



Item Number: {{item.number}}

# CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS AGENDA ACTION REQUEST

**DATE:** August 13, 2024

**TO:** Mark Washington, City Manager

**COMMITTEE:** Committee of the Whole  
**LIAISON:** Mark Washington, City Manager

**FROM:** Kristin Turkelson, Planning Director  
Planning, Design & Development

**SUBJECT:** **Resolution Authorizing the Distribution of the Draft Community Master Plan for Public Comment**

## Overview

Bridge to Our Future, the Grand Rapids Community Master Plan, is a blueprint for how the community grows and evolves set forth by the Planning Commission and adopted by the City Commission. It builds community pride and defines a long-range vision for the future, typically 20 years.

The plan, once adopted, becomes a steering mechanism for the organization. It will inform the City's five-year strategic plan and its recommendations will be prioritized through conversations with the City Commission. The priorities will be integrated into departmental operations and may include, but not be limited to:

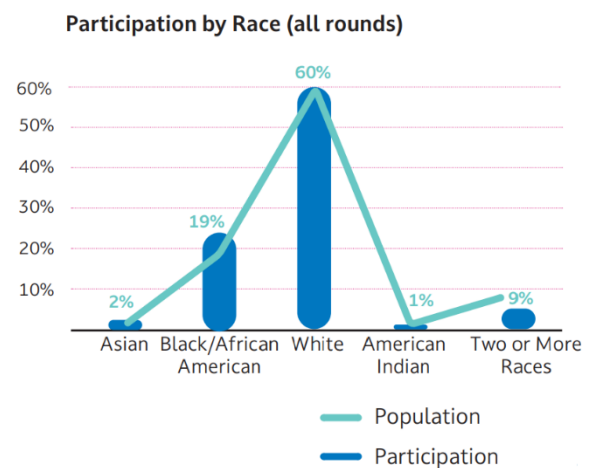
- Annual work programs and budgets
- Development decisions
- Capital plan
- Operational policies
- Economic initiatives
- Private development decisions

## Engagement Process

Bridge to Our Future launched in 2020 with the hiring of twenty paid Neighborhood facilitators as part of a pre-planning phase. The program meaningfully engaged the community to review the 2002 Master Plan to determine what had worked, what did not work, and what needed to change with the next Plan. Facilitators hosted small reoccurring meetings that took the process into the community and special consideration was given to Neighborhoods of Focus and underrepresented communities.

The facilitators succeeded in completing robust engagement with over 90 meetings held and a total of 530 people participating. Importantly, the Black/African American participation was 33% vs a GR Census percentage of 19%, while the Hispanic/Latinx participation was 24% vs a GR Census percentage of 16%. The input and emerging themes gathered from the Facilitator Program informed the request for proposals and the scope of work for hiring the consultant team.

The Bridge to Our Future planning process started in 2022, during which the Mayor appointed a fifty-person Steering Committee that reflected the demographics of the City. The Steering Committee worked tirelessly to provide guidance for the four rounds of public engagement that began in early 2023 and ended in June 2024. Each round built on the last and featured community-wide meetings, usually one in each ward, as well as small meetings in communities hosted by hired Community Connectors and CDBG-funded Neighborhood Organizations. Additionally, each round featured online engagement opportunities. In total, over 4,700 participants were engaged. 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.



## Plan Content

Based on the public engagement and data analysis, the process established the below goals (or chapters) and themes, which are woven throughout the goal recommendations. When implemented, the Plan 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.

### Goals (Chapters)

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.

### *Themes*

1. Equity: Where all residents have access to resources that allow for opportunity, influence, and positive life outcomes no matter their starting point.
2. Safety: Where all people are secure and protected in all communities no matter where they live or come from, or what they look like.
3. Vibrancy: A variety of amenities, including arts, culture, and recreation opportunities, that activate and contribute to the energy of the city year-round.
4. Culture: Traditions and experiences that originate from one's background and lived experiences and can be shared and celebrated with others.
5. Sustainability: Balancing growth, environmental stewardship, and well-being in a way that fulfills current and ongoing needs and opportunities of future generations.

Additionally, as part of the planning process, three Area Specific Plans were created and cover Creston, Butterworth, and the Southtown Neighborhoods.

For more information about the plan content, including the recommendations, please read the draft plan and draft Area Specific Plans included in this agenda packet.

