Connectivity. Refers to the way in which individual developments and uses are physically linked together within the larger fabric of the city. Most often, it refers to the network of streets and blocks and the way in which they encourage or discourage walkability and concentrate or distribute traffic. Other examples of connectivity include the availability and location of transit routes and stops, bike routes, and other off-street pathway.

Development Center. Consolidated service center which brings together staff from Building Inspection, Engineering, Planning, and Zoning to more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of developers, builders and trades people.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA). A public authority established in 1979 to promote development and fund improvements in Downtown Grand Rapids. Most funds come to the DDA through tax increment financing. Many of the significant improvements completed in downtown over the past 20 years have been completed with the support of the DDA, including Plaza Towers, Grand River Walkways, Monroe Center Improvements, and the DeVos Place Convention Center.

Downtown Improvement District (DID). A Business Improvement District established for Downtown Grand Rapids in October 2000. The DID will provides maintenance & beautification, promotions & communications, special events, and neighborhood development services for Downtown Grand Rapids.

First- and Last-Mile Connection. The beginning or end of an individual trip made primarily by public transportation. On either end of a public transit trip, the origin or destination may be difficult or impossible to access by a short walk. The trip from a destination to public transit is called the first mile connection, and the trip from public transit to a destination is termed a last mile connection.

Future Character and Land Use Map. The portion of the Community Master Plan that describes planned land uses and areas for change. The descriptions illustrate what types of land uses are appropriate within a given geographic area, points for consideration, and desired outcomes for the future. The text describes the future land use map and supersedes the map in instances where clarification or interpretation is required.

Greenfield. Greenfields are undeveloped properties where new development is proposed or occurring. Typically, greenfield sites are active or idle farmland with limited development restrictions or site constraints that allow for cheaper, quicker development than in a previously developed location.

Green Infrastructure. a network of green space, low impact development, and nature conservation that connects to form an overall system that, through infiltration, evapotranspiration, and reuse, improves water quality and controls rainfall runoff rates on the site where it is generated.

Historic District. An area or group of areas not necessarily having continuous boundaries, that contains one, or more significant resources that are related by history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.

Historic Preservation. The identification, evaluation, establishment, and protection of resources significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.

Historic Resource. A publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture of the State, a community, or the United States.

Infill Development. The development of new housing or other buildings/uses on scattered vacant sites in a built-up area.

Infrastructure. This is a general term that includes all the structures, facilities, and services that support development, provided by the public and private sectors. Examples include roads, bike facilities (lanes, trails, racks), sidewalks, transit, stormwater facilities, water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, parks, fire, police,



emergency services, libraries, schools, and government offices.

Land Uses. The purpose to which a parcel of land is being used. Examples of uses include. residential, commercial, industrial and recreational.

Mixed-use/mixed-use development. The development of a tract of land or building or structure with two or more different uses such as but not limited to residential, office, retail, civic, or entertainment, in a compact urban form.

Multimodal. Allowing for the use or operation of different modes of transportation including but not limited to walking, biking, personal vehicle, and public transit.

Nonconforming Use. A structure or use that is not permitted in the zoning district in which it is located, but which is permitted to continue with restrictions because the structure or use predates the designation of the zone.

Open space. A parcel of land and/or water reserved for the use and enjoyment of residents, tenants, and their guests. Roofed structures may be included within open space if they are intended for the recreational or other leisure use of residents. Open space shall not include public or private street right-of-way nor any part of a building lot which is intended for the private and exclusive use of individual owners.

City Planning Commission. Body of 9 members appointed by the Mayor. The Planning Commission is responsible for overseeing the physical development of the community and formal adoption of the Community Master Plan.

Redevelopment. Development that occurs by improving existing structures or by building where previous structures have been demolished.

Redlining. A discriminatory practice that consists of the systematic denial of services such as mortgages, insurance loans, and other financial services to residents of certain areas, based on their race or ethnicity.

Residential Land Use. A building, or parcel of land used for housing. This can include detached one family housing units, or multifamily arrangements including two units; three or more units; apartments, condos, etc.

Right of Way. A general term denoting public ownership or interest in land,

usually in a strip which has been acquired for or devoted to the use of a street or alley.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF). A financing plan to support development of under utilized private properties by capturing a portion of the property tax within a district to fund improvements in the district. When a TIF is established, an existing property tax base is established and all base taxes continue to be collected and transmitted to various government units. As the district develops, the property taxes collected on the increase in tax value for the district (the “tax increment”) is transmitted to the authority and used to pay for specific improvements in the area.

Transit. The movement of people by public conveyance.

Transit-oriented development (TOD). A development approach that creates compact, mixed-use communities near transit where people enjoy easy access to jobs and services.

Stakeholder. One who is involved in or affected by a course of action.

Steering Committee. Citizen committee of 50 individuals appointed by the Mayor representing diverse interests to oversee the Community Master Plan process.

Variance. A departure from the provisions of a zoning ordinance relating to setbacks, side yards, frontage requirements, and lot size that, if applied to a specific lot, would significantly interfere with the use of the property and cause hardship.

Zoning. An important tool used in shaping and forming community growth and redevelopment in a manner consistent with the community master plan. It regulates various aspects of how land may be used.

Zoning Classification. The name given to types of zones such as single family residential, rural residential, agricultural, regional shopping, neighborhood shopping, office, industrial, etc

Zoning Ordinance. A zoning ordinance consists of two parts - the district map and the written text. The text sets out the purposes, uses and district regulations for each district, the standards for special land uses and for general administration. The zoning map graphically illustrates into which the zones or districts into which all of the land within the community is classified.



BRIDGE TO OUR FUTURE

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Pre-planning Engagement Summary

Round 1 Engagement Summary

Round 2 Engagement Summary

Round 3 Engagement Summary

Round 4 Engagement Summary

Total Participation Summary

Pre-planning Engagement Summary



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

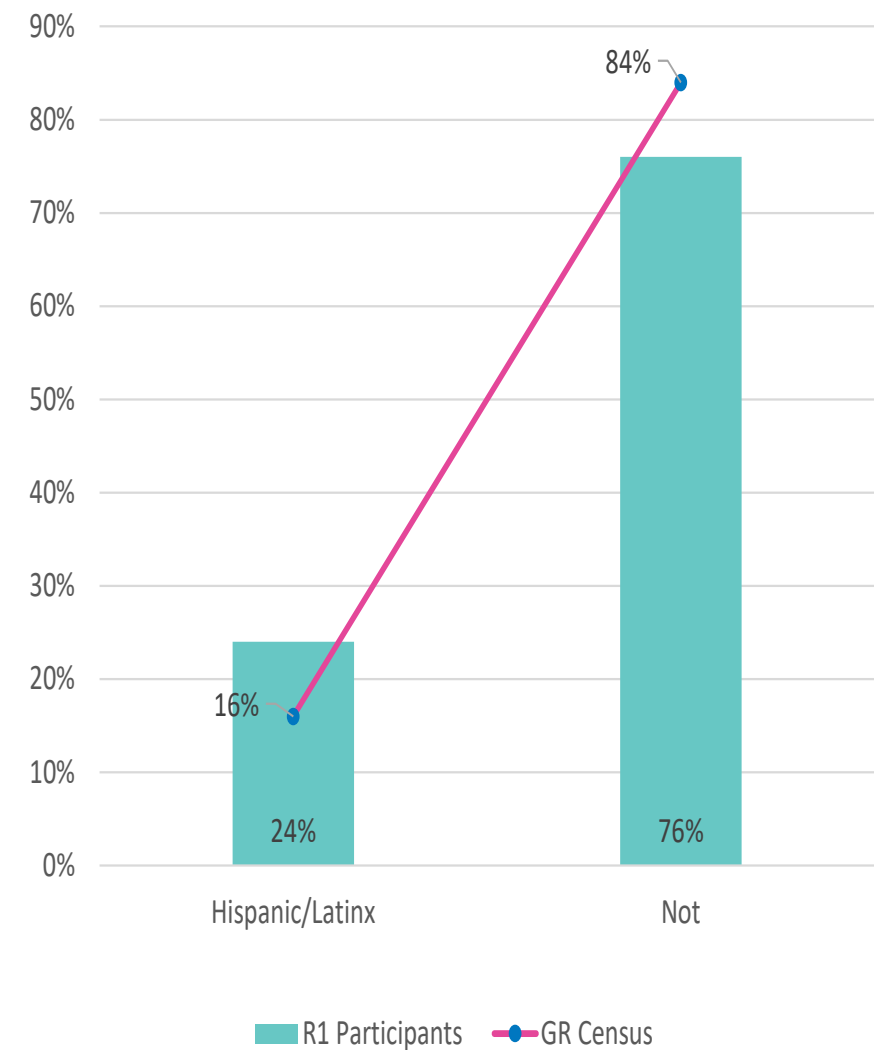
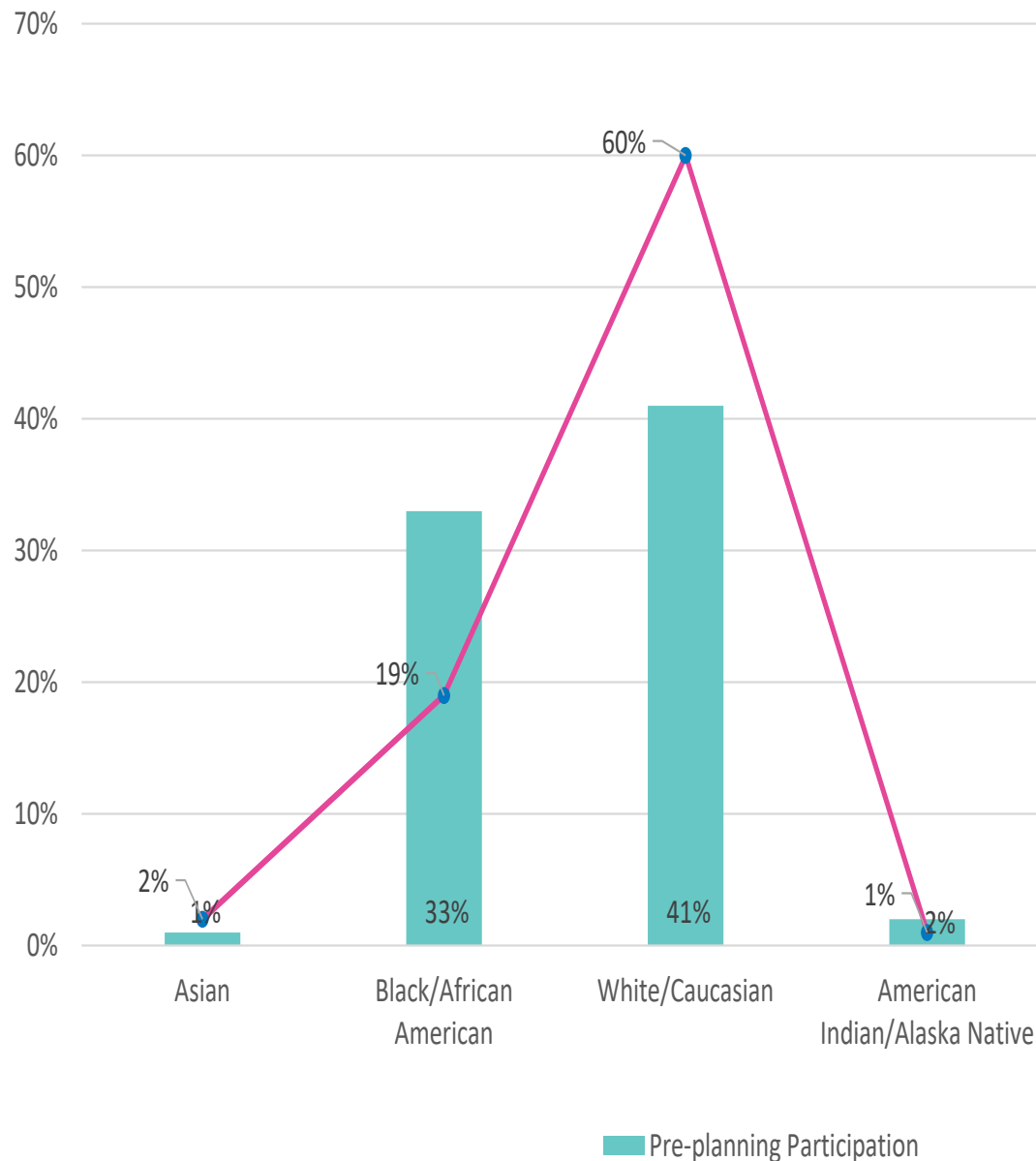
GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

Participation Overview

- 530 people participated
- Over 90 meetings were held across four rounds
 - *Hosted virtually, distanced, or outside*
 - *Groups discussed successes from and improvements to the 2002 CMP*



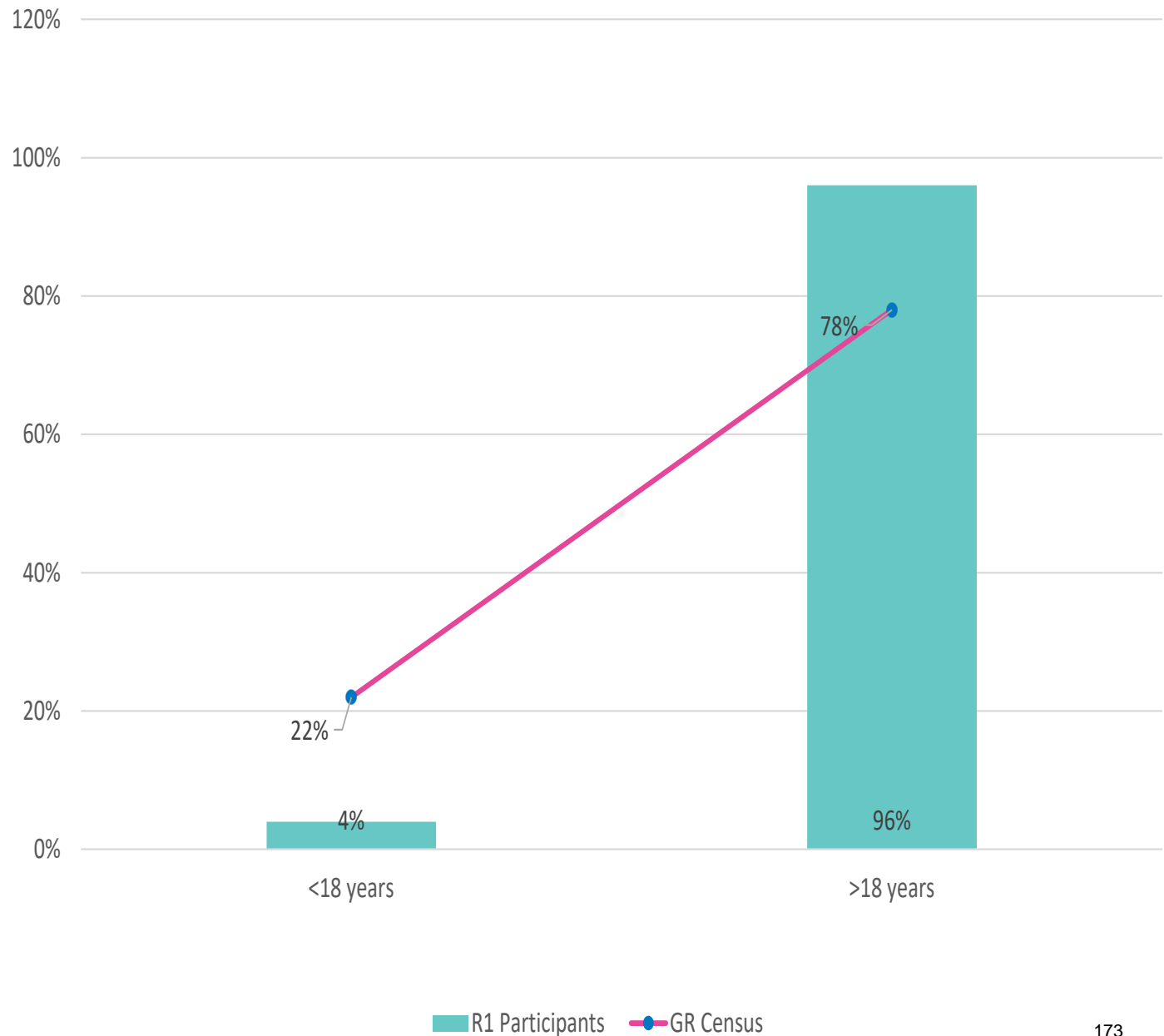
Race/Ethnicity



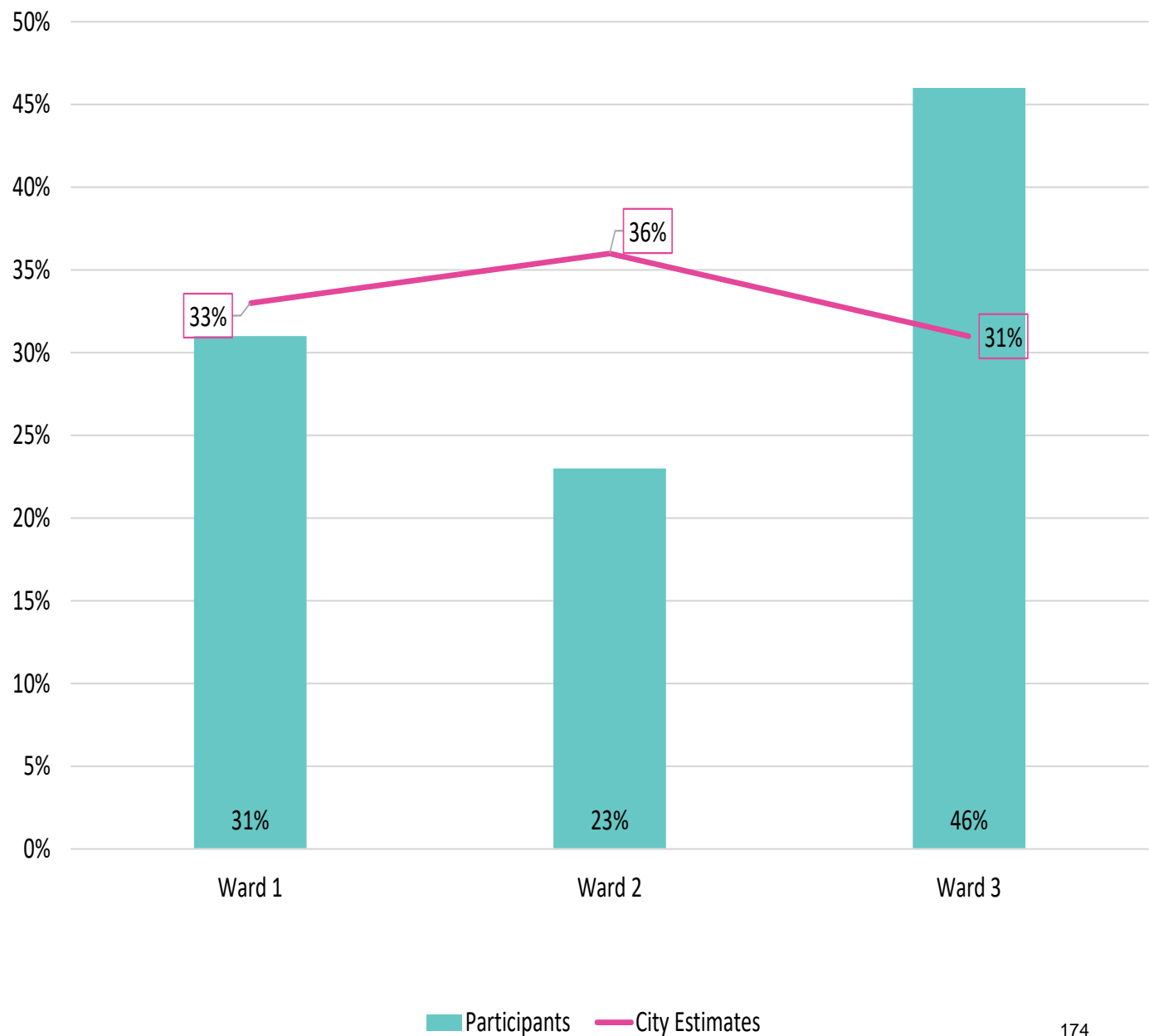
Age

Ages 15-17 make up 3.1% of the population, ages 5-14 make up 10.1%.

Under 18 participation was mainly ages 12-17.



Ward



Round 1 Engagement Summary

April 13, 2023



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

Engagement Overview

- Four rounds of equitable, inclusive, productive and fun engagement
- Moves from *generative* (brainstorming) to *responsive* (providing feedback and direction)
- Self-selected, qualitative data
- Focused on topics within the Community Master Plan purview.

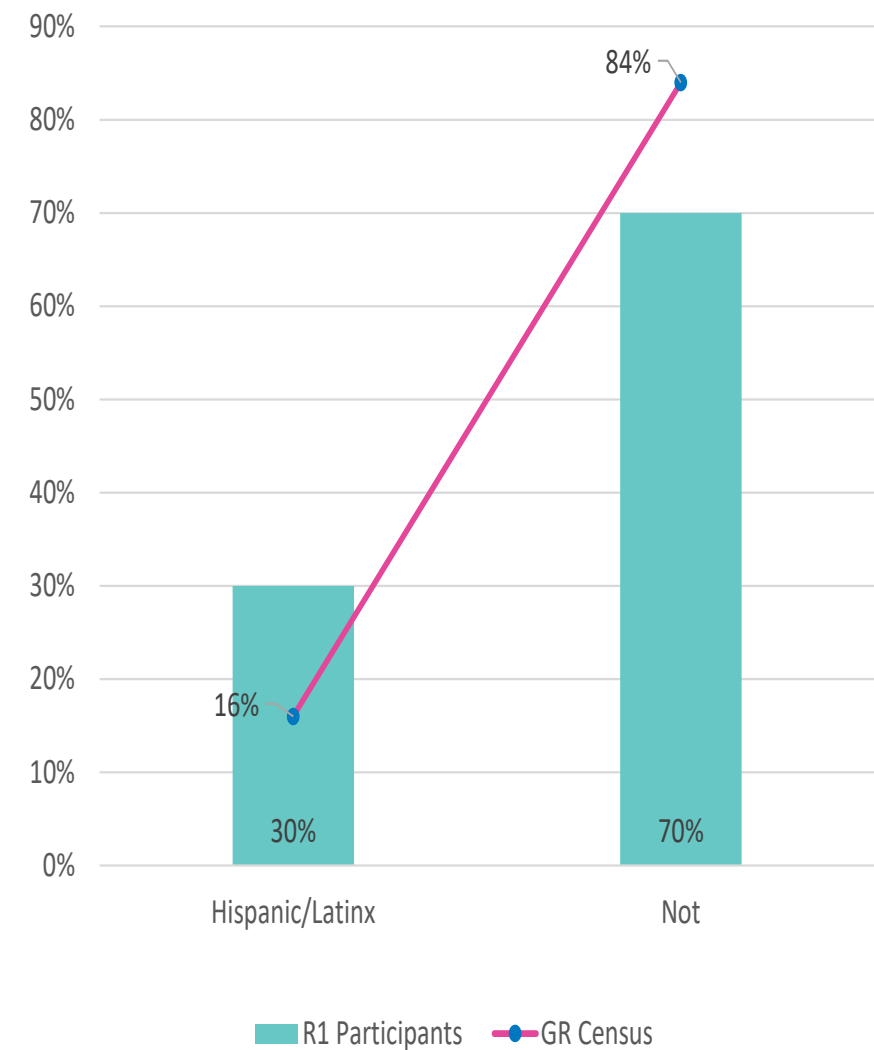
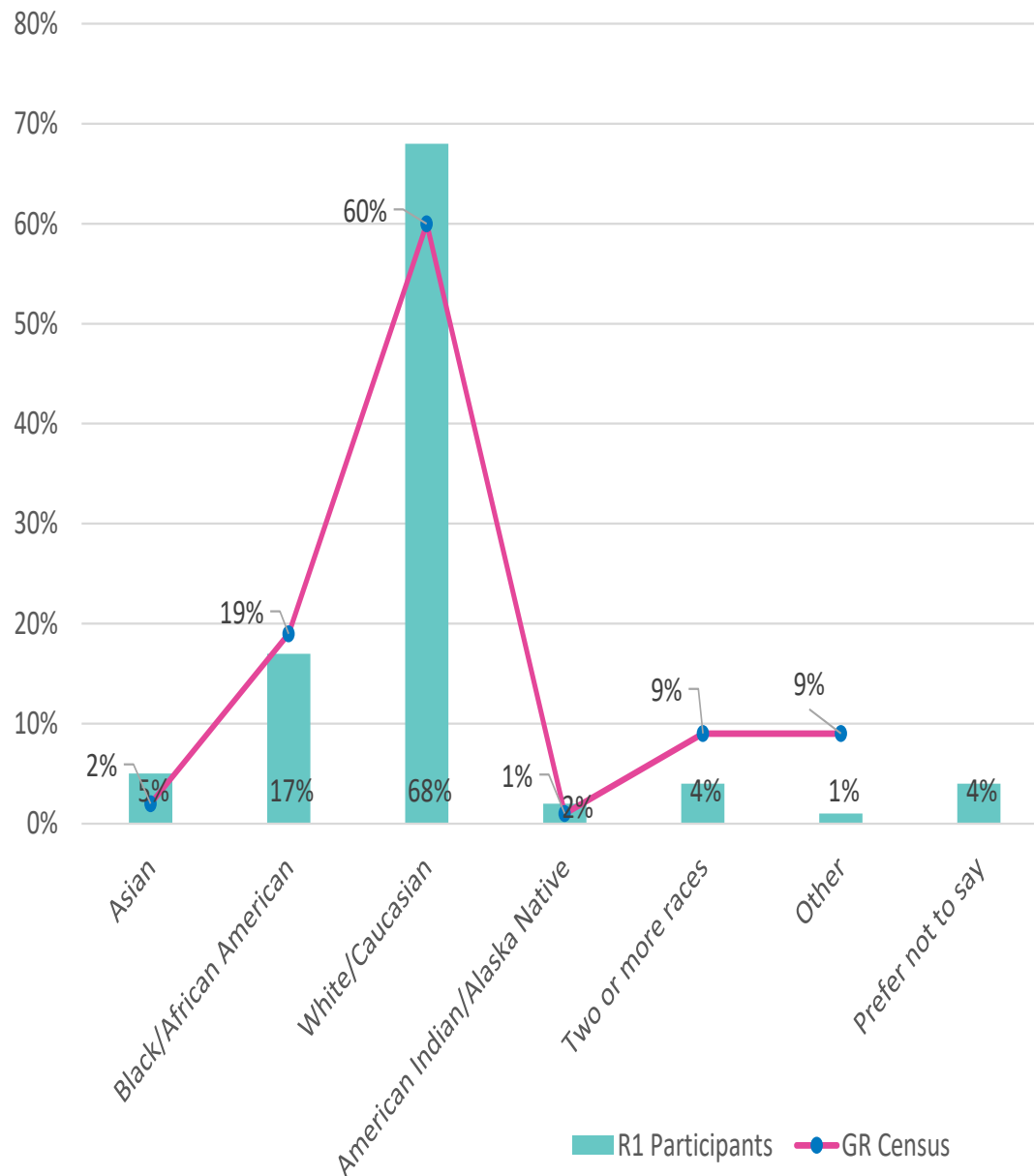


Participation Overview

- **762 people participated**
- **Conducted engagement in a variety of formats**
 - *In person workshops, meeting-in-a-box, 1:1 interviews, youth, online, and stakeholder meetings*
- **Successful PR campaign that reached over 2.5 million people. Coverage was considered positive or neutral**
- **Heard from people living in all three wards**

Participation Overview

Race/Ethnicity

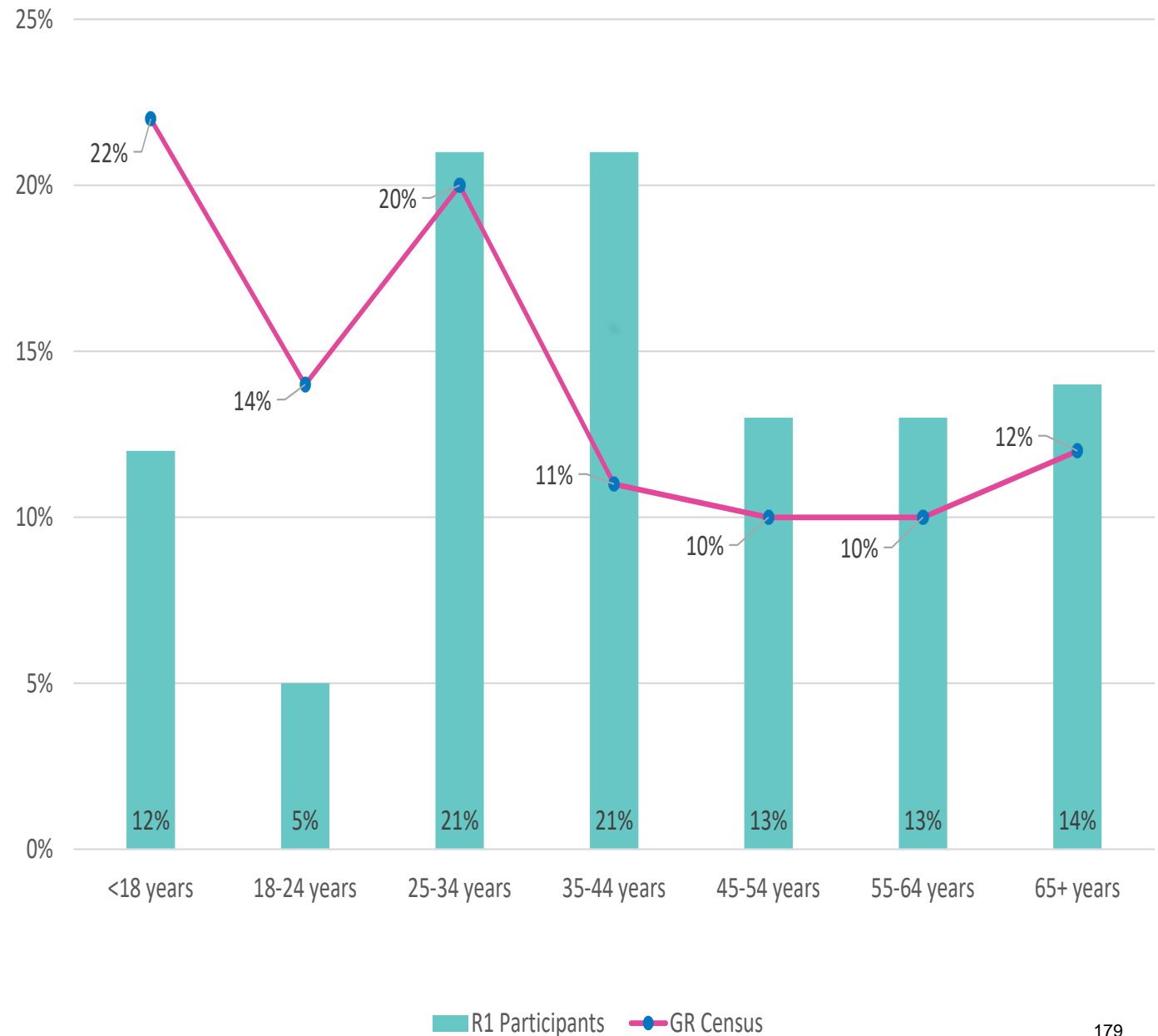


Participation Overview

Age

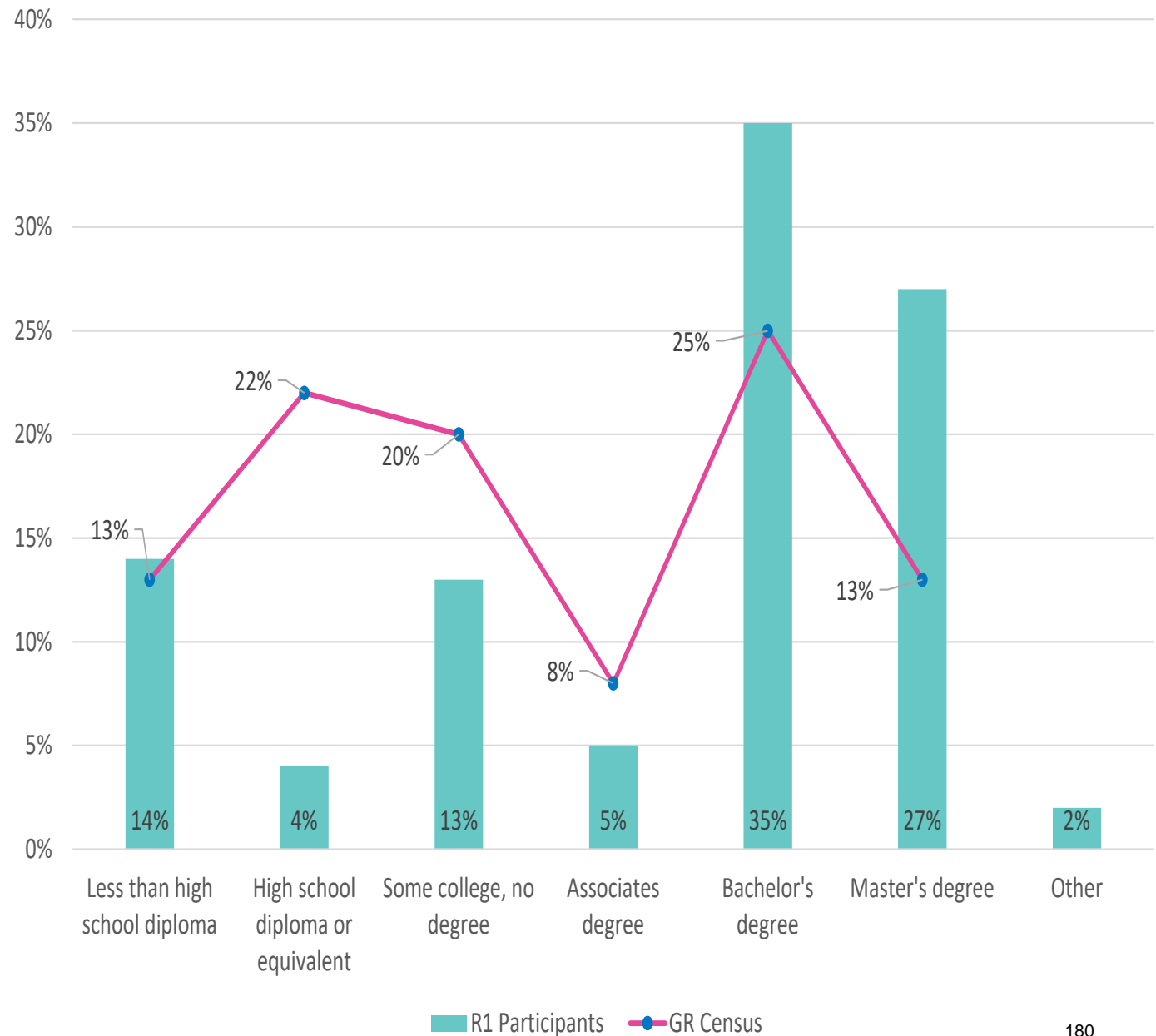
Ages 15-17 make up 3.1% of the population, ages 5-14 make up 10.1%.

Under 18 participation was mainly ages 12-17.



Participation Overview

Education



Who did we hear from?

7. Neighborhoods (ranked from highest engagement to lowest)

1. Creston	12. Southeast Community	23. Black Hills
2. Heritage Hill	13. Downtown	24. Shawnee Park
3. Garfield Park	14. Northeast	25. Richmond-Oakleigh
4. Eastown	15. Belknap Lookout	26. Grandville
5. West Grand	16. Midtown	27. Ridgemoor Park
6. East Hills	17. Fulton Heights	28. Ken-O-Sha Park
7. Highland Park	18. Roosevelt Park	29. Leffingwell-Twin Lakes
8. John Ball Park	19. Shawmut Hills	30. Michigan Oaks
9. Alger Heights	20. Ottawa Hills	31. Eastgate
10. Baxter	21. Eastern-Burton	32. Shangri La
11. Southeast End	22. North End	

Engagement Activities and Results

1. Hopes and Dreams
2. Big Ideas
3. Future Housing Mapping
4. Area Specific Plans
5. Define it
6. Storytelling



1. Hopes and Dreams

Participants were asked, “What do you hope Grand Rapids will be known for in the next 10-15 years?” The following themes are not listed in priority order.

Emerging Themes

- Equity
- Increase economic opportunity for marginalized populations, available jobs that pay well
- A vibrant and inclusive city with easy access to amenities and safe spaces for people of all backgrounds to spend time in
- More affordable and available housing for all residents, equitable development
- Need widespread active and alternative transportation networks that are safe and convenient to use
- Implement sustainable development and growth practices, protected green spaces
- Diversity of local businesses, neighborhood centers, community-focused quality of life
- Health and wellness

Focus Areas of the CMP Pre-planning

In 2020, through a CMP pre-planning process, Master Plan Facilitators reviewed the 2002 Master Plan and determined the themes of the 2002 Master Plan remain relevant (Great Neighborhoods, Vital Business Districts, A Strong Economy, Balanced Transportation, A City that Enriches our Lives, A City in Balance with Nature, Partnerships, and Smart Growth principles). However, the interests have evolved, and residents would also like to see a focus on...

- Equity
- Housing
- Transportation/Mobility
- Safety
- Environmental justice and health
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation

2. Big Ideas

- **Generally, most themes from the pre-planning phase are still important to people**
 - a) Equity
 - b) Housing
 - c) Mobility
 - d) Environmental justice and health
 - e) Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- **Safety was integrated into the themes**
- **Economic health, culture, and vibrancy also important**

2. Big Ideas

Participants generated big ideas for the future of Grand Rapids and, as a group, organized them into themes.

Emerging themes:

- a) Transportation/Mobility
- b) Housing
- c) Equity
- d) Vibrancy
- e) Sustainability and the Environment



2a. Transportation/Mobility

90% of participants identified this as a theme, or mentioned specific actions that relate to transportation/mobility.

Sample of ideas include...

- Increase hours of operation for bus system, more ways to pay for fares*
- Construct protected bike lanes, with barriers of some kind*
- Improve accessibility for bus stops (benches, covered stops)*
- Create better train access to nearby cities, particularly Chicago and Detroit*
- Introduce car-free spaces throughout the city*

2b. Housing

88% of participants either identified this as a theme, or mentioned specific actions that relate to housing. Sample of ideas include...

- *More affordable housing, different types of housing at different densities*
- *Organize better support and services for homeless population*
- *Build non-traditional housing – group living, ADUs, senior housing, transitional housing*
- *Develop mixed-use, mixed-income areas*
- *Stronger protection for renters*
- *Encourage more clean-up days in neighborhoods*
- *Better utilize underused properties, parking lots, former industrial*
- *Educate about home ownership, repairs and warranties*

2c. Equity

73% of participants either identified this as a theme, or mentioned specific actions that relate to equity. Sample of ideas include...

- *Increase funding for schools in all zip codes*
- *More recognition of cultural diversity – cultural events, language programs, etc.*
- *Eliminate food deserts*
- *Expand social services beyond downtown*
- *Increase support for homeless population – eliminate anti-homeless architecture, protect tent cities*
- *More transparency between city and public*
- *Better communication, access to information for all*

2d. Vibrancy

68% of participants either identified this as a theme, or mentioned specific actions that relate to vibrancy/amenities. Sample of ideas include...

- *Revitalize the riverfront, keeping it publicly accessible*
- *Design more spaces to hang out that don't cost money*
- *Construct more community centers, with longer hours*
- *Create public art that reflects the neighborhoods and cultures*
- *Organize activities for youth and teens*

2e. Sustainability and the Environment

63% of participants either identified this as a theme or mentioned specific actions that relate to climate/sustainability. Sample of ideas include...

- *Increase solar presence, community solar*
- *Create opportunities for urban agriculture*
- *Increase the tree canopy and use of native plants*
- *Organize community gardens, especially in food desert areas*
- *Increase accessibility of composting*
- *Create a better network of EV chargers, electric vehicles for city*

3. Future Housing

Participants...

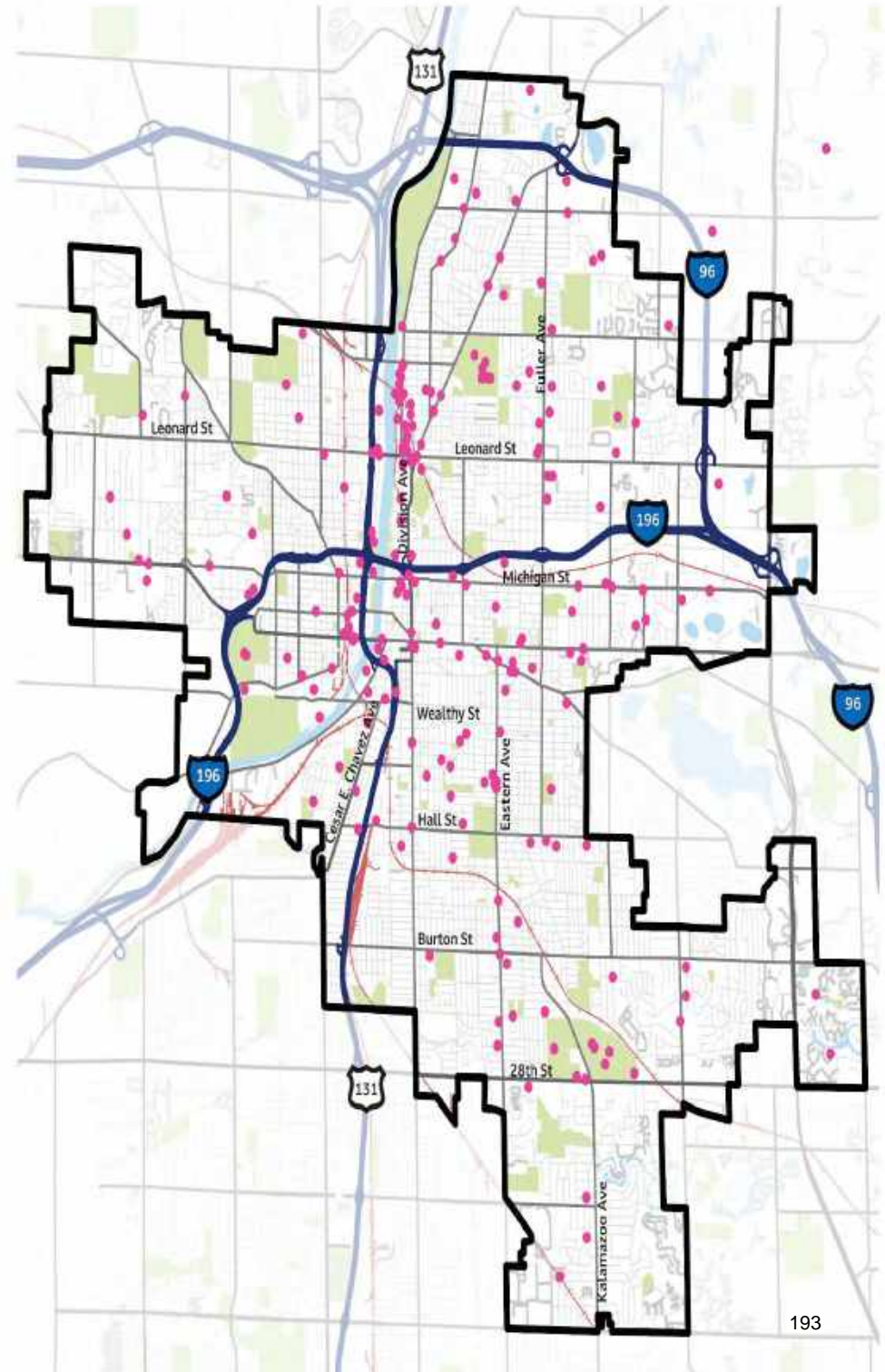
1. identified where the city could use more housing.
2. filled out a comment card
 - *why they think that area of the city could use more housing*
 - *what type of housing might be most appropriate.*



3. Future Housing

Example Comments

- More missing middle housing
- Reuse or redevelop into medium-high density housing
- Multi-family housing, duplexes, stacked housing
- Housing near downtown jobs, high density
- Low-income, affordable housing
- Upgrade older buildings to meet healthy living standards, money to fix older houses
- Reuse abandoned buildings and industrial
- Build up not out

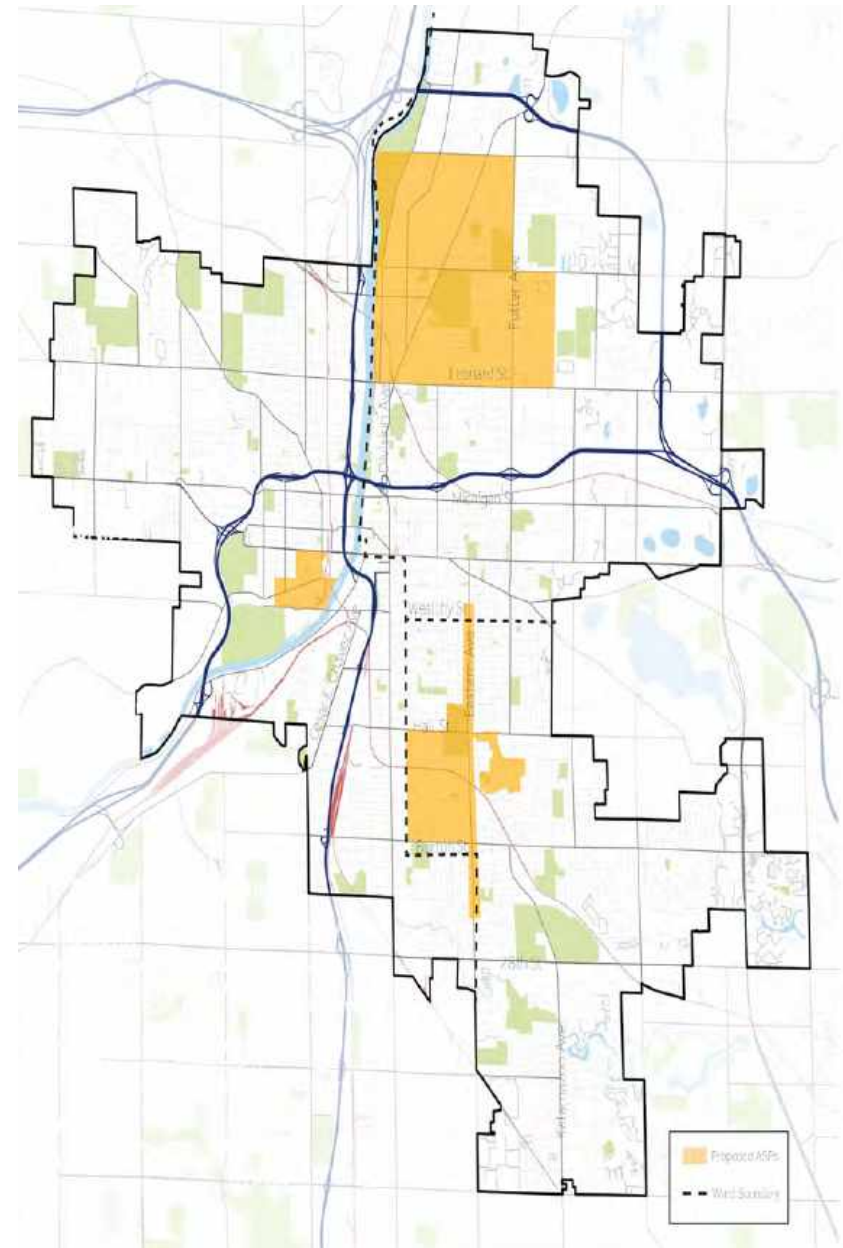


4. Area Specific Plans

Three areas were identified for area specific plans. Participants were asked what they knew about the areas that could be helpful to the planning team. The areas are:

- a) Southtown Neighborhoods
- b) Butterworth Area
- c) Creston Neighborhood

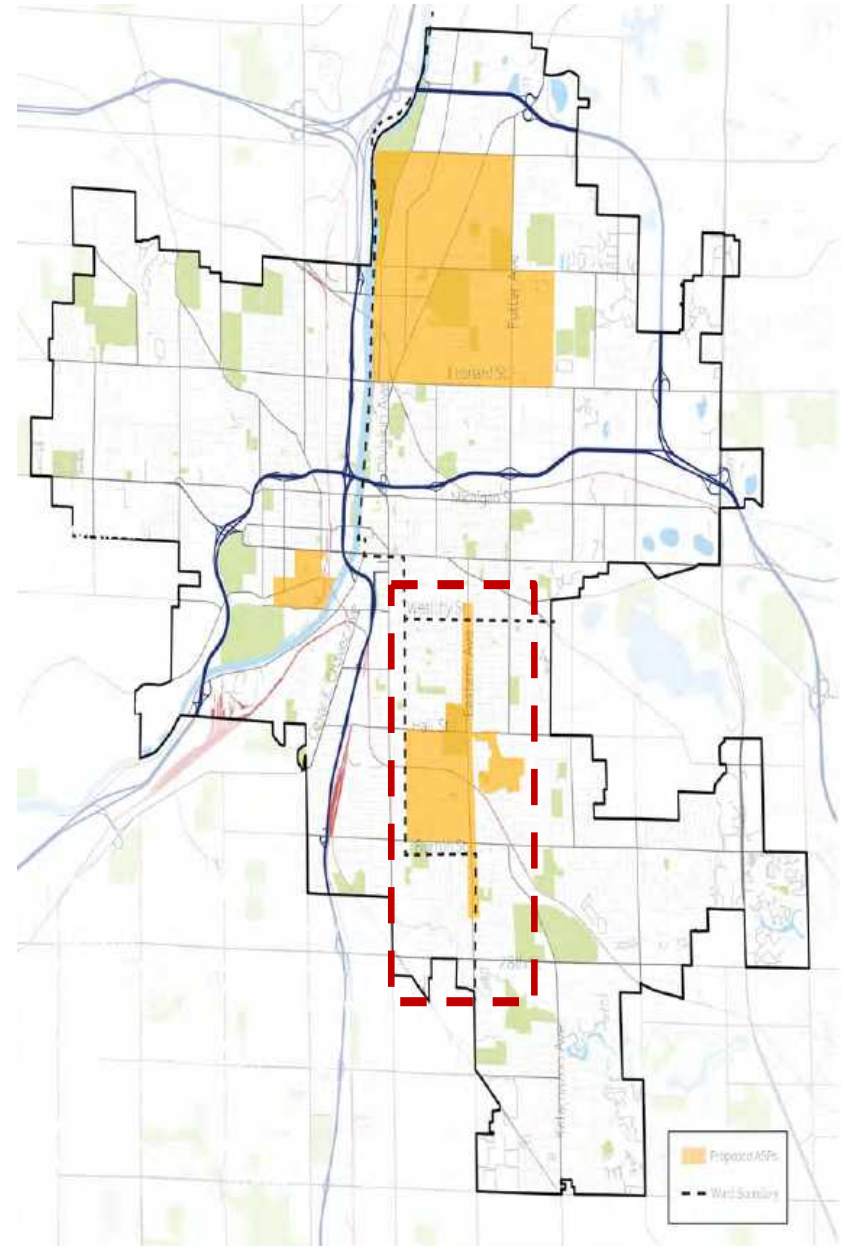
An Area Specific Plan provides a more detailed approach than the CMP to certain areas of the city.



4a. Southtown Neighborhood

Emerging themes:

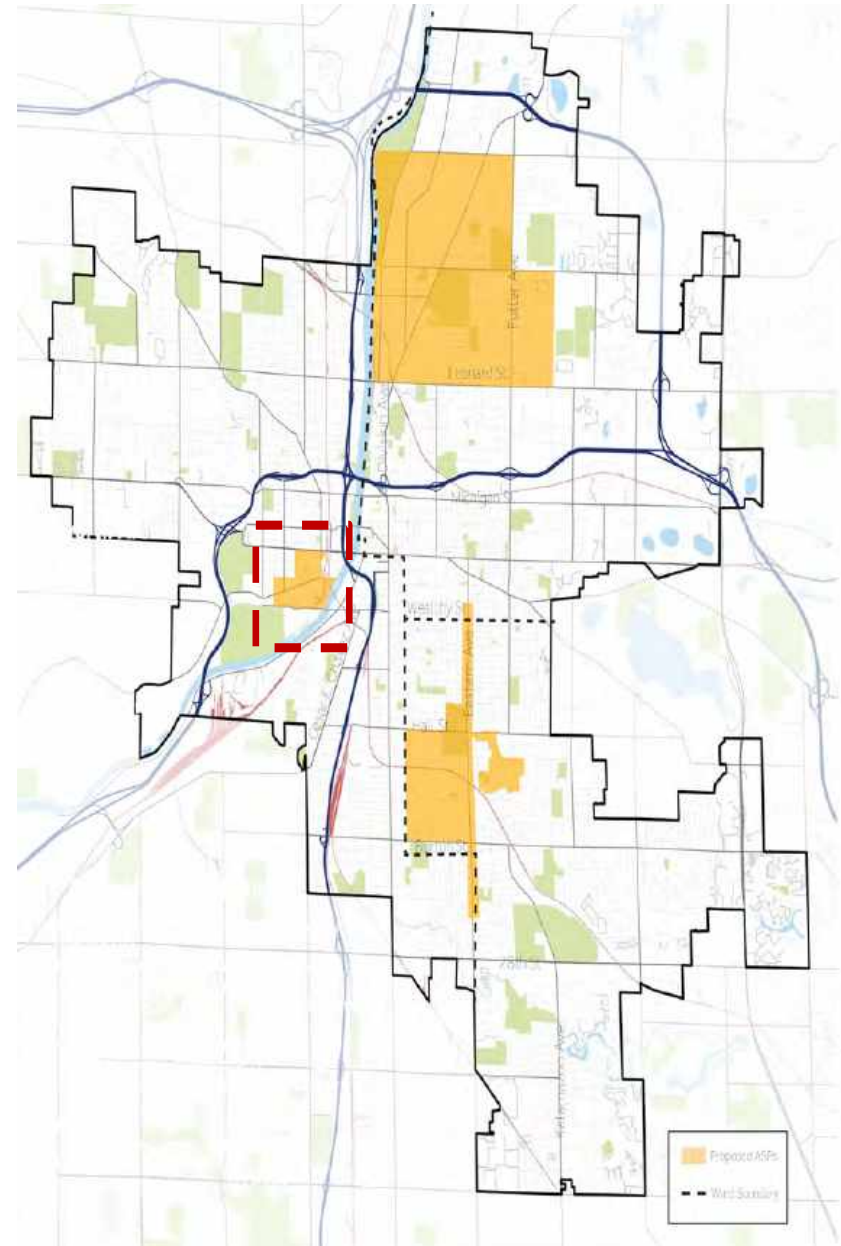
- Improve infrastructure such as roads, bike lanes, crossings, lights, streetscape
- More tree canopy and greenspace, spaces for people to spend time in
- Improve housing stock, strategies to protect current residents
- Encourage diverse businesses and small businesses
- Access to healthy food



4b. Butterworth Area

Emerging themes:

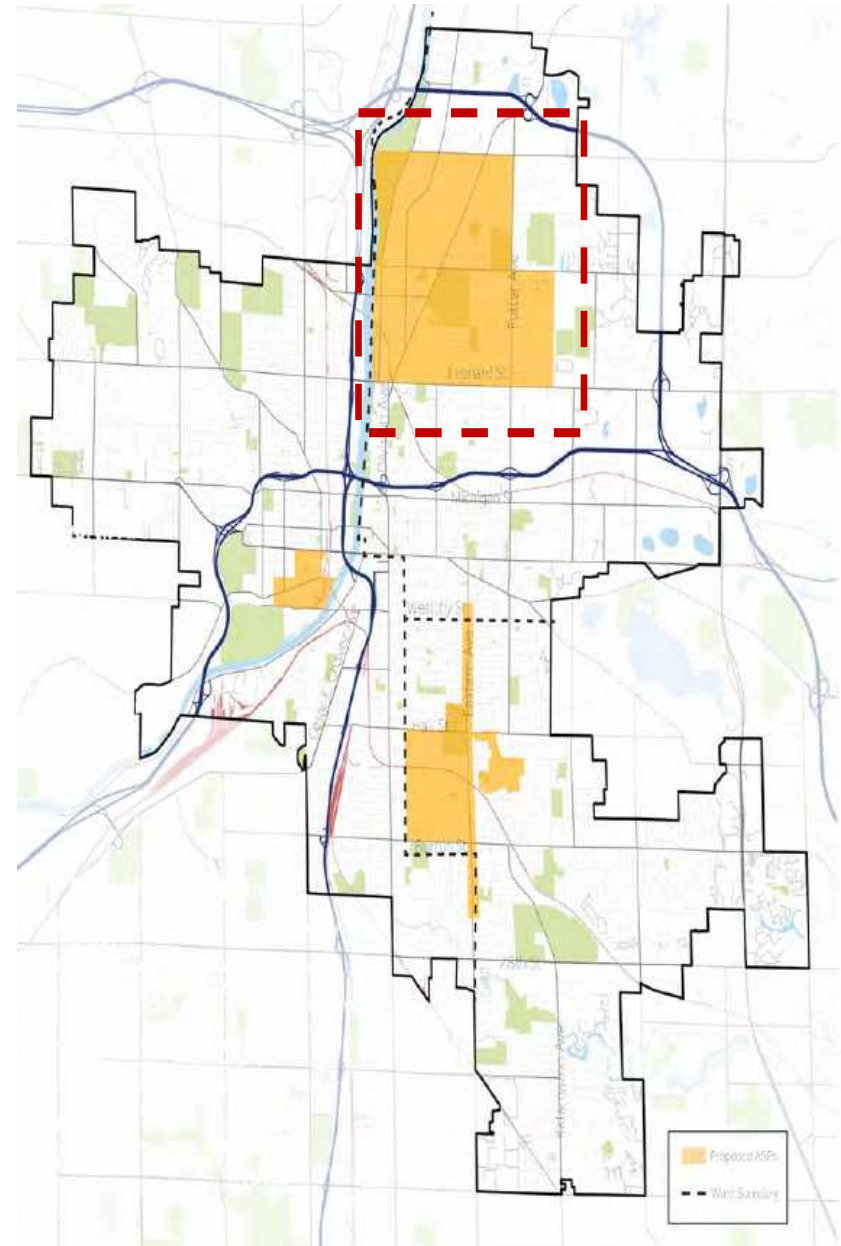
- Opportunity for redevelopment, reinvest in older businesses, improving facades and landscaping
- Retain and create green spaces, spaces where people can gather
- Parking and transportation challenges, improve alternative transportation options
- Need more variety in housing, make it easier to build housing here
- Clean up industrial sites
- Safety, lights
- Walkability



4c. Creston Neighborhood

Emerging themes:

- Area has a lot of potential/opportunity for small business incubation and development
- Need more housing options, housing updates
- Additional active transportation infrastructure like separated bike lanes
- New/redeveloped open space and gathering spaces
- Connectivity to downtown
- Balance between residential and business/mixed use



5. Share your Understanding

Participants were provided with four terms and asked to share their understanding or definitions of the terms as they relate to Grand Rapids.

a) Equity is...

b) Safety is...

c) Culture is...

d) Vibrancy is...

5a. Equity is...

- Removing barriers to success, equal access to opportunity, uplifting minority voices, open communication
- “The ability of the community to support a wide variety of socioeconomic individuals, with different backgrounds, cultures and desires that allows for them to thrive.”
- Affordable and fair housing and healthcare
- Inclusive representation across groups, “for the community by the community”
- “Devoting less public space to private automobiles”, reliable and affordable public transportation
- “The access to tools for success regardless of the ward in which you reside”
- Diversity of housing and lifestyles in each neighborhood
- Transparency

5b. Safety is...

- Feeling protected in the community, protection of all no matter the neighborhood
- Not worrying about the color of your skin
- Neighborhood inclusion and collaboration
- “The feeling and trust that if something ever goes wrong, I can depend on my family, friends, neighbors, and City/State government to support me. Safety is not a heavy reliance on military equipped and trained police force.”
- “Reducing reliance on vehicles which make neighborhoods more empty, dangerous, and add to traffic accidents”, protected bike lanes, kids can safely walk to school
- Safe spaces for youth to enjoy, exciting street life, welcoming outdoor spaces
- Cleanliness
- Slowing down, “walkable life”
- Respect for all

5c. Culture is...

- Celebrating our differences and cultures
- No discrimination, investing in and engaging with people who don't have the same background or culture
- Wonderful arts, food, parks and recreation scenes, advancing the small artist, free expression
- “When people from across the city of different backgrounds can come together and make something that is uniquely Grand Rapids.”
- Sharing our histories
- Access to education and enrichment opportunities
- Placemaking
- Flavor/vibe/unique traits

5d. Vibrancy is...

- Standing out, attractive, lively
- Different summer festivals, local food, green spaces, people being outdoors, variety of activities and opportunities
- “Getting to know your neighbors, building and creating growth within your community helping one another like planting a beautiful garden, engaging and supporting a healthy community so that it thrives”
- Strong walkable communities, pleasant places to spend time in, cleanliness
- “A city that is for people, not cars. Everyone feels safe to walk or bike in a space that is beautiful and inviting”
- Diverse businesses, neighborhoods, and active spaces for all seasons
- Welcoming and thriving

6. Storytelling

Participants were asked to tell a story about their favorite experience in Grand Rapids.

"I live about a mile from downtown and visit all the neighborhoods. My favorite thing about GR is probably when I unexpectedly walk into some event that I had no idea was going on and dive right in. I remember in 2007 or 2008 when I first moved here and walked into Festival of the Arts. It was a treat."

"Me and a few friends went to the antique stores downtown and bought some cool knick knacks. We then walked to the Downtown Market and got some tasty snacks. This is my favorite memory because I got to connect with people I love, eat good food, and go to a unique location/activity."

"My favorite story isn't a one-time occurrence. Every week I love being able to take my bike to the grocery store to buy what I need for the week. Only having to rely on a bike is the coolest. I get to see another layer of my city I wouldn't otherwise."

"Still being best friends with 10+ people I started at Riverside elementary with, then Riverside JHS and all continuing to Creston HS. We all lived within walking distance of each other - went to our parks, pools, etc. that were close to home."

6. Storytelling

“The small places like Blue Bridge or Fish Ladder Park. I just love viewing the sunset or just the whole city. I love the Lookout Park more, its like seeing what's all around you and you don't even know what's still out there. It's just so pretty to take a deep breath and just think.”

“Sitting outside at a restaurant during an art festival. Roads were closed for pedestrian use. People were out in droves. It made me wonder how much more alive the city would feel if we allocated more space to people instead of cars.”

“I've been working for years to help bring a community owned food co-op to central Grand Rapids. Through this work I have gotten to know people from all over the city. I would never have been able to meet them and come to know them if I didn't have this project that has brought us together.”

“At the 2022 Eastown Street Fair, we got to meet so many neighbors and creators. There was even a bagpiper marching through the streets. We ended up sitting at a table with someone who did magic tricks for our kids. It was such a beautiful, fun example of the diversity and life in this place.”

Community Connectors Program

- **17 Community Connectors**
- **13 Neighborhood Organizations**
- **Conducted 27 meeting-in-a-box meetings**
- **Conducted 45 Interviews**

Round 2 Engagement Summary

October 12, 2023

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

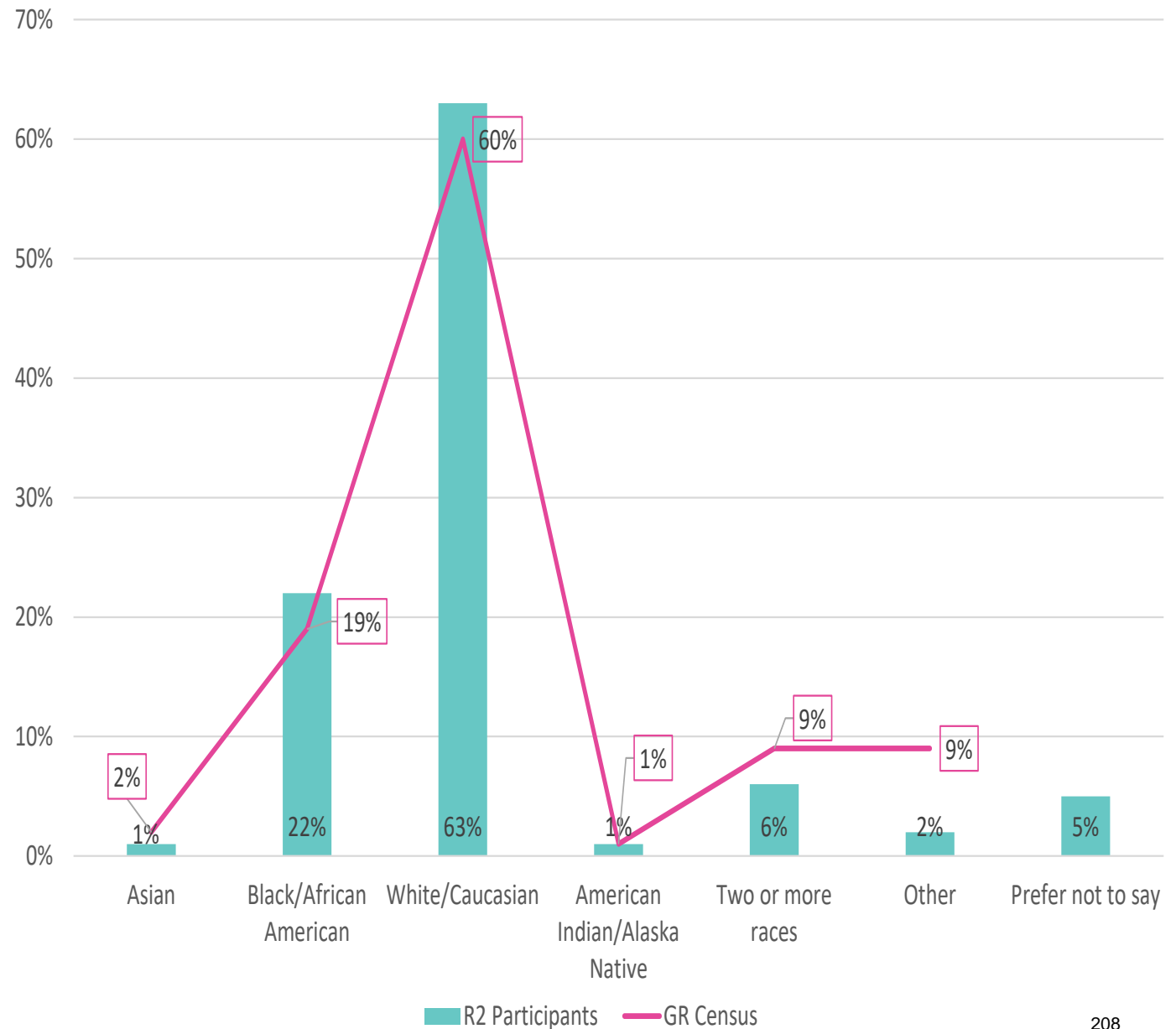
Participation Overview

- **1,834* people participated**
- **2,359 total pieces of input collected**
- **Conducted engagement in a variety of formats**
 - *In person workshop, Neighborhood Summit, Move and Talks, 1:1 interviews, youth camps, online survey, and pop ups*
- **Heard from people living in all three wards and majority of neighborhoods**

**as of 10/2/23*

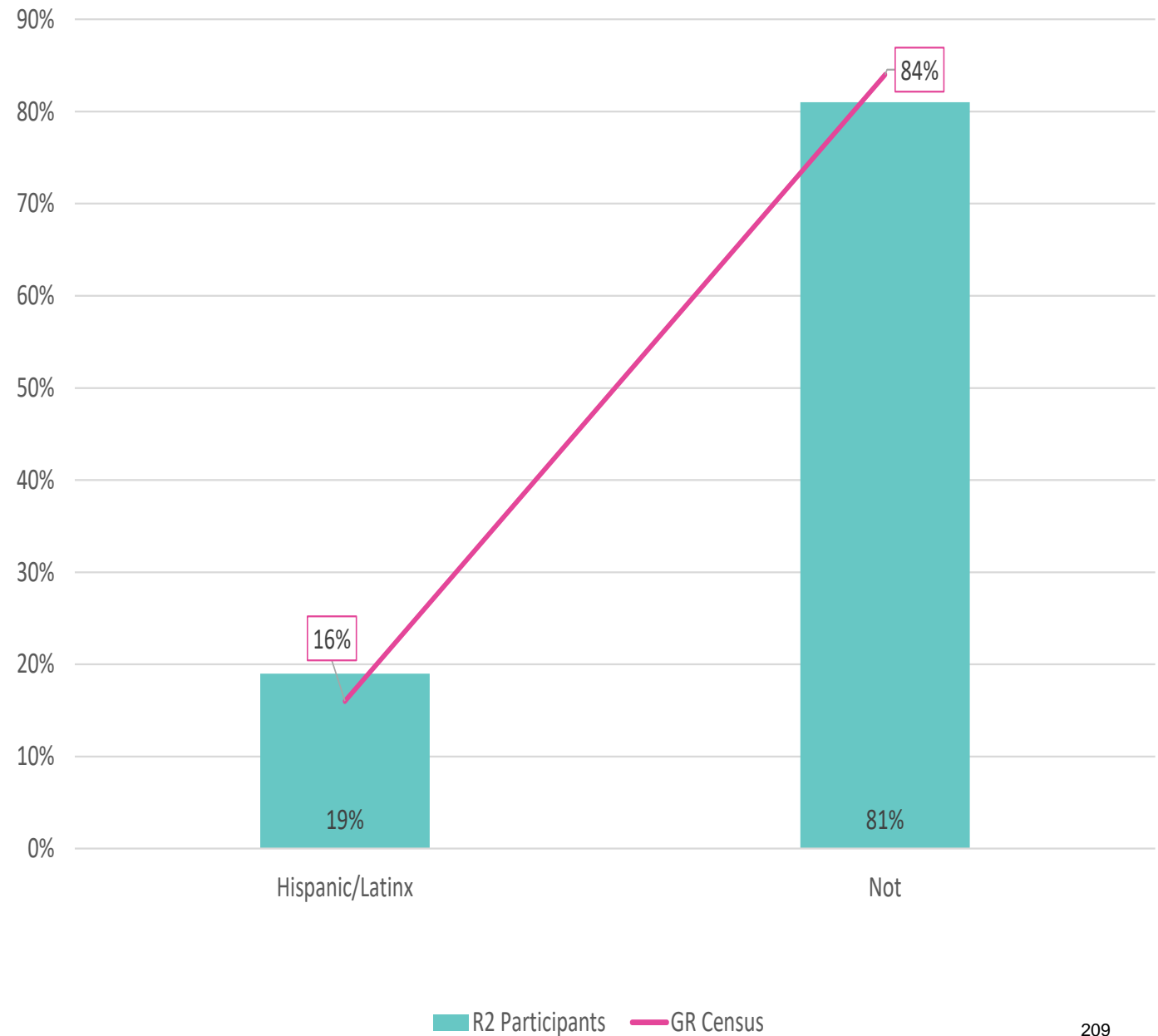
Who did we hear from?

Race



Who did we hear from?

**Hispanic/
Latinx**

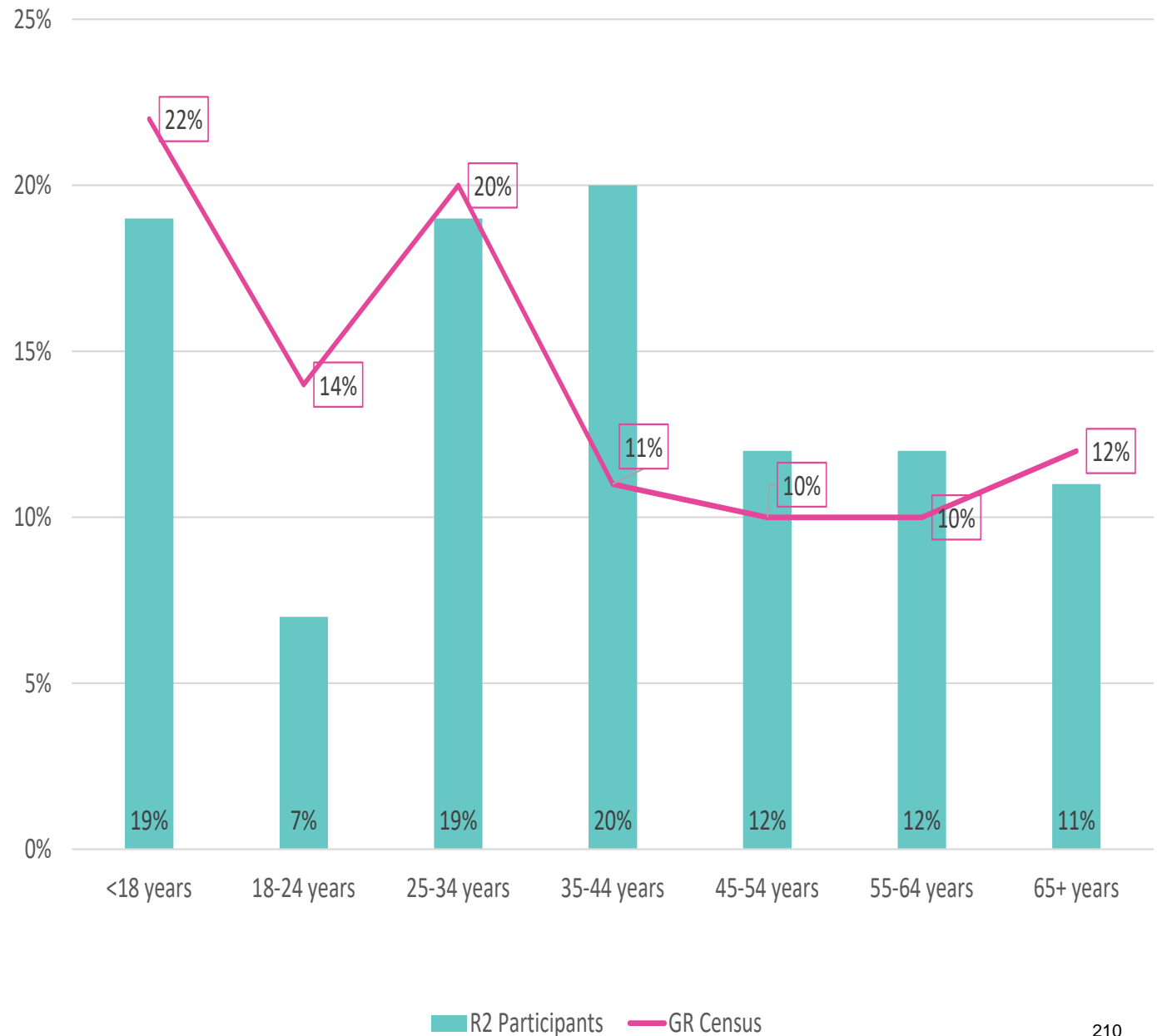


Who did we hear from?

Age

Ages 15-17 make up 3.1% of the population, ages 5-14 make up 10.1%.

Under 18 participation was mainly ages 12-17.



Who did we hear from?

Education



Who did we hear from?

7. Neighborhoods (ranked highest engagement to lowest)

1. Creston	11. Fulton Heights	21. Eastgate	31. Michigan Oaks
2. West Grand	12. Northeast	22. Shawmut Hills	32. Shangri La
3. John Ball Park	13. Downtown	23. Highland Park	33. Leffingwell-Twin Lakes
4. Garfield Park	14. Midtown	24. North Park	34. Black Hills
5. Eastown	15. Ottawa Hills	25. Grandville	35. Eastern-Burton
6. Heritage Hill	16. Ridgemoor Park	26. North End	36. Shawnee Park
7. Alger Heights	17. Southwest	27. Oldtown-Heartside	37. Ken-O-Sha Park
8. East Hills	18. Baxter	28. Lake Eastbrook	
9. Belknap Lookout	19. Southeast End	29. Millbank	
10. Roosevelt Park	20. Southeast Community	30. Richmond-Oakleigh	

What we heard...

Vision, Values, & Goals (438 responses)

Vision – In the next 20 years, Grand Rapids aspires to build a city of inclusion, where people in all neighborhoods have the opportunity to live in safe and affordable housing, to move throughout the city in a variety of ways, to earn a living wage through meaningful job choices, and to gather together in vibrant spaces that celebrate our unique cultures and histories. (Rating: **4.29/5**)

Values – Equity, Safety, Vibrancy, Culture, & Climate Justice (Average Rating: **4.29/5**)

Goals – Great Neighborhoods, Vital Business Districts, A Strong Economy, Balanced Mobility, & Development Character (Average Rating: **4.35/5**)

What we heard...

15 Minute Community: Land Use, Housing, & Transportation

- More public amenities: pools, ball courts, playgrounds, community gardens
- Micro-mobility hubs
- Tiny home community, Incentives for ADUs, Senior living, live-Work spaces
- Cultural amenities like an amphitheater
- Variety of green space types along Grand River, public access and community services on Riverfront
- Community solar
- Pedestrian bridge over Grand River, Pedestrian-only streets
- Community-owned or local grocery store
- Mixed use along major corridors, increased density around major corridors and near parks
- Greenways and bike infrastructure along Plaster Creek
- Sidewalks everywhere

What we heard...

Land Use Planning for Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation

- **Energy**

- Community solar projects
- Incentives and education for solar in residential
- Solar should not be compromised for the sake of aesthetics

- **Transportation**

- De-center private vehicle use, make the city “car optional”
- Improved bike infrastructure, more “complete” network of paths and trails
- More pedestrian-only streets and spaces

- **Green Space**

- More amenities/facilities for adults in parks
- Green infrastructure
- Parks are unevenly developed

- **Budget**

- Allocate more funding to the Office of Sustainability

- **Land Use**

- Increased density
- Eliminate parking minimums

What we heard...

Land Use Planning for Environmental Justice, Health, and Equity

- **Environmental Justice**

- More resources in underserved areas
- Address air pollution from highways
- Improve tree canopy
- Funding for brownfield remediation

- **Inclusion & Representation**

- Focus on disinvested communities
- Engage young people
- Land acknowledgement in CMP
- Stronger indigenous representation

- **Transportation**

- Many places not currently accessible by bus
- Protected bike lanes
- Sidewalk maintenance for accessibility

- **Accessibility**

- Parks are not accessible for those with disabilities or limited mobility

What we heard...

Magic Wand (1,107 responses)

Affordable Housing

- Affordable housing options like ADUs and modular housing
- Resources to help first time buyers, single parents, and seniors afford housing

Public Transportation

- Improve and expand public transit
 - More bus routes, longer hours, reduced fares
 - Rail options and increasing connectivity to other major metro areas

Homelessness

- Resources and programs to support unhoused individuals
 - Rehabilitation services, work programs, improved shelters and affordable housing

Infrastructure

- Improve transportation infrastructure
 - Traffic congestion, parking availability, bike lanes and crosswalk safety, road maintenance, and US 131

Civic Engagement & Unity

- Greater engagement with city officials and more transparency in the decision-making process
- Greater unity and inclusivity among diverse communities

Education & Youth Programming

- Concerns about the quality of education, especially in public schools
- Programs and activities for young people, including after-school programs and mentorship opportunities

What we heard...

Neighborhood Walk Audit (20 Move & Talk Groups)

- **Housing**
 - Scarcity and affordability concerns
 - Large disparities in housing quality, maintenance
- **Food Access**
 - Most neighborhoods have food access, but people want more local produce/farmer's markets
- **Environment/Green Space**
 - Solid quantity of trees, but maintenance/quality could be improved
 - Disparities in park access
- **Parks & Rec**
 - Recreation opportunities largely centered on parks
 - Need expanded walking and biking trails, public basketball courts
- **Mobility**
 - Sidewalks and stairs need maintenance – snow clearing, repairing curbs
 - Difficult to navigate without a car
- **Accessibility**
 - Sidewalk maintenance
 - Language barrier in signage, 311 operators

What we heard...

Envision the Future (20 Move & Talk Groups)

Affordable Housing & Housing

Types:

- Promote single-family home ownership
- Encourage mixed-use development with housing and amenities
- Encourage diverse and affordable housing options including apartments, townhomes, and ADUs
- Allow higher density on certain corridors
- Require mandatory landlord education and regulation
- Respond to homelessness with compassion
- Preserve historic buildings

Environmental Justice & Health:

- Enhance recreational opportunities at parks in all neighborhoods
- Focus on climate change, especially regarding clean water and air access
- Improve and expand green space and parks
- Improve environmental education
- Implement stricter regulations on trucking

Health Equity:

- Improve access to preventative and general well-being care
- Expand healthy recreation opportunities (i.e. yoga classes and improved bike trails)
- Expand access to healthy food options
- Increase availability of mental health and family planning services

What we heard...

Storytelling (20 Move & Talk Groups)

- **379 minutes (6.31 hours) of audio collected so far**
- **Summary of Key Points**
 - Grand Rapid's history, including redlining and the impact of the streetcar, were identified as key events that shaped the current physical and political forms of the city.
 - Many residents feel that pedestrian and bicyclist safety should be a priority along major roadways.
 - Rising rent prices, affordability, and housing diversity were frequent concerns that residents shared.

Round 3 Engagement Summary



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

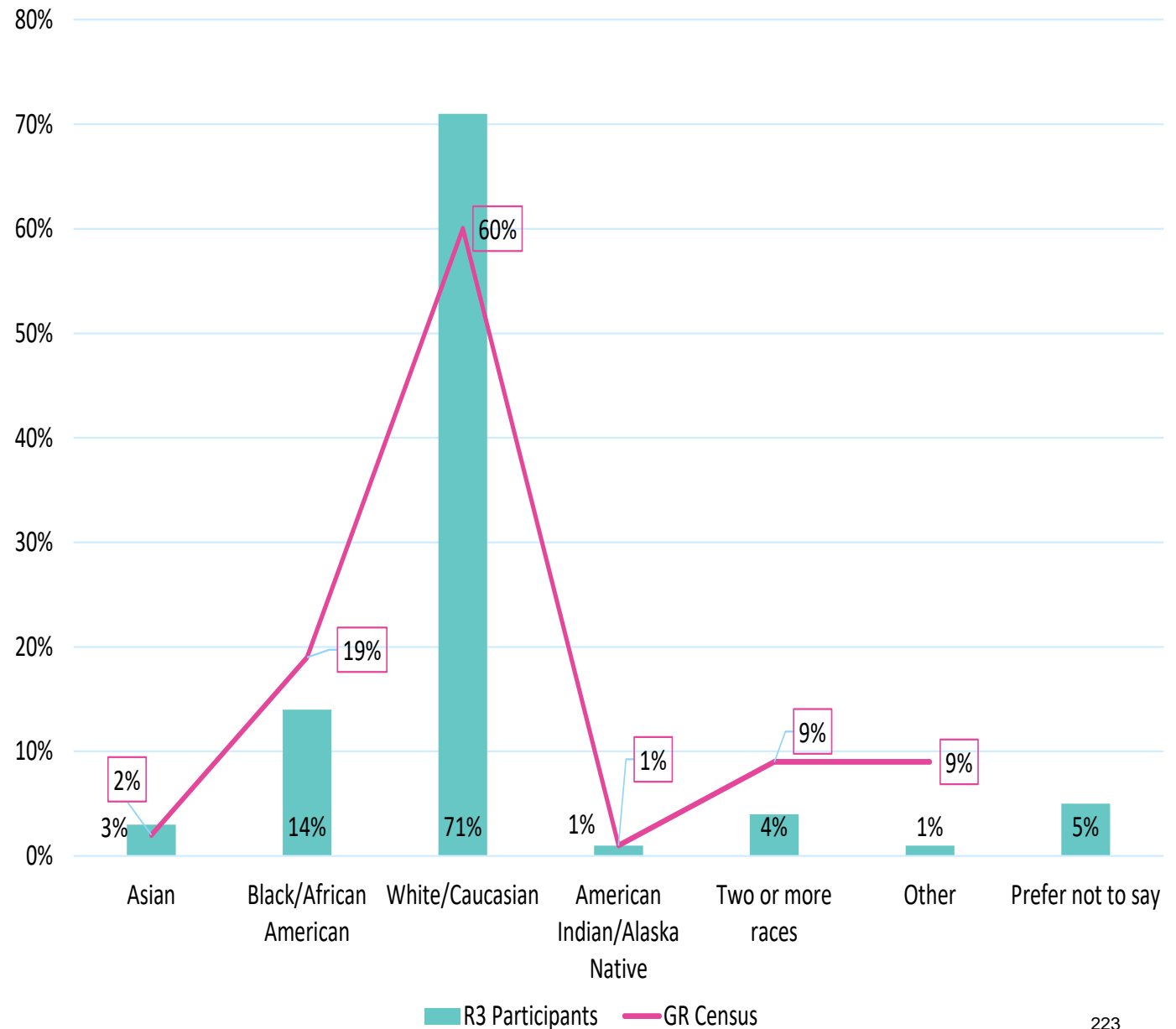
Participation Overview

- 1,105 submitted exit questionnaire
- Conducted engagement in a variety of formats
 - 3 *in-person workshops, Community Conversations, and online survey*
- Heard from people living in all three wards and majority of neighborhoods
- Engagement ran November 2023 – February 2024



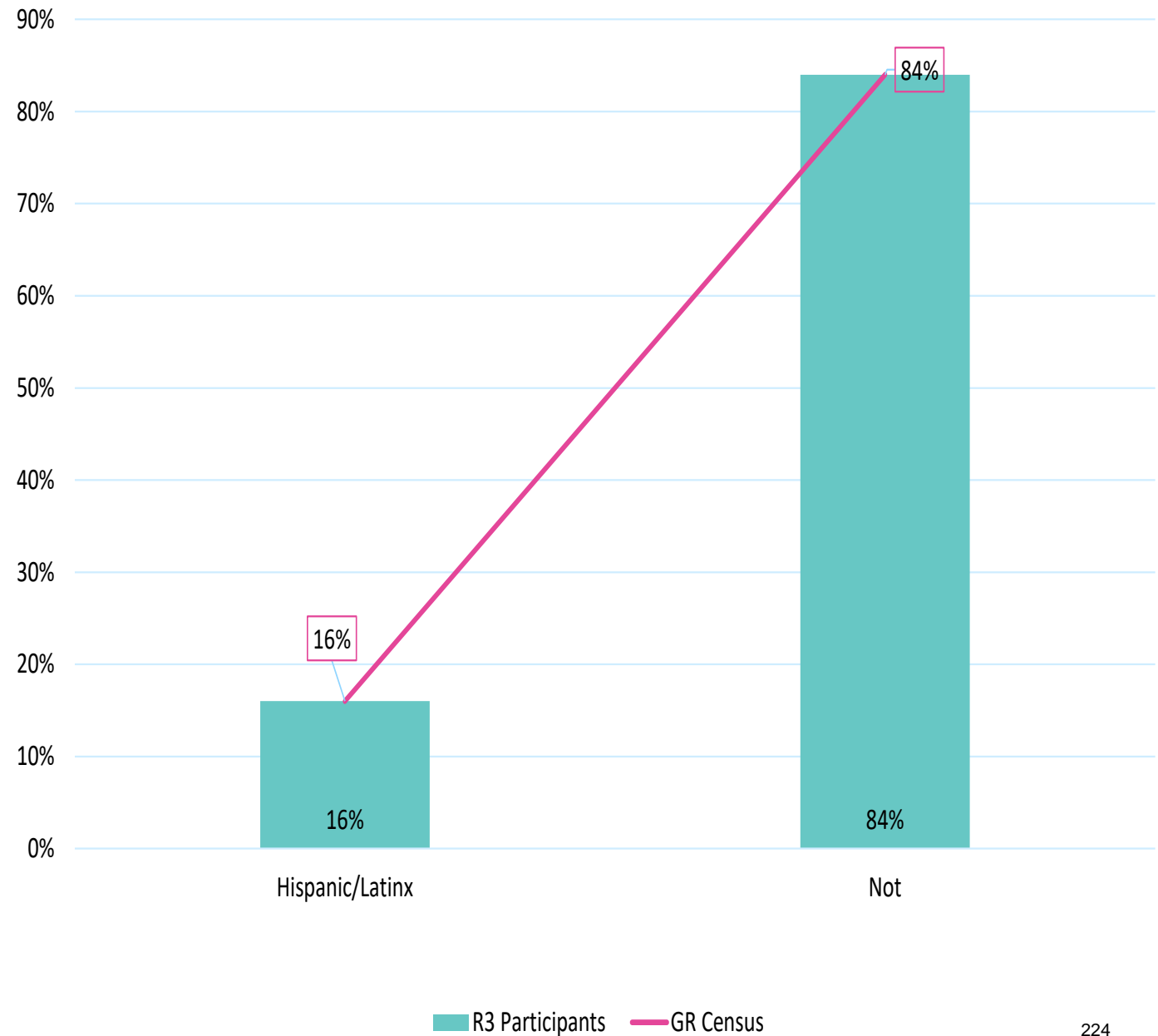
Who did we hear from?

1. Race



Who did we hear from?

2. Hispanic/Latinx

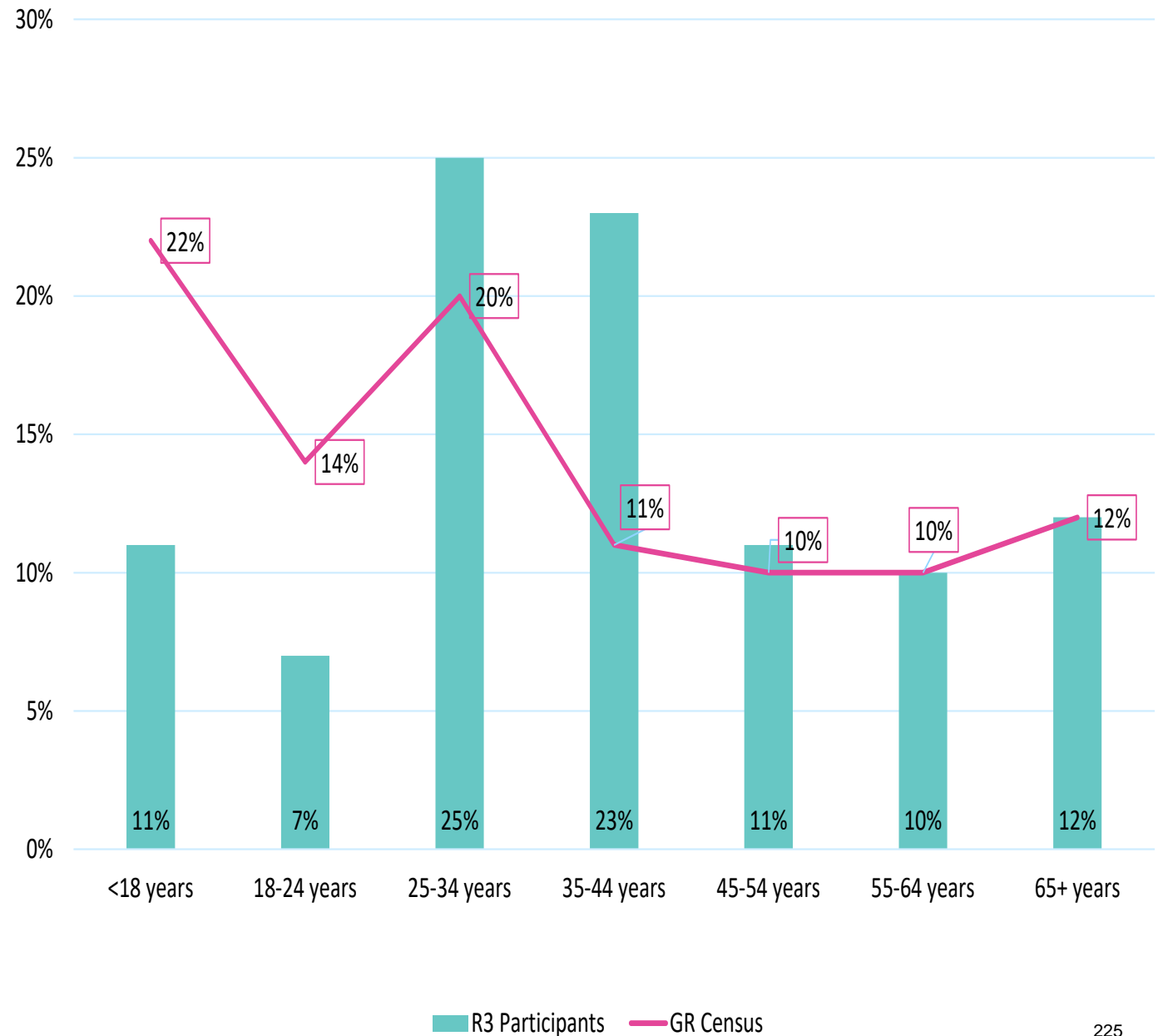


Who did we hear from?

3. Age

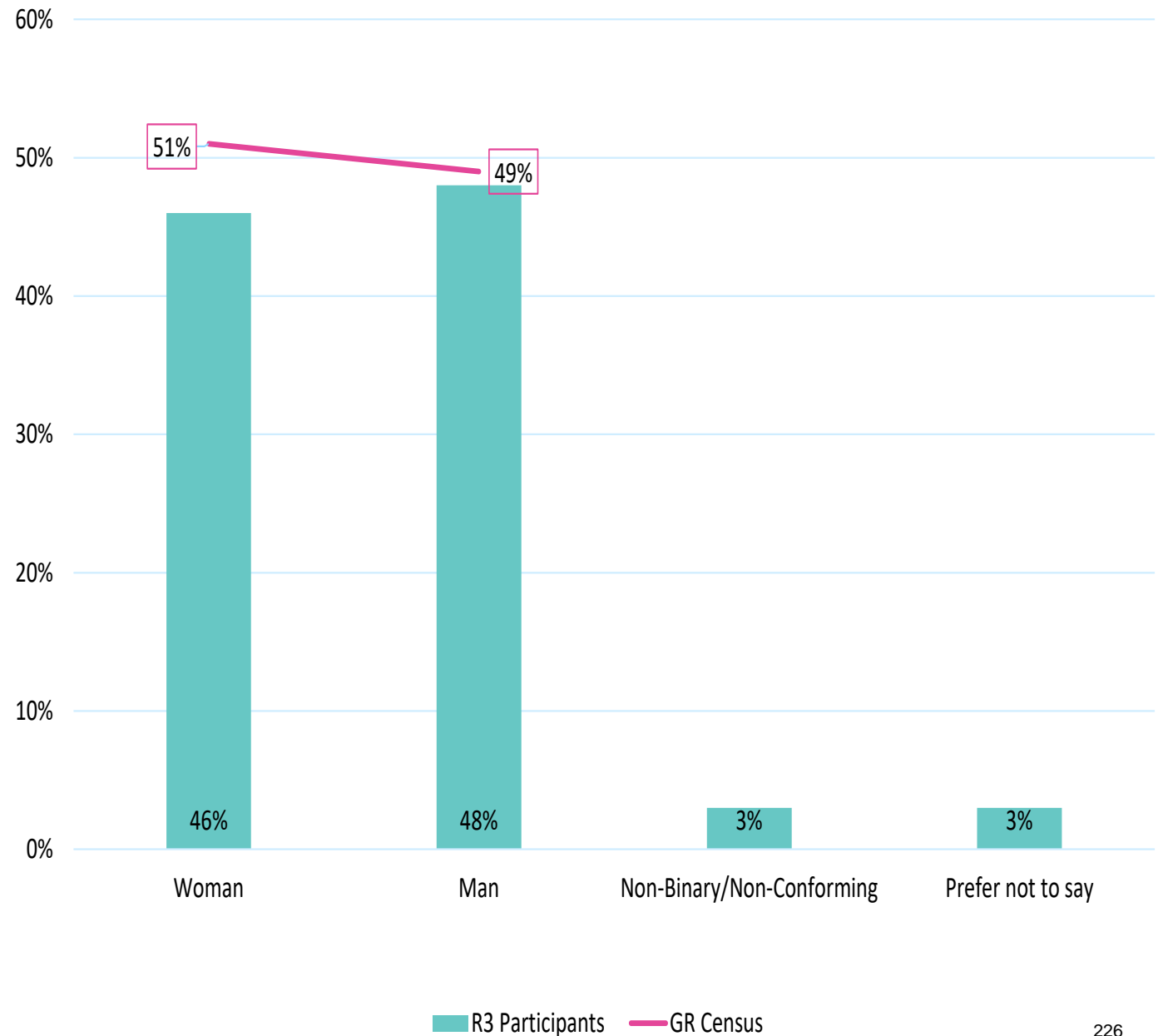
Ages 15-17 make up 3.1% of the population, ages 5-14 make up 10.1%.

Under 18 participation was mainly ages 12-17.



Who did we hear from?

4. Gender



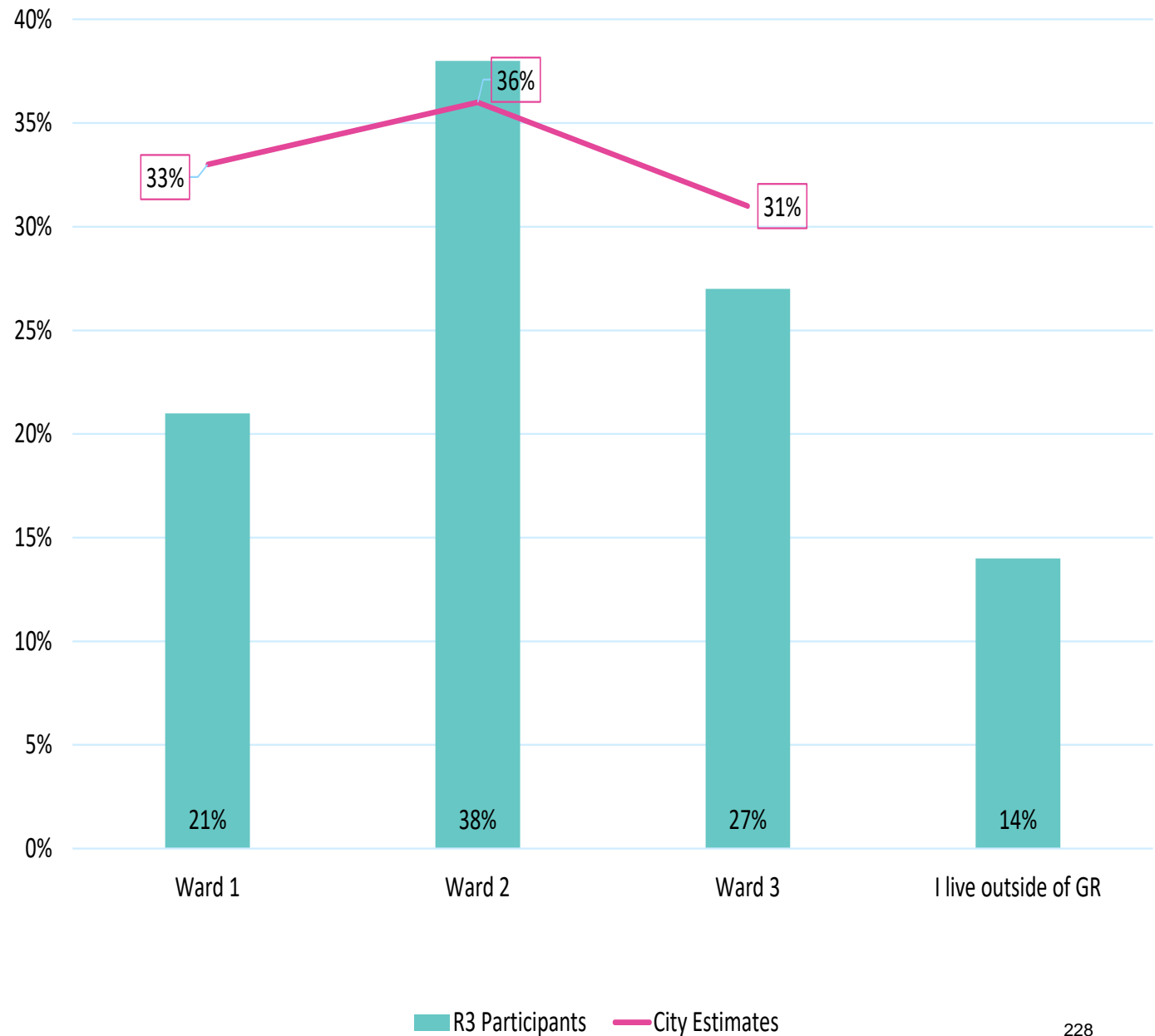
Who did we hear from?

5. Education



Who did we hear from?

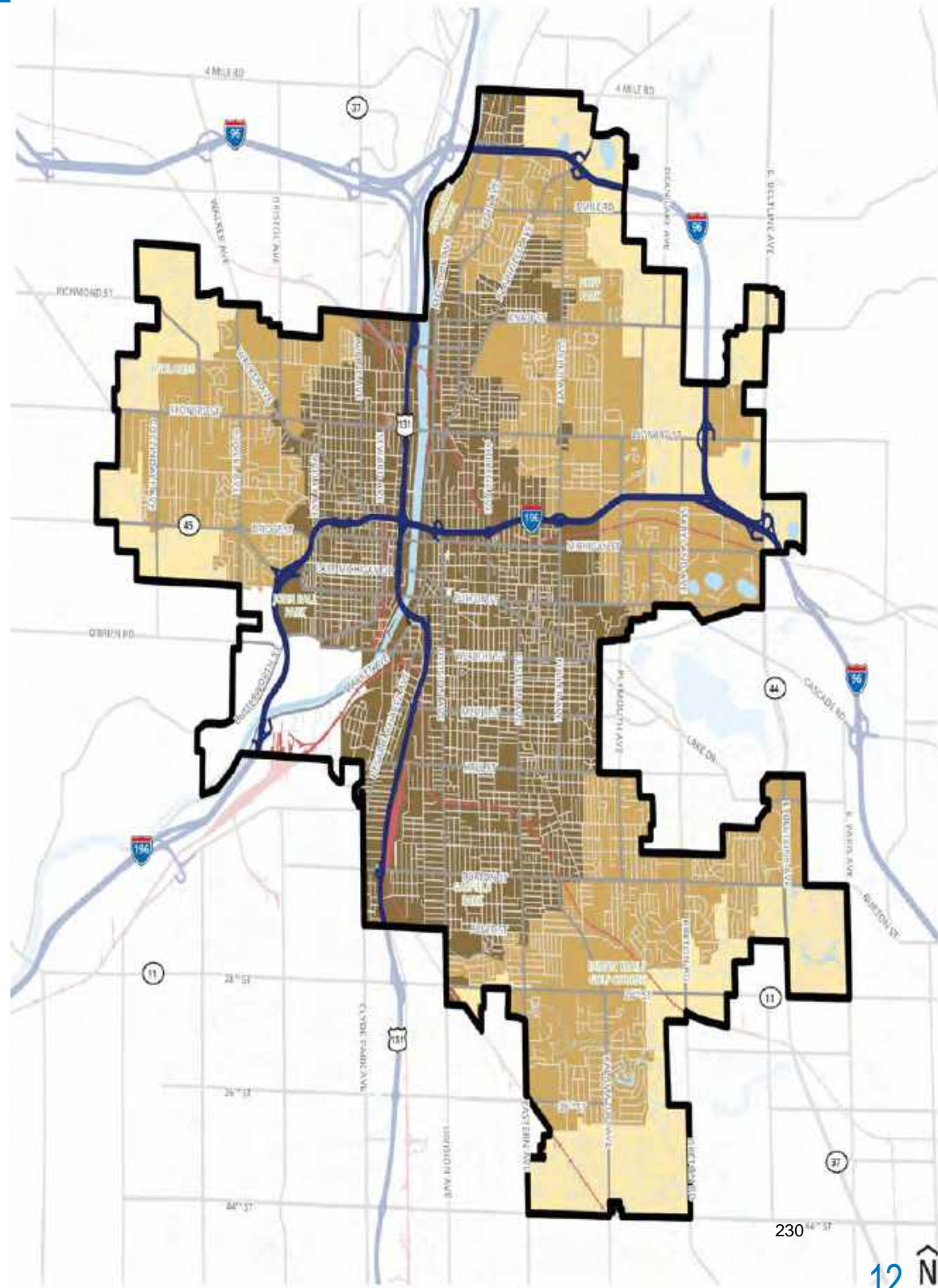
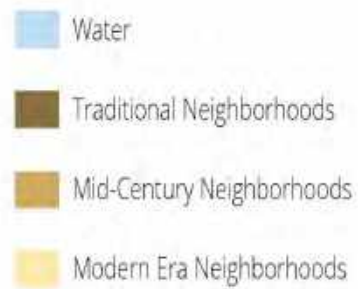
6. Ward



Engagement Activities

1. **Display boards and recording sheets** collected input on big ideas from each of the five plan chapters:
 - *Great Neighborhoods*
 - *Vital Business Districts*
 - *A Strong Economy*
 - *Balance Mobility*
 - *Development Character*
 - *Area Specific Plans*
2. Community Connectors hosted **Community Conversations**.
3. Steering Committee members used a **Quick Engage Survey** around the community.
4. An **Online Survey** collected responses through February.

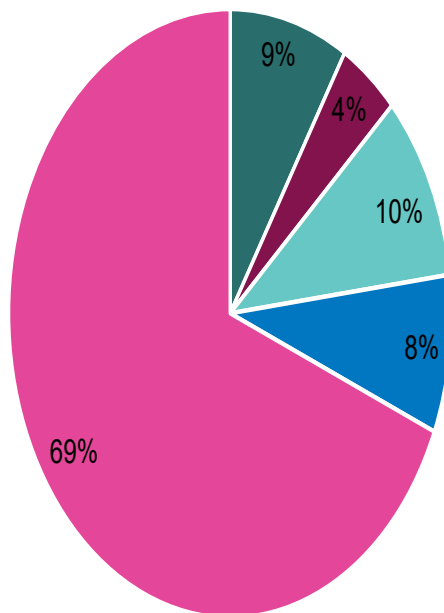
Neighborhood Types



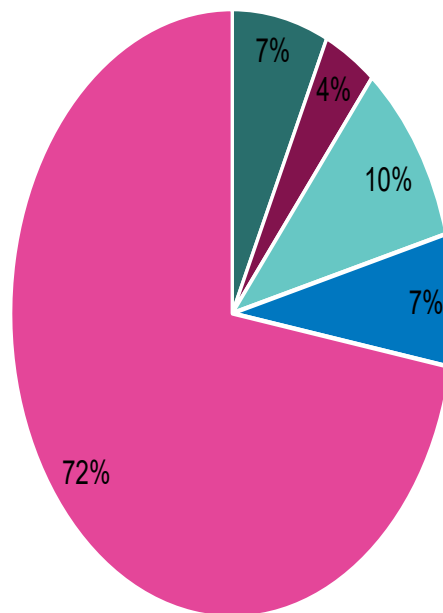
Great Neighborhoods- Accessory Dwelling Unit

Most people think accessory dwelling units should be allowed everywhere in all neighborhoods.

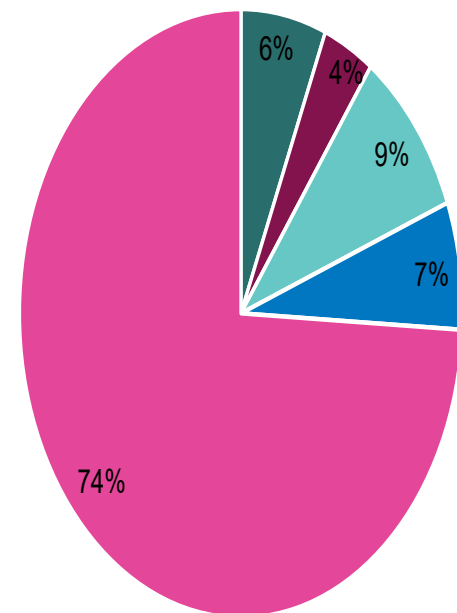
Traditional Neighborhoods



Mid-Century Neighborhoods



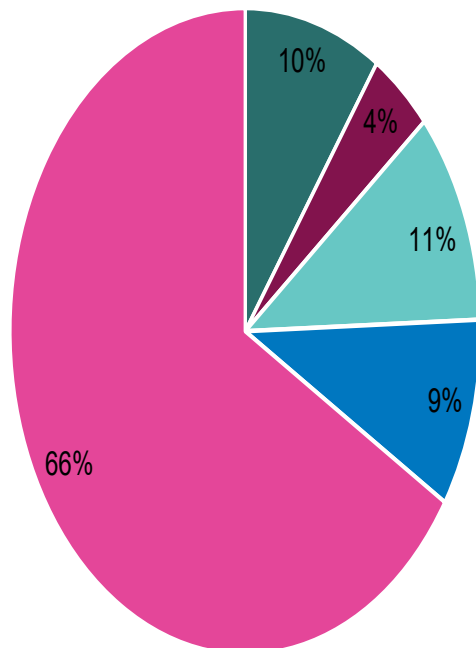
Modern Era Neighborhood



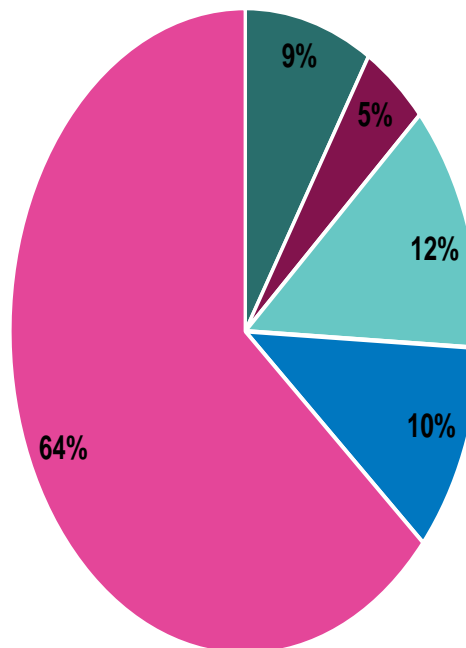
Great Neighborhoods- Duplex

Most people think duplexes should be allowed everywhere in all neighborhoods.

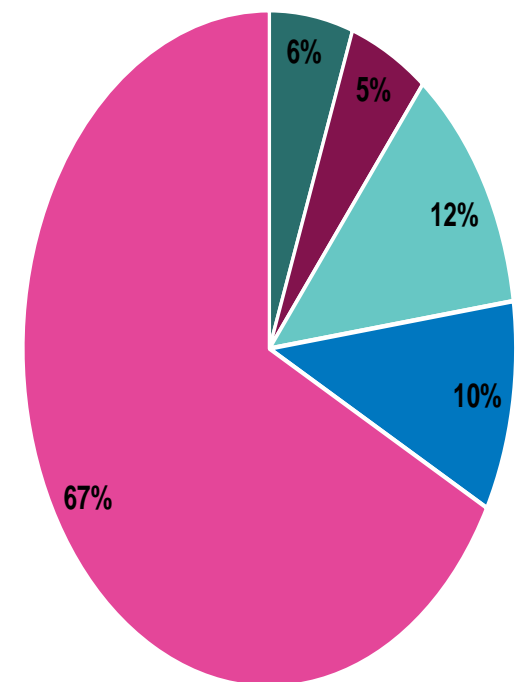
Traditional Neighborhoods



Mid-Century Neighborhoods

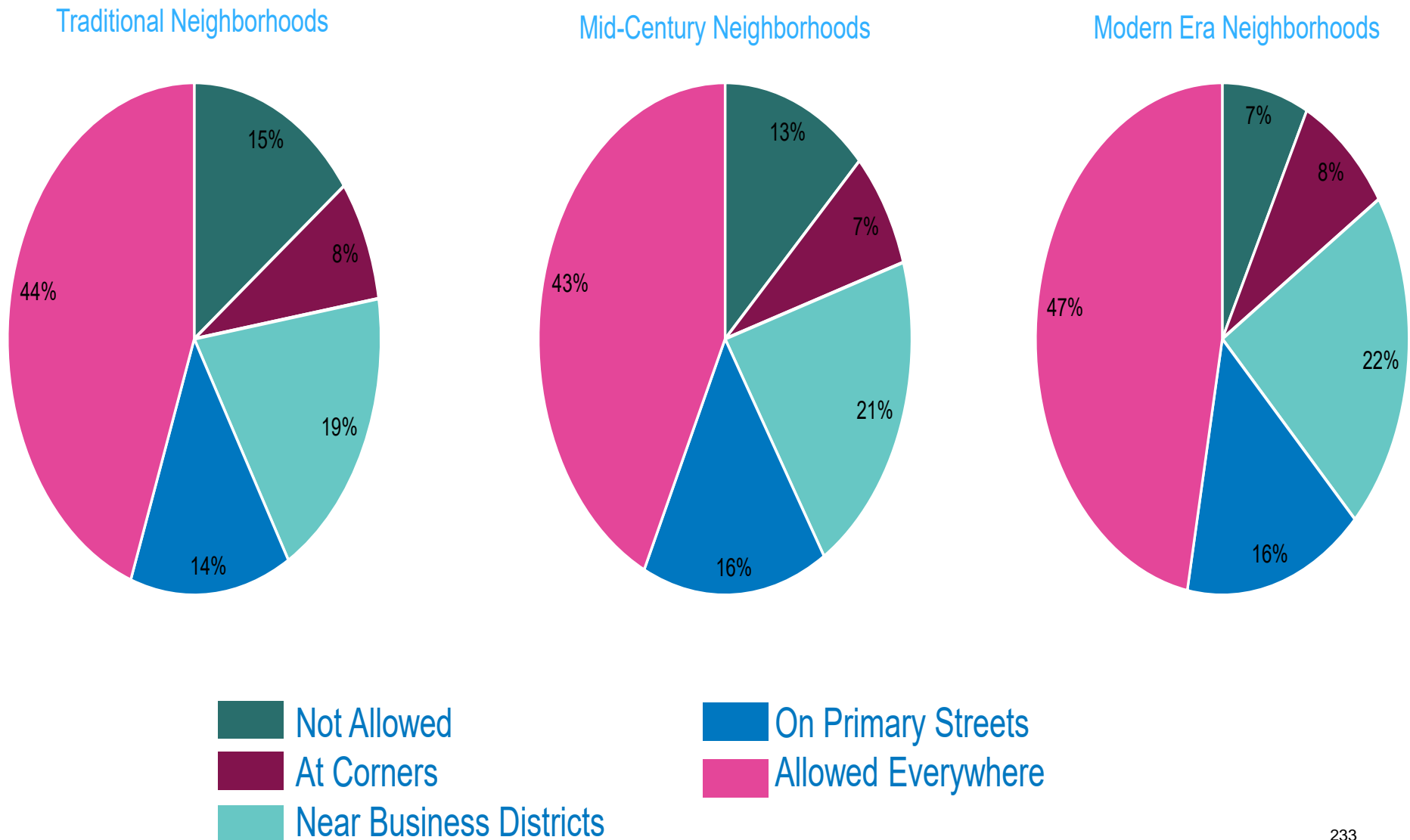


Modern Era Neighborhood



Great Neighborhoods- Triplex or Quadplex

Most people think triplexes or quadplexes should be allowed everywhere in all neighborhoods.



Vital Business Districts

Question “Should business districts prioritize space for people over space for cars by removing parking minimums?”

Ranking: **3.92 out of 5**

Summary of comments of support:

- There is a lot of pre-existing parking
- Prioritize space for people, not cars
- Reducing parking will increase neighborhood activity and vibrancy
- Increased foot traffic will benefit businesses

Summary of comments of concern:

- Businesses should have a say and choice in how parking is provided
- Grand Rapids is very car dependent
- Need to have more multimodal transportation options
- Concern that it will negatively impact businesses.
- Not all neighborhoods are prepared to reduce parking

A Strong Economy

Question “How important is it to preserve areas for manufacturing?”

Ranking: **3.32 out of 5**

Summary of comments:

- Preservation of manufacturing benefits the economy
- Important to maintain a balance between manufacturing and other uses
- Need to increase mobility options to get to jobs
- Need to ensure the type of manufacturing would not negatively impact the environment
- Need a larger variety of jobs

Balanced Mobility- Summary Comments

Curb Bulb-outs:

Most Impact

- Opportunity to slow traffic and increase pedestrian visibility, preventing accidents
- Prioritize pedestrians by creating a safer and more walkable environment

Least Impact

- Can be confusing for bike traffic, forces bikers further into driving lanes
- Question of benefit or impact on safety



Balanced Mobility- Summary Comments

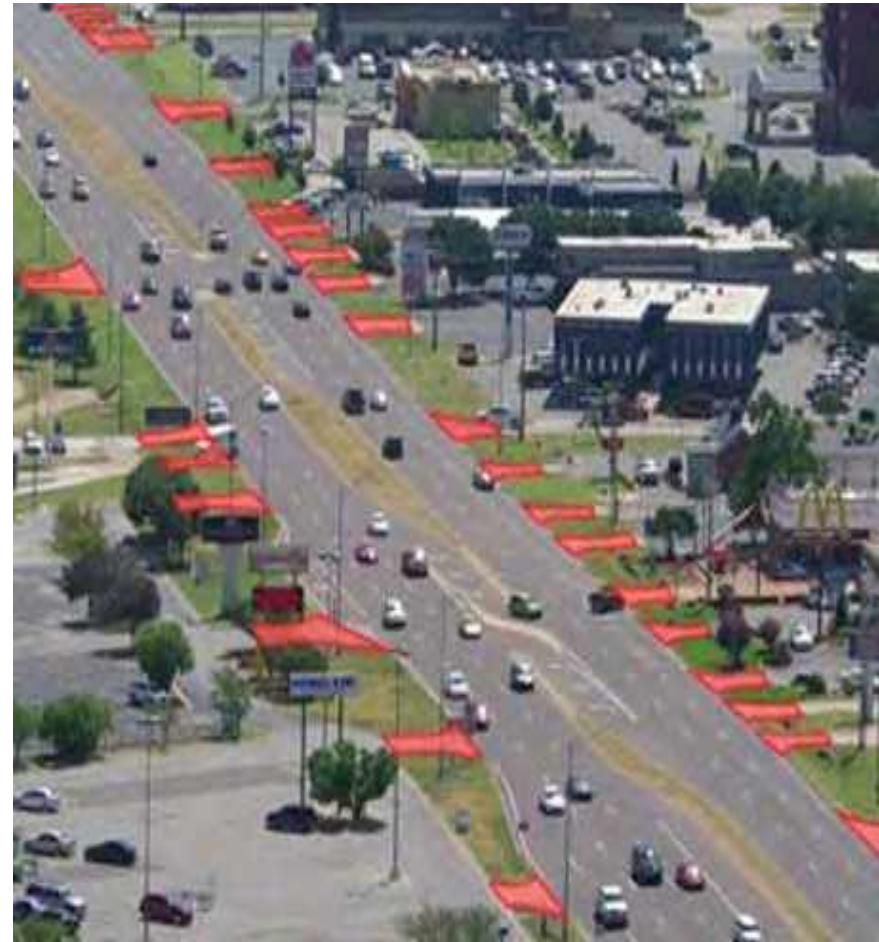
Access Management:

Most impact

- Critical on main streets and in busy areas
- Increase pedestrian and cyclist safety and reduce conflict points
- Anything to increase the walkability of communities and safety of pedestrians

Least impact

- Significant confusion on this tactic
- Concerns that this will congest the roads
- Concerns that it will not work and/or will be hard to implement



Balanced Mobility- Summary Comments

Protected Bike Lanes:

Most impact

- Critical to protect people's lives but need to be a physical barrier
- Encourages biking and walking instead of driving (if you build it, they will come)
- Lack of lanes creates more car congestion

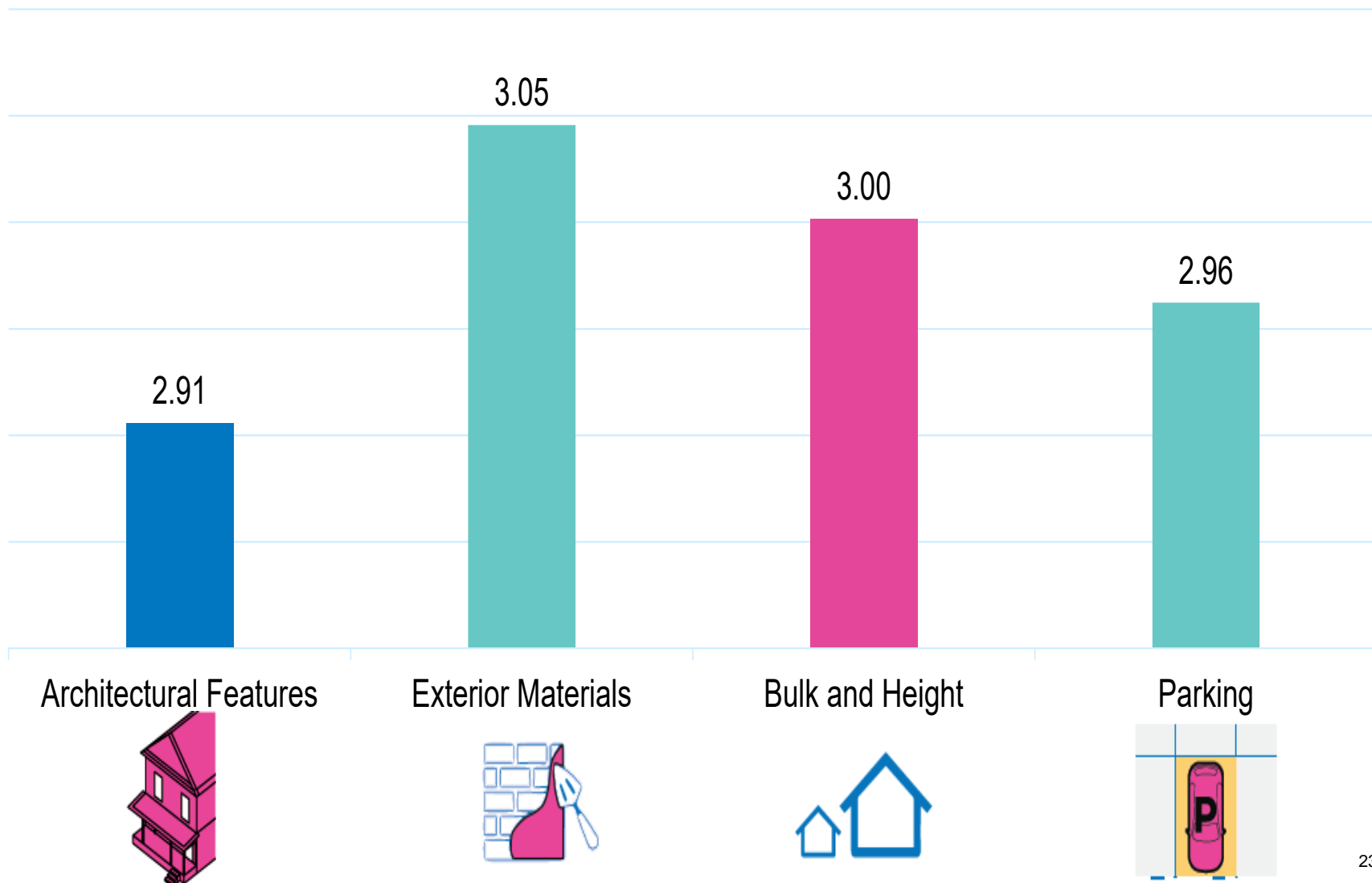
Least impact

- Many think not worth investment for something only used for a portion of the year (warmer weather months)
- Concerns it will increase congestion



Development Character

How Important are the Following Design Elements to the Development Character in your Neighborhood?

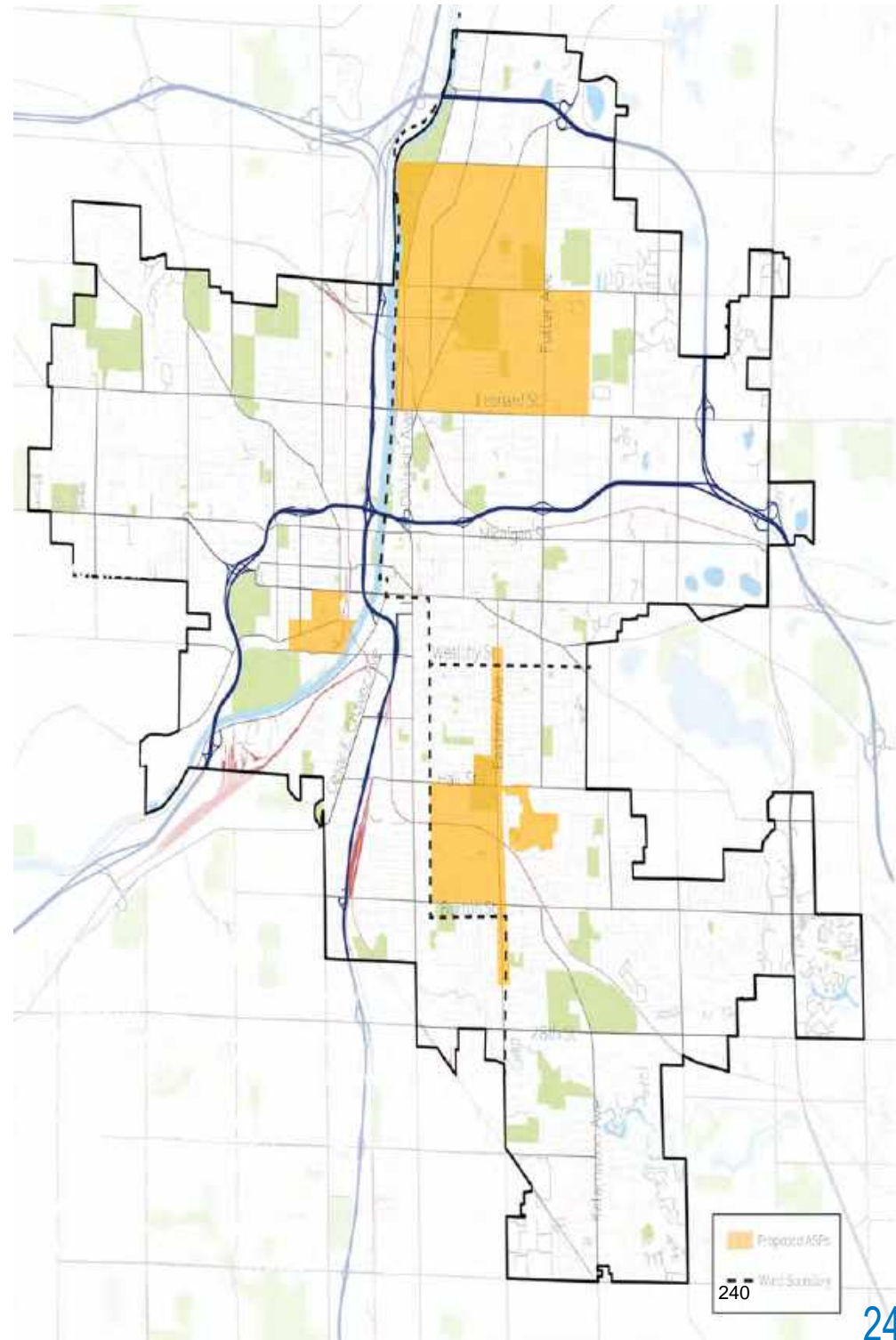


Area Specific Plans

Three areas were identified for area specific plans. The areas are:

- a) Southtown Neighborhoods
- b) Butterworth Area
- c) Creston Neighborhood

An Area Specific Plan provides a more detailed approach than the CMP to certain areas of the city.



Area Specific Plans - Creston

- **Different opinions on increasing density in neighborhoods.** Denser housing (triplexes and larger) should be at riverfront and Plainfield.
- **Support for ADUs**, desire for “less red tape” and in more locations than just alleys.
- Strong support for design guidelines to **complement existing character.**
- Strong support for **better bike infrastructure.**
- Support for **more housing options, affordable and “missing middle”.**
- Broad support for infrastructure improvements (including plaza) related to **connectivity on Plainfield, to riverfront, and citywide.**
- Desire for **improved public transit connections** - expand DASH farther into Creston.

Area Specific Plans - Butterworth

- **Streamline regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** to increase housing options and affordability.
- **Safer, family-friendly bike lanes** a big priority. Agreed with rerouting semi-truck traffic to increase bike safety, and redesign of Wealthy Street.
- Provide **public access to riverfront**, safe pathways to get there, improved maintenance and quality of green spaces, and public bathrooms.
- Like the idea of **protecting neighborhood character** - “simple, understated” and “coziness and charm”.
- **Some pushback on multi-family buildings in single-family neighborhoods**, likely tied to homes rented to students in the area, others were more supportive.
- Some support of **adaptive reuse of industrial buildings** for art/maker focus.
- Support for **increased density along key corridors**.

Area Specific Plans – Southtown Neighborhoods

- Open to **infill development** that's denser than single-family housing.
- **Very supportive of adding ADUs** within existing alley network, though there are concerns that alleys may need to be improved to support this.
- Unique architectural designs are fine, **quality is the most important thing** to emphasize in design guidelines over matching existing character - allow for creativity and innovation.
- Shift focus to **transit-oriented development and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure**, prioritizing investment in public transit, biking, and pedestrian pathways over parking.
- Integrate amenities such as **bus shelters, benches, and green spaces** into multi-family developments to enhance community interaction and livability.
- Explore options for **energy efficiency upgrades** in existing housing stock.

Key Takeaways

- People are supportive of the overall big ideas tested, but have an interest in how the ideas are executed.
- People are generally supportive of the plan's direction on housing.
- Developing recommendations...

Round 4 Engagement Summary

July 16, 2024



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS

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GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

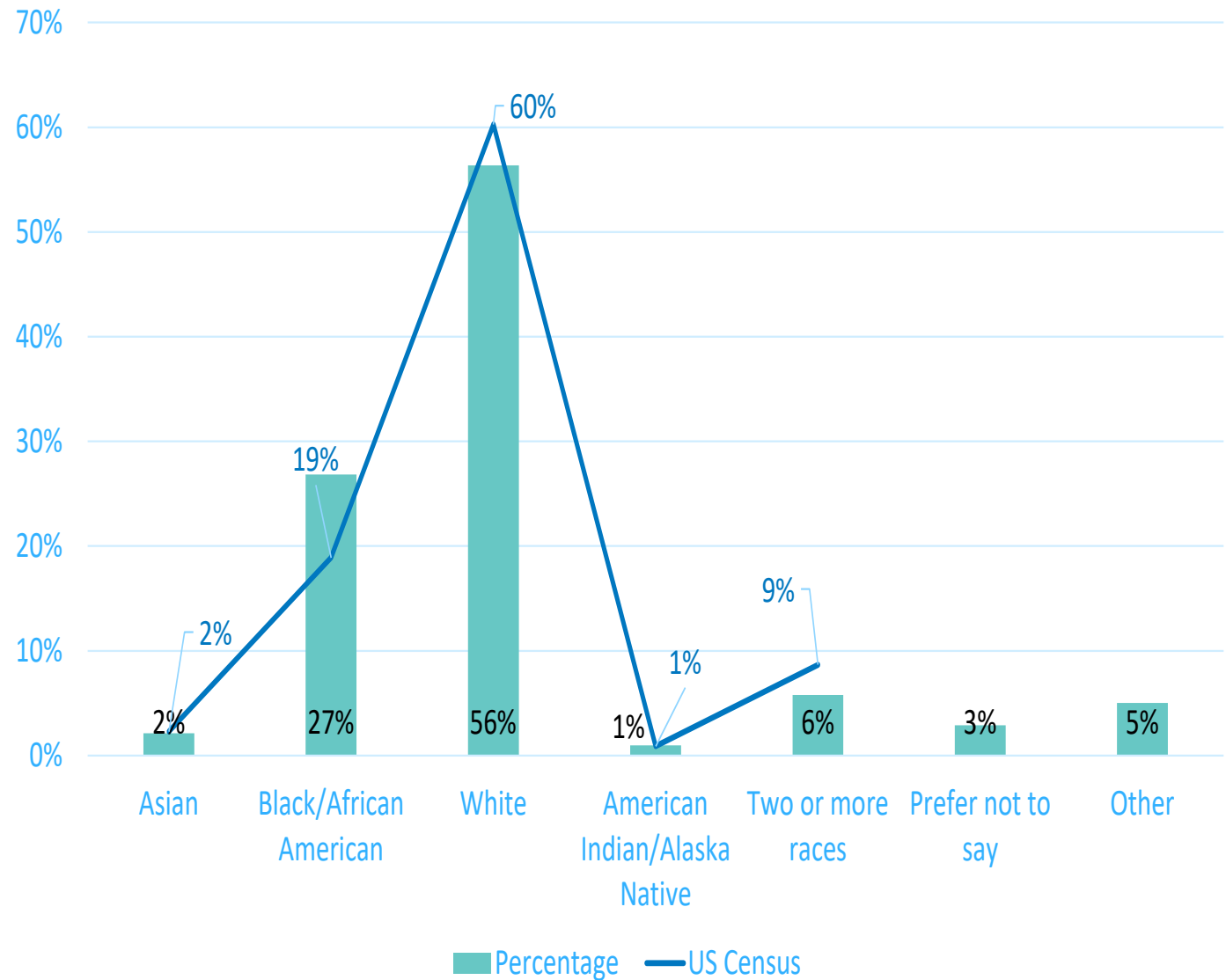
Participation Overview

- 562 submitted exit questionnaire
- Conducted engagement in a variety of formats
 - 3 in-person workshops, *Moving Ahead Conversations*, and online survey
 - *Neighborhood Summit*, summer camps, high school engagement
- Heard from people living in all three wards and majority of neighborhoods
- Engagement ran May 2024 – June 2024



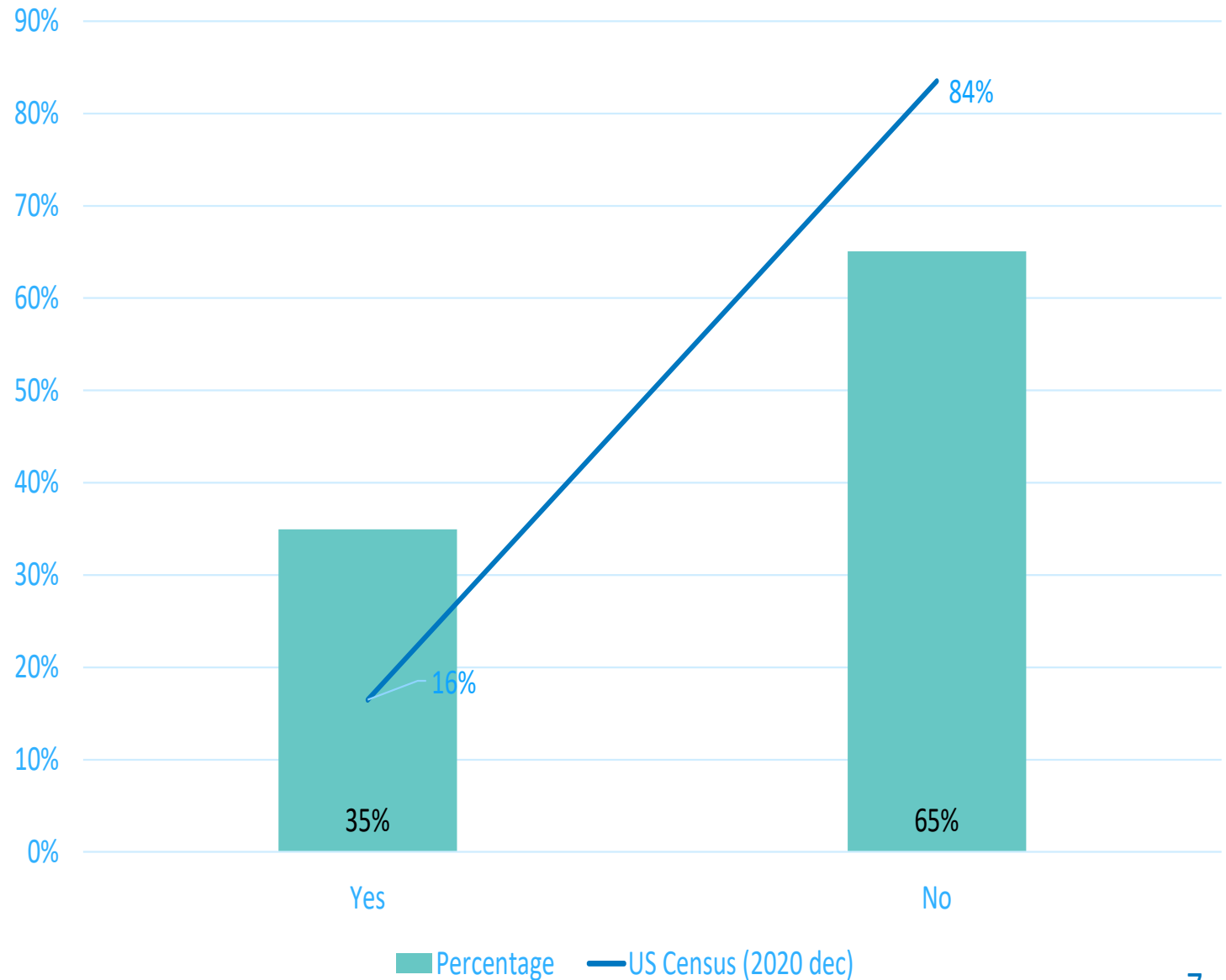
Who did we hear from?

1. Race



Who did we hear from?

2. Hispanic/ Latinx



Balanced Mobility- Summary Comments

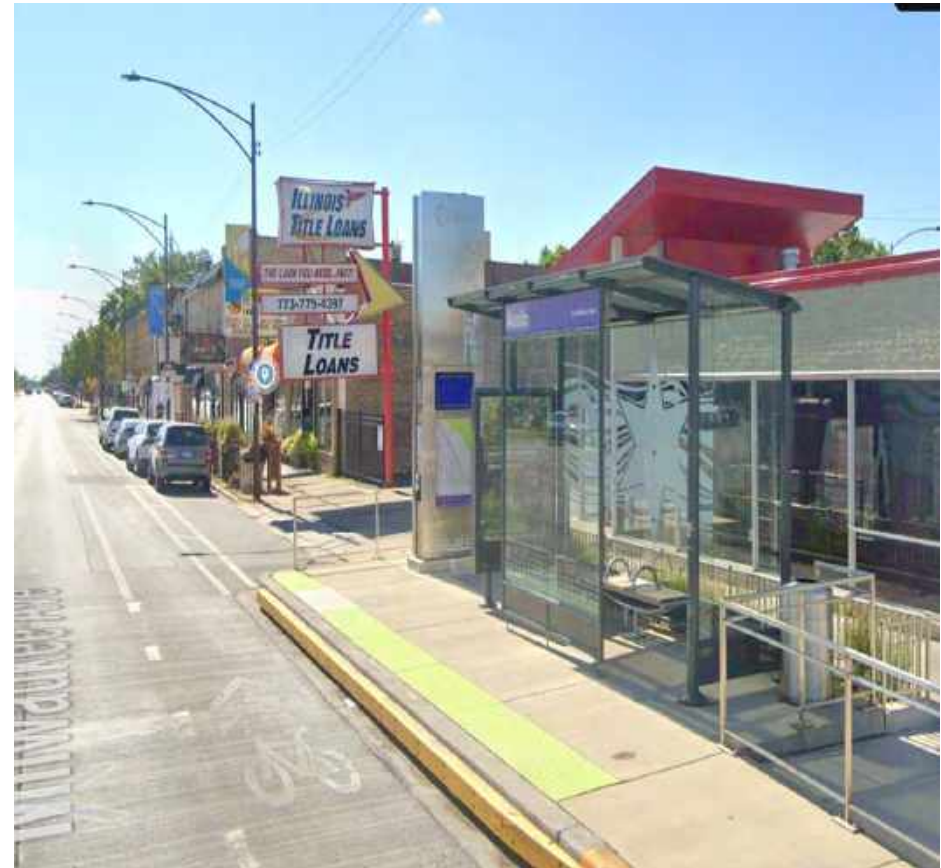
Bus Bulbs:

Most impact

- Safer and easier for riders to access the bus
- Easier to identify bus stops
- Interest in anything that will help improve transit in Grand Rapids.

Least impact

- Many participants indicated they don't take the bus, they walk or drive.
- Concerns about taking away parking
- Will only help if there is a shelter, benches and other amenities

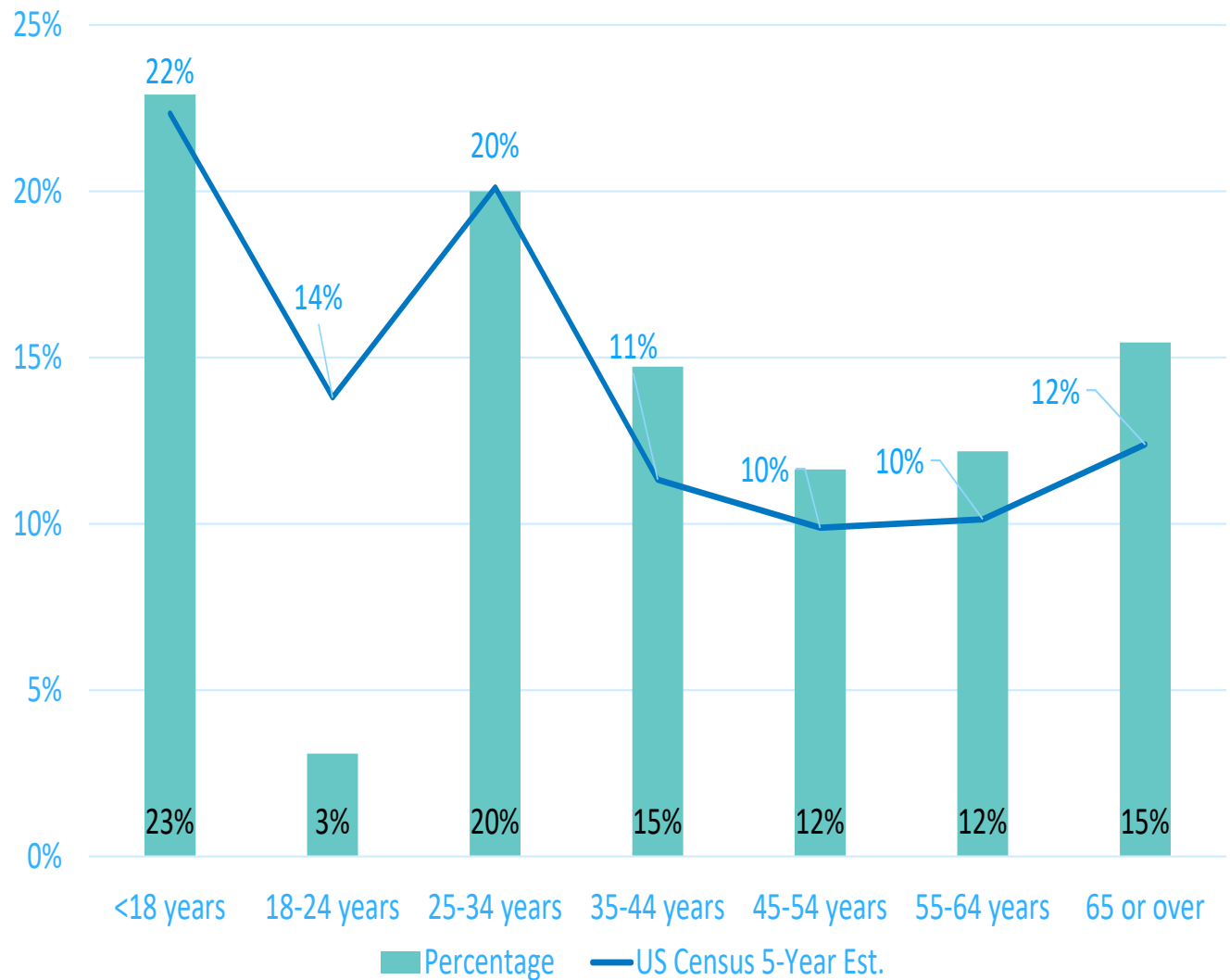


Who did we hear from?

3. Age

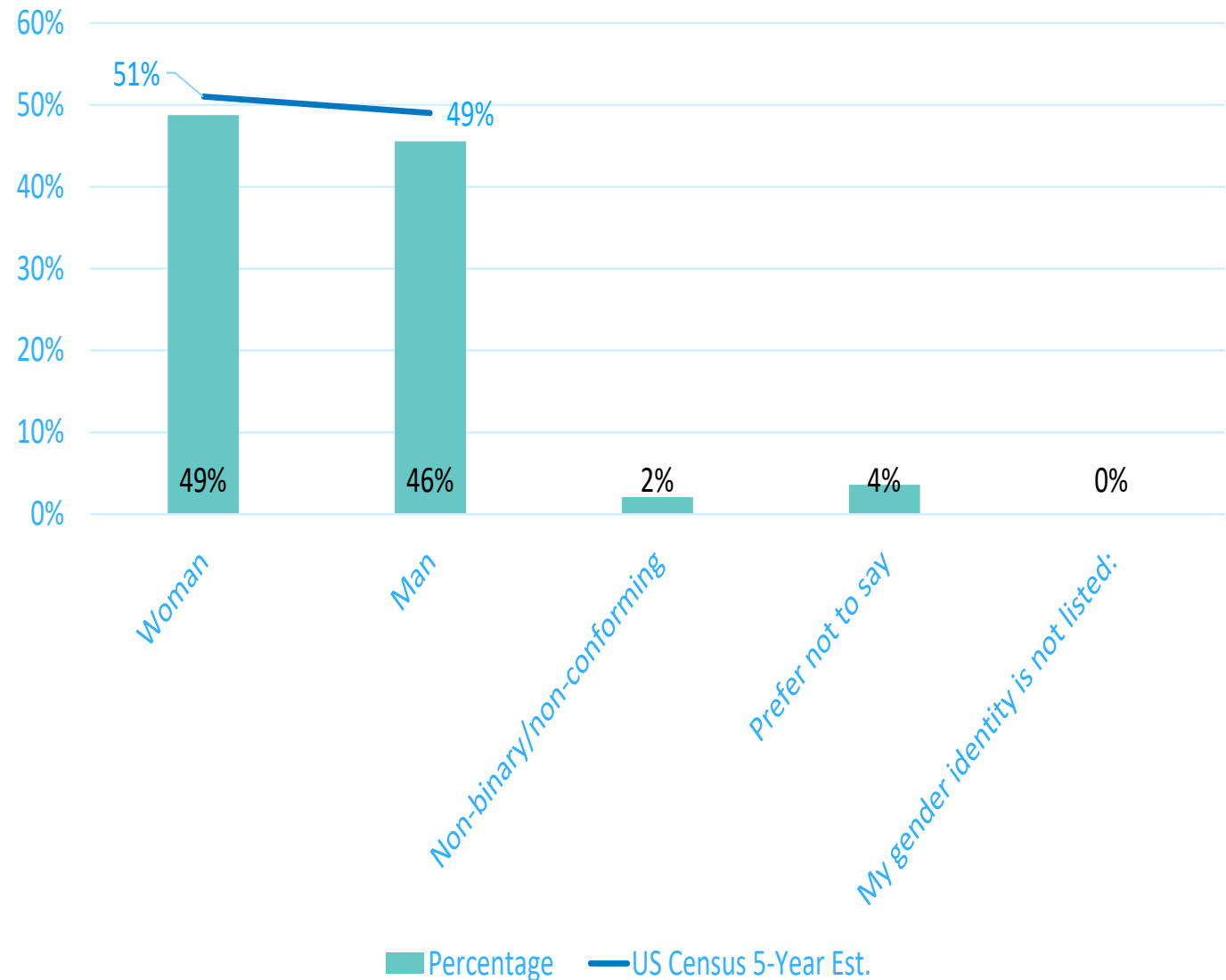
Ages 15-17 make up 3.1% of the population, ages 5-14 make up 10.1%.

Under 18 participation was mainly ages 12-17.



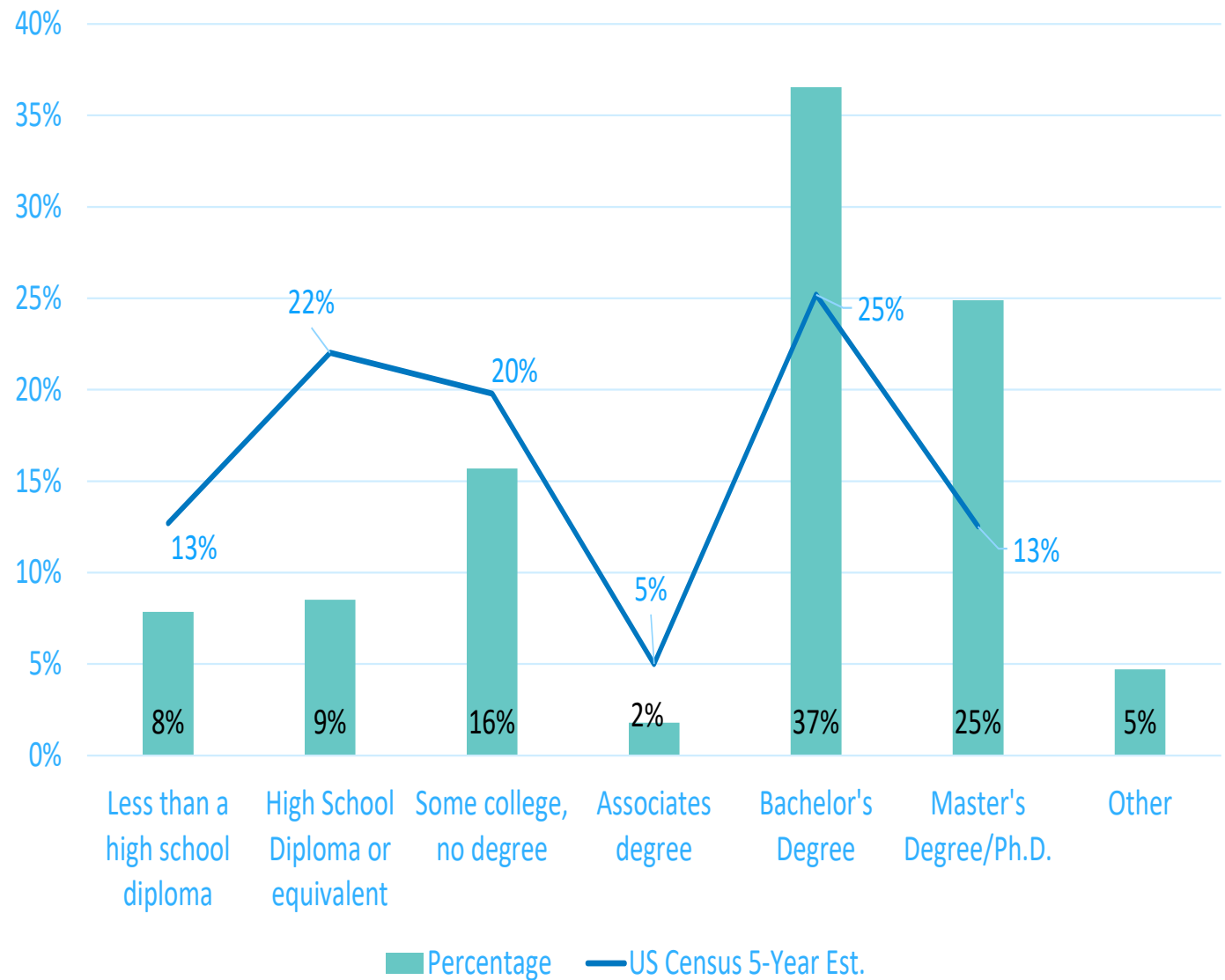
Who did we hear from?

4. Gender



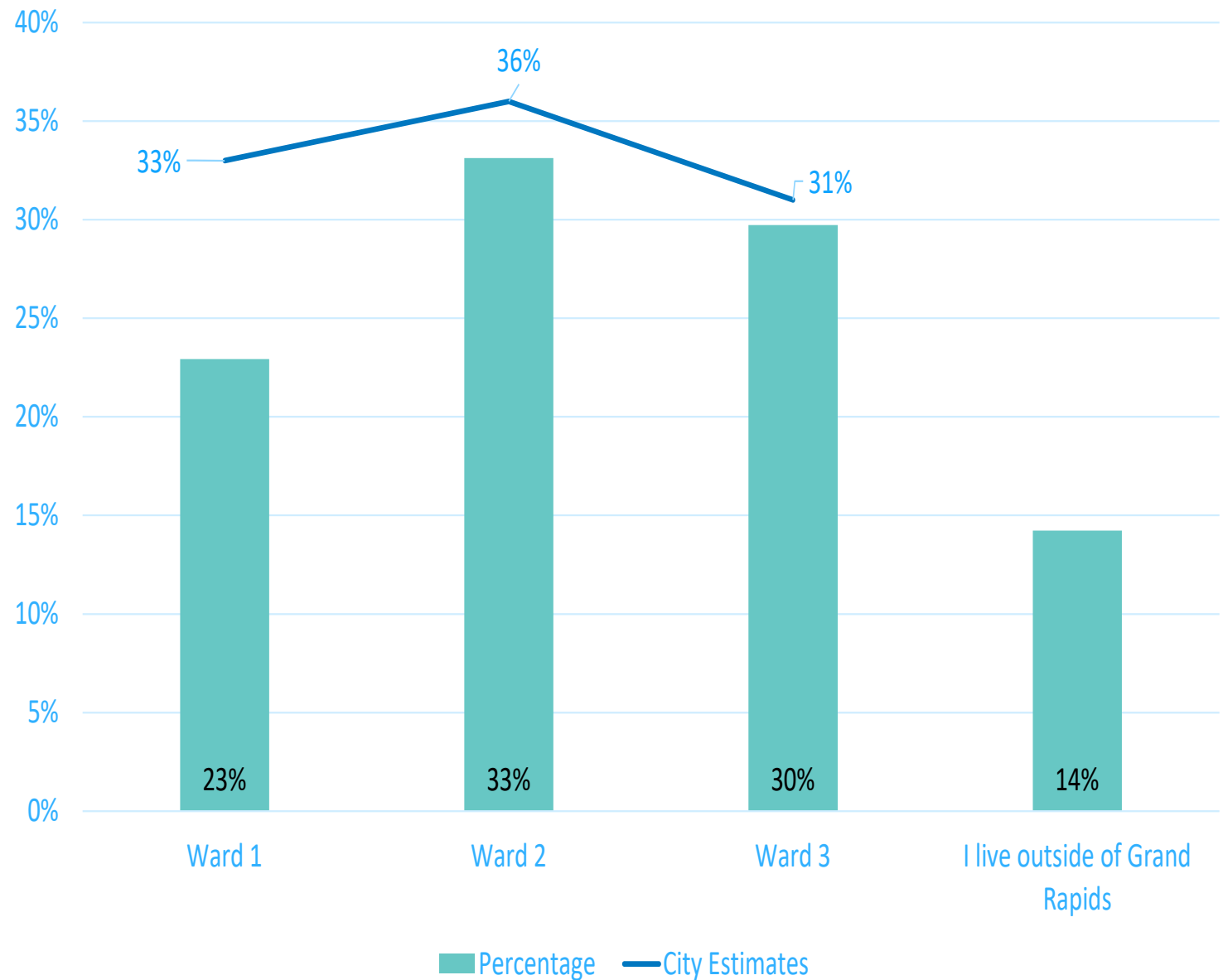
Who did we hear from?

5. Education



Who did we hear from?

6. Ward



Plan Framework

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT

In the next 20 years...

Grand Rapids aspires to build a sustainable city of inclusion, where people in all neighborhoods have the opportunity to live in safe and affordable housing, to move throughout the city in a variety of ways, to earn a living wage through meaningful job choices, and to gather together in vibrant spaces that celebrate our unique cultures and histories.

The vision is an expression of the community's future and was tested in Round 2 of public engagement.

COMMUNITY VALUE THREADS



Equity: Where all residents have access to resources that allow for opportunity, influence, and positive life outcomes no matter their starting point.



Safety: Where all people are secure and protected in all communities no matter where they live or come from, or what they look like.



Vibrancy: A variety of amenities, including arts, culture, and recreation opportunities, that activate and contribute to the energy of the city year-round.



Culture: Traditions and experiences that originate from one's background and lived experiences and can be shared and celebrated with others.



Sustainability: Balancing growth, environmental stewardship, and well-being in a way that fulfills current and ongoing needs and opportunities of future generations.

Values reflect, at a high level, what the community cares about. The value threads are woven throughout the plan chapters.

COMMUNITY GOAL AREAS

Goals are desired outcomes expressed in simple terms. Each goal area is a chapter of the plan.

1. **Great Neighborhoods:** Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.
2. **Vital Business Districts:** A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.
3. **A Strong Economy:** An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage.
4. **Balanced Mobility:** A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.
5. **Development Character:** A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives are strategic direction that organizes the recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations include projects, policies, and programs to achieve desired outcomes.

Balanced Mobility

Chapter

4.A Design and maintain streets that are safe for all road users.

The recommendations under this objective:

- *Direct improvements to streets and intersections with high crash rates.*

4.B Support viable transportation options that are affordable, accessible, and meet community members' needs.

The recommendations under this objective:

- *Promote transportation options other than personal vehicles.*
- *Invest in transit, walking, and bicycling infrastructure.*

4.C Coordinate land use and transportation decisions.

The recommendations under this objective:

- *Reduce space for cars, such as parking lots, to support more compact, walkable development.*
- *Prioritize riding transit, walking, and bicycling in new development.*
- *Manage the way space along the curb is used for parking, loading, drop-off, and other activities.*



Desirable Development Character

Chapter

This chapter provides guidance on the physical development of Grand Rapids.

- *Development Principles*
- *Future Character and Land Use Map*
- *Future Character Types*
- *Conceptual Development Framework*



Area Specific Plans (ASP)

Chapter

This chapter provides an overview of the three ASPs to be adopted with the Community Master Plan.

- *Creston*
- *Butterworth*
- *Southtown*

Round 4 Engagement – Plan Comments

Engagement Activities

1. **Display boards and recording sheets** collected input on objectives/principles from each of the five plan chapters:
 - *Great Neighborhoods*
 - *Vital Business Districts*
 - *A Strong Economy*
 - *Balanced Mobility*
 - *Development Character*
2. **Small groups** tagged recommendations with applicable value threads.
3. **Community Connectors and Neighborhood Organizations** hosted small group activities.
4. **An Online Survey** collected responses through June.

Display boards and recording sheets



Great Neighborhoods

Objectives:

Overall Rating: 4.1/5

- 1.A Create complete and stable neighborhoods.
- 1.B Expand the variety of housing types and price points.
- 1.C Integrate sustainable practices into development projects.

Comment Summary:

- Significant support for new housing development, specifically mixed-use
- Emphasis on increased density while ensuring materials are sustainable
- Emphasis on increased public transit, as well as walking and bicycling infrastructure
- Overall support for increased green spaces, community gardens, and tree cover



Vital Business Districts

Objectives:

Overall Rating: **3.9/5**

- 2.A Support compact centers that provide a mix of uses.
- 2.B Improve the visual appeal and walkability of all business districts.
- 2.C Broaden and enhance local services, amenities, and cultural assets.

Comment Summary:

- Overall support for mixed-use development and increase in businesses
- Emphasis on street-scaping and beautifying the streets with flowers and plants, as well as improved road infrastructure
- Support for modes of transportation other than driving and easy access to multi-modal transportation
- Overall support for increasing public art in the city



A Strong Economy

Objectives:

Overall Rating: 4.0/5

3.A Deepen and broaden the range of jobs and pay scales available within the city.

3.B Ensure a wide range of residents can access jobs.

3.C Balance economic growth with priorities for the environment and health.

Comment Summary:

- Emphasis on higher paying jobs and transit near downtown
- Focus on attracting quality, sustainable businesses that will provide job opportunities
- Emphasis on jobs for residents with all different education levels
- Emphasis on making the environment the number one priority over economic growth, not just balancing economic growth and a healthy environment



Balanced Mobility

Objectives:

Overall Rating: **4.0/5**

4.A Create streets that are safe for all road users.

4.B Support viable transportation options that are affordable and accessible.

4.C Coordinate land use and transportation decisions.

Comment Summary:

- Emphasis on dedicated and protected bike lanes, overall safer streets
- Emphasis on frequent public transit
- A lot of support for reducing number of parking lots and taxing parking lots
- Some desire to keep parking but as an addition to housing developments, street parking, edge of town, etc.



Balanced Mobility- Scores

The participants were asked to rank the impact of the following items.

4.17 - the impact of protected bike lanes.

3.86 - the impact of curb bulb-outs.

3.75 - the impact of access management.

3.30 - the impact of bus bulbs.

(1- least impactful, 5 - most impactful)

Desirable Development Character

Development Principles

Overall Rating: 4.0/5

Comment Summary:

- Desire for more affordable housing
- Emphasis on historic preservation
- Support for more commercial and small businesses in neighborhoods

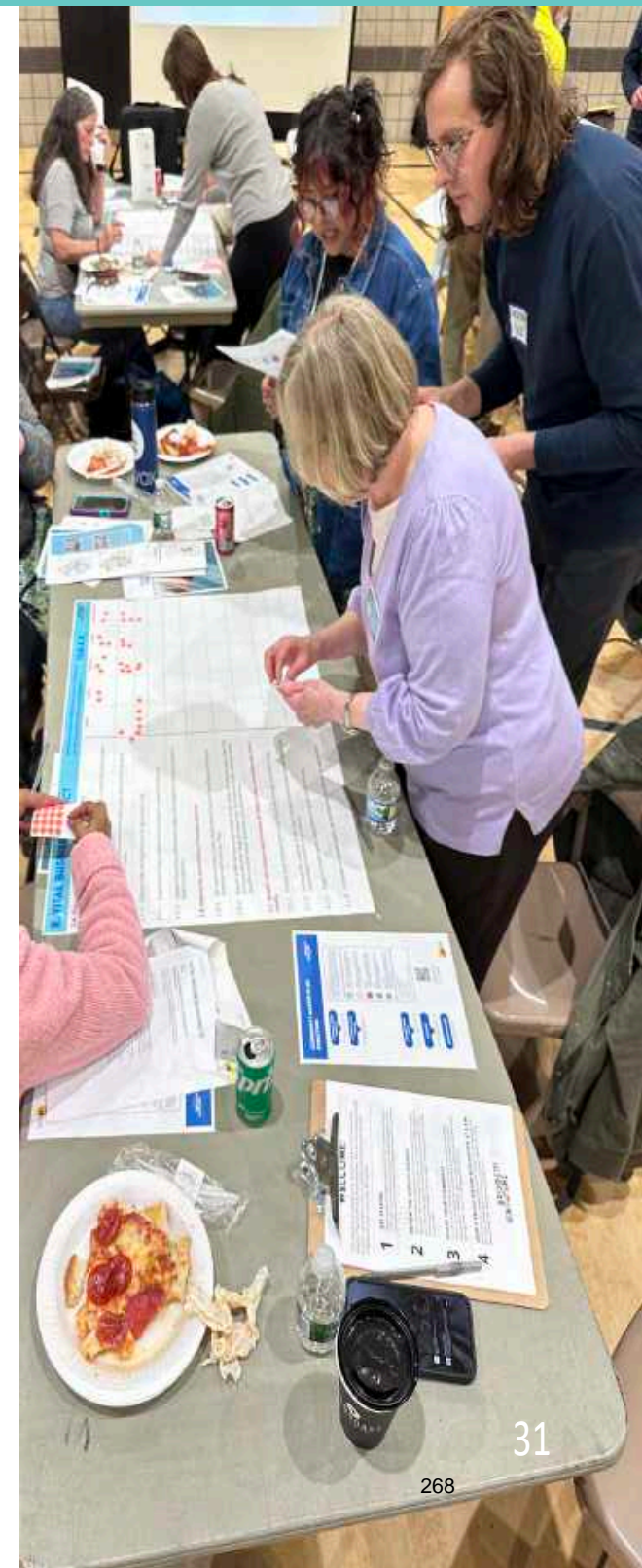


Small group activity



Value Thread Key Takeaways

- Equity and Sustainability value threads were the most frequently tagged across all recommendations.
- Residents are overall optimistic for more density, mixed-use buildings, green space, improved public transit, and road infrastructure, as long as it is affordable, and the unique character of Grand Rapids is maintained.



Adoption Process

Adoption Process Timeline

Proposed Community Master Plan - City Commission and Planning Commission Meetings

(Schedule is tentative and subject to change pending the actions of the PC and CC.)



Questions?

Thank You!



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**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

Total Participation



CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

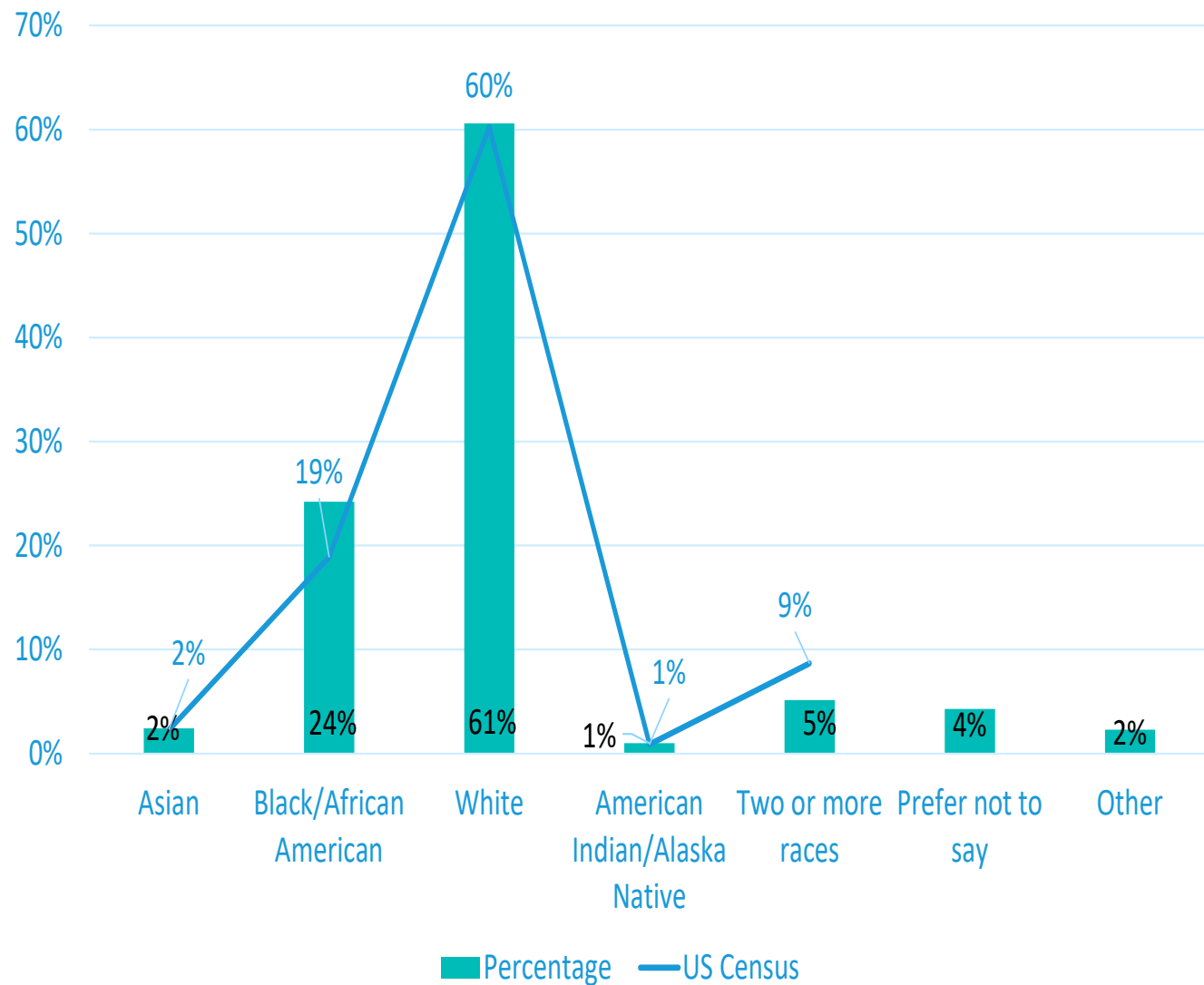
Participation Overview

- 4,780 submitted exit questionnaires
- Conducted engagement in a variety of formats
- Heard from people living in all three wards and majority of neighborhoods
- Engagement ran 2020 – 2024



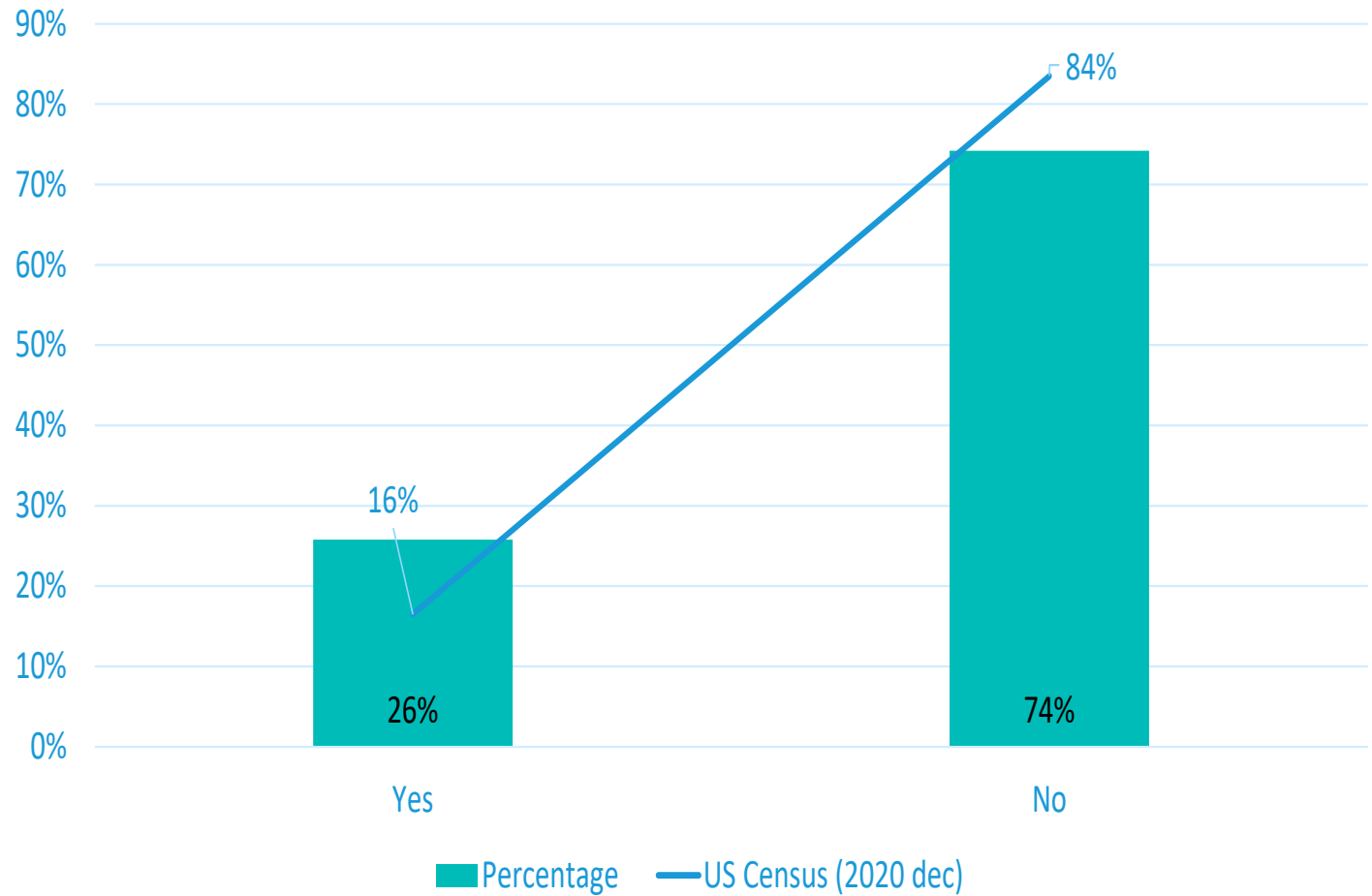
Who did we hear from?

1. Race



Who did we hear from?

2. Hispanic/Latinx

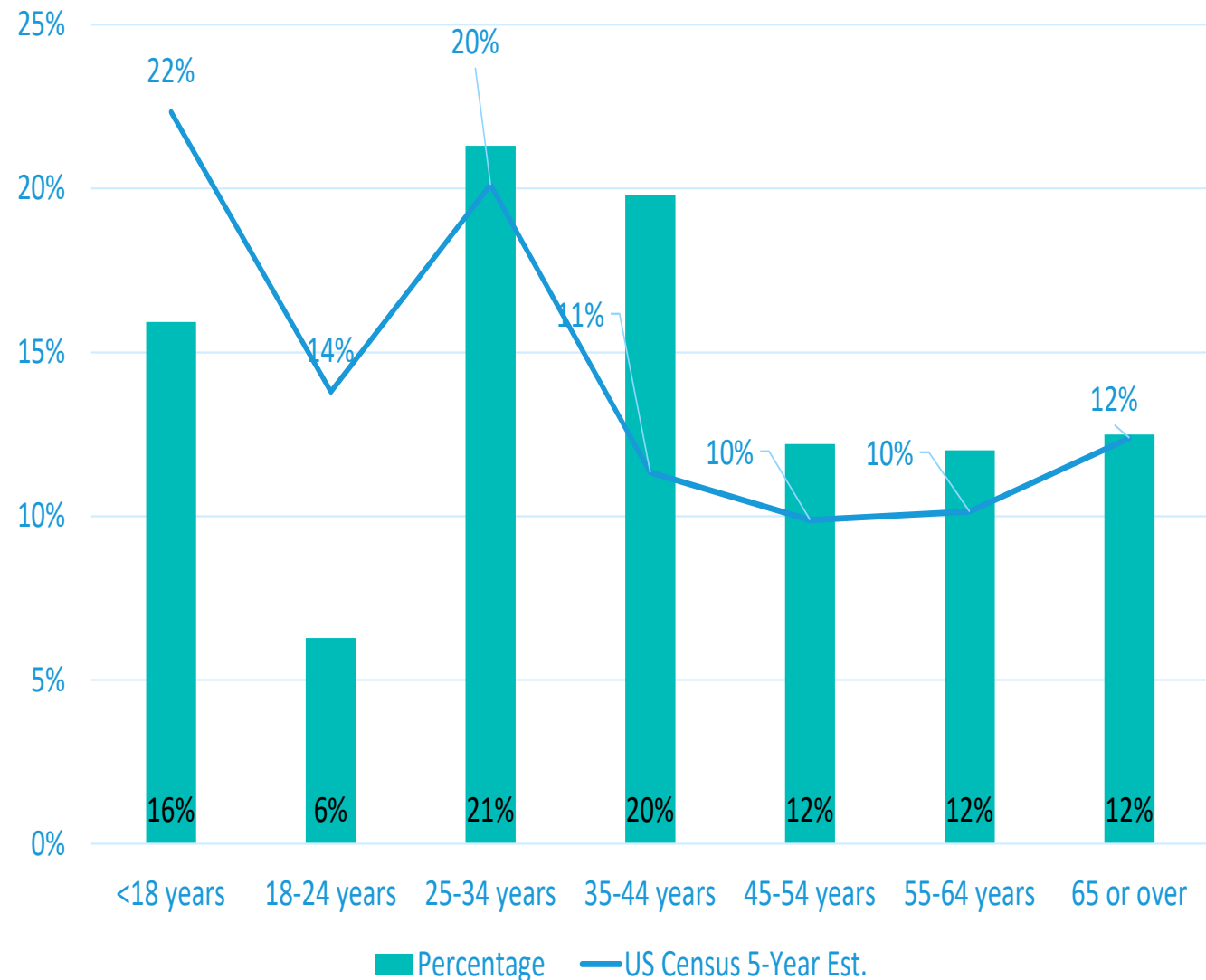


Who did we hear from?

3. Age

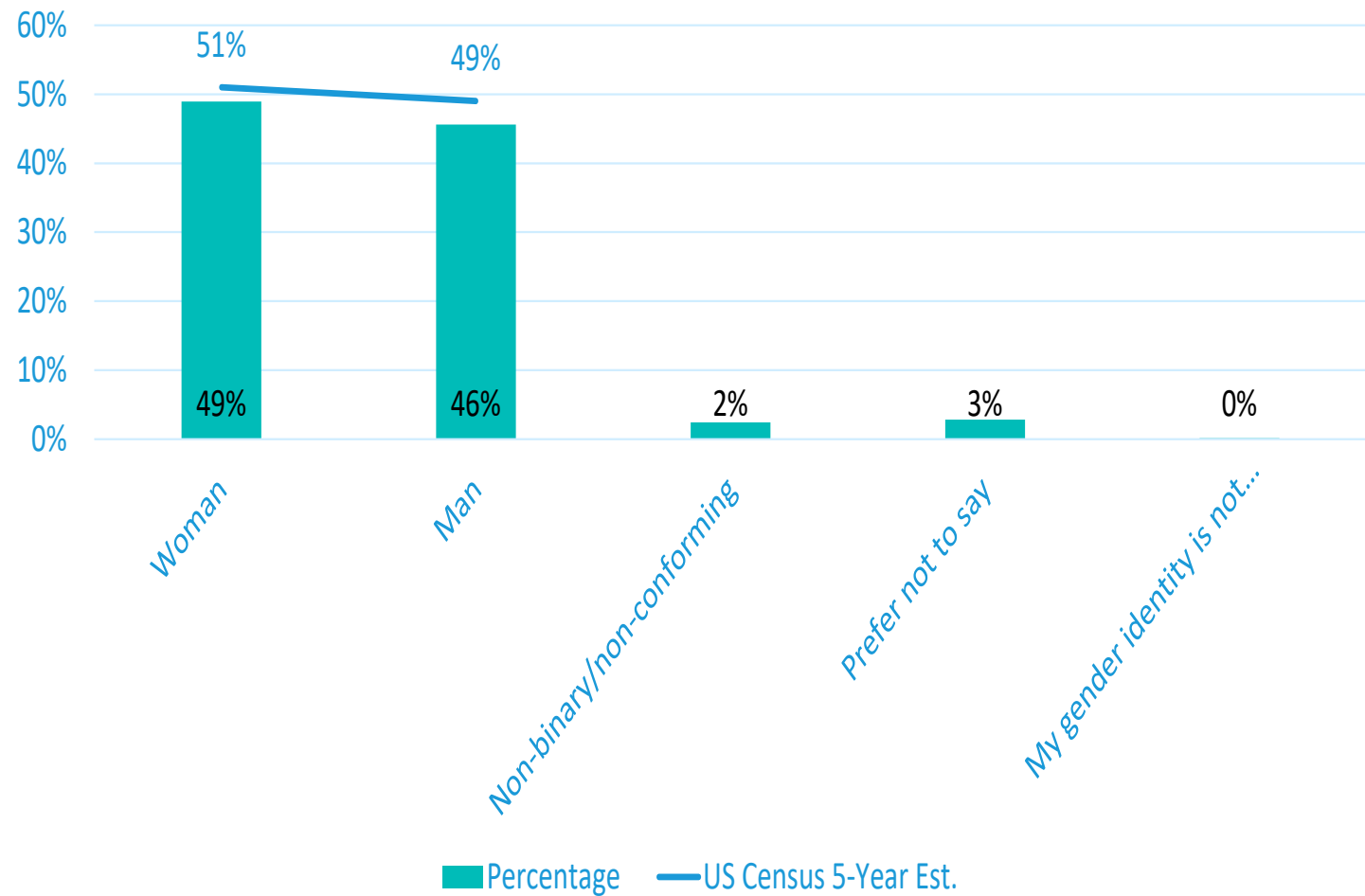
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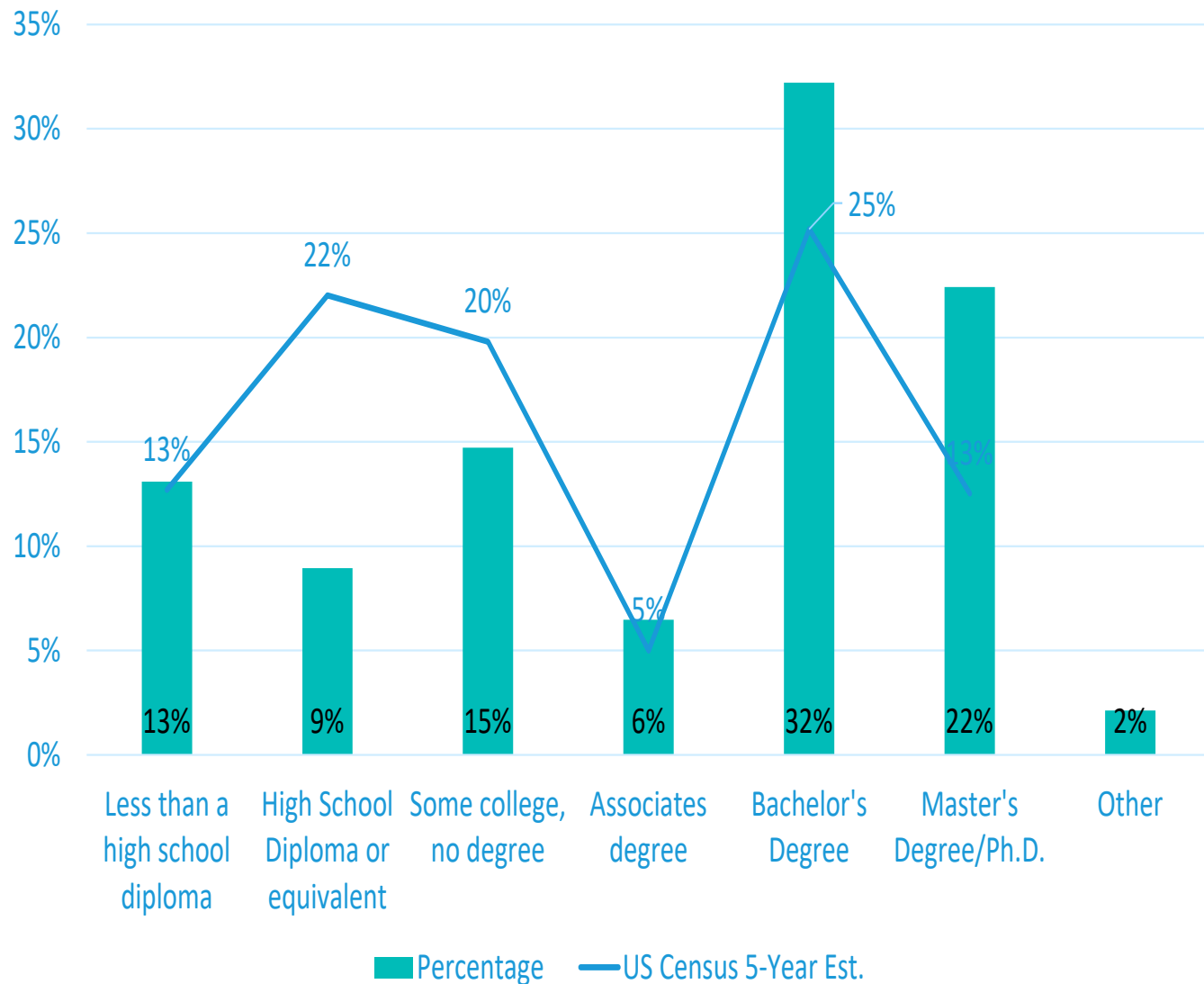
Who did we hear from?

4. Gender



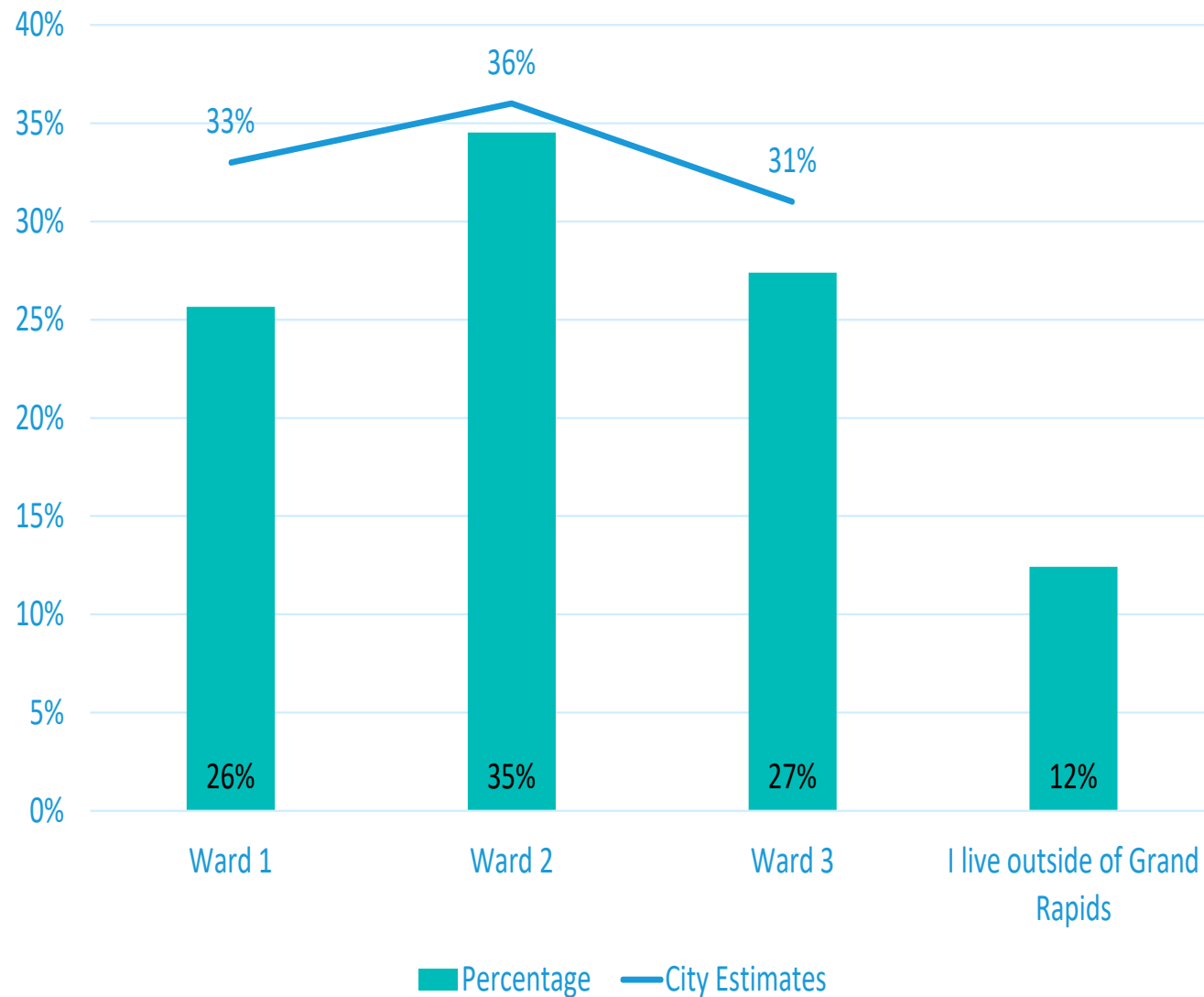
Who did we hear from?

5. Education



Who did we hear from?

6. Ward



APPENDIX B








TECHNICAL ANALYSIS


Plan Maps


Community Profile


HOLC AND NEIGHBORHOODS OF FOCUS


Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

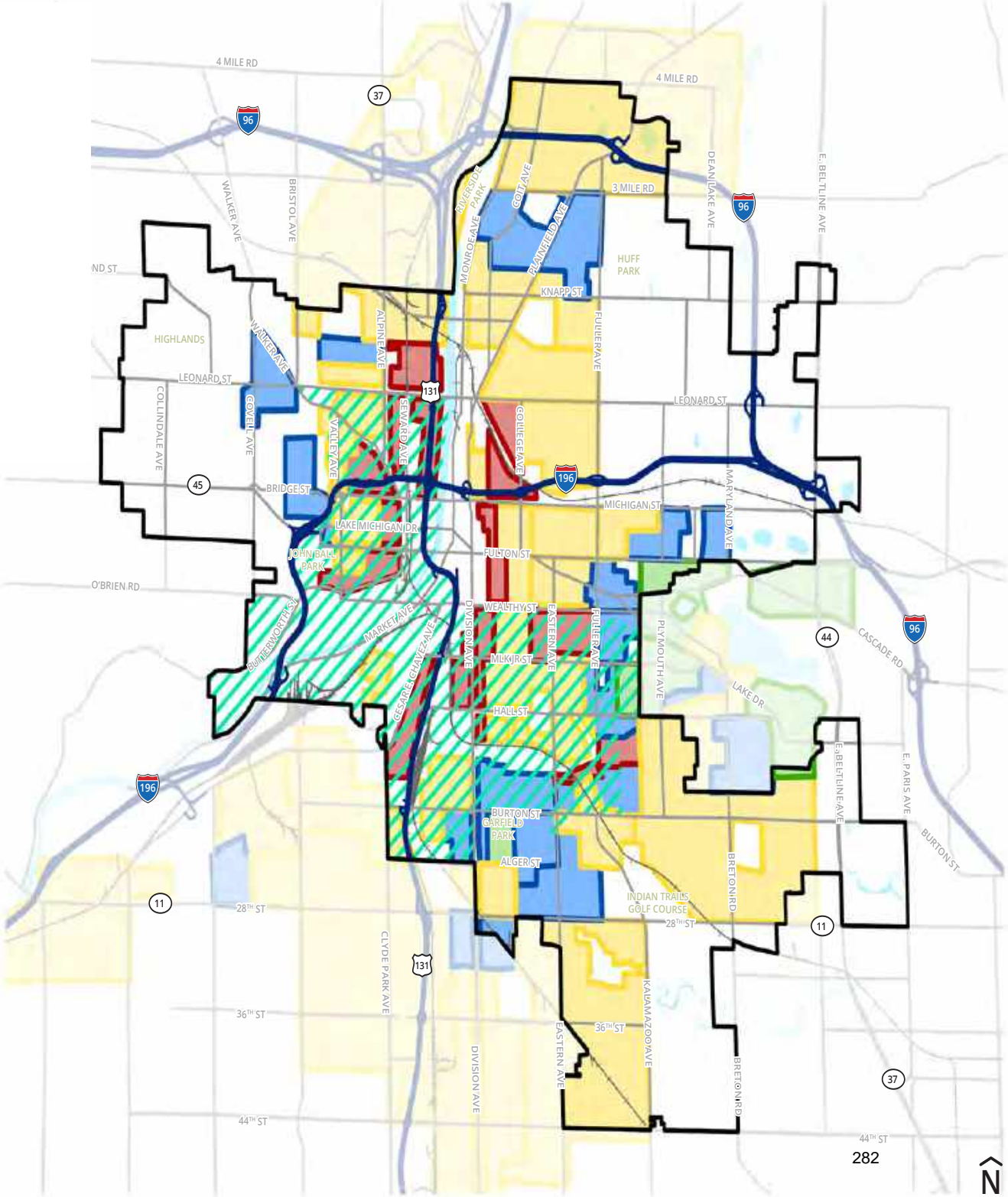
-  Interstate
-  US Freeway
-  State Freeway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Neighborhoods of Focus
- HOLC Designation

 A (Best)

 B (Still Desirable)

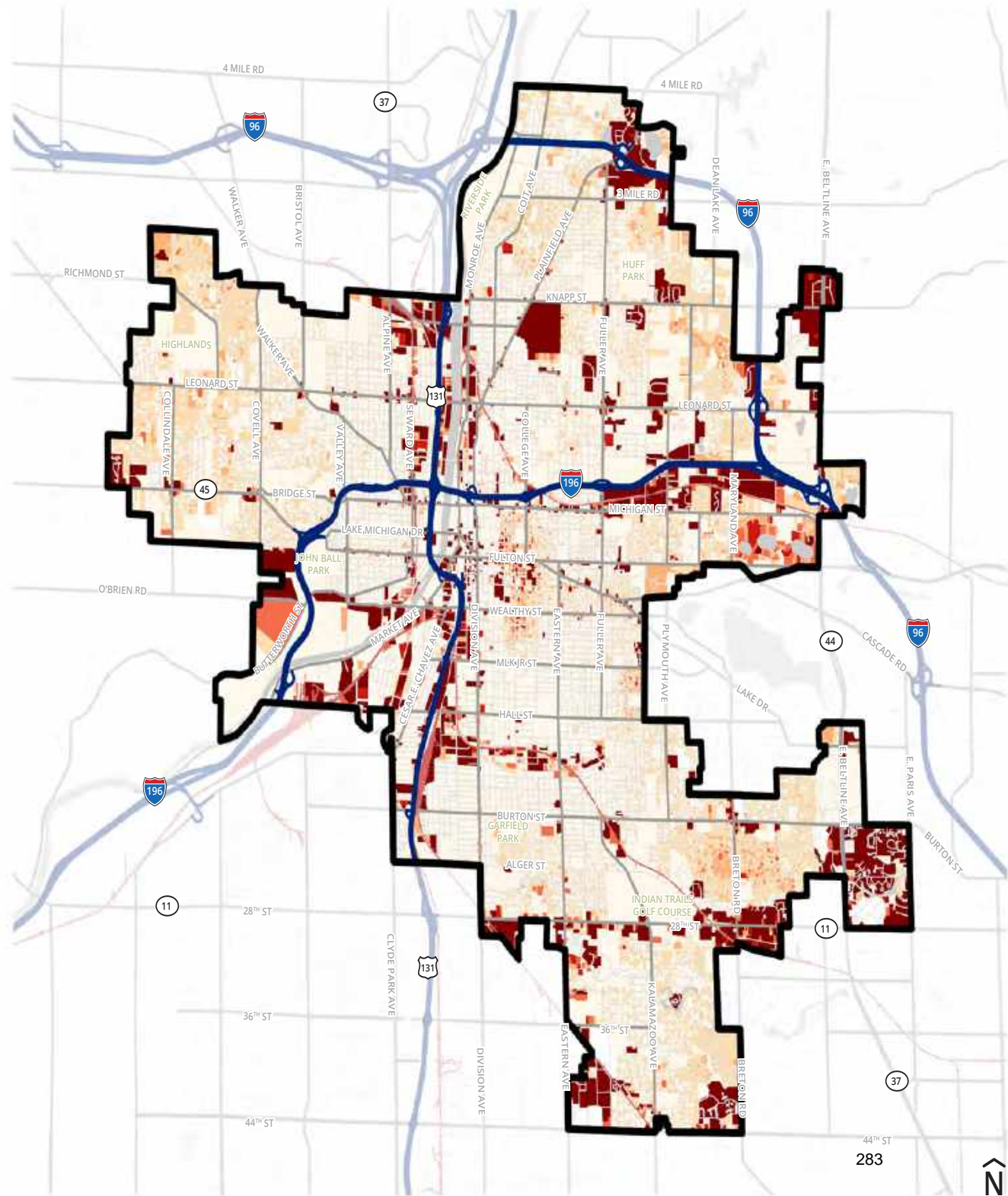
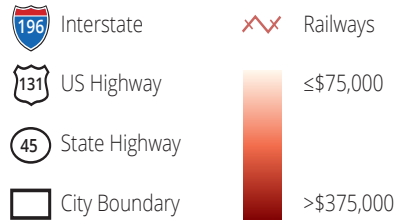
 C (Declining)

 D (Hazardous)










TAXABLE PROPERTY VALUE

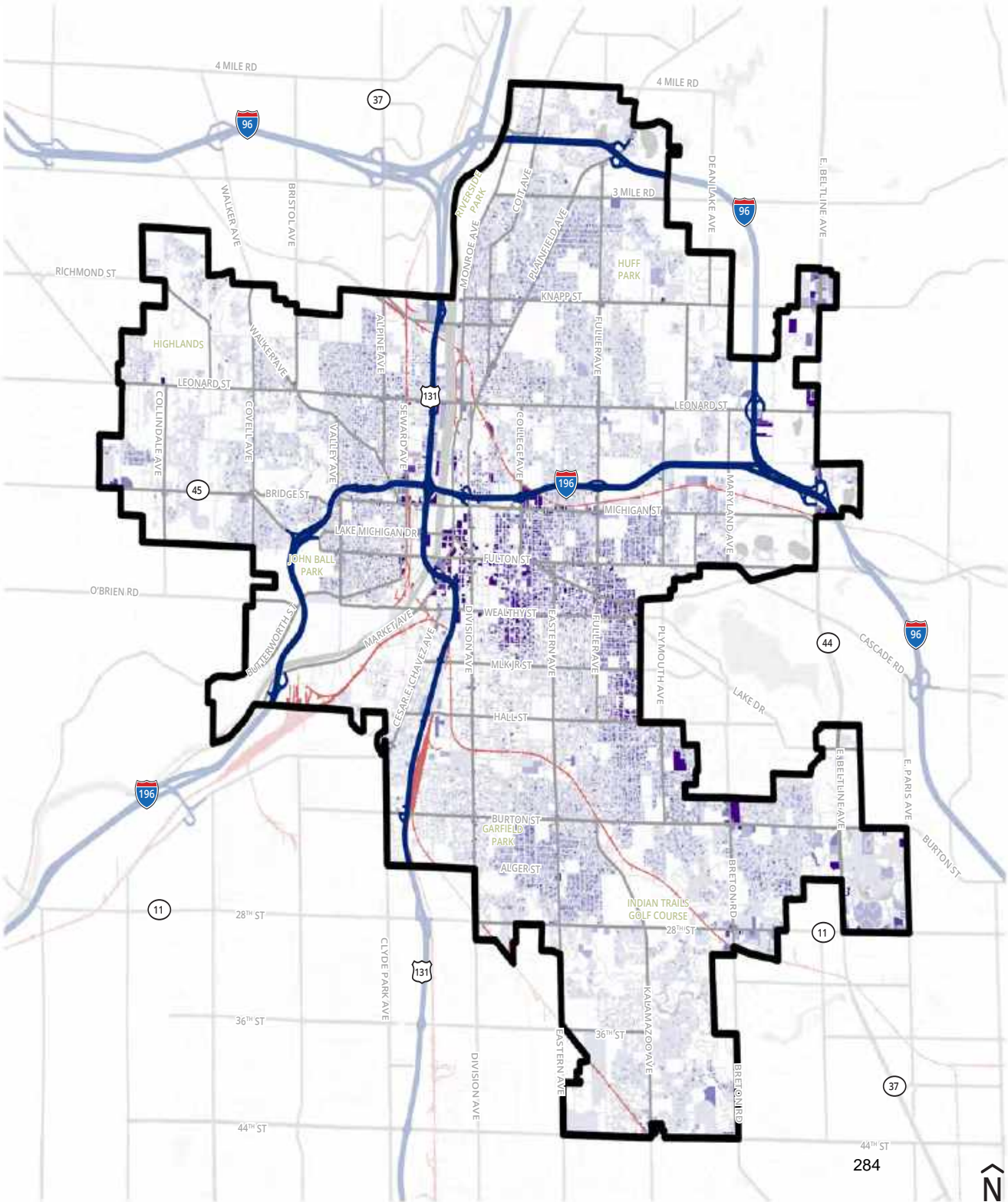
Grand Rapids Community Master Plan



PROPERTY VALUE PER ACRE





Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Commercial Land
-  Railways
- 
 - ≤\$200,000
 - \$312,000 (median)
 - >\$1,000,000
 - \$33,000,000 (average)

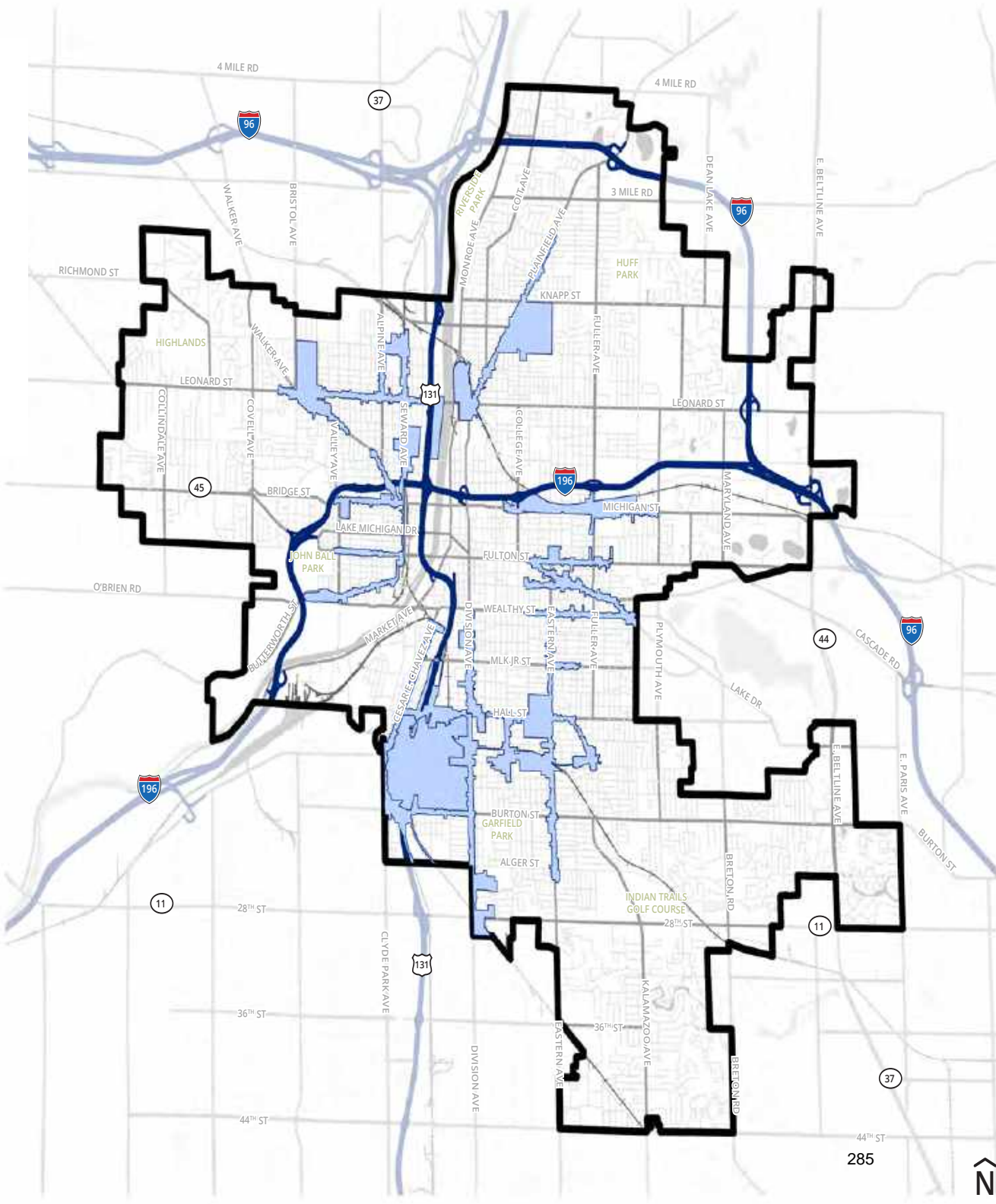


CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITIES

Grand Rapids Community Master Plan










-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Commercial Land

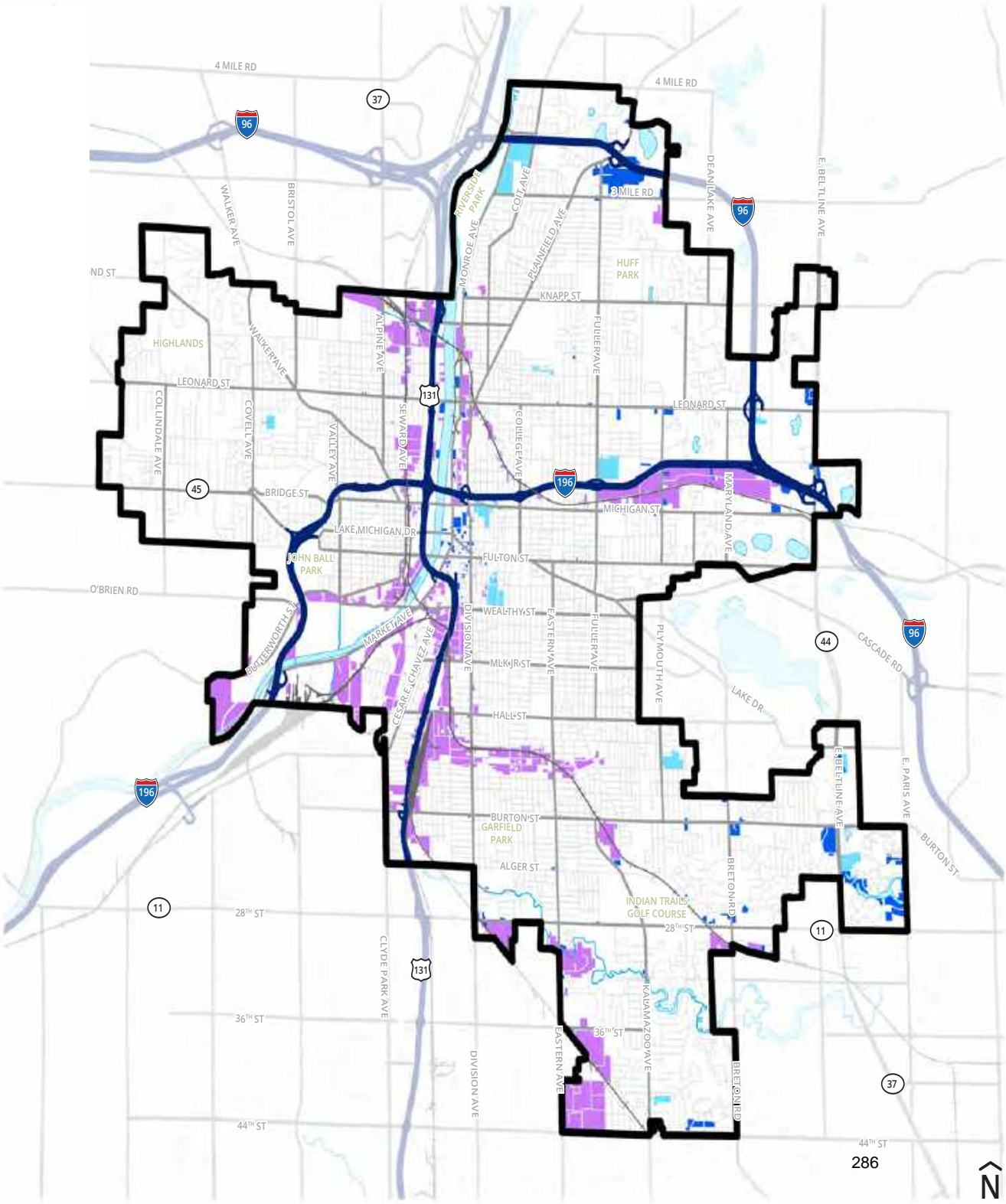
 Corridor Improvement Authorities



EMPLOYMENT LAND USES









Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

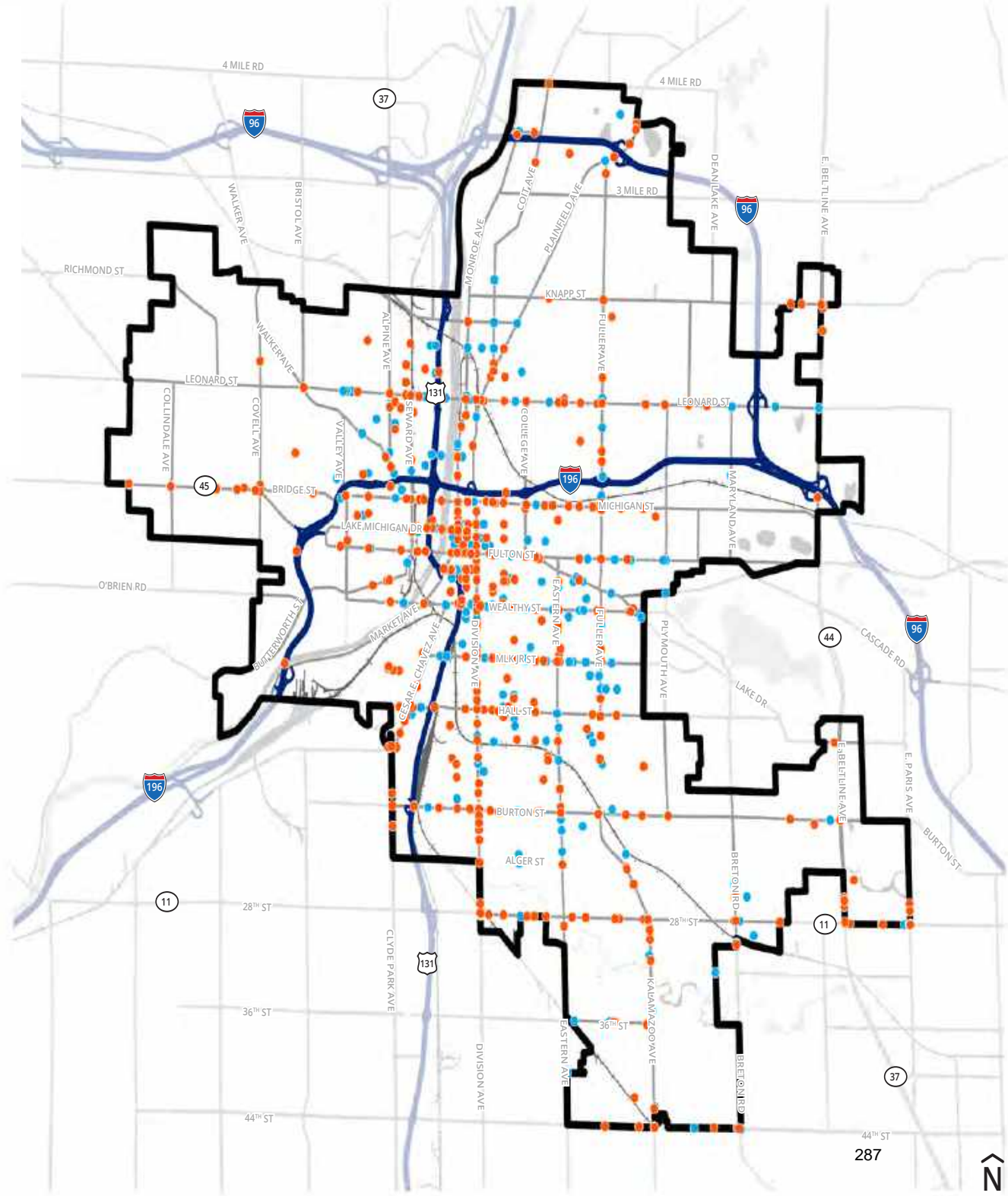
-  Interstate
-  US Freeway
-  State Freeway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Office
-  Industrial
-  Medical Facilities



CRASHES INVOLVING PEDESTRIANS & BICYCLISTS


Grand Rapids Community Master Plan


-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Water
-  Railroad
-  Crash Involving Pedestrian
-  Crash Involving Bicyclist





EXISTING LAND USE


Grand Rapids Community Master Plan


-  Interstate


 US Freeway


 State Freeway


 City Boundary



 Railways


 Water


 Industrial

 Medical Facilities


 Office


 Public / Quasi Public
-  Commercial


 Mixed Commercial / Residential


 Multifamily - 3 or more units


 Multifamily - 2 units

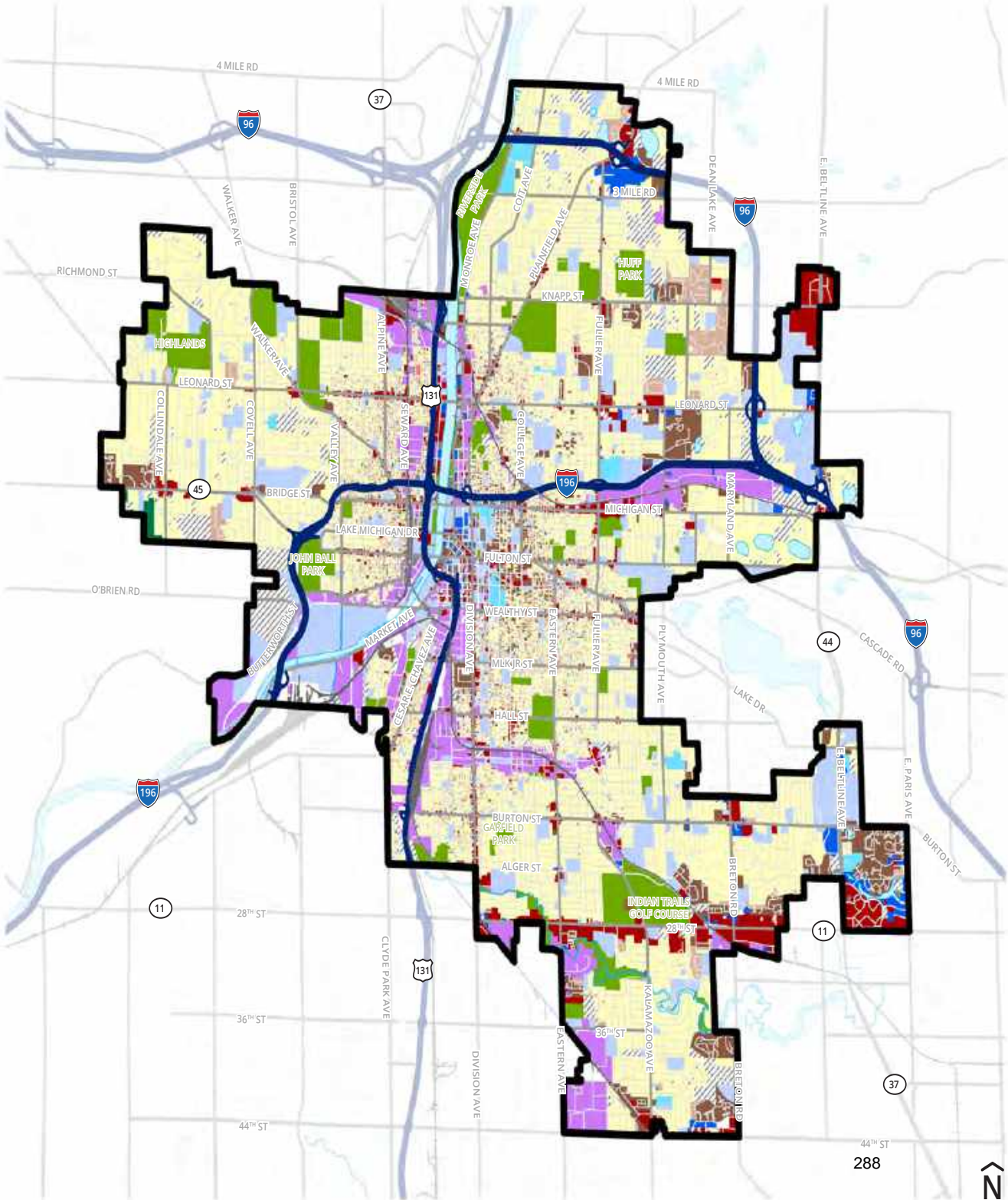
 Single Family

 Parks

 Agricultural

















 Parking Lot

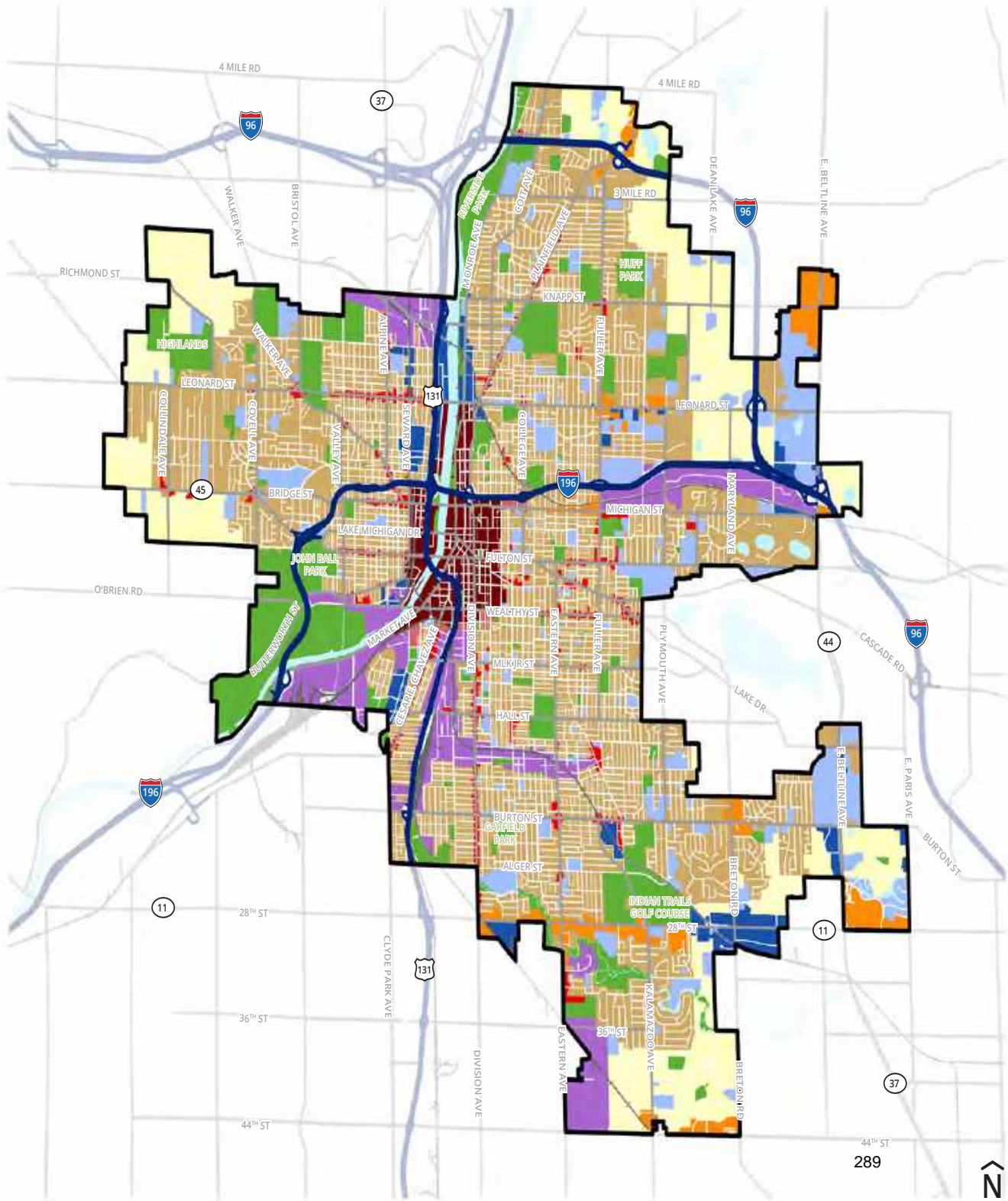
 Vacant Lot



FUTURE LAND USE & CHARACTER













Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

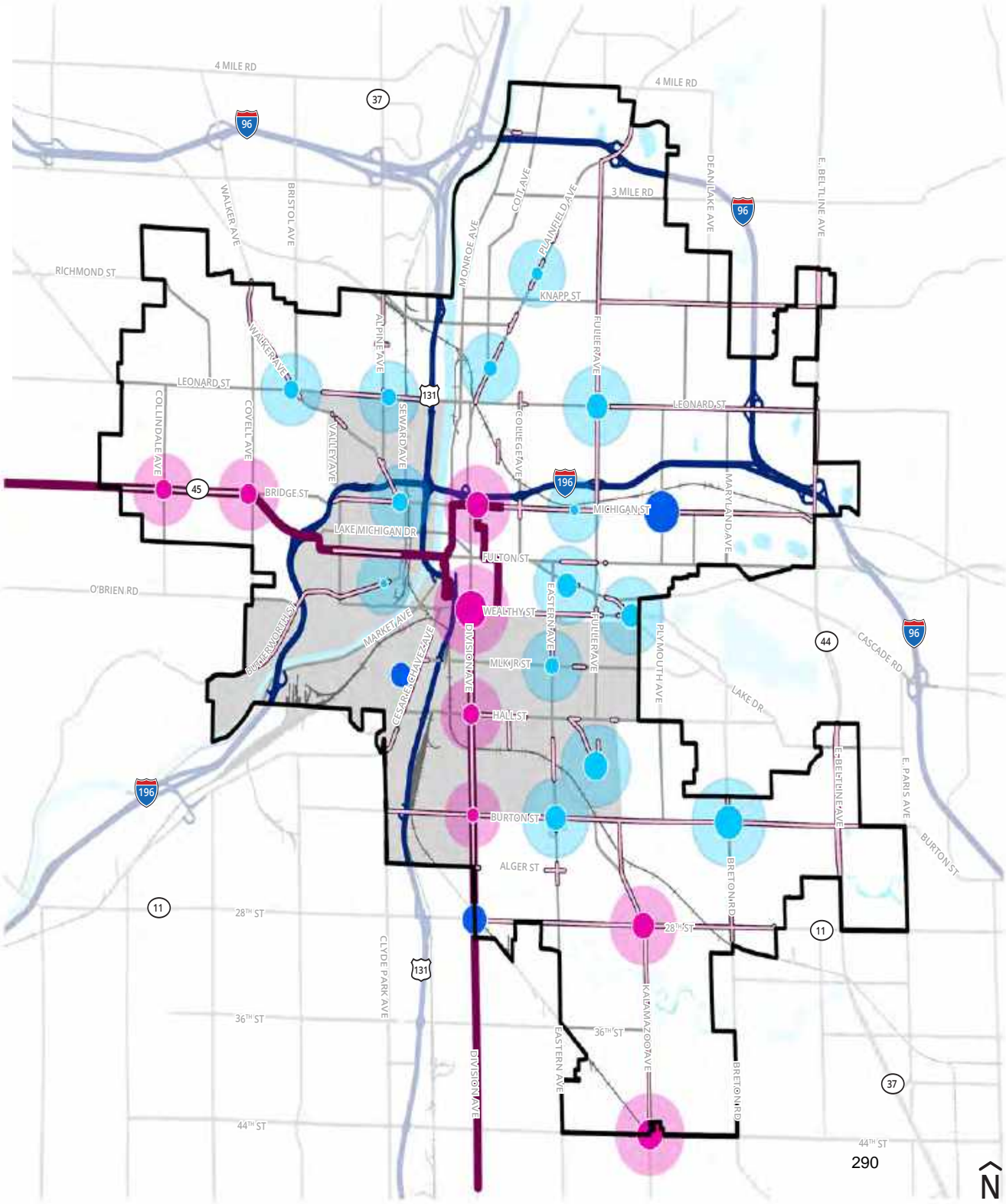
-  Interstate
-  US Freeway
-  State Freeway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Downtown
-  Transitional Activity Center
-  Community Activity Center
-  Neighborhood Center
-  Manufacturing & Logistics
-  Innovation Center
-  Compact Neighborhood
-  Suburban Neighborhood
-  Campus
-  Parks and Open Space



NODE FRAMEWORK








Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

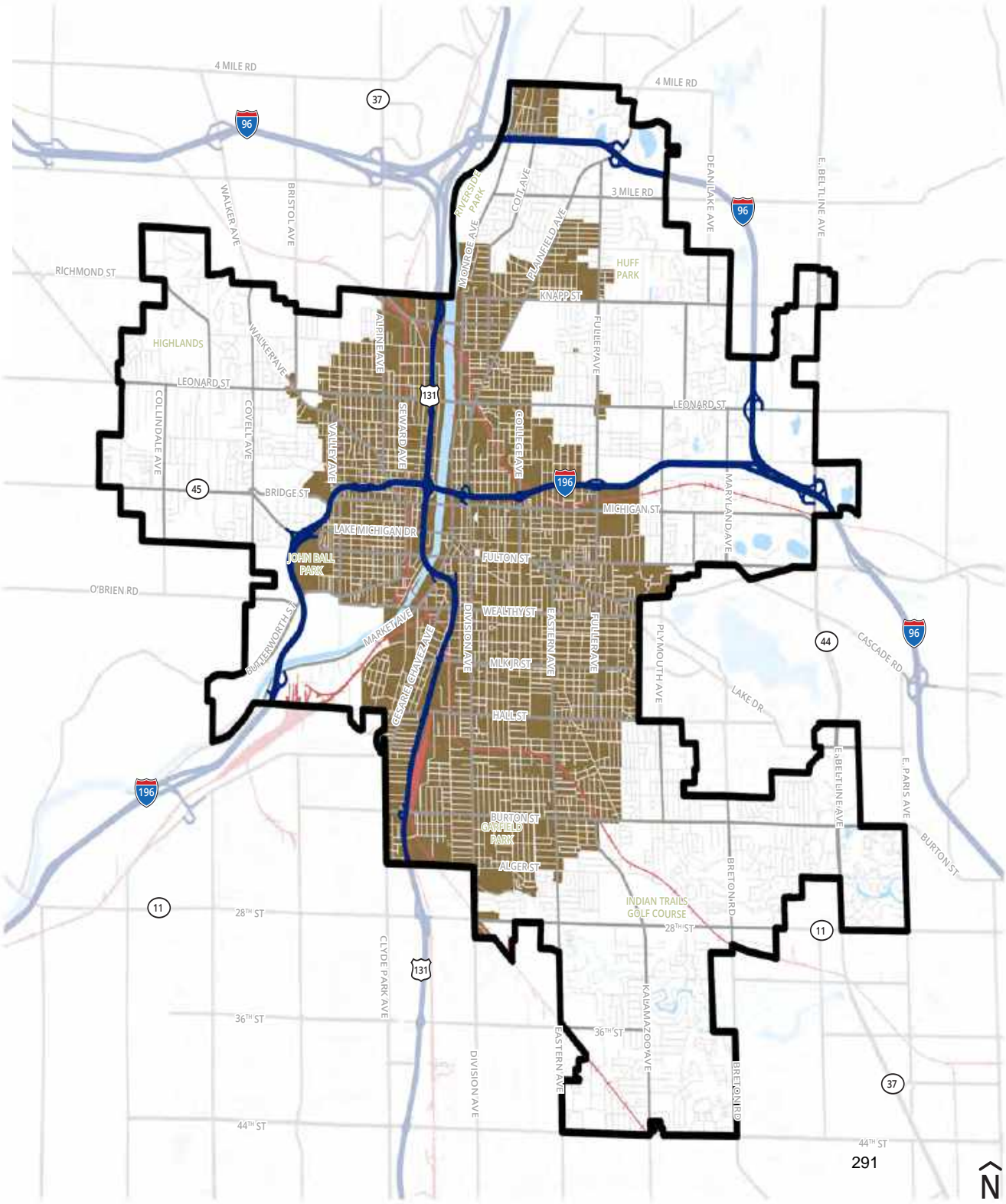
-  Interstate
-  US Freeway
-  State Freeway
-  City Boundary
-  Water
-  Railroad
-  Neighborhoods of Focus
-  Significant Corridors
-  Bus Rapid Transit
-  Transit Oriented
-  Neighborhood
-  Employment



NEIGHBORHOOD TYPES








Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

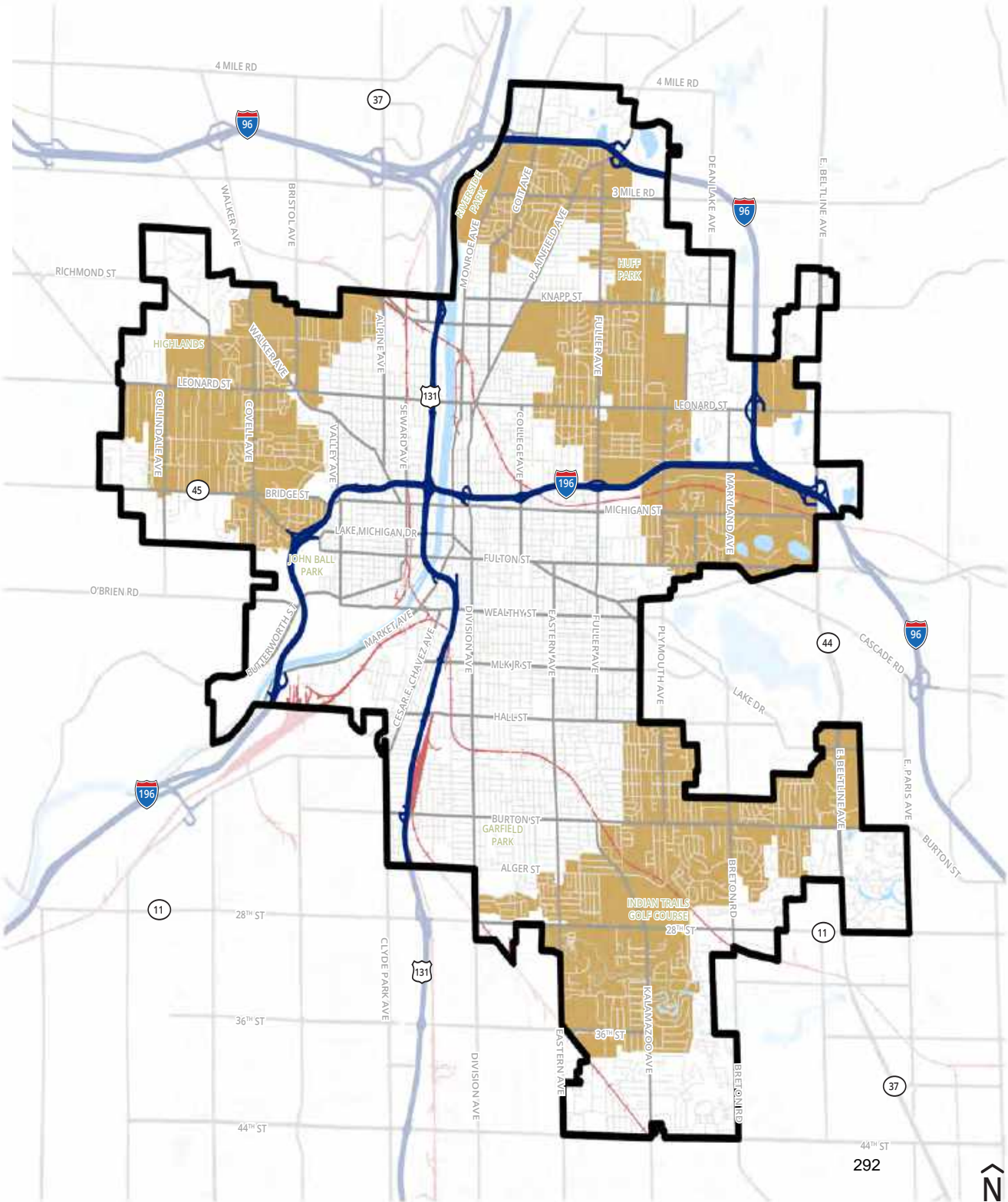
-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Traditional Neighborhoods




NEIGHBORHOOD TYPES

Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Mid-Century Neighborhoods



Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

 US Highway

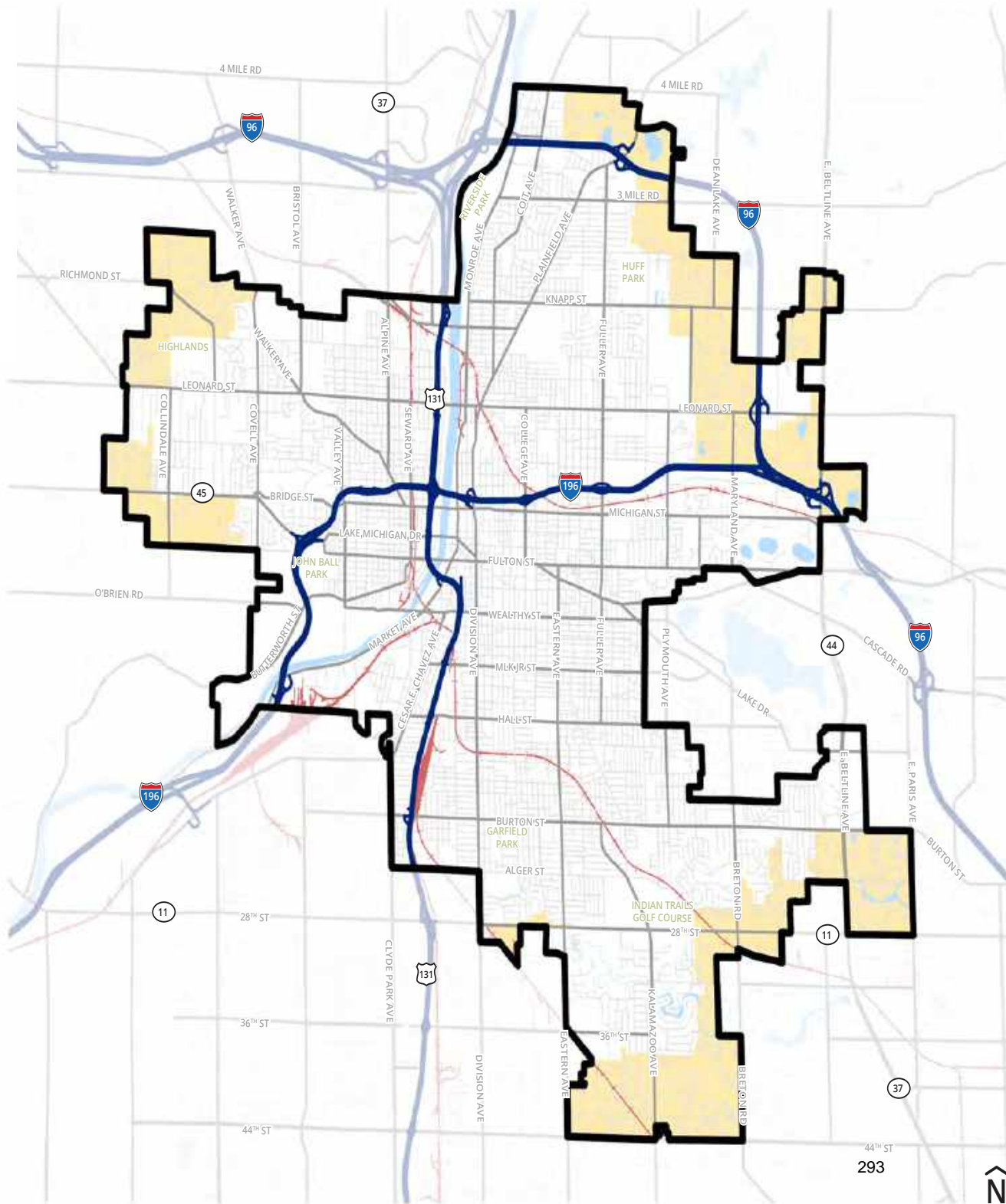
45 State Highway

 City Boundary

 Railways













Water

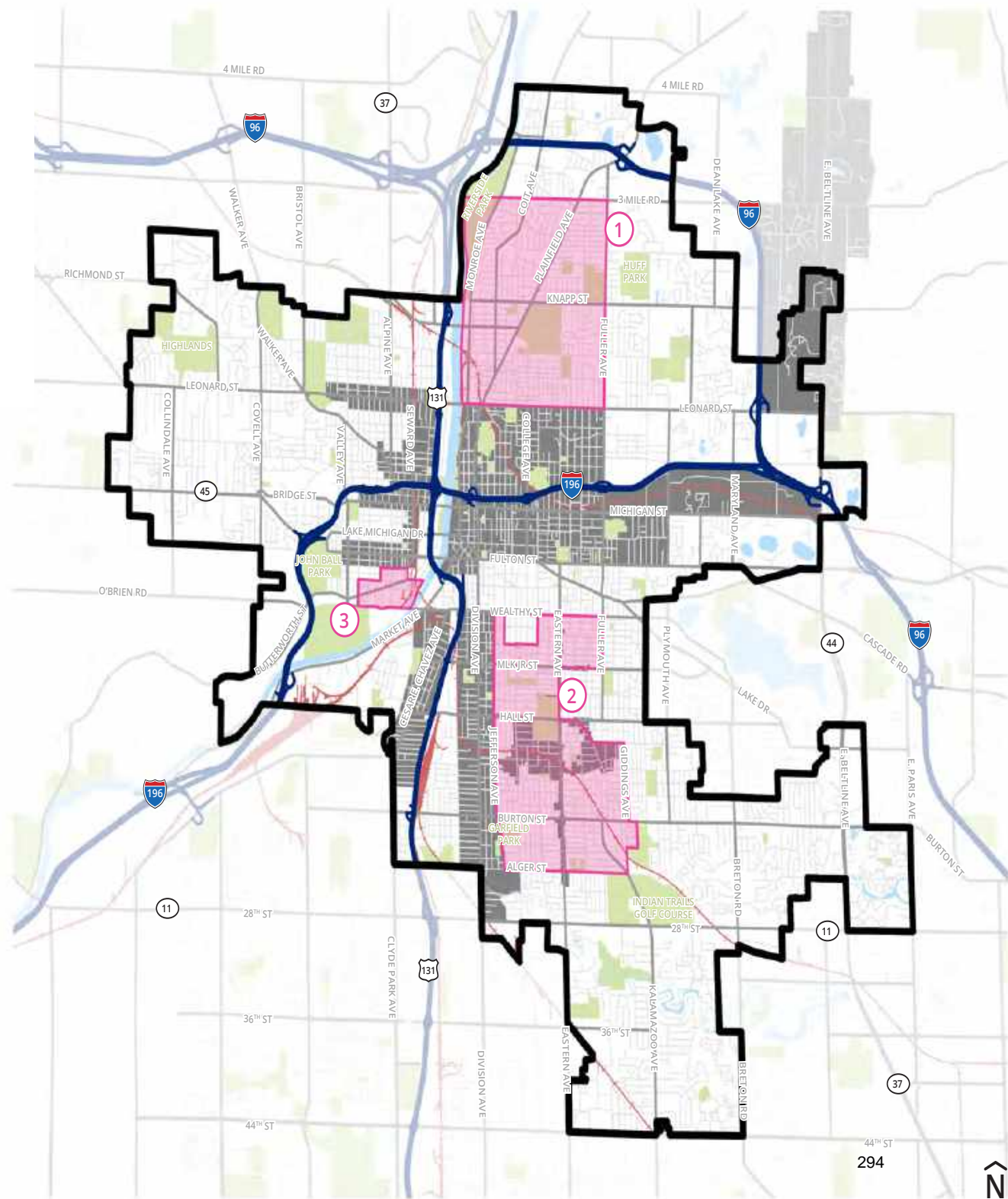
Modern Era Neighborhoods



AREA SPECIFIC PLANS

Grand Rapids Community Master Plan

-  Interstate
-  US Highway
-  State Highway
-  City Boundary
-  Railways
-  Water
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Adopted ASP's
-  Master Plan ASP's
-  1 Creston Neighborhood
-  2 Southtown Neighborhood
-  3 Butterworth Area



Grand Rapids CMP

Community Profile

January 5, 2023

**BRIDGE TO
OUR FUTURE**

GRAND RAPIDS
COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

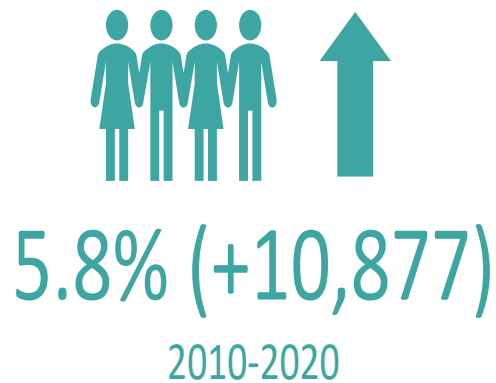
Purpose

- Summarize and analyze baseline conditions and trends
- Inform and support recommendations for the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan
- Topics:
 - *People*
 - *Place*
 - *Prosperity*

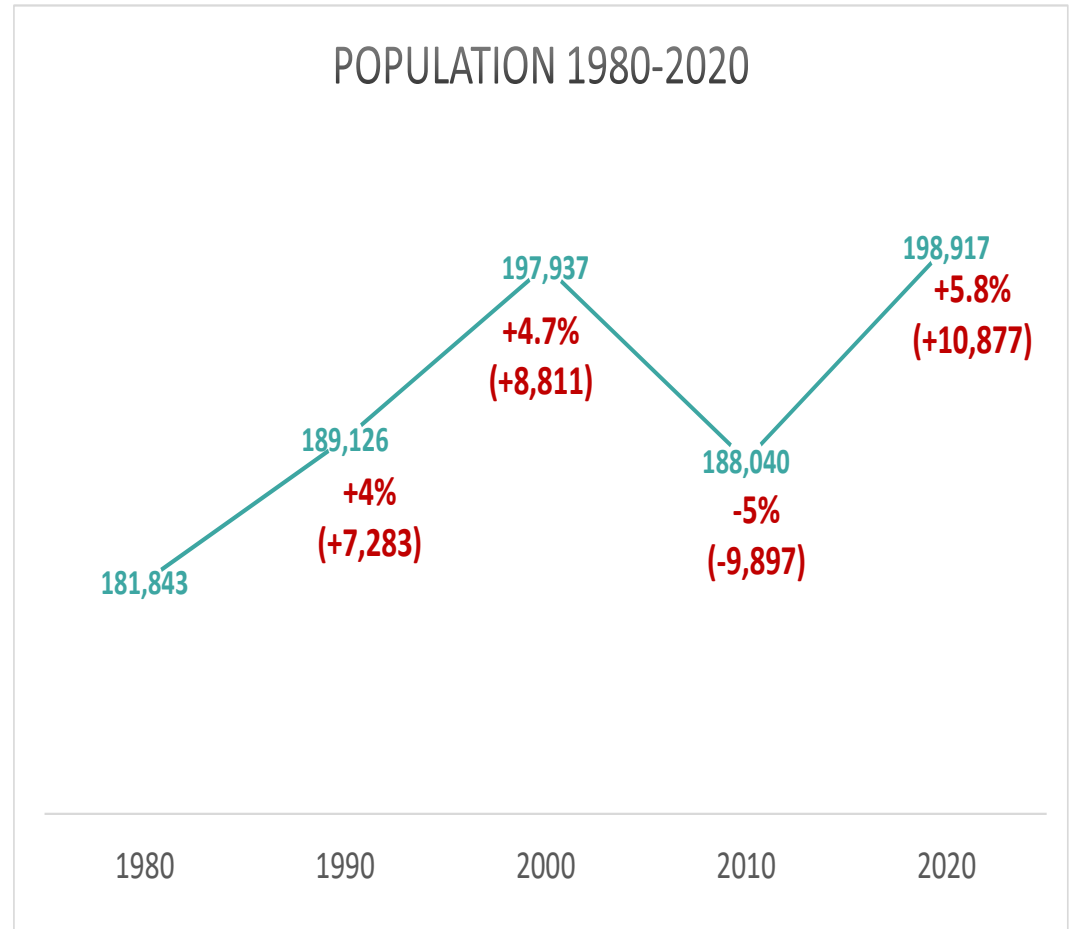
PEOPLE

Demographic conditions and trends

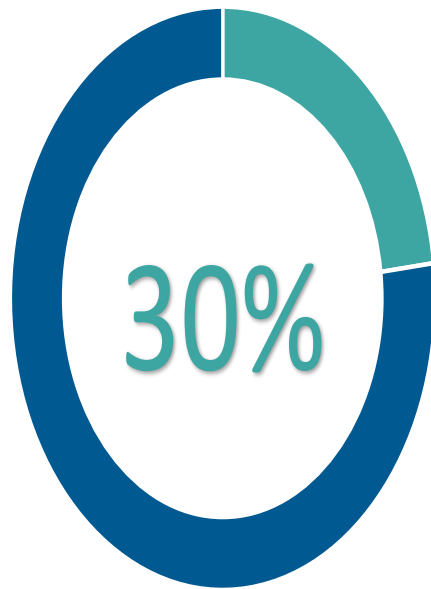
After a short period of decline, the population has recovered and is increasing.



- Grand Rapids experienced a decrease in population between 2000 and 2010 (5%) but gained that population back by 2020.



Grand Rapids sits within a county experiencing high population growth.



■ Grand Rapids ■ Kent County

Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of the population.

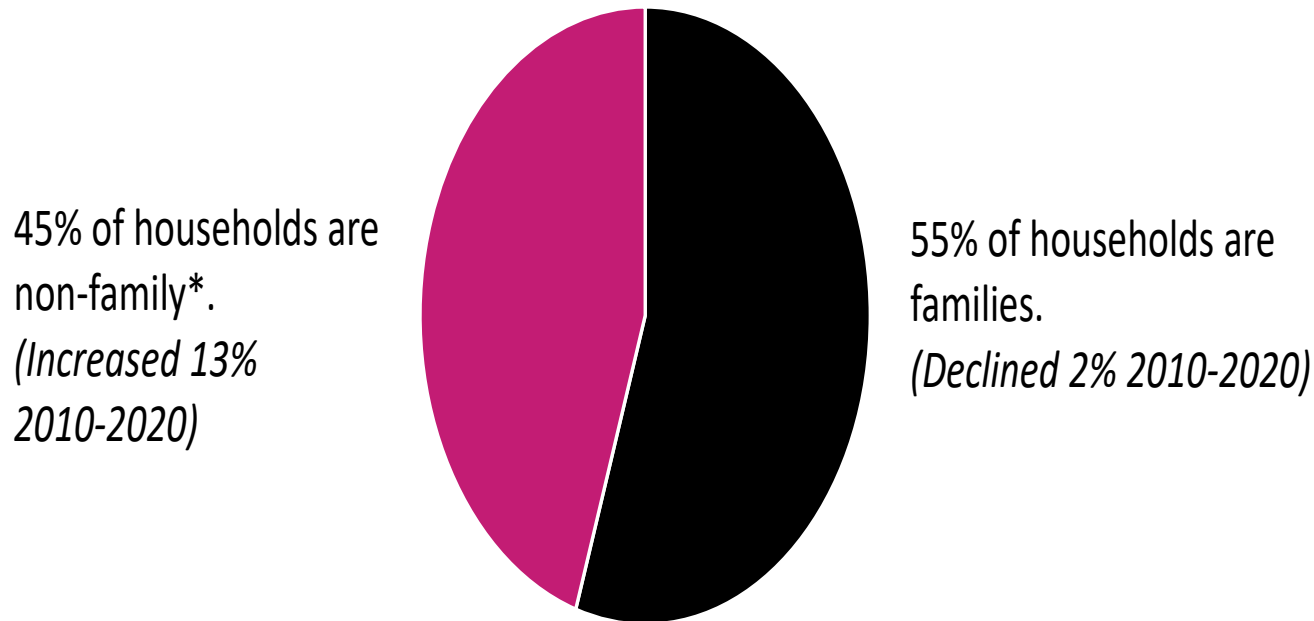
- The population of Kent County is expected to grow by to 837,330 by 2045 (+169,000, 27%).
- At 30% of the county, Grand Rapids will grow to approximately 251,000 residents if it maintains its 30% share of county population (+52,000).



26% (+52,000)

2020-2045

Non-family households are increasing.

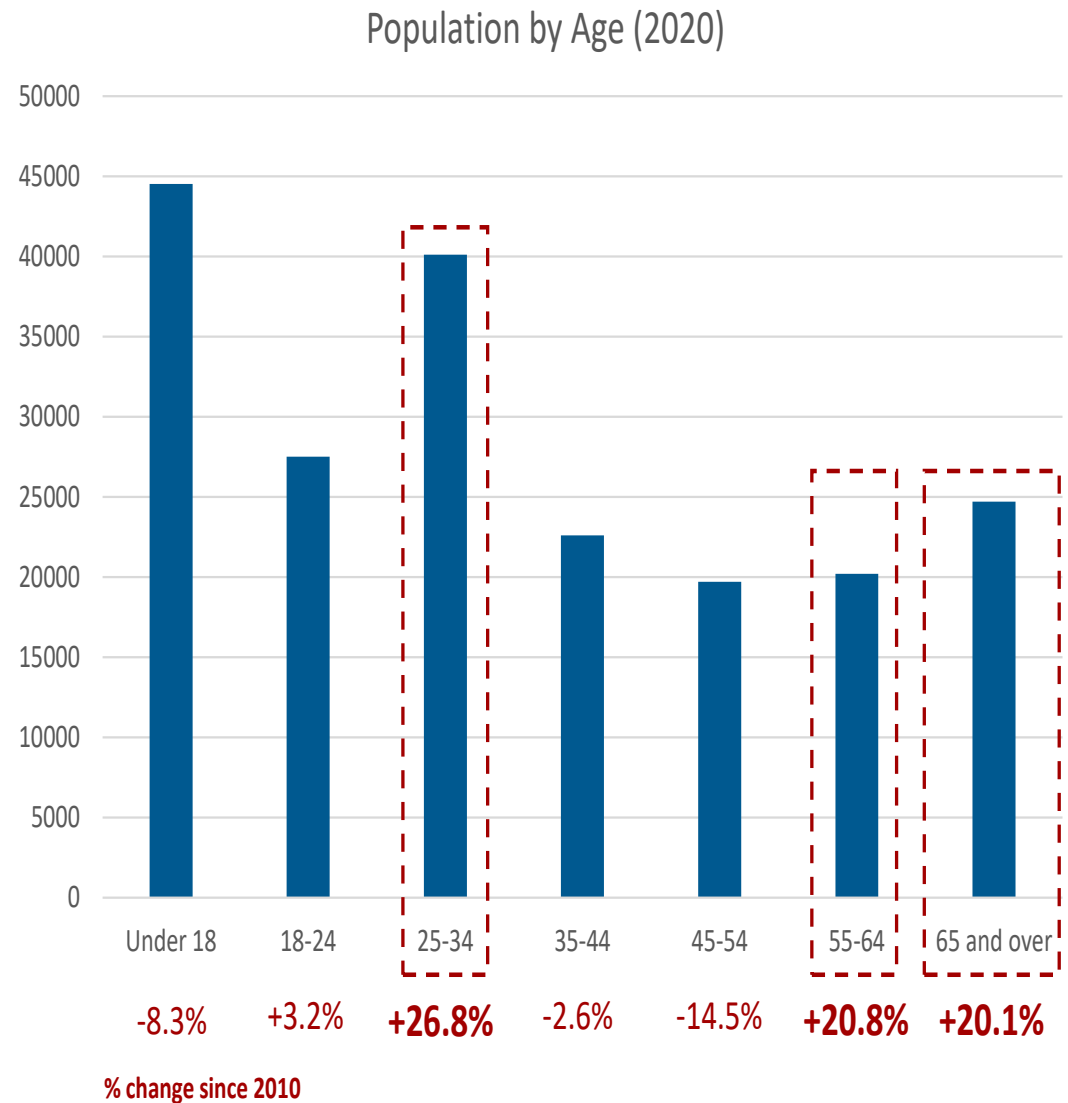


- The average family size remains steady (2.47 in 2010 and 2.51 in 2020)
- 25% of households have children under 18 years old (19,000)
- Not only are non-family households increasing, they are increasing at a faster rate than the decline of family households.

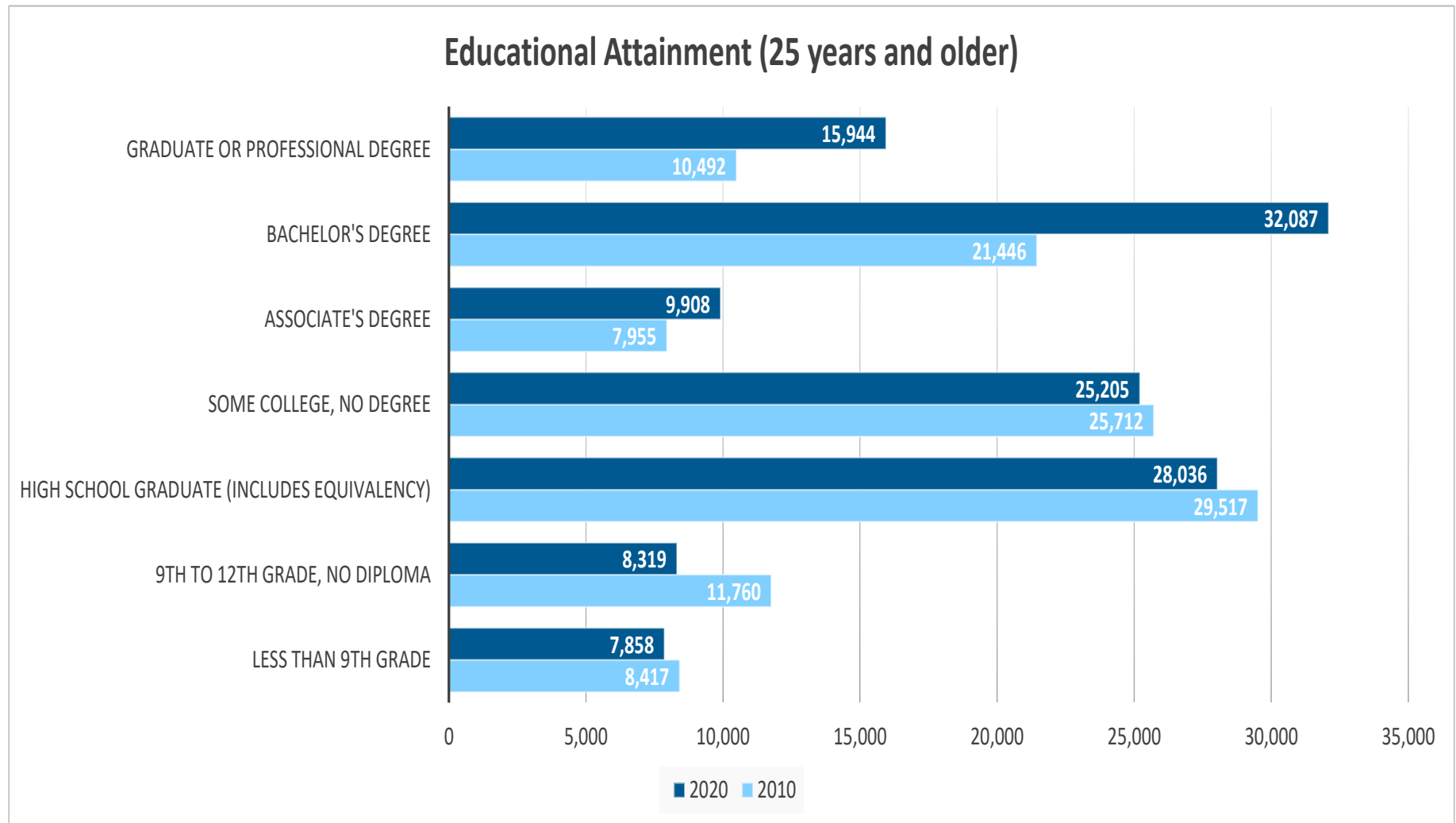
**A non-family household consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom they are not related.*

Grand Rapids remains a young city.

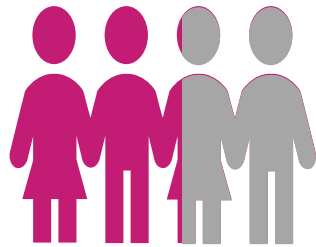
- Median age (31.4 years) has held steady since 2000.
- 25-34 was the fastest growing age group but seniors are also growing.



Educational attainment improved between 2010 and 2020.



Education is also improving among children.



53% of 3 and 4-year-olds
enrolled in preschool (+8%
since 2010)



82% of students
graduating high school
on time (+14% since
2010)

Grand Rapids is growing more diverse.

- Foreign born population increased 33% (16,615 to 22,094).
- There is a high level of English proficiency in Grand Rapids. Of the population over 5 years of age, only 8.4% speak English less than “very well”.

↑ 187.6%
Two or more races

↑ 56%
American Indian

↑ 46.4%
Other

↑ 40.2%
Asian

↑ 16%
Hispanic or LatinX

↓ 5%
White / Caucasian

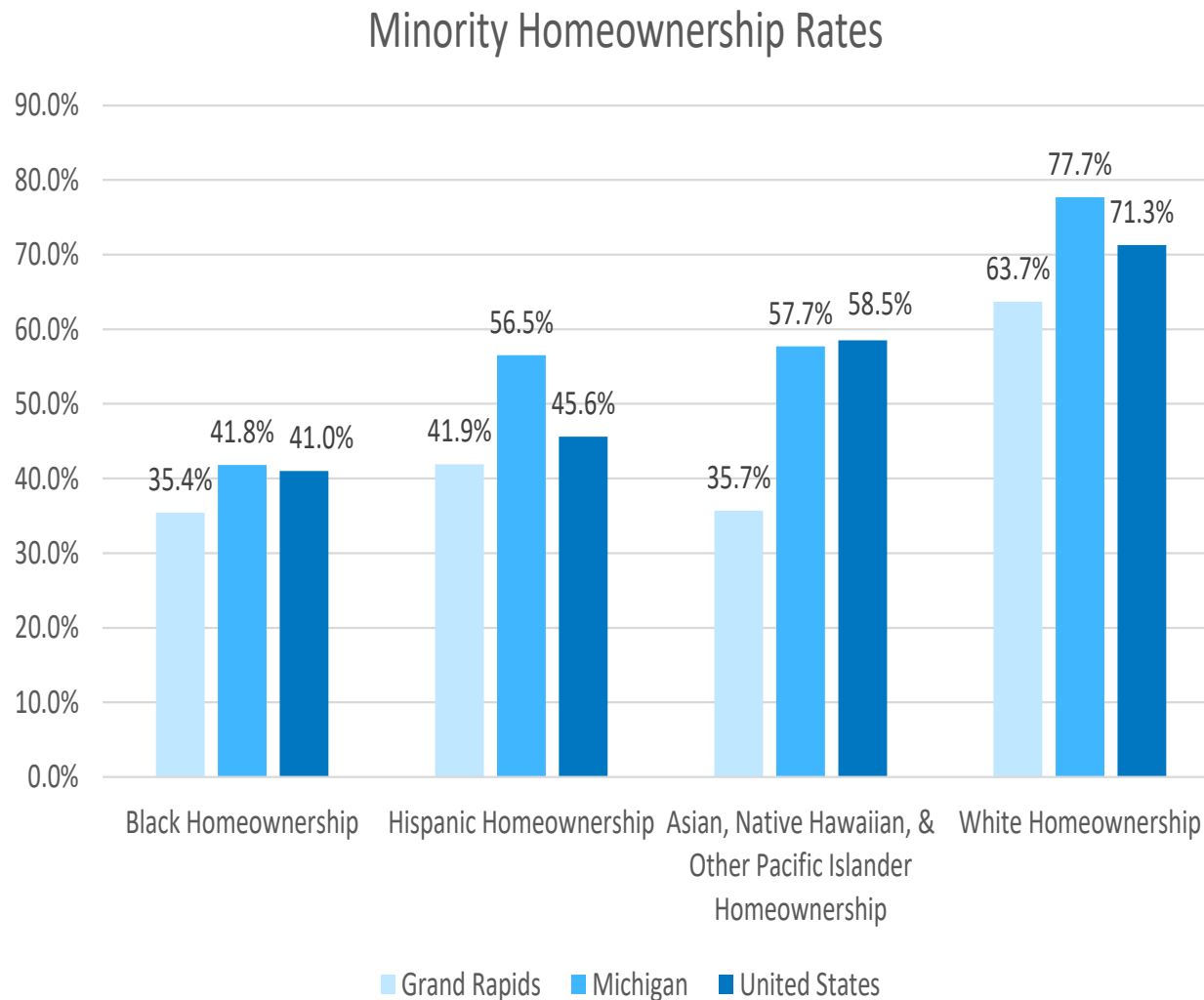
↓ 7.8
Black + African American

↓ 62%
Native Hawaiian + Other
Pacific Islander

Grand Rapids is more diverse than the county and state.

	Grand Rapids	Kent County	Michigan
White, alone	65.5%	81.8%	79%
Black or African American alone	18.1%	10.7%	14.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.4%	0.7%	0.7%
Asian alone	2.6%	3.4%	3.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	16.3%	3.2%	2.7%
Hispanic or Latino	16.3%	11.3%	5.6%

There is a low rate of minority homeownership compared to the state and nation.



Source: Construction Coverage

Family and child poverty rates are declining in Grand Rapids



30% of families are
burdened by high housing
costs



33% of children under
the age of 17 live in
poverty, down from 44%
in 2010

Source: Michigan League for Public Policy

**Burdened Household: those that spend at least 35% of their monthly income on housing costs (US Census Bureau)*

Grand Rapids has a higher percentage of people with disabilities than the county and state.

12.6% (25,000)

Grand Rapids

8% (52,600)

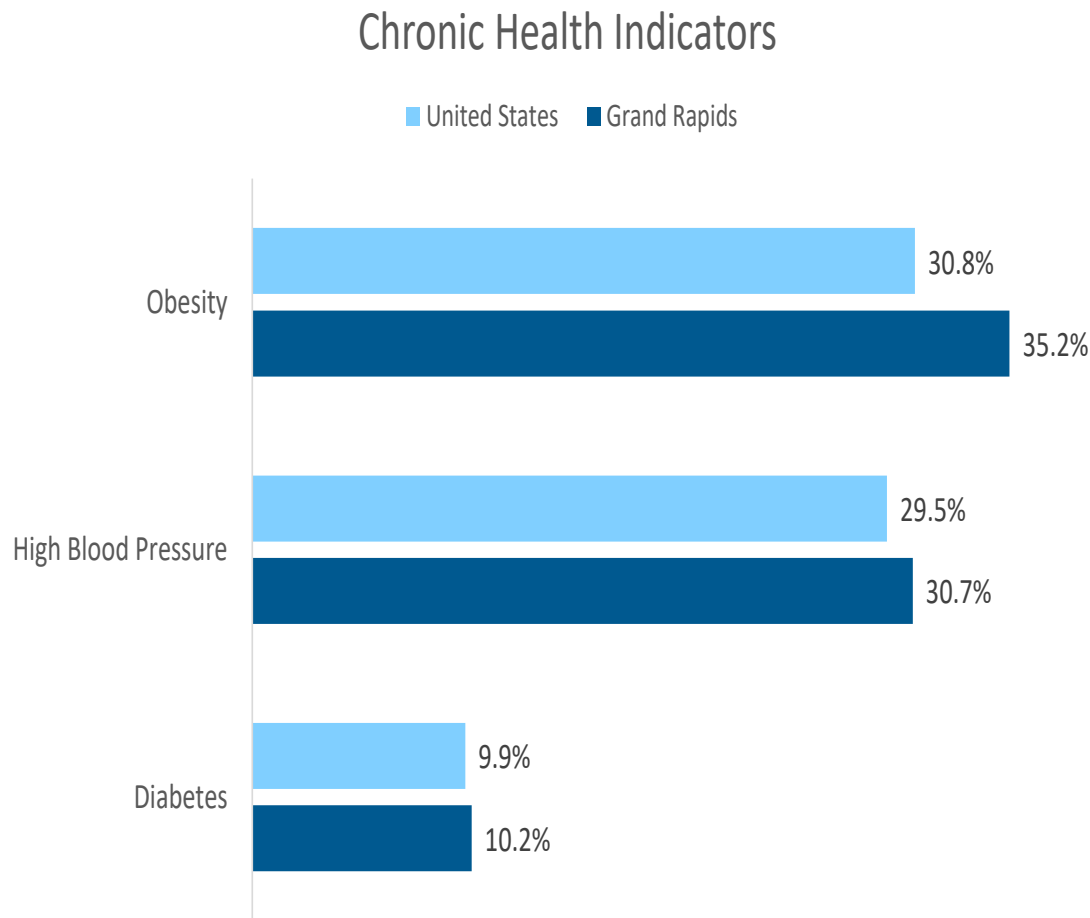
Kent County

10.4% (1,048,000)

Michigan

**Disability: a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, learning, or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job or business. (US Census Bureau)*

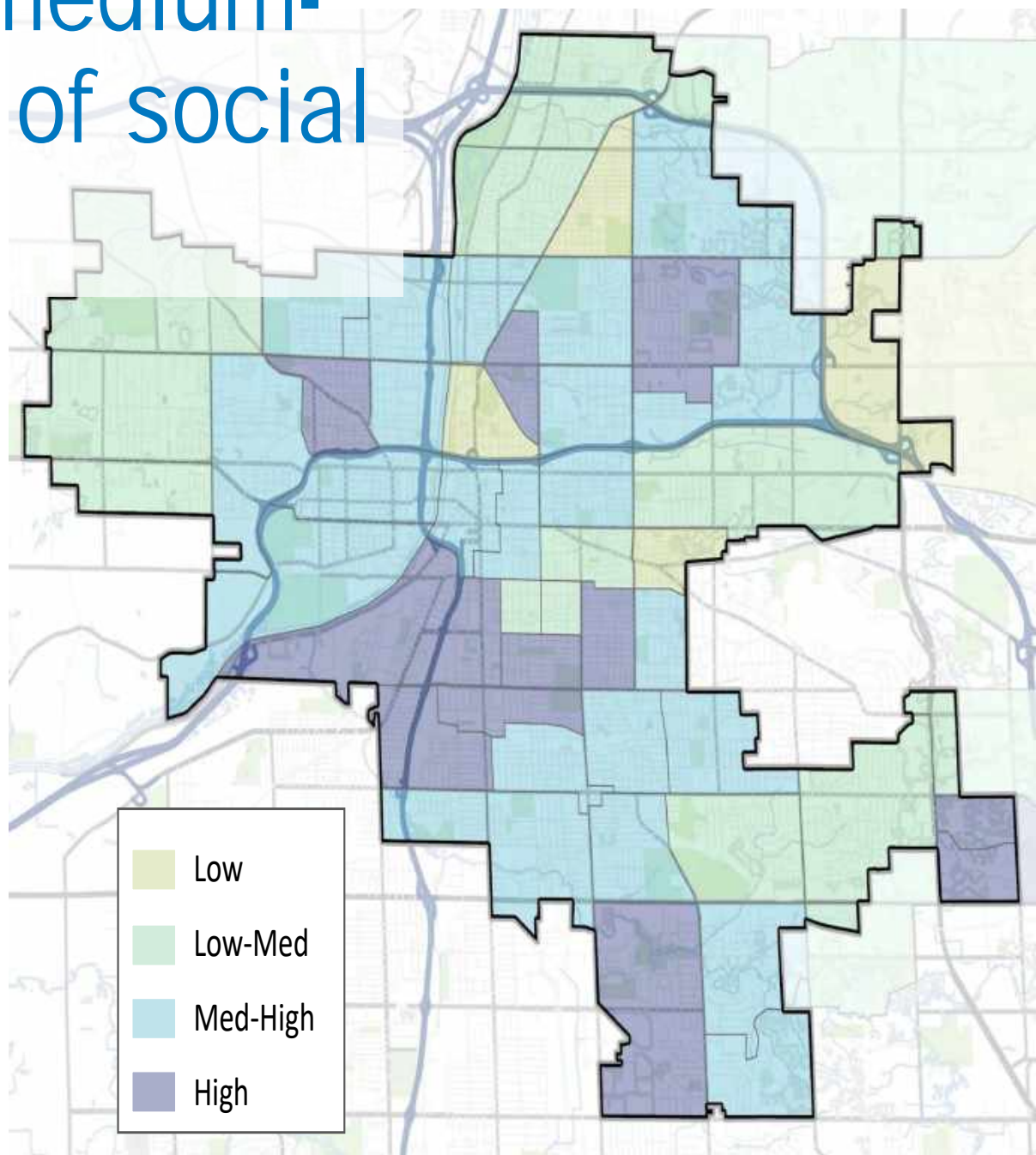
Grand Rapids falls below the nation in key health indicators.



- 37.2% of houses in Grand Rapids have a high level of potential lead risk, compared to 17.7% across the nation.
- Infant mortality rates have declined since 2010, from 9.0 to 7.4. Rates are on par with the county (6.7) and state (6.8).

66% considered medium-high to high level of social vulnerability.

- 23% at high level
- The degree to which a community responds to hazardous events points to social vulnerability.
- Overall vulnerability takes socioeconomic status, household characteristics, racial and ethnic minority status, and housing type and transportation into account
- Levels of vulnerability identified by census tract



Key Takeaways

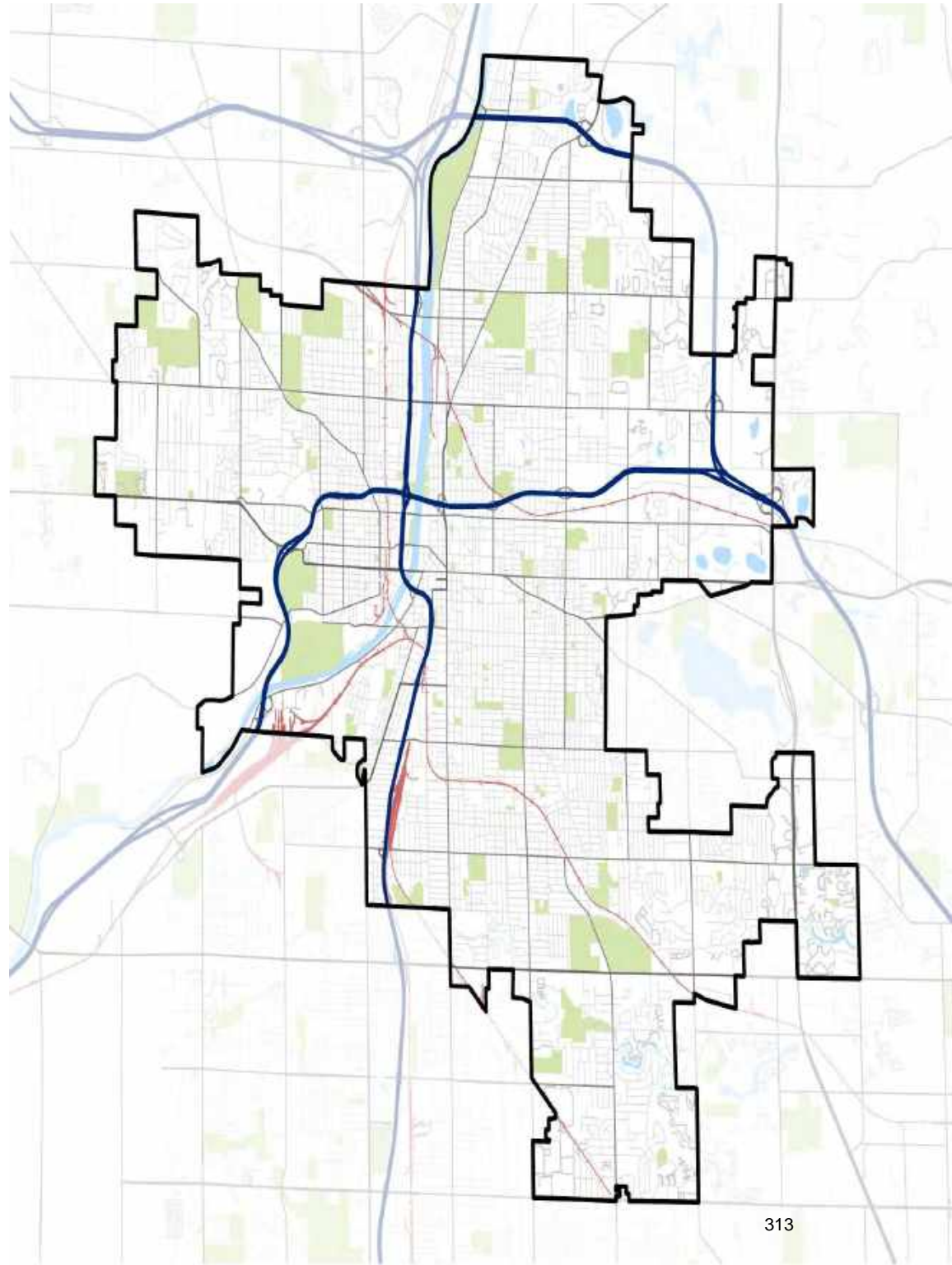
- Population has returned to (and slightly exceeded) the 2000 level, after a 5% decline during the early 2000s.
- Population may increase by 52,000 by 2045 if City maintains its 30% share of Kent County population growth.
- The city remains young and educated.
- Non-family households are growing.
- Diversity continues to increase.
- But minority groups lag in homeownership and other wealth indicators.

PLACE

Built environment, community characteristics, housing, and mobility /
transportation

Grand Rapids is large in the state but small in the region.

- At approximately 45 square miles (29,000 acres), Grand Rapids is roughly 1/3 the size of Detroit.
- However, the City makes up only a small portion of the county's land area (five percent).



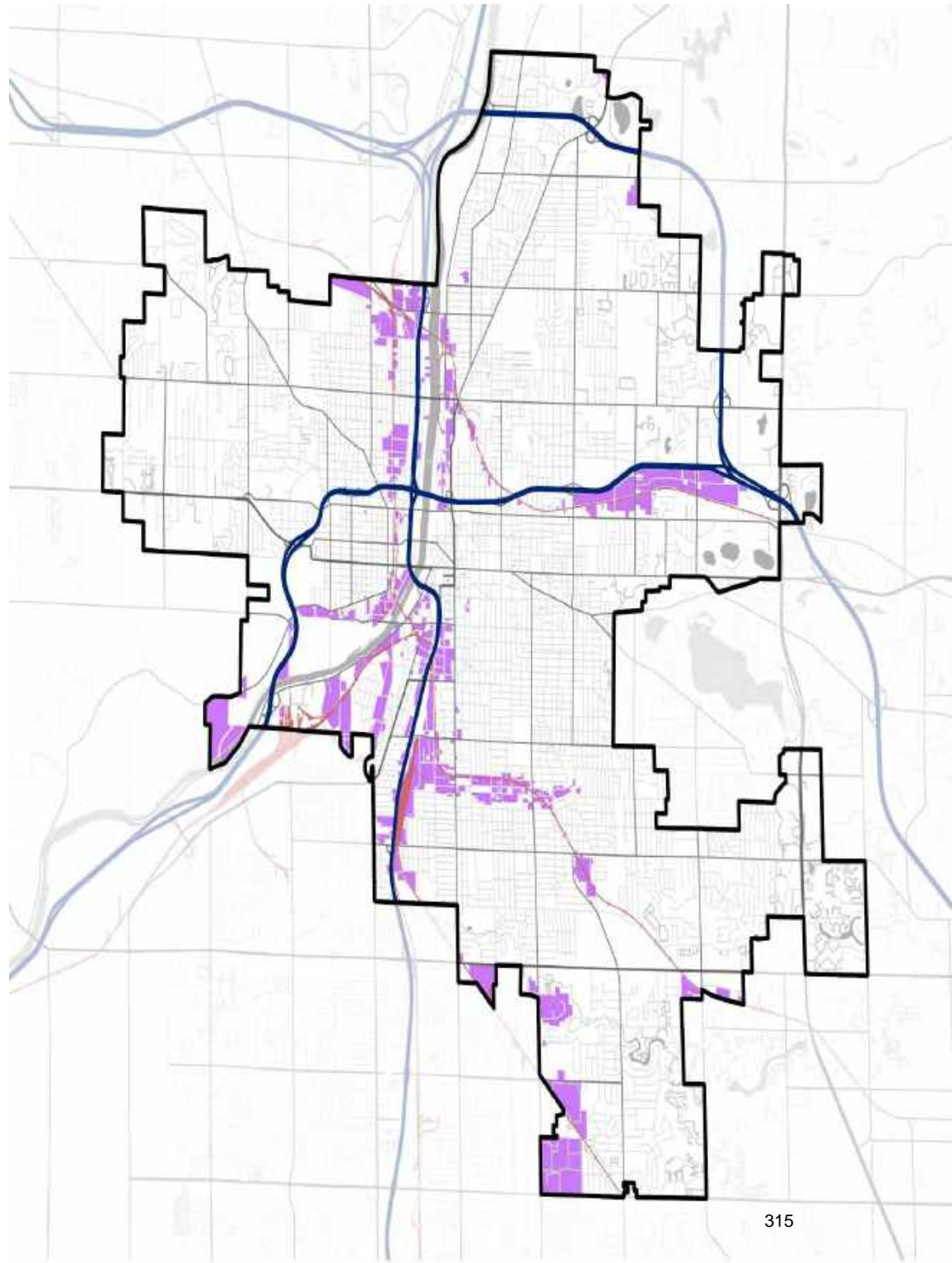
More than one third of the City is residential.

- 35 percent of the City is single-family which increases to 43 percent if you include two or more-unit structure
- Complementing neighborhoods and enhancing housing is an important piece of land use decisions



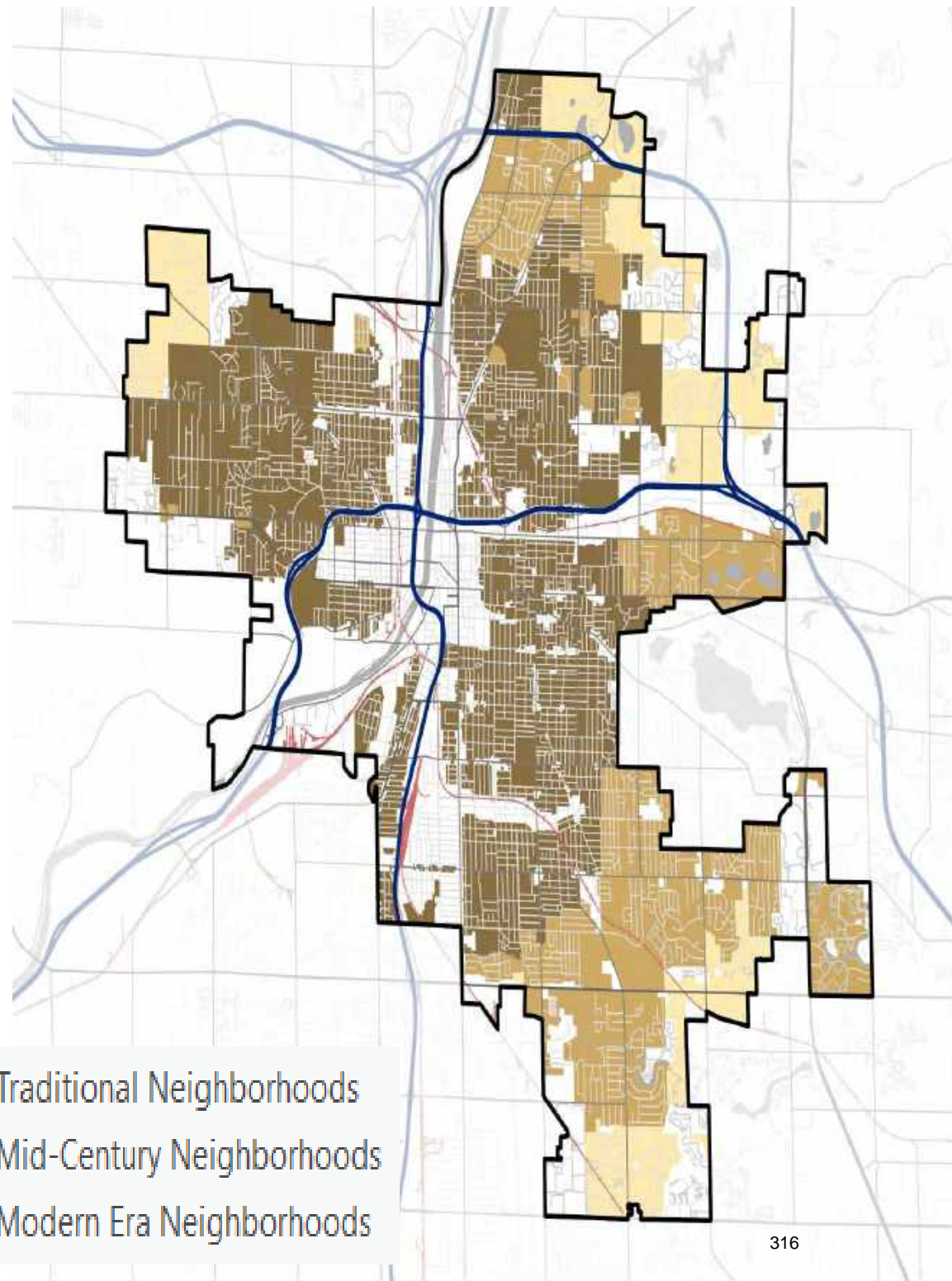
Industrial is integrated along key corridors.

- Industrial land today covers six percent (1,750 acres), primarily located along the river and major roadways
- These areas offer unique opportunities for future redevelopment
- With limited land availability, relocating industrial within the City would require careful consideration



Neighborhoods are defined by three unique types.

- The Zoning Ordinance, which regulates land use and development standards, defines three types of neighborhoods:
 - Traditional – dense, grid-pattern streets
 - Mid-Century – mostly grid-pattern with larger lots
 - Modern Era – large lots on curvilinear streets
- Special districts regulate land in areas such as downtown, the airport, etc.

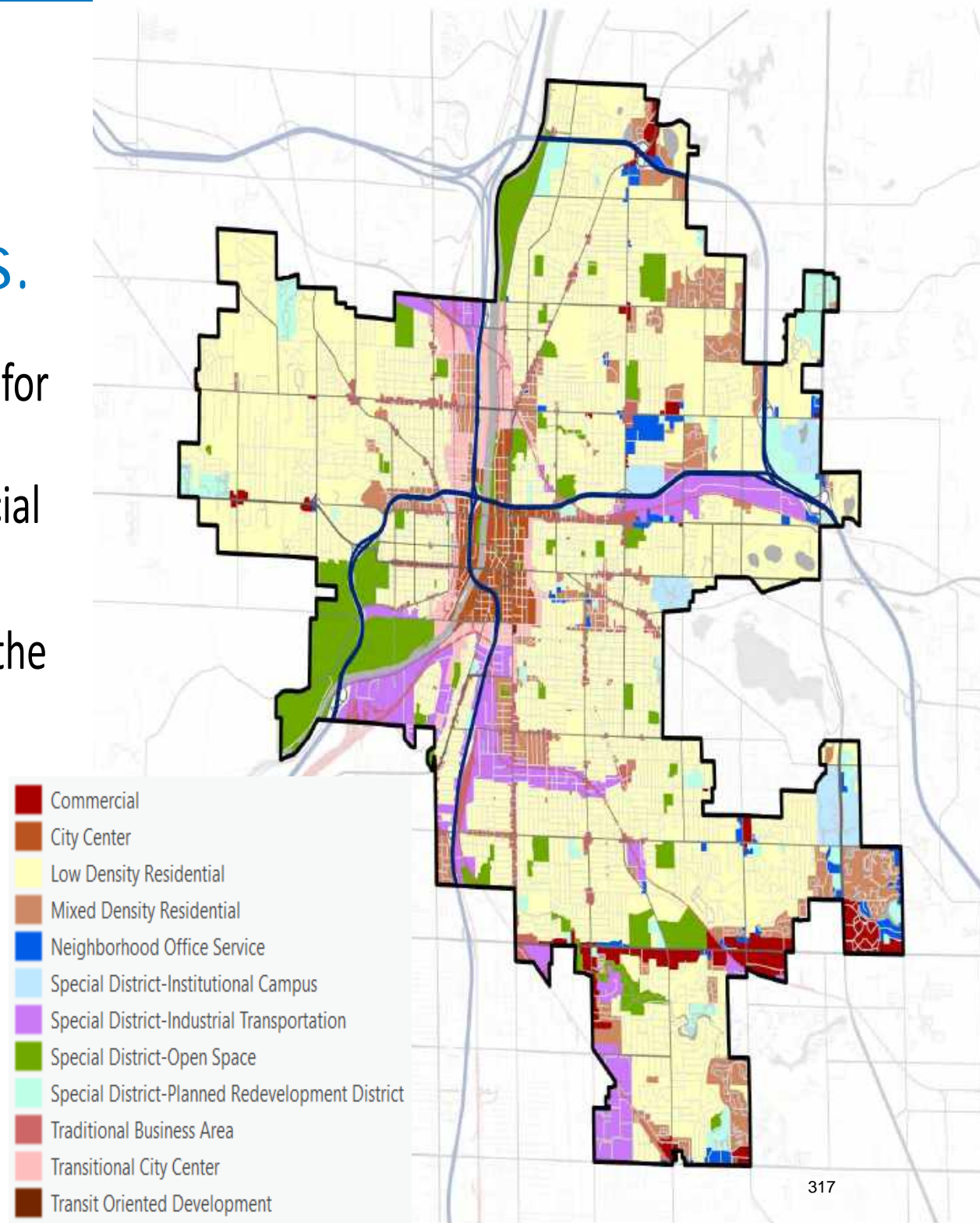


Seven zoning districts further outline regulations.

- Each neighborhood type allows for a variety of uses from mixed residential to office to commercial
- Aligning regulations with neighborhood types reinforces the importance of building strong communities with access to essential services

**Transit-oriented development (TOD) creates compact, mixed-use communities near transit where people enjoy easy access to jobs and services*

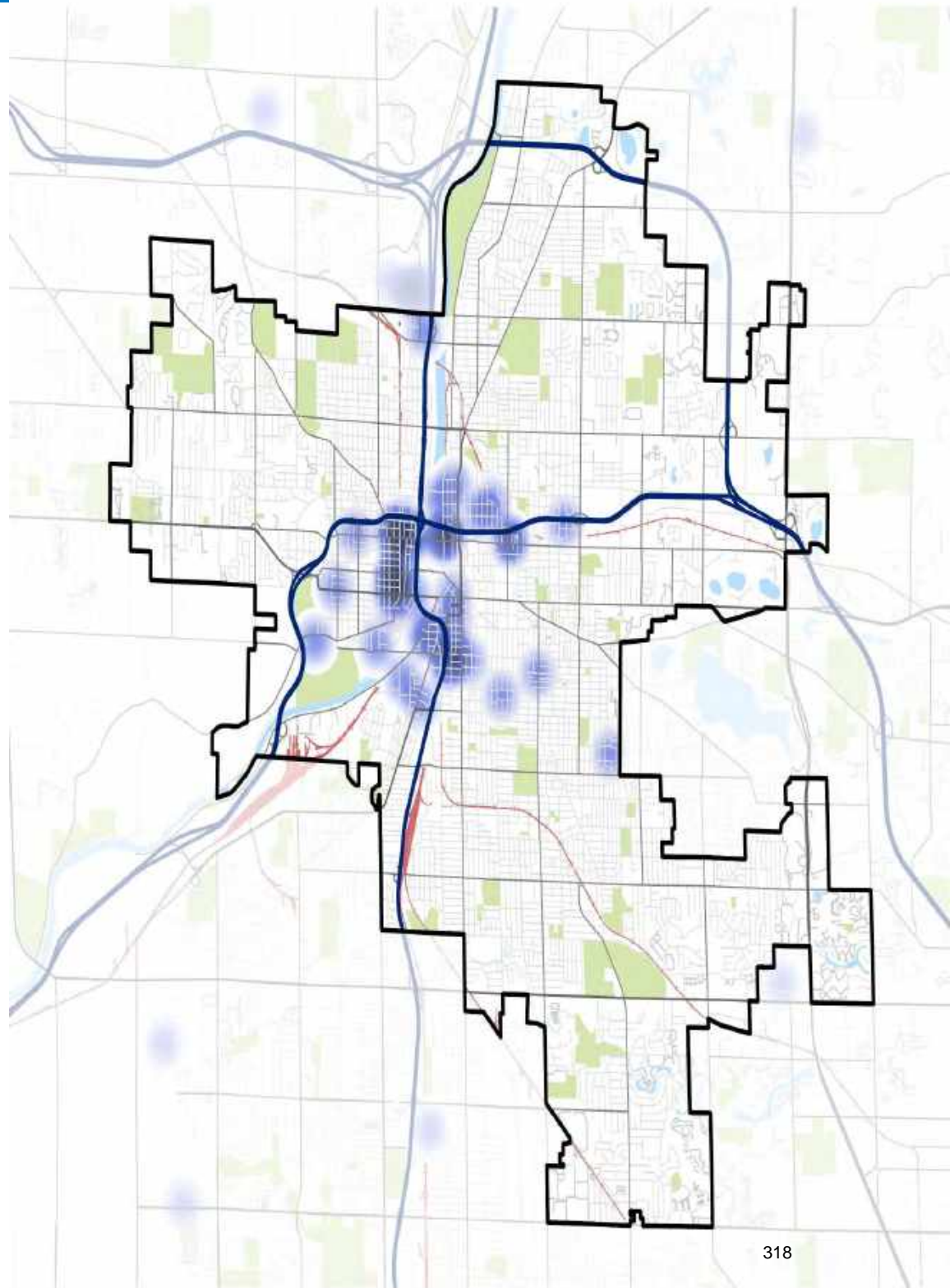
Source: City of Grand Rapids GIS



41 brownfield* sites exist in Grand Rapids today.

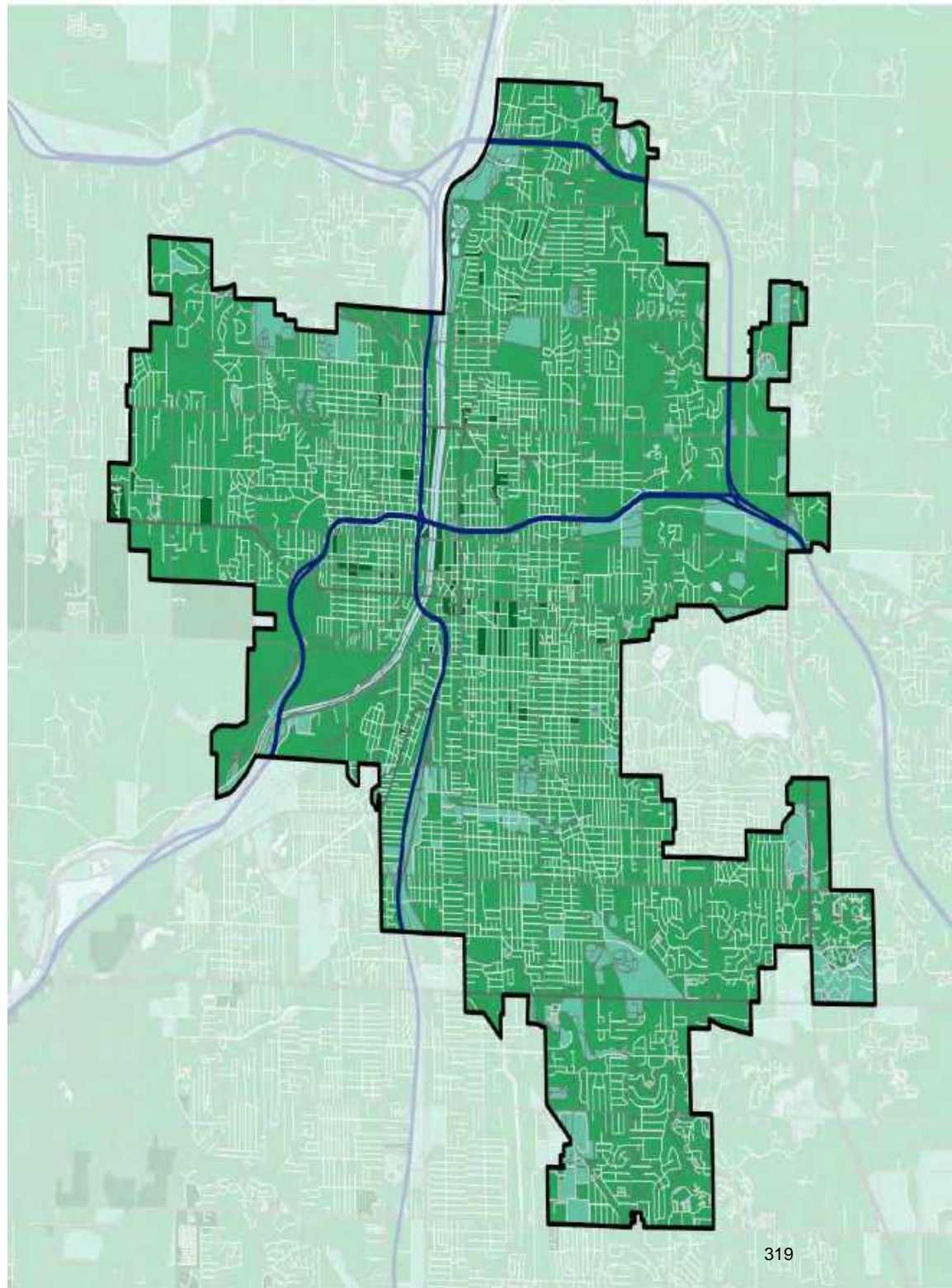
- This includes identified sites monitored by the EPA, many of which have received funding for remediation or redevelopment
- Majority are located near downtown or along the Grand River
- These may present unique environmental factors for redevelopment

**A former industrial or commercial site where future use is affected by real or perceived environmental contamination.*



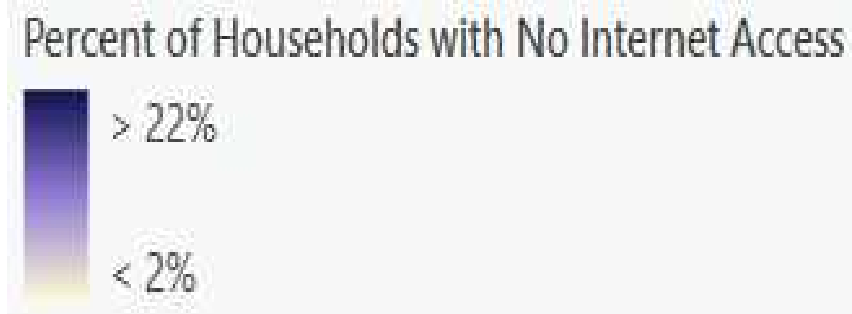
City has a range of internet providers.

- Grand Rapids has access to more than one internet provider, with some areas having more than five options
- This offers the opportunity for neighborhoods and businesses to connect to high-speed internet



However, access varies across the City.

- Census tracts in the southwest and along outer edges of the city have a larger percentage of households with no internet access
- With multiple providers and service offered across the City, many of these areas face other challenges for accessing internet such as cost



Grand Rapids has over 130 distinct open spaces.

- Ranging from parks to golf courses to cemeteries, the City contains a variety of natural and recreational areas
- Almost 2,000 acres or seven percent of all land in the City is maintained park space
- Grand Rapids currently has 7.7 accessible acres per 1,000 residents, compared to the national average of 8.9 acres per 1,000 residents



Park



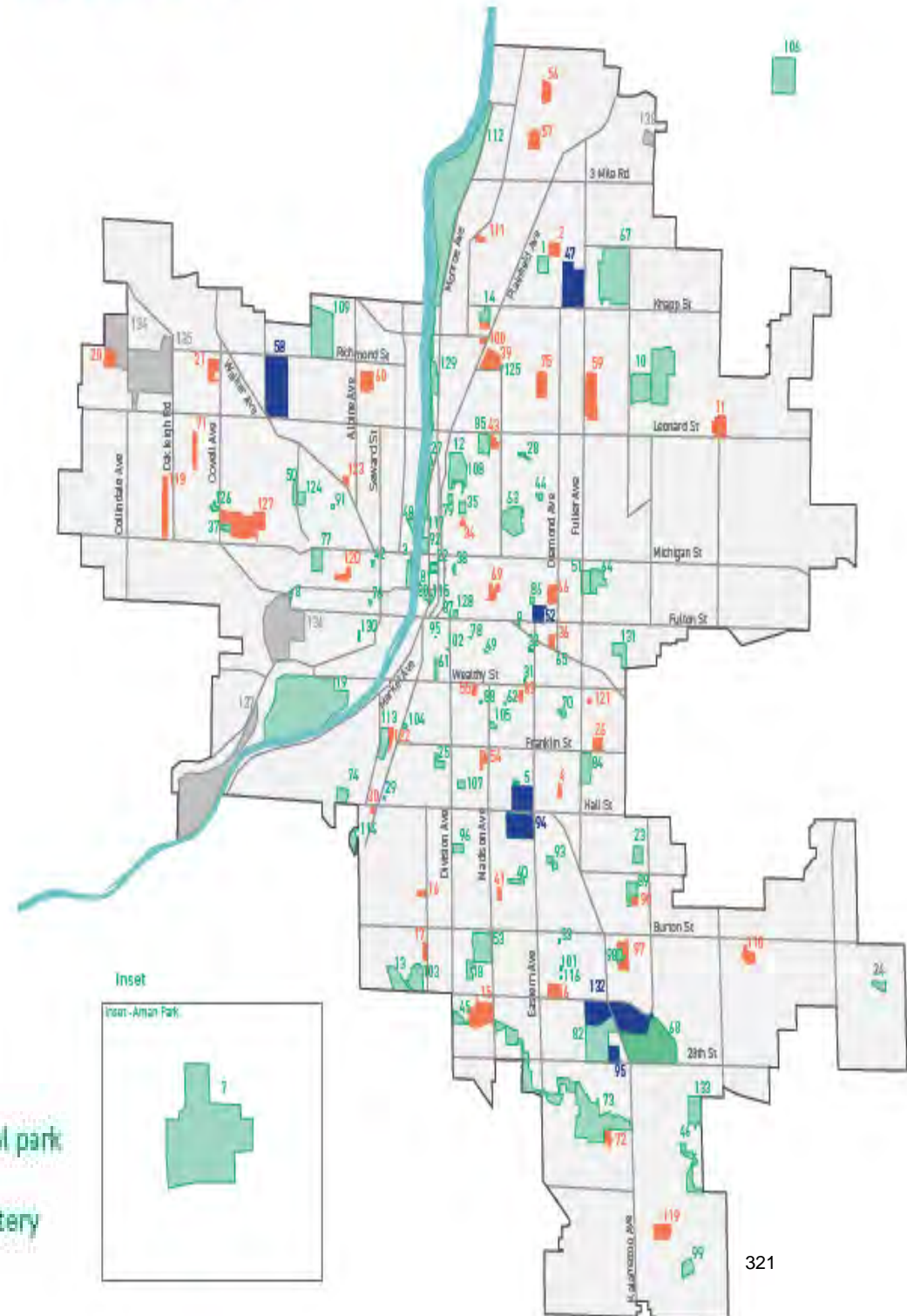
Golf course



School park

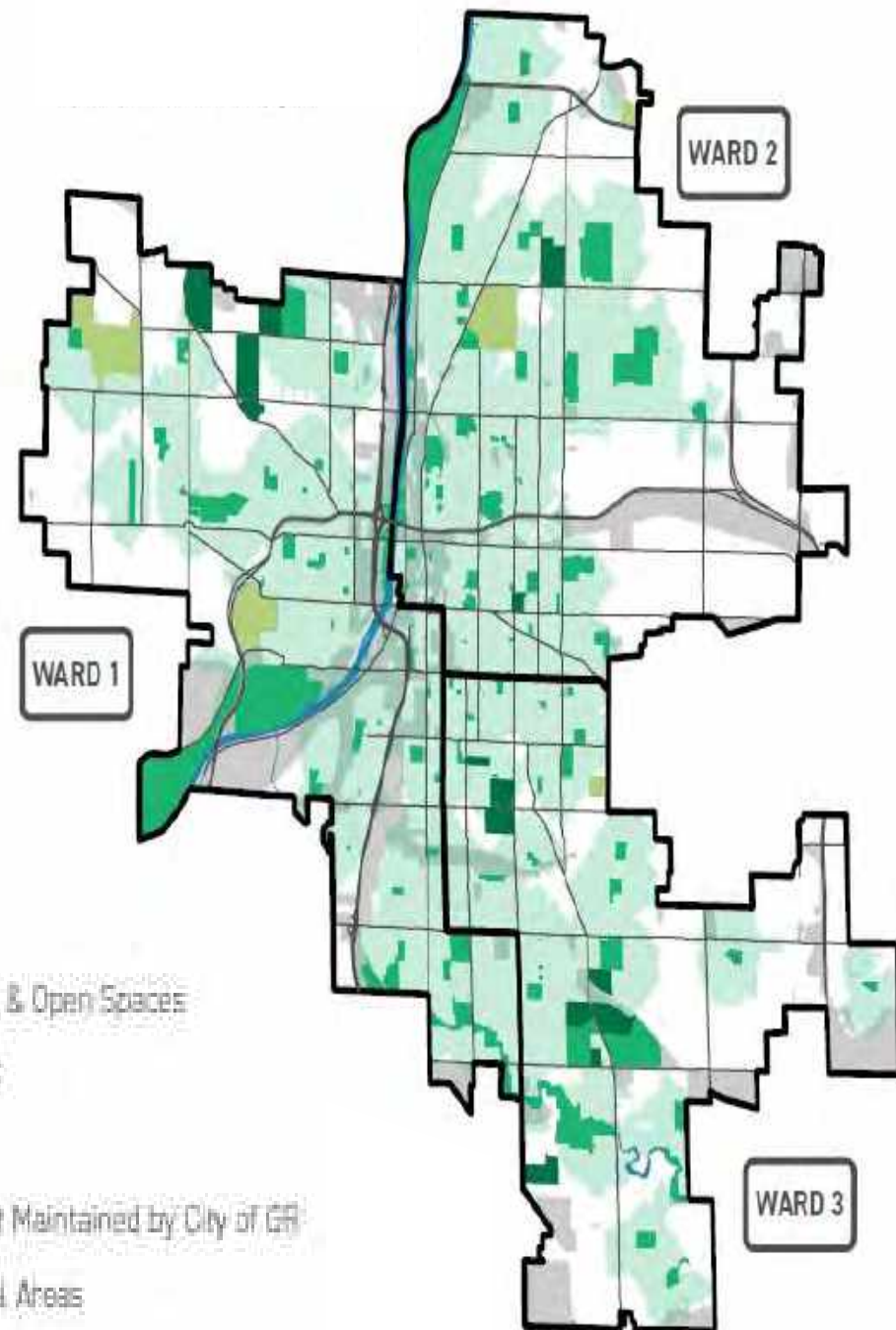


Cemetery



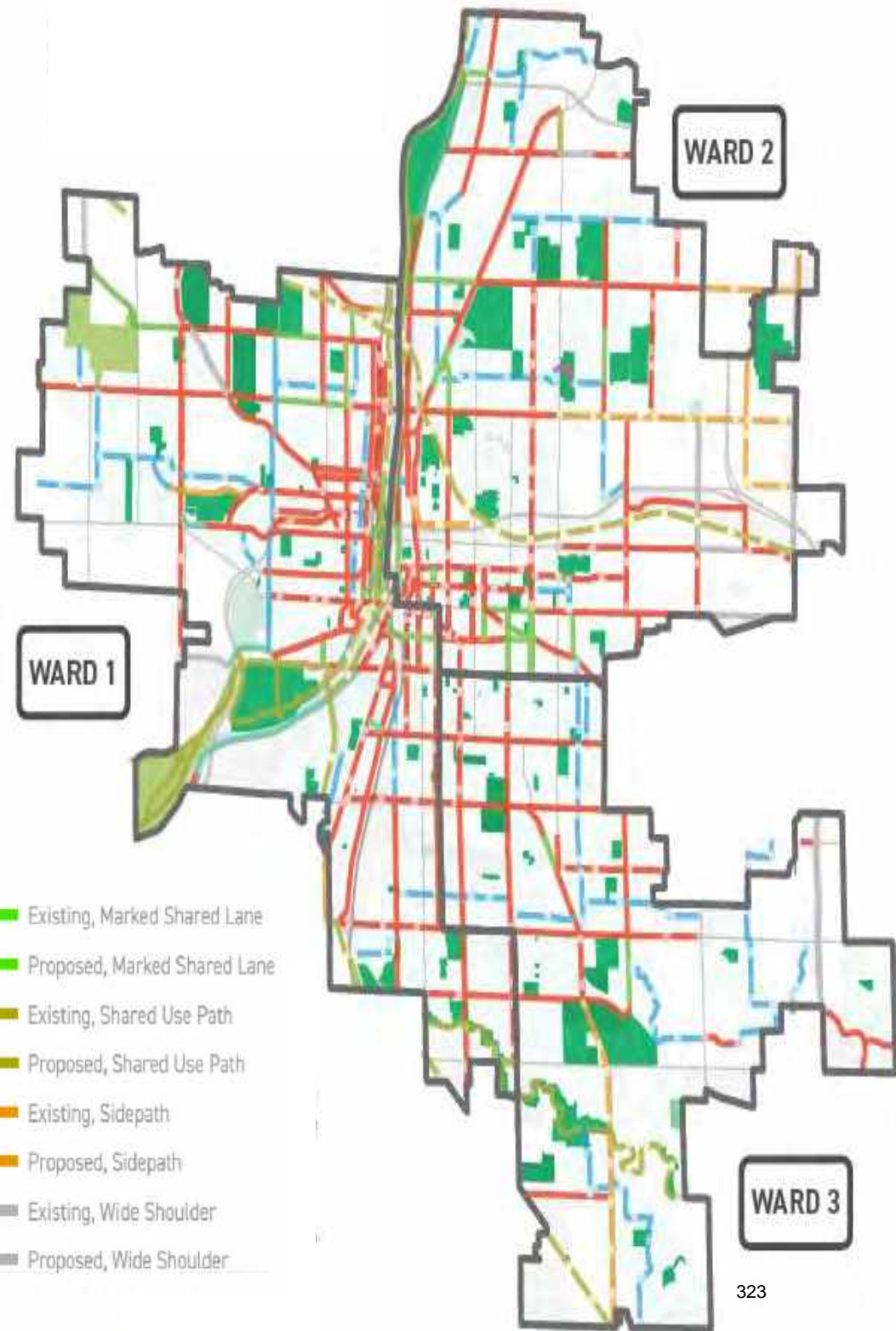
80 percent of residents are within a 10 min walk to parks.

- Most residents are within walking distance to either a neighborhood or city park
- This includes public parks, schools, and open spaces available for use by the public



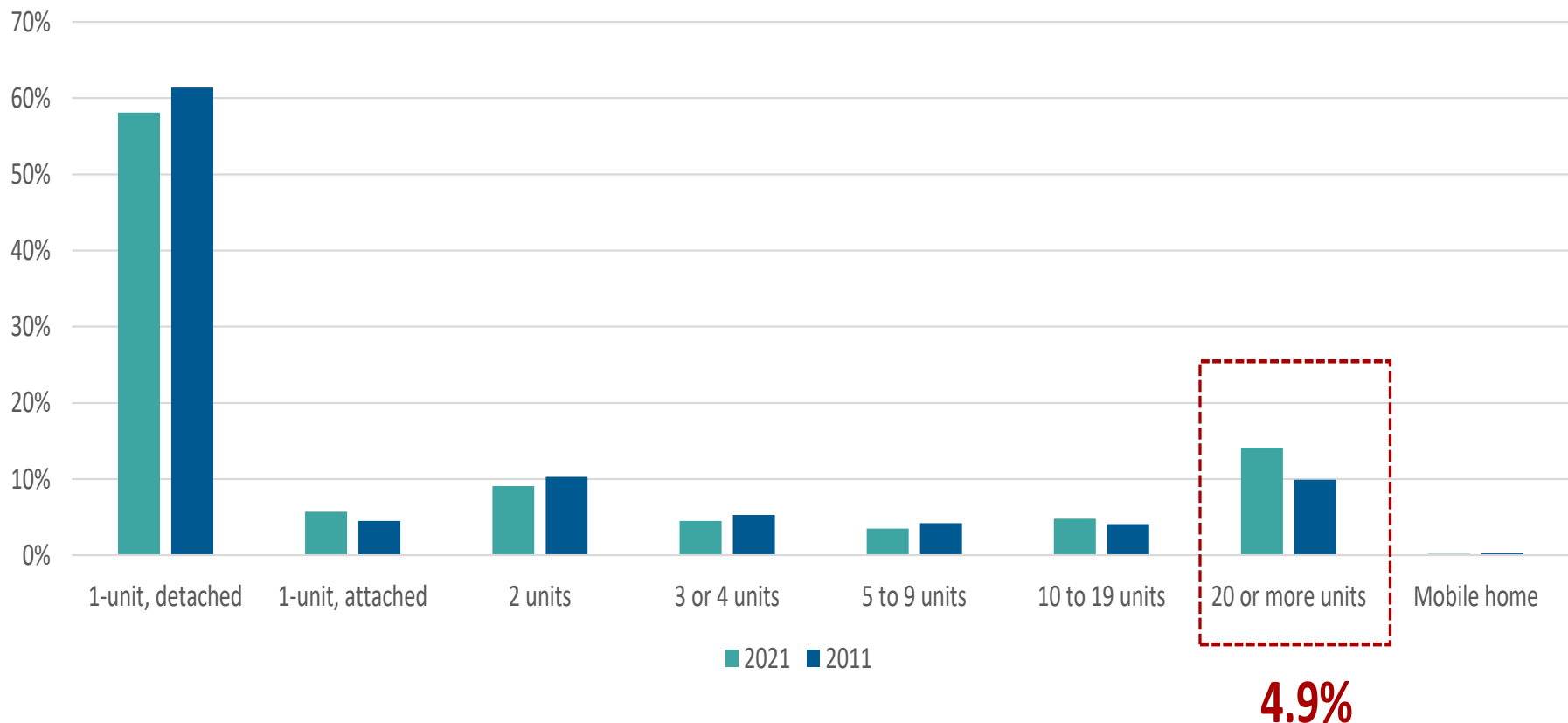
The City has a broad trail network.

- Trails and bike paths are provided throughout the City, with many plans to close gaps and complete the network
- Majority of neighborhoods have direct connection to a trail system, both locally and throughout the City

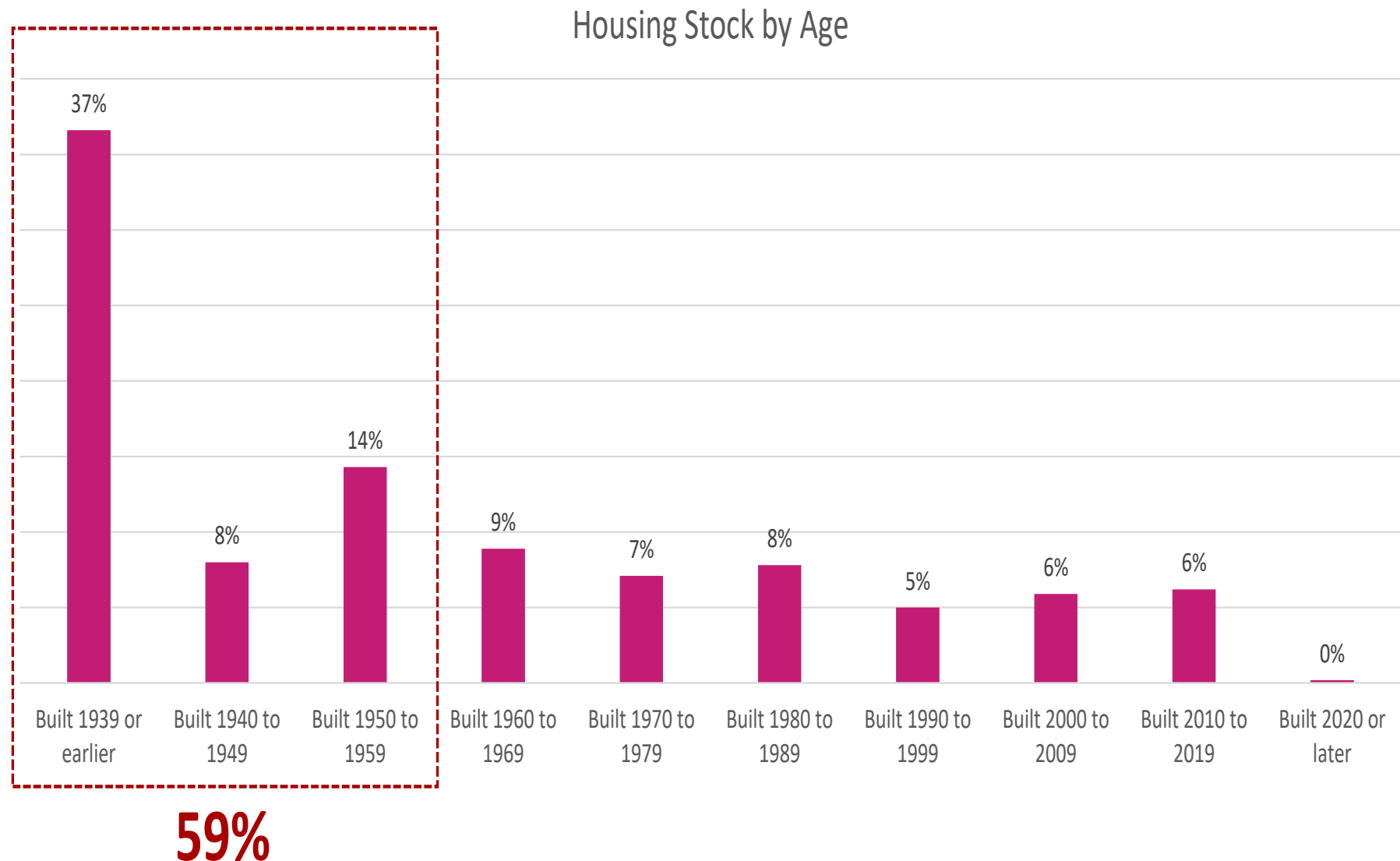


Large apartment complexes increased the most since 2011.

Housing Structure by Type
2021 vs 2011

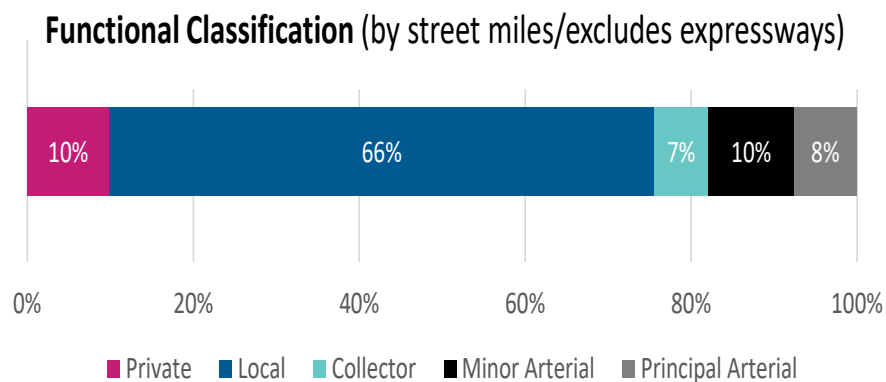


Much of the city's housing stock was built prior to 1960.

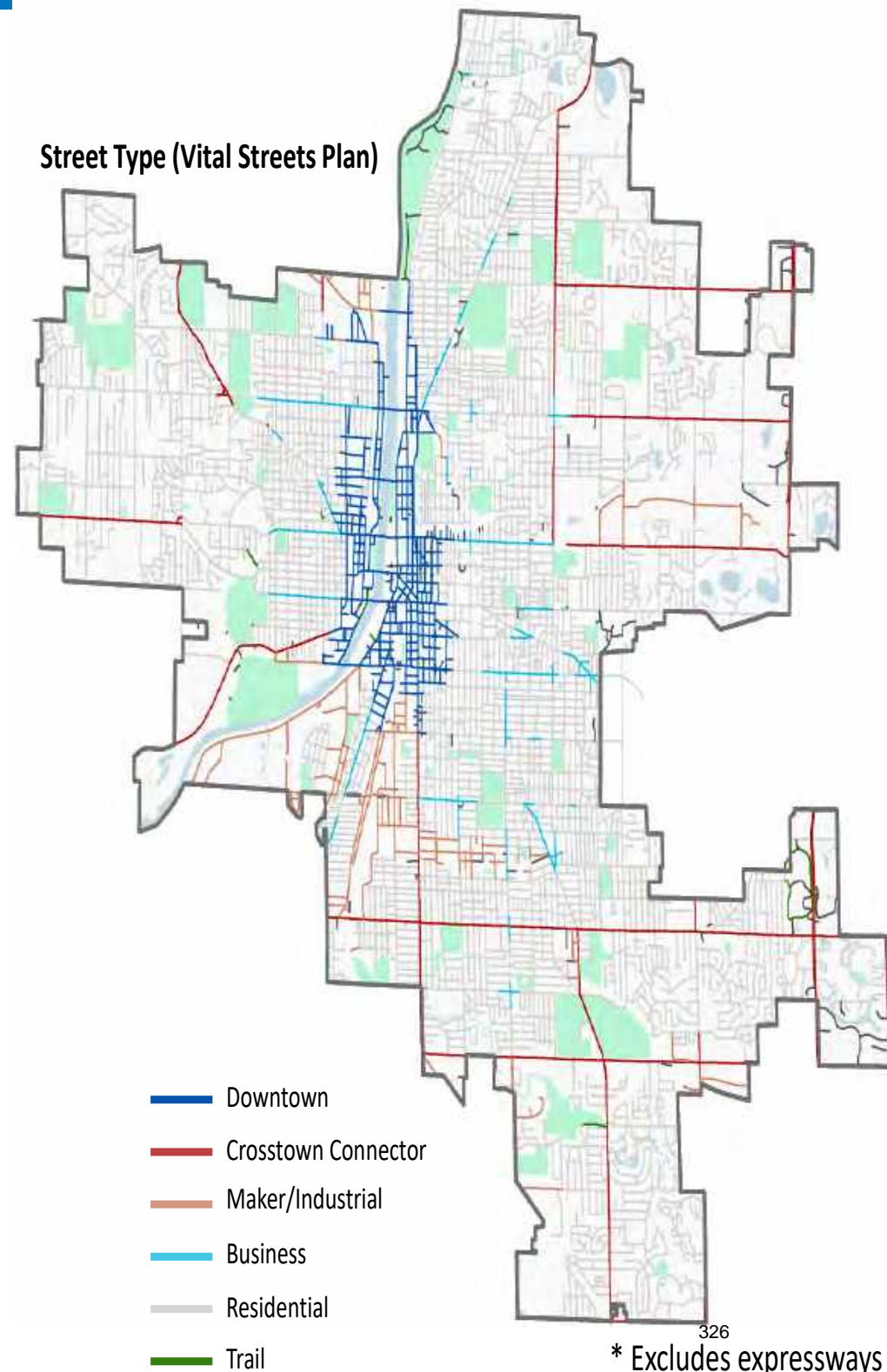


Most Grand Rapids roads are local streets, but many have high speed limits.

- Over 720 miles of streets*, two thirds are local streets
- 20% of streets are 25 MPH, 15% of local streets are 25 MPH
- Local street speeds are generally low due to frequent movement of pedestrians and children



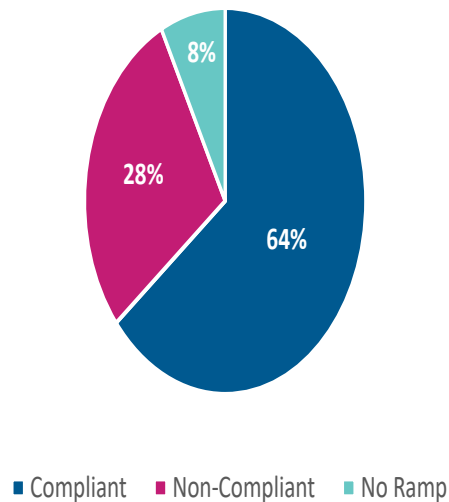
Source: City of Grand Rapids GIS



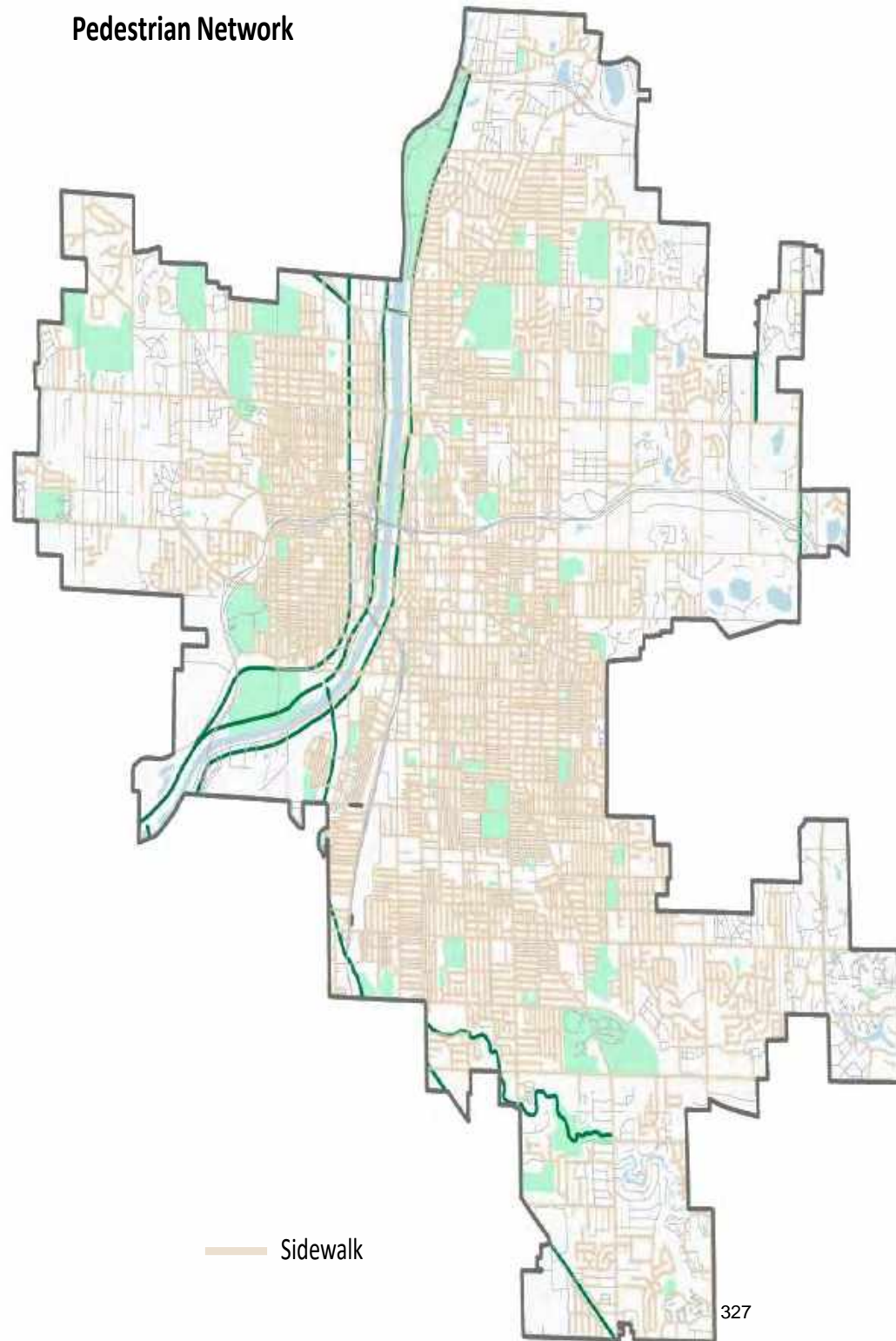
Grand Rapids has a vast pedestrian network.

- Nearly 900 miles of sidewalks
- Over 6,000 street crossings
- Only 2/3 of sidewalk ramps are ADA accessible (out of 15,000)

Sidewalk Ramps ADA Compliance

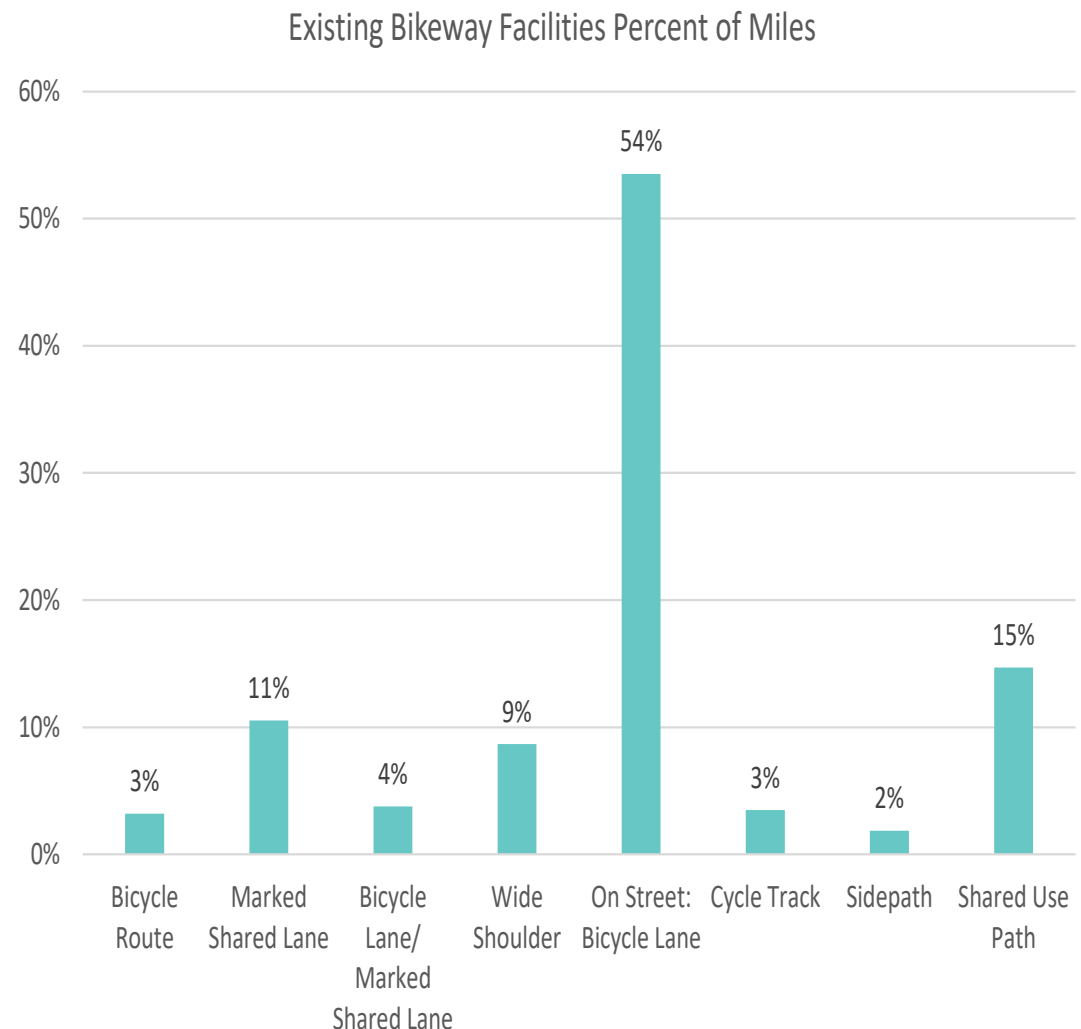


Pedestrian Network



The majority of existing bikeways are on-street.

- Over 115 miles of existing bikeways and 90 additional miles planned
- Vital Streets Plan emphasizes bicyclists as modal priority on over 165 miles of street
- Differentiates between two types of cyclist, with different needs and demands
 - Bicycle Community Emphasis, 95 miles (connect to local destinations)
 - Bicycle Commuter Emphasis, 70 miles (longer distance connections)



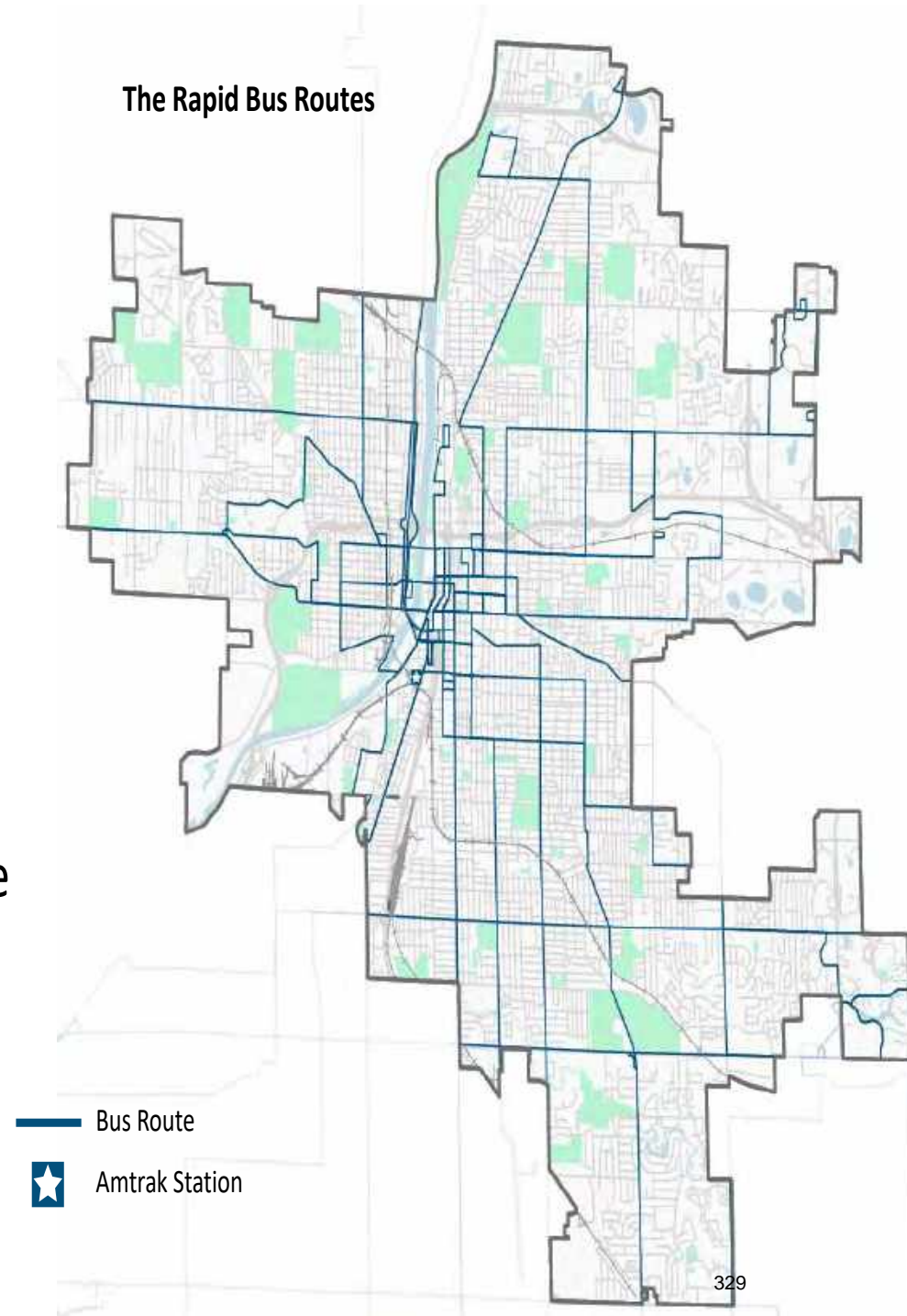
The Rapid ridership is trending in a positive direction after decreasing during the pandemic.

- In 2022, The Rapid published its Climate Action Plan for a sustainable future.
- The Rapid is encouraging ridership through:
 - Laker Line – connecting GVSU students from Allendale to downtown campuses
 - 8 corridors with all day 15-minute service
 - Installing new bus shelters

Bus Stops with the most activity (boarding + disembark):

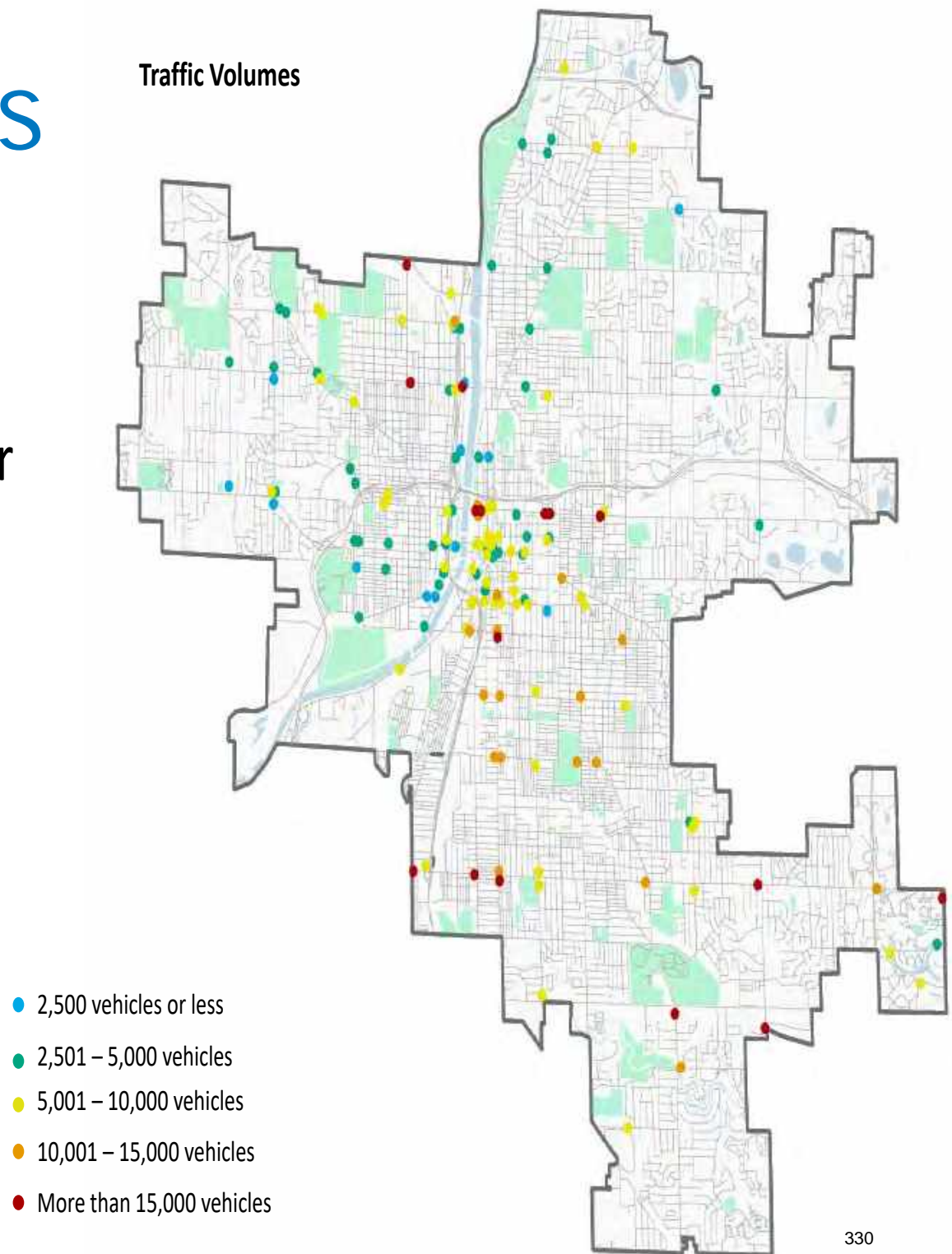
1. Grand Valley State University Pew Campus (Front Ave)
2. Grand Rapids Community College DeVos Campus (Fulton Ave)
3. Rapid Central Station (Cesar Chavez Ave)
4. Grand Rapids Public Library

Source: The Rapid

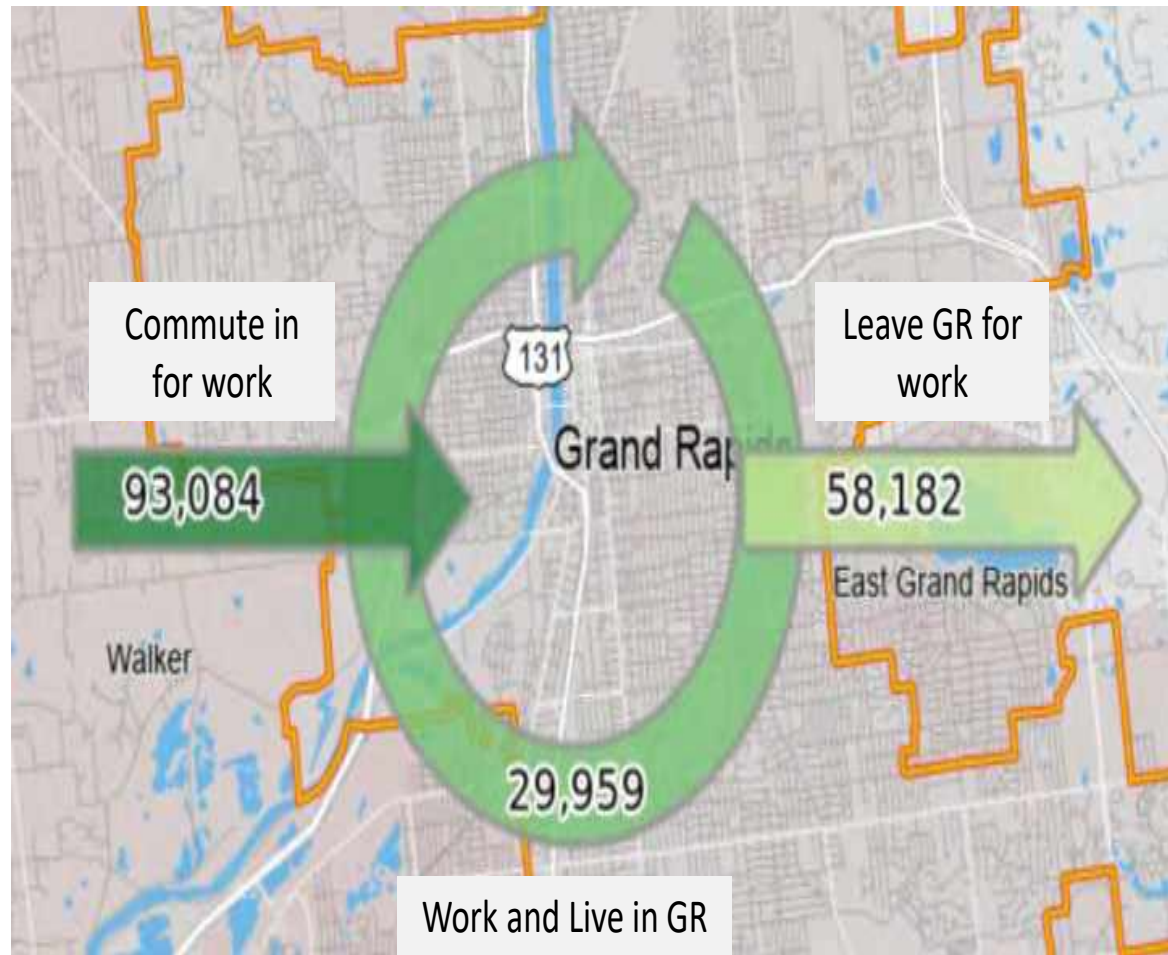


Most residents drive to work.

- Only 3% of residents walk or bike to work.

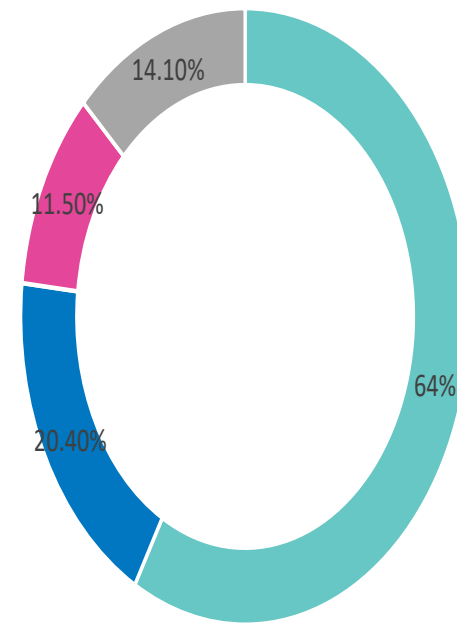


Grand Rapids attracts many workers from outside the city.



Most residents work close to home.

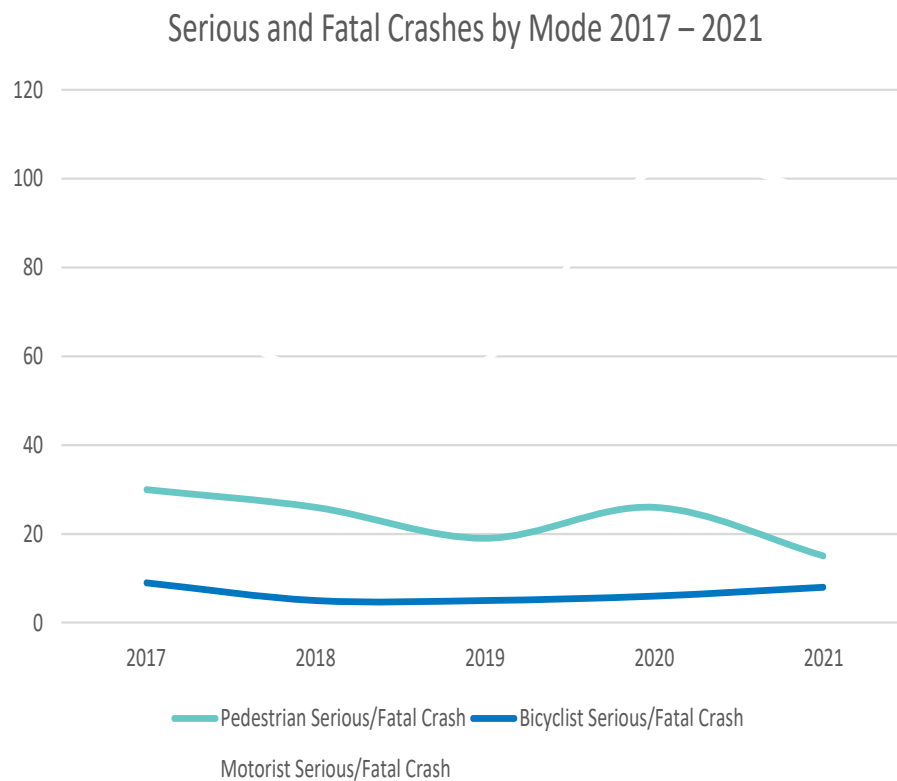
- 75% of residents have a commute less than 30 minutes.
- 14.5% commute more than 50 miles to work, down from 17% in 2009.



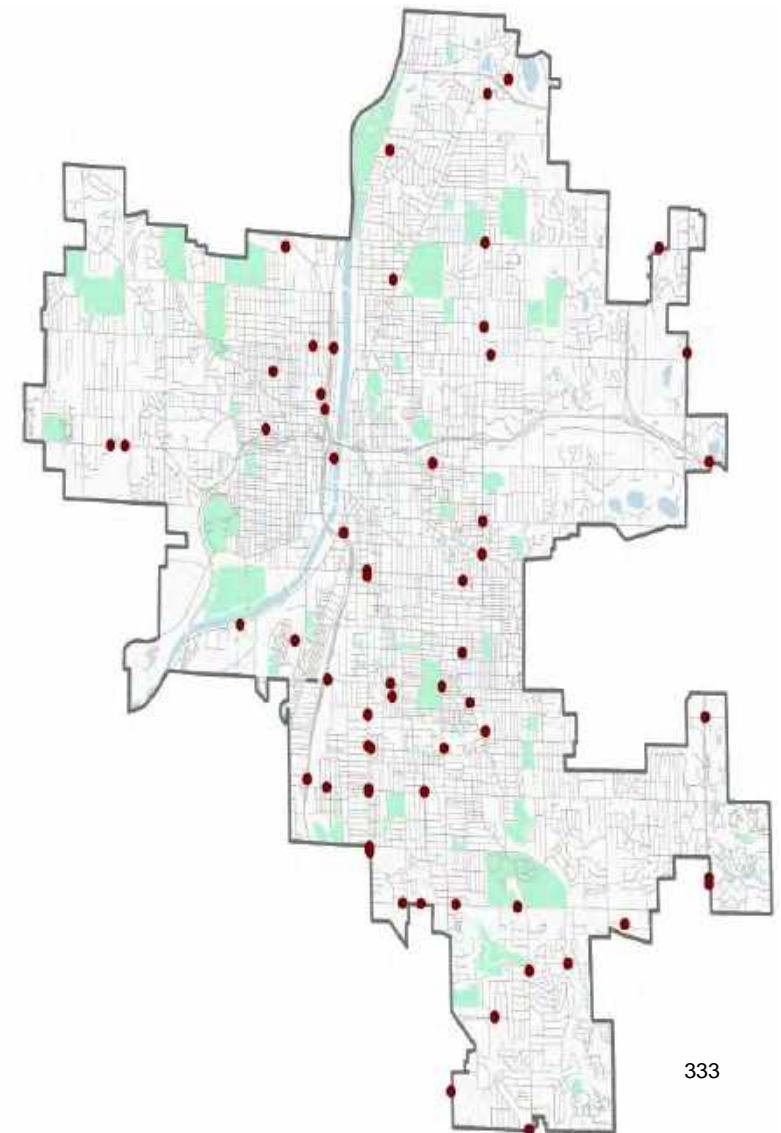
■ Less than 10 miles ■ 10 - 24 miles ■ 25 - 50 miles ■ Greater than 50 miles

Serious injury crashes increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- From 2017 to 2021, 61 people were killed in traffic crashes and 479 people suffered serious injuries in traffic crashes.



Fatal Crashes (2017 – 2021)



Key Takeaways

- More than a third of the City is residential, emphasizing the importance of neighborhood character.
- 80 percent of residents are within a 10-minute walk to open spaces.
- More than half of the City's housing stock was built before 1960.
- The City has a vast pedestrian network of over 900 miles of sidewalk.
- Most residents work close to home with over 80 percent traveling less than 24 miles to work.

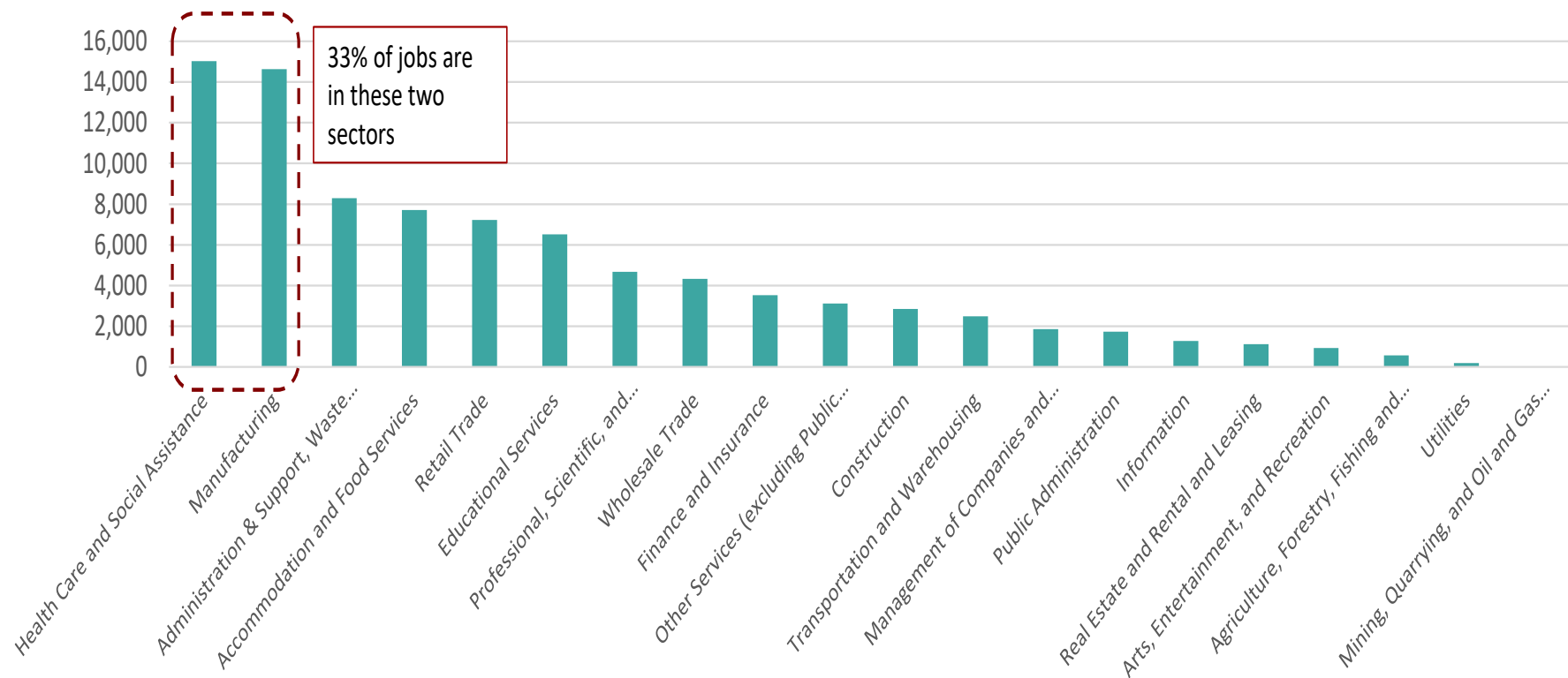
PROSPERITY

Economy, employment, personal prosperity

The City of Grand Rapids hosts more fulltime jobs than in 2009.

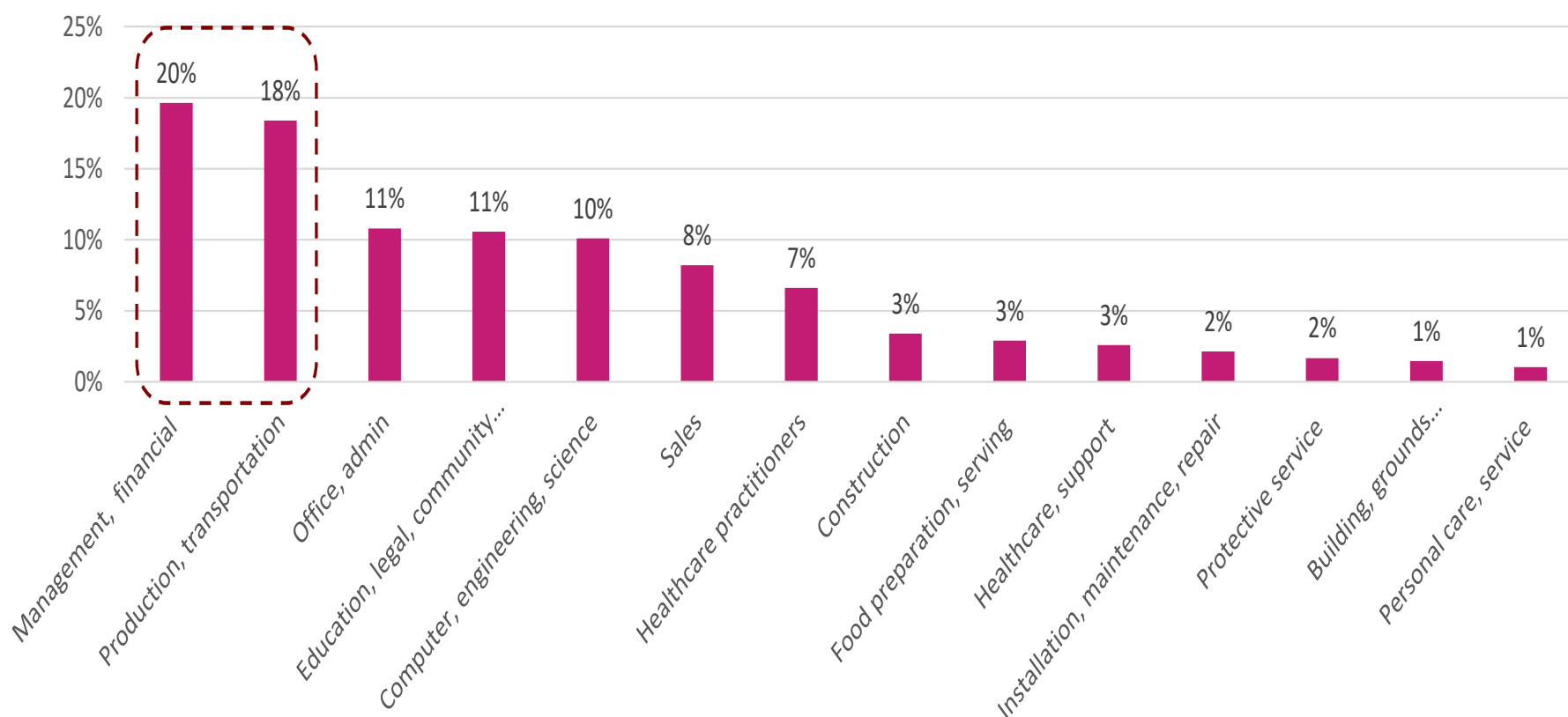
- 88,000 jobs in 2019, 25% (18,000) more than in 2009
- There may be another 7,600 self-employed individuals

Primary Employment in Grand Rapids By Industry 2019



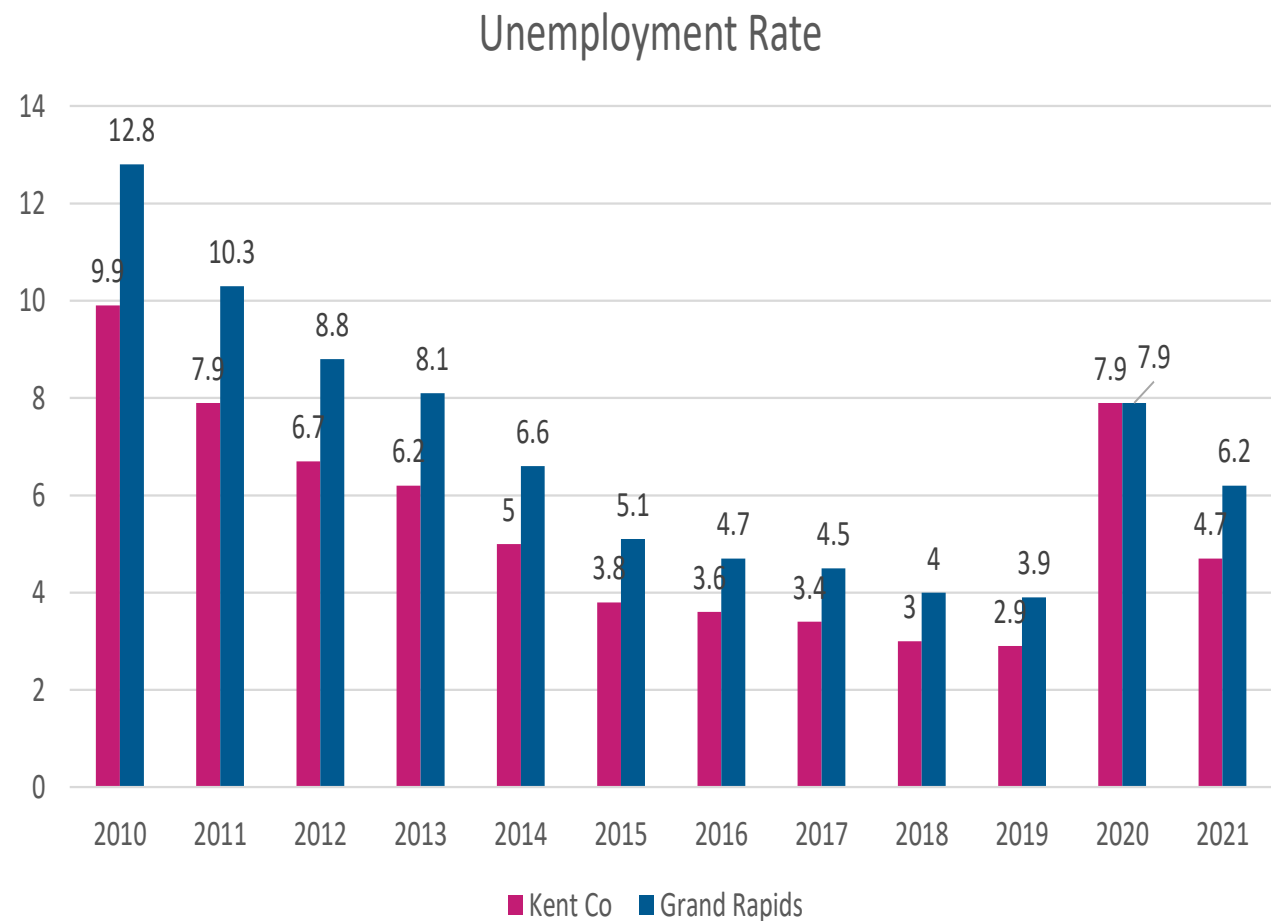
Nearly 40% of Grand Rapid residents are either in management occupations or work in production or logistics occupations.

Occupational Distribution Grand Rapid Residents
2021 ACS



Grand Rapids has a higher rate of unemployment than the county.

- Grand Rapids unemployment rate is 30% higher, on average, than Kent County
- Unemployment decreased by 21.5% between 2020 and 2021



Grand Rapids-Wyoming is 9th among US large metros for small business employment.

- Over half of Grand Rapids workers (50.4%) were employed by small businesses in 2020
- 19,092 small businesses in 2020
- 7.6% self employed people slightly smaller than the county (8.4%) overall

Top 10 Cities for Small Business Employment

1. New Orleans-Metairie, Louisiana
2. Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, Florida
3. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
4. Providence-Warwick, Rhode Island-Massachusetts
5. New York-Newark-Jersey City, New York-New Jersey-Pennsylvania
6. Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, California
7. Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, Oregon-Washington
8. Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls, New York
9. **Grand Rapids-Wyoming, Michigan**
10. San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, California

Small business defined by Census Bureau as those firms having fewer than 500 employees.

Sources: US Census Bureau

Grand Rapids workforce has become increasingly more diverse.

Workforce Characteristic %	2019	2009
White, alone	77%	81%
Black or African American alone	17.4%	14.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.7%	0.5%
Asian alone	2.4%	2.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	2.4%	3.2%
Hispanic or Latino	11.0%	8.3%
Male	50.5%	48.5%
Female	49.5%	51.3%

Grand Rapids is closing the income gap with the county.

- Median income in Grand Rapids in 2020 was \$51,333
- In 2010, the median income of the City was 40% lower than the County
- In 2021, the median income of the City was 20% lower than the County

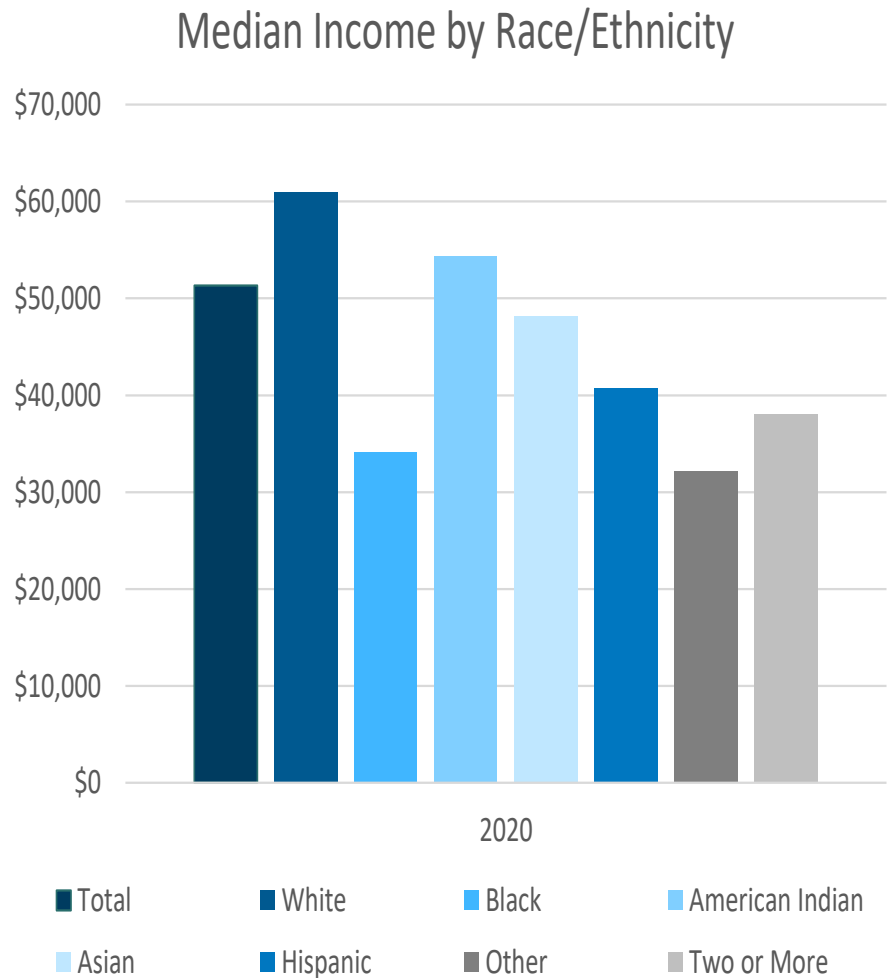


63%

In the past 10 years, the City of Grand Rapids median income increased by 63%, compared to 42% at the County level

The racial income gap persists among most BIPOC* groups.

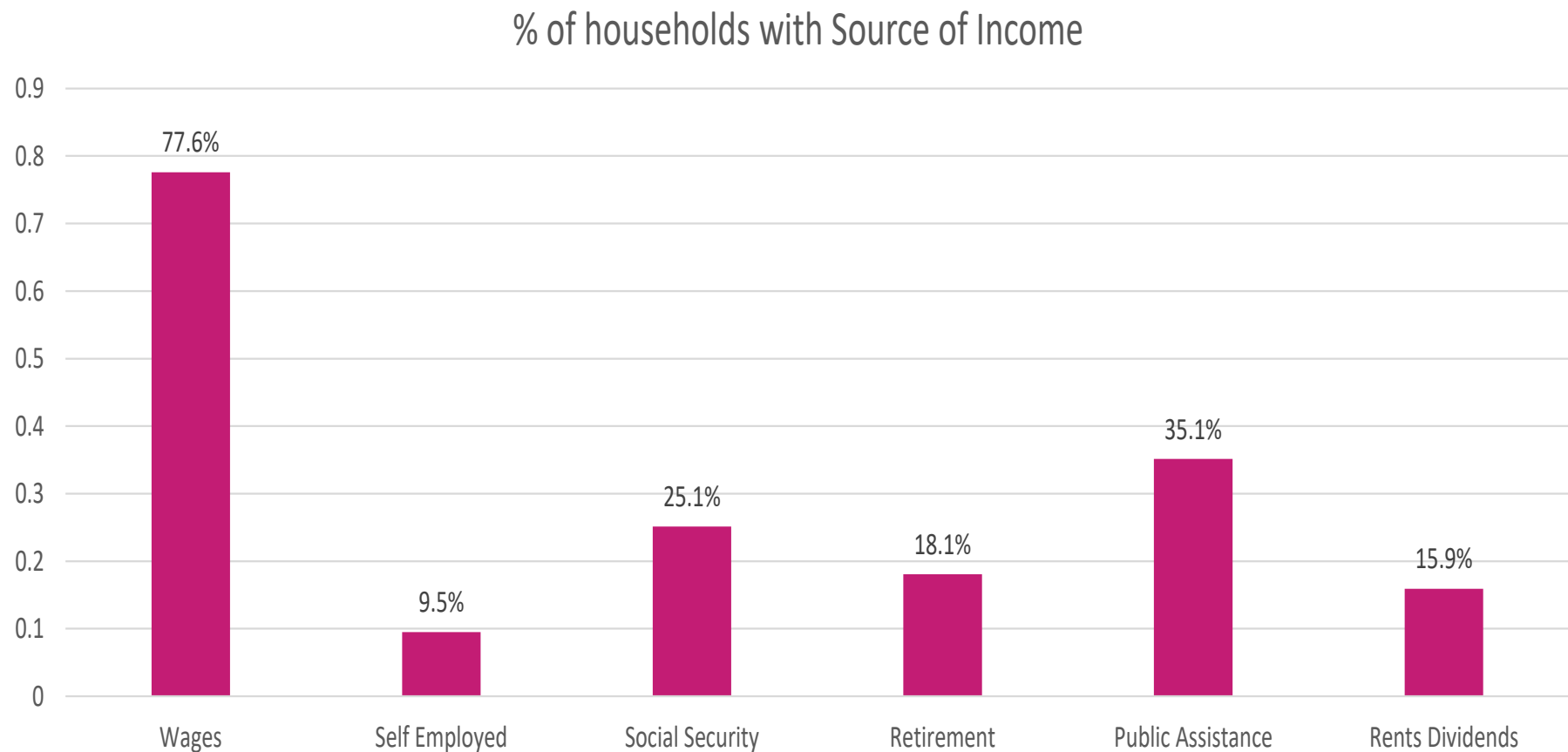
- % change from average median income across all groups:
 - Black: 33.6% lower than average median
 - Asian: 6.3% lower than average median
 - Hispanic: 20.6% lower than average median
 - Other races: 37.3% lower than average median
 - Two or more races: 25.8% lower than average median



*BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of color

Source: US Census Bureau

Residents rely on a mix of income sources, but wages lead.



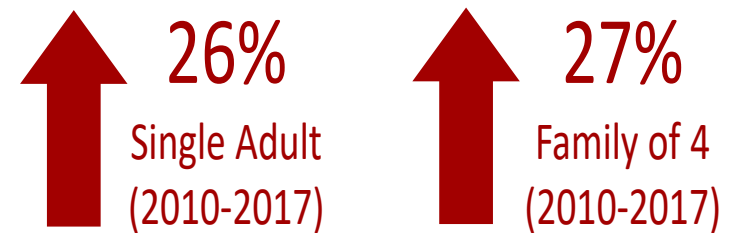
**Will not add to 100% because some household can receive income from multiple sources e.g., retirement and social security*

Source: ACS 1 year estimates

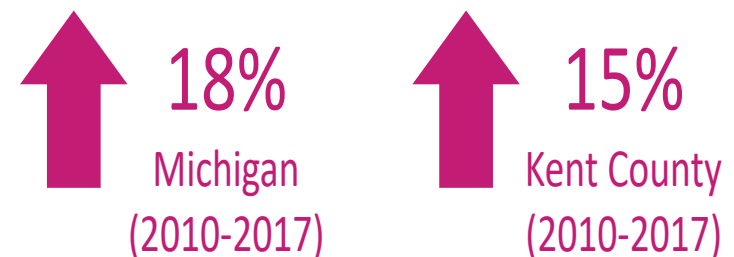
Hourly wages are not keeping up with the cost of necessities.

- ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed
- Include households that have incomes above the federal poverty level (FPL) but struggle to afford basic necessities
- 49% of households in Grand Rapids are below the ALICE threshold
 - *24% in Kent County as a whole*
 - *11% in Ada Township and East Grand Rapids*

Increase in Cost of Household Necessities



Increase in Hourly Wages

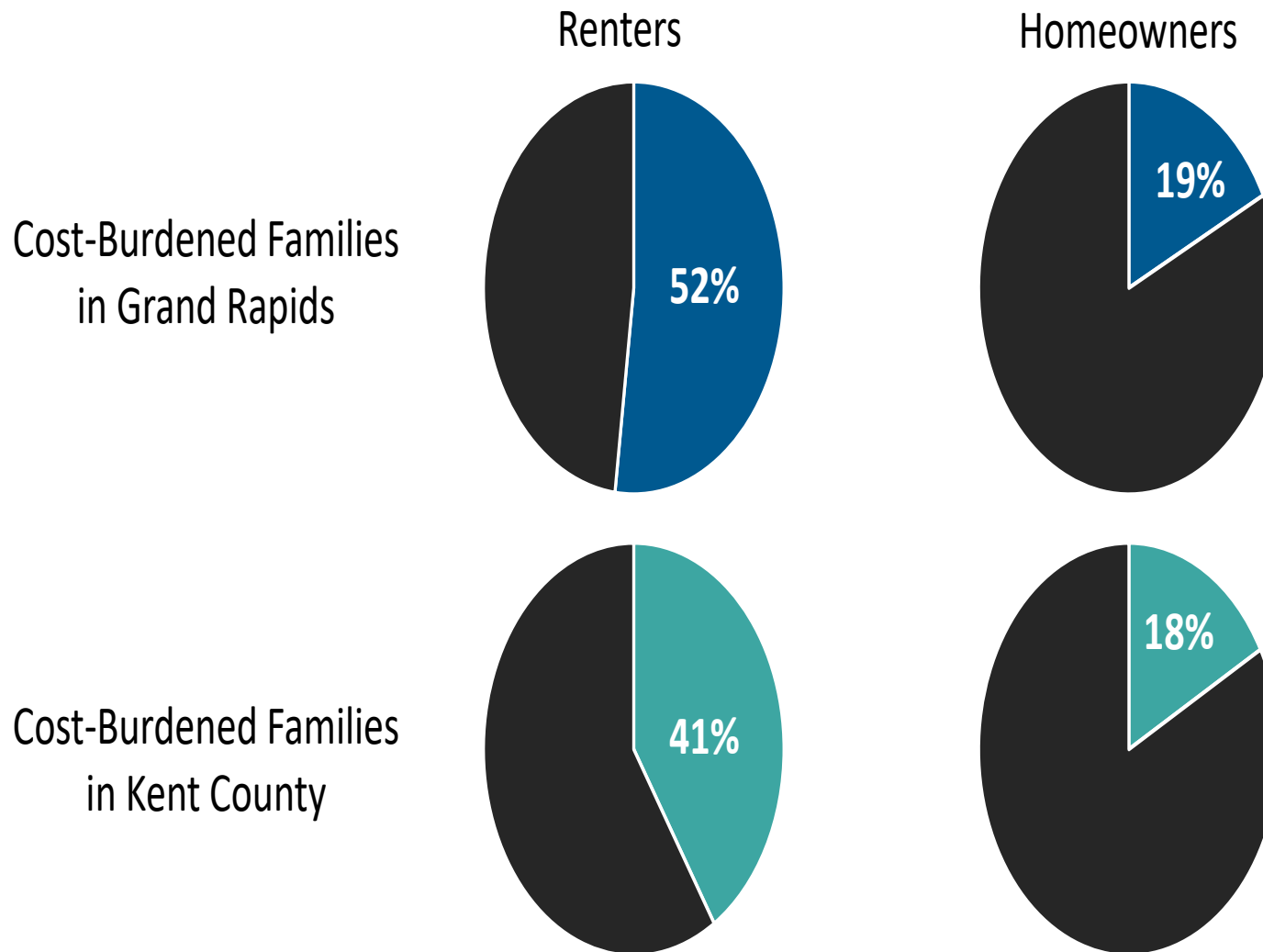


The living wage is higher than the minimum wage.

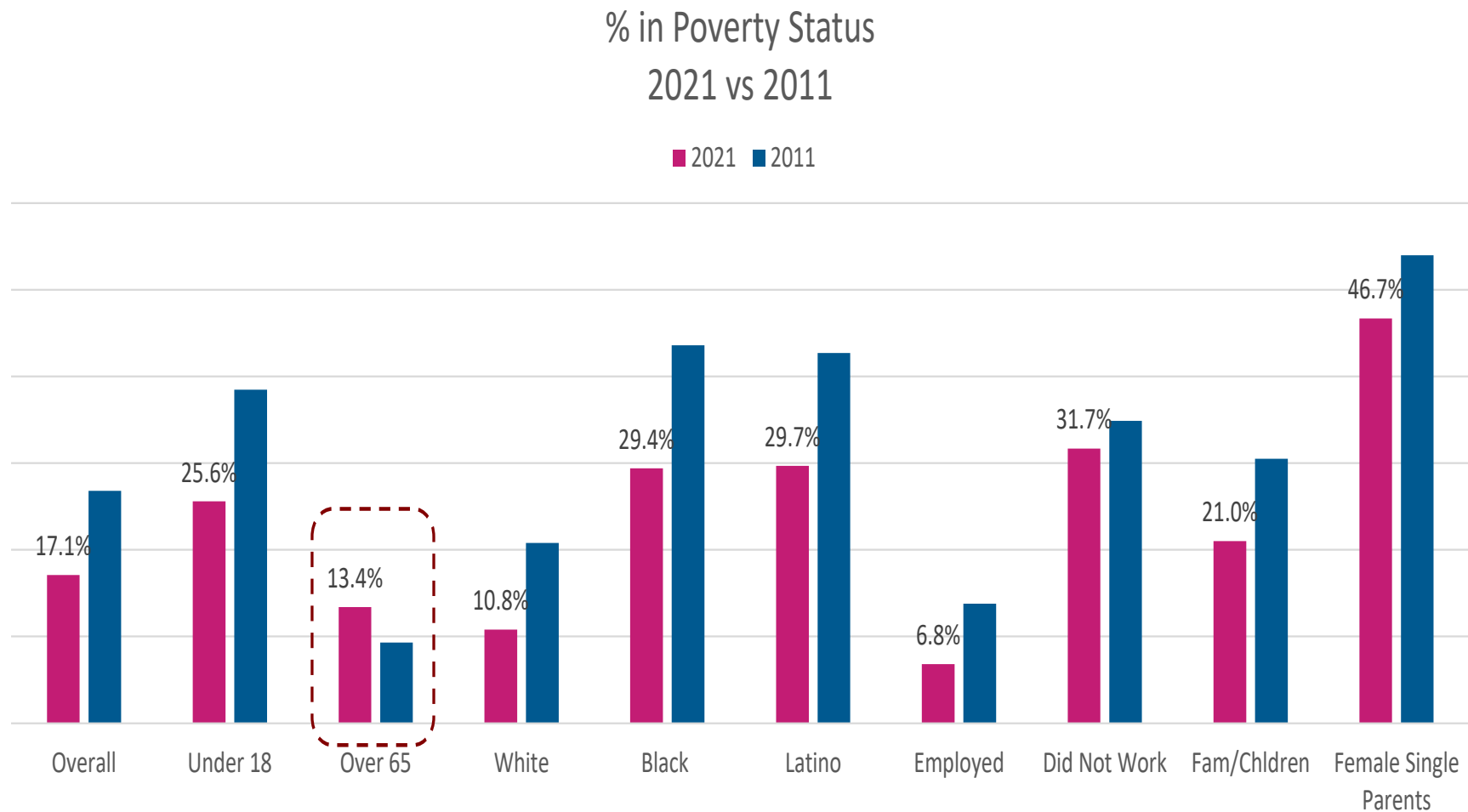
- Living wage is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support themselves and their family (working full-time).
- State minimum wage is \$9.87, state does not allow for a municipal minimum wage

		1 Adult				2 Adults (Both Working)			
		0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Living Wage		\$16.50	\$33.91	\$44.78	\$60.38	\$12.37	\$18.67	\$25.28	\$30.60
Poverty Wage		\$6.19	\$8.38	\$10.56	\$12.74	\$4.19	\$5.28	\$6.37	\$7.46

Grand Rapids has a higher level of cost-burdened families than the county.



Poverty levels across all categories (except over 65) have declined over the last decade.

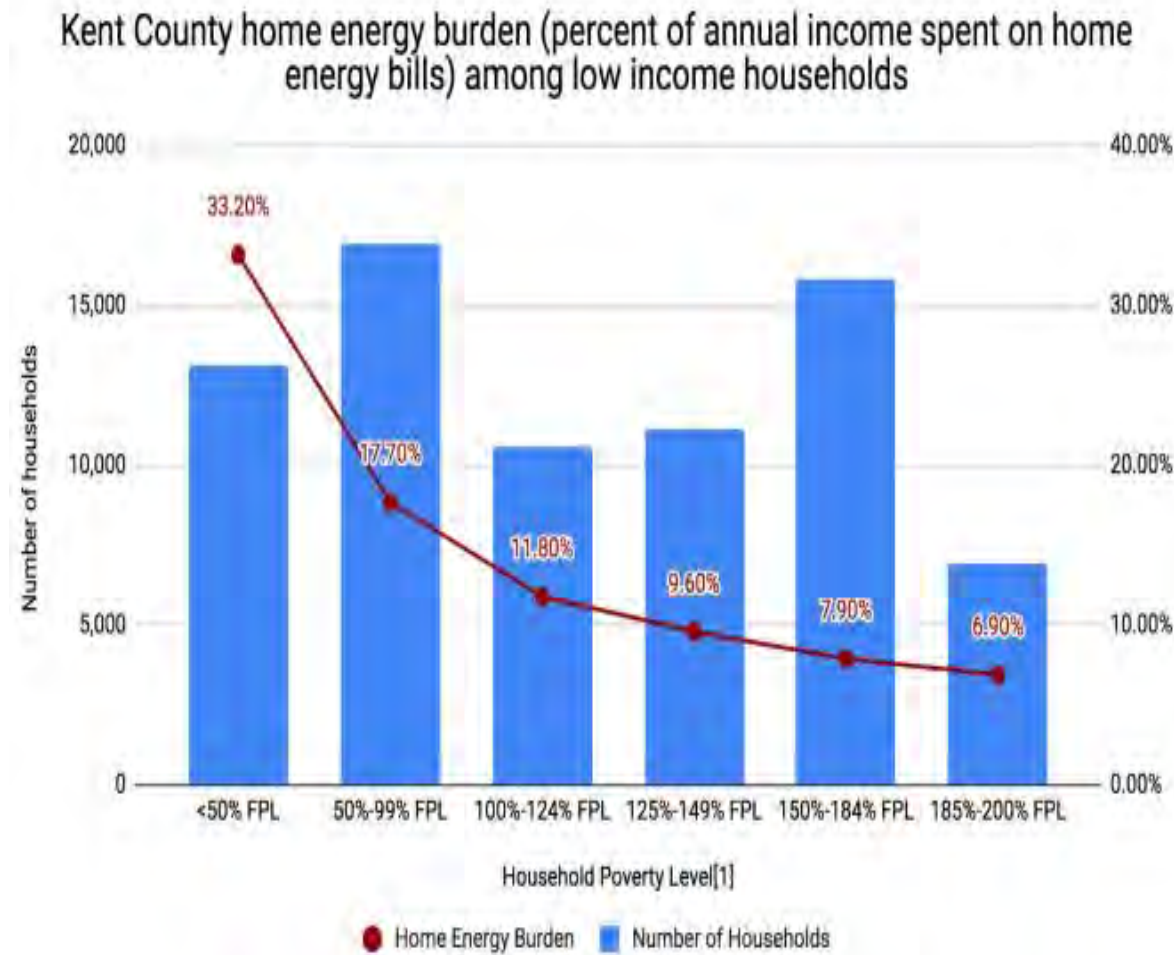


The median income is lower than necessary to afford the average home in 2022.

For Sale Market September 2022

- 884 homes for sale
- \$259.9K listing price – \$158/sqft
 - 15.5% yr/yr increase
 - 20% down mortgage payment approximately \$1300
 - **Requires an income of around \$60-\$65,000**
 - Increase in interest rate from Jan 2022 decreased purchasing power by about \$40,000
- Like markets in other large cities, homes have been selling for more than the asking price since December of 2020.

The home energy burden is higher among households below the federal poverty level.



- Nationally, BIPOC* households have a higher percentage of energy burden.
 - 4.2% for American Indian households
 - 4.1% for Black households
 - 3.5% for Hispanic households

*BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, People of color

Source: Zero Cities Equity Assessment Tool, ACEEE Household Energy Burden Report

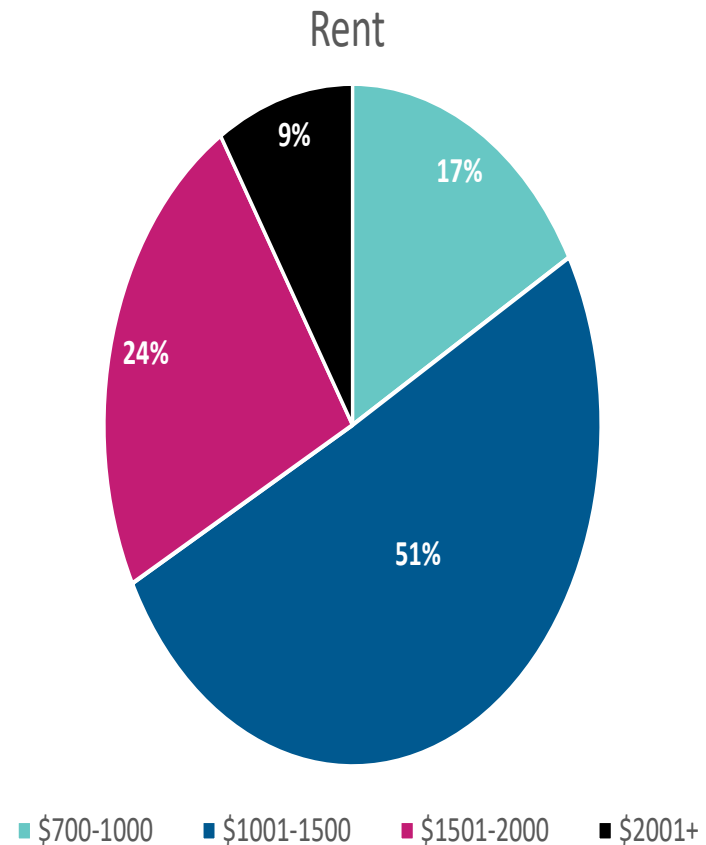
There is high demand for more owner-occupied housing.

- Grand Rapids will need 3,548 more owner-occupied units by 2025 to satisfy demand
- AMI – Area Median Income (\$51,333)

Grand Rapids For-Sale Housing Needs (2020-2025)					
Income Category	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-120% AMI	120% AMI +
Overall Units Needed	254	346	949	1,569	430

Most rental units cost more than \$1,000 a month.

- Rental Market – July 22
 - *Average apartment rent: \$1,391*
 - *Average apartment unit size: 873sqft*
- To not be rent burdened, a minimum income of \$48,000 is required to rent a unit over \$1,000/month.
 - *45% of renters are severely burdened with at least 30% of their income going to rent*



Grand Rapids needs more rental housing stock to satisfy demand.

- Grand Rapids will need at least 5,340 more rental units by 2025 to satisfy demand
- AMI – Area Median Income (\$51,333)

Grand Rapids Rental Housing Needs (2020-2025)					
Income Category	0-30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-120% AMI	120% AMI +
Overall Units Needed	1,031	895	966	1,469	979

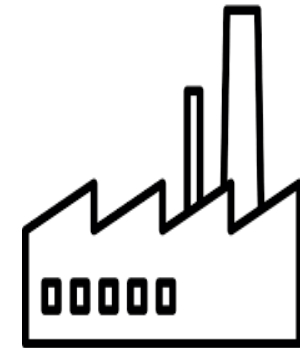
Vacancy rates in industrial and commercial spaces are low, and there has been little new construction.



- 11.2msft of existing building (excludes tenant owned) space
- **~11% vacancy**
- \$20.70 asking rent



- Overall retail has stabilized with **5% vacancy rate** and relatively little new construction
- Rents vary widely across the city
 - Uptown rents range between \$20-\$25/ft with some quoted rates over \$30
 - Other markets with older properties show rents in the \$8 - \$14 range



- 21.5msft of existing building (excludes tenant owned) space
- **1.7% vacancy**
- \$5.20 asking rent

Residents new to Grand Rapids have **partly fueled the city's growth.**

- 70% of residents have been in their current residence for 10 years or less
- Moreover 1/3 of residents have been in their current residence for 2 years or less
- During this period homeownership has also increased

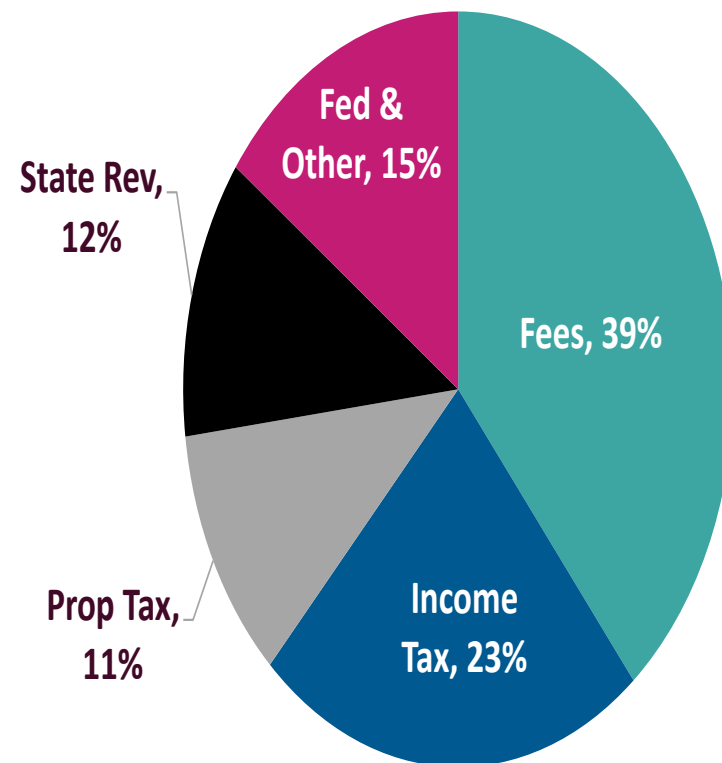
	2011		2021	
	Kent	Grand Rapids	Kent	Grand Rapids
Owner Occupied	70%	54%	71%	56%
Renter Occupied	30%	46%	29%	44%

Budget Basics

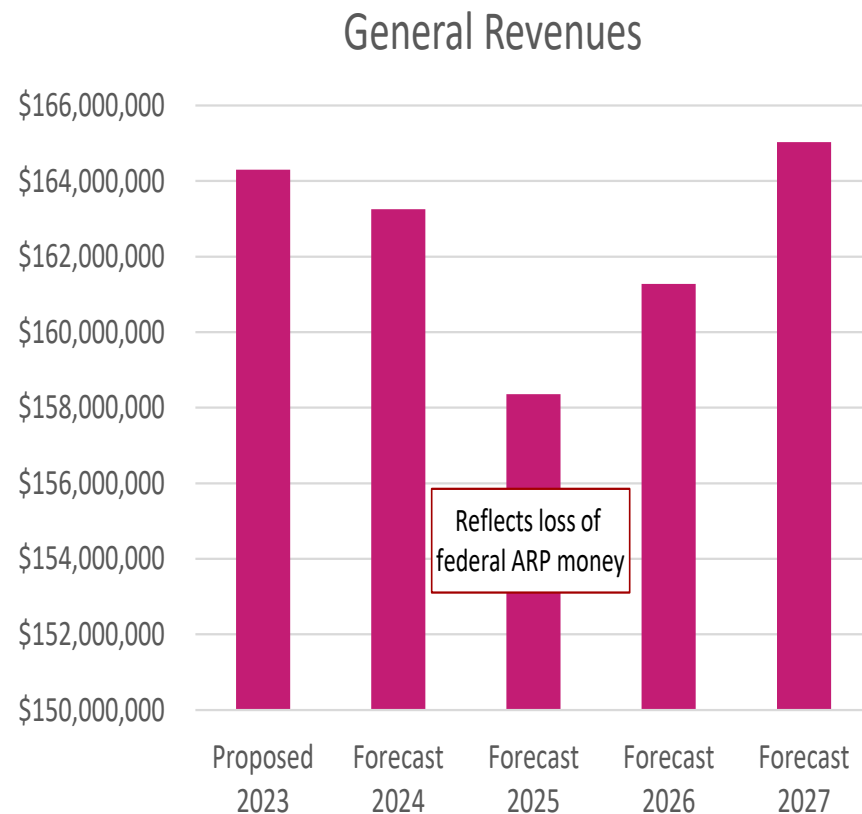
FY23

- Total Appropriations: \$598m
 - *Includes water / sewer, parks, streets, libraries etc*
- General Fund Appropriation: \$164m
 - *General fund includes police, fire, planning, administrative functions*
 - *82% of income tax goes to General Fund*
- Capital Budget (all sources including appropriations and bonds): \$106m
 - *\$57.6m water / sewer*
 - *\$25.3m Streets/sidewalks/parking*
 - *\$11.1m General Capital Fund*
 - *\$4.8m parks and libraries*
 - *\$7.2m other*

FY23 Sources of Revenue



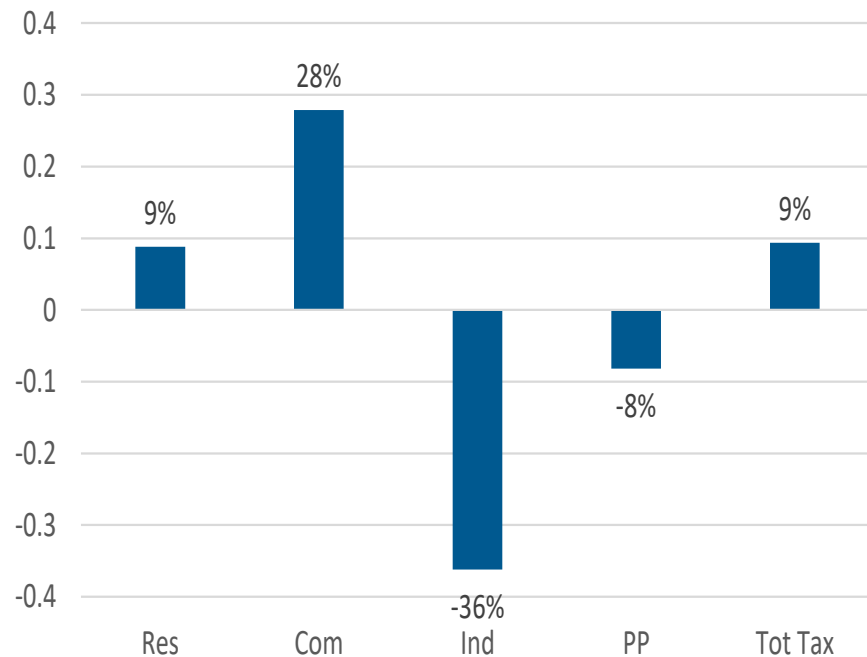
Income tax is the largest source of revenue for the City.



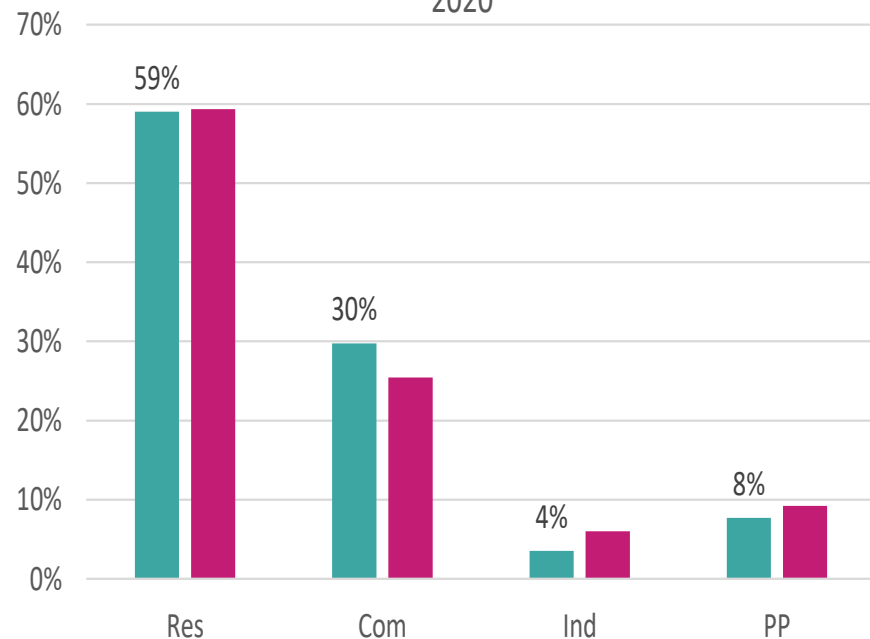
- General fund revenues are projected to shrink over the next few years
- Based on 2020 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (most recent available)
 - 144k income tax returns (CY 2019)
 - 53% of the income tax returns comes from city residents which represents 57% of income tax collections
 - 47% of returns comes from nonresidents and other return types which represents 43% of the income tax revenue
 - 34% of income tax is generated by 10% of the returns (incomes over \$100,000)

Property tax from industry has declined, offset by major increases in commercial property.

Change in Taxable Values by Type of Property
2020 vs 2011



% Taxable Values
By Type of Property
2020



- *Residential as a % of the property tax base is unchanged since 2011*
- *PP: Personal Property*

Key Takeaways

- There are more full-time jobs than a decade ago, but unemployment is higher than the county.
- While median income is rising, it is lower than necessary to afford the average listed home in 2022.
- More rental and owner-occupied housing is needed.
- Poverty levels are declining except among older adults, but wages are not keeping up with the cost of living.
- Property tax from industry has declined while property tax from commercial has increased.

AREA SPECIFIC PLAN:

CRESTON



DRAFT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO BE UPDATED

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Creston Area Specific Plan (ASP) is the culmination of a series of community input and feedback sessions with the neighborhood. The ASP outlines the community's vision for the future of the neighborhood and defines the steps necessary to achieve that vision. This includes both short- and long-term improvements related to land use, housing, economic development, transportation, and public space.

The Creston ASP is bounded by the following streets: Grand River, 3 Mile Road, Fuller Avenue, and Leonard Street. Creston is primarily a residential community with industrial areas along the rail lines and Monroe Avenue, and a commercial corridor along Plainfield Avenue that bisects the neighborhood diagonally (see **ASP Study Area Boundary** map). Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include Riverside Park, Kent Country Club, the Plainfield commercial districts, and the Grand River.

ASP STUDY AREA BOUNDARY



--- Neighborhood Study Area

RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN AND OTHER PLANS

The Community Master Plan (CMP) acts as a blueprint, outlining a vision and broad objectives along with detailed recommendations to achieve them. Building on this foundation, the Area Specific Plans (ASPs) adhere to the same principles and provide more detailed strategies. These plans illustrate how the overarching vision and goals of the CMP are tailored and implemented to meet the unique needs of individual neighborhoods. Additionally, citywide planning initiatives such as the Vital Streets Plan, Bicycle Action Plan, Grand Rapids/Kent County Housing Needs Assessment, Housing NOW, and others offer further recommendations.

NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2020 & 2022 (5-Year Estimates) - Census Tracts 4, 5, 9, 10, and 13, Kent County, Michigan

POPULATION



INCOMES



HOUSING

Housing by Geography



Census tracts are designed to capture statistical data and are often delineated based on population size and other criteria that do not necessarily correspond with neighborhood boundaries, which can be more fluid and defined by a combination of historical, social, and economic factors. Despite these limitations, the insights derived from analyzing census tract data provide a valuable foundation for understanding the broader trends and dynamics of the neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS & CLASSIFICATION



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Parks
- Open Spaces
- Railway
- Existing Trail
- Parks
- Community Services
- Education
- Health Facilities
- Places of Worship
- Arts, Culture & Recreation
- Historic & Landmarks
- Public Services
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Mid-Century Neighborhood

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS

The Creston neighborhood is a tight-knit and engaged community of over 18,000 residents with beloved neighborhood assets (see **Neighborhood Assets** map) that neighbors want to support, enhance, and expand access to. Some of the assets identified by residents include:

- Quality public schools.
- Access to local and citywide parks and trails.
- Easy access to downtown Grand Rapids.
- Active and organized residents and neighborhood groups.

NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATION

The Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance assigns different neighborhood classifications to residential and mixed-use commercial districts based on existing development characteristics. Creston contains two of the three residential classifications as seen on the map to the left.

Traditional Neighborhood (TN): Designed prior to the advent of the automobile, these neighborhoods were created to offer residents commercial and institutional uses within a short walk of their homes. Housing options include single-family homes and apartments located above storefronts, with commercial and institutional spaces seamlessly incorporated into the neighborhood. The variety in building sizes and uses adds to the vibrancy of these areas.

Mid-20th Century Neighborhoods (MCN): Post-World War II, neighborhoods transformed to accommodate the rise of the automobile. Residential areas expanded, featuring larger lots and buildings set back from the streets, creating a more open feel. The interconnectedness of streets and neighborhoods diminished, with land uses becoming distinctly separated and apartment buildings were no longer mixed with single-family homes. More intense commercial and institutional activities were relegated to heavily traveled corridors, manifesting as strip developments.

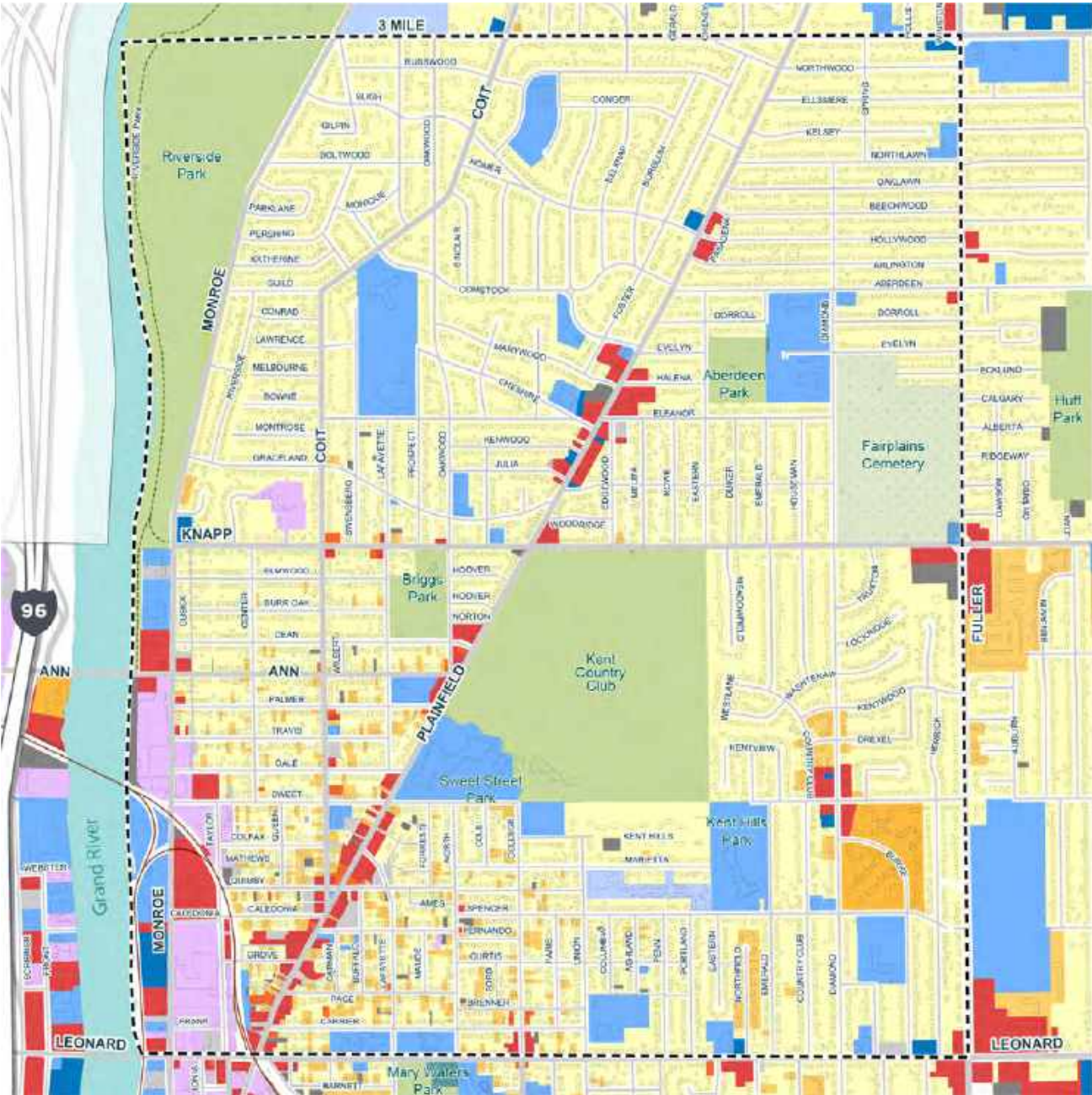


Creston Garden Tours (credit: Creston Neighborhood Association).



Riverside Park (credit: City of Grand Rapids).

EXISTING LAND USE



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Railway
- Existing Trail

- Commercial
- Mixed Commercial/Residential
- High Density Residential
- Multifamily - 2 Units or more
- Single Family
- Office

- Parking Lot
- Parks & Other Open Spaces
- Public/Quasi Public
- Medical Facilities
- Industrial
- Vacant Lot
- Not Classified

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

Existing Land Use

The land use in Creston (see **Existing Land Use** map) contains three main areas:

- The majority of Creston is made up of predominantly single-family residential neighborhoods. Traditional Neighborhood classifications include a mix of housing types including some multifamily housing, while Mid Century Neighborhoods are almost exclusively single-family.
- Plainfield Avenue contains the majority of commercial businesses in Creston but there remain pockets of residential use interspersed between areas of commercial activity.
- The riverfront is a historic industrial district that now contains some more traditional commercial spaces and larger vacant parcels.

Existing Zoning

Zoning in Creston is classified under Traditional Neighborhood (TN) and Mid Century Neighborhood (MCN) designations, which generally reflect existing land uses within neighborhood streets and commercial corridors. Industrial properties along the riverfront have been rezoned to the mixed-use commercial district Transitional City Center (TCC), serving as a buffer between the higher-intensity uses allowed in City Center and the adjacent residential districts. Many larger-scale industrial uses are now allowed only by special land use permits, altering the nature of this historically industry district. The following zones are found within Creston:

- TCC - Transitional City Center
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- LDR - Low Density Residential
- MDR - Mixed Density Residential
- C - Commercial
- S-OS - Open Space
- NOS - Neighborhood Office Service



Properties in the Low Density Residential district.



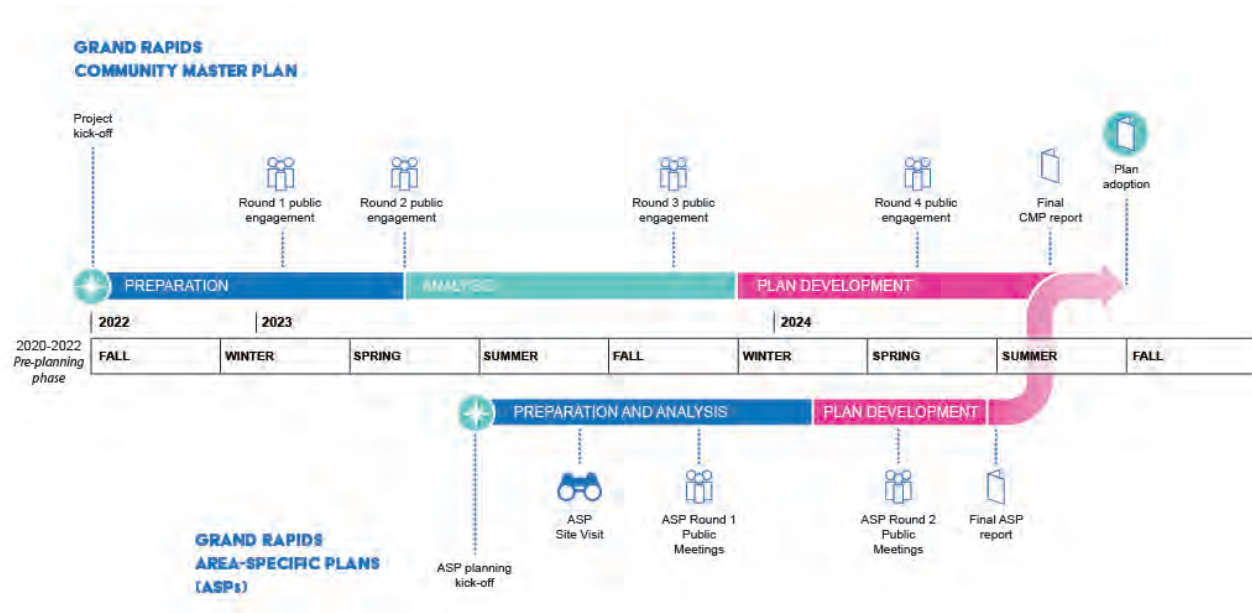
Properties in the Traditional Business Area district.



Properties in the Transitional City Center district.

PLANNING PROCESS & ENGAGEMENT

CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE & CMP VALUES & GOALS



A Comprehensive View

The City of Grand Rapids began developing a new Community Master Plan in 2022, after two years of preliminary planning from 2020 to 2022, and more than 20 years since the release of the previous plan. The citywide engagement process required a comprehensive, phased approach over two years, including:

- Four rounds of **engagement**.
- Various **focus groups and interviews** with key stakeholders to discuss specific issues.
- Regular meetings with the **Steering Committee** to help guide the process.
- Small group meetings and targeted conversations with neighborhood residents through **Community Connectors**. The Connectors were trusted voices in the community, made up of community leaders and activists representing non profits and other stakeholders from across the city. They hosted small group meetings, in addition to other tasks, helping to expand the reach of the engagement process.
- The City of Grand Rapids has over 30 **Neighborhood Organizations**, many of which participated in the Community Master Plan process. Some were on the Steering Committee, others served as Community Connectors, and CDBG funding enabled many to host engagement meetings. These organizations helped inform residents about the process and facilitated community conversations.

Community Master Plan Values

One clear goal of the citywide engagement process was to determine the values that are most important to the community. These values are crosscutting and are threaded throughout the CMP.

CULTURE



EQUITY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



VIBRANCY



Community Master Plan Goals

The citywide engagement process also revealed residents' overall concerns and priorities, such as a desire for better and more diverse housing options, pleasant public spaces that support economic activity, access to local jobs and amenities, and improved pedestrian safety and mobility. This community input, combined with an existing conditions analysis, informed the creation of the community goals upon which the CMP is based and **ultimately guided the strategies for the ASPs:**

1. GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS: Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.

2. VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS: A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.

3. A STRONG ECONOMY: An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. The Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage

4. BALANCED MOBILITY: A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.

5. DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER: A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.

CRESTON SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

The Creston ASP engagement process began in the summer of 2023, alongside the citywide engagement process. The community priorities identified through the citywide effort helped shape the ASP engagement by highlighting issues and priorities that needed further exploration with community members.

The ASP engagement process included:

- Two public meetings with over 100 attendees overall. The meetings were organized in partnership with the Creston Neighborhood Association (CNA) and hosted locally.
- ASP related questions and activities in the broader CMP engagement process.
- Regular meetings with City staff and consultants to ensure alignment between the community input from Creston residents and the strategies being developed in the Community Master Plan.

ASP engagement summary

Common themes that emerged from these discussions include:

- Housing affordability.
- Increased pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- Preservation of valued community spaces and historic features.
- Encouraging a conscious development that was compatible to its surroundings, both physically and culturally.

Residents echoed the need to encourage:

- Sustainable, equitable development.
- A vibrant and thriving business community.
- Affordable and inclusive growth.
- A lively and unique neighborhood (a.k.a. Keep Creston Funky).
- Safer, walkable and bikeable streets.
- Revitalized and connected open spaces.

Community event in Creston.



Ideas shared by the community at an outreach event.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement with neighbors, along with data and analysis of existing conditions, led to several key takeaways.

A COLLECTION OF RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES UNITED BY PLAINFIELD AVENUE

Creston proudly proclaims itself as the largest neighborhood within Grand Rapids. Plainfield Avenue is the connective tissue and defacto gathering space that unites this large geography and helps to create a cohesive community. Because of this vital role, investments to the corridor will have an outsized influence on the surrounding community.



Plainfield Avenue in Creston.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS EXPERIENCING THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF INVESTMENT SEEN IN DECADES

New apartment buildings are just a few of the visible signs of the major investments currently taking place in Creston. Coupled with proposed development projects along Monroe North, Creston is poised to benefit from the new residents and businesses that will soon call the neighborhood home. Building off this momentum will be critical for Creston to leverage investments that help to meet neighborhood goals. Both Plainfield Avenue and the riverfront are areas with increasing investment interest.



New construction on Plainfield Avenue.

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO CREATE A MORE VIBRANT & CONNECTED RIVERFRONT

The industrial nature of Creston's riverfront is rapidly changing. Proposed investments seek to further transform older industrial businesses to a broader mix of uses. Finding the right balance between support for long term businesses and encouraging residential and mixed-use development will help to create a vibrant riverfront district.



Vacant land near the riverfront.

MOST PARKS ARE ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND CONNECTIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT

Riverside Park, Huff Park, Ball Perkins Park, Highland Park and Belknap Park are some of the crown jewels of the Grand Rapids Park system and are located in or adjacent to Creston. In addition, the burgeoning river trail network along the Grand River will soon connect Creston to neighborhoods north and south with a safe, off street connection. Finding opportunities to not only improve these assets, but better connect the community to them will greatly improve the quality of life for Creston residents.



Riverside Park.

PLAINFIELD AVENUE IS EVER CHANGING, YET RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS ARE STATIC

While the Plainfield Avenue commercial district and the riverfront are poised to change, much of Creston is zoned Low Density Residential. With very few vacant properties available for new development, there are limited opportunities to provide additional housing within the neighborhood. In order to create more diverse housing options and address concerns around housing affordability, Creston must look for ways to integrate new housing units and housing options within its traditional single-family residential neighborhoods.



Single-family residential neighborhoods in Creston.



A typical residential street in Creston.

COMMUNITY GOALS

The following Goals were determined with the community throughout the engagement process.

01

AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** and **Desirable Development Character** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

02

A LIVELY & UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD (AKA KEEP CRESTON FUNKY)

This goal relates to the **Vital Business Districts** and **A Strong Economy** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

03

SAFER STREETS FOR BICYCLING & WALKING

This goal relates to the **Balanced Mobility** goal found in the Community Master Plan.

04

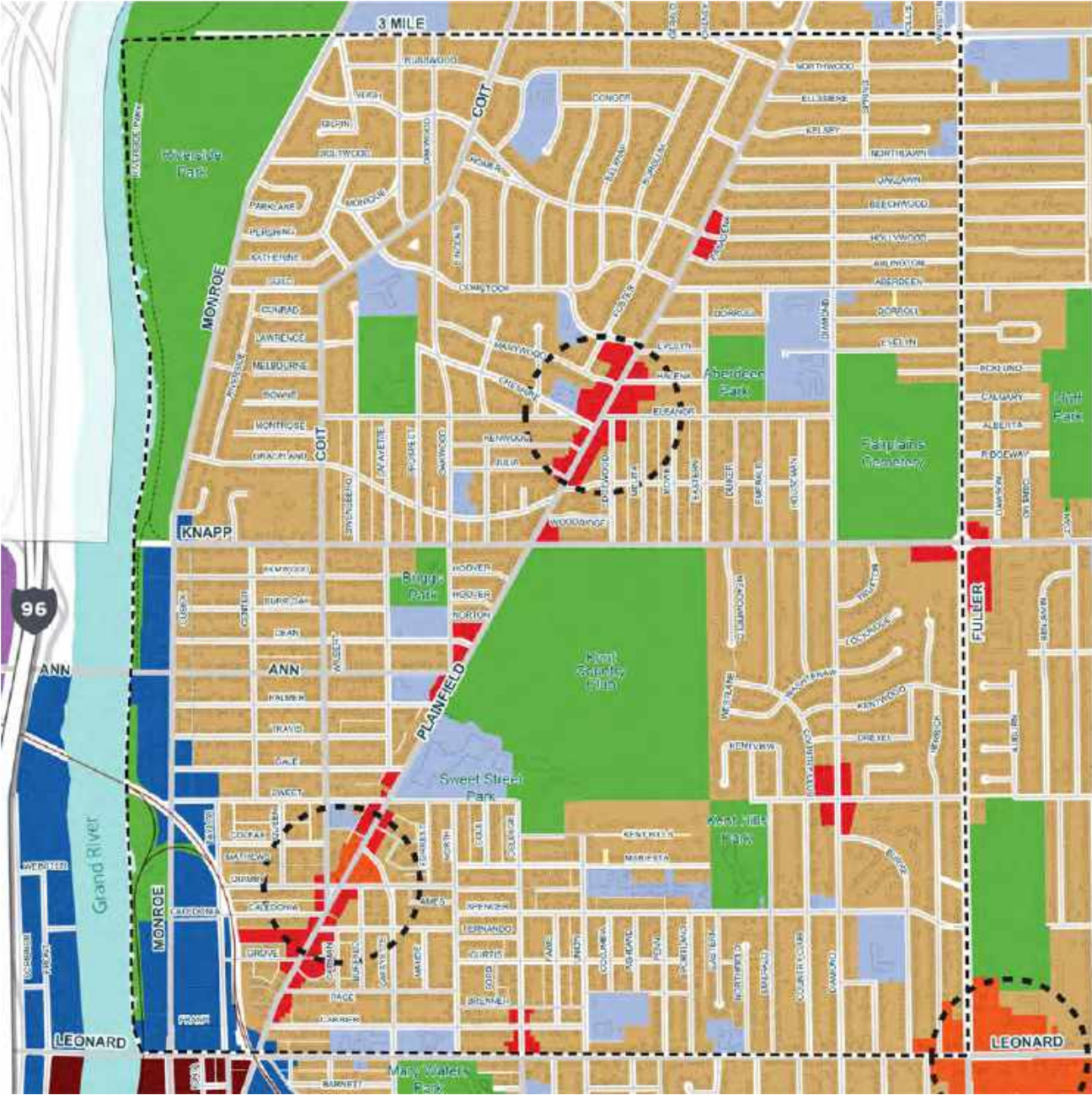
REVITALIZED & CONNECTED OPEN SPACES

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** goal found in the Community Master Plan.

ASP Recommendations will be organized around the above Goals.

NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE FUTURE

FUTURE CHARACTER MAP & NODES



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Neighborhood Nodes

- Community Activity Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics

Through the CMP and ASP engagement process, the community helped co-create the Future Character Map, which outlines Grand Rapids' future land use. It emphasizes development character and qualities as well as urban form and function. This map guides future development citywide, reinforcing existing patterns in some areas and supporting changes in others.

Neighborhood Node



Intent: Neighborhood Nodes are central to residential areas or business zones, primarily serving the neighborhood but sometimes drawing regional visitors. They offer local access to businesses, services, and amenities within walking distance. These nodes mix commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses, and increased residential density within a quarter-mile radius is crucial for supporting them.

What it means for Creston: Creston has three Neighborhood Nodes as defined by the CMP:

- Plainfield Avenue and Quimby Street
- Plainfield Avenue and Eleanor Street
- Fuller Avenue & Leonard Street

Community Activity Center

Intent: Provide places to live, work, and shop around key intersections, to create well-connected, walkable places within a 15-minute walk, bike, or transit trip of surrounding neighborhoods.

What it means for Creston: The future character map envisions the core properties in the Neighborhood Nodes at Plainfield & Quimby as well as Fuller & Leonard as Community Activity Centers.

Neighborhood Center

Intent: Reinforce a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment in a compact area and promote a mix of small-scale retail, service, entertainment, civic, office, and residential uses to enhance the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods.

What it means for Creston: Existing commercial corridors in Creston will continue to serve as Neighborhood Centers.

Compact Neighborhood

Intent: Create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

What it means for Creston: Neighborhoods that are predominantly single family housing may grow to provide more diverse housing options.

Innovation Center

Intent: Accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground floor uses abutting public streets to promote compact, walkable areas.

What it means for Creston: In the future, the former industrial areas along the riverfront will include diverse employment options as well as multi-family residential and active ground floor uses. Access to the riverfront and trails will also be improved.

GOAL 01:

AFFORDABLE & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

GOAL CONTEXT

"Grand Rapids sits within a county experiencing high population growth. Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of its population. After a short period of decline (5% between 2000 and 2010), the population of Grand Rapids has recovered and is increasing, with new residents partly fueling the city's growth. Additionally, the population of Kent County is expected to grow by about 27% (+169,000 people) by 2045. If Grand Rapids maintains its 30% share of county population, the city will grow to approximately 251,000 residents in that time. In the shorter term, it is expected that Grand Rapids will need at least 14,000 housing units by 2027 to satisfy demand."

- Excerpt from the Community Master Plan

The housing shortage in Grand Rapids can be alleviated through various means, and the CMP identifies several key recommendations. The ASP process provides an opportunity to observe the impacts of broader citywide policies within ASP areas. In Creston, there are opportunities to add housing along the commercial corridor, in parking lots, on vacant lots, and in areas near the river that were rezoned for mixed-use development. There are also opportunities to meet some of this demand in the traditional residential neighborhoods while retaining community character. The following recommendations offer ideas to add new housing and provide support for existing residents and homeowners.



Surface parking lots such as the one near the intersection of Plainfield Avenue and Lafayette Avenue would be ideal places for new housing and redevelopment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING ON KEY CORRIDORS.

The Community Master Plan (CMP) strongly advocates for incorporating denser housing in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure. The CMP includes specific goals to better coordinate development with transportation decisions, such as considering up to six units on lots fronting Link Residential and Network Residential streets. The Vital Streets Plan defines these street types as follows:

Link Residential: Link Residential streets connect neighborhoods and local destinations. They are common in areas with a traditional grid layout but can be found in any neighborhood type. These streets typically feature low-to-moderate density housing and should support high-quality residential life. They often host community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship.

Network Residential: Network Residential streets are quality residential corridors that efficiently and safely move vehicles and non-motorized users. They are similar to arterial roads but are designed with more attention to non-auto users. These streets typically have higher residential density than other types and often feature community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship, along with some industrial or small commercial spaces.

Link Residential and Network Residential streets are shown on the map to the right. Existing bus routes are layered onto the map to reinforce the connection between land use density and transportation infrastructure.

The following streets should be prioritized for consideration of denser residential use for these reasons:

- **Plainfield Avenue** contains bus and bicycle connections, is a major vehicular street, and is suitable for denser uses.
- **Leonard Street** contains bus and bicycle connections, is a major vehicular street, and is suitable for denser uses.
- **Knapp Street** is a network residential street, and is the proposed location for new bicycle facilities in the Bicycle Action Plan.
- **Coit Avenue** is a network residential street, and is the proposed location for new bicycle facilities in the Bicycle Action Plan.
- **Fuller Avenue** is a major vehicular street and is suitable for denser uses.



New apartment buildings under construction on Plainfield Avenue.

VITAL STREETS PLAN STREET TYPES & EXISTING BUS ROUTES



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Bus Route
- Network Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Link Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Priority Streets for Increased Density (as proposed in the ASP)

2

ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IN SINGLE-FAMILY DISTRICTS.

The CMP recommends allowing more types of housing in low-density residential zones. This aims to keep naturally occurring affordable housing viable and compliant with regulations. It also seeks to expand and preserve middle-density housing and encourage the development of new housing types for a range of families.

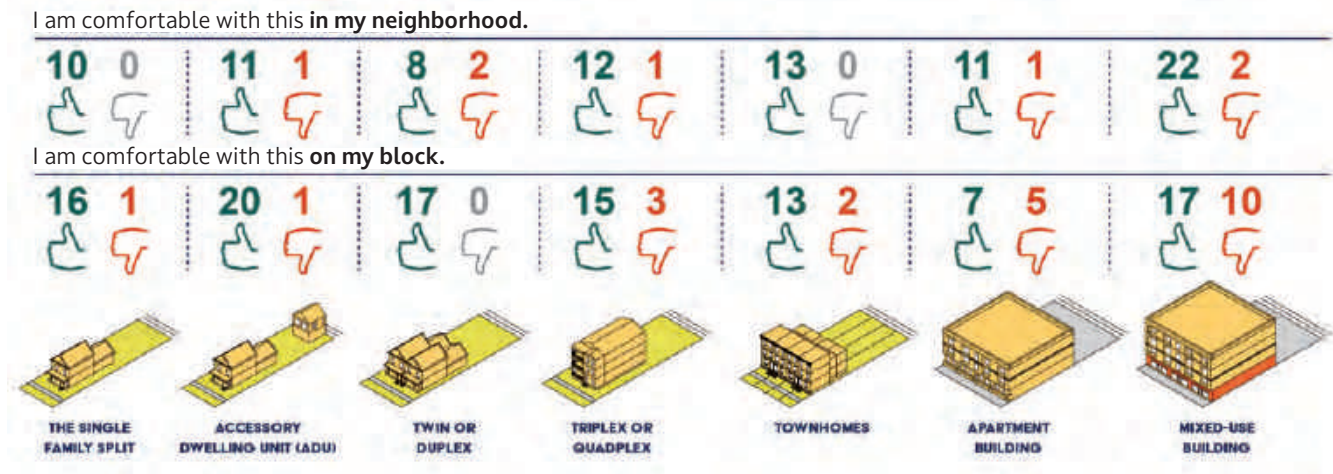
The CMP identifies the residential neighborhoods of Creston as Compact Neighborhoods within the Future Character Map (see **CMP Compact Neighborhood Designations** map). They are defined as areas that create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

Most residential properties in Creston are zoned for Low Density Residential and are predominantly detached single-family houses. Opportunities exist within the code to add denser housing types in various circumstances, particularly in Traditional Neighborhood designations. Achieving the future character identified in the CMP will likely require broader zoning changes, especially outside of the Traditional Neighborhoods. It will be important to integrate residents' desires and comfort levels when making any changes.

CMP COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGNATIONS AS WELL AS EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS**Legend**

- Compact Neighborhood - Future Character as define by CMP
- Existing Neighborhood Type - Traditional Neighborhood
- Existing Neighborhood Type - Midcentury Neighborhood

Below: During the engagement process, residents were asked to vote with a thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate the types of development they would or would not support in their neighborhood.



As part of the engagement process, residents were asked about the types of housing they would be comfortable with in their neighborhood and on their block. The types of added density that residents were most comfortable with included:

- Single-family housing split into multiple units
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
- Duplexes
- Triplexes
- Quadplexes
- Townhomes

Residents had mixed opinions on apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings, with an equal number of residents supporting and opposing these housing types.

When residents were asked what type of housing they would like to see most on their block to help address the housing shortage, ADUs received the most votes. According to the Grand Rapids zoning code, an ADU is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that is either attached to the main house or a separate structure. ADUs are a great way to add density to neighborhoods without altering their character. Both homeowners and potential renters can benefit in various ways: homeowners can supplement their income through renting the ADU and gain opportunities to age in place, while renters often find ADUs more affordable due to their smaller size.

While the benefits of ADUs are numerous, there are some downsides as well. Upfront costs can be substantial and difficult to finance. To overcome this challenge, the City has continued to refine its legislation to lower barriers to entry and make the process as easy as possible. The City should continue refining as needed.

There are also issues regarding accessibility, parking, and residents feeling like secondary members of the community. Focusing ADUs on properties with an existing alley network may help sidestep some of these challenges by creating additional off-street parking spaces, which can be difficult to find on narrow lots in traditional neighborhoods like Creston. Additionally, residents would have direct access to their units rather than having to walk through the primary home's property. Alleyways are also the most likely locations for detached parking garages, which offer easier and more affordable opportunities for residential conversions.

Another challenge is that residents may be unaware of the benefits of ADUs and current city legislation. As an initial step, neighborhood or housing-focused organizations could conduct targeted outreach to property owners within eligible areas to educate homeowners on ADUs, discuss their benefits, and provide resources.

CASE STUDY: Los Angeles leads the United States in the number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The city's favorable regulations, which include no owner-occupancy restrictions and no minimum lot size requirements, have made it a model for ADU development. Los Angeles allows detached ADUs up to 1,200 square feet and two stories tall, with many homeowners converting garages into livable spaces. Los Angeles has also launched the Accessory Dwelling Unit Standard Plan Program, which offers pre-approved ADU designs to simplify the building process.

Below: Examples of ADUs in Los Angeles. The below photo includes off-street parking and direct access from an alley.

Source: bunchadu.com



Source: archdaily.com

3

SUPPORT EXISTING HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS.

Neighborhoods thrive on the diversity of their neighbors, and it is important that existing homeowners and renters can stay in their community if they choose to do so. Along with the City's CMP and housing-related initiatives and policies, it is important to undertake targeted outreach to Creston residents to ensure they are aware of and have access to resources available to help them improve their housing. This work needs to be done with the following goals in mind:

Keep Housing Affordable:

- Continue to provide and promote the Housing Rehabilitation Program, a federally funded program administered by the Community Development Department that offers affordable loans for home repairs to applicants who meet eligibility requirements.
- Incentivize and preserve affordable housing per the Grand Rapids Housing Needs Assessment.

Encourage Resident Involvement:

- Create pathways for residents to be informed and provide input on new development.
- Support community members who aspire to take on small-scale real estate development projects in their community through trainings, mentorship, and networking opportunities.



Photo of a new home under construction in Creston.

GOAL 02:

A LIVELY
& UNIQUE
NEIGHBORHOOD
(AKA KEEP
CRESTON
FUNKY)

RECOMMENDATIONS

4

REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.

Industry along the Creston riverfront benefited from its location adjacent to both the river and rail for decades but has seen a decline similar to other urban industrial districts as the needs of industry have evolved. Over time, industrial uses in the area left or closed, replaced with different uses or surface parking lots, and this trend is likely to continue in the future.

The CMP identifies the Creston riverfront as an Innovation Center, an area that can accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground-floor uses. These ideas were reinforced through the ASP engagement, where residents envisioned the riverfront as a mixed-use area. It will offer places to work (excluding heavy industry), provide new housing to support the community and existing businesses, and add new commercial amenities for residents. Much of this can be achieved through the existing zoning of Transitional City Center.

Existing development proposals aim to provide hundreds of new residential units and multiple commercial spaces in the coming years. While the community would benefit from new development, many of the smaller-scale industrial buildings along Taylor Avenue have served an important purpose by providing flexible buildings supporting a variety of different business types and should be preserved as the district evolves. Some of these properties contain smaller industrial buildings that house traditional small-scale industrial businesses, while others have newer businesses like pottery studios and advertising agencies in repurposed buildings. Providing affordable, flexible spaces for businesses will be important for Creston to retain its existing character.

The City may offer support in various ways through targeted assistance to help repurpose existing buildings or economic development programs designed to support entrepreneurship and small businesses.



Vacant land near the riverfront.



A vacant industrial building near the riverfront.



Small scale industrial building near the riverfront.



Small scale industrial building in the riverfront district.

5

SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD NODES WITH NEW MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT.

The Plainfield Avenue commercial corridor is an important public gathering space for Creston, with multiple neighborhood-serving businesses that residents love. Adding density in strategic locations that complement the surrounding context would enhance the vibrancy of the corridor and support local businesses by bringing additional foot traffic to Plainfield Avenue. At the macro level, new apartments and mixed-use buildings on Plainfield Avenue can help address the shortage of units across the city with a housing type not largely available in Creston.

Key opportunities for new mixed-use development along Plainfield Avenue include:

- **Plainfield and Leonard** - this location could serve as a gateway to the community but is currently made up of auto oriented uses, vacant lots, and parking lots. New development could help to change the nature of this location and create a more welcoming environment to the entrance of the commercial corridor. The active rail lines that cut through the site diagonally will need to be considered in future redevelopment.
- **Grove to Sweet** - the heart of the commercial district and the most urban in nature. New development should be considerate of the existing fabric and new buildings should be contextual.
- **Carrier to Grove, Palmer to Dean, Graceland to Helena, Arlington to Beechwood** - these areas are a mix of auto-oriented businesses and buildings as well as some traditional urban commercial buildings. If redevelopment were to occur, retaining the historic and smaller scale commercial buildings will be important.

VARIOUS CONDITIONS OF THE PLAINFIELD AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The intersection of Plainfield Avenue and Leonard Street.



The intersection of Plainfield Avenue and Quimby Street.



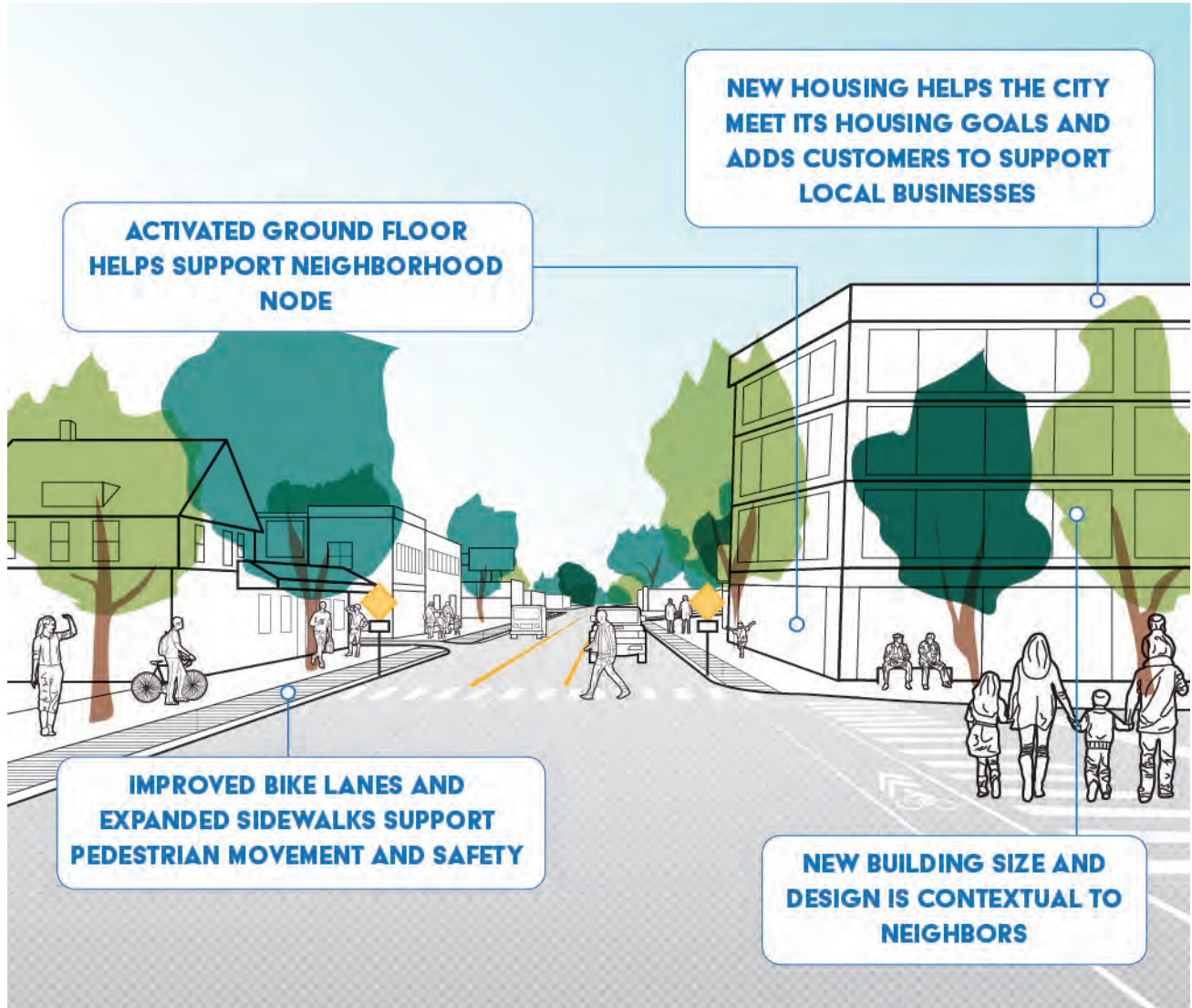
The intersection of Plainfield Avenue and Kenwood in Cheshire.

6

TARGET STOREFRONT AND FACADE REPAIRS IN NEIGHBORHOOD NODES.

Grand Rapids has six Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) that can administer facade improvement grants. Plainfield Avenue, within the North Quarter CIA boundaries, should focus on engagement within the Neighborhood Nodes to educate and support interested property owners.

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO PLAINFIELD AVENUE AS PROPOSED IN RECOMMENDATION 5



The various facade types on Plainfield Avenue require different levels of maintenance and improvement.



GOAL 03:

SAFER STREETS FOR BIKING & WALKING

RECOMMENDATIONS

7

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLING CONNECTIONS ON PLAINFIELD AVENUE.

As the community's primary commercial street, Plainfield Avenue needs to better serve active transportation or people that are walking or bicycling. Plainfield currently lacks a continuous bicycle lane, has small sidewalks, and few places to safely cross the street. The street is narrow which requires finding the right balance of space for traffic and space for people. The City should consider the following improvements:

- **Sidewalks** - sidewalks on Plainfield even in the Neighborhood Node at Quimby are narrow, sometimes only 7 feet wide. Future improvements to the street should consider expanding the sidewalk width.
- **Bicycle lanes** - existing bicycle lanes disappear in the main commercial portions of the corridor and are replaced by on street parking, forcing people bicycling into lanes with automobile traffic. The City should prioritize completing this gap in the network and improving bicycle safety. Engagement and coordination with local business owners and neighborhood organizers will be necessary to discuss potential solutions, given the narrow street width.
- **Crossings** - few signalized crossings exist in the commercial sections of Plainfield Avenue, forcing people to walk long distances to cross safely. The stretch of Plainfield between Leonard and Quimby is over a third of a mile and lacks any traffic lights. Beyond Quimby, the next traffic light is at Sweet Street, which is an additional 1,000 feet away. The City has made improvements by installing crosswalks, signage, and updating policies to require cars to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. However, the engagement process revealed that drivers often don't follow these updated policies, leaving pedestrians uncomfortable crossing at these locations.

In the short term, curb bump-outs and flashing lights can be added to the existing crosswalks. In the long term, the City should consider adding new stop lights at Page, Spencer/Caledonia, Lafayette, and Graceland to further improve pedestrian safety.

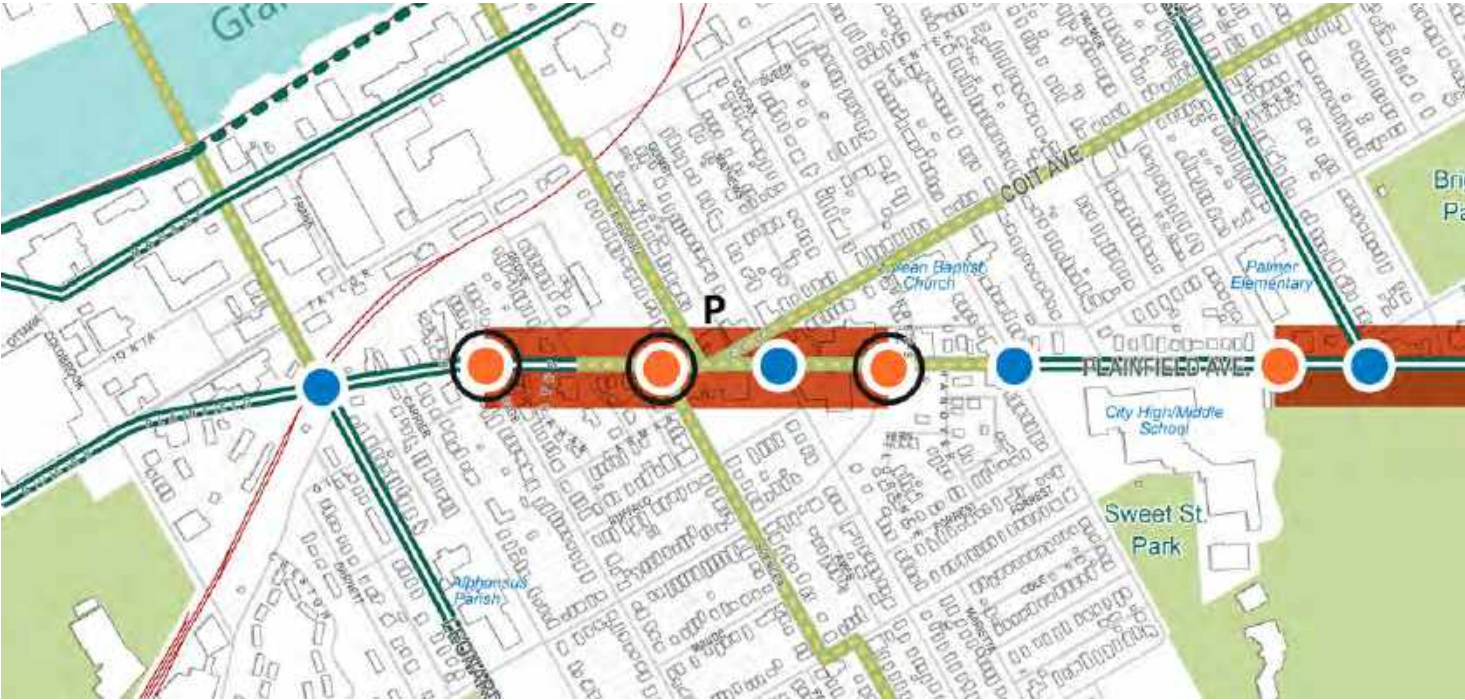


Example of a narrow sidewalk on Plainfield Avenue.

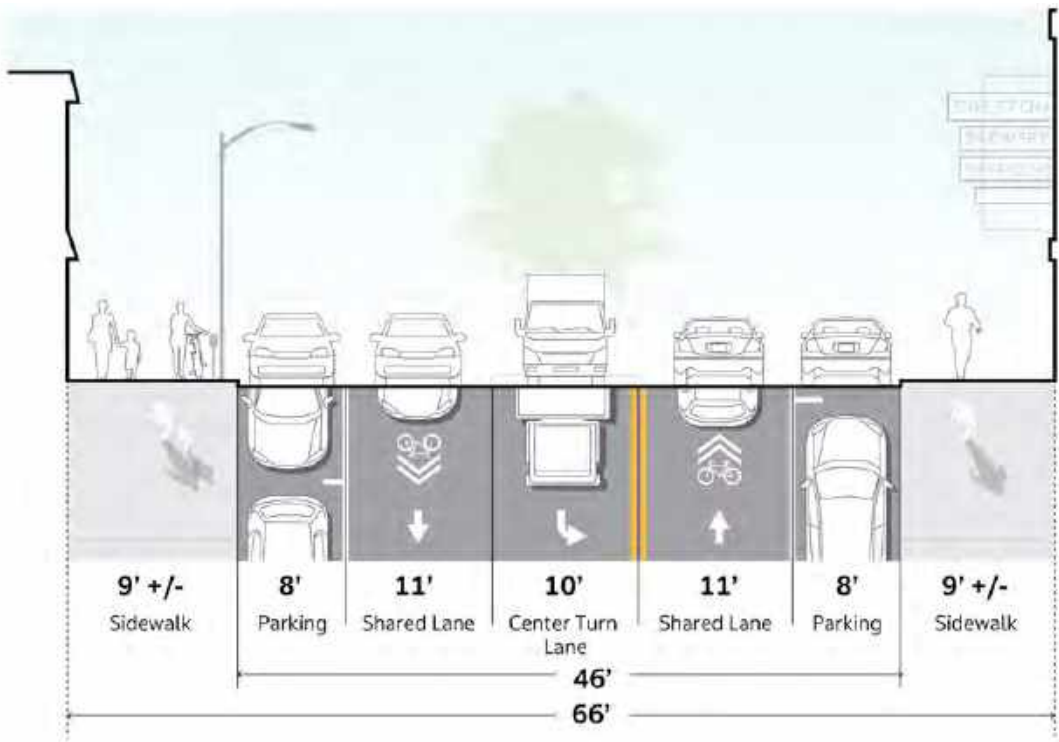


An example of a new pedestrian crossing on Plainfield Avenue.

PLAINFIELD AVENUE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

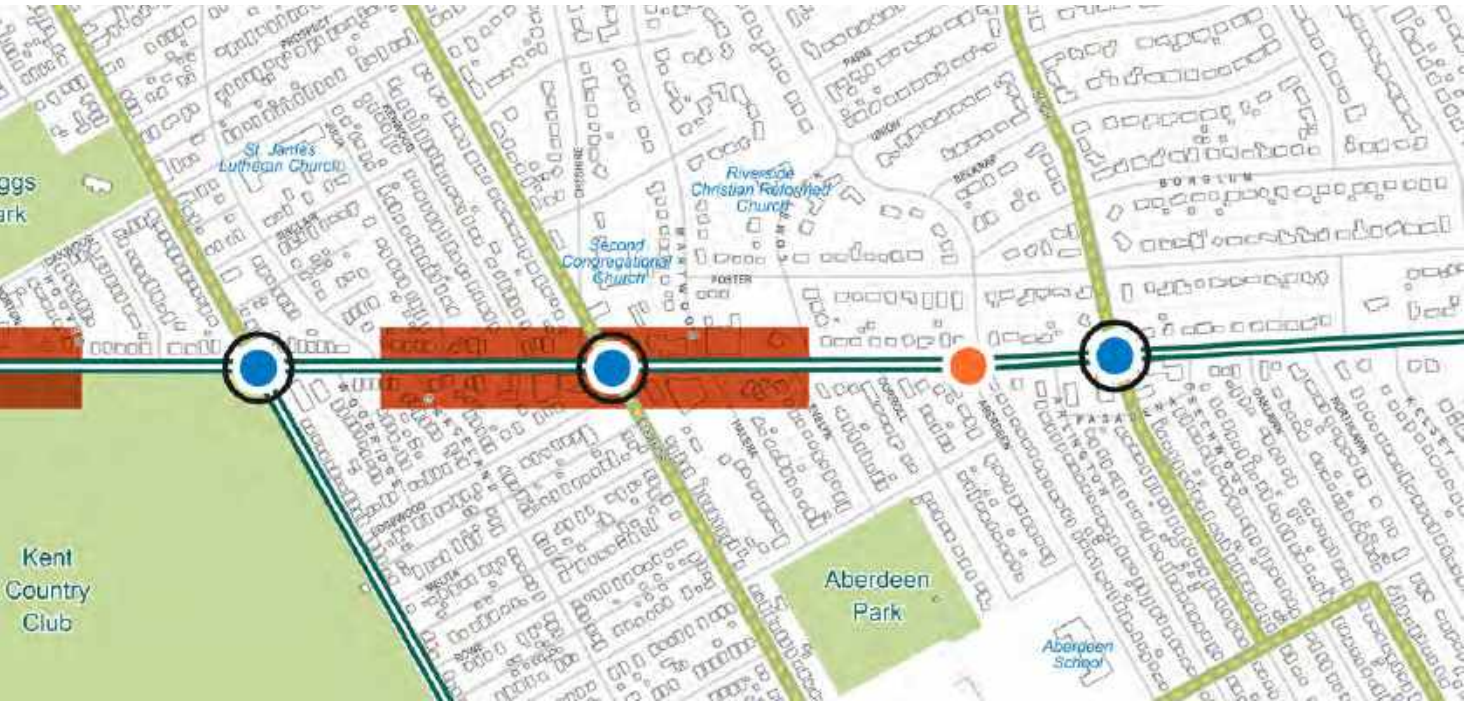


EXISTING SECTION - PLAINFIELD AVENUE AT QUIMBY STREET



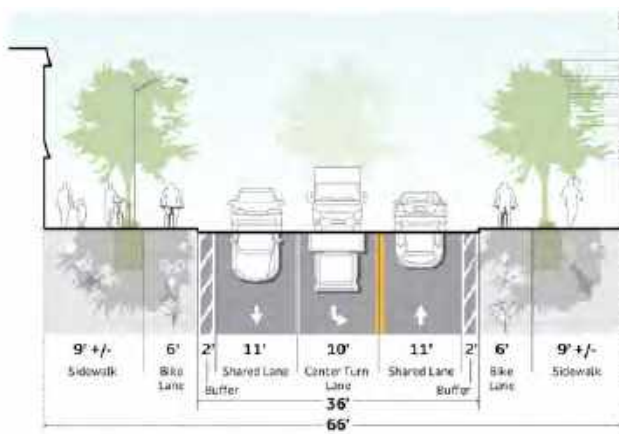
Legend

- Existing Bike Facility
- Proposed New/Improved Bike Facility
- Targeted Sidewalk Improvements
- Pedestrian Crossing - With Signalized Stoppage
- Pedestrian Crossing - Without Signalized Stoppage
- Potential Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements

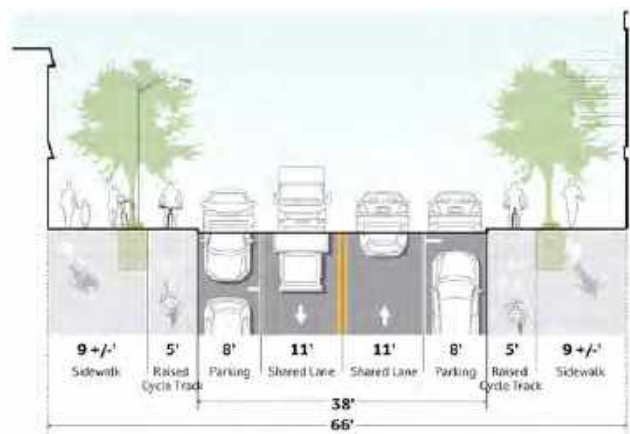


PROPOSED SECTION - PLAINFIELD AVENUE AT QUIMBY STREET

POTENTIAL OPTION A - BICYCLE LANES ON SIDEWALK REPLACE PARKING LANES



POTENTIAL OPTION B - BICYCLE LANES ON SIDEWALK REPLACE TURN LANE



8

ADD BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGHOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

The City has recently invested in improving bicycle infrastructure by adding new lanes on Monroe Avenue, Plainfield Avenue, and smaller streets like Ann Street. Residents appreciate these improvements, but additional investments are needed to create an interconnected network. This network would allow residents to safely enjoy neighborhood amenities (such as Riverside Park and the Plainfield Avenue commercial corridor) as well as amenities in nearby neighborhoods (including Downtown, Huff Park, Highland Park, Belknap Park, and Ball Perkins Park). The Bicycle Action Plan (see **Bicycle Action Plan - Proposed Improvements** map) outlines significant investment in bicycle infrastructure in Creston over the coming decades.

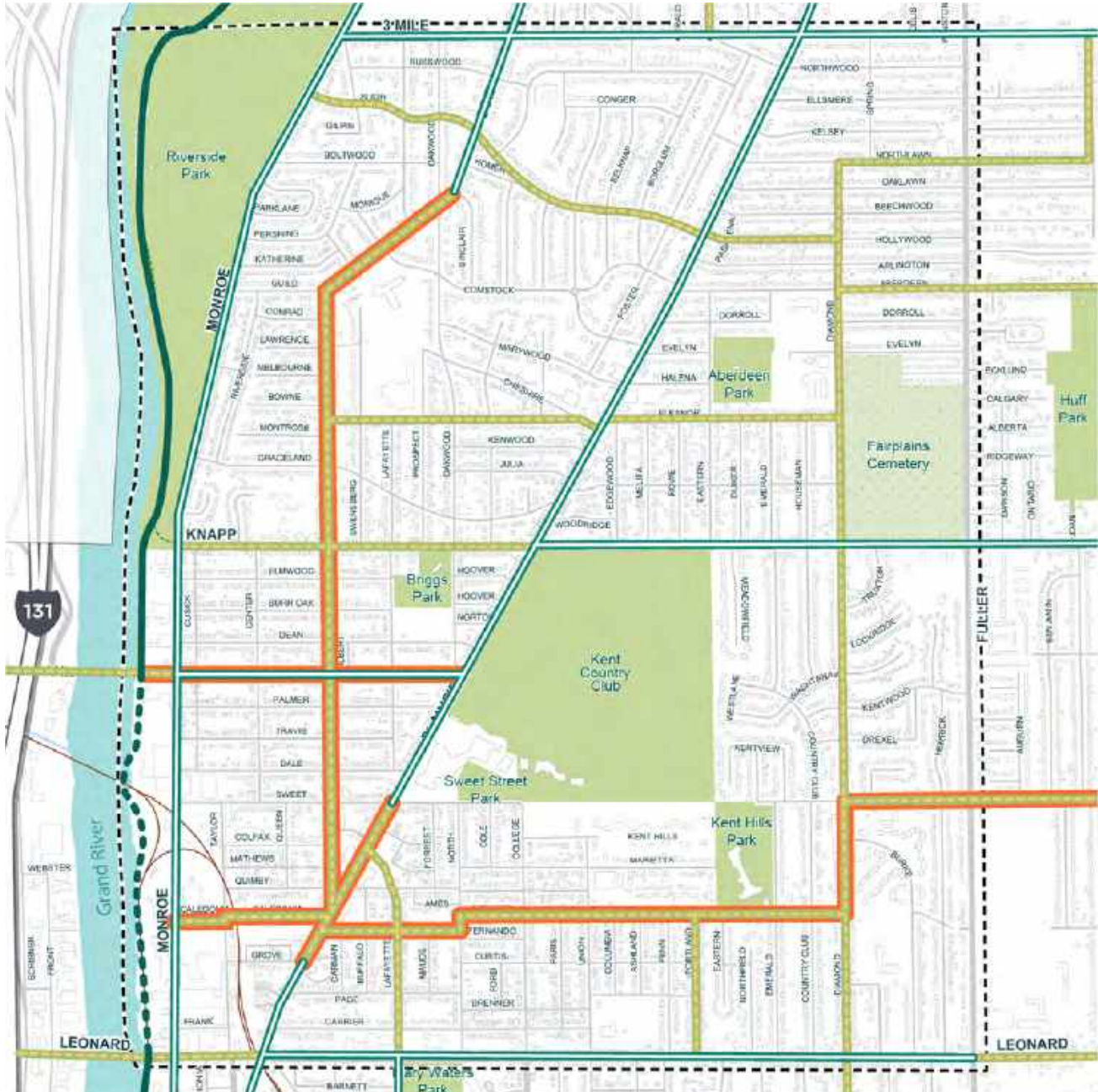
Some key projects should be prioritized as the Bicycle Action Plan moves towards implementation:

- **Plainfield Avenue** - a major bicycle network that currently lacks continuous dedicated infrastructure.
- **Coit Avenue** serves as an important ancillary north/south route to Plainfield Avenue. The existing bicycle lane currently terminates at Oakwood. Extending this network all the way to the intersection with Plainfield Avenue will create an important new connection to the existing network.
- **Caledonia Street** could serve as an important connection between the riverfront trail and the Plainfield Avenue commercial district. The City should explore options in creating a new bicycle facility on this important connection.
- **Spencer Avenue** - the City is actively working to create this facility and would serve as an important east/west connection to Ball Perkins Park, and onto Caledonia, eventually reaching the Grand River Trail.
- **Ann Street** - the City plans to reconfigure the section of street between Plainfield and Monroe by removing on-street parking on one side and raising the bike lanes to sidewalk level. Construction is expected to begin in 2025.



The existing bicycle lane on Plainfield Avenue.

BICYCLE ACTION PLAN - PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Priority Improvement

- Existing Trail
- Existing Bike Facility
- Proposed Trail
- Proposed New/Improved Bike Facility

GOAL 04:

REVITALIZED & CONNECTED OPEN SPACES

RECOMMENDATIONS

9

CREATE A PLAZA WHERE COIT AVENUE MEETS PLAINFIELD AVENUE.

Plainfield Avenue has minimal sidewalk space and few public areas for neighborhood programming. The last block of Coit Avenue, where it meets Plainfield Avenue, is an unnecessary street that could be better used for people rather than cars. Closing this block would have minimal impact on traffic flow, as cars could easily divert to Quimby Street. Parking spaces could be added to Quimby and Plainfield to offset the lost spaces on Coit.

In the short term, closing the street to vehicular traffic with strategically located planters and adding outdoor furniture could be an effective way to test the best use of the space, after which more permanent redesigns should be pursued. Local organizations like the North Quarter CIA and the Creston Neighborhood Association could actively program the space with a variety of events.



Block of Coit Avenue which could be closed to vehicular traffic.

POTENTIAL COIT AVENUE AS A PEDESTRIAN ONLY STREET

10

BETTER CONNECT PLAINFIELD AVENUE TO THE RIVERFRONT ALONG KEY STREETS.

Throughout the planning process, residents continuously expressed a desire to better connect the riverfront trail (and trail users) to the Plainfield Avenue commercial corridor. Caledonia Street sits at a key location, connecting the river and trail to the heart of the Plainfield Avenue commercial corridor and adjacent to major development sites. To better improve this connection the following measures should be taken:

- Create a bicycle lane on Caledonia from the river trail to Plainfield.
- Add sidewalks where they are missing.
- Add trees and green infrastructure.
- Explore a connection through the Water Department property to ensure access to the river and trail.

Improvements to the street should be done in coordination with any redevelopment of adjacent properties to ensure projects are aligned. Any development team may be obliged to make improvements to support this goal.

Beyond Caledonia, additional streets to improve connections between the neighborhood and the river may include:

- Leonard Street
- Sweet Street
- Ann Street
- Knapp Street

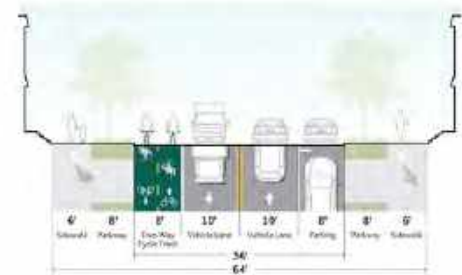
Images of Caledonia Street near Plainfield Avenue.



EXISTING SECTION - CALEDONIA STREET BETWEEN PLAINFIELD & TAYLOR AVENUES.



PROPOSED SECTION - CALEDONIA STREET BETWEEN PLAINFIELD & TAYLOR AVENUES.



Please Note: A cycle track is one form the bicycle connection may take as conditions change from the river trail to Caledonia Street and further east on Spencer Street.

11

WORK TO COMPLETE GRAND RIVER TRAIL THROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD.

The Grand River Trail extends north through Creston at Ann Street, and south at Leonard, with a missing segment from Leonard to Ann Street. Plans are in the works to close this nearly one mile gap in the system and allow residents to have a continuous off street path connecting to points north and south. Neighborhood organizations should continue to advocate for this work to ensure that it is fully implemented.



Rendering of the future Grand River Trail through Creston.

Image courtesy of: Grand River Network, VIRIDIS

12

FOCUS ON GREENING RESIDENTIAL PORTIONS OF PLAINFIELD AVENUE.

Trees and other plantings on Plainfield Avenue are often intermittent, depending on location. Recent investments to add green infrastructure and planted medians have added welcomed greenery to the corridor. Additional improvements to the residential portion of the street may include:

- Coordinate efforts among residential property owners to add trees and other native plants in front yards and sidewalk strips.
- Work with Kent Country Club to upgrade their fence along Plainfield Avenue including a setback to provide space for additional plantings.
- Find space to create new greenery along the corridor's narrow sidewalks. Consider:
 - Landscaped buffers between sidewalks and parking lots.
 - Street trees within the sidewalk where width permits.
 - Container gardens or planters outside businesses.



Residential portion of Plainfield Avenue.



Chain link fence along Kent County Country Club.

13

ESTABLISH COMMUNITY VISION FOR REDEVELOPED RIVERSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL.

The engagement process revealed that the open space at Riverside Middle School is a valuable community asset, with the soccer fields, large lawns, and basketball courts all being heavily utilized by nearby residents. With recent school closures and realignments, Riverside Elementary is planned to be the new site of North Park Montessori. As investments are planned for the school structure, additional community engagement is needed to determine how to improve the open space to best support the community's needs.

While Riverside has immediate plans for activation, the future of other schools in Creston slated for closure remains uncertain. Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) should only pursue redevelopment of these properties after an extensive engagement process to understand the community's desires for these spaces.



Open space at the former Riverside Elementary School.

14

BOOST CRESTON'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE.

Urban trees play an important role in creating a healthy environment for the city and its residents. They help to clean the air, they help absorb stormwater, and they create shade to cool the urban heat island effect. Residential streets within Creston have good tree coverage on both private yards and along curbs, but portions of the riverfront lack trees coverage due to its industrial history. To help bolster Creston's resilience and protect residents from summer heat, focus on ensuring new trees are included with new development and identify locations throughout the community that need additional trees to fill gaps in the urban forest.



Good tree coverage in residential neighborhoods.

Formerly industrial areas along the river are lacking tree coverage.



To compliment new tree initiatives, new development and building renovations should seek to reduce the community's carbon footprint where possible. This includes:

- Sourcing local and sustainable building materials.
- Encouraging solar panels or solar hot water heaters and reducing the use of fossil fuels where possible.
- Encouraging new rain barrels to help capture and reuse stormwater.
- Encouraging the use of design and technology solutions like green roofs, natural ventilation, insulation, and others to minimize the use of heating and air conditioning .

DRAFT

FUTURE SCENARIOS & IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations set the stage for future changes. The final section of this Area Specific Plan outlines the potential impact of these recommendations across Creston and how to implement them. This section is divided into the following parts:

Future Development Scenarios:

This section graphically depicts how many of the recommendations around the built environment and housing could look on typical blocks within Creston. It includes a variety of developments that add housing in a contextual way, mixed-use developments that support commercial corridors, and larger-scale developments on formerly industrial areas.

Site-Specific Improvements:

While the future development scenarios illustrate potential futures on typical blocks, this section focuses on specific areas within Creston, showcasing what the recommendations could look like across different goal areas. The primary areas of focus are the industrial zones near the river and Plainfield Avenue and adjacent blocks, which are most likely to undergo changes.

Future Character Areas and Zoning:

The CMP identifies future character areas across the city, often requiring zoning changes to achieve the desired character. This section includes a map and associated chart to help navigate potential zoning changes.

Implementation:

This matrix identifies potential partnerships needed to accomplish the specific recommendations outlined in the plan.

DRAFT

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.
Please see **RECOMMENDATION 4** for more details

SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD NODES WITH NEW MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT .
Please see **RECOMMENDATION 5** for more details

Repurposing of small scale industrial buildings for new businesses

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings

Ground floor commercial

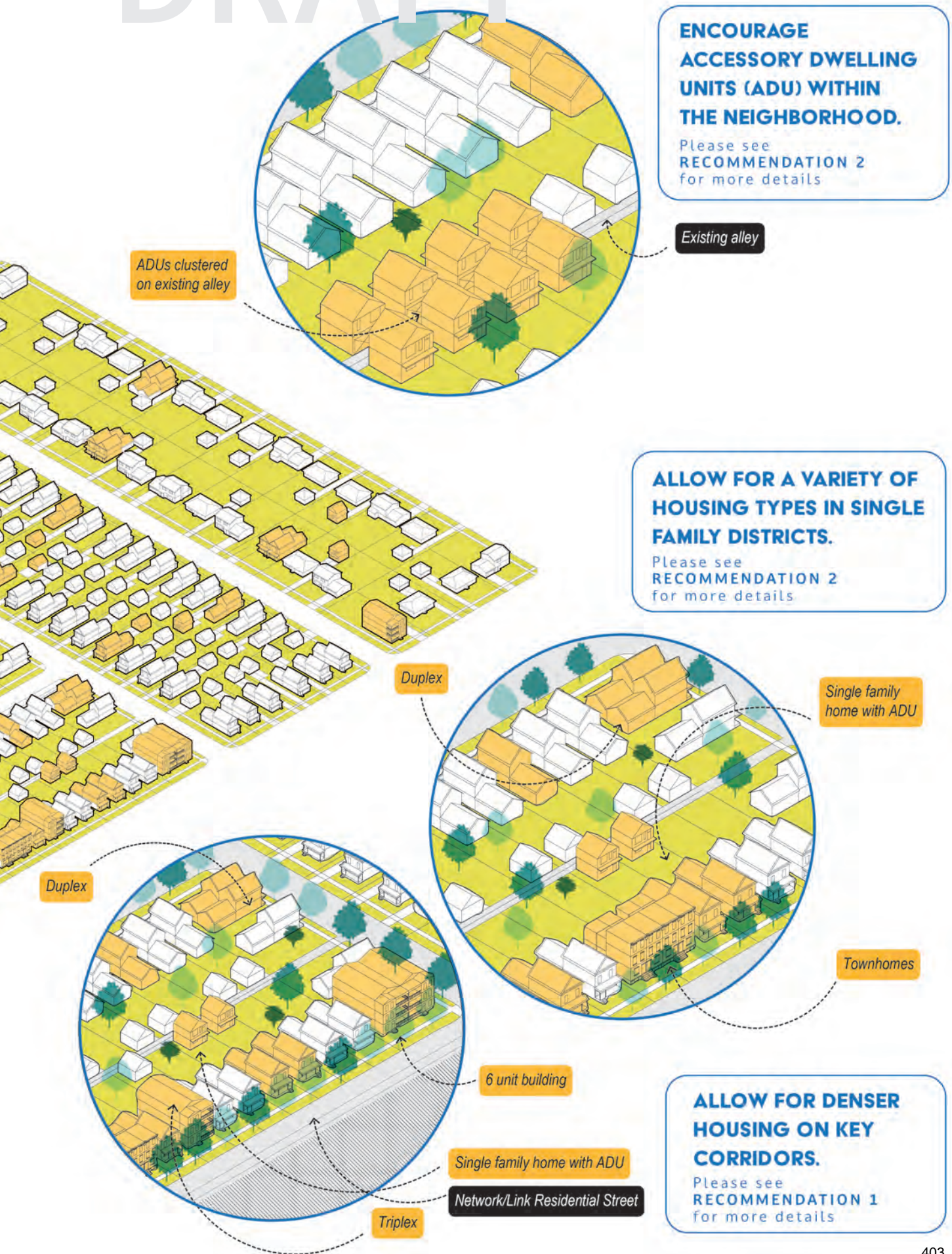
Upper floor residential
Ground floor maker space

Height respectful to neighborhood context

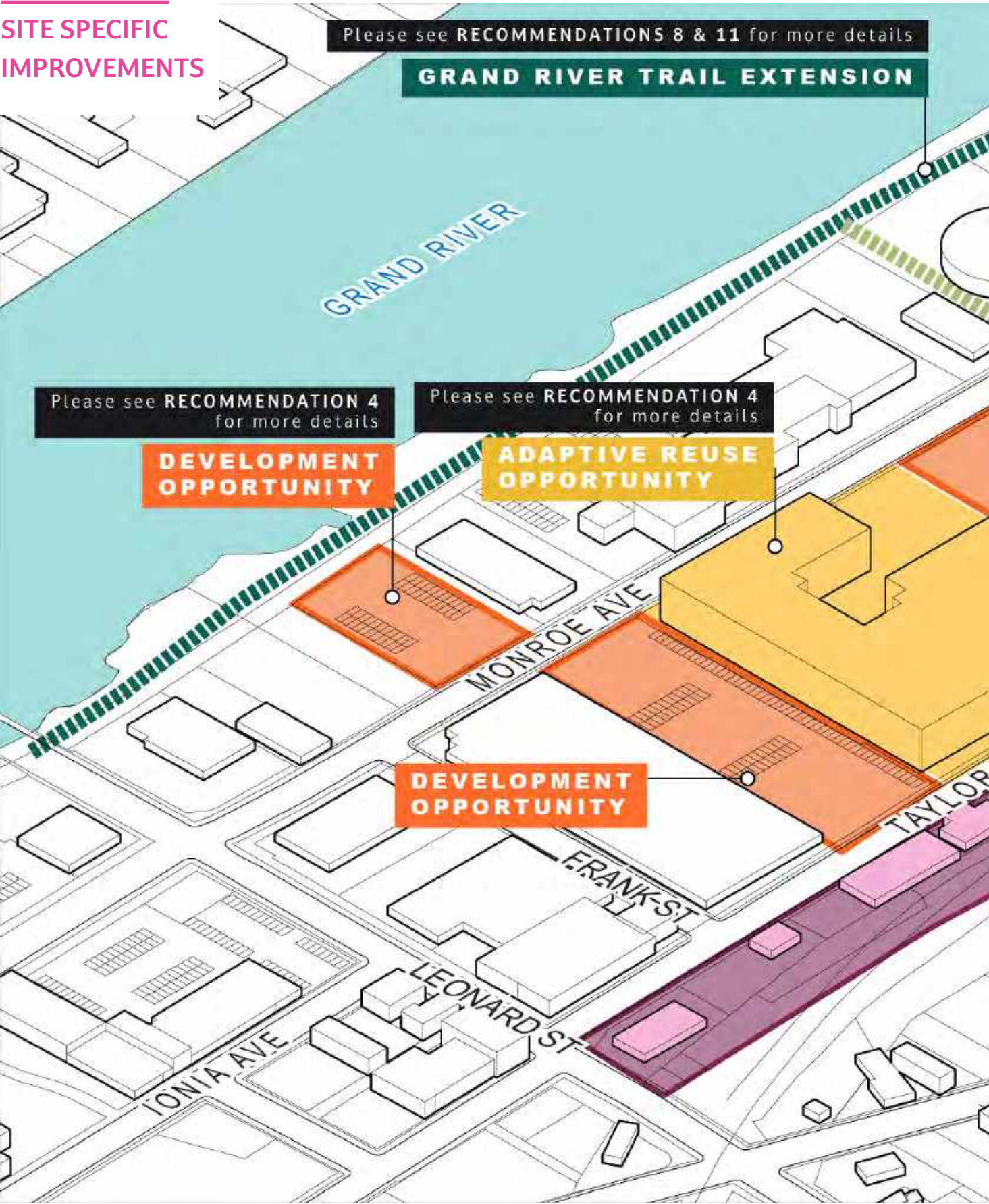
Commercial corridor

Upper floor residential

Ground floor commercial

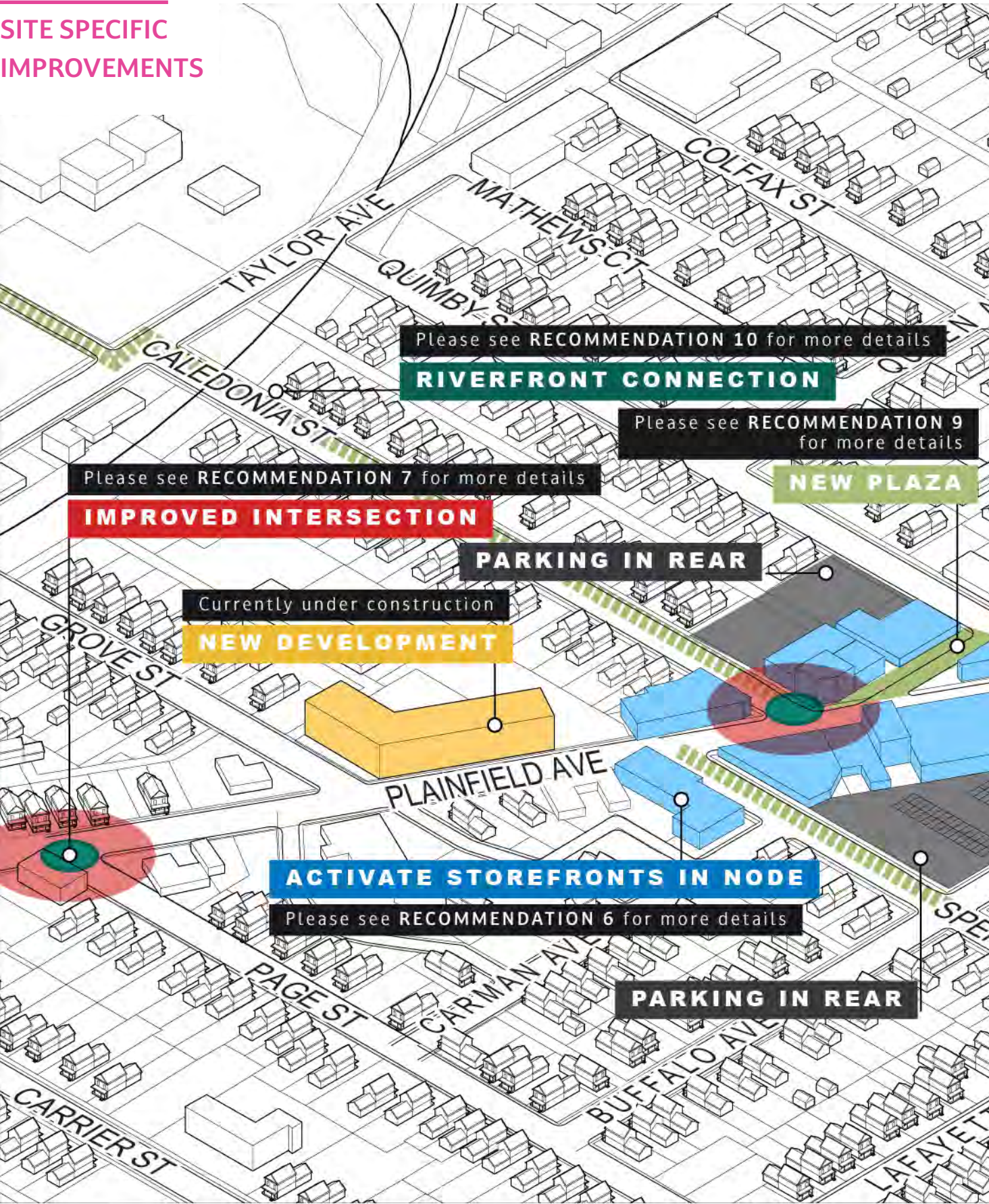


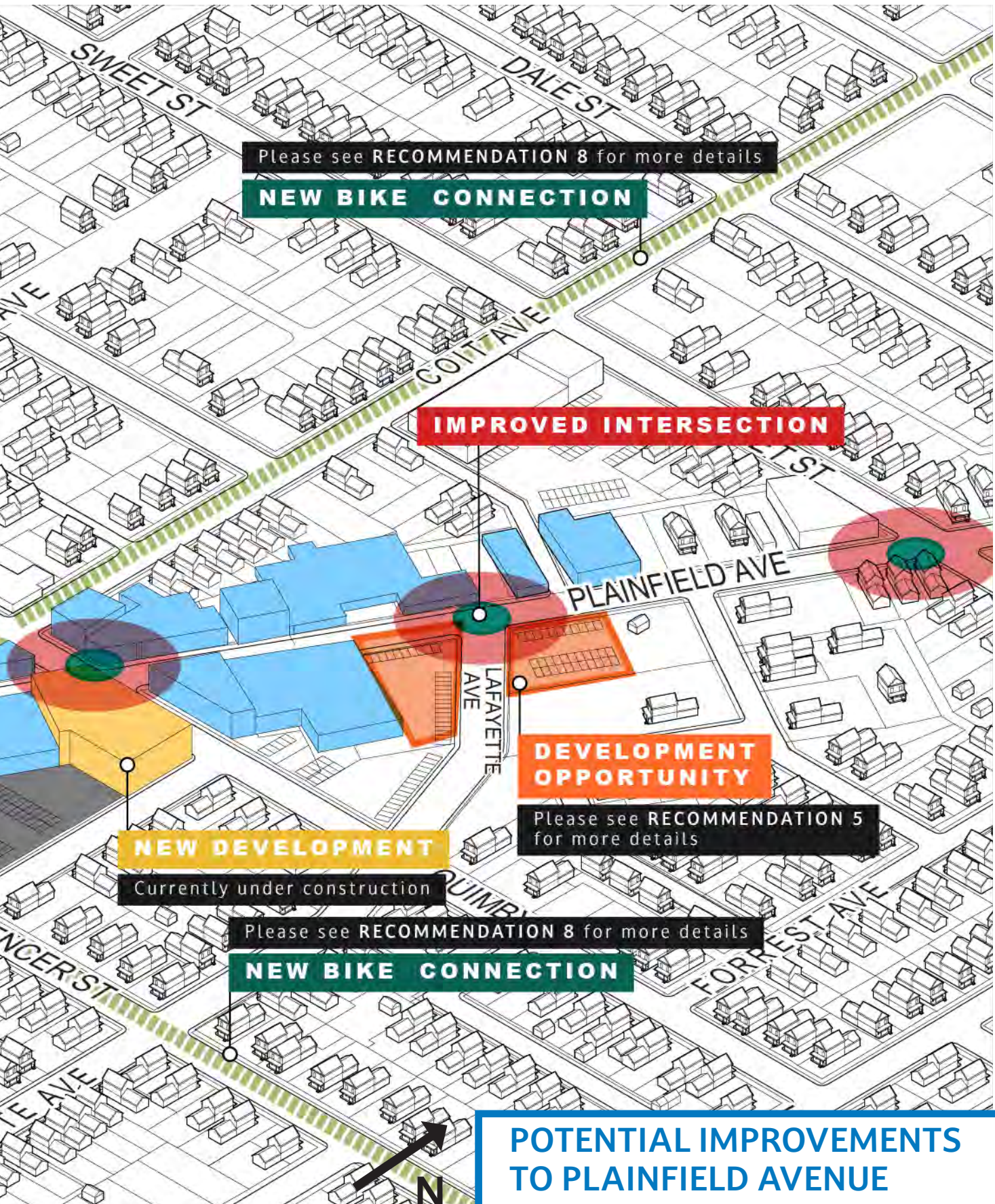
SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS





SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS





FUTURE CHARACTER & LAND USE

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING



Legend

Existing Zoning

- LDR** - Low Density Residential
- MDR** - Mixed Density Residential
- TBA** - Traditional Business Area
- NOS** - Neighborhood Office Service
- C** - Commercial
- TCC** - Transitional City Center
- OS** - Open Space

Future Character Areas

- Downtown
- Neighborhood Center
- Community Activity Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics

Community Activity Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Commercial
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

Neighborhood Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Traditional Business Area
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Transit Oriented Development

Compact Neighborhood

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Mixed-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

Innovation Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Transitional City Center
- Commercial
- Transit Oriented Development
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Planned Redevelopment

Campus

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Institutional Campus
- Transit Oriented Development
- Planned Redevelopment

Parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Open Space

The **Future Character Map** and **Zoning Map** serve different purposes for the City.

Future Character Map: This map is a visionary tool that outlines the intended use of land in the future, reflecting the community's long-term goals and aspirations. It is part of a Community Master Plan and guides future development, informing decisions about growth and land use changes.

Zoning Map: This map is a regulatory tool that defines the current legal use of land, specifying what can be built and how land can be used right now. It divides the city into zones, each with its own set of rules and regulations regarding building types, densities, and uses.

In essence, the **Future Character Map** provides a guide for future development, while the **Zoning Map** enforces current land use regulations. The City will need to update its zoning to achieve this vision, and this zoning plan may help coordinate between existing zoning classifications and desired outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION

TO BE UPDATED

DRAFT

AREA SPECIFIC PLAN:

SOUTHTOWN



DRAFT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO BE UPDATED

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Southtown Area Specific Plan (ASP) is the culmination of a series of community input and feedback sessions with the neighborhood. The Southtown ASP builds on the findings and recommendations of the Southtown Business Area Specific Plan (BASP) from 2019, the purpose of which was to create a roadmap for improving commercial corridors and public spaces in the neighborhood to support new and existing businesses, appeal to neighborhood residents, encourage pride in places, and attract visitors.

This Plan builds on that work by focusing on the 7 neighborhoods that share these corridors. The Plan outlines the community's vision for the future of the Southtown neighborhoods and defines the steps necessary to achieve that vision, with a special focus on issues and opportunities related to housing, affordability, and development/redevelopment.

The Southtown ASP is bounded by the following streets: Wealthy, Lafayette, Pleasant, Union, Fuller, MLK, Eastern, Hall, Kalamazoo, Adams, Giddings, Burton, Oakfield, Alger, and Jefferson. Southtown contains pockets of residential neighborhoods bounded by commercial streets on the major north/south and east/west thoroughfares. Industrial uses line the freight rail corridor that cuts through the neighborhood. Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include Pleasant Park, Oakhill Cemetery, Garfield Park, and the commercial corridors on Division, Madison, and Eastern.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN & OTHER PLANS

The Community Master Plan (CMP) acts as a blueprint, outlining a vision and broad objectives along with detailed steps to achieve them. Building on this foundation, the Area Specific Plans (ASPs) adhere to the same principles and provide more detailed recommendations. These plans illustrate how the overarching vision and goals of the CMP are tailored and implemented to meet the unique needs of individual neighborhoods. Additionally, citywide planning initiatives such as the Vital Streets Plan, Bicycle Action Plan, Grand Rapids/Kent County Housing Needs Assessment, Housing NOW, and others offer further opportunities to develop a comprehensive neighborhood plan.

In addition, the Southtown area has been part of previous planning efforts with an economic development focus, also known as a Business Area Specific Plan (BASP) (see **Previous Plans & Business Districts** map). These plans are designed to guide investment and stimulate economic growth in specific corridors of existing commercial activity, including the business districts and properties that connect them.

To date, Southtown and adjacent neighborhoods have had three studies: the 2019 Southtown Business Area Specific Plan, the 2019 South Division Corridor Plan and the 2021 Division United Transit-Oriented Development Study.

Unlike a traditional ASP, the Southtown BASP and South Division Corridor Plan focused exclusively on commercial land use and the needs and priorities of businesses. However, these plans contain goals and values that are still relevant to the current Southtown study, including support for:

- Diverse housing choices for people of all household sizes and life stages.
- Development without displacement.
- Affordable housing for residents.
- Programs that help homeowners maintain and preserve their properties.
- Maintaining small businesses that serve the needs of the community and the role of density in doing so.

PREVIOUS PLANS & BUSINESS DISTRICTS



Legend

- Parks
- Open Spaces
- Railway
- Existing Trail
- 2023 ASP Study Area
- Commercial
- Office
- Mixed Commercial/Residential

Past Business Area Specific Plans and Corridor Studies

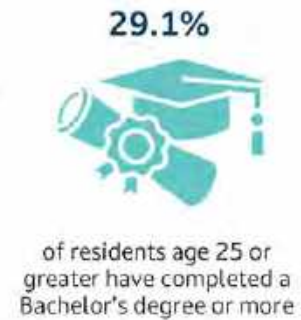
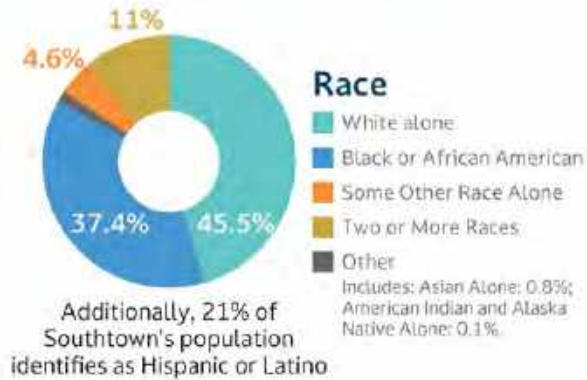
- 1 2019 Southtown Business Area Specific Plan
- 2 2019 South Division Corridor Plan

NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Source: U.S. Census ACS 2020 & 2022 (5-Year Estimates)
Census Tracts 29, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 41, and 42, Kent County, Michigan

POPULATION



INCOMES



HOUSING



Census tracts are designed to capture statistical data and are often delineated based on population size and other criteria that do not necessarily correspond with neighborhood boundaries, which can be more fluid and defined by a combination of historical, social, and economic factors. Despite these limitations, the insights derived from analyzing census tract data provide a valuable foundation for understanding the broader trends and dynamics of the neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS

Some of the assets highlighted by residents (see **Neighborhood Assets** map) include:

- Open spaces like Garfield Park and MLK Park.
- Commercial corridors such as Eastern and Madison.
- The architectural character of the buildings along the commercial corridors and its potential to be preserved.

The Southtown area is a collection of diverse neighborhoods, including Baxter, Boston Square, Oakdale, Madison, Alger Heights, Garfield Park, incorporating many unique identities into a single geographic area. Residents value their neighborhoods and want to improve their quality of life while ensuring that improvements are sensitive to neighborhood desires and community identity, preserve neighborhood assets and character, and allow residents of all ages to remain safely in place.



Legend

Parks & Gardens	Places of Worship	Traditional Neighborhood
Community Services	Arts, Culture & Recreation	Mid-Century Neighborhood
Education	Historic & Landmarks	
Health Facilities	Public Services	

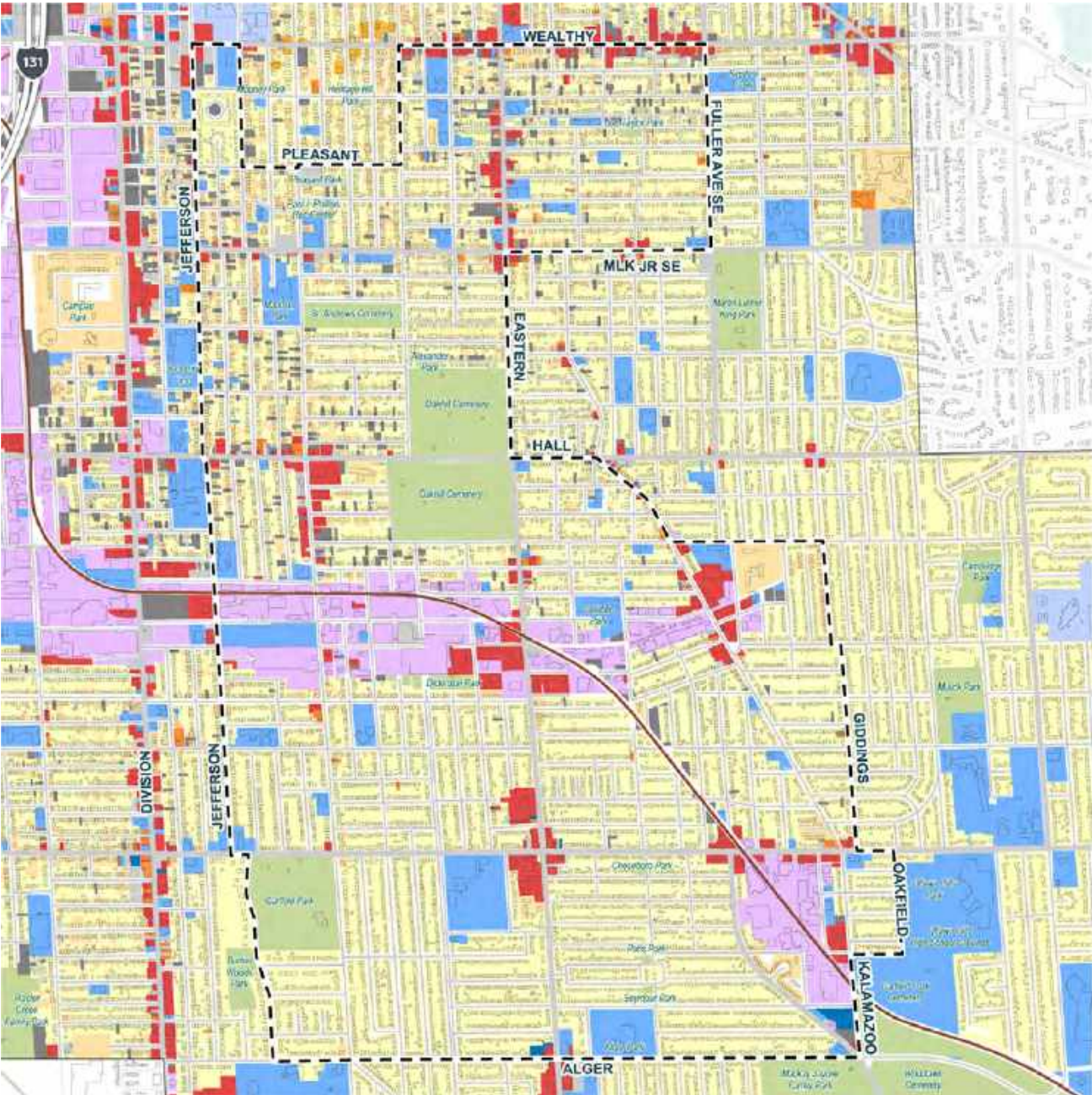
NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATION

The Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance assigns different neighborhood classifications to residential and mixed-use commercial districts based on existing development characteristics. Southtown contains two of the three residential classifications as seen on the map to the left.

Traditional Neighborhood (TN): Designed prior to the advent of the automobile, these neighborhoods were created to offer residents commercial and institutional uses within a short walk of their homes. Housing options include single-family homes and apartments located above storefronts, with commercial and institutional spaces seamlessly incorporated into the neighborhood. The variety in building sizes and uses adds to the vibrancy of these areas.

Mid-20th Century Neighborhoods (MCN): Post-World War II, neighborhoods transformed to accommodate the rise of the automobile. Residential areas expanded, featuring larger lots and buildings set back from the streets, creating a more open feel. The interconnectedness of streets and neighborhoods diminished, with land uses becoming distinctly separated and apartment buildings were no longer mixed with single-family homes. More intense commercial and institutional activities were relegated to heavily traveled corridors, manifesting as strip developments.

EXISTING LAND USE



Legend

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Neighborhood Study Area | Commercial | Parking Lot |
| Railway | Mixed Commercial/Residential | Parks & Other Open Spaces |
| Existing Trail | High Density Residential | Public/Quasi Public |
| | Multifamily - 2 Units or more | Medical Facilities |
| | Single Family | Industrial |
| | Office | Vacant Lot |
| | | Not Classified |

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING

Existing Land Use

The land use in Southtown (see **Existing Land Use** map) is made up of four primary uses:

- Predominantly residential neighborhoods that are primarily single family residences with some multi-family housing in the northern section of the community.
- Industrial uses along the rail line that cuts through the study area.
- Commercial centers on major streets and intersections.
- Vacant land predominantly in the northern section of the neighborhood.

Existing Zoning

Zoning in Southtown is classified under Traditional Neighborhood (TN) and Mid Century Neighborhood (MCN) designations, which generally reflect existing land uses. Predominantly residential neighborhoods are surrounded by commercial corridors and nodes. Properties along the rail line are still used for industrial purposes and are zoned accordingly.

The following zones are found within Southtown:

- TCC - Transitional City Center
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- LDR - Low Density Residential
- MDR - Mixed Density Residential
- SD-OS - Open Space
- SD-PRD - Planned Redevelopment District
- NOS - Neighborhood Office Service
- SD-IT - Industrial Transportation



Properties in the Low Density Residential district.



Properties in the Traditional Business Area district.

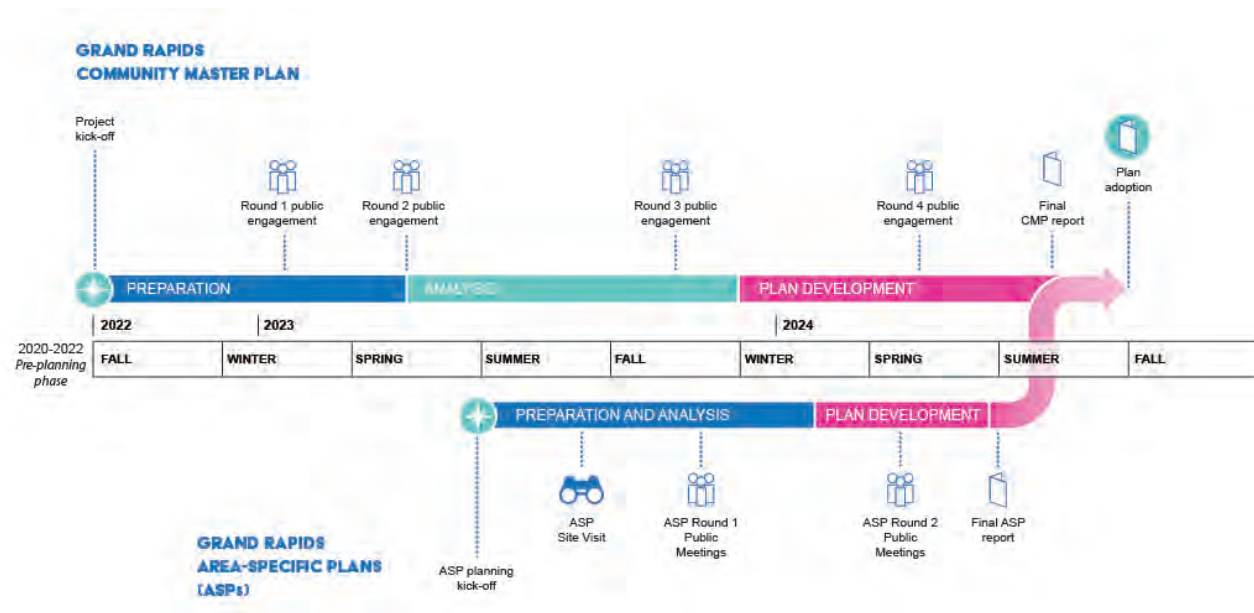


Properties in the Industrial Transportation district.

Source: Notions Marketing Corporation.

PLANNING PROCESS & ENGAGEMENT

CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE & CMP VALUES & GOALS



A Comprehensive View

The City of Grand Rapids began developing a new Community Master Plan in 2022, after two years of preliminary planning from 2020 to 2022, and more than 20 years since the release of the previous plan. The citywide engagement process required a comprehensive, phased approach over two years, including:

- Four rounds of **engagement**.
- Various **focus groups and interviews** with key stakeholders to discuss specific issues.
- Regular meetings with the **Steering Committee** to help guide the process.
- Small group meetings and targeted conversations with neighborhood residents through **Community Connectors**. The Connectors were trusted voices in the community, made up of community leaders and activists representing non profits and other stakeholders from across the city. They hosted small group meetings, in addition to other tasks, helping to expand the reach of the engagement process.
- The City of Grand Rapids has over 30 **Neighborhood Organizations**, many of which participated in the Community Master Plan process. Some were on the Steering Committee, others served as Community Connectors, and CDBG funding enabled many to host engagement meetings. These organizations helped inform residents about the process and facilitated community conversations.

Community Master Plan Values

One clear goal of the citywide engagement process was to determine the values that are most important to the community. These values are crosscutting and are threaded throughout the CMP.

CULTURE



EQUITY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



VIBRANCY



Community Master Plan Goals

The citywide engagement process also revealed residents' overall concerns and priorities, such as a desire for better and more diverse housing options, pleasant public spaces that support economic activity, access to local jobs and amenities, and a prioritization of pedestrian safety and mobility. This community input, combined with the existing conditions analysis, informed the creation of the community goals upon which the CMP is based and **ultimately guided the strategies for the ASPs:**

1. GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS: Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.

2. VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS: A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.

3. A STRONG ECONOMY: An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. The Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage

4. BALANCED MOBILITY: A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.

5. DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER: A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.

SOUTHTOWN SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

The ASP engagement process began in the summer of 2023, alongside the citywide engagement process. The community priorities identified through the citywide effort helped shape the ASP engagement by highlighting issues and priorities that needed further exploration with community members. The ASP engagement process included:

- Two rounds of public meetings.
- ASP related questions and activities in the broader CMP engagement process.
- Regular meetings with City staff and consultants to provide guidance and ensure alignment between the ASP and the efforts and strategies of the Community Master Plan.

ASP engagement summary

Some of the ideas that emerged from public engagement discussions include:

- Support quality in new development and design guidelines to match existing character.
- Support ADUs within the alley network and the alley maintenance needed to accommodate them.
- Consider infill development options that is denser than single-family housing.
- Prioritize investments in transit-oriented development and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Integrate amenities such as bus shelters, benches, and green spaces into multi-family developments to enhance community interaction and livability.
- Explore opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of existing housing stock.

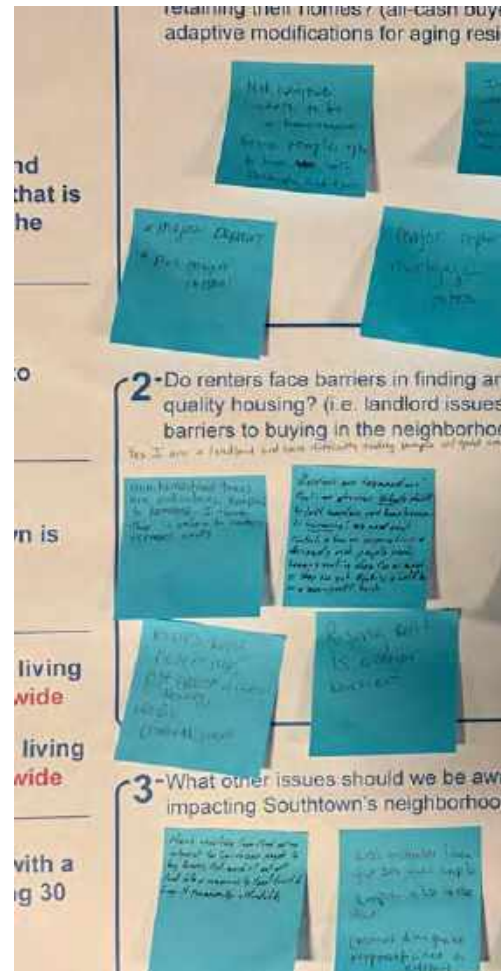
Residents echoed the need to encourage:

- Sustainable, equitable development.
- A vibrant and thriving business community.
- Safer, walkable/bikeable streets.
- Beautiful neighborhoods with healthy, active community spaces.

Community event in Southtown.



Ideas shared by the community at an outreach event.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement with neighbors, along with data and analysis of existing conditions, led to several key takeaways.

SOUTHTOWN IS A COLLECTION OF RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITIES & BUSINESS CORRIDORS, ALL WITH THEIR OWN IDENTITY

Southtown is made up of no less than 7 neighborhoods. While united by common commercial corridors and public spaces, each neighborhood is unique with its own challenges. It is important to consider the nuance of each neighborhood when crafting collective strategies.

PROXIMATE TO DOWNTOWN & WITH VACANT LAND, SOUTHTOWN IS FEELING DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

The north side of Southtown faces similar development pressures as Downtown, with investment continuing to move south. This is compounded by Southtown's high concentrations of residential vacancy, making the area prime for redevelopment. New investment could benefit a neighborhood that has experienced decades of disinvestment, but it is important to ensure that the benefits of redevelopment do not bypass long-time residents.

HOUSING COSTS (RENT, MAINTENANCE, OTHERS) ARE A MAJOR ISSUE FOR RESIDENTS

Many existing residents in Southtown are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on rent. Renters are particularly vulnerable to unaffordable price increases since they are not protected by long-term mortgage rates. This issue is exacerbated in parts of the neighborhood with a disproportionately high percentage of renter households compared to the city. Homeowners also face challenges, as maintaining old housing stock can be difficult and expensive. Ensuring affordable housing for both renters and homeowners will be a significant challenge for Southtown.



A residential block in Southtown.



New homes in Southtown.



A home under renovation.

EXISTING RESIDENTS MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Many Southtown residents have lived in the neighborhood for decades and experienced its highs and lows. As new investments take place, it will be important for the long term residents to be able to benefit.

THE DESIGN AND SCALE OF NEW DEVELOPMENT IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

The City classifies Southtown as a residential community with both traditional and mid-century development patterns, contributing to its unique character. As new development occurs, it is crucial for any new buildings to consider the surrounding context to ensure they complement the neighborhood and add value to the community.



A vacant commercial building.



A new mixed use building.

New housing in Southtown.



COMMUNITY GOALS

The following Goals were determined with the community throughout the engagement process.

01

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods**, **Vital Business Districts** and **Balanced Mobility** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

02

A COMMUNITY BUILT BY ALL FOR ALL

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** and **Desirable Development Character** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

03

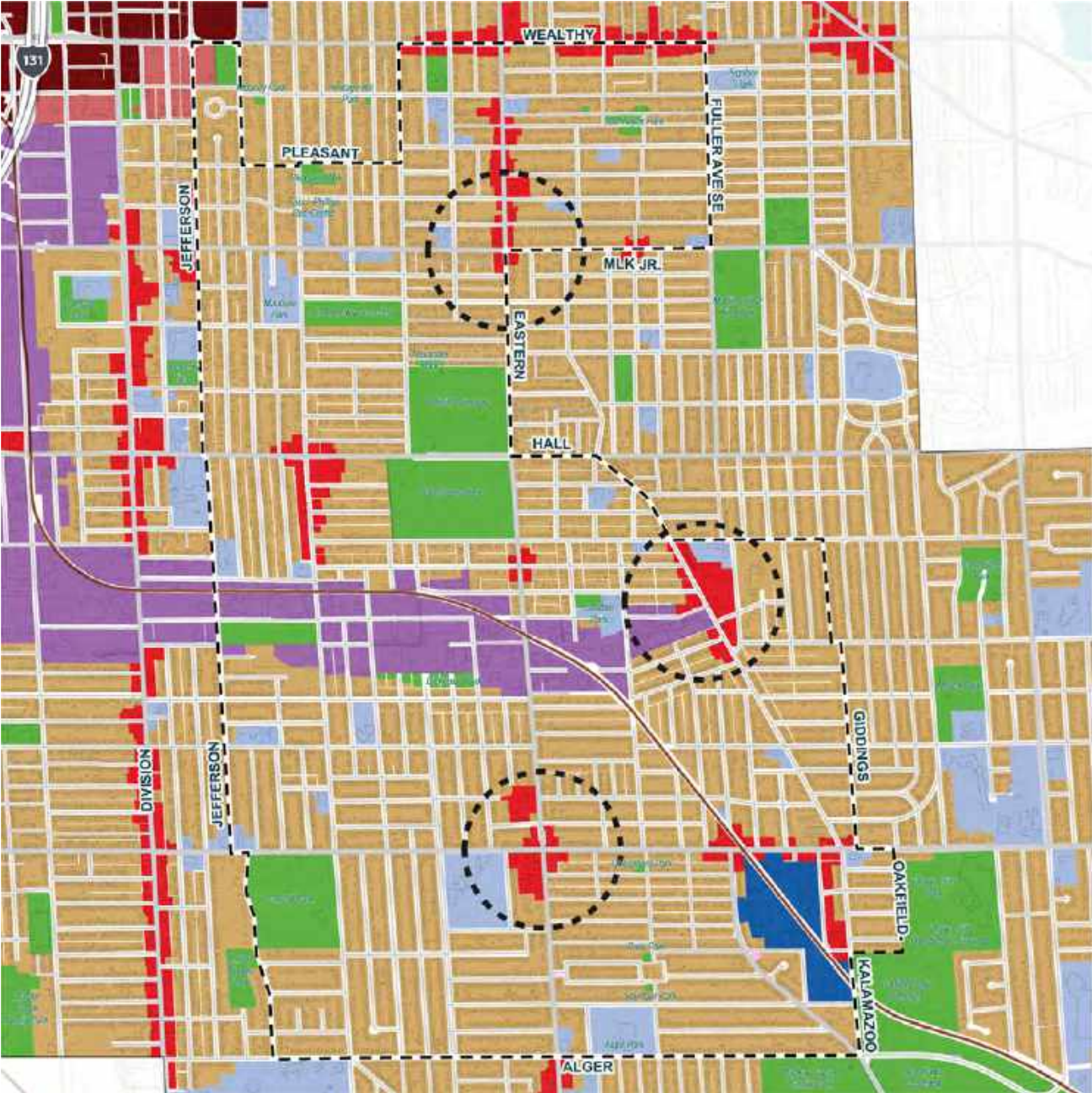
PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods**, **Vital Business Districts**, and **Desirable Development Character** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

ASP Recommendations will be organized around the above Goals.

NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE FUTURE

FUTURE CHARACTER & NODES



Legend

-  Neighborhood Study Area

 Neighborhood Nodes
-  Downtown

 Community Activity Center

 Neighborhood Center

 Compact Neighborhood

 Transitional Activity Center
-  Suburban Neighborhood

 Campus

 Innovation Center

 Parks & Open Spaces

 Manufacturing & Logistics

Through the CMP and ASP engagement process, the community helped co-create the Future Character Map, which outlines Grand Rapids' future land use. It emphasizes development character and qualities as well as urban form and function. This map (see **Future Character & Nodes** map) guides future development citywide, reinforcing existing patterns in some areas and supporting changes in others.

Neighborhood Node



Intent: Neighborhood Nodes are central to residential areas or business zones, primarily serving the neighborhood but sometimes drawing regional visitors. They offer local access to businesses, services, and amenities within walking distance. These nodes mix commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses, and increased residential density within a quarter-mile radius is crucial for supporting them.

What it means for Southtown: Southtown has three Neighborhood Nodes as defined by the CMP:

- Eastern Avenue & MLK Jr. Street
- Eastern Avenue & Burton Street
- Kalamazoo Avenue & Fuller Avenue

Neighborhood Center

Intent: Reinforce a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment in a compact area and promote a mix of small-scale retail, service, entertainment, civic, office, and residential uses to enhance the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods.

What it means for Southtown: Existing commercial corridors in Southtown will continue to serve as Neighborhood Centers

Compact Neighborhood

Intent: Create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

What it means for Southtown: Neighborhoods that are predominantly single family housing may grow to provide more diverse housing options.

Manufacturing & Logistics

Intent: Allow for a wide range of types, services, and wage levels in sectors such as production, manufacturing, research, distribution, and logistics while preserving the character and integrity of adjacent land uses.

What it means for Southtown: The Southtown industrial district along the rail corridor will continue to serve the city as an important industrial center and support existing jobs.

Innovation Center

Intent: Accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground floor uses abutting public streets to promote compact, walkable areas.

What it means for Southtown: Isolated industrial uses may transition to diversified economic centers or multi-family residential to better integrate with adjacent neighborhoods.

GOAL 01:

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT

GOAL CONTEXT

"Grand Rapids sits within a county experiencing high population growth. Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of its population. After a short period of decline (5% between 2000 and 2010), the population of Grand Rapids has recovered and is increasing, with new residents partly fueling the City's growth. Additionally, the population of Kent County is expected to grow by about 27% (+169,000 people) by 2045. If Grand Rapids maintains its 30% share of county population, the City will grow to approximately 251,000 residents in that time. In the shorter term, it is expected that Grand Rapids will need at least 14,000 housing units by 2027 to satisfy demand."

- Excerpt from the Community Master Plan

The housing shortage in Grand Rapids can be alleviated through various means, and the CMP identifies several key recommendations. The ASP process provides an opportunity to observe the impacts of broader citywide policies within ASP areas. In Southtown, there are opportunities to add housing along the commercial corridor, in parking lots, and on vacant lots. There are also opportunities to meet some of this demand in the traditional residential neighborhoods while retaining community character. The following recommendations offer ideas to add new housing and provide support for existing residents and homeowners.



Surface parking lots such as the one near the intersection of Madison Avenue and M.L.K. Jr. Street would be ideal places for new housing and redevelopment.

REDLINING IN SOUTHTOWN

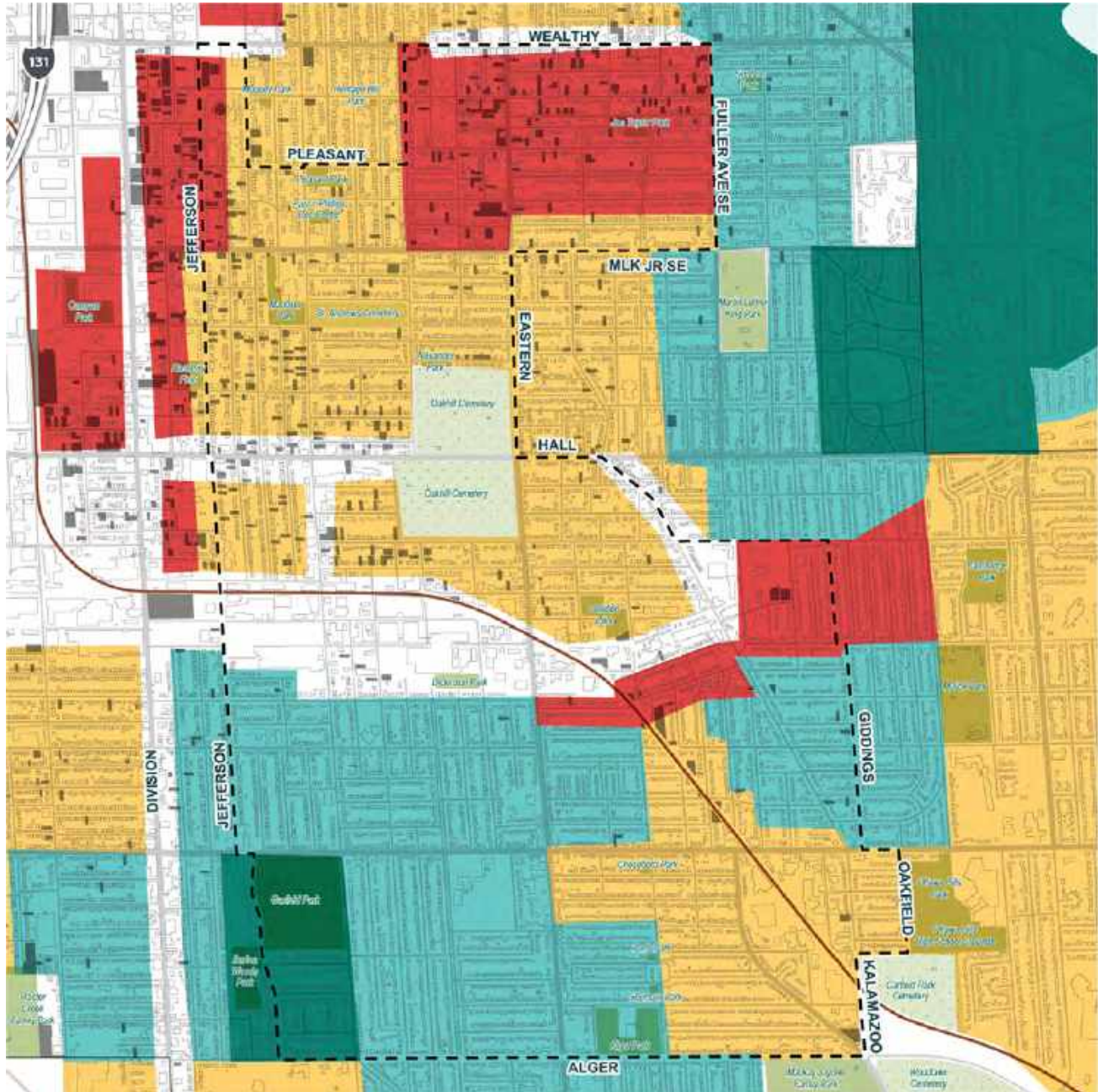
Redlining has profoundly impacted communities across the nation and in Grand Rapids. Historically, redlining involved discriminatory policies that denied mortgages or insurance to residents in predominantly non-white neighborhoods, segregating cities and reinforcing racial disparities. These policies were part of the federal government's Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) program in the 1930s, which rated neighborhoods based on racial composition, leading to systematic disinvestment in communities of color. Today, communities that experienced redlining endure the compounded effects of this discrimination, including under-investment, lower property values, and increased vacancy rates.

Significant portions of the Southtown community were negatively impacted by redlining, especially communities north of the rail line and west of Fuller Avenue (see **Redlining Map in Southtown**). The scars of redlining are readily apparent in the higher number of vacant parcels in areas that were given third or fourth grade designations, which effectively discouraged lending and investments in these communities. Future investment and policies in this area should seek to make amends for this legacy of disinvestment and guard against displacement.



Vacant land in Southtown.

REDLINING MAP IN SOUTHTOWN



Legend

- Vacant Lot
- A - First Grade
- B - Second Grade
- C - Third Grade
- D - Fourth Grade

RECOMMENDATIONS

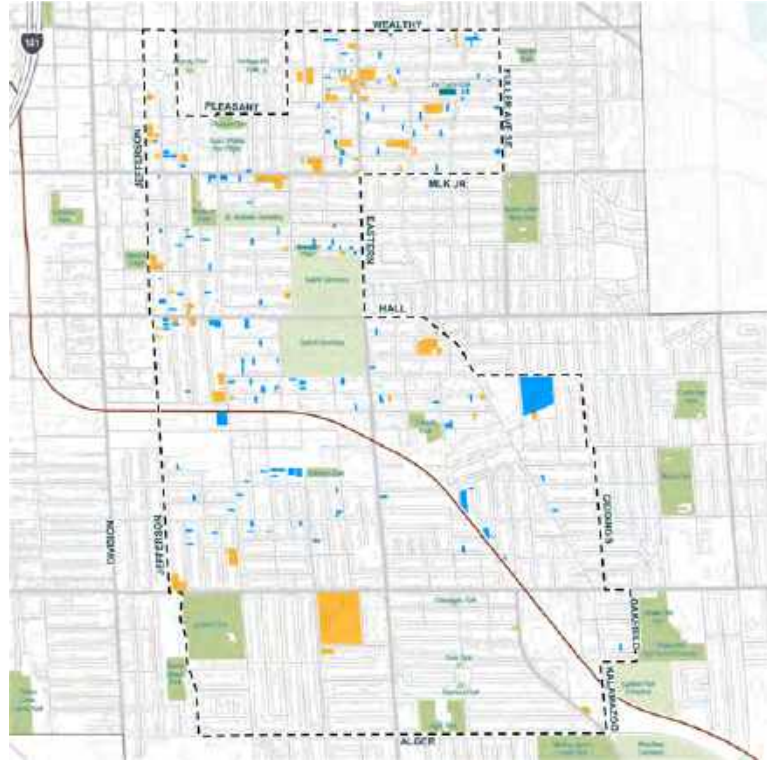
1

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS TO BUILD AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES.

Affordable housing is typically built by utilizing competitive grants or tax credits to fill the financial gaps of providing subsidized units. Developers can also use various zoning incentives that allow them to build more units to offset the costs of subsidizing affordable housing. The City can further support affordable housing by offering underutilized City assets as potential sites for development. This can be achieved through competitive Request for Proposals (RFPs) that require the development of specific City-owned properties to include an affordable housing component.

Religious institutions across the county have been partnering with private developers to build affordable housing on underutilized properties, creating an interesting new model for affordable housing development. This type of development often aligns with their missions and provides cash infusions that help support the church's primary mission. The adjacent map outlines City and church-owned properties within Southtown. Additional analysis would need to be coordinated with the specific owners to determine better utilization options.

MAP OF PUBLIC & RELIGIOUS OWNED PROPERTIES



Legend

- Publicly Owned Properties
- Religious Organizations
- Neighborhood Study Area

CASE STUDY: Be Ready CDC is a community and economic development organization located in West Side district of Wilmington, Delaware. Since its inception in 2023, and driven by the mission of Be Ready Jesus Is Coming Apostolic Church, the CDC offers support programs for families and youth in the Hilltop neighborhood. Most recently, the CDC has led the development of affordable and supportive housing, with Solomon's Court being its most recent project. An affordable housing development occupying a previously vacant block, Solomon's Court will provide a total of 20 new affordable housing units and ground floor commercial space for small businesses. Phase I (completed) and Phase II (shovel-ready) have been developed in partnership with public, private, and philanthropic institutions.

2

SUPPORT AND EXPAND A COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Goal 1A within the Community Master Plan recommends developing an anti-displacement strategy by supporting mechanisms to acquire land that can be used to provide more affordable housing options. One of the mechanisms suggested in the CMP is a community land trust (CLT). A CLT is a non-profit organization whose goal is to own and manage land for the betterment of the community. CLT's acquire land and retain ownership indefinitely, leasing it back to the community at below market rate. Homeowners typically own their home, but rent the land from the CLT, who also have control over the home during resale to ensure that it remains affordable.

CLT's are a proven method for providing lower cost housing for communities. Often the hardest part of getting one up and running is organizing a non-profit to administer it. Luckily for Southtown, Dwelling Place is an established affordable housing provider that is actively working on creating a community land trust in the neighborhood. They are currently constructing 42 new homes and community green spaces at 2080 Union Avenue. Building off this success and helping to find additional land and housing opportunities for the community land trust can bring a steady stream of new affordable housing into the neighborhood.

Affordable housing units under construction at the Community Land Trust located at 2080 Union Avenue.



3

ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING ON KEY CORRIDORS.

The Community Master Plan (CMP) strongly advocates for incorporating denser housing in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure. The CMP includes specific goals to better coordinate development with transportation decisions, such as considering up to six units on lots fronting Link Residential and Network Residential streets. The Vital Streets Plan defines these street types as follows:

Link Residential: Link Residential streets connect neighborhoods and local destinations. They are common in areas with a traditional grid layout but can be found in any neighborhood type. These streets typically feature low-to-moderate density housing and should support high-quality residential life. They often host community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship.

Network Residential: Network Residential streets are quality residential corridors that efficiently and safely move vehicles and non-motorized users. They are similar to arterial roads but are designed with more attention to non-auto users. These streets typically have higher residential density than other types and often feature community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship, along with some industrial or small commercial spaces.

Link Residential and Network Residential streets are shown on the map to the right. Existing bus routes are layered onto the map to reinforce the connection between land use density and transportation infrastructure.

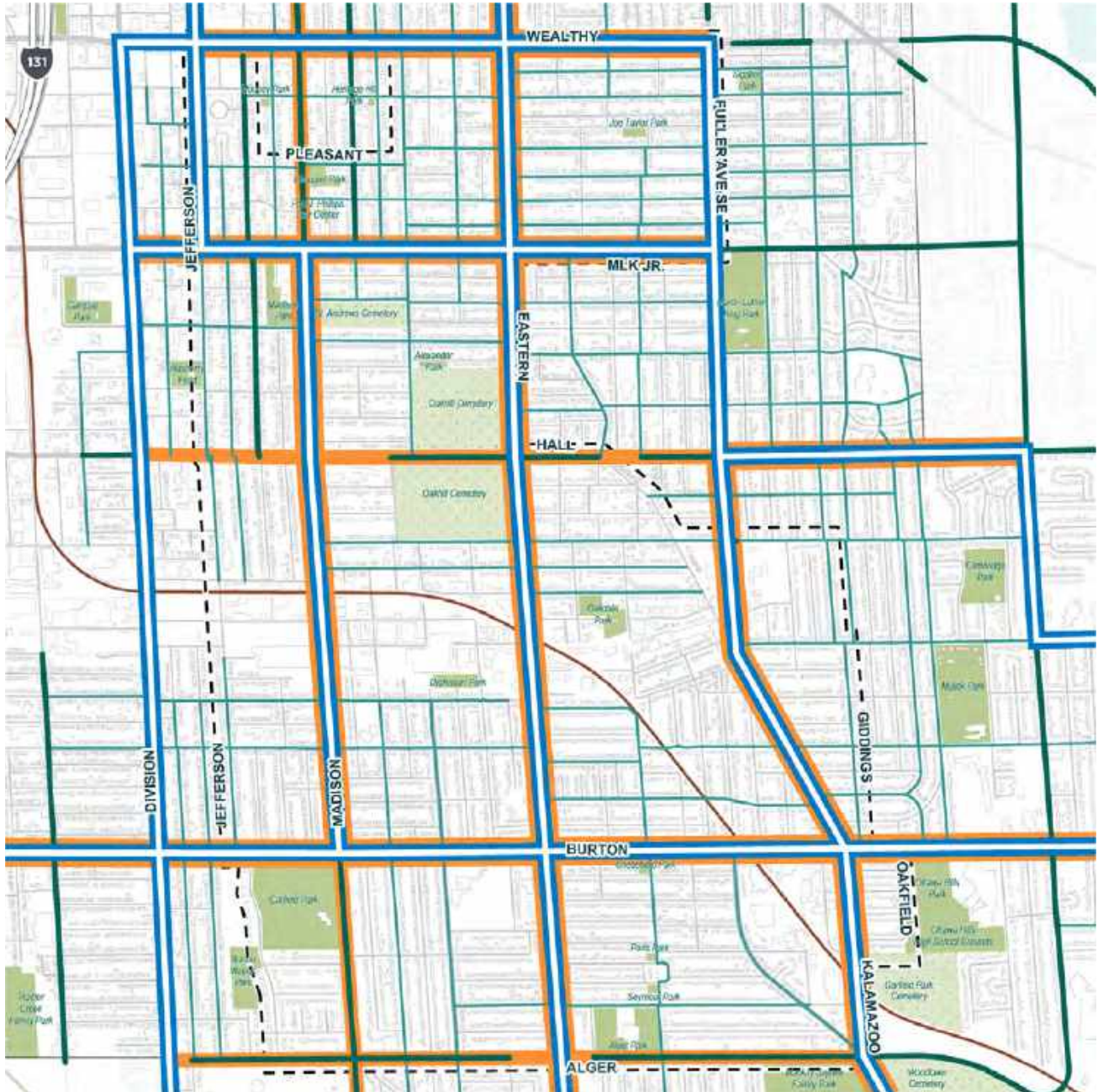
The following streets should be prioritized for consideration of denser residential use:

- Madison Avenue
- Eastern
- MLK Jr.
- Wealthy
- Hall
- Burton
- Alger
- Kalamazoo



A vacant lot on a bus route.

VITAL STREETS PLAN STREET TYPES & EXISTING BUS ROUTES



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Bus Route
- Network Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Link Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Priority Streets for Increased Density (as proposed in the ASP)

4

ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IN SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICTS.

The CMP recommends allowing more types of housing in low-density residential zones. This aims to keep naturally occurring affordable housing viable and compliant with regulations. It also seeks to expand and preserve middle-density housing and encourage the development of new housing types for a range of families.

The CMP identifies the residential neighborhoods of Southtown as Compact Neighborhoods within the Future Character Map (see **CMP Compact Neighborhood Designations** map). They are defined as areas that create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

CMP COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGNATIONS AS WELL AS EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS

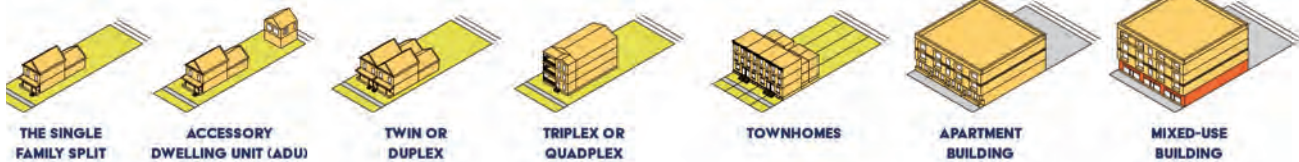
A Southtown block that mixes new and old houses.



I am comfortable with this **in my neighborhood.**



I am comfortable with this **on my block.**



As part of the engagement process, residents were asked about the types of housing they would be comfortable with in their neighborhood and on their block. The types of added density that residents were most comfortable with included single-family housing split into multiple units, accessory dwelling units, and twins or duplexes. Residents had mixed opinions on triplexes or quadplexes, townhomes, and apartment buildings with or without a commercial component, with an equal number of residents supporting and opposing these housing types.

Above: During the engagement process, residents were asked to vote with a thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate the types of development they would or would not support in their neighborhood.

Most residential properties in Southtown are zoned for Low Density Residential and are predominantly detached single-family houses. Opportunities already exist within the zoning code to add denser housing types, but achieving the future character identified in the CMP may require broader zoning changes. Based on the engagement, residents would support changes that allow for more diversified housing types, particularly under three or four units.

5

ENCOURAGE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU) WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

According to the Grand Rapids zoning code, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that is either attached to the main house or a separate structure. ADUs are a great way to add density to neighborhoods without altering their character. When residents were asked what type of housing they would like to see most on their block to help address the housing shortage, ADUs received the most votes. Both homeowners and potential renters can benefit in various ways: homeowners can supplement their income through renting the ADU and gain opportunities to age in place, while renters often find ADUs more affordable due to their smaller size.

While the benefits of ADUs are numerous, there are some downsides as well. Upfront costs can be substantial and difficult to finance. To overcome this challenge, the City has continued to refine its legislation to lower barriers to entry and make the process as easy as possible. These improvements should continue as more issues with the existing legislation come to light.

There are also issues regarding accessibility, parking, and residents feeling like secondary members of the community. Focusing ADUs on properties with an existing alley network may help sidestep some of these challenges by creating additional off-street parking spaces, which can be difficult to find on narrow lots in traditional neighborhoods like Southtown. Additionally, residents would have direct access to their units rather than having to walk through the primary home's property. Alleyways are also the most likely locations for detached parking garages, which offer easier and more affordable opportunities for residential conversions.



Homes without driveways or alleys can make accessing and parking more challenging for ADUs.

Another challenge is that residents may be unaware of the benefits of ADUs and current City legislation. As an initial step, neighborhood or housing-focused organizations could conduct targeted outreach to property owners within eligible areas to educate homeowners on ADUs, discuss their benefits, and provide resources.

The alley between MLK and Worden may be a good place for an initial round of engagement. Most of the properties have large rear yards that could easily support an ADU, and it is close to the heart of the Eastern Avenue commercial corridor where the additional residents could help support neighborhood businesses.

CASE STUDY: Los Angeles leads the United States in the number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The City's favorable regulations, which include no owner-occupancy restrictions and no minimum lot size requirements, have made it a model for ADU development. Los Angeles allows detached ADUs up to 1,200 square feet and two stories tall, with many homeowners converting garages into livable spaces. Los Angeles has also launched the Accessory Dwelling Unit Standard Plan Program, which offers pre-approved ADU designs to simplify the building process.

Right: Examples of ADUs in Los Angeles. The right photo includes off-street parking and direct access from an alley.



Source: bunchadu.com



Source: archdaily.com

GOAL 02:

A COMMUNITY BUILT BY ALL, FOR ALL

RECOMMENDATIONS

6

HOME REPAIRS PROGRAMS.

The City of Grand Rapids has a comprehensive housing rehabilitation assistance program for homeowners that meet certain income requirements. The program provides loans for home repairs and assists homeowners in securing quality contractors and completing projects. Some of the services offered by the City include weatherization and emergency repairs, lead abatement, health and safety repairs, and energy efficiency upgrades.

With the main citywide housing program as a foundation, consideration can be given to expanding the program to address the unique housing needs of specific neighborhoods, especially as expressed during the community engagement process for the ASP.

In Southtown, residents expressed a desire to improve the community without putting long-time residents at risk of displacement. One way to accomplish this may be to offer educational workshops for residents on how to perform minor repairs and regular maintenance on their own homes, so that they can address any repairs quickly while having the City's assistance program available for major repairs.

One factor to keep in mind is that not all residents own their homes and therefore would not be eligible for assistance under the current program. Some avenues that can be explored in this regard may be to expand the program to include rental units and to work with landlords and the Code Compliance and Community Development Departments to improve the conditions of rental housing. This could also serve as a complement to the City's existing Rental Inspection program which is designed to ensure that rental properties meet certain health, safety, and maintenance standards.

Another way to increase the impact of the existing program is to promote the program and publicize its benefits and requirements. This information is available in multiple languages on the City's official website. However, this can be supplemented with printed materials distributed directly to communities, businesses, health centers, or churches, among others.

Finally, the City can partner with local organizations and community leaders to identify homes in need of repair and use technology to collect and share this data. In this way, local partners can help keep the data current, and the City can support them in providing data-driven, targeted housing assistance to residents in areas of greatest need.

A home currently being renovated in Southtown.



7

PRESERVE EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

There's a common misconception that affordable housing is primarily occupied by low-income individuals or those reliant on government assistance. In reality, affordable housing serves a diverse population, including working families, young professionals, seniors on fixed incomes, and individuals with disabilities. Many residents hold jobs that are vital to the community, such as teachers, healthcare workers, and service industry employees. Affordable housing ensures that these individuals can live in safe, stable environments without spending disproportionate amounts of their income on rent, contributing to a healthier, more equitable community for all.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are one of the most common federal programs available to create affordable rental housing (based on area median income) and many developers and organizations in Southtown have taken advantage of LIHTC financing (see **LIHTC Properties** map). LIHTC requires developers to keep properties affordable for at least a 15 year period, but are often subject to 30 year time commitments. After those time periods, property owners are able to convert the housing to market rate. It will be important for the neighborhood to keep the currently affordable units as affordable. Working with property owners and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) will be important to monitor units that are reaching their affordability limits in order to restructure or refinance with tax credits, capitalize needed maintenance projects, or find new owners/organizations who have an interest in maintaining their long-term affordability.



Existing LIHTC properties in Southtown.

8

DEVELOP MECHANISMS TO PROTECT RESIDENTS FROM DISPLACEMENT.

Policies that promote density should go hand in hand with protections for long term homeowners so they are not priced out of the neighborhood. This ensures that residents who have long contributed to the fabric of their communities can continue to afford to live there despite the pressures of a changing real estate market. This aligns with recommendation 1.A.5: Develop an Anti-Displacement Strategy, in the Community Master Plan.

Several existing programs in the state are designed to alleviate tax burdens for low-income households.

Michigan's Poverty Tax Exemption.

Under this program, eligible residents who meet specific income and asset levels can receive a partial or full exemption from property taxes on their principal residence.

Michigan's Principal Residence Exemption (PRE) exempts a homeowner's principal residence from the tax levied by a local school district for school operating purposes up to 1.8% of the property's assessed value.

LIHTC PROPERTIES - SCALED BY NUMBER OF UNITS (INCLUDES INITIAL CREDIT YEAR)

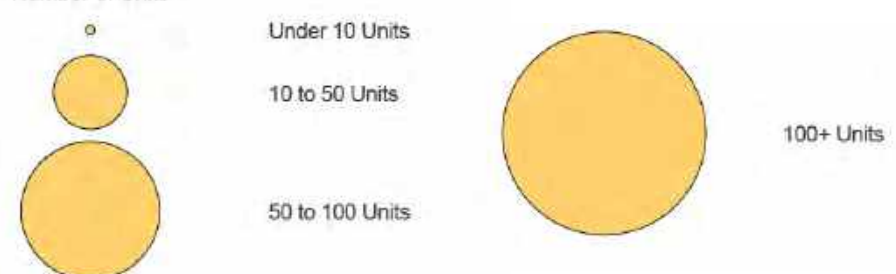
Source: Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) - LIHTC database



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- # Credit Allocation Year

Number of Units



9

CREATE PATHWAYS FOR RESIDENTS TO PROVIDE INPUT ON NEW DEVELOPMENT.

Providing clear and defined pathways for residents to provide input on new development projects can help ensure new development/(re)development projects align with the community's needs and vision for their neighborhood. This is especially important for larger projects that have a significant impact on their surroundings.

In this respect, the CMP proposes several recommendations that will help align the code with the community's vision:

- 1.A.4, which ensures residents can access information on all infill development proposals over a certain size, including those approved administratively.
- 1.A.7, which ensures departments are adequately staffed to support higher volumes of development proposals, support the ongoing work of Code Compliance and other departments to assist historically marginalized property owners, and considers the impacts additional development will have on existing public infrastructure and services.
- Design guidelines to help ensure new development is reflective of residents' vision for the community.

Locally, the Development with Us (DwUs) pilot program seeks to facilitate meaningful engagement between residents, neighborhood associations, and developers for projects that are anticipated to have a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The program includes enhanced mailings, signage, use of social media, neighborhood meetings, and other engagement techniques to ensure that residents are aware of proposed projects in their neighborhood. It also helps residents identify opportunities to share feedback and engage in the approval process.

CASE STUDY: Philadelphia's Citizens Planning Institute (CPI), an initiative of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, increases resident engagement with new developments in their neighborhoods through an eight-week seasonal program that includes seven evening classes: a class orientation, three introductory classes on planning, land use and zoning, and the real estate development process; and three special topic classes, which change every session.



Source: Citizens Planning Institute.

10

SUPPORT RESIDENT-LED SMALL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT.

Supporting resident-led small-scale development is an opportunity to involve local residents directly in the revitalization of their community. Through training, mentoring, networking, and providing access to financial resources, aspiring local entrepreneurs can help invest in their communities, build affordable housing, and build generational wealth.

Recommendation 1.A.8 of the Community Master Plan advocates for supporting “efforts by the Economic Development Department to provide small-scale developer training to residents”. The Community Economic Development Association of Michigan operates the Real Estate Development Boot Camp, a comprehensive training program that provides the necessary tools to help participants build affordable housing in their communities. With updates each year to address rising construction costs and new funding opportunities, the curriculum keeps pace with Michigan’s real estate development changes. The program features expert speakers from around the state and nation to share practical insights and foster valuable connections.

CASE STUDY: A similar private-sector supported program, Jumpstart Germantown in Philadelphia, is a small-scale developer training program that aims to revitalize Philadelphia neighborhoods by teaching interested community members about real estate development. The program includes training sessions, mentorship, networking opportunities, and a dedicated loan program to support new developers, focusing on community improvement and local wealth building.



Source: Philadelphia Citizen.

GOAL 03:

PRESERVE LOCAL CULTURE

RECOMMENDATIONS

11

**SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD
NODES WITH NEW MIXED USE
DEVELOPMENT.**

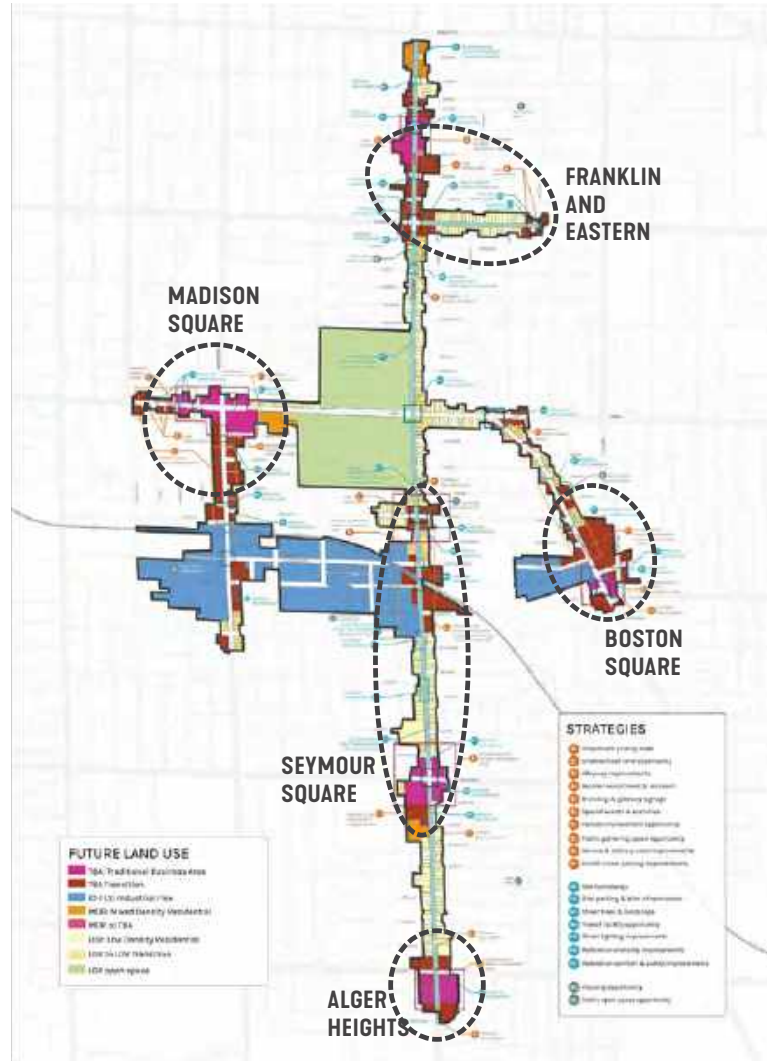
The 2019 Southtown Business Area Specific Plan (BASP) defined guiding principles, goals, and action steps to support economic growth and corridor improvements in the community. Strategies focused on supporting and revitalizing existing businesses to attract new visitors, engage residents, leverage existing cultural and neighborhood assets, and encourage the use of public spaces. These goals remain relevant to support the recommendations in the Southtown ASP, as increased density, housing affordability, and employment opportunities are fundamental to stabilizing neighborhoods and, therefore, allowing businesses to thrive.

Neighborhood Nodes, as identified in the CMP, are suitable for increased residential development, which also supports existing commercial corridors and business districts. The Southtown BASP highlights additional areas appropriate for increased development beyond Neighborhood Nodes, including sections of Eastern Ave, MLK Jr. St. (formerly Franklin Ave),



A cluster of businesses on Eastern Ave at Seymour Square.

Future Land Use Map from the Southtown BASP.



Kalamazoo Ave, Alger, Burton, and Hall Streets, where they intersect with consolidated business districts.

These corridors also have cultural and community significance, so it is important to support the preservation of the identity of these corridors through appropriately scaled development, implementation of corridor design guidelines, and strategic investments in community spaces that can serve both businesses and residents, such as public spaces, on-street parking, and streetscape improvements.

Please refer to the Southtown BASP for additional details on corridor specific recommendations.

12

SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS TO BICYCLE FACILITIES, TRANSIT FACILITIES, AND PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS.

The 2019 Southtown Business Area Specific Plan (BASP) identifies improvements to make it easier and safer to get around by foot, bicycle, or using public transit. These improvements are applicable to the neighborhood at large, as they form a larger mobility network that connects residents with their business districts, and the city. Recommended improvements include:

- Designing and implementing high-quality bike lanes facilities in alignment with the Vital Streets Plan and the Bicycle Action Plan.
- Coordinating with The Rapid and the City's Design Team to implement bus stops that provide seating, cover from the elements, and that provide sufficient information to riders.
- Coordinating with the Southtown CID, business associations, and the City's Design Team to implement crosswalk improvements in alignment with the Vital Streets Plan and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide.
- Designing streets for pedestrian safety and comfort, which in the context of residential neighborhoods, should at a minimum include shade trees, street lighting, buffers (such as landscape islands) from the roadway, places to sit and rest, and safer and more visible crossings.

Many of the major corridors in Southtown cater to the automobile and are less than hospitable for other modes of transit.



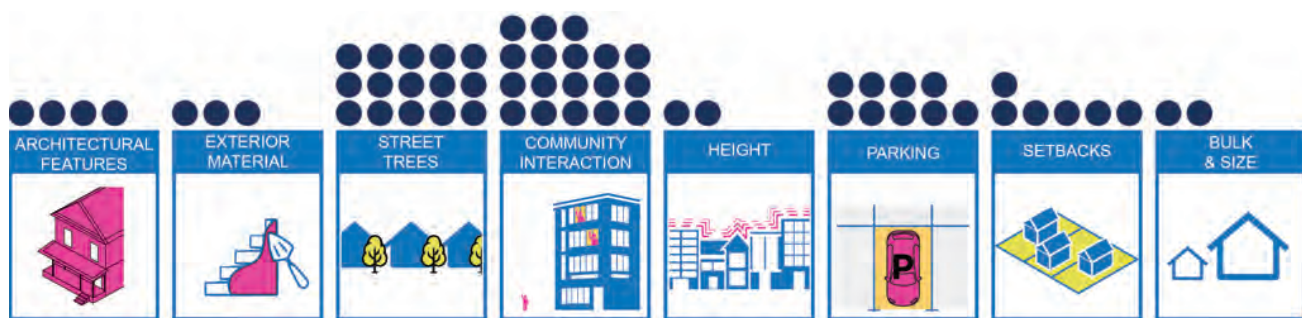
13

IMPLEMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR LARGE LOT INFILL THAT BUILDS UPON EXISTING DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.

The Community Master Plan calls for the implementation of design guidelines to create complete and stable neighborhoods. The guidelines are not tailored to each community, nor do they provide a one-size-fits-all approach, but, as the plan states, they "provide a framework that allows new types of development to occur in a manner that is compatible with existing development" (Bridge To Our Future Grand Rapids Community Master Plan). Elements that design guidelines can provide direction on include materials, distinctive architectural features, and the relationship of the building to the street and public realm, among other principles.

How these design guidelines are applied to each neighborhood will depend on identified community priorities, existing policies, and context.

In the case of the various neighborhoods that make up Southtown, the vast majority of properties fall into the Traditional Neighborhood residential category. These properties were built before the automobile era and therefore include historic assets and some of the oldest homes in the city. Characteristics of this development include smaller blocks and building footprints, a mix of uses within a short walking distance, and high-quality materials and human-scale buildings and streetscapes.



During the community engagement process, Southtown residents shared that their top three most valued elements in new development were design that encourages community interaction, street trees, and parking. Based on this feedback and the historic character of the neighborhood, identifying assets for preservation, capturing relevant architectural features, maintaining human scale in new development, and balancing pedestrian safety with transit access will be key to how design guidelines are defined and applied in Southtown neighborhoods.

14

IDENTIFY VACANT LOTS THAT MAY BE ACTIVATED AS GREEN SPACE.

The southern portion of the Southtown study area has several small pocket parks that add accessible green space in the community and that complement larger parks in the neighborhood (see **Access to Parks and Vacant Land** map). Research has shown that access to green spaces is crucial for community well-being, offering both environmental and social benefits. Additionally, green spaces can foster social cohesion by providing meeting places that strengthen community ties and support diverse activities. They also contribute to the aesthetic value of neighborhoods, potentially increasing property values and attracting investment.

Sites that are located at high visibility corners and that cannot be combined into larger development sites could be prioritized for consideration in terms of adding green space.

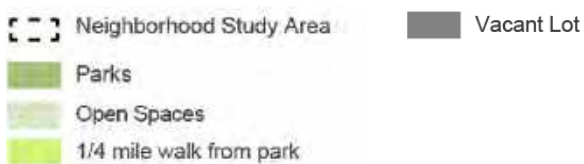
Vacant lots across Southtown.



ACCESS TO PARKS AND VACANT LAND



Legend



DRAFT

FUTURE SCENARIOS, ZONING, & IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations set the stage for future changes. The final section of this Area Specific Plan outlines the potential impact of these recommendations across Southtown and how to implement them. This section is divided into the following parts:

Future Development Scenarios:

This section graphically depicts how many of the recommendations around the built environment and housing could look on typical blocks within Southtown. It includes a variety of developments that add housing in a contextual way, mixed-use developments that support commercial corridors, and larger-scale developments on formerly industrial areas.

Site-Specific Improvements:

While the future development scenarios illustrate potential futures on typical blocks, this section focuses on a specific area within Southtown, showcasing what the recommendations could look like across different goal areas. The primary area of focus is a residential neighborhood adjacent to a commercial corridor.

Future Character Areas and Zoning:

The CMP identifies future character areas across the city, often requiring zoning changes to achieve the desired character. This section includes a map and associated chart to help navigate potential zoning changes.

Implementation:

This matrix identifies potential partnerships needed to accomplish the specific recommendations outlined in the plan.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

**ENCOURAGE
ACCESSORY DWELLING
UNITS (ADU) WITHIN
THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

Please see
RECOMMENDATION 5
for more details

ADUs clustered on existing alley

Existing alley

**SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD
NODES WITH NEW MIXED
USE DEVELOPMENT.**

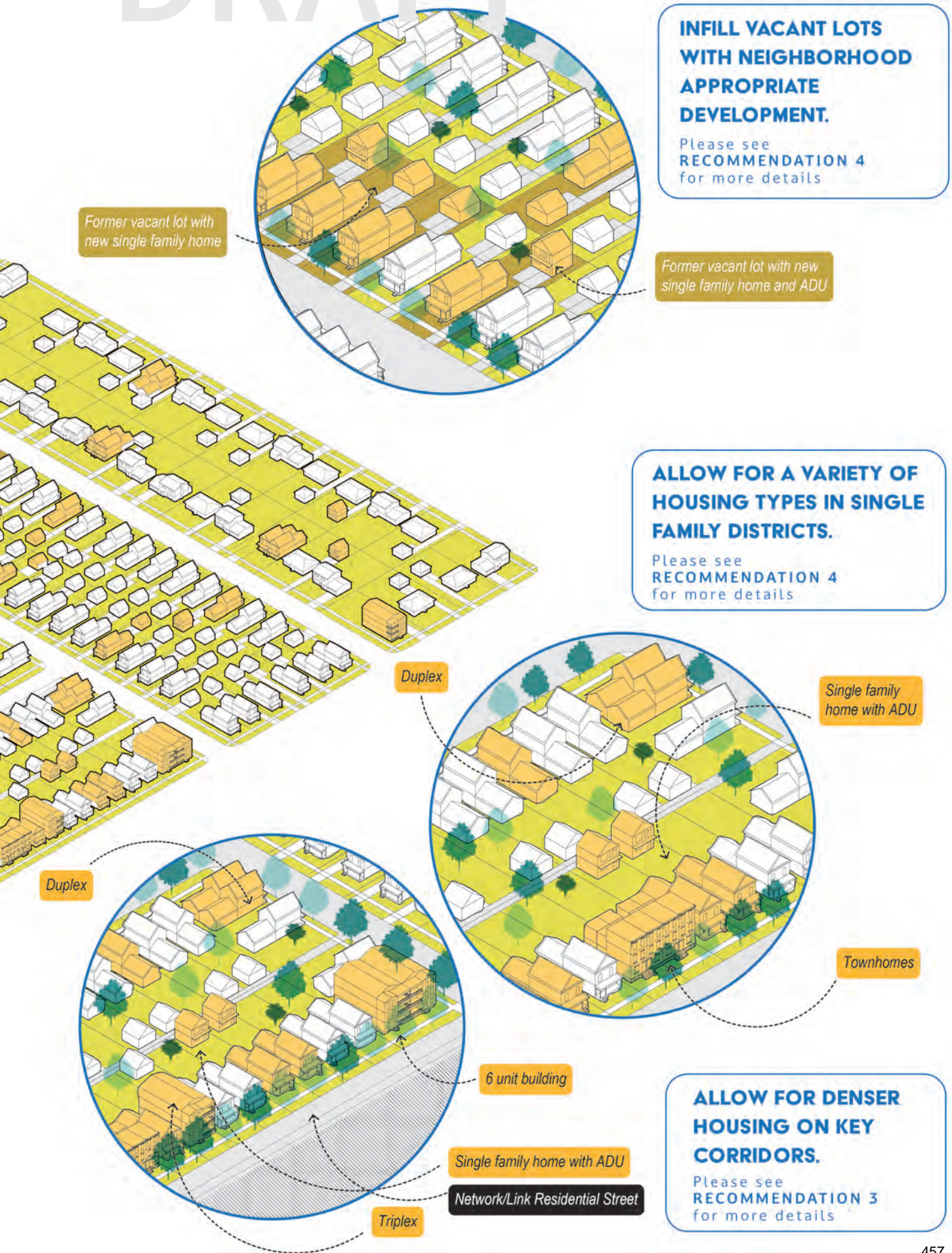
Please see
RECOMMENDATION 11
for more details

*Height respectful to
neighborhood context*

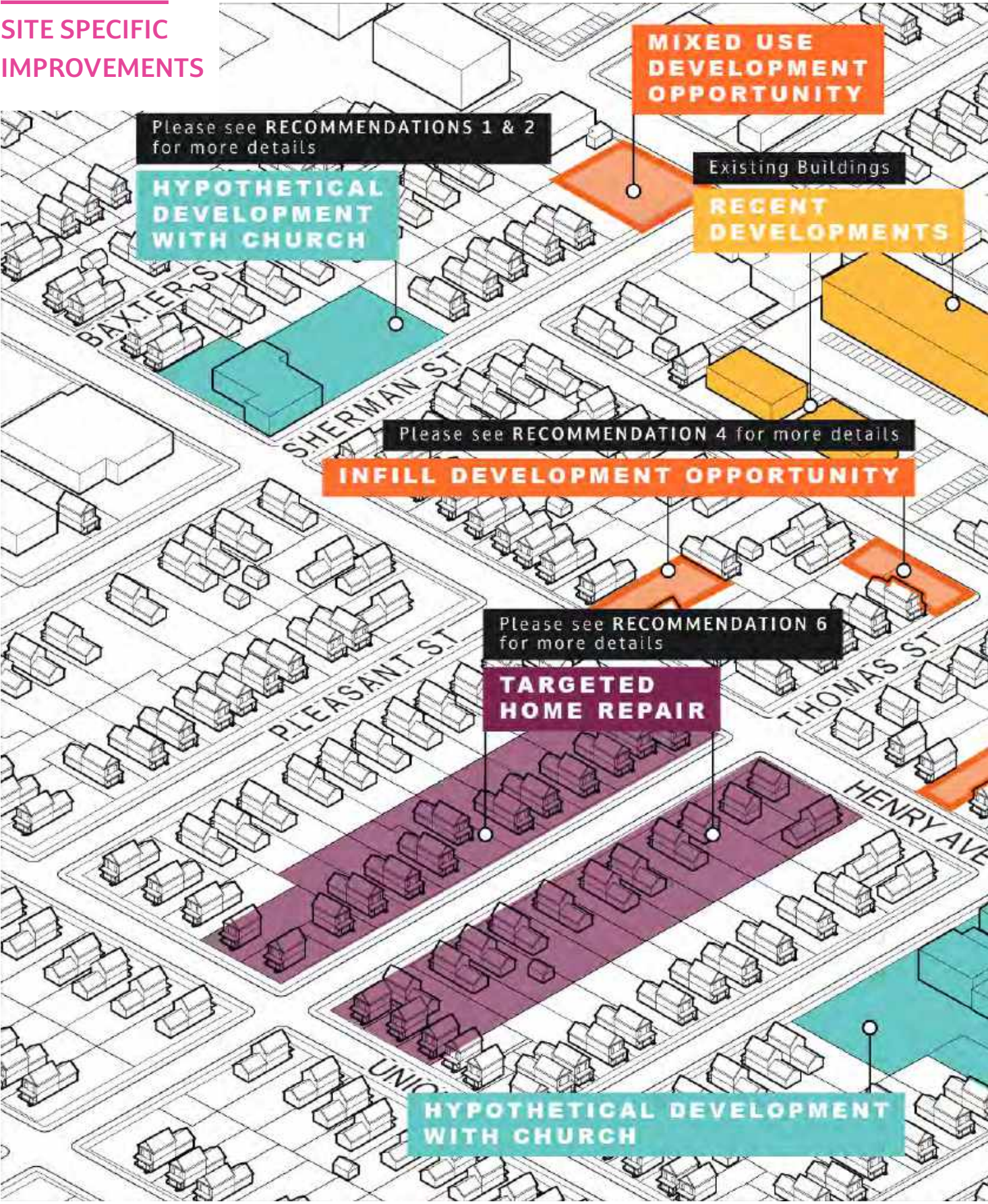
Commercial corridor

Upper floor residential

Ground floor commercial



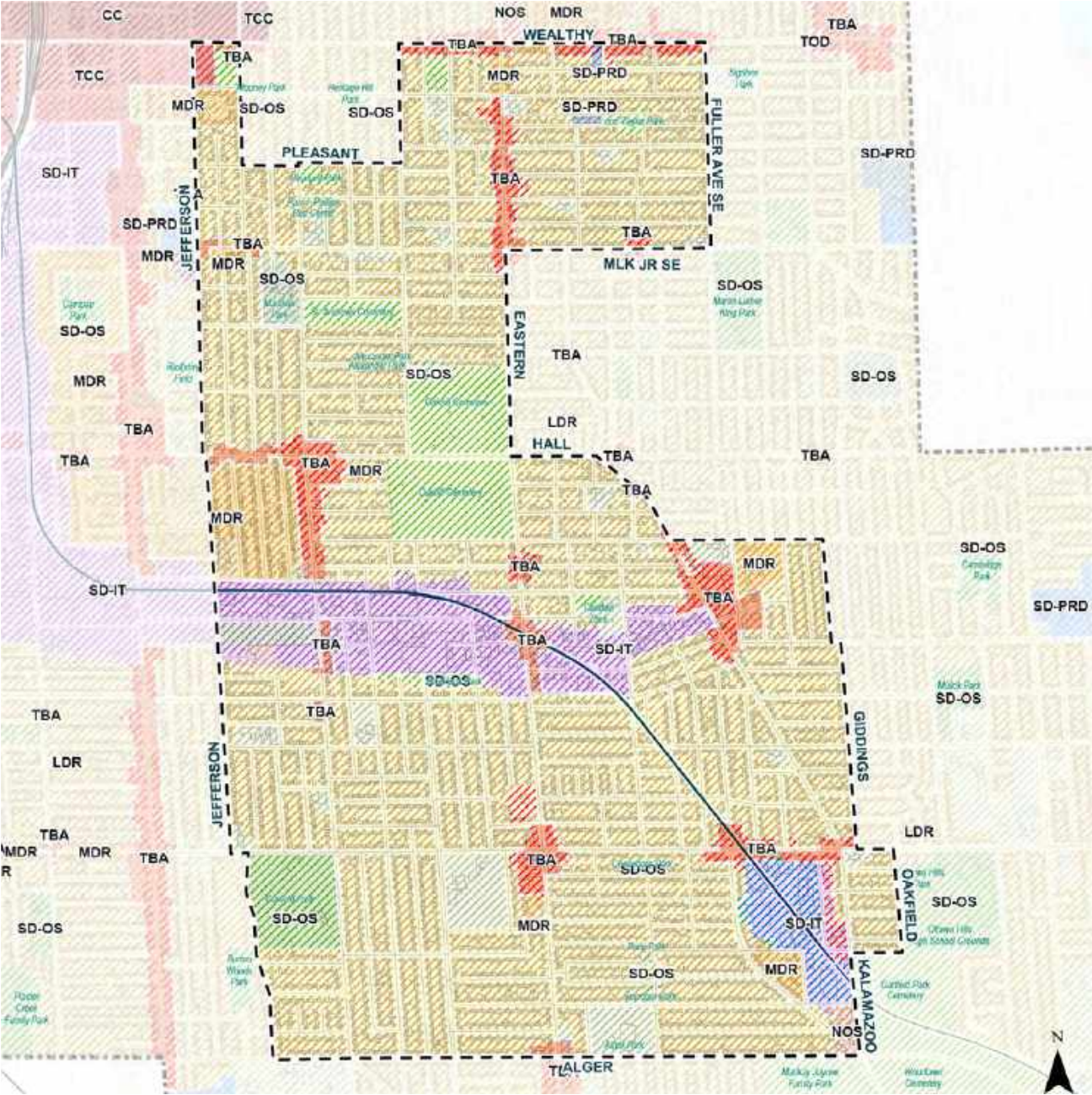
SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS





FUTURE CHARACTER & ZONING

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING



Legend

Future Character Areas		Existing Zoning	
	Downtown		LDR - Low Density Residential
	Neighborhood Center		MDR - Mixed Density Residential
	Compact Neighborhood		TBA - Traditional Business Area
	Transitional Activity Center		TCC - Transitional City Center
	Campus		CC - City Center
	Innovation Center		IT - Industrial-Transportation
	Parks & Open Spaces		OS - Open Space
	Manufacturing & Logistics		PRD - Planned Redevelopment District
			NOS - Neighborhood Office Service

Neighborhood Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Traditional Business Area
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Transit Oriented Development

Compact Neighborhood

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Mixed-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

Innovation Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Transitional City Center
- Commercial
- Transit Oriented Development
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Planned Redevelopment

Manufacturing & Logistics

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Industrial - Transportation
- Commercial
- Planned Redevelopment

Campus

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Institutional Campus
- Transit Oriented Development
- Planned Redevelopment

Parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Open Space

The **Future Character Map** and **Zoning Map** serve different purposes for the City.

Future Character Map: This map is a visionary tool that outlines the intended use of land in the future, reflecting the community's long-term goals and aspirations. It is part of a Community Master Plan and guides future development, informing decisions about growth and land use changes.

Zoning Map: This map is a regulatory tool that defines the current legal use of land, specifying what can be built and how land can be used right now. It divides the city into zones, each with its own set of rules and regulations regarding building types, densities, and uses.

In essence, the **Future Character Map** provides a guide for future development, while the **Zoning Map** enforces current land use regulations. The City will need to update its zoning to achieve this vision, and this zoning plan may help coordinate between existing zoning classifications and desired outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION

TO BE UPDATED

DRAFT

AREA SPECIFIC PLAN:

BUTTERWORTH



DRAFT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TO BE UPDATED

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Butterworth Area Specific Plan (ASP) is the culmination of a series of community input and feedback sessions with the neighborhood. The ASP outlines the community's vision for the future of the neighborhood and defines the steps necessary to achieve that vision. This includes both short- and long-term strategies related to land use, housing, economic development, transportation, and public space.

The Butterworth ASP is bounded by the following streets: Watson, Lexington, Butterworth, Front, Wealthy, Marion, Park, and Deloney (see **ASP Study Area Boundary** map). Butterworth contains a mix of industrial uses along the river and existing rail corridors, a commercial corridor on Butterworth Street, and traditional residential neighborhoods. Defining features within or adjacent to the study area include the Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Pew Campus, the Grand River, Westtown Commons Park, the Padnos scrap yard, the former Butterworth Landfill, regional trail connections, and the future Acrisure Amphitheater across the river.

ASP STUDY AREA BOUNDARY



--- Neighborhood Study Area

RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN AND OTHER PLANS

The Community Master Plan (CMP) acts as a blueprint, outlining a vision and broad objectives along with detailed recommendations to achieve them. Building on this foundation, the Area Specific Plans (ASPs) adhere to the same principles and provide more detailed strategies. These plans illustrate how the overarching vision and goals of the CMP are tailored and implemented to meet the unique needs of individual neighborhoods. Additionally, citywide planning initiatives such as the Vital Streets Plan, Bicycle Action Plan, Grand Rapids/Kent County Housing Needs Assessment, Housing NOW, and others offer further recommendations.

NEIGHBORHOOD TODAY

COMMUNITY PROFILE

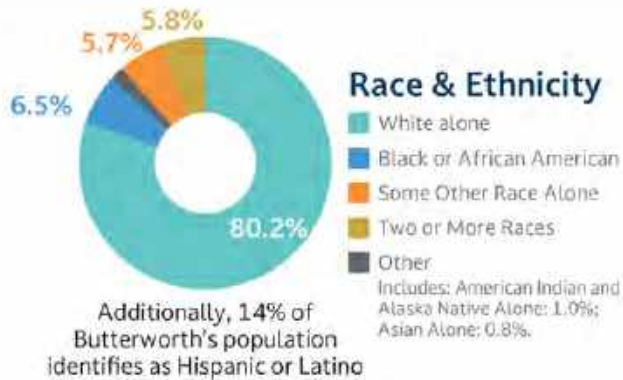
Source: U.S. Census ACS 2020 & 2022 (5-Year Estimates) - Census Tract 27, Kent County, Michigan

POPULATION

3,487
residents



2% of the city's total population



32.6%

of residents age 25 or greater have completed a Bachelor's degree or more

INCOMES



\$46,534
Median Household Income

9.3% lower than the city's median household income of \$51,333



13.5%
Families in Poverty

HOUSING



46%
Homeownership Rate

9 percentage points lower than the city's homeownership rate of 55%



\$112,400
Median Home Value

The Median Home Value in Butterworth increased to \$183,200 by 2022, a 63% increase in just two years.



\$1,035
Median Gross Rent

The Median Gross Rent in Butterworth increased to \$1,280 by 2022, a 24% increase in just two years.



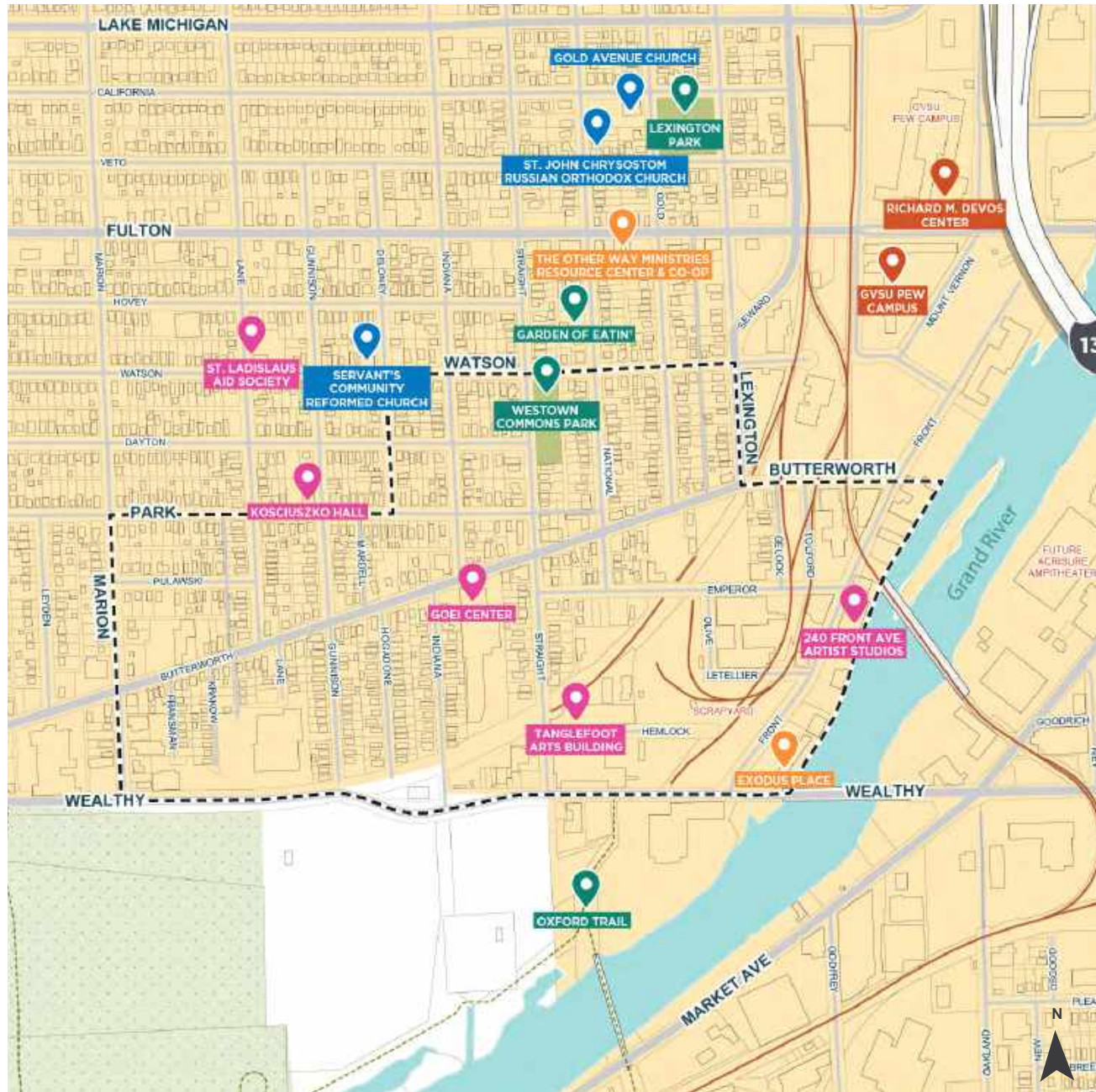
32.5%
Homeowners with a mortgage are cost-burdened

51.8%
Of renters are cost-burdened

A household is considered cost-burdened when 30% or more of household income is spent on housing

Census tracts are designed to capture statistical data and are often delineated based on population size and other criteria that do not necessarily correspond with neighborhood boundaries, which can be more fluid and defined by a combination of historical, social, and economic factors. Despite these limitations, the insights derived from analyzing census tract data provide a valuable foundation for understanding the broader trends and dynamics of the neighborhood.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS & CLASSIFICATION



NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS

Some of the assets highlighted by residents (see **Neighborhood Assets** map) include:

- Westown Commons Park.
- Access to the Oxford Trail.
- An engaged community of residents, artists, and business owners.
- Beloved businesses and social organizations.

The small size of the Butterworth community provides a neighborhood feel that residents value and want to support and enhance. As the neighborhood continues to evolve, there is interest in reactivating areas such as the commercial corridor along Butterworth Street and former or underutilized industrial sites, while ensuring that residents are the ones who benefit from these improvements.

NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATION

The Grand Rapids Zoning Ordinance assigns different neighborhood classifications to residential and mixed-use commercial districts based on existing development characteristics. Butterworth contains one of the three residential classifications as seen on the map to the left and described below.

Traditional Neighborhood (TN): Designed prior to the advent of the automobile, these neighborhoods were created to offer residents commercial and institutional uses within a short walk of their homes. Housing options include single-family homes and apartments located above storefronts, with commercial and institutional spaces seamlessly incorporated into the neighborhood. The variety in building sizes and uses adds to the vibrancy of these areas.



Westown Commons Park.

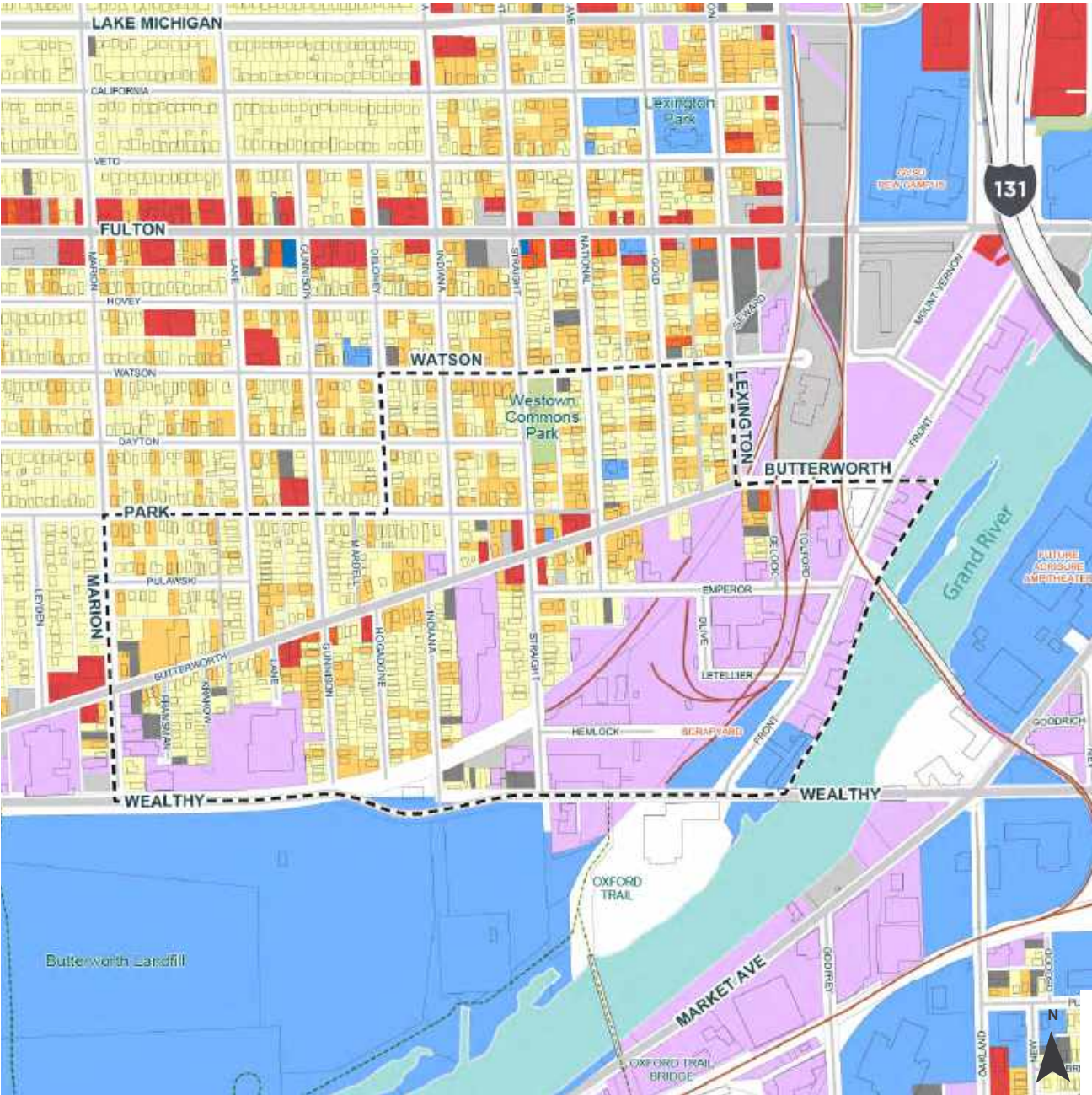


Office and research buildings along the riverfront.



Tanglefoot building.

EXISTING LAND USE



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Railway
- Existing Trail

- Commercial
- Mixed Commercial/Residential
- High Density Residential
- Multifamily - 2 Units or more
- Single Family
- Office

- Parking Lot
- Parks & Other Open Spaces
- Public/Quasi Public
- Medical Facilities
- Industrial
- Vacant Lot
- Not Classified

EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING

Existing Land Use

Land use patterns in Butterworth (see **Existing Land Use** map) include the following:

- Single family and multi-family residential properties.
- A commercial corridor along Butterworth Street that contains a mix of commercial, residential, and small scale industrial properties.
- Industrial properties along the river and active rail lines.
- A large open space on the former Butterworth landfill.

Existing Zoning

Zoning in Butterworth falls under the Traditional Neighborhood (TN) classification, generally aligning with the community's existing land use patterns. Industrial properties along the riverfront have been rezoned to mixed-use commercial districts, including City Center and Transitional City Center (TCC). The TCC serves as a buffer between the higher-intensity uses permitted in City Center and the adjacent residential areas. In the TCC, large-scale industrial activities require a special land use permit, changing the character of this historically heavy industrial district. The following zoning districts are found in Butterworth:

- CC - City Center
- TCC - Transitional City Center
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- LDR - Low Density Residential
- SD-OS - Open Space
- SD-IT - Industrial Transportation



Properties in the Low Density Residential district.



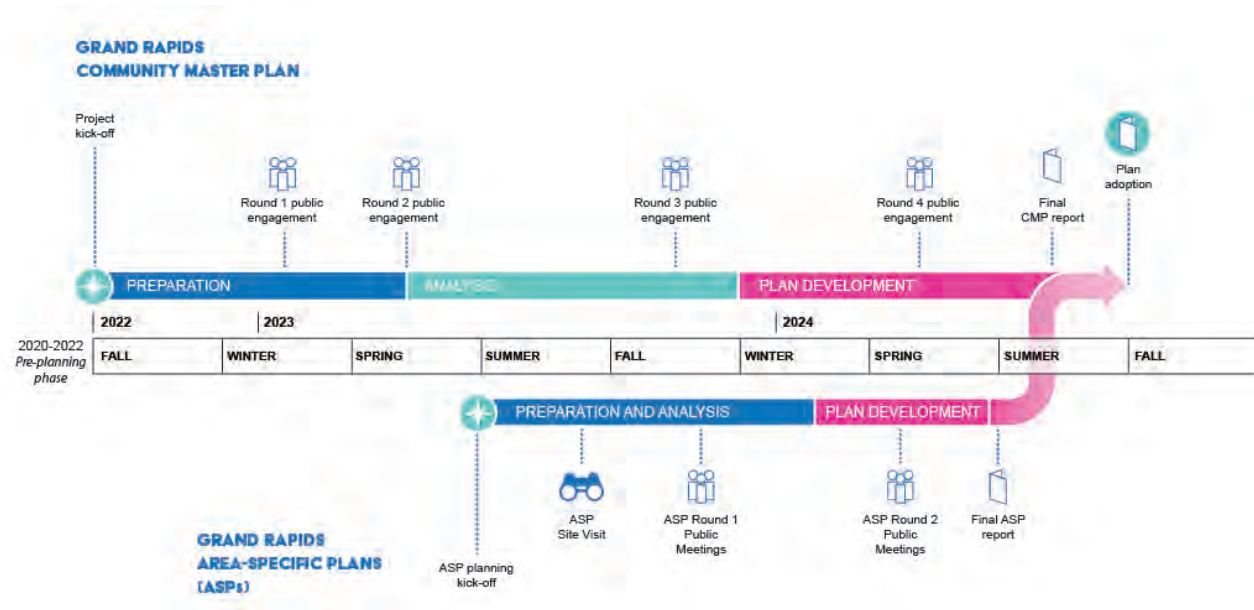
Properties in the Traditional Business Area district.



Properties in the Transitional City Center district.

PLANNING PROCESS & ENGAGEMENT

CITYWIDE ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE & CMP VALUES & GOALS



A Comprehensive View

The City of Grand Rapids began developing a new Community Master Plan in 2022, after two years of preliminary planning from 2020 to 2022, and more than 20 years since the release of the previous plan. The citywide engagement process required a comprehensive, phased approach over two years, including:

- Four rounds of **engagement**.
- Various **focus groups and interviews** with key stakeholders to discuss specific issues.
- Regular meetings with the **Steering Committee** to help guide the process.
- Small group meetings and targeted conversations with neighborhood residents through **Community Connectors**. The Connectors were trusted voices in the community, made up of community leaders and activists representing non profits and other stakeholders from across the city. They hosted small group meetings, in addition to other tasks, helping to expand the reach of the engagement process.
- The City of Grand Rapids has over 30 **Neighborhood Organizations**, many of which participated in the Community Master Plan process. Some were on the Steering Committee, others served as Community Connectors, and CDBG funding enabled many to host engagement meetings. These organizations helped inform residents about the process and facilitated community conversations.

Community Master Plan Values

One clear goal of the citywide engagement process was to determine the values that are most important to the community. These values are crosscutting and are threaded throughout the CMP.

CULTURE



EQUITY



SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY



VIBRANCY



Community Master Plan Goals

The citywide engagement process also revealed residents' overall concerns and priorities, such as a desire for better and more diverse housing options, pleasant public spaces that support economic activity, access to local jobs and amenities, and improved pedestrian safety and mobility. This community input, combined with an existing conditions analysis, informed the creation of the community goals upon which the CMP is based and **ultimately guided the strategies for the ASPs:**

1. GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS: Connected and diverse neighborhoods where residents can thrive. Grand Rapids neighborhoods will have access to housing, retail, open space, and more that meet the needs of residents in all phases of life.

2. VITAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS: A network of unique and diverse businesses in all neighborhoods. Vital business districts will provide a variety of products, services, amenities, and safe, walkable places that attract people.

3. A STRONG ECONOMY: An economy that offers a prosperous quality of life. The Grand Rapids economy will offer a range of employers and job choices so that everyone can access and earn a living wage.

4. BALANCED MOBILITY: A transportation network that is safe, reliable, and affordable. Grand Rapids will have mobility options that include a variety of ways to move about the city and beyond.

5. DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER: A strong sense of place through high quality design. New development will improve or support the existing fabric of each neighborhood.

BUTTERWORTH SPECIFIC ENGAGEMENT

The Butterworth ASP engagement process began in the summer of 2023, alongside the citywide engagement process. The community priorities identified through the citywide effort helped shape the ASP engagement by highlighting issues and priorities that needed further exploration with community members. The ASP engagement process included:

- A guided neighborhood visit with community stakeholders, City staff, and the consultant team.
- Two rounds of public meetings, organized in partnership with the John Ball Area Neighbors. The meetings were hosted locally thanks to the Goei Center and Butterworth residents.
- ASP related questions and activities in the broader CMP engagement process.
- Regular meetings with City staff and consultants to ensure alignment between the community input from Butterworth residents and the recommendations being developed in the Community Master Plan.

ASP engagement summary

Some of the ideas that emerged from public engagement discussions include:

- Increase housing affordability and housing options.
- Increase pedestrian and bicycle safety by re-routing semi-truck traffic.
- Provide public access to the waterfront and preserve the neighborhood's charm and scale.
- Support increased density along key corridors and the Neighborhood Node, as well as some support for adaptive reuse of industrial buildings for arts/makers.

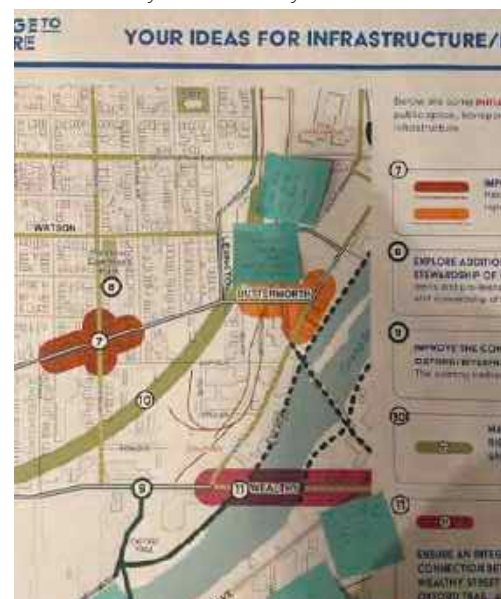
Residents echoed the need to encourage:

- Sustainable, equitable development.
- A vibrant and thriving business community.
- Safer, walkable/bikeable streets.
- Beautiful neighborhoods with healthy, active community spaces.

Community event in Butterworth.



Ideas shared by the community at an outreach event.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Engagement with neighbors, along with data and analysis of existing conditions, led to several key takeaways.

THE RIVERFRONT IS POISED TO CHANGE IN THE COMING YEARS

With direct access to rail, river, and the citywide landfill (in operation from 1950 to 1973), Butterworth flourished as an industrial district for decades. The closure of the landfill and the changing nature of transportation (trucking replacing rail and river) contributed to a decline in industrial activity in Butterworth, with only a few legacy businesses remaining. With plans to grow the GVSU Pew Campus onto former industrial land and investments in the higher tech industrial sector highlighted by Grand River Aseptic, the district is likely to evolve considerably in the future.



Surface parking lots in formerly industrial areas.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS FEELING THE PRESSURE OF THE LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

Historically an affordable landing spot for a working class immigrant population, Butterworth is now suffering the same housing affordability issues that much of the City of Grand Rapids is experiencing. As a downtown adjacent neighborhood and within walking distance of GVSU's Pew Campus (with thousands of students enrolled), Butterworth has felt the issue more acutely.



Example of new housing.

BUTTERWORTH STREET IS IN A STATE OF TRANSITION

Butterworth Street serves many purposes for the neighborhood and the Westside:

- It is a neighborhood commercial corridor serving local needs.
- It is a light industrial center with auto repair shops and other similar uses.
- It is a residential street at times.
- It is a heavily used truck route for major industrial uses outside of the neighborhood, including the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant and the City of Grand Rapids Yard Waste Drop-off Site.

Determining how all of these uses coexist is important for the future of the neighborhood.



Butterworth commercial corridor.

Source: River for All

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS A HUB FOR THE REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK

Butterworth sits at the crossroads of many regional trail connections including the Grand River Trail, Kent County Trails (with connections to Millennium Park), and the Oxford Trail (with future connections to the Plaster Creek Greenway). Investments to the existing network to help fill in gaps as well as enhance trail accessibility will improve the neighborhood for future generations of Butterworth residents.



Oxford Trail bridge crossing the Grand River.

MAJOR PROJECTS WILL HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Some of the biggest investments in the Grand Rapids region are happening adjacent to Butterworth. The under construction Acrisure Amphitheater will reimagine the former City street maintenance yard into an outdoor music venue, trail, and public space. A proposed new soccer stadium will replace some of the DASH surface parking lots north of Lake Michigan Drive into a multipurpose sports facility. The expansion of the GVSU Pew Campus, with new residential and academic buildings, will bring additional buildings and people to what are now parking lots. All of these investments will have impacts on the future of Butterworth and may jump-start smaller scale investments in the neighborhood.



The riverfront across from Butterworth and site of the future Acrisure Amphitheater.

The below intersection of Front and Wealthy will soon be reconstructed with bicycle lanes, transit stops, and amenities.



COMMUNITY GOALS

The following Goals were determined with the community throughout the engagement process.

01

SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** and **Desirable Development Character** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

02

A VIBRANT & THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY

This goal relates to the **Vital Business Districts** and **A Strong Economy** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

03

SAFER, WALKABLE & BIKEABLE STREETS

This goal relates to the **Vital Business Districts** and **Balanced Mobility** goals found in the Community Master Plan.

04

BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS AND HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

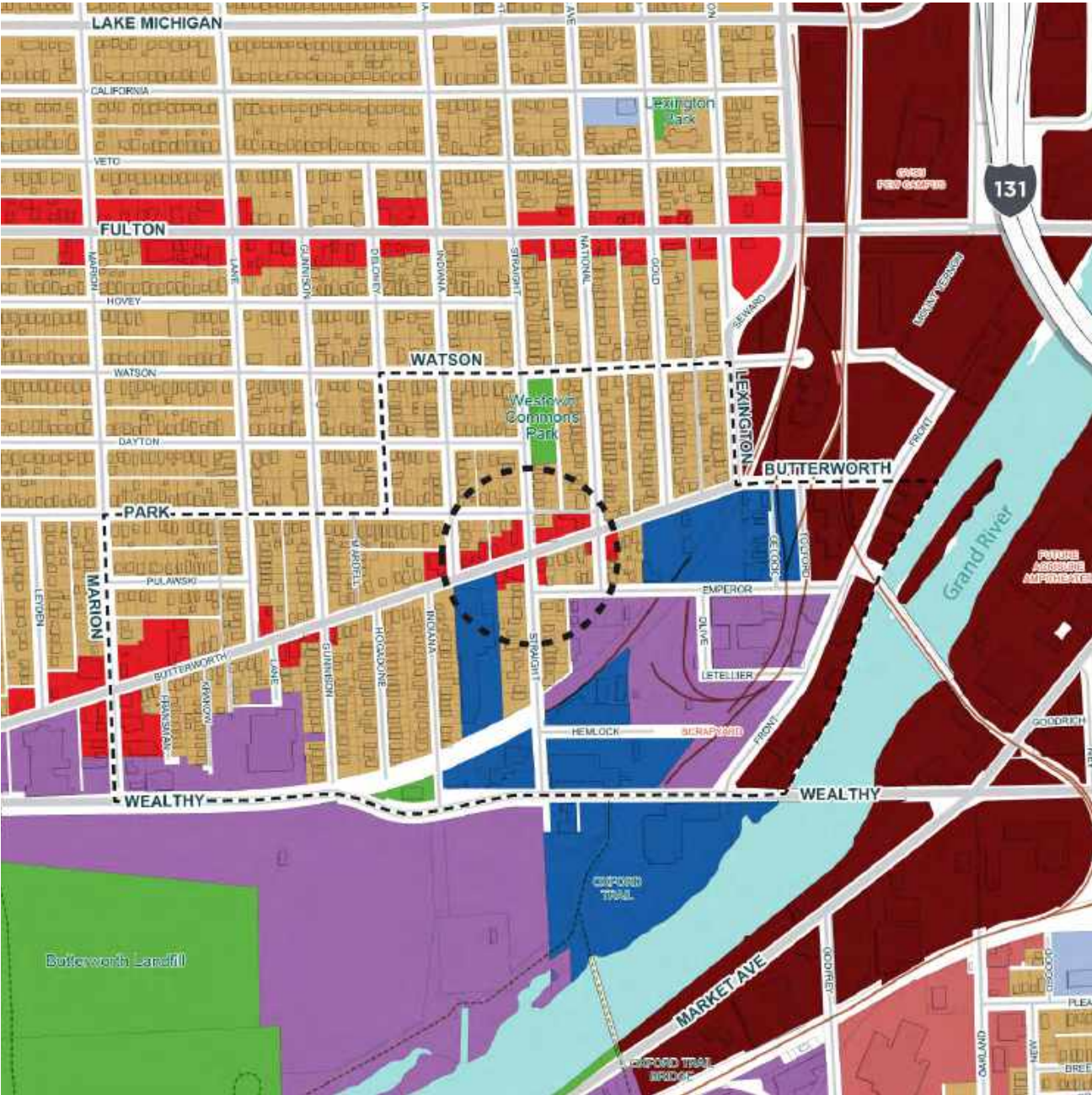
This goal relates to the **Great Neighborhoods** goal found in the Community Master Plan.

ASP Recommendations will be organized around the above Goals.

Through the CMP and ASP engagement process, the community helped co-create the Future Character Map (see **Future Character Map** on next page), which outlines Grand Rapids' future land use. It emphasizes development character and qualities as well as urban form and function. This map guides future development citywide, reinforcing existing patterns in some areas and supporting changes in others.

NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE FUTURE

FUTURE CHARACTER MAP & NODE



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Neighborhood Node

- Downtown
- Community Activity Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Suburban Neighborhood
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics

Neighborhood Node



Intent: Neighborhood Nodes are central to residential areas or business zones, primarily serving the neighborhood but sometimes drawing regional visitors. They offer local access to businesses, services, and amenities within walking distance. These nodes mix commercial, civic, institutional, and residential uses, and increased residential density within a quarter-mile radius is crucial for supporting them.

What it means for Butterworth: Butterworth has one Neighborhood Node as defined by the CMP:

- Butterworth Street and Straight Avenue

Downtown

Intent: Promote a dense development pattern focused on the close proximity of services, a diversity of uses, and dynamic building styles.

What it means for Butterworth: In the future, the underutilized properties adjacent to GVSU and the riverfront will be activated with a denser development pattern

Neighborhood Center

Intent: Reinforce a pedestrian and transit-friendly environment in a compact area and promote a mix of small-scale retail, service, entertainment, civic, office, and residential uses to enhance the vitality of surrounding neighborhoods.

What it means for Butterworth: Existing commercial corridors in Butterworth will continue to serve as Neighborhood Centers

Compact Neighborhood

Intent: Create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

What it means for Butterworth: Neighborhoods that are predominantly single family housing may grow to provide more diverse housing options.

Innovation Center

Intent: Accommodate a broad range of flexible employment opportunities, with a focus on active ground floor uses abutting public streets to promote compact, walkable areas.

What it means for Butterworth: In the future, the former industrial areas along the riverfront will include diverse employment options as well as multi-family residential and active ground floor uses. Access to the riverfront and trails will also be improved.

Manufacturing & Logistics

Intent: Allow for a wide range of types, services, and wage levels in sectors such as production, manufacturing, research, distribution, and logistics while preserving the character and integrity of adjacent land uses.

What it means for Butterworth: Legacy industrial properties within Butterworth will continue to support existing jobs. If businesses decide to close or move in the future, redevelopment may be done to fit the adjacent character areas (Downtown and Innovation Centers).

GOAL 01:

SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

GOAL CONTEXT

"Grand Rapids sits within a county experiencing high population growth. Grand Rapids is the largest city in Kent County and accounts for 30% of its population. After a short period of decline (5% between 2000 and 2010), the population of Grand Rapids has recovered and is increasing, with new residents partly fueling the City's growth. Additionally, the population of Kent County is expected to grow by about 27% (+169,000 people) by 2045. If Grand Rapids maintains its 30% share of county population, the City will grow to approximately 251,000 residents in that time. In the shorter term, it is expected that Grand Rapids will need at least 14,000 housing units by 2027 to satisfy demand."

- Excerpt from the Community Master Plan

The housing shortage in Grand Rapids can be alleviated through various means, and the CMP identifies several key recommendations. The ASP process provides an opportunity to observe the impacts of broader citywide policies within ASP areas. In Butterworth, housing can be added along the Butterworth commercial corridor, in parking lots, on vacant lots, and in areas near the river that have been rezoned for mixed-use development. Additionally, there are opportunities to add housing in residential neighborhoods while maintaining community character. The following recommendations offer ideas for adding new housing and supporting existing residents and homeowners.



Surface parking lots such as the one near the intersection of Butterworth Street and Lexington Avenue would be ideal places for new housing and redevelopment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING ON KEY CORRIDORS.

The Community Master Plan (CMP) strongly advocates for incorporating denser housing in areas with adequate transportation infrastructure. The CMP includes specific goals to better coordinate development with transportation decisions, such as considering up to six units on lots fronting Link Residential and Network Residential streets. The Vital Streets Plan defines these street types as follows:

Link Residential: Link Residential streets connect neighborhoods and local destinations. They are common in areas with a traditional grid layout but can be found in any neighborhood type. These streets typically feature low-to-moderate density housing and should support high-quality residential life. They often host community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship.

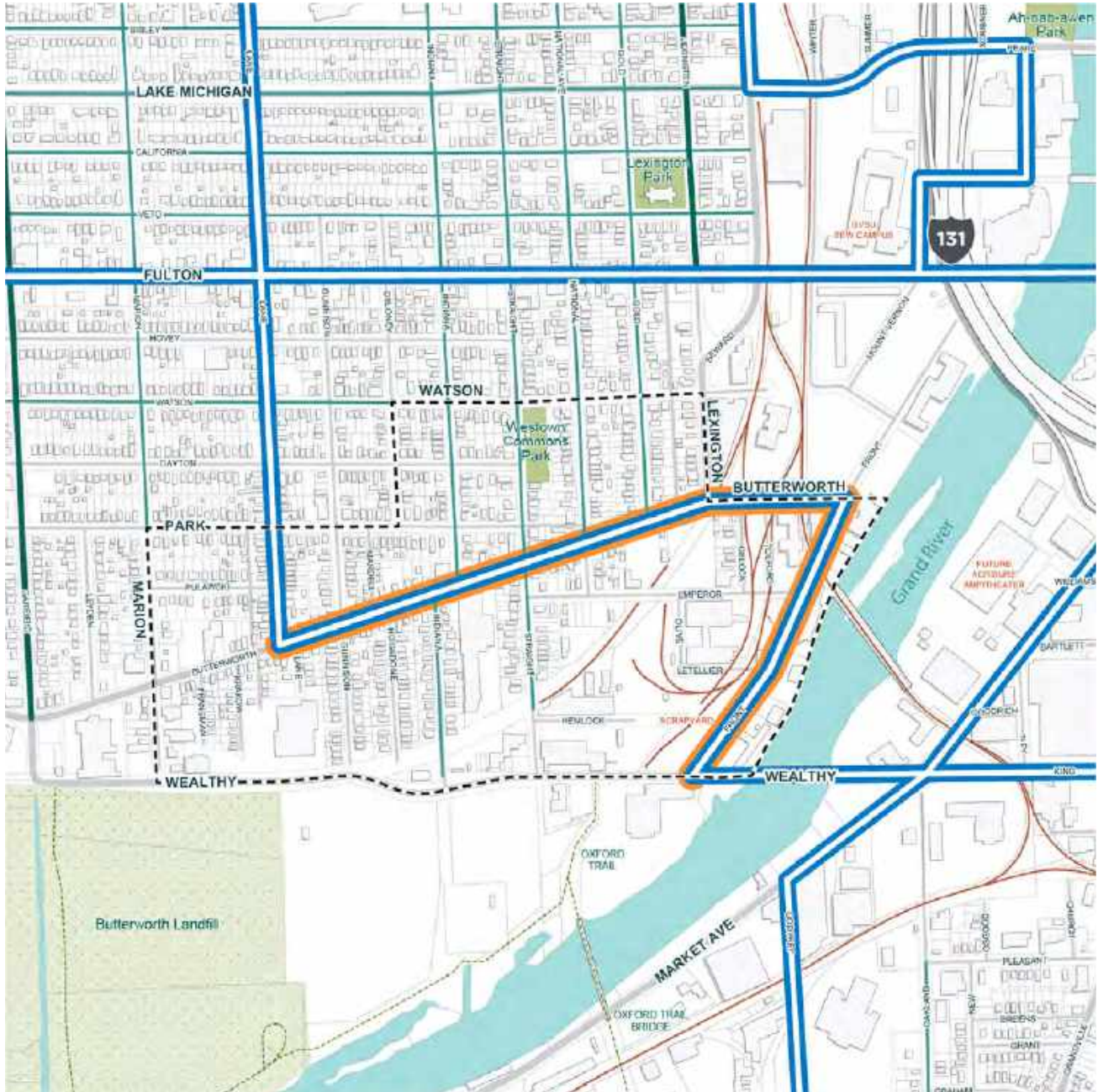
Network Residential: Network Residential streets are quality residential corridors that efficiently and safely move vehicles and non-motorized users. They are similar to arterial roads but are designed with more attention to non-auto users. These streets typically have higher residential density than other types and often feature community facilities like parks, schools, and places of worship, along with some industrial or small commercial spaces.

Link Residential and Network Residential streets are shown on the map to the right. Existing bus routes are layered onto the map to reinforce the connection between land use density and transportation infrastructure.

The following streets should be prioritized for consideration of denser residential use for these reasons:

- **Butterworth:** Bus and bicycle connections, identified as downtown and neighborhood/innovation centers in the future character map, suitable for denser uses.
- **Front:** Bus and bicycle connections, identified as downtown in the future character map, suitable for denser uses.

VITAL STREETS PLAN STREET TYPES & EXISTING BUS ROUTES



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Bus Route
- Network Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Link Residential (Vital Streets Plan)
- Priority Streets for Increased Density (as proposed in the ASP)

2

ALLOW FOR A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES IN SINGLE FAMILY DISTRICTS.

The CMP recommends allowing more types of housing in low-density residential zones. This aims to keep naturally occurring affordable housing viable and compliant with regulations. It also seeks to expand and preserve middle-density housing and encourage the development of new housing types for a range of families.

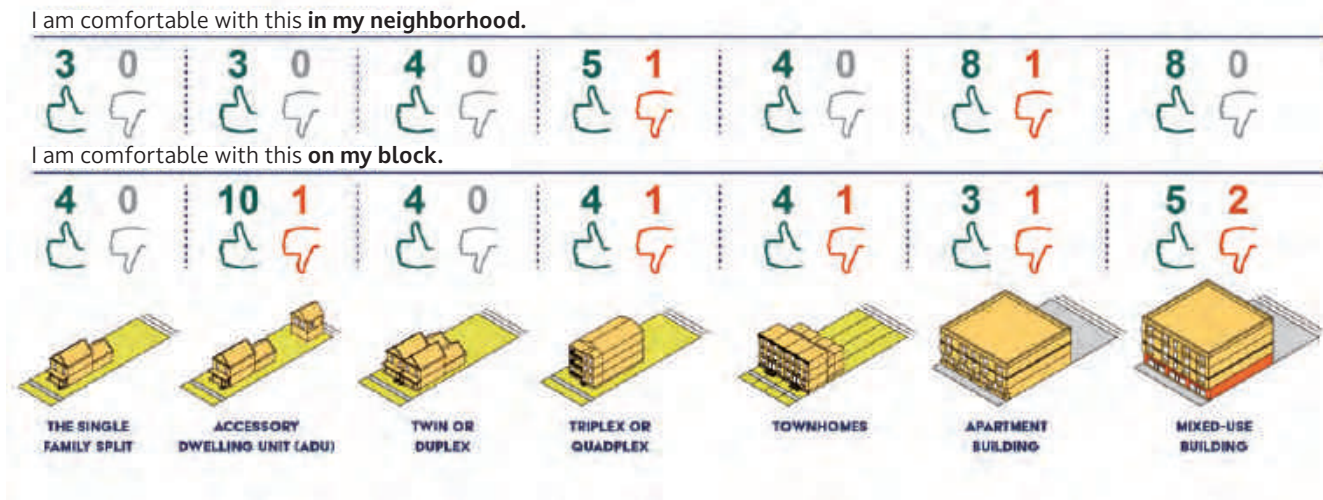
The CMP identifies the residential neighborhoods of Butterworth as Compact Neighborhoods within the Future Character Map (see **CMP Compact Neighborhood Designations** map). They are defined as areas that create, maintain, and promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of a diverse population while maintaining the desired physical characteristics of the city's existing neighborhoods.

Most residential properties in Butterworth are zoned for Low Density Residential and are predominantly detached single-family houses. Opportunities already exist within the zoning code to add denser housing types, but achieving the future character identified in the CMP may require broader zoning changes. Based on the engagement, residents would support changes that allow for more diversified housing types.

CMP COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGNATIONS AS WELL AS EXISTING NEIGHBORHOOD CLASSIFICATIONS**Legend**

Compact Neighborhood - Future Character as define by CMP

Below: During the engagement process, residents were asked to vote with a thumbs up or thumbs down to indicate the types of development they would or would not support in their neighborhood.



As part of the engagement process, residents were asked about the types of housing they would be comfortable with in their neighborhood and on their block. They were most strongly in favor of Accessory Dwelling Units but generally supported a variety of housing types, with no strong opposition. According to the Grand Rapids zoning code, an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that is either attached to the main house or a separate structure. ADUs are a great way to add density to neighborhoods without altering their character. When residents were asked what type of housing they would like to see most on their block to help address the housing shortage, ADUs received the most votes. Both homeowners and potential renters can benefit in various ways: homeowners can supplement their income through renting the ADU and gain opportunities to age in place, while renters often find ADUs more affordable due to their smaller size.

While the benefits of ADUs are numerous, there are some downsides as well. Upfront costs can be substantial and difficult to finance. To overcome this challenge, the City has continued to refine its legislation to lower barriers to entry and make the process as easy as possible. The City should continue refining as needed.

There are also issues regarding accessibility, parking, and residents feeling like secondary members of the community. Focusing ADUs on properties with an existing alley network may help sidestep some of these challenges by creating additional off-street parking spaces, which can be difficult to find on narrow lots in traditional neighborhoods like Butterworth. Additionally, residents would have direct access to their units rather than having to walk through the primary home's property. Alleyways are also the most likely locations for detached parking garages, which offer easier and more affordable opportunities for residential conversions.

Another challenge is that residents may be unaware of the benefits of ADUs and current City legislation. As an initial step, neighborhood or housing-focused organizations could conduct targeted outreach to property owners within eligible areas to educate homeowners on ADUs, discuss their benefits, and provide resources.

The alley on the backside of properties on National Avenue between Watson and Park is an excellent location to focus investment in ADUs as all of the properties have access off the alley and have the added benefit of fronting Westown Commons Park, providing tangential benefits to the park by activating the underutilized space.

The alley between National and Watson streets fronting Westown Commons Park.



CASE STUDY: Los Angeles leads the United States in the number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The City's favorable regulations, which include no owner-occupancy restrictions and no minimum lot size requirements, have made it a model for ADU development. Los Angeles allows detached ADUs up to 1,200 square feet and two stories tall, with many homeowners converting garages into livable spaces. Los Angeles has also launched the Accessory Dwelling Unit Standard Plan Program, which offers pre-approved ADU designs to simplify the building process.

Below: Examples of ADUs in Los Angeles. The below photo includes off-street parking and direct access from an alley.

Source: bunchadu.com



Source: archdaily.com

3

SUPPORTING EXISTING HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS.

Neighborhoods thrive on the diversity of their neighbors, and it is important that existing homeowners and renters can stay in their community if they choose to do so. Along with the City's CMP and housing-related initiatives and policies, it is important to undertake targeted outreach to Butterworth residents to ensure they are aware of and have access to resources available to help them improve their housing. This work needs to be done with the following goals in mind:

Keep Housing Affordable:

- Continue to provide and promote the Housing Rehabilitation Program, a federally funded program administered by the Community Development Department that offers affordable loans for home repairs to applicants who meet eligibility requirements.
- Incentivize and preserve affordable housing per the Grand Rapids Housing Needs Assessment.

Encourage Resident Involvement:

- Create pathways for residents to be informed and provide input on new development.
- Support community members who aspire to take on small-scale real estate development projects in their community through trainings, mentorship, and networking opportunities.



Butterworth continues to evolve with new construction housing.

GOAL 02:

A VIBRANT & THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY

RECOMMENDATIONS

4

REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.

Industrial properties near the river in Butterworth have evolved over time, and can accommodate a broader range of uses moving forward, including office, research and development, artist studios, small-scale manufacturing, hotels, multi-family residential, retail, restaurants, and services. This evolution may accelerate as GVSU expands their campus south and as the riverfront continues to grow and develop. The rezoning of this industrial district to City Center and Transitional City Center after the 2002 Master Plan were a first step in starting this transition.

Through the engagement process for the Community Master Plan and the Area Specific Plan, residents confirmed that transitioning the industrial uses to an Innovation Center aligns with their future vision for this area. Additionally, the Community Master Plan identified multiple Innovation Centers in the citywide Future Character Map, including properties near the Butterworth riverfront.

The City should look to develop a strategic partnership with GVSU and local partners to support new investments in creating a vibrant Innovation Center along the river. These investments could include property acquisition, development incentives, marketing assistance, job training, expansion of the West Side Corridor Improvement Area, and upgraded infrastructure such as streets and parks.

5

ADAPTIVE REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WITH AN ART/MAKER FOCUS.

The area around the intersection of Straight and Wealthy is home to a burgeoning arts district anchored by the Tanglefoot building, the Goei Center, The Moon Photography Studio, Dinderbeck Print Studios, Red Hydrant Press, and several other art, maker, and light industrial businesses. Additional buildings in the area, including the large Padnos building at the corner of Straight and Wealthy and the Spectrum Industries building on Wealthy and Front, could support more art, maker, and light industrial spaces if redeveloped. Older industrial structures in the community provide excellent opportunities for reuse to support new and growing local businesses. Creative businesses, makers and many more are in dire need nationally for relatively inexpensive small to medium sized spaces. Butterworth could play a key role in the City's drive to expand local businesses and entrepreneurship by retaining the area's industrial zoning.

Modest infrastructure improvements could better connect this area to the neighborhood. The former rail right-of-way on the north side of the Tanglefoot building presents an excellent opportunity to create a temporary, flexible outdoor space. This space could be shared by these buildings and potentially be accessible to the public, supporting the work of makers and artists in the area, before the extension of Seward Avenue comes to fruition. See **Recommendation 11** for more details.



Surface parking lots within the riverfront district.



Tanglefoot building.

6

SUPPORT BUTTERWORTH STREET AS A NEIGHBORHOOD-SERVING COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR.

Butterworth Street currently hosts a mix of uses, including small-scale industrial, residential, and neighborhood-serving commercial spaces. In the broader neighborhood context, Fulton Street serves a larger market as a commercial corridor, while Butterworth caters to local needs. The following recommendations aim to support Butterworth as a neighborhood-serving commercial street and a community gathering place in the future.



Butterworth Commercial Corridor.



A redeveloped industrial building on Butterworth.



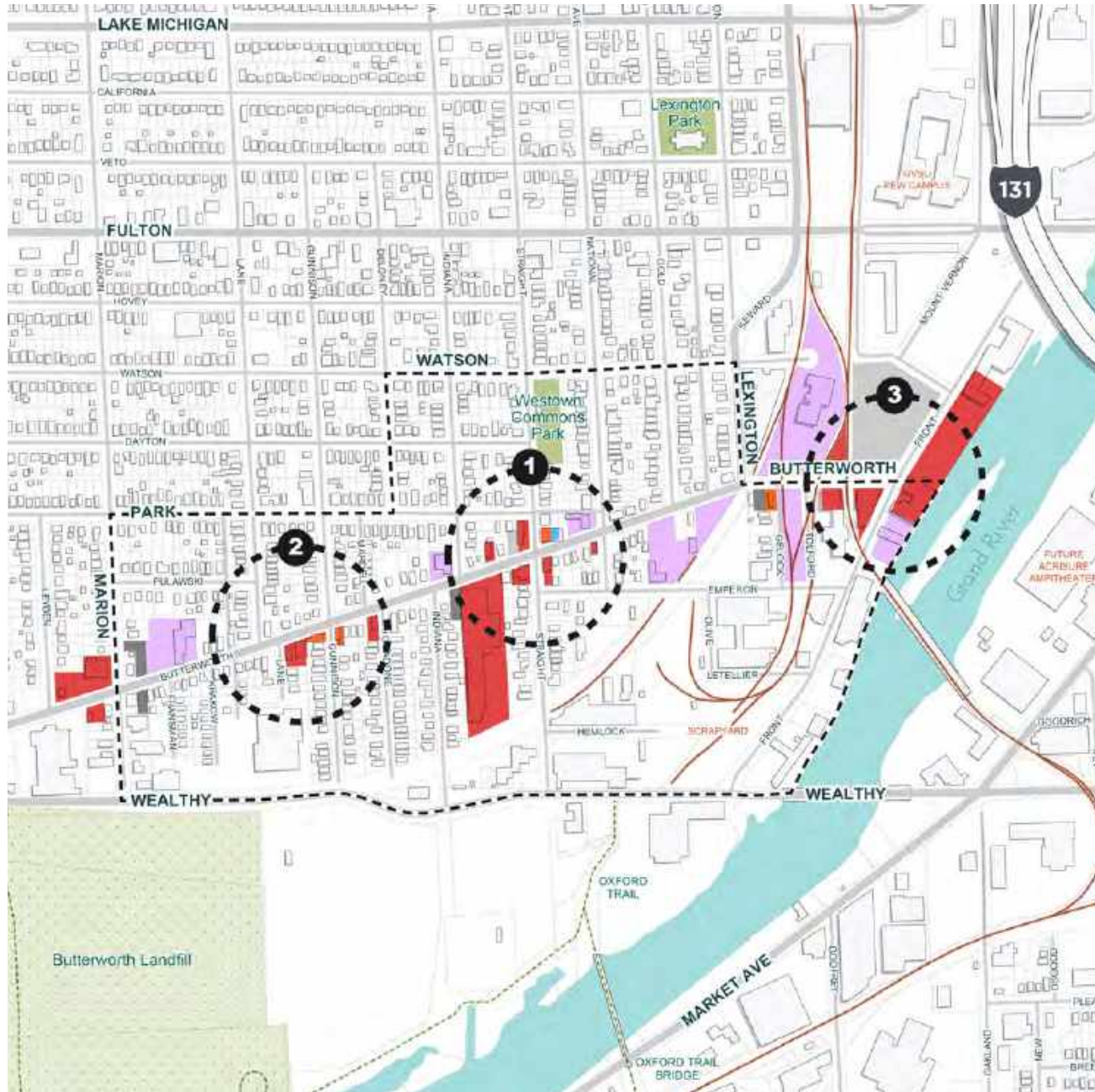
An empty lot outside the Goei Center.



Butterworth commercial corridor.

1. **Promote additional housing units** to help the broader city meet expected housing demand as well as provide customers for corridor businesses. Focus new development in three nodes:
 - Butterworth and Straight (from National to Indiana) - identified as a Neighborhood Node in the CMP.
 - Butterworth and Gunnison (from Lane to Gunnison) - identified as a Node Subdistrict in the ASP.
 - Butterworth and Front - identified as a Node Subdistrict in the ASP.
2. **Ensure active ground floor uses with any new development** within the Neighborhood Node and Subdistricts and east of Lexington Ave. Non-commercial ground floor uses can still add to the vitality of the street, but within the targeted Neighborhood Node and Subdistricts, active ground floors with engaging storefronts and commercial spaces would be preferred.
3. **Maintain small scale/industrial buildings as affordable work/commercial space.** While some of the older small scale industrial buildings on Butterworth street may seem obsolete, they are often great opportunities to provide inexpensive commercial space for a variety of uses that can add vitality and new life to the district. A perfect example is 839 Butterworth which was home to Advance Caster and Wheel Company for many years which eventually relocated to an industrial district in SE Grand Rapids around 2016. After years of vacancy the building was eventually bought and renovated as an interior design company with a retail component. Numerous similar buildings exist on Butterworth Street and are ripe for similar conversions.
4. **Encourage parking on side streets and in the rear of properties accessed through alleys at the Neighborhood Node and Subdistricts.** Surface parking lots interrupt the activity along the street and create unsafe crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. Due to the alleys on the north side of the street and the numerous side streets on the south side, surface parking lots should be accessed through those less visible streets.
5. **Target storefront and facade repairs in the Neighborhood Node and Subdistricts.** Grand Rapids has six Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) that can administer facade improvement grants. Butterworth Street, within the West Side CIA boundaries, should focus on engagement within the Neighborhood Node to educate and support interested property owners.

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO BUTTERWORTH STREET AS PROPOSED IN RECOMMENDATION 6



Legend

Neighborhood Study Area

Neighborhood Nodes

- 1** Butterworth & Straight (from National to Indiana)
- 2** Butterworth & Gunnison (from Lane to Gunnison)
- 2** Butterworth & Front

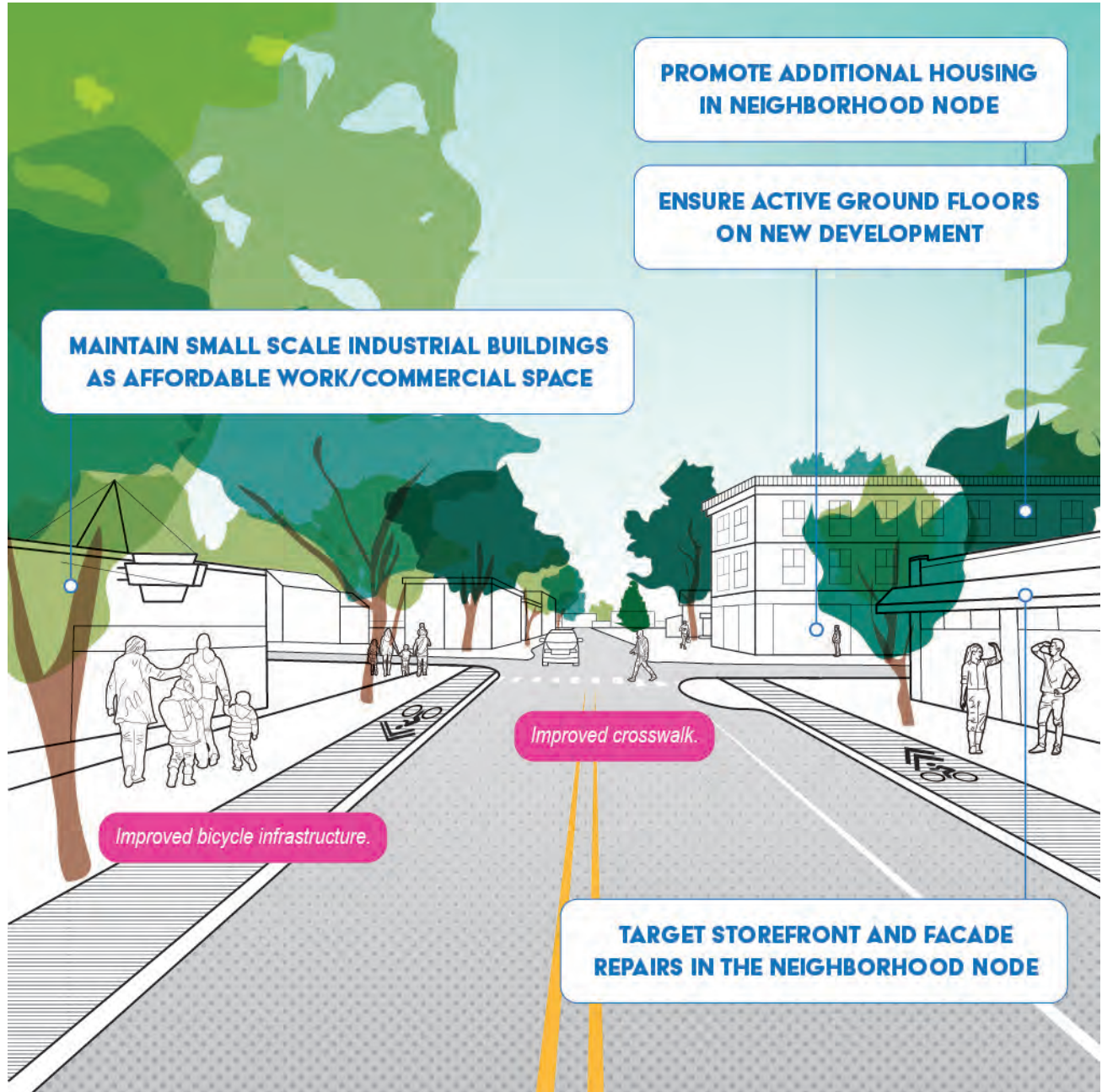
Butterworth Street - Non-Residential & Mixed Use Parcels

- Commercial
- Mixed Commercial/Residential
- Public/Quasi Public
- Industrial

Butterworth Street - Underutilized Parcels

- Parking Lot
- Vacant Lot

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO BUTTERWORTH STREET AS PROPOSED IN RECOMMENDATION 6



GOAL 03:

SAFER, WALKABLE & BIKEABLE STREETS

RECOMMENDATIONS

7

IMPROVE BUTTERWORTH FOR PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS.

Butterworth Street accommodates various modes of travel, including cars, bicycles, and trucks, making it challenging to maintain a safe environment for all users. The following recommendations aim to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on Butterworth Street:

Pedestrian Safety:

- Install pedestrian crossing signs at key crosswalks along Butterworth to increase driver awareness.
- Implement curb bump-outs at intersections with mandatory stop crosswalks to enhance pedestrian visibility and safety.
- Study for the potential of signalized intersections with curb bump-outs at Butterworth Streets intersections with Marion Avenue, Gunnison Avenue, and Lexington Avenue to improve pedestrian crossing safety.

Truck Traffic Management:

- Short-term: Implement pedestrian safety improvements as described above to slow down truck traffic.
- Long-term: Develop alternative routes for truck traffic to alleviate the impacts on the corridor. Options for alternative routes could include:
 - Realize existing City plans to extend Seward Avenue south to Wealthy Street.
 - Monitoring and capitalizing on any property ownership changes along the planned extension route to facilitate the Seward Street project, ensuring alignment with City development goals.
 - Realize existing City plans to connect Wealthy Street to 196.

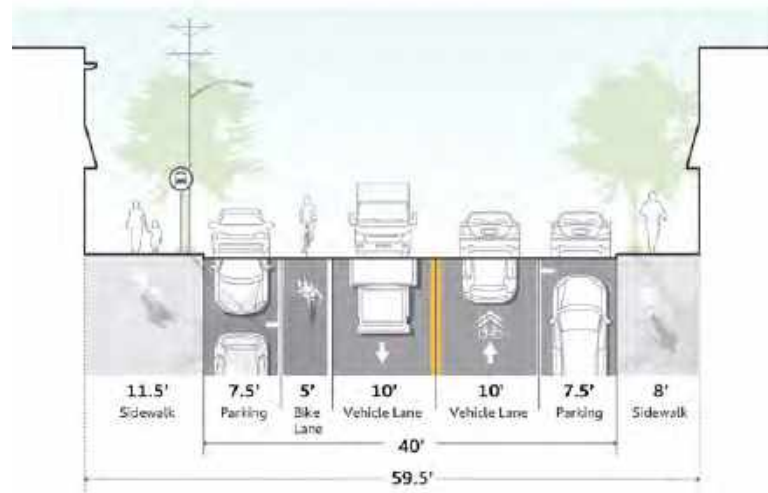
Bicycle Facilities:

- Assess and enhance the safety of bicycle lanes from Marion to Gold by considering a raised cycle track in both directions.
- Evaluate impacts of removing street parking in front of commercial businesses before finalizing new bicycle facility plans.
- Maintain protected bicycle lanes west of Marion and standard lanes east of Gold Street to Front Street.



Existing bicycle facilities on Butterworth Street.

EXISTING SECTION - BUTTERWORTH STREET AT STRAIGHT AVENUE



PROPOSED SECTION - BUTTERWORTH STREET AT STRAIGHT AVENUE



8

DEVELOP ALLEYS AS AN ALTERNATIVE PEDESTRIAN NETWORK AND COMMUNITY SPACE.

Alleys serve as ancillary infrastructure for Butterworth, and provide access to garages, trash and recycling pickup, and utility right-of-ways. They are often overlooked and thought of as a back of house location to hide things that are unsightly. Neighborhoods across the country have flipped the script and have begun to look at alleys in a new light, recognizing that alleys can serve as ancillary pedestrian routes and public spaces as well. The alleys in Butterworth could serve as additional spaces for the community to gather, traverse through the neighborhood, and add greening. The alley behind National Avenue between Watson and Park could serve as a pilot for this recommendation, as it was already identified as a targeted location for ADUs in **Recommendation 2**. Adding additional greening, art, and pedestrian improvements to this alley could serve as a model for the rest of the community.



Existing alley between Straight Avenue and National Avenue.

9

CASE STUDY: Multiple cities have initiated projects to green and upgrade alleys for pedestrian use. In South Los Angeles, the organization Parks for People (a program by the Trust for Public Land) has led the Avalon Green Alleys Demonstration Project, transforming six alley segments into walkable, bikeable, green community spaces. This project included features such as light-colored pavement to reduce urban heat, additional lighting and pavement markings to promote pedestrian use, and native plantings to enhance the greenery.

In Chicago, the city has developed a Green Alleys program and handbook that aims to improve alleys using green infrastructure strategies. These strategies include the use of permeable pavement, recycled construction materials, energy-efficient lighting fixtures, and proper grading of alley surfaces for effective water drainage.

Right: Examples of completed green alleys in Los Angeles (above) and Chicago (below).

Source: SALT Architects.



Source: City of Chicago Green Alley Handbook.

IMPROVE EXISTING TRAIL AND BICYCLE CONNECTIONS WITHIN NEIGHBORHOOD.

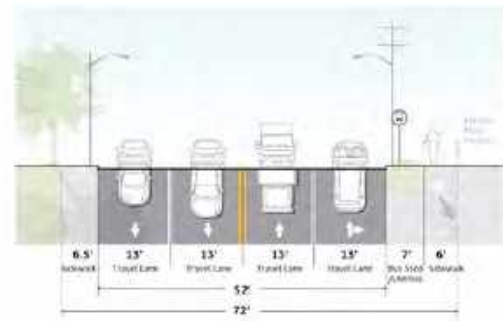
Butterworth is the converging point for a variety of trails extending beyond the city, including the Grand River Trail. Planned extensions to the trails will make for even more of an interconnected network and Butterworth stands to benefit. Investments have been made to the bicycle network, adding new facilities in the past decade, but gaps exist to connect bicycle lanes to the broader trail network and the city at large. The following improvements (see **Bicycle Action Plan Recommendations** map) will help solidify Butterworth as a critical piece within the bicycle and trail network:

- Implement the Bicycle Action Plan throughout the neighborhood.
- Enhance the connection to the Oxford/Riverfront trailhead. Currently, the trailhead is uninviting and hard to locate. In the long term, options should be explored to move the trailhead to a more visible and accessible location. Potential new sites include the intersection of Wealthy and Straight or the intersection of Front and Wealthy, running along the rear of the Spectrum Industries property.
- Ensure an integrated connection between the Wealthy Street bicycle lane, the Oxford Trail, and the Wealthy Street bridge. Improve pedestrian infrastructure on Wealthy Street across the length of the bridge (see **Wealthy Street Bridge Street Sections**).
- Work to complete connections to the Grand River Trail throughout neighborhood.



Existing Oxford Trail entrance in the distance.

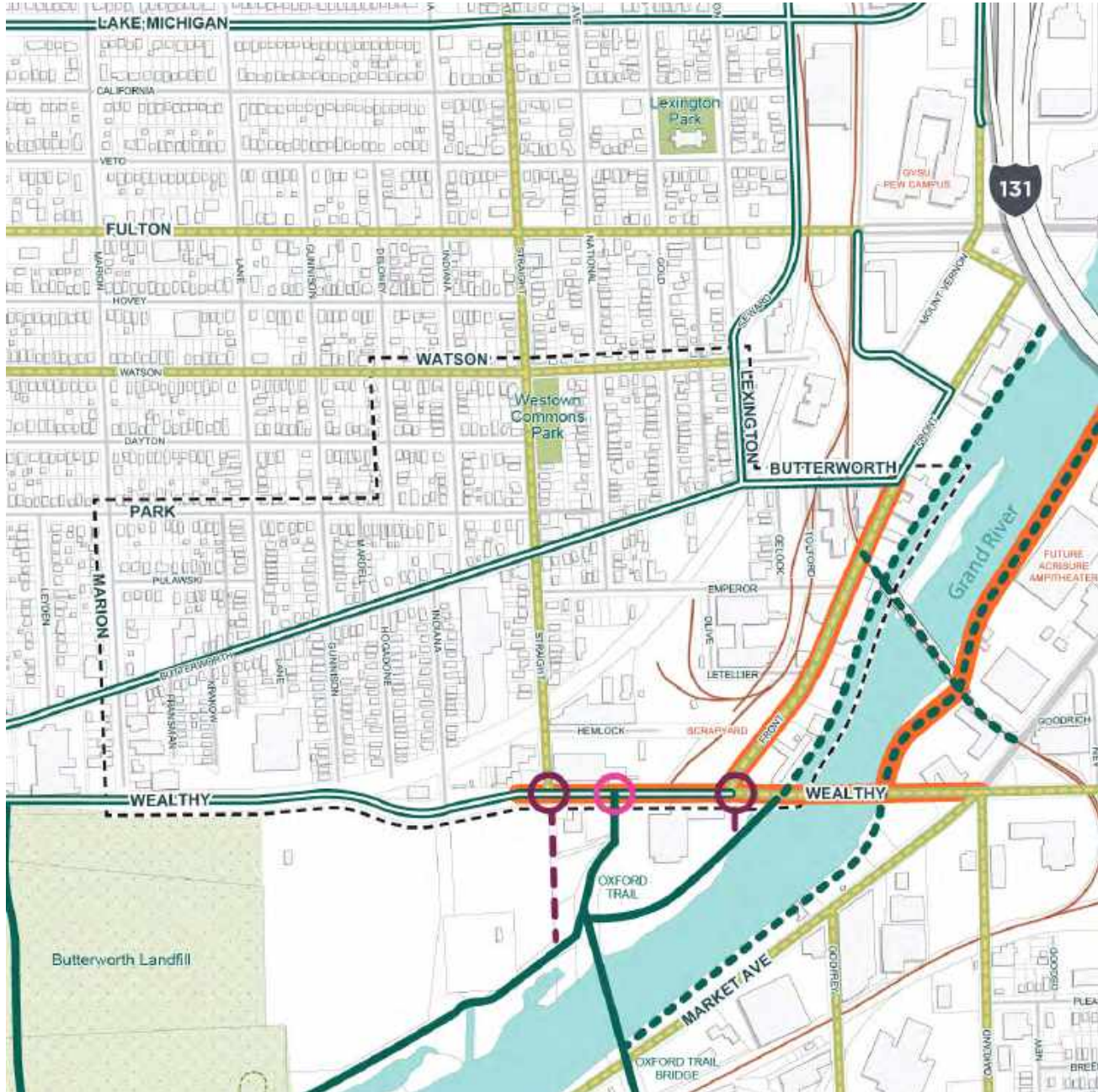
EXISTING SECTION - WEALTHY STREET BRIDGE



PROPOSED SECTION - WEALTHY STREET BRIDGE



BICYCLE ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



Legend

- Neighborhood Study Area
- Existing Trail
- Existing Bike Facility
- Proposed Trail
- Proposed New/Improved Bike Facility
- Priority Improvement
- Existing Trailhead Improvement
- Potential New Trailhead & Connection

GOAL 04:

BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS & HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY SPACES

RECOMMENDATIONS

10

EXPLORE ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING AND ONGOING STEWARDSHIP OF WESTOWN COMMONS PARK.

Westown Commons Park is a valued community asset and the only public park in the Butterworth area. Recent improvements to the park include a new shade pavilion and the replacement of an abandoned wading pool with a skate park serving neighborhood youth. Neighbors are actively involved in stewardship of the park and the park is part of the Adopt-A-Park program, an initiative of the Friends of Grand Rapids Parks that engages volunteers to host at least one beautification event or activation per quarter.

The existing support for maintenance through the City and the Adopt-A-Park program should continue, but larger maintenance issues beyond the ability of volunteers should be noted and addressed appropriately.

Butterworth residents expressed a desire to have more support for programming and partnership-building, noting that there is a notable gap in activities for teens and pre-teens. Activities like outdoor movie nights could help attract a broader audience, but would also require the support of small grants. Many neighborhood parks host a series of yearly programs for between \$1,000 - \$5,000 annually, amounts that could be raised through local fundraising or small grants. Additionally, partnering with outside organizations to host programming at the park or other facilities is another way to activate, and increase access to, public spaces. These organizations could include local non-profits, artists, and elementary, middle, and high schools.



Westown Commons Park.

CASE STUDY: Green for the Greater Good at Rodney Reservoir (Wilmington, DE) is a volunteer-run organization focused on advocating for Rodney Reservoir, a 4-acre abandoned water reservoir in the heart of Wilmington's Hilltop neighborhood. The organization, in partnership with community members, has led efforts to redevelop the park as a neighborhood amenity through a community-driven design process. In addition, Green for the Greater Good has established partnerships with residents, volunteers, and organizations such as West Side Grows Together, Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids, and local schools to develop environmental programming and a learning curriculum around the park's currently active community garden.

Below: Children from the Lewis Dual Language Elementary School in the West Side participate in the Education Cultivation Program at the Rodney Reservoir community garden.

Source: Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids



11

IDENTIFY NEW PUBLIC SPACE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

New neighborhood public spaces would enhance the variety and quality of gathering areas for the community. Opportunities include:

The abandoned rail right-of-way that cuts diagonally through Butterworth from Fulton Street to Wealthy Street is currently occupied by parking, vacant lots, and industrial storage. In the long term, this land is intended for an extension of Seward Avenue to Wealthy Street. However, with no funding in place, these blocks are unlikely to change in the near term. Some blocks could be repurposed temporarily to add unique green spaces, neighborhood amenities, and space to showcase art and other products produced by local artists and makers. Additional blocks could also be used for other temporary installations or greening initiatives.

Here are just a few ideas for how the space could be used:

- Community gardens
- Wildflower meadow
- Programmed space
- Mulch path and plantings
- Play space for children
- Picnic tables and BBQ pit

The lawn in front of the Goei Center offers the possibility of a unique public space that fronts on Butterworth Street at a key commercial center, and could serve as additional outdoor space for events held at the Center. The existing loading dock area could be opened during events to create a strong connection between indoor event spaces and a new outdoor space.

Public spaces that are part of future redevelopment of the riverfront could also greatly add to the neighborhood's public space network. GVSU's campus expansion plans include a central campus green to replace the parking lot between Watson Street, Front Avenue, and Fulton Street. Additional public space opportunities to be explored in future redevelopment projects include the entrance to the Grand Rapids Swing Bridge located near the intersection of Front Avenue and Emperor Street, which is planned to become a pedestrian and bicycle connection in the Bicycle Action Plan.



An empty lot outside the Goei Center.



Rail right-of-way outside the Tanglefoot building.



Potential pedestrian and bicycle connection over the Grand River on the Swing Bridge.

12

INCREASE THE TREE CANOPY AS THE INNOVATION CENTER DEVELOPS.

Urban trees play an important role in creating a healthy environment for the city and its residents. They clean the air, help with stormwater issues, and create shade to cool the urban heat island effect. Residential streets within Butterworth have good tree coverage on both private yards and along curbs, but the riverfront is lacking due to its industrial history. As the district changes, a concerted effort should be made to add additional tree coverage by taking the following steps:

- Work with GVSU to ensure trees are added to existing properties and future development plans.
- Include street trees along any new streets created to serve Innovation Center uses.
- Plant trees within City owned properties and parking lots.
- Engage with existing property owners to partner with local tree planting organizations.
- Mandate tree planting requirements within Innovation Center designations.



Extensive tree coverage within residential streets.



Extensive tree coverage within residential streets.

Minimal tree coverage on surface parking lots and industrial properties near the river.



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FUTURE SCENARIOS, ZONING, & IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations set the stage for future changes. The final section of this Area Specific Plan outlines the potential impact of these recommendations across Butterworth and how to implement them. This section is divided into the following parts:

Future Development Scenarios:

This section graphically depicts how many of the recommendations around the built environment and housing could look on typical blocks within Butterworth. It includes a variety of developments that add housing in a contextual way, mixed-use developments that support commercial corridors, and larger-scale developments on formerly industrial areas.

Site-Specific Improvements:

While the future development scenarios illustrate potential futures on typical blocks, this section focuses on specific areas within Butterworth, showcasing what the recommendations could look like across different goal areas. The primary areas of focus are the industrial zones near the river and Butterworth Street and adjacent blocks, which are most likely to undergo changes.

Future Character Areas and Zoning:

The CMP identifies future character areas across the city, often requiring zoning changes to achieve the desired character. This section includes a map and associated chart to help navigate potential zoning changes.

Implementation:

This matrix identifies potential partnerships needed to accomplish the specific recommendations outlined in the plan.

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FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

REDEVELOP THE RIVERFRONT AS AN INNOVATION CENTER.

Please see
RECOMMENDATION 4
for more details

ENCOURAGE ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU) WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Please see
RECOMMENDATION 2
for more details

Repurposing of small scale industrial buildings for new businesses

Adaptive reuse of existing buildings

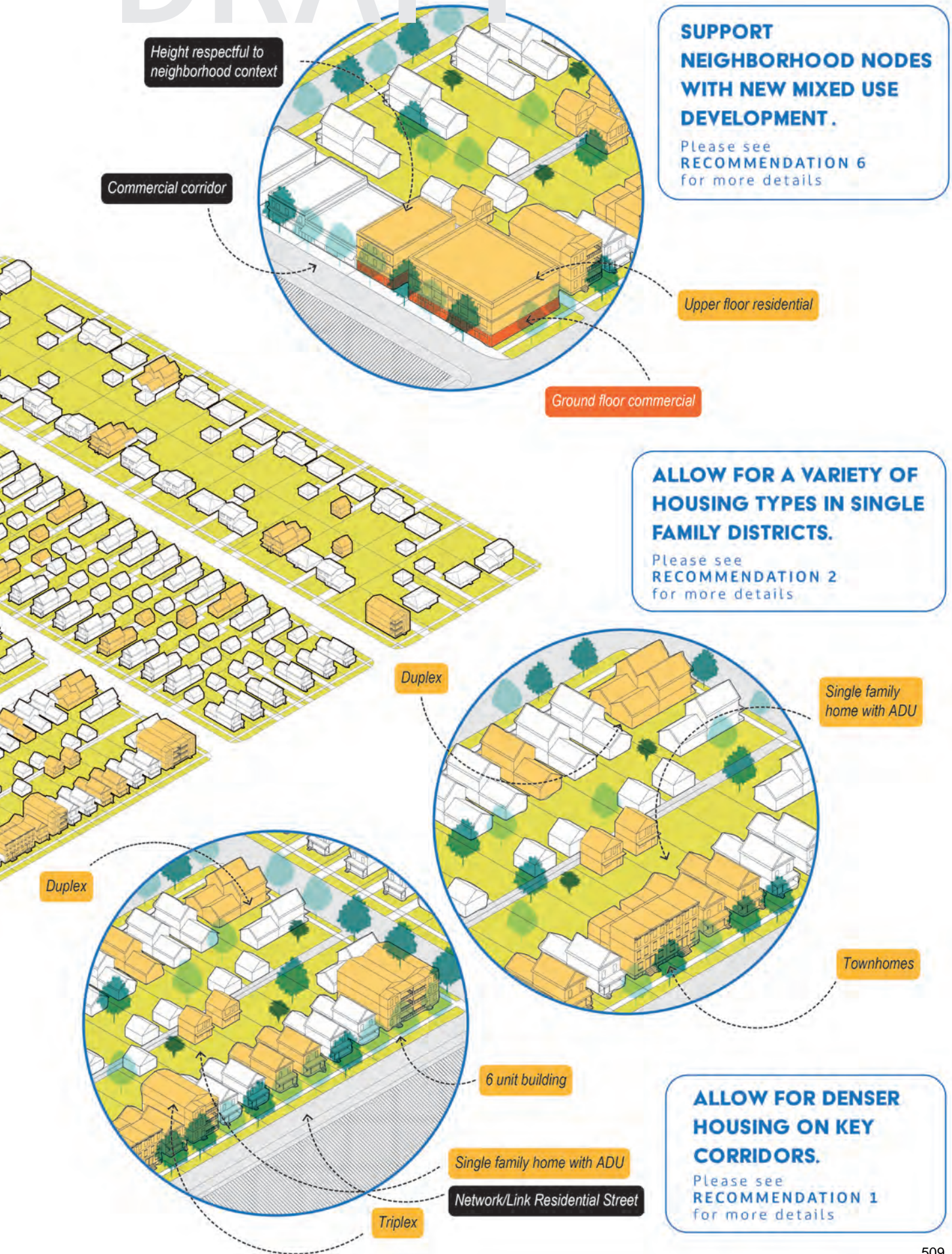
Ground floor commercial

Upper floor residential

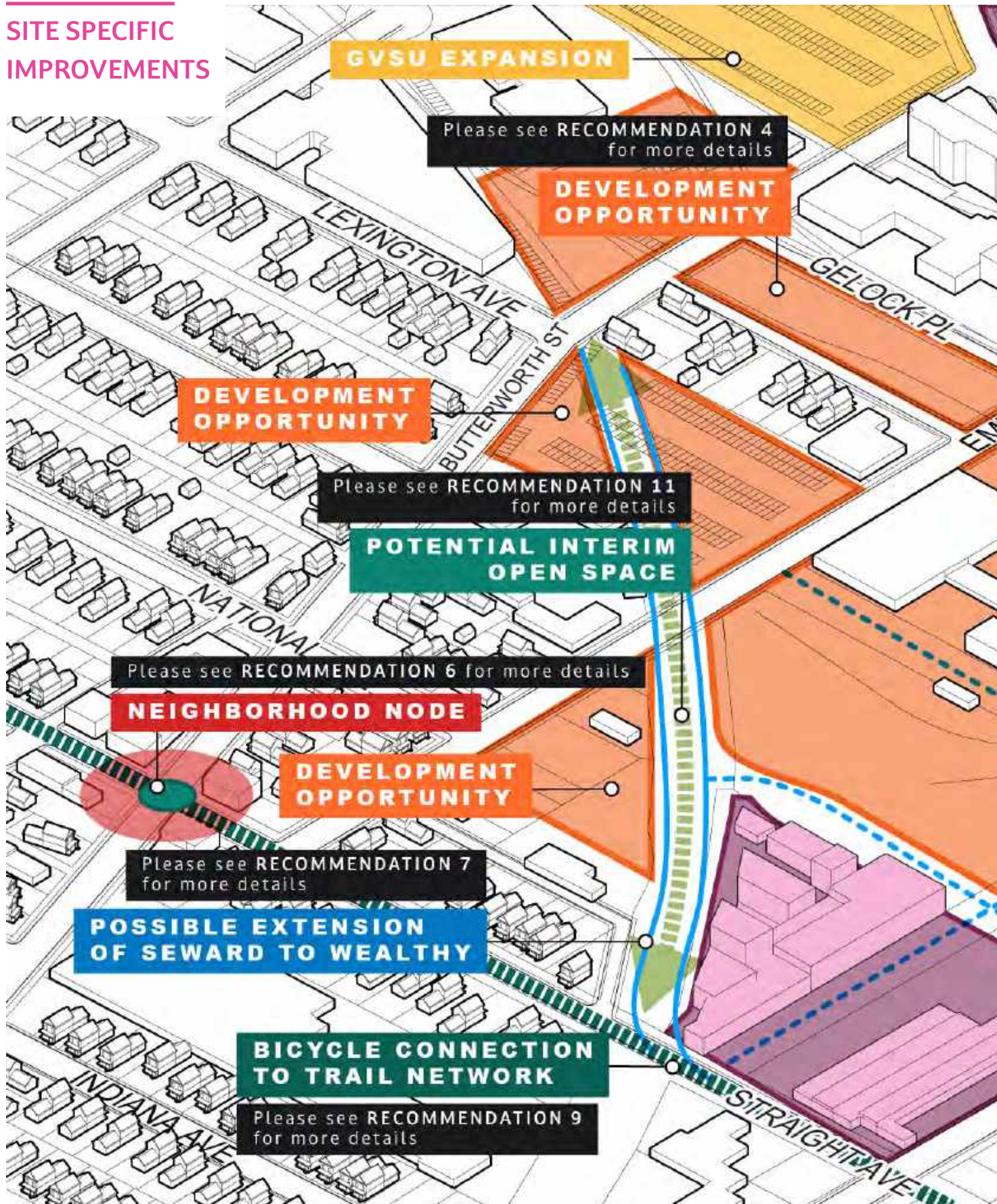
Ground floor maker space

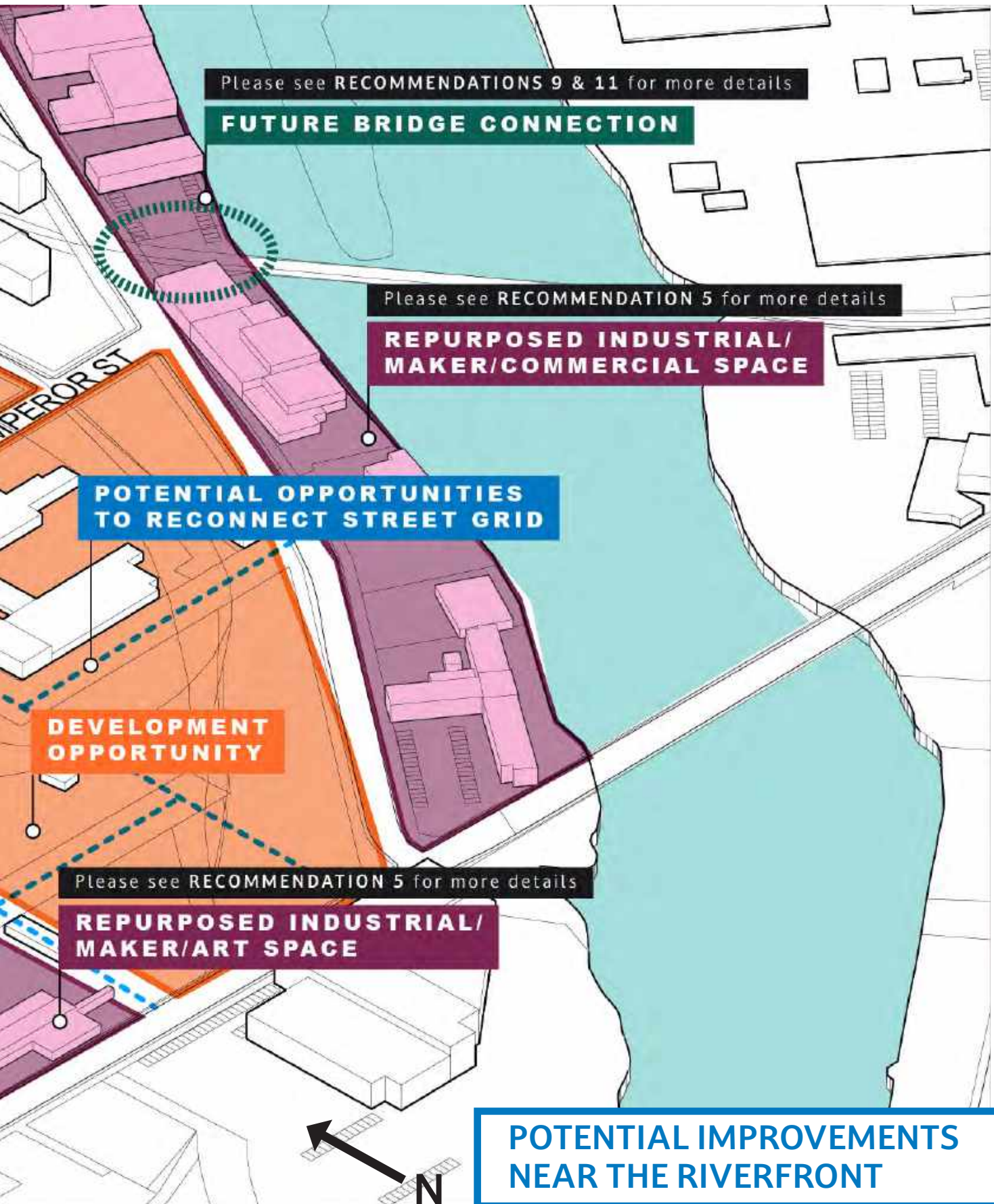
Existing alley

ADUs clustered on existing alley

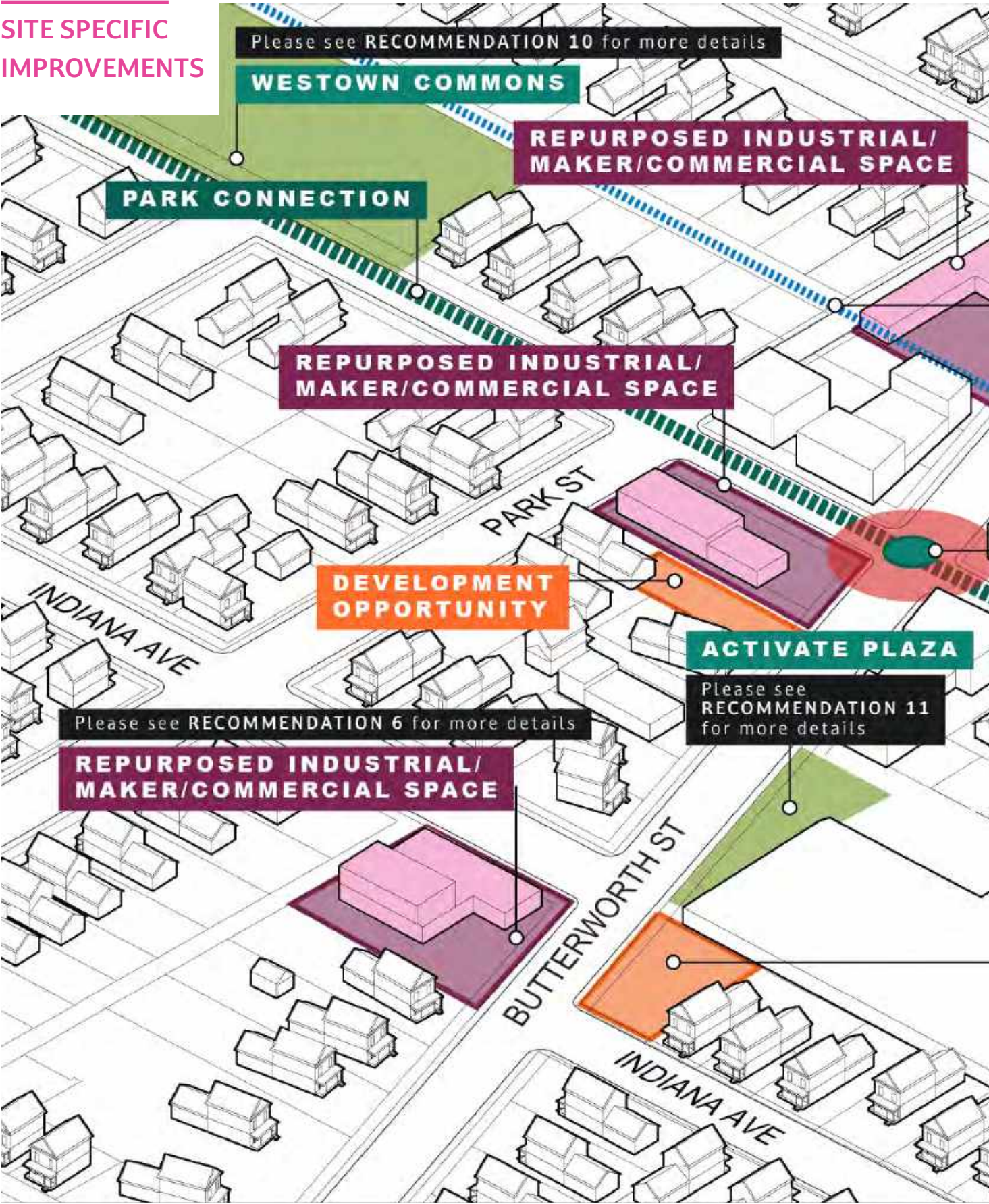


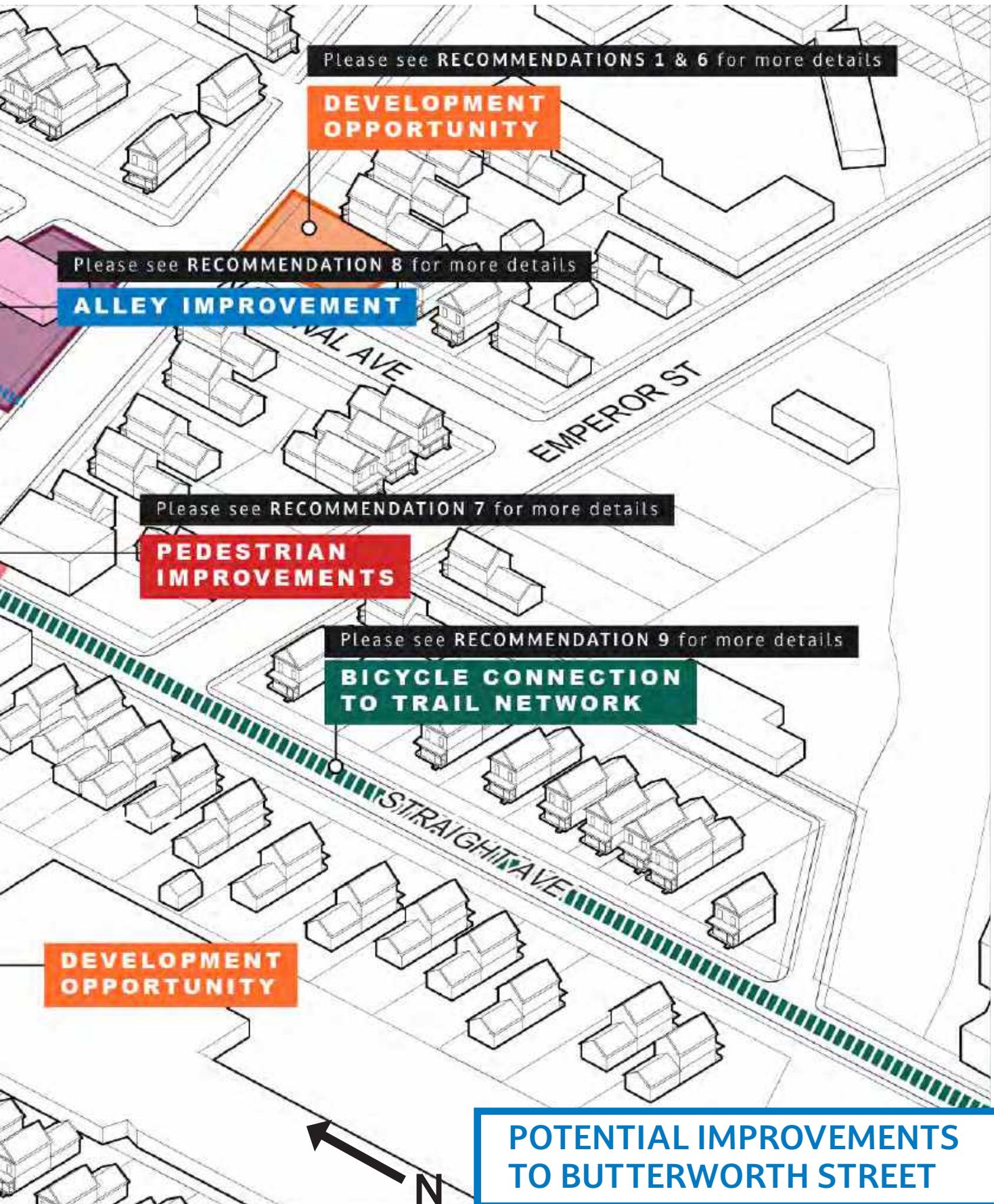
SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS





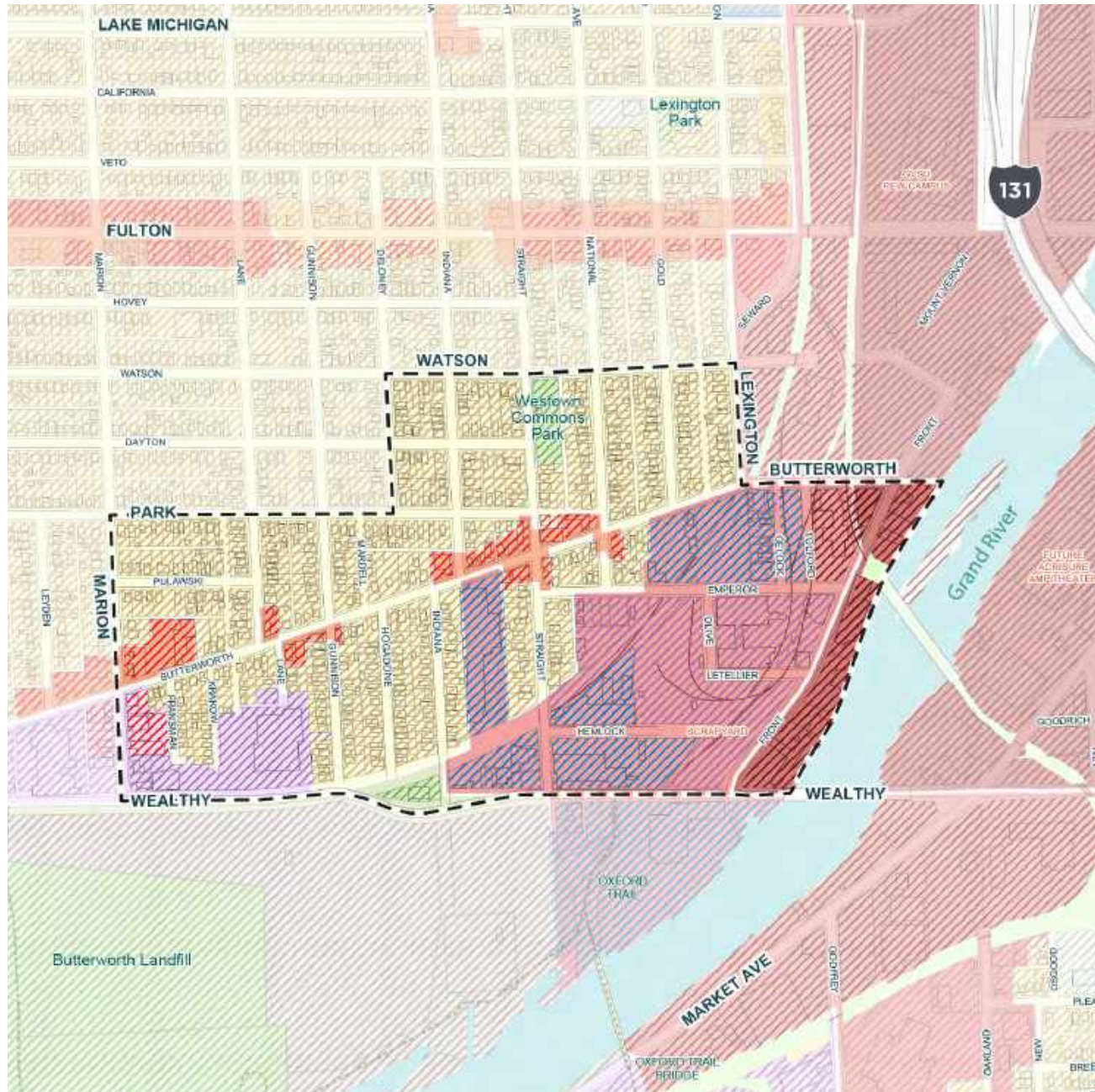
SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS





FUTURE CHARACTER & ZONING

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING



Legend

Future Character Areas

- Downtown
- Neighborhood Center
- Compact Neighborhood
- Transitional Activity Center
- Campus
- Innovation Center
- Parks & Open Spaces
- Manufacturing & Logistics

Existing Zoning

- LDR - Low Density Residential
- MDR - Mixed Density Residential
- TBA - Traditional Business Area
- TCC - Transitional City Center
- CC - City Center
- IT - Industrial-Transportation
- OS - Open Space
- PRD - Planned Redevelopment District

Downtown

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- City Center

Neighborhood Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Traditional Business Area
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Transit Oriented Development

Compact Neighborhood

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Mixed-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Neighborhood Office Service
- Planned Redevelopment

Innovation Center

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Transitional City Center
- Commercial
- Transit Oriented Development
- Mixed-Density Residential
- Planned Redevelopment

Manufacturing & Logistics

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Industrial - Transportation
- Commercial
- Planned Redevelopment

Parks

Appropriate Zoning Districts:

- Open Space

The **Future Character Map** and **Zoning Map** serve different purposes for the City.

Future Character Map: This map is a visionary tool that outlines the intended use of land in the future, reflecting the community's long-term goals and aspirations. It is part of a Community Master Plan and guides future development, informing decisions about growth and land use changes.

Zoning Map: This map is a regulatory tool that defines the current legal use of land, specifying what can be built and how land can be used right now. It divides the city into zones, each with its own set of rules and regulations regarding building types, densities, and uses.

In essence, the **Future Character Map** provides a guide for future development, while the **Zoning Map** enforces current land use regulations. The City will need to update its zoning to achieve this vision, and this zoning plan may help coordinate between existing zoning classifications and desired outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION

TO BE UPDATED

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