### **Adoption Process and Public Comment**

On July 16, the Planning Commission and City Commission held a joint meeting to receive an introduction to the Plan. Based on the questions and comments received at this meeting and others, the Planning Department put together the Frequently Asked Questions document included in the packet.

Adoption of the City’s Master Plan is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, which sets out a specific process for review and approval. As established in the Act, a minimum 63-day comment period is required before approval.

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft document on August 8, 2024 and voted in support of forwarding the plan to the City Commission for distribution to surrounding jurisdictions, utilities, and other interested parties for review and comment. Additionally, the plan will be publicized with a press release, the project’s email distribution list, on the City’s social media channels, and via the Steering Committee members. If the City Commission approves the release of Bridge to Our Future for public review on August 13, public comment will be taken until October 16, 2024. Correspondence should be directed to:

City of Grand Rapids Planning Department  
1120 Monroe NW, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

or via email at: [planning@grcity.us](mailto:planning@grcity.us)

or via the online form at [bridgetoourfuture.com](https://bridgetoourfuture.com)

Below is the tentative review/adoption schedule for the plan:

August 8, 2024:	Presentation of proposed <i>Bridge To Our Future</i> to the City Planning Commission for review and consideration.
August 13, 2024:	Submit and present proposed <i>Bridge To Our Future</i> to the Grand Rapids City Commission for review, comment, and consideration.
August 14, 2024:	If approved by City Commission, <i>Bridge To Our Future</i> document will be officially distributed for a minimum 63-day public review period.
August 22, 2024:	Planning Commission takes a deep dive (1 of 2) in reviewing the plan chapters.
August 27, 2024:	City Commission receives a high-level briefing (1 of 2) on the plan and results of the Planning Commission deep dive.
September 12, 2024:	Planning Commission takes a deep dive (2 of 2) in reviewing the plan chapters.

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| September 24, 2024: | City Commission receives a high-level briefing (2 of 2) on the plan and results of the Planning Commission deep dive. |
| September 26, 2024: | Planning Commission receives a summary of comments received to date (tentative).                                      |
| October 10, 2024:   | Planning Commission receives a summary of comments received to date (tentative).                                      |
| October 16, 2024:   | Date the required 63-day comment period ends.   |
| October 24, 2024:   | Planning Commission holds their public hearing.   |
| November 12, 2024:  | City Commission sets the date for their public hearing.   |
| November 19, 2024:  | City Commission holds their public hearing.   |
| December 3, 2024:   | City Commission reviews final draft and votes to accept, modify, or reject.   |
| December 17, 2024:  | City Commission reviews final draft and votes to accept, modify, or reject (if needed).                               |

Your COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE recommends adoption of the following resolution accepting the Bridge to Our Future and directing the Secretary of the Planning Commission to distribute said Plan for review and comment as specified in Act 33 of 2008, as amended.

WHEREAS:

1. The City 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; and
2. The City desires to create a Community Master plan that builds community pride and defines a long-range vision for the future, typically 20 years; and
3. The City Planning Commission is designated to lead and recommend to the City Commission any Master Plan or amendment to Master Plans in accordance with MCL 125.3801 under Act 33 of 2008, as amended; and
4. The Planning Commission with guidance from a fifty-person Steering Committee made up of individuals representing all races, gender, economic status, geography and age, helped to create and conduct robust community engagement and outreach over the course of four years which resulted in over 4,700 participants engaged; and
5. The culmination of that work resulted in a draft Community Master Plan titled Bridge to Our Future and includes three area specific plans for Butterworth, Creston and Southtown; and
6. The draft plan is ready for public review and comment by all who wish to be heard.

RESOLVED:

1. That the City Commission hereby accepts the draft Community Master Plan called the *Bridge to Our Future*; and
2. That the City Commission welcomes all citizens to review and comment on the Bridge to Our Future to assure their voices are heard; and
3. The City Commission hereby directs staff to make the draft Bridge to Our Future available for public review and public comment; and
4. That the City Commission hereby directs the Secretary of the Planning Commission to submit a copy of the draft *Bridge to Our Future* for review and

comment to each of the parties identified in MCL 125.3801 under Act 33 of 2008, as amended.

**CORRECT IN FORM**  
  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAW**