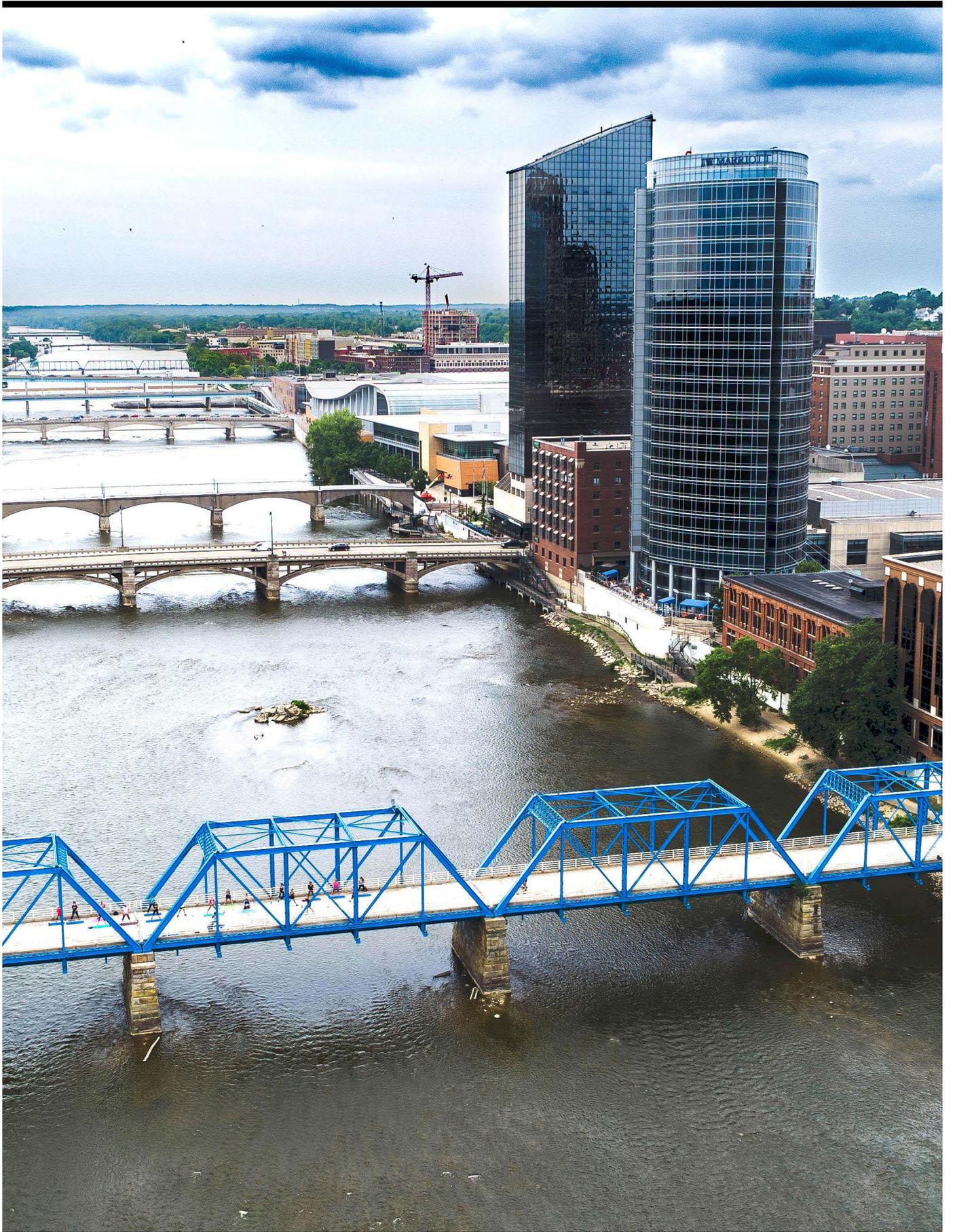


# GRAND RAPIDS

## EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY STRATEGIC PLAN

January 2020





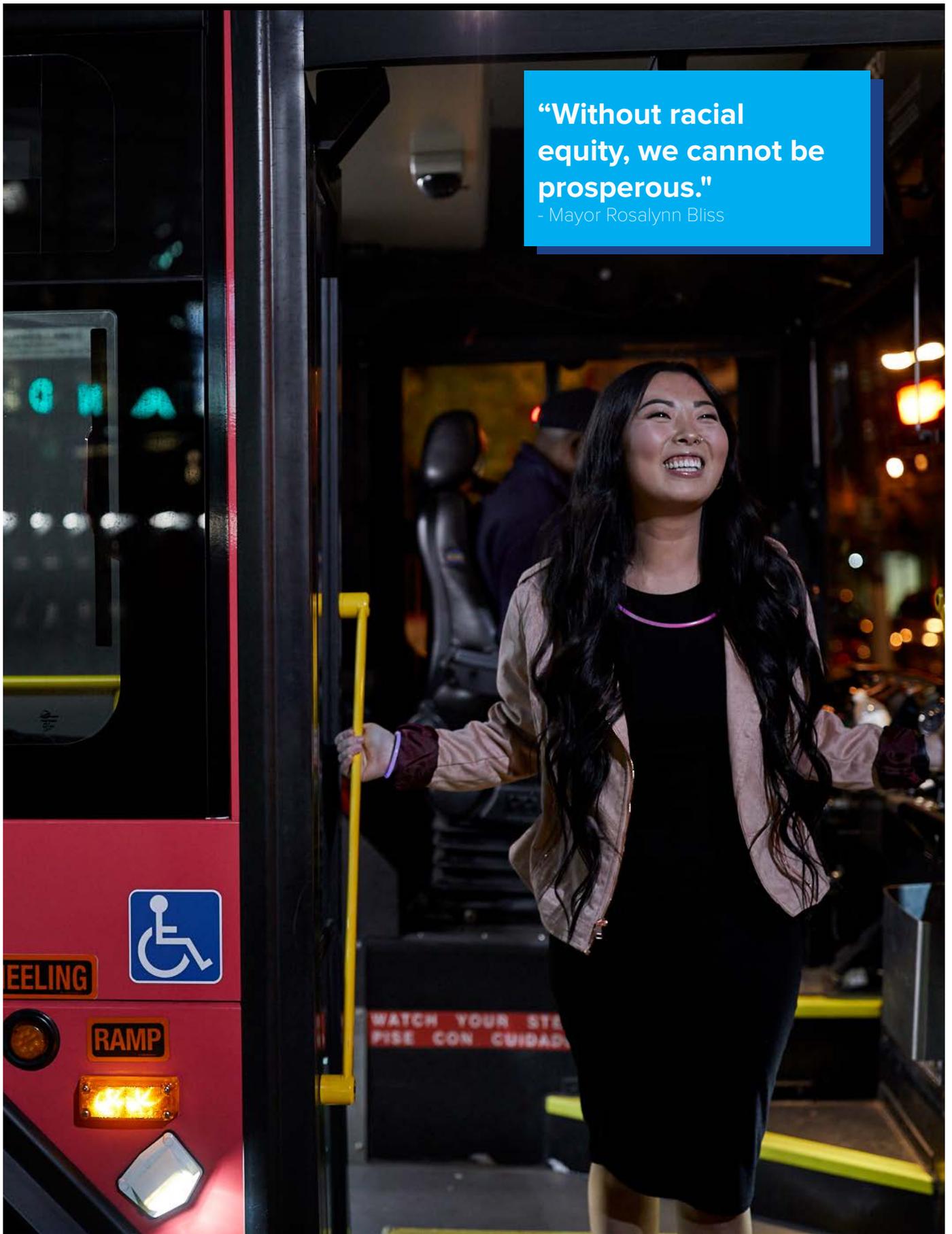
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**“Without racial equity, we cannot be prosperous.”**

- Mayor Rosalynn Bliss



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Grand Rapids Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Plan has been developed by the City of Grand Rapids (the City), with the input of dozens of key stakeholders, community representatives, and partner organizations to identify key priorities and economic opportunities to overcome barriers to mobility and opportunity in Grand Rapids, within the framework of the Economic Development and Mobile GR Departments of the City.

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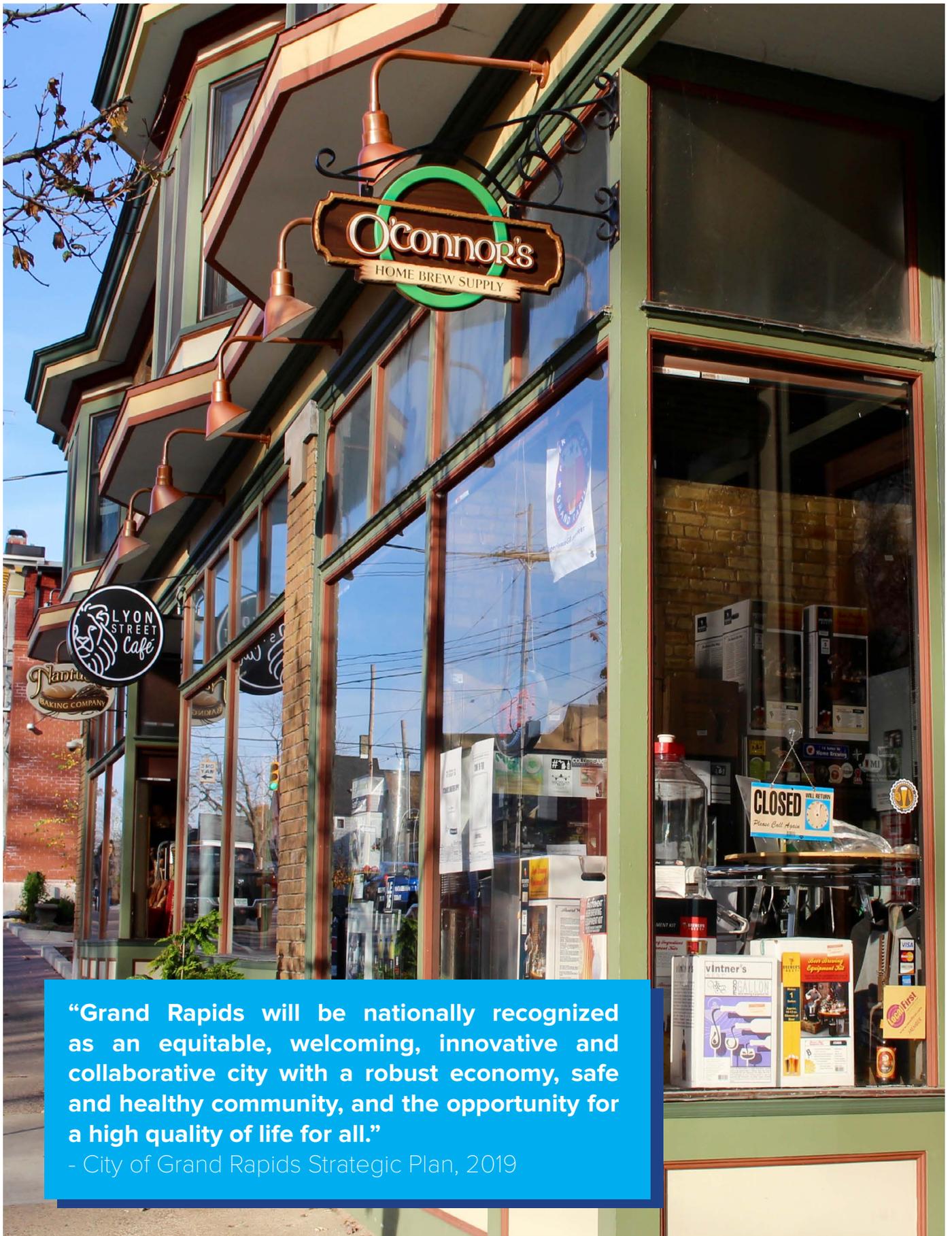
## Steering Committee

The Grand Rapids Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategy was developed in coordination with a Steering Committee of local stakeholders.

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This document was prepared by a Consulting Team led by HR&A Advisors and supported by Nelson/Nygaard and Interboro. The document was designed by Lixia Guo.



**“Grand Rapids will be nationally recognized as an equitable, welcoming, innovative and collaborative city with a robust economy, safe and healthy community, and the opportunity for a high quality of life for all.”**

- City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan, 2019

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Grand Rapids recognizes the need for a bold commitment to equity, and a strategy for economic development and mobility planning that capitalizes on Grand Rapids' advantages while broadening opportunity and targeting initiatives to communities that have been left out of Grand Rapids' economic growth. The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan evaluates current programs and practices through a lens of equity and crafts a community-defined goal for equitable economic development and mobility, as well as a set of actionable strategies that the City is committed to implementing to realize this goal.

The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan will produce:

- **Enhanced tools for the City to communicate, collaborate with partners, and provide information about economic development and mobility practices and opportunities**
- **An equitable economic development scorecard to evaluate and award incentives**
- **New links between incentive programs and the hiring of MWBE and MLBE Contractors**
- **Better resourced Corridor Improvement Authorities**
- **New resources for the City to attract and retain businesses**
- **A parking expansion decision tool**
- **Strategic planning for mobility programs and capital improvements**
- **A pilot transportation demand management incentive program**
- **Increased collaboration and integration between Economic Development and Mobile GR to support inclusive growth**

**Since the recession, Grand Rapids has become one of the fastest growing cities in the Midwest. However, not all Grand Rapids residents benefit from this prosperity.** Neighborhoods of color in Grand Rapids see less private investment, and Black and Hispanic residents have lower incomes compared to White residents. Residents also have unequal access to safe and fast transportation options. While this problem is not unique to Grand Rapids, the impacts of racial disparities are much more pronounced in Grand Rapids compared to other cities. Among the largest 100 cities in the United States, Grand Rapids is ranked 11th for the largest racial generation gap.

The City recognizes that addressing disparities will require a commitment to equity. In 2019, the City released its Strategic Plan, which sets forth a bold vision for the future of Grand Rapids and affirms the City's commitment to ensuring that all residents have access to pathways to financial growth and security, and affordable and safe mobility options.

**Mobility and economic development are closely linked to equity.** Communities need safe, convenient, and affordable transportation options to succeed and thrive economically. Recognizing this link, the Strategic Plan called for the development of an Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan to serve as a roadmap for the City’s efforts to improve mobility, economic growth, and access to opportunity citywide.

The plan contains proactive and targeted strategies that will help the City remove barriers for members of the community who have been left out of Grand Rapids’ economic prosperity. **Strategies in the plan will help Grand Rapids increase the total number of jobs and access to employment for the under- and unemployed; adding transit routes and connecting people to jobs and services; and gathering input**

**from business leaders and historically marginalized voices.**

**Planning Process**

The City of Grand Rapids hired a team of consultants--HR&A Advisors, Nelson\Nygaard and Interboro Partners--to develop the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan. The Consulting Team worked with the City and a Steering Committee of local leaders to evaluate existing conditions and develop strategies. The Consulting Team also conducted a series of focus groups with community members and other stakeholders to review these strategies. The final Plan includes recommendations to guide the City in implementing each strategy.

**Traditional vs. Equitable Approaches to Economic Development and Mobility**

Traditional economic development strategies focus on attracting businesses or growing a city’s job or real estate markets. Equitable economic development adds a focus on the distribution of and access to the benefits generated by this growth. Equitable economic development purposefully and intentionally seeks to leverage tools and resources to increase access to opportunity for all residents.

Similarly, traditional mobility strategies may aim to increase the number of riders on public transportation, or reduce traffic and congestion. Equitable mobility creates safe environments for cars, pedestrians, and bicycles. Equitable mobility also means that residents have access to affordable and safe transportation to travel to work, school, or other services.

**Equitable strategies serve the needs of everyone in the community,** particularly those in under-resourced neighborhoods that have historically been left out of conversations around transportation planning and development.

<b>Traditional Approach</b>	<b>Equitable Approach</b>
Increasing the total number of jobs	Increasing the total number of jobs <b>and access to jobs for low-income populations</b>
Private investment leveraged with public capital	Private investment leveraged with public capital <b>and increasing property ownership among existing residents and businesses</b>
Constructing new transit routes with a focus on Return-on-Investment and efficiency	Constructing new transit routes with a focus on Return-on-Investment and efficiency <b>and focusing on connectivity to jobs and services, as well as a reduction in rider time and cost</b>
Adopting auto-oriented policies that mitigate traffic congestion	Adopting auto-oriented policies that mitigate traffic congestion <b>and addressing health and safety indicators in communities of color</b>
Gathering input from influential city leaders	Gathering input from influential city leaders <b>and public input from businesses, residents, and other stakeholders</b>

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## Overview of Opportunities and Challenges Facing Grand Rapids

The Plan provides an opportunity to build on the existing strengths of Grand Rapids and mitigate challenges and barriers to equitable economic development and mobility. Underpinning the Plan is an assessment of existing conditions in the city, including its demographic and socioeconomic trends, real estate market, economic development practices and entities, and mobility options. **The research confirms that while Grand Rapids is a city on the rise, it also faces significant challenges to equitable economic development and mobility.**

The opportunities and challenges to overcome for Grand Rapids' economy and transportation network include:

**Strong industry growth.** Grand Rapids' economy has grown at nearly double the rate of Michigan and the country. The city's dominant industries and sources of jobs are in manufacturing and health care, and health care and advanced manufacturing industries are projected to grow.

**Economic development ecosystem.** Grand Rapids has a strong residential and office real estate market, and downtown Grand Rapids has grown, in part due to investment and leadership from Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. and the City of Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids also has many local and regional economic development organizations that support existing businesses that work to attract new companies to the area.

**Established network supporting local neighborhood development.** Grand Rapids has a system of locally-governed Corridor Improvement Authorities to plan for and fund improvements in commercial corridors and districts, encouraging economic growth and vibrancy in many of the city's commercial districts.

**Robust mobility network.** 70% of city residents live within a quarter mile of transit service, and over 85 miles of bikeways have been added from 2010 to 2017. Grand Rapids has nearly 20,000 public and commercial parking spaces in Downtown and in neighborhood commercial districts.

**Civic commitment to improving mobility.** Mobility and Safety are two of the six priorities set by the City's Strategic Plan, and Mobile GR is well-positioned to respond to these priorities. The 2014 Vital Streets Funds ballot measure also renewed funding to transportation improvements.

Despite this progress, Grand Rapids' economy and mobility network also face challenges:

**Racial disparities in income, assets, and opportunity.** The growing disparities in income and employment show that more must be done to address fundamental barriers and gaps in access to opportunity.

**Underutilized resources to support equity or economic growth.** The State's incentives administered by the City mainly support real estate development rather than job creation, and Grand Rapids' reliance on partner organizations often results in fragmented or decentralized economic development activities that limit the City's ability to promote equity.

**Barriers to economic participation.** Minority workers are under-represented in sectors that provide higher-wage, entry-level positions with opportunities for advancement, while growing industries such as health care and manufacturing face talent pipeline challenges compounded by high turnover.

**Capacity and organizational challenges.** Capital investments, programming, and staff capacity are behind the rapid pace of development and the need for equitable service delivery.

**Barriers to equitable mobility.** Even for those who have access to transit, limited weekday and weekend evening service hours and wide headways (i.e. time between bus arrivals) leave many areas and individuals under-served by transit, and racial and income disparities persist in ownership of personal vehicles.

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## Goals & Strategic Direction

The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan is aligned with the City's Strategic Plan and seeks to: 1) support economic competitiveness, which is dependent upon more equitable participation in the economy; 2) enhance citywide mobility options and increase safety; and 3) promote inclusive growth and access to City services.



Expand access to opportunity and support economic competitiveness



Enhance citywide mobility and safety



Promote inclusive growth and access to City services



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The Plan identifies objectives and strategies for the City's Economic Development Office and Mobile GR to orient their work toward accomplishing these goals, organized into two interrelated sections:



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ensure that the City's economic development services are accessible and aligned with core City functions to create economic growth and close existing gaps in wealth and prosperity.

Economic Development strategies will address the following objectives:

**Information.** To help overcome the information and social capital gap, make the City a hub of information for accessing services and resources available to the business community.

**Incentives.** To ensure that the City's incentive programs promote inclusive growth and create benefits throughout the city, update the City's approach to deploying incentives to enhance access to opportunity for small businesses and traditionally marginalized communities.

**Small Businesses.** To remove barriers to financial and social capital, use City resources and strategic partnerships to enhance access and opportunity for small businesses and property owners, particularly for minorities and those in neighborhoods of focus.

**Neighborhoods.** To reduce geographic barriers to development and support Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and funding for real estate development in neighborhood business districts.

**Economic Growth.** To ensure the long-term strength of Grand Rapids' economy and its attractiveness to both residents and businesses, continue to promote job creation and high quality of life in Grand Rapids.



## MOBILITY

Help the City create and reinforce innovative, efficient, and equitable mobility solutions that are safe, affordable, and convenient to the community.

Mobility strategies will address the following objectives:

**Alignment.** Align planning and capital investments to support economic development and promote equitable outcomes.

**Transportation Demand Management.** Manage transportation demand by making programs, policies, and incentives more effective.

**Curb Management.** Establish curb management practices that promote City goals.

**Capacity.** Invest in staff and system capacity to meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids residents.

**Asset Management.** Develop an asset management approach that will support the long-term health of the City's mobility networks.

**Communication.** Establish comprehensive communications, engagement, and education programs.

**Strategic Partnerships.** Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships to achieve the City's equitable mobility goals.

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## Priority Near-Term Strategies

The eleven priority strategies have high potential to support the goals of the plan and will be implemented in the near term, within the next twelve months. These are:

### **Economic Development 1.1 | Make the City's economic development services accessible to everyone.**

Gaps in information can make it difficult for businesses and aspiring business owners and entrepreneurs to access valuable resources and services that are available from the City. This is especially true for those who lack prior relationships or familiarity with existing processes. The Economic Development Department will close these gaps by creating a transparent and visible centralized information hub for economic development services, including incentives, programs, and other resources available to the business community. In parallel, the City will streamline its application and review processes for incentives, and work with a communications firm to create materials that clearly outline its updated processes. Impacts include:

- Increase the number of developers, property owners, and businesses participating in economic development programs
- Increase the diversity of participants in City programs, including small developers and business owners of color
- Increase representative participation in economic development boards and authorities

### **Economic Development 2.1 | Design and implement an equitable development scorecard for evaluating, negotiating, and awarding incentives.**

Like many cities, Grand Rapids uses economic incentives to promote real estate and business investment. The City needs a new approach to incentives that focuses on directly linking the use of financial resources to desired outcomes in the community. Incentives should create jobs, support development, support the City's tax base, and advance equity in several targeted ways. An incentive scorecard can help the City use its incentive programs to support equitable development. Impacts include:

- Create and retain high-wage and high-opportunity jobs and ensure residents have access to the jobs
- Support local ownership
- Attract private investment
- Support minority-owned businesses
- Incentivize inclusive business practices
- Incentivize mobility programs

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### **Economic Development 3.3 | Incentivize and support efforts to build the capacity of MBEs, WBEs, and MLBEs.**

Despite efforts to increase contracting opportunities in Grand Rapids for minority-owned, woman-owned, and locally-owned businesses, racial and gender gaps persist in the construction industry. The City will encourage developers participating in City incentive programs to achieve aspirational goals for MBE, WBE, and MLBE participation in their projects. The Economic Development Department will work closely with the City's Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to optimize the City's existing programs and design a robust process to track MBE, WBE, and MLBE participation in City-supported projects. The past performance of incentive applicants against these targets will be used to evaluate future applications for incentive projects. Impacts include:

- Increase the number of MBE, WBE, and MLBE contractors working on City-supported projects, and their share of total project costs
- Build capacity amongst MBE, WBE, and MLBE contractors operating in Grand Rapids
- Support minority and locally-owned businesses and wealth creation

### **Economic Development 4.1 | Expand Corridor Improvement Authority staffing and programs.**

Grand Rapids has six Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) that implement local development initiatives in commercial districts throughout the City. However, these Authorities vary considerably in resources and internal staff support is not sufficient to help them accomplish their objectives. The Economic Development Department will expand the support it offers to CIAs so that they are better able to support the economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, and physical infrastructure of commercial districts, particularly those in neighborhoods of focus. The Department will add a new staff position to enhance the administrative support offered to CIAs, help them navigate City processes, and support them in developing and implementing new initiatives and projects. Impacts include:

- Enhanced levels of public and private investment in commercial districts
- New programming and events to support neighborhood businesses
- Reduced vacancies in neighborhood business districts
- Increased levels of revenues to support CIA activities

**Equitable strategies serve the needs of everyone in the community, particularly those in under-resourced neighborhoods that have historically been left out of conversations around planning and development.**

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### **Economic Development 5.2 | Enhance the success of startups and maturing companies through new funding sources and dedicated facilities**

Though Grand Rapids has services to support entrepreneurs in ideation and early concept development, there are limited facilities and programs to support startups and maturing companies to grow in place in Grand Rapids. To enhance the success of startups and maturing companies, Grand Rapids can use SmartZone to strengthen the local entrepreneurial community and expand access to capital, particularly for minority-owned companies. Impacts include:

- Support the creation of jobs in high-tech and high-growth industries
- Support the entrepreneurial ecosystem through targeted investments that support equitable outcomes

### **Mobility 1.4, 5.1 | Take a proactive and strategic approach to capital and safety investments, prioritizing projects that address safety and equity needs**

Mobile GR needs clear techniques to proactively identify locations of traffic safety concerns. In addition, a new focus on cost-effective investments will improve the impact of safety investments. Mobile GR should lead with a data-driven approach to revise its policies and practices, and provide a clear and comprehensive plan for investment priorities to communicate progress to the Grand Rapids community. Impacts include:

- Reduce annual crashes, including bicycle and pedestrian crashes, citywide and in high-crash areas
- Make transportation safety a factor in all transportation investment projects
- Provide greater investment in capital and safety improvements in areas of high need

### **Mobility 1.7 | Develop a parking expansion decision tool**

The City of Grand Rapids owns a substantial amount of public parking, but parking availability is limited in some neighborhoods. Mobile GR should develop a parking expansion decision tool to inform public investments in new parking. The tool should align decisions with mobility, economic development, and fiscal sustainability goals. Impacts include:

- Improved return on investment from parking improvements due to property value improvements and public capacity created
- Increased utilization of existing and future parking supply
- More efficient use of public dollars invested in parking supply and management
- Added parking capacity in strategic locations

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### **Mobility 6.3 | Implement a comprehensive communication strategy**

Working across disciplines and departments, Mobile GR and its partners should implement a comprehensive communication strategy. The communication strategy should connect the dots between the goals, objectives, strategies, and implementation efforts of the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan. This can help to communicate capacity needs and advance critical partnerships, both internally and externally. It can also increase the community's understanding of issues and resources available. Impacts include:

- Increased provision of public-facing messages and reports on mobility and economic development
- Improved public understanding and feedback from community members related to mobility and economic development policies

### **Mobility 2.5 | Pilot expanded Transportation Demand Management (TDM) incentive programs**

Mobile GR should work with a few employers and service providers to pilot TDM incentive programs. The goal of these pilots will be to increase TDM efforts and develop local best practices. The pilot will customize programs and incentives to address near-term opportunities and should feature collaboration with participating employers and service providers. The City of Grand Rapids should lead by example, as one of the initial program participants, and should solicit participation by other agencies who have a role in providing TDM services. Impacts include:

- Reduce single occupant vehicle trips
- Increase geographic reach of TDM services

## Objectives & Strategies

The Plan identifies twelve objectives and 40 strategies that build from the City's strengths and address challenges to equitable economic development and mobility.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## 1. INFORMATION

To help overcome the information and social capital gap, make the City a hub of information for accessing services and resources available to the business community

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
1.1   Improve the accessibility of the City's economic development services.	Near term (1 year)		Mobility 6.1 – 6.3 (Communication)
1.2   Become a hub for all business development needs.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
1.3   Identify and promote businesses that adopt inclusive practices	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		

## 2. INCENTIVES

To ensure that the City's incentive programs promote inclusive growth and create benefits throughout the city, update the City's approach to deploying incentives to enhance access to opportunity for small businesses and traditionally marginalized communities.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
2.1   Design and implement an equitable development scorecard for evaluating, negotiating, and awarding incentives.	Near term (1 year)		Mobility 1.1 (Alignment), 2.5 (Transportation Demand)
2.2   Empower economic development boards and authorities to support equitable economic development	Near term (1 year)		

### 3. SMALL BUSINESSES

To remove barriers to financial and social capital, use City resources and strategic partnerships to enhance access and opportunity for small businesses and property owners, particularly for minorities and those in neighborhoods of focus.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
3.1   Build upon the successes of the one-year pilot partnership between the City, DGRI, and Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to establish a small business advocate	Long term (3-5 years)	 	
3.2   Incentivize and support efforts to build the capacity of MBEs and WBEs	Near term (1 year)	 	

### 4. NEIGHBORHOODS

To reduce geographic barriers to development and support Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and funding for real estate development in neighborhood business districts.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
4.1   Expand staffing and programs to support CIAs	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	 	Mobility 1.1-1.4 (Alignment), 4.1 (Capacity), 7.1, 7.4 (Strategic Partnerships)
4.2   Increase access to capital in neighborhoods of focus	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	  	
4.3   Develop an integrated public land acquisition and disposition strategy to support neighborhood development without displacement	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	   	Mobility 1.2, 1.5,1.6 (Alignment), 3.2 (Curb Management), 6.1-6.3 (Communication)

### 5. ECONOMIC GROWTH

To ensure the long-term strength of Grand Rapids' economy and its attractiveness to both residents and businesses, continue to promote job creation and high quality of life in Grand Rapids.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
5.1   Support business attraction in priority sectors jointly with economic development partners	Near term (1 year)	 	Mobility 2.1, 2.3 (Transportation Demand Management), 7.1-7.4 (Strategic Partnerships)
5.2   Enhance the success of startups and maturing companies through new funding sources and dedicated facilities	Long Term (3-5 years)		
5.3   Support placemaking and quality of life improvements to make Grand Rapids a destination city.	Long Term (3-5 years)	   	Mobility 1.4 (Alignment), 5.1 (Asset Management)

# MOBILITY OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES

## 1. ALIGNMENT

Align planning and capital investments to support economic development and promote equitable outcomes.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
1.1   Integrate Vision Zero, transportation demand management, and parking priorities into economic development tools and incentives.	Near term (1 year)		Economic Development 1.1 (Information), 2.1 (Incentives)
1.2   Collaborate with the City Planning and Economic Development Departments to align & leverage zoning strategies and policies around mobility goals.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 1.1 (Information)
1.3   Use a Safe Systems Framework.	Near Term (1 year)		Economic Development 4.1 (Neighborhoods), 5.2 (Economic Growth)
1.4   Take a proactive and strategic approach to capital and safety investments, prioritizing projects that address safety and equity needs.	Near term (1 year) and Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
1.5   Increase the use of shared parking management strategies.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Mobility 1.1 – 1.2 (Alignment), Economic Development 1.1 (Information)
1.6   Develop a parking expansion decision tool.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
1.7   Track investment in mobility projects, programs, and services through an equitable mobility dashboard.	Near Term (1 year)		Mobility (Communication), Economic Development (Information)

## 2. TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Manage transportation demand by making programs, policies, and incentives

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
2.1   Work with The Rapid to pursue equity and service goals.	Near term (1 year)		Economic Development 5.1
2.2   Establish a lead TDM provider and coordinator for Grand Rapids.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		
2.3   Expand established services.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1
2.4   Explore new mobility and transportation technologies.	Long Term (3-5 years)		
2.5   Pilot expanded TDM incentive programs.	Near term (1 year)		

## 3. CURB MANAGEMENT

Establish curb management practices that promote City goals.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
3.1   Pursue an incremental approach to modifying on-street parking management and curbside regulations based on data and metrics.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
3.2   Take a proactive approach to curbside management to achieve broader mobility and economic development goals.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)

## 4. CAPACITY

Invest in staff and system capacity to meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
4.1   Align Mobile GR strategies and department capacity.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		

## 5. ASSET MANAGEMENT

Develop an asset management approach that will support the long-term health of the City’s mobility networks.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
5.1   Develop an asset management strategy that specifies and prioritizes safe and accessible walking and bicycling facilities and supports transit investments.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
5.2   Continually assess and evaluate the utilization and conditions of Mobile GR's parking assets.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	  	Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
5.3   Establish a formal transit stop asset management program.	Near term (1 year)	   	Mobility 1.1 – 1.2 (Alignment), Economic Development 2.1 (Incentives)

## 6. COMMUNICATION

Establish comprehensive communications, engagement, and education programs.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
6.1   Commit to the process of engaging community.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	   	Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods), 5.3 (Economic Growth)
6.2   Empower community members to shape the shift to a traffic safety culture.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
6.3   Implement a comprehensive communication strategy.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)	   	Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods), 5.3 (Economic Growth)

## 7. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships to achieve the City’s equitable mobility goals.

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
7.1   Partner with strategically positioned employers, institutions, public agencies and community organizations.	Near Term (1 year)	  	Economic Development 1.2 (Information)
7.2   Collaborate at a regional level to pursue TDM opportunities.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1 (Economic Growth)
7.3   Partner with local agencies and institutions to leverage safe systems improvements.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1 (Economic Growth)





# INTRODUCTION

Coming out of the recession, **Grand Rapids has been one of the fastest growing cities in the Midwest.** Grand Rapids boasts big city amenities – including major economic and institutional anchors like Spectrum Health and Michigan State University; civic, cultural, philanthropic and institutional resources that range from the world’s largest art competition to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum – with small town, community-oriented programming, like the Grand Rapids Asian-Pacific Festival.

However, **not all Grand Rapids residents benefit from this prosperity.** The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan will capitalize on Grand Rapids’ advantages while broadening opportunity and targeting initiatives that have been left out of Grand Rapids’ economic growth.

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## Overview

Over the last ten years, Grand Rapids' economy grew by nearly 25 percent, with the largest gains in the health care and manufacturing industries, and unemployment remains low. Recent public and private investments in entertainment and nightlife, including the highly anticipated opening of Studio Park, a mixed-use development adjacent to Van Andel Arena, further solidify the city's status as a regional destination.

However, not all Grand Rapids residents benefit from this prosperity. Historic racial and geographic disparities in access to economic opportunity or to reliable and safe transportation to good jobs continue to hinder economic mobility in Grand Rapids. While this is problem is not unique to Grand Rapids, the impacts of racial disparities are much more pronounced. Data from 2013 shows that out the country's 52 largest cities, Grand Rapids is the second worst city for economic outcomes for Black Americans, as measured by homeownership, median household income and entrepreneurship or self-employment. The typical Black household in Grand Rapids earns only half as much as the typical White household, and the rate of unemployment is nearly four times as high for Black workers as for White workers.



CAPTION XXXX

## Purpose of the Plan

The City recognizes that addressing economic disparities will require a bold commitment to equity, and a strategy that capitalizes on Grand Rapids’ advantages while broadening opportunity and targeting initiatives to communities that have been left out of Grand Rapids’ economic growth. In 2019, the City released its Strategic Plan, which sets forth a bold vision for the future of Grand Rapids as a “nationally recognized... equitable, welcoming, innovative and collaborative city with a robust economy, safe and healthy community and the opportunity for a high quality of life for all.” In the Strategic Plan, the City stated its commitment to ensuring that all residents have access to pathways to financial growth and security, and affordable and safe mobility options.

The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan represents the City’s next step in its visionary and groundbreaking pursuit of equity. The Plan evaluates current programs and practices through a lens of equity and crafts a community-defined goal for equitable economic development and mobility, as well as a set of actionable strategies the City is committed to implement to realize this goal.

Mobility and economic development are closely linked to inclusive growth. Establishing equitable, affordable, and safe access to transportation ensures that residents can travel safely to work, school and essential services. Mobility also creates safe environments for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles, which in turn supports economic activity in neighborhood business

districts. When communities do not incorporate equitable mobility into an economic development strategy, important benchmarks of economic success, including access to food, critical health services, jobs, and housing suffer. To succeed and thrive economically, communities require safe, convenient, and affordable transportation options to access to these fundamental services.

Recognizing this link, the Strategic Plan called for the development of an Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan to serve as an implementation road map for the City’s efforts to enhance mobility, economic growth, and access to opportunity citywide. This plan requires a distinct approach to economic development and mobility planning, and defined metrics to measure success. Whereas traditional economic development strategies typically focus on business attraction or market growth, and traditional mobility strategies may focus on increasing ridership or reducing congestion, an equitable approach recognizes that these measures are important, but that alone, they cannot define success; rather, success must also be measured by who participates in economic growth and has access to transportation options. Grand Rapids can and should continue to evaluate its success based on metrics that are profit- or outcome-focused, such as increasing tax revenues, but a truly equitable approach also requires serving the best interests of the community, particularly those in under-resourced neighborhoods and communities of color who were historically left out of planning or development conversations.

## Traditional vs Equitable Approach to Economic Development & Mobility

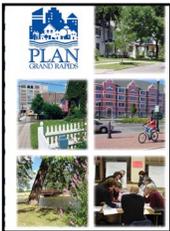
Traditional Approach	Equitable Approach
Increasing the total number of jobs	Increasing the total number of jobs <b>and access to jobs for low-income populations</b>
Private investment leveraged with public capital	Private investment leveraged with public capital <b>and increasing property ownership among existing residents and businesses</b>
Focusing on high school graduation rates	Focusing on high school graduation rates <b>and investing in workforce training for high-tech jobs</b>
Constructing new transit routes with a focus on Return-on-Investment and efficiency	Constructing new transit routes with a focus on Return-on-Investment and efficiency <b>and focusing on connectivity to jobs and services, as well as a reduction in rider time and cost</b>
Adopting auto-oriented policies that mitigate traffic congestion	Adopting new transit policies that mitigate congestion <b>and addressing health and safety indicators in communities of color</b>
Gathering input from influential city leaders	Gathering input from influential city leaders <b>and public input from businesses, residents, and other stakeholders</b>

## Planning Context

The City and its partners advanced several citywide, regional, and neighborhood-based planning initiatives in recent years. Among these, the launch of the Grand Rapids Racial Equity Initiative in 2017 represented a seminal moment in the city's history, underscoring a new commitment by local government to prioritize economic empowerment for all residents in Grand Rapids.

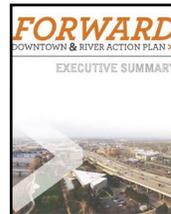
In 2019, the **City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan** took this commitment a step further, articulating a path for incorporating a racial equity lens into all City government activities. The Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan is a direct outgrowth of these commitments; it is rooted in and informed by the number of past plans.

Several documents provided insight into past efforts and the development of this plan.



### City of Grand Rapids Master Plan Summary (2002)

The Master Plan establishes the type, character, and density of development in the community, identifies important natural and cultural resources to protect, and strategizes public investments in streets and infrastructure. The overall goal of the Master Plan is to make Grand Rapids a competitive housing location by providing a range of housing and neighborhood types, improving walkability and coordinating density with transit routes, and blending new development with the existing neighborhood context.



### GR Forward (2015)

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) is the organization responsible for city building and place-management in the urban core of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Partnering with the City of Grand Rapids and its public schools, DGRI facilitated GR Forward, a community investment plan that centers equity and shared vision in its policies and strategies in response to the need for a new and community-driven approach to systematic growth for Downtown and the Grand River corridor. As such, GR Forward represents one of the most extensive and inclusive public engagement processes in the history of Grand Rapids, engaging over 4,400 citizens, businesses, institutions, and stakeholders over 18 months to shape recommendations and develop a shared vision for promoting growth and equity in Downtown, the River, and local schools.



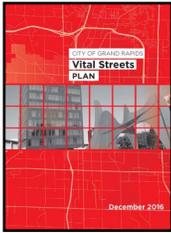
### Great Housing Strategies (2015)

As Grand Rapids' population becomes more diverse, the city recognizes that this growth is also accompanied by rising rates of income inequality and challenges finding affordable, quality housing. In June 2015, the City convened working groups – made up of representatives from government and human service agencies, community advocacy groups, foundations, neighborhood associations and housing developers – to create a strategic framework that addresses Grand Rapids current and future housing challenges. These working groups focused on four topics – Land Use and Zoning; Housing Finance; Economic and Workforce Development; and Low-Income and Vulnerable Populations – and met over a two month process to: a) identify desired housing outcomes and indicators; b) examine existing and potential housing policies, programs and tools; and c) develop recommendations and a plan of action to achieve desired housing outcomes.



### Inclusive Contracting and Procurement Report (2016)

Inclusion efforts in Grand Rapids must comply with the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, passed in 2006, which prohibits race- or gender-based preferences in hiring and contracting decisions by public entities. This report offers recommendations for the City to still advance an equitable contracting and procurement process based on existing constraints and best practices.



### Vital Streets Plan (2016)

Prior to its approval in 2014, roughly half of all streets in Grand Rapids were in poor conditions. After its adoption into the City code, a task force was created to set a vision and metrics for building fair quality streets. The program restores the City's infrastructure by constructing complete streets and is funded by an income tax rate of 0.02%. It includes an engagement portion, where staff go into the community understand what residents want their streets to look like. One of the outcomes from this process are "equity heat maps" which show the greatest areas of need (determined by demographic factors, e.g. poverty) and streets in the worst condition, so that the City can priority these high-need areas first.

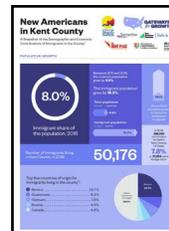
### Rose Center Fellowship Recommendations Memo (2017)

In November 2016, the National League of Cities and the Urban Land Institute selected Grand Rapids as one of four cities to participate in the Rose Center for Public Leadership in Land Use fellowship. Part of this program includes mayors from each city appointing and leading multi-disciplinary teams to develop recommendations on how their city can refine its evaluation and participation in private development to ensure public investment is used to advance public policy goals. This program also includes a short community engagement process, where citizens can offer feedback on the opportunities and constraints facing Grand Rapids.



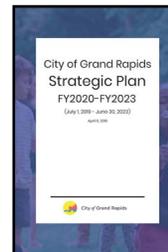
### Align - The Rapid Transit Improvement Plan (2018)

Led by the Interurban Transit Partnership ("the Rapid"), the study identified, analyzed and prioritized a set of transit improvements that would improve the rider experience in Grand Rapids and surrounding communities. Outcomes from the plan include goals to increase ridership, which has plateaued since 2015, and increase transit service in areas that are currently under-served.



### New Americans in Kent County (2018)

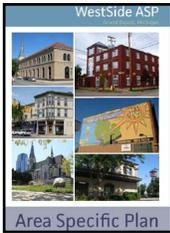
Immigrants represent roughly 10 percent of Kent County's working-age population and account for 24 percent of the total population growth, but they also have a lower rate of homeownership and higher education holders. Supported by a variety of community organizations and the City of Grand Rapids, this comprehensive study provides a snapshot of the demographic and economic contributions of immigrants in the County.



### Grand Rapids Strategic Plan (2019)

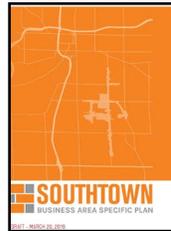
Over a five-month process, the City of Grand Rapids developed its first strategic plan, which will serve as the operating plan for the City to align on initiatives, resources, goals, department operations, projects and investments. The strategic plan outlines the City's core values, six targeted priorities: governmental excellence; economic prosperity and affordability; engaged and connected community; health and environment; mobility; and safe community - and the supporting strategies to accomplish these goals. During this process, the City engaged with over 1,000 City employees through discussions about Grand Rapids' core values and how to create a plan that is both ambitious, but realistically manages the City's current capacities.

In recent years many neighborhoods and corridors developed Area Specific Plans to guide neighborhood development to support community priorities. These plans define neighborhood business district strategies:



### WestSide Area Specific Plan (May 2015)

Recommendations in the WestSide ASP included streetscape and traffic improvements to prioritize pedestrian safety and encouraging mixed use development and transit-oriented development while protecting the historic character of the neighborhoods and business corridors.



### Southtown Business Area Specific Plan (2019)

The Southtown Business Area Specific Plan represented a proactive response to the significant redevelopment occurring across the city. Input from community stakeholders indicated concern for preserving the existing neighborhood character, a greater desire for multi-modal transit options, and priority on affordability, diversity, and local businesses.



### Viva la Avenida - Grandville Avenue Area Specific Plan (2017)

In response to rapid new growth in the Roosevelt Park/Grandville Avenue neighborhood, the Grandville ASP solicited public input to develop key vision statements and actions to make Grandville Avenue more safe, accessible, and walkable while meeting resident needs for increased ownership objectives and affordable housing.



### South Division Corridor Area Specific Plan (2019)

Led by a diverse cross-section of community members, the South Division Corridor Area Specific Plan addresses the area's changing development patterns. The plan recognizes existing community patterns, such as the established Burton Heights commercial area and the possibility of developing new nodes around major Silver Line BRT stops or other assets that could create new opportunities for the community. Recommendations for each Focus Area are intended to be utilized in other parts of the Corridor that share similar characteristics.



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## Goals & Focus Areas

In accordance with the City's Strategic Plan, the goal of the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan is **to support economic competitiveness, enhance citywide mobility and safety, and promote inclusive growth and access to the City's Economic and Mobility services.** The Plan has two sections, an Equitable Economic Development Strategic Plan and an Equitable Mobility Strategic Plan. Each of these sections identifies a set of objectives and strategies for the City's Economic Development Office and Mobile GR to orient their work toward accomplishing this goal.

The two sections set out distinct objectives, but strategies in both sections will support improved outcomes related both to equitable economic development and equitable mobility in Grand Rapids. The strategies in the Equitable Economic Development Strategic Plan will help ensure that the City's economic development services are accessible and aligned with core City functions to create economic growth and close existing gaps in wealth and prosperity, while the Equitable Mobility Strategic Plan will help the City create and reinforce innovative, efficient, and equitable transportation solutions that are safe, affordable, and convenient to the community.

## GOALS



Expand access to opportunity and support economic competitiveness



Enhance citywide mobility and safety



Promote inclusive growth and access to City services

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## OBJECTIVES



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ensure that the City's economic development services are accessible and aligned with core City functions to create economic growth and close existing gaps in wealth and prosperity.

Economic Development strategies will address the following objectives:

**Information.** To help overcome the information and social capital gap, make the City a hub of information for accessing services and resources available to the business community.

**Incentives.** To ensure that the City's incentive programs promote inclusive growth and create benefits throughout the city, update the City's approach to deploying incentives to enhance access to opportunity for small businesses and traditionally marginalized communities.

**Small Businesses.** To remove barriers to financial and social capital, use City resources and strategic partnerships to enhance access and opportunity for small businesses and property owners, particularly for minorities and those in neighborhoods of focus.

**Neighborhoods.** To reduce geographic barriers to development and support Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and funding for real estate development in neighborhood business districts.

**Economic Growth.** To ensure the long-term strength of Grand Rapids' economy and its attractiveness to both residents and businesses, continue to promote job creation and high quality of life in Grand Rapids.



### MOBILITY

Help the City create and reinforce innovative, efficient, and equitable mobility solutions that are safe, affordable, and convenient to the community.

Mobility strategies will address the following objectives:

**Alignment.** Align planning and capital investments to support economic development and promote equitable outcomes.

**Transportation Demand Management.** Manage transportation demand by making programs, policies, and incentives more effective.

**Curb Management.** Establish curb management practices that promote City goals.

**Capacity.** Invest in staff and system capacity to meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids residents.

**Asset Management.** Develop an asset management approach that will support the long-term health of the City's mobility networks.

**Communication.** Establish comprehensive communications, engagement, and education programs.

**Strategic Partnerships.** Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships to achieve the City's equitable mobility goals.





# EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

As Grand Rapids continues to grow and become more diverse, the City has made a commitment to pursue an equitable, actionable economic development strategy designed to bolster the city's economic competitiveness, while also making meaningful progress towards inclusive growth and accessibility. The Equitable Economic Development Strategic Plan builds on work already done to bring an equity focus to the City's work through the Grand Rapids Racial Equity Initiative, a commitment by local government to prioritize economic empowerment for all Grand Rapids residents. This strategy represents a seminal moment in the city's history as it looks to the future, and reflects a larger national discussion about what it really means to create a 21st century city in which opportunities are available to anyone, no matter their race, gender, or age.

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**This Equitable Economic Development Strategic Plan does not eliminate or replace existing policies, but rather identifies revisions to current City practices and new programs** that can complement the existing economic development ecosystem, capitalize on strong economic growth in Grand Rapids, and ensure that the City's economic development activities support growth that reduces racial economic disparities and supports income growth. The City's Economic Development Office will retain its core goals of supporting business development, real estate development, and neighborhood business districts, but will supplement or modify its approach to service delivery and implementation to support economic growth and opportunity for all.

An analysis of existing conditions in Grand Rapids, informed by the City's current economic development practices and previous planning efforts, as well as through primary data analysis of real estate, employment and population trends and preliminary interviews with City staff and partners, confirms that **Grand Rapids is a city on the rise, but it also faces economic and mobility challenges and racial disparities that will test how the City can be successful at facilitating inclusive access to economic opportunity.**

## STRENGTHS

The opportunities for Grand Rapids' economy include:

- **Strong industry growth:** Grand Rapids' economy has grown at nearly double the rate of Michigan and the country. The city's dominant industries and source of jobs are in manufacturing and health care, and health care and advanced manufacturing industries are projected to grow.
- **Economic development ecosystem:** Grand Rapids has a strong residential and office real estate market, and downtown Grand Rapids has grown, in part due to investment and leadership from Downtown Grand Rapids Inc and the City. Grand Rapids also has many local and regional economic development organizations that support existing businesses and work to attract new companies to the area.
- **Established network supporting local neighborhood development:** Grand Rapids has a system of locally-governed Corridor Improvement Authorities to plan for and fund improvements in commercial corridors and districts, encouraging economic growth and vibrancy in many of the city's commercial districts.
- **Civic commitment to improving mobility:** Mobility and Safety are two of the six priorities set by the City's Strategic Plan, and Mobile GR is well-positioned to respond to these priorities. The 2014 Vital Streets Fund ballot measure also renewed funding to transportation improvements.

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## Grand Rapids, the economic engine of Western Michigan.

Over the last ten years, Grand Rapids has recovered from the recession and is now one of the fastest growing Midwestern cities. With 24% job growth from 2010 to 2019, Grand Rapids' economy has grown at nearly double the rate of Michigan and the country. Strong employment growth in the city's core legacy industries of manufacturing and health care has contributed to the strength of the city's economy. The city's economy is largely supported by its diversified industrial and manufacturing sub-sectors. Unlike many Midwestern communities – which were dependent on one or two large factories and suffered the economic consequences when those industries left – Grand Rapids' industrial jobs are spread out among smaller industrial firms. Manufacturing and health care continue to remain the City's two largest employment sectors, although job growth in the next decade is also expected to expand in the area of administrative services.

Grand Rapids has small businesses in diverse industries including retail, health care, and professional and technical services. Small businesses of fewer than 20 employees make up 81% of all establishments. The majority of these have 1 to 4 employees; some of these may be sole-proprietor ventures for real estate or other holdings, but others may be startups with employment growth potential. Businesses with 5 to 19 employees account for approximately one third of all businesses. Compared to Michigan overall, Grand Rapids has a strong presence of small businesses in Professional and Scientific Service industries, which includes many high-tech businesses. Grand Rapids also has a higher proportion of small businesses than the state in religious and civic organizations and finance and insurance, though retail small businesses also make up a large proportion (14%) of Grand Rapids' small businesses.

Within this landscape, high wage jobs are concentrated among three sectors:

### Manufacturing

Grand Rapids has remained a manufacturing hub even as many Midwestern cities have seen this industry decline. Over the last 50 years, manufacturing in the region has expanded from furniture manufacturing to include equipment and machinery manufacturing, food and beverage processing, and other manufacturing industries. Due to this diversity, the city is not dependent on one major employer; the average manufacturing firm size is just 250 employees. At \$71,000, median manufacturing wages remain well above the city's median household income of \$59,000.

### Health Care

Grand Rapids has a sizeable health care industry, supported by a network of nationally-ranked hospitals and research facilities including Mercy Health and Spectrum Health. The health care industry accounts for over 46,000 jobs in Grand Rapids, and employment growth in this industry surpassed the city's overall growth from 2010 to 2019. Spectrum Health, a network of 12 hospitals within the region, is the city's largest employer and Spectrum's services are nationally competitive: Spectrum's Butterworth and Blodgett Campuses and Helen DeVos Children's Hospitals are nationally ranked in pediatric specialties by U.S. News.

By 2029, the health care industry is projected to add another 11,400 jobs, over half of which will be in hospitals. The health care industry is highly concentrated in Grand Rapids, as indicated by high location quotients in both general and specialty hospitals, which signal a high degree of concentration in Grand Rapids as compared to the nation. Health care industries are growing nationally, and Grand Rapids is capturing a large share of that growth.

### Advanced Industry

Many of Grand Rapids' existing strengths are aligned with the Brookings Institution's Advanced Industries Sector, a list of industries that employ many Research & Development and STEM workers. This includes manufacturing industries such as motor vehicle parts manufacturing, machinery manufacturing, and medical equipment manufacturing, as well as professional services industries like consulting and computer systems design. Local employers in these sectors include Gill, Viant, Dorner-Works, Ranir, Van Andel Institute, and Firstonic. Employment projections indicate that advanced scientific and manufacturing industries are an emerging area of growth for Grand Rapids. The City can leverage its legacy in manufacturing and health care to support existing biomedical industries and can nurture growth to build specialization in these high-tech manufacturing industries.

In the next ten years, Grand Rapids is projected to add almost 19,000 jobs. Of these, 11,400 will be in the health care industry, primarily due to employment growth in the city's hospitals. Another 14% will be in administrative services. While food and beverage manufacturing and some more advanced industries like electrical equipment and component manufacturing are expected to grow, traditional manufacturing employment drivers including furniture and equipment manufacturing may decline. Manufacturing employment overall is thus expected to decline slightly over the next decade.

## GRAND RAPIDS' ECONOMY BY THE NUMBERS

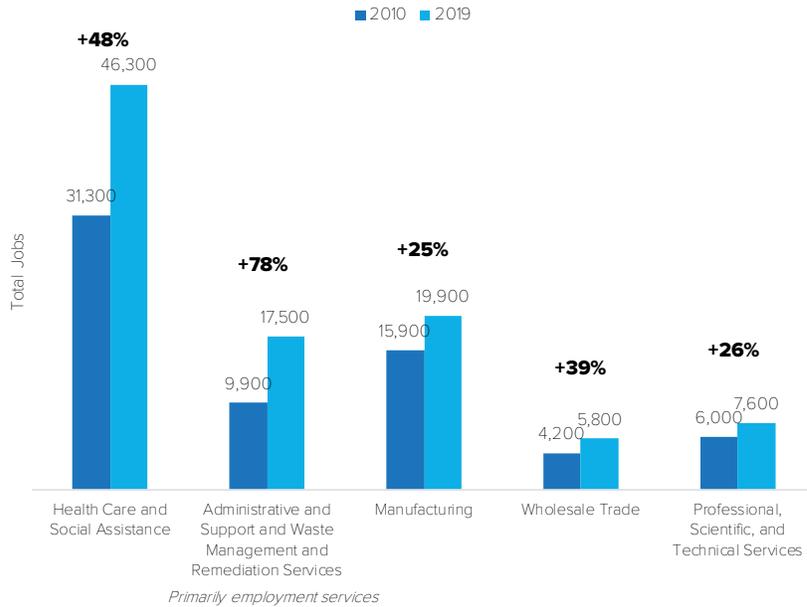
**29th**  
Best-Performing City in  
the U.S.

**38,300**  
Jobs Added  
(2010-2019)

**2.9%**  
Regional Unemployment  
April 2019

**24%**  
Job Growth  
(2010-2019)

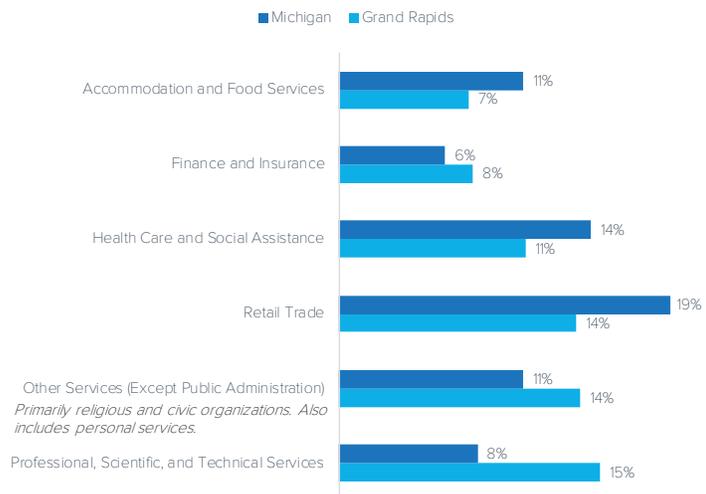
### Grand Rapids Job Growth, 2010-2019



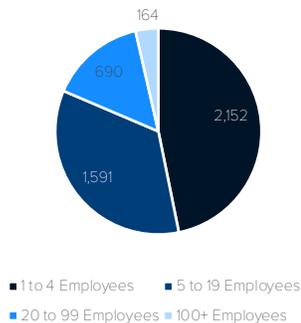
**1,600**  
Businesses with 5-19 Employees

**81%**  
Establishments in Grand Rapids with <20 Employees

### Small Businesses\* by Industry in Grand Rapids and Michigan, 2014



### Grand Rapids Businesses by Establishment Size, 2014



Source(s): Social Explorer - U.S. Business Patterns

\*Businesses with fewer than 20 employees

## A vibrant, growing tech and innovation hub.

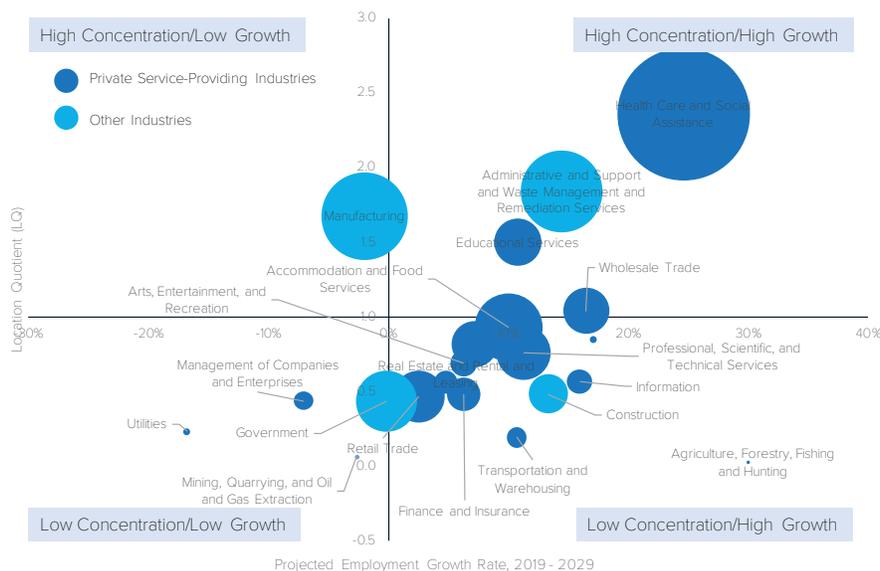
As the largest city in the region, Grand Rapids is the center for exploring new technologies and investing in innovative research in Western Michigan. A West Michigan Entrepreneurial study from the Michigan Venture Capital Association revealed that West Michigan experienced a 20 percent increase in the number of startups from 2014 to 2017, and half of all startups that have received venture capital funding represent life science companies. While Grand Rapids' growth continues in its legacy industries, the city is also becoming a regional center for innovation, entrepreneurship and commercialization, supported by local entrepreneurial organizations such as Start Garden. Grand Rapids has programs that support high-tech startups through ideation, and the city's SmartZone provides an opportunity to build this emerging innovation hub into a full ecosystem of support for tech sector entrepreneurs.

Grand Rapids' civic, cultural, philanthropic and institutional resources support and attract employers, while the City has also worked to create the type of business environment that specifically excites young entrepreneurs and tech companies. Innovative projects and partnerships include the Grand Rapids Autonomous Mobility Initiative, a public-private partnership between the City and nine Michigan-based companies, and Michigan State University's partnership with Health Innovation Partners to create a medical innovation building in downtown Grand Rapids. Grand Rapids' strength in supporting innovation has helped anchor Western Michigan as the second strongest region in the state behind Detroit for new startups.

Within the manufacturing sector, firms continue to innovate. In 2017, INRAD and MediSurge, two Grand Rapids based medical device companies partnered together to expand their line of products and develop new systems to increase efficiencies. Steelcase, one of Grand Rapids' oldest companies and the largest office furniture manufacturer in the world, leads conversations about workplace design and functionality, which they pilot at their global headquarters. This innovation extends to the craft brewing industry. Often referred to as Beer City USA, the Western Michigan region is home to over 60 breweries. Recent partnerships include local hops growers working with Michigan State University to create a training program that supports young entrepreneurs interested in starting their own farm or brewery.

Projections for 2029 indicate that advanced scientific and manufacturing industries may be an emerging area of growth for Grand Rapids, and that the City can leverage its legacy in manufacturing and health care to support existing biomedical industries and nurture growth to build specialization in these high-tech manufacturing industries. With a location quotient of 3.0, Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing is highly concentrated in Grand Rapids, while projected growth in other advanced sectors includes Scientific Research and Development Services (79%), Other Information Services (60%), Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing (31%), and Computer Systems Design and Related Services (17%).

## GRAND RAPIDS' INDUSTRY LOCATION QUOTIENT<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Location quotient (LQ) is a way to quantify how concentrated a specific industry is in a city and/or region as compared to the nation. An LQ greater than 1 signifies that the city or region has a higher concentration than the United States within a specific industry.

## A robust economic development policy toolkit supported by regional development organizations.

Grand Rapids’ strong real estate development and business environment is largely supported by the City’s toolkit of development programs and incentives. Existing economic development programs administered through the City’s Economic Development Office, and include the Brownfield Redevelopment Program, Neighborhood Enterprise Zones, and Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption. From 2014 to 2018, Grand Rapids allocated over \$200 million in public investments to over 100 projects, resulting in 8,000 new and retained jobs, 2,400 new housing units, and \$4.9 million in new annual taxes. The City also identified the need to understand and visualize economic inequity, which led to the creation of an interactive Economic Opportunity Dashboard on the City’s website. The dashboard identifies metrics such as wages and jobs supported by City investment and incentives by different geographies, including Census tracts, neighborhoods of focus, and wards. This tool provides public-facing information about the impact of the City’s economic development programs and incentives in the larger geographic and socioeconomic context of economic equity in Grand Rapids.

A network of local economic development authorities support economic development in Grand Rapids, including Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs), Downtown, Grand Rapids, Inc. (DGRI), and the SmartZone Local Development Finance Authority (SmartZone). These authorities leverage mechanisms such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support local development. In recent years, many of the city’s CIAs have led engagement and planning efforts to ensure that future growth is consistent with community values.

In addition to the City’s economic development programs, Grand Rapids benefits from an ecosystem of statewide, regional, and local economic development organizations that provide business attraction and retention services. Grand Rapids’ regional partners in economic development organizations include the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and The Right Place. The Grand Rapids Chamber and other business associations provide services and support to established businesses, while organizations like Start Garden support the city’s emerging technology and innovation cluster by providing business development services to local entrepreneurs.

## Grand Rapids’ Economic Development Organization Ecosystem

### MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is public-private partnership agency between the State and over 100 economic development partners. MEDC provides economic development services and programs that attract and retain talent in Michigan.



The Western Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce provides professional support and advisory services to Hispanic-owned businesses and connects the Hispanic community to local employers.



For over 30 years, the Right Place is a public-private partnership of Western Michigan cities and employers that provides economic development and business services to companies within the region. This support includes investing in a work-talent strategy to support training programs and connect workers with local employees.



The Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses (GRABB) provides economic and business development through capacity-building, trainings and educational services to support for the city’s black community.

### GRAND RAPIDS CHAMBER

The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce provides resources and support to over 2,400 businesses in Western Michigan. The Chamber provides support in three different areas – business services; talent development; and advocacy and government affairs.



Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) is the City’s development partner, and is responsible for city building and place-management in the urban core of Grand Rapids.

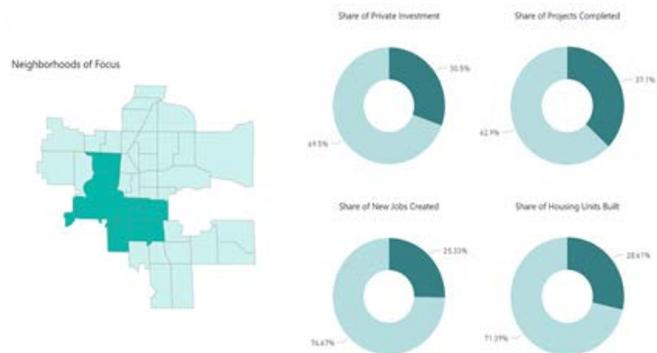
### City of Grand Rapids Economic Opportunity Dashboard & Neighborhoods of Focus

Over the last ten years, the Kellogg Foundation has invested more than \$30 million to develop infrastructure that will increase access to employment and career pathways within 17 census tracts that have the lowest economic outcomes - including the highest concentration of poverty and unemployment - in the entire Western Michigan region. Residents of these communities, now known as “neighborhoods of focus,” are disproportionately people of color. Funding through various grants has allowed these communities to start addressing racial inequalities, including access to affordable housing, maternal and infant health, food security, and lead poisoning in children.

#### Investment in Wards, 2012-2017



#### Investment in Neighborhoods of Focus, 2012-2017



### Big city amenities with small town feel.

Downtown has become a center for growth, fueled by strategic investment and leadership from DGRI and the City of Grand Rapids. DGRI has been a vital factor in the growth and revitalization of Grand Rapids’ central business district. Established in 2013, DGRI is the City’s development partner in managing the Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Improvement District, and Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority. In FY 2018, DGRI raised \$6.6M in tax increment revenues, leveraged nearly \$140 million in private investment for real estate projects, delivered 350+ new housing units, and established an affordable housing fund.

With its thriving Downtown, Grand Rapids has both “big city” cultural assets and neighborhood-oriented retail and events. As the largest city in the region, Grand Rapids’ civic, cultural,

philanthropic and institutional resources support and attract employers. Grand Rapids is home to the world’s first LEED-certified art museum, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, and ArtPrize, the world’s largest art competition. In addition, Grand Rapids has a strong cultural identity as “Beer City USA” with many well-known breweries that draw visitors and residents. The City has a diverse range of festivals celebrating the cultures of its residents, and neighborhoods have street fairs, outdoor arts events and other cultural amenities. The City’s range of cultural amenities enable Grand Rapids to market itself as a forward-thinking, culturally significant city.

## CHALLENGES

Despite the city's progress, Grand Rapids' economy also face challenges:

- **Racial disparities in income, assets, and opportunity.** The growing disparities in income and employment show that more must be done to address fundamental barriers and gaps in access to opportunity.
- **Underutilized resources to support equity or economic growth.** The State incentives administered by the City mainly support real estate development rather than job creation, and Grand Rapids' reliance on partner organizations often results in fragmented or decentralized economic development activities that limit the City's ability to promote equity.
- **Barriers to economic participation.** Minority workers are often under-represented in sectors that provide higher-wage, entry-level positions with opportunities for advancement, while growing industries such as health care and manufacturing face talent pipeline challenges compounded by high turnover.
- **Capacity and organizational challenges.** Capital investments, programming, and staff capacity are behind the rapid pace of development and the need for equitable service delivery.
- **Barriers to equitable mobility.** Even for those that have access to transit, limited weekday and weekend evening service hours and wide headways (i.e. time between bus arrivals) leave many areas and individuals underserved by transit, and racial and income disparities persist in ownership of personal vehicles.

### A Tale of Two Cities.

Although the Grand Rapids region is growing at a strong pace, economic benefits are often unequally distributed. While Grand Rapids' overall economy is growing, real wage growth for most employees has declined since 2010, echoing larger national trends. Since 2010, the largest job growth has been in industries with average wages significantly below the city's median income of \$59,000, including jobs in Administrative Services (\$27,100) and Accommodation and Food Services (\$20,600). 73% of the projected jobs in administrative services (12,841) are in Temporary Help Services, which may indicate that some job growth in other industries will be staffed through temporary staffing agencies. While manufacturing and health care are still the city's dominant industries, manufacturing employment is expected to decline over the next decade while jobs with lower wages in the service industry are expected to increase.

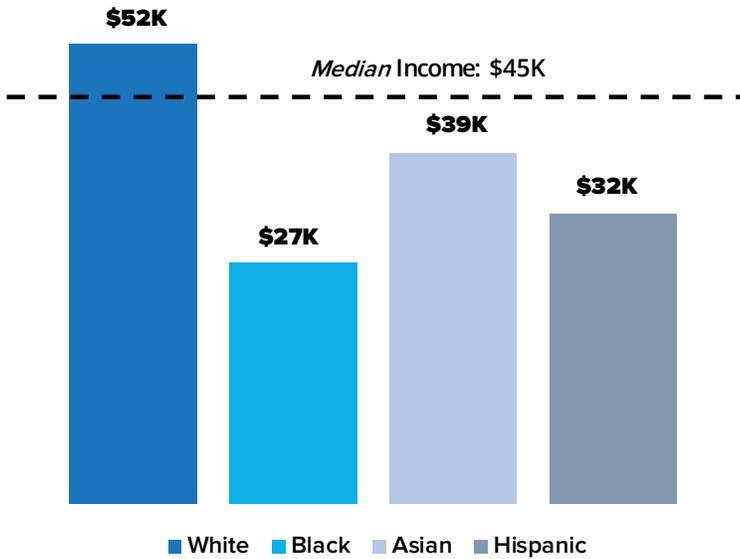
When adjusted for inflation, average earnings for all workers in Grand Rapids have decreased by 4% since 2010, while wages for the top earners have increased by roughly 7%. This has led to a growing disparity between higher-wage earners in professional services positions, and those in traditionally blue-collar industries. The city's recent growth is also accompa-

nied by rising rents, homeownership costs and a decline in the available supply of affordable housing units. The chronic issues facing Grand Rapids are compounded by the rising cost of living, further widening the economic gap and impeding shared prosperity.

Where someone lives is often one of the largest factors in determining economic opportunity and mobility in Grand Rapids. Economic mobility or access to opportunity within Grand Rapids is often limited to a resident's zip code or census tract, which is closely interlinked with race.

While the City and its partners have worked to address these challenges, racial disparities still exist within communities of color. Although the overall median household income in the city is \$45,000, Black and Hispanic households earn \$27,000-\$39,000, or barely half of the median income for White households (\$52,000). With lower incomes and higher unemployment than White households, households of color continue to rent and do not reach the same levels of homeownership as White households. While 81% of White households are homeowners, homeownership is only 11% for Black Households and 7% for Hispanic households.

### Household Income by Race in Grand Rapids (2019)



### Homeownership by Race in Grand Rapids (2017)

White	81%
Black	11%
Hispanic	7%
Asian	1%
Kent County Overall	50%

**Existing structural and financial barriers limit the availability of capital for many small businesses and property owners,** especially those located in neighborhoods of focus. Historically, minority communities have faced structural barriers preventing them from accessing capital in the form of business loans and venture capital to conduct business. The legacy of historical inequities persists in effect due to traditional underwriting practices, which rely on factors such as credit rating and property assessments to evaluate risk and make lending decisions. Conversations with traditional lenders in Grand Rapids confirm that lenders feel that loans to small business owners with limited credit histories or in neighborhoods perceived as “blighted” or with limited property value growth are too risky and do not “belong” on traditional balance sheets. Small Business Administration (SBA) loans are meant to help small businesses overcome these barriers by offering flexible terms and lower up-front capital requirements. SBA loans may be able to help some small businesses in Grand Rapids access loans for improvements or working capital, but the information gap may limit businesses ability to access these funds. However, traditional underwriting may still view many small businesses as too risky even for this more flexible product. This ultimately constrains the ability of many business owners to grow successful businesses.

**For both small businesses and entrepreneurs of color, lack of access to capital creates a significant barrier to success.** Although people of color start businesses at rates similar to Whites, Black and Latino-owned businesses are typically small-

er, less profitable, and less likely to survive than White businesses, as Black and Hispanic/Latino business owners are more likely to be denied financing or be charged higher interest rates due to a lack of capital. Only 1% of venture capital-funded start-ups in the United States are founded by Black entrepreneurs. Grand Rapids representatives reported similar trends locally. Despite efforts at inclusive contracting, minority communities have not been included in contracting opportunities from the development boom in Grand Rapids. According to the City’s inclusive contracting and procurement report, when MWBEs participation is disaggregated, the participation rate for Black subcontractors in 2015 was nonexistent. Further discussion with Minority and Black contractors indicated that the construction workforce is not growing and the recession had a deeper impact on the smaller Black contractors.

While the City has some organizations to support minority businesses in Grand Rapids such as the Black and Hispanic Chambers of Commerce and SpringGR, these communities still face barriers in access to resources and capital essential to their survival and success. Minority-owned businesses also have not accessed programs intended to support economic development, in part due to the legacies of historic exclusion. Compounding challenges include bureaucratic processes for seeking help and unclear points of contact within the City, as well as a lack of access to business and management training and education in minority communities. The City does not have a system to be held accountable for addressing these dispari-

ties, as the last disparity study was conducted in 2006. Real estate disparities further compound existing inequalities. This is particularly pronounced in the dichotomy between a growing market for development in downtown and the varying market conditions in the City’s neighborhood business districts. The majority of projects in recent years have been focused in and around downtown and were funded by public initiatives, including the Brownfield Redevelopment Program and Neighborhood Enterprise Zones. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) administered by Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) is meant to provide resources for neighborhood development, but the current TIF revenue of the city’s existing CIAs varies significantly, and many CIAs still have limited funding to support development projects, and/or have not developed robust programming in this area.

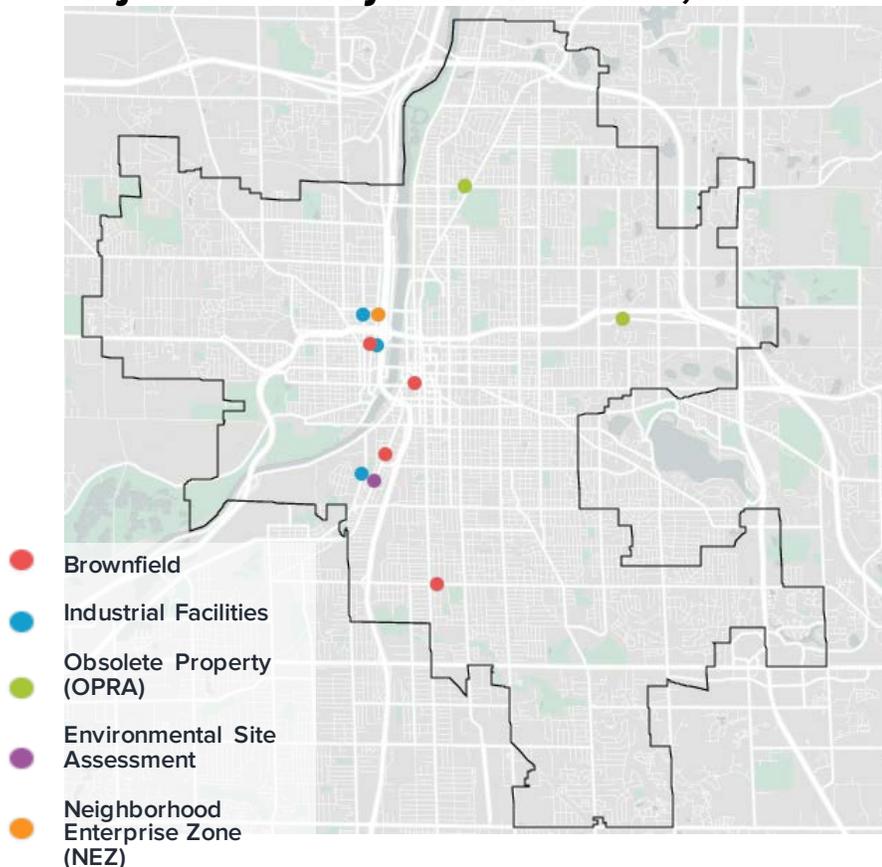
While Grand Rapids offers public incentives to encourage development, the toolkit’s emphasis on real estate limits the activities the City can undertake to further economic development goals such as job creation. In addition, **incentives are not used to support projects in a way that provides clear public benefits aligned with the City’s strategic goals.** Best

practices for incentives typically call for incentive projects to pass a “but for” test, indicating that a project would not advance without public incentives. Though Grand Rapids’ incentives are discretionary, historically they have been viewed and provided as “by-right” or entitlements to developers, and are generally accessed by those who are well-connected and well-equipped to take advantage of the programs offered by the City. Grand Rapids has therefore **not been proactive at ensuring that programs deliver specific public benefits, and that programs are available to a wide range of potential investors.**

Although the City has more recently attracted investment from several national development groups, Grand Rapids’ development community has primarily been dominated by a few large developers. This means that **the City primarily provides public incentives to a small group of developers who know how to navigate the City’s processes and access incentives, with little required from the City in terms of training, education, or outreach.** The majority of this development takes place downtown, rather than in neighborhoods of focus.

Relationships are crucial to accessing services and opportunities in Grand Rapids and perpetuate the “tale of two cities”

### Projects Funded by Public Incentives, 2018



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distinction. Traditional networks of relationships and social capital benefit those already well connected to City leadership and staff, local developers, business owners, and community organizations. The reliance on social capital in the business community and the City government is complicated by a lack of clear and accessible information about City regulations, services, and roles. This results in a system where those with social capital, typically wealthy White residents, can easily access services or economic opportunities in Grand Rapids, while many of the City's lower-income and minority residents, have difficulty accessing resources to make property improvements, access business services, and navigate City processes. The social capital gap also extends to businesses outside Grand Rapids, which may limit the City's ability to attract outside investment.

Inequities in access to safe and speedy transportation options also hampers inclusive economic growth. In Grand Rapids, the opportunity cost of these gaps has been well-documented by recent research and community initiatives. For instance, neighborhoods of focus have a higher instance of households without access to a vehicle, and because robust alternative transportation is not available, this can make access to jobs challenging. Accessibility is a key component of closing the gaps and providing opportunities to populations who have been left out of the City's historic and recent growth.

The relationship between each of these barriers can often create a chain reaction that perpetuates negative outcomes for Grand Rapids residents. For example, an unemployed resident living in a neighborhood of focus may not have access to a variety of professional and personal contacts to help them search for a job, or access to a personal vehicle. When the resident eventually hears of a job opportunity, the interview could be as much as an hour away via public transportation, when driving would take less than 25 minutes.

### Disparities in Funding and Organization

The City lacks case management, technical assistance, and streamlined processes to remove barriers for small businesses. As a result, the process for obtaining permits and approvals from the City's Development Center and other offices is complex and difficult to navigate. These challenges are complicated by the social capital gap; business owners and property owners with relationships and social capital within City government have an easier time navigating the Development Center and accessing business development services. The recently created City Ombudsperson position is intended to address this challenge for real estate development processes, but the City lacks the capacity to provide proactive support to small

businesses who lack the information and resources to successfully access business development services from the City and its partners.

Disparities in funding and staffing capacity among the City's Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) also compromise the ability for the districts to equally support neighborhood and business development. Grand Rapids' CIAs differ in their capacity to support development and provide services, due to differences in revenue between CIAs. While all CIAs leverage funding through size, the revenue generated by each TIF varies based on its location, age, and local market conditions. Additional disparities exist due to a lack of representation and capacity in Neighborhood Associations. Some CIAs have the resources to hire staff and to proactively influence development, while others have no association representation or staff. CIAs with fewer resources are compromised in their ability to execute projects and support business development in their corridors. The City lacks the staff capacity, a clearly defined strategy and comprehensive toolkit to support CIA activities.

**Accessibility is a key component of closing the gaps and providing opportunities to populations who have been left out of the City's historic and recent growth.**

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## Strategic Direction

The objectives and strategies below provide an approach for Grand Rapids' Economic Development Office to support equitable economic growth. While successful economic development relies on strong partnerships across public, private, and nonprofit partners, this plan focuses on specific actions that the City of Grand Rapids' Economic Development Office will take to enhance the impact and inclusiveness of its programs and practices.

The strategic direction is informed by the strengths and challenges in Grand Rapids economy. Grand Rapids has been successful at supporting economic growth, and should continue to implement its existing programs that support employment and development in the City. The strategies detailed below are structured to help leverage the City's growth to create greater access to opportunity, to support wage growth for workers in Grand Rapids, to promote growth in areas that the City has not previously focused on, and to ensure that the City is working to reduce barriers to equitable economic opportunity. The strategies are organized around five objectives:

- 1. Information.** To help overcome the information and social capital gap, make the City a hub of information for accessing services and resources available to the business community.
- 2. Incentives.** To ensure that the City's incentive programs promote inclusive growth and create benefits throughout the city, update the City's approach to deploying incentives to enhance access to opportunity for small businesses and traditionally marginalized communities.
- 3. Small Businesses.** To remove barriers to financial and social capital, use City resources and strategic partnerships to enhance access and opportunity for small businesses and property owners, particularly for minorities and those in neighborhoods of focus.
- 4. Neighborhoods.** To reduce geographic barriers to development and support Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and funding for real estate development in neighborhood business districts.
- 5. Economic Growth.** To ensure the long-term strength of Grand Rapids' economy and its attractiveness to both residents and businesses, continue to promote job creation and high quality of life in Grand Rapids.

For each objective, the plan identifies the potential impacts and measurable outcomes associated with successful implementation. For each strategy, the plan identifies which economic development and mobility focus areas the strategy most closely supports, relevant corresponding strategies from the City Strategic Plan, the timeframe in which implementation can be achieved, and the mechanism of each strategy (whether it represents a new resource, policy, or staff need, or a revision to an existing practice). In addition, the plan identifies the potential impacts and metrics to track the success of implementation.





# OBJECTIVE 1

## Description

To help overcome the information and social capital gap, make the City a hub of information for accessing services and resources available to the business community.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Access to economic development programs through the City and its partners can be difficult due to gaps in information and the strong reliance on relationships within Grand Rapids. The City has an opportunity to reduce the information and social capital gap and help businesses access services by becoming a hub of information. Proactive outreach and communication will help ensure that businesses and neighborhoods that have historically had barriers to access City services are increasingly able to benefit from available economic development programs.

## Outcomes

- Increased diversity of developers and property owners accessing City incentive programs to spur development in new areas of the City
- Increased use of business services provided by organizations in the City's economic development ecosystem
- Improved long-term success of small businesses, particularly in neighborhoods of focus
- Increased median household income and minority median household income
- Increased City income tax revenue

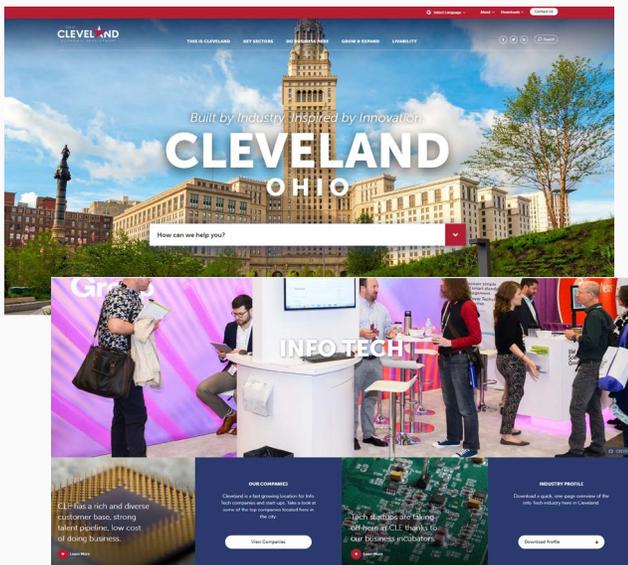
# INFORMATION

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
1.1   Improve the accessibility of the City's economic development services.	Near term (1 year)	 	Mobility 6.1 – 6.3 (Communication)
1.2   Become a hub for all business development needs.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
1.3   Identify and promote businesses that adopt inclusive practices	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		

## CASE STUDY

### Cleveland Citywide Development Corporation Web Site



Economic development in Cleveland is handled by both municipal and private sector organizations. The Cleveland Citywide Development Corporation (CCDA) is a quasi-public entity that provides the City of Cleveland with economic development support through its business attraction services. The CCDA has an easy to navigate website that includes helpful information, including labor force data and resources for the City's key industry sectors. Incentives and financing are two of the primary ways the City attracts businesses. CCDA provides detailed information about city, county and state incentive programs. Each program includes a brief description that translates complex loan terms and eligibility into short sentences that communicate important pieces of information, and a link to contact the City for more information.

# STRATEGY 1.1



## Improve the accessibility of the City's economic development services

**Description** Provide centralized information on available incentives from the City and its partners. Streamline the City's application and review processes, and create materials that clearly outline these processes.

- Implementation**
- 1. Gather & Organize Information**
    - Review the information currently available on the City's website and printed materials for accuracy, completeness, and accessibility.
    - Review the City's application and review processes for potential barriers to accessibility and revise practices as needed.
    - Conduct outreach to the City's economic development partners to gather information related to existing incentive programs, including eligibility, application processes, and funding available.
  - 2. Launch Revised Incentive Information Hub**
    - Provide clear information about available programs and incentives including eligibility requirements, available funding, and application processes. This should be undertaken in coordination with Strategy 1.2.
    - Work with a communications firm to develop informational materials.
  - 3. Promote New Informational Resources**
    - Conduct public outreach proactively to promote awareness of available incentives in coordination with Strategy 1.2.
  - 4. Simplify and standardize information across various applications and programs**
    - Develop a simplified online application process that is standardized across application types to the extent possible.
    - Develop printed and digital information that can be used and distributed by partners, and kept at strategic locations across the City.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice  
New Resource or Policy

**Timeframe** Near-term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Multiple stakeholders reported an information and social capital gap that limits the accessibility of incentives to those not already familiar with the City's programs, particularly developers from outside Grand Rapids or smaller developers. This limits competitiveness and access to opportunity in Grand Rapids' real estate market.

Increasing the accessibility of the City's economic development programs and other incentives available in Grand Rapids will help support economic growth and ensure that a greater diversity of businesses and developers are able to take advantage of available incentives and services, by reducing the importance of prior relationships or familiarity with existing processes.

- Metrics**
- Number of developers, property owners, or businesses receiving incentives, and number of first-time recipients
  - Number of minority participants in City programs, including small developers, and business owners of color
  - Rate of representative participation in economic development boards and authorities

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Governmental Excellence Objective 1, Strategy 5  
Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 1, Strategy 2  
Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 1, Strategy 3

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# STRATEGY 1.2



## Become a hub for all business development needs

**Description** Develop a centralized list of programs offered by nonprofits and local partners to support businesses of all sizes. Conduct outreach with partner organizations to build the City's knowledge and ability to provide referrals for businesses of all sizes to access relevant services.

- Implementation**
- 1. Gather & Organize Information**
    - Conduct outreach to partner organizations and compile a comprehensive list of available services and programs to support business development, including: entrepreneurship programs; small business assistance programs; Small Business Administration (SBA) lenders; financial counselors; and workforce development organizations. Note the services provided and industry focus of each partner organization as relevant.
    - Develop a plan for regular review and updates to partner information.
  - 2. Launch Revised Business Services Information Hub**
    - Provide clear information about available programs so that business owners can easily identify potential resources. This should be undertaken in coordination with Strategy 1.1.
    - Provide referrals as appropriate to business owners seeking City assistance who might benefit from programs available at partner organizations.
    - Work with a communications firm to develop informational materials.
  - 3. Promote New Informational Resources**
    - Conduct public outreach proactively to promote awareness of available business services in coordination with Strategy 1.1.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy      **Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1 – 3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Despite Grand Rapids' robust ecosystem of economic development and business service providers, stakeholders report a lack of knowledge or clarity about what services are available or which programs may best suit their needs. Increasing the accessibility of the business services in Grand Rapids by providing a centralized and navigable list of services will help support economic growth by connecting both large and small employers with tools to find and train employees, access capital, and receive technical assistance.

- Metrics**
- Number of referrals provided
  - Utilization of business services provided by the City and its partners

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 1, Strategy 3  
Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 3, Strategy 3

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# STRATEGY 1.3



## Identify and promote businesses that adopt inclusive practices

**Description** Develop a list of preferred lenders and other businesses that have committed to providing services to overcome barriers to access.

**Implementation** **1. Define Standards for Preferred Businesses**

- Working with business representatives and community organizations, define a set of standards or commitments to eliminating barriers to access desirable in Grand Rapids' business community. Identify the level of performance required for businesses to meet these standards.
- Standards may include: businesses that pursue supplier diversity programs, adopt inclusionary hiring practices, commit to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for hiring managers and supervisors, provide job training opportunities, or meet wage and benefit standards; lenders with flexible and affordable capital products for individuals or businesses with historic barriers to accessing capital; or developers that have committed to building the capacity of small and minority-owned contractors.

**2. Incentivize and Promote Preferred Businesses**

- Identify lenders, developers, and other businesses that have met defined standards.
- Work with a communications firm to promote these businesses on the City's website as partners in supporting equitable economic development.
- Maintain and promote a list of "Good for Grand Rapids" businesses that have met defined standards

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy      **Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1 – 3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Culture change in the private sector, through the adoption of inclusive business practices, is crucial to Grand Rapids' success in achieving equitable economic development. By highlighting equitable practices and successes of its business partners, the City can provide greater visibility to efforts undertaken by the private sector, while providing an inducement for other businesses to adopt inclusive practices.

**Metrics** • Number of businesses identified as partners in equitable economic development.



# OBJECTIVE 2

## Description

To ensure that the City's incentive programs promote inclusive growth and create benefits citywide, update the City's approach to deploying incentives to enhance access to opportunity for small businesses and traditionally marginalized communities.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Though Grand Rapids' incentives are discretionary, historically they have been viewed and provided as "by-right" and are generally accessed by those who are connected and have experience navigating the City's processes. The City has begun to align its use of incentives with its goal of promoting equity by instituting an equity dashboard to track the impacts of projects that receive incentives, but can do more to ensure that City incentives not only enhance development feasibility but also explicitly address barriers to access to opportunity. The City can change the way it uses its incentives toolkit to ensure that projects that receive support also provide public benefits that advance the City's goals, and to encourage developers and employers to adopt equitable practices.

## Outcomes

- Development supported in new areas of the City
- Increased public impact and fiscal return generated by the City's incentive programs
- Increased median household income and minority median household income
- Increased City income tax revenue

# INCENTIVES

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
2.1   Design and implement an equitable development scorecard for evaluating, negotiating, and awarding incentives.	Near term (1 year)	  	Mobility 1.1 (Alignment), 2.5 (Transportation Demand)
2.2   Empower economic development boards and authorities to support equitable economic development	Near term (1 year)	  	

## CASE STUDY

### Indianapolis Inclusive Growth Strategy



Despite growth and low unemployment in Indianapolis, racial disparities persist in access to opportunity. As part of its mission to expand access to opportunity and encourage inclusive growth in Indianapolis, the Indy Chamber worked with the City to revised the Tax Abatement Program—the City’s most widely used incentive—to ensure alignment with inclusive growth priorities by asking more of employers and recognizing companies that create positive impacts in the community. The revised program streamlines the application process to make it more business-friendly and establishes baseline requirements for companies to receive incentives including a wage floor, health care benefits, return-on-investment (ROI) and community impacts. The existing scoring matrix was also modified to weigh inclusive priorities such as local hiring, location, and use of MBEs to evaluate incentive awards, and creates tiers of incentive awards so that projects that score higher qualify for longer abatements. The Indy Chamber is also working with the City and other partners to develop a Community Impact Network to continue engaging with businesses to build support for initiatives including workforce development, inclusive hiring, access to transit and health care, and investment in underserved communities. The Indy Chamber and the Mayor of Indianapolis announced the revised roadmap for economic development in July, 2019.

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# STRATEGY 2.1



Design and implement an equitable development scorecard for evaluating, negotiating, and awarding incentives.

**Description** To increase the potential to support the City’s equity and growth goals using incentives, define target public benefits such as:

- **Job Creation and Retention Paired with Hiring and Compensation Practices**, including local hiring, inclusive hiring practices such as eliminating drug testing or providing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) training to recruiters, meeting wage or benefits thresholds, employee benefits in the form of subsidized public transit passes or other mobility programs that align with the City’s TDM strategies), or training and advancement opportunities; or
- **Inclusive Real Estate Development Practices**, including MWBE contracting and supplier diversity, displacement mitigation practices, working with entrepreneurial support organizations (ESOs) to allow local small businesses to occupy retail space, or transit system improvements.

Design a scorecard that establishes baseline expectations for projects receiving incentives and aspirational “opt-in” benefits. Make high-scoring projects eligible for higher levels of support (e.g. longer terms). Ensure the successful implementation of the scorecard by proactively communicating the City’s new policy to developers, employers, and economic development partners, and increase requirements and standards for incentives over time.

To view the Scorecard, go to Appendix A.

**Implementation** 1. **Establish Scoring Criteria**

- Review and refine preliminary scorecard to reflect the City’s preferred baseline requirements and incentive levels, in coordination with Mobility Strategy 1.1.
- Conduct early outreach and conversations with the development community, businesses, and the public to inform the design of the scorecard.
- Adopt the scorecard as official City policy for all incentive programs.

2. **Communicate New Policies**

- Proactively communicate the City’s new incentive policy to developers, employers, and economic development partners.
- Work with incentives applicants to identify opportunities to increase scoring and encourage equitable outcomes of projects receiving incentives.
- Conduct ongoing outreach and conversations with the development community, businesses, and the public to inform the implementation and future revisions to the scorecard.

3. **Review Impacts and Revise Practices**

- Track metrics of success and incorporate equity outputs into reporting on the impact of incentives.
- Highlight successful programs developed by incentive recipients to increase inclusivity and mobility, such as inclusive hiring or supplier diversity programs, in coordination with Strategy 1.3.
- Raise participation and impact over time by increasing the minimum criteria or score required to qualify for City incentives and revising scoring criteria to reach higher targets.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy      **Timeframe** Near-term (within 1 year)

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**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Grand Rapids' incentive programs promote investment in real estate and business expansion, but typically benefit those who are already well-connected to City services. A new approach to reviewing and scoring incentives that puts equitable economic development at the forefront and provides deeper incentives to projects that do more to advance equitable economic growth would give the City a mechanism to ensure that its incentives are deployed to advance both traditional and equitable economic development goals.

- Metrics**
- Number of developments incorporating Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies into their projects
  - New and retained jobs, including jobs paying a living wage and offering a pathway to career advancement or with high ALICE wage
  - Ratio of public to private investment (leverage)
  - Percent of public and private development dollars paid to minority-owned business enterprises
  - Number of employers or developers adopting inclusive hiring and EDI training programs, employee mobility programs, or supplier diversity programs

**City Strategic Plan Alignment**

Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 2, Strategy 1  
Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 3, Strategy 4

## CASE STUDY

### Austin Firm-Based Incentive Matrix

In 2004, the Austin City Council passed a resolution to use an equity assessment tool across all city departments to address inequities in existing policies. The tool evaluates the racial impact of all policies and practices in city departments. The City evaluates tax abatement deals using a firm-based matrix on a variety of factors related to citywide inclusion goals. To qualify for an abatement, firms must locate in a desired development zone and comply with environmental regulations; projects are then scored on qualitative factors related to public priorities including linkages to the local economy, local hiring, workforce training, and contributions to cultural vitality and quality of life. Projects must meet a minimum score to qualify for an abatement, with the level of abatement awarded dependent on the score. The matrix uses a tiered system to award incentives based on project's evaluation in the above categories, with higher scores associated with greater sales/property tax abatements. Through a City Council resolution, the City updated its evaluation matrix in 2013 to provide bonus points on additional inclusivity categories, including the placement of economically disadvantaged workers, ex-offenders, and Austin residents in new full-time jobs, programs encouraging alternative modes of transportation, and on-site day care facilities. The City has reported a 239 percent return on investment from the incentives provided to Austin-based companies.







# OBJECTIVE 3

## Description

To remove barriers to financial and social capital, use City resources and strategic partnerships to enhance access and opportunity for small businesses and property owners, particularly for minorities and those in neighborhoods of focus.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Providing resources for small business owners, particularly in communities of color, can be an important tool for building strong neighborhoods and closing the asset gap. Small businesses are businesses in any sector with fewer than 100 employees. Further, supporting entrepreneurship in innovative and high-tech sectors is an important tool for economic growth and competitiveness. In Grand Rapids, stakeholders report that many small business owners, particularly people of color, face interrelated challenges due to lack of social capital, lack of information, and lack of access to capital; it can be difficult for business owners to navigate City processes, access additional business development services, and secure traditional financing to invest in business growth. Stakeholders involved in the startup ecosystem indicate that there are gaps in the services available to high-tech entrepreneurs. Grand Rapids has an opportunity to use City resources and strategic partnerships to provide support to small businesses and entrepreneurs, with a focus on helping minority business owners overcome barriers to access.

## Outcomes

- Increased median household income and minority median household income
- Increased City income tax revenue
- Increased employment in high-tech, high-growth industries

# SMALL BUSINESS

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
3.1   Build upon the successes of the one-year pilot partnership between the City, DGRI, and Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to establish a small business advocate	Long term (3-5 years)	 	
3.2   Incentivize and support efforts to build the capacity of MBEs and WBEs	Near term (1 year)	 	

## CASE STUDY

### St. Louis Development Corporation Minority Business Development Services



The St. Louis Development Corporation (SLDC) works to promote business opportunities for and the capacities of minority and woman owned enterprises, and to eliminate barriers for equal opportunity for MBEs and WBEs in the marketplace. Core business services of the SLDC include assisting with the M/WBE certification process, business expansion strategies, technical and business consulting, business incentives, and trainings. As part of its M/WBE business expansion strategies, the SLDC offers services including a Contractor Loan Fund, Online Plan Room, and Global Project Tracking System (GPTS) Training. The Plan Room portal provides fast, easy access to construction bid and job opportunities for M/WBEs to view drawings, order prints, upload files, and more, while the GPTS training offers two hour sessions for subcontractors working on projects incentivized by the City. Established in 2015, the \$10.5 million Contractor Loan Fund makes below market rate construction and expansion loans of up to \$1 million to eligible M/WBEs. In 2016, the Contractor Loan Fund approved 11 loans for a total of \$2.8 million, and closed eight loans totaling \$1.5 million in commitments, while more than \$10 billion in projects were in the pipeline over the next 10 to 15 years.

# STRATEGY 3.1



Build upon the successes of the one-year pilot partnership between the City, DGRI, and Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to establish a small business advocate

**Description** Build on effective aspects of the one-year pilot partnership between the City, DGRI, and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to create a small business advocate position within the Chamber or City government. The role of the advocate will be to help small businesses successfully navigate City services and to provide information and referrals about services provided by partner organizations. Distinct from the City's recently-created Development Center Ombudsperson position, the purpose of this position will be to provide proactive outreach to small businesses, advocate and serve as a resource to access services within City government, and provide guidance and referrals to needed business services in coordination with Strategy 1.2, in order to help small businesses, particularly businesses owned by people of color or located in neighborhoods of focus, overcome barriers including the social capital gap, and become a driver of economic growth and neighborhood business district development.

- Implementation**
- 1. Evaluate Pilot Successes**
    - Evaluate the one-year pilot contract with the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce and identify successful aspects for replication.
  - 2. Create a Small Business Advocate Positions**
    - Develop a job description for a small business advocate to help small business owners successfully navigate Development Services, Economic Development and other City and partner-provided services.
    - Hire a staff person to serve as a small business advocate within the Chamber or City government.
  - 3. Proactively Provide Services to Small Businesses**
    - Work with partners in neighborhood business districts to conduct outreach to business owners in coordination with Strategy 1.1.
    - Establish regular hours for drop-in small business services in neighborhood business districts.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy  
New Staff

**Timeframe** Long Term (3 to 5 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Small business owners in Grand Rapids report that accessing permitting, approvals, and other City services can be challenging, and case management is lacking, different City departments do not always collaborate to address issues on the timeframe desired by applicants. Dedicating a small business advocate to serve a case management and advocacy role, and to connect small businesses with other available services outside the City, can help lower the transaction costs of starting or growing a small business in Grand Rapids.

- Metrics**
- Number of new small businesses
  - Small businesses served by zip code
  - Small business employment
  - Ground floor vacancy rates by business district

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 1, Strategy 5

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## CASE STUDIES

### REACH King County

A free business service program operated by the Seattle Metro Chamber, the REACH (Retention, Expansion, and Collaboration Hub) King County program provides business development services to any business in King County. Services include one-on-one consultation with business owners to identify urgent needs, centralized information and services to help navigate regulations and local processes, and referrals and networking assistance to help businesses access resources, services, and financial assistance.



### NYC Small Business Services Small Business Advocates

To help New York City's small businesses navigate government and cut through red tape, NYC Small Business Advocates work one-on-one with businesses to help them start, operate, and grow their businesses without delay. Small Business Advocates help businesses understand and follow key City rules and requirements to avoid fines and violations, connect businesses to government agencies to acquire necessary permits and licenses, coordinate plan reviews and inspections from City and State agencies, and help businesses resolve City violations. NYC Small Business Services also recently launched Black Entrepreneurs NYC, which is a first-of-its-kind model in a major American city to help create equitable opportunities for Black business owners. SBS is working together with community leaders, local organizations and Black entrepreneurs to help launch and scale more Black-owned businesses across the five boroughs. To inform the development of these programs, the City is encouraging Black entrepreneurs to share their voice in an online survey. From 2014 to 2017, Small Business Services has reduced small business fines by 40%, visited 870 businesses, and nearly doubled the percentage of the value of City contracts awarded to MWBEs.

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# STRATEGY 3.2



## Incentivize and support efforts to build the capacity of MBEs and WBEs

**Description** Increase the capacity and utilization of minority-owned contractors. Develop a protocol to work with developers to establish aspirational goals for MBE, WBE, and MLBE participation for projects receiving City incentives and to make plans to meet these targets, track MBE and WBE participation, and provide reports following project development. Increase targets over time and use past performance to evaluate future applications for incentive projects.

**City Strategic Plan Sample** The City's protocol for requiring MBE and WBE participation plans should be developed with the following parameters in mind:

- **Target participation.** Set separate targets for MBE and WBE participation. The City should establish ambitious overall targets (for example 20% MBE participation and 4% WBE participation) and work with developers to set appropriate targets for each project. Increase targets over time.
- **Require outreach documentation.** Developers or general contractors should document efforts to conduct outreach and contract with MWBEs. The City can use this documentation to identify trades where capacity building efforts should be focused, in partnership with trade associations. The City should provide guidelines for suggested efforts at outreach, including using resources developed as part of Strategy 1.3.
- **Capacity building programs.** To ensure the success of each project in meeting its targets, developers and general contractors should identify programs they have or can provide to help MWBEs build capacity by using purchasing power to negotiate favorable materials pricing, implementing joint-check agreements or shared bonding, or any other means.
- **Reporting.** Developers should provide reports throughout construction on utilization and payment of subcontractors.
- **Track record.** Use past developer performance in meeting MWBE goals to evaluate future applications for incentives.

- Implementation**
- 1. Design New Policy**
    - Conduct early outreach to developers, contractors, and trade organizations to solicit input on the design of parameters and protocols.
    - Develop a protocol to work with developers to establish and meet MBE, WBE, and MLBE participation goals.
    - Set ambitious parameters for MBE, WBE, MLBE participation in construction projects receiving real estate development incentives.
    - Begin setting targets for new incentive projects.
    - Work with the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to optimize the Equal Business Opportunity program to support the City's goal of increasing MBE, WBE, MLBE participation in City-supported development.
  - 2. Communicate New Policy**
    - Communicate the City's new approach to developers and work with the development community to implement the new policy.
  - 3. Review Impacts and Revise Practices**
    - Track participation and impacts on incentive projects.
    - Continue to review and refine the policy based on initial results.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

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**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Despite efforts to increase inclusive contracting in Grand Rapids, racial and gender disparities exist in construction trades. By incentivizing developers and contractors to make real effort at setting and meeting contracting targets, the City can increase the impacts of its ongoing efforts to support diversification and inclusive contracting.

**Metrics**

- Percent of construction dollars on projects receiving incentives awarded to MBEs, WBEs, and Micro-LBEs
- MBE and WBE participation on projects receiving City incentives (percent of total project cost)
- Number of MBE and WBE firms contracted on incentive projects

**City Strategic Plan**

Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 2, Strategy 3

## CASE STUDIES

### City of Bridgeport, CT Tax Incentive Development Program

The City of Bridgeport's Office of Planning and Economic Development offers tax abatements, assessment deferrals, or payments in lieu of taxes to property owners who use minority contracting for property improvements. To be eligible for the incentive, developers must show full inclusion of minority representation in the procurement of development contracts for each project seeking benefit, and shall undertake affirmative action measures to involve minority contractors in the construction of projects receiving tax incentives. In the event that twenty percent of the dollar value of total construction costs is not awarded to minority or women-owned contracting businesses, program participants are required to demonstrate an extensive search for minority contractors has taken place for project elements which have been contracted.



### City of Chicago Tax Increment Financing Requirements

For projects receiving tax increment financing assistance from the City of Chicago, applicants are required to submit an affidavit acknowledging the developer's knowledge and acceptance of the City's requirements regarding the use of Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) and Women Business Enterprises (WBEs). Minimum participation requirements for the pre-development and construction of projects are at least 24% participation by MBEs and at least 4% by WBEs. Applicants for TIF funding are requested to submit a project budget as well as an MBE/WBE budget showing the distribution of total project costs to participating MBE and WBE contractors. This commitment is formalized through a redevelopment agreement between the developer and the City. The City's TIF funding application provides a list of MBEs and WBEs with contact information.

# OBJECTIVE 4

## Description

To reduce geographic barriers to development and support Grand Rapids' neighborhoods, provide technical assistance and funding for real estate development in neighborhood business districts.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

As Grand Rapids' neighborhood business districts have grown and seen increasing investment, there is a rising concern about displacement and the need to build community ownership. At the same time, many neighborhoods still have limited property value growth, and need near-term support for businesses and property owners paired with longer-term strategies to limit displacement. Grand Rapids has six Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs) that leverage Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funding to implement local development initiatives in neighborhood business districts, but these vary in resources and staffing, and the City needs additional capacity to support CIA activities. Through coordinated efforts to support CIAs and neighborhood development in neighborhood business districts, Grand Rapids can meet its goal to preserve and enhance the physical infrastructure, cultural vibrancy, and economic prosperity of the City's neighborhood business districts.

## Outcomes

- Increased occupancy in CIAs
- Increased TIF revenue for all Corridor Improvement Authorities
- Neighborhood support for development communicated through engagement and letters of support from community organizations

# NEIGHBORHOODS

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
4.1   Expand staffing and programs to support CIAs	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	 	Mobility 1.1-1.4 (Alignment), 4.1 (Capacity), 7.1, 7.4 (Strategic Partnerships)
4.2   Increase access to capital in neighborhoods of focus	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	  	
4.3   Develop an integrated public land acquisition and disposition strategy to support neighborhood development without displacement	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	   	Mobility 1.2, 1.5, 1.6 (Alignment), 3.2 (Curb Management), 6.1-6.3 (Communication)

## CASE STUDY

### Chicago Neighborhood Opportunity Fund

In 2016, the City of Chicago reformed its Zoning Code to ensure that growth occurring downtown would result in equitable development outcomes throughout the city. This change capitalizes on new development in and around Chicago's downtown to create a Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, which supports business and real estate development along commercial corridors in under-resourced neighborhoods on Chicago's West, Southwest and South Sides. Funds for the program come from the city's Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus, which allows developers in downtown properties to increase density in exchange for voluntary payments. The program provides grants up to \$250,000 for business and property owners to help pay for new construction, development or rehabilitation of real estate, and supports projects that support new or expanding businesses or cultural assets. Larger awards are available subject to City Council approval. Since the first grant awards were made in 2017, the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund has awarded over 180 grants totaling more than \$46.5 million.



**BEFORE**

**AFTER**

# STRATEGY 4.1



## Expand staffing and programs to support CIAs

**Description** Expand the City’s staff capacity by adding staff capacity and redefining the role of the liaisons for CIAs to include additional responsibilities such as accessing city services, navigating approvals, and pursuing neighborhood development projects. Provide strategic guidance and coordinated support for CIA activities. Develop a toolkit that defines CIA capacities, resources, and enumerates some potential projects such as a commercial improvement matching grant or a streetscape improvement program in coordination with the City’s Vision Zero strategies. Facilitate best practice sharing and help to replicate successful projects between CIAs.

- Implementation**
- 1. Add an additional CIA Liaison Position with Revised Scope of Work**
    - Revise job description for a CIA Liaison focused on providing technical assistance to CIAs, acting as a liaison between CIAs and other City departments, and replicating successful programs across CIAs.
    - Hire additional staff to serve as CIA Liaisons.
  - 2. Provide Technical Assistance to Build CIA Capacity and Impacts**
    - Clearly define CIA roles and responsibilities relative to City roles and responsibilities, in coordination with Strategy 2.2.
    - Provides guidance and education to CIAs on how to spend Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds to enhance property values and increase revenue streams.
    - Develop a CIA toolkit that identifies types of projects that CIAs can pursue alone or in partnership with the City, such as streetscape improvements, pedestrian safety enhancements, façade improvement programs, community events, and public arts programs.
    - Develop programming and capacity in CIAs, particularly in Neighborhoods of Focus, to provide low-cost retail space for new or expanding businesses.
  - 3. Identify Opportunities for Ongoing Partnership**
    - Conduct ongoing outreach with CIAs and neighborhood businesses to identify opportunities for collaboration and best practice sharing.
    - Evaluate potential projects to be undertaken by the City or in partnership with CIAs to support development in Neighborhood Business Districts, such as infrastructure improvements or the acquisition or disposition of public land in coordination with Strategy 4.3.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice  
New Staff

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Grand Rapids’ CIAs can provide important local services to support neighborhood business districts, but some CIAs have limited revenue and capacity to provide programs. The Economic Development Office currently lacks the capacity to fully support its CIAs, which limits their effectiveness. Dedicating additional staff capacity to provide guidance, help access City services, and support programming will increase the impact of the City’s CIAs, advance Vision Zero goals, and increase TIF revenue to support additional development.

- Metrics**
- TIF revenue by CIA
  - Public and private investment in commercial districts
  - Number of customers for retailers and small businesses
  - Vacancy rates in neighborhood business districts
  - Funds spent by program
  - Metrics related to CIA programs, e.g. commercial square footage improved, pounds of litter collected, number of events held

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 5, Strategy 5

# STRATEGY 4.2



## Increase access to capital in neighborhoods of focus

**Description** Increase access to capital in neighborhoods of focus by dedicating funding for commercial development in the form of a neighborhood development capital fund or small business loan fund.

- Implementation**
- 1. Identify Partners and Design New Program**
    - Evaluate the effectiveness of pilot Third Ward Equity programs over the next year and identify opportunities to expand or adapt successful programs into new neighborhoods.
    - Identify sources of funding for a neighborhood development capital fund including CDBG funds, philanthropy, institutions, or foundations.
    - Determine grant parameters including award amount, eligible projects, eligible geographies, and application process.
    - Solicit public input and participation and neighborhood organizations in the design of the program to intentionally overcome traditional barriers to capital.
    - Dedicate funding and begin awarding grants, administered by the City or a nonprofit partner.
  - 2. Communicate New Program Availability**
    - Develop a community marketing and engagement strategy to publicize the program.
  - 3. Track Impacts**
    - Track impacts and metrics of success.
    - Communicate impacts as part of the community marketing and engagement strategy.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy      **Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1 – 3 years)  
Funding Required

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Access to capital, particularly for businesses and property owners in neighborhoods of focus, is a persistent challenge in Grand Rapids. Dedicating grant funds to support business and real estate development in neighborhoods of focus is an important investment in the City's neighborhood business districts to raise property values and support wealth creation for communities of color.

- Metrics**
- Dollar value and number of grants made
  - Square footage improved
  - Percent of grant recipients who are people of color
  - Number of businesses able to open or expand physical locations

## CASE STUDY

### Motor City Match

Many small business owners face two major challenges when looking to start or expand their businesses: finding the right space, and bridging financial gaps that might prohibit their opening. Motor City Match helps businesses address both by providing assistance through the business startup and renovation process. As a partnership between the City of Detroit, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Motor City Match leverages financial assistance from a range of financial institutions, corporations, and philanthropies to help start new, permanent businesses in Detroit's commercial corridors. It does so by providing \$500,000 in grants each quarter to business owners looking to start or expand in Detroit, and building owners looking to lease vacant space to awarded businesses. To be eligible for technical or financial assistance, business owners must locate in Detroit for at least two years and demonstrate a benefit to the community. All property owner applicants who meet basic eligibility criteria have their property listed as available on the Motor City Match Website, but owners must have a tenant secured and a plan for build-out and funding in order to be eligible for program financing. Motor City Match also provides tools such as a Match Map to help connect local businesses and potential outside businesses to Detroit's best available real estate, a list of professional service providers and contractors to help start and build businesses, and the Biz Grid, a directory of organizations that offer support services to Detroit businesses. To date, Motor City Match has served 1,344 businesses, leased 396 spaces totaling over 3.3 million square feet, and delivered \$7.5 million in grants.

# STRATEGY 4.3



## Develop an integrated public land acquisition and disposition strategy to support neighborhood development without displacement

**Description** Revise the City’s policies related to the acquisition and disposition of public land to support inclusive growth and development without displacement in neighborhood business districts. Identify opportunities to partner with Mobile GR to acquire property for interim use as surface parking lots which may support future development through infill or joint-use agreements as the real estate market changes.

- Implementation**
- 1. Design Disposition Process**
    - Inventory publicly owned land and identify priority sites for development. Priority sites should be identified in partnership with Corridor Improvement Authorities (CIAs).
    - Enumerate development goals to be met through the disposition of public land.
    - Refine the City’s Request-for-Proposals process to align development with public goals and neighborhood anti-displacement policies.
  - 2. Implement Disposition Processes**
    - Issue RFPs for priority sites and negotiate development parameters.
  - 3. Identify Acquisition Opportunities**
    - Identify underdeveloped or underused sites in neighborhoods that may begin to see development and displacement pressures.
    - Work with Mobile GR to develop a surface parking acquisition strategy that targets emerging neighborhoods in coordination with Mobility Strategy 5.2.
    - Evaluate sites for physical feasibility and current and future market conditions.
  - 4. Identify Acquisition Opportunities**
    - Acquire property in target areas that can provide near-term surface parking in neighborhood business districts and which may become long-term opportunity sites for development.
    - Continue to identify sites for acquisition in new neighborhoods.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice  
Funding Required

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Public land disposition is a significant way for cities to support development and public policy goals. The City needs a coordinated strategy for public-private partnerships to develop public land that can create short-term impacts in neighborhood business districts while preserving long-term affordability and local ownership. Public land strategies are frequently used to support affordable housing, Grand Rapids could use a similar approach to support commercial and mixed-use development as well as affordable housing.

- Metrics**
- Private investment leveraged through sales of public land
  - Metrics related to specific development goals, e.g. square footage developed near transit nodes, affordable housing units developed
  - Parking spaces provided near transit nodes

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**City Strategic Plan  
Sample**

The City's disposition process for public land should be developed with the following parameters in mind:

**Target sites.** Identify sites owned by the City and other public or private entities that are suitable for development.

- **Physical Suitability:** Sites should be of a size and shape that can support development (e.g. no overly irregular sites), and should have access to roads and utilities.
- **Neighborhood Suitability:** Priority sites should be located near transit corridors and employment centers, and should not be adjacent to incompatible uses such as heavy industrial sites.
- **Market Suitability:** Sites should be located in areas with market opportunity. Public engagement and collaboration with Corridor Improvement Authorities may be helpful in identifying priority sites to support neighborhood business district development, while conversations with commercial brokers and developers may help evaluate the marketability of sites.
- **Equity Suitability:** Sites should consider the potential for gentrification in the area, and be targeted to neighborhoods of focus.

**Development Goals.** Identify the public benefits or goals to be met through development on public land.

- **Affordable Housing:** The City could require or request development proposals that include the provision of affordable housing units.
- **Affordable Commercial & Community Space:** The City could require or request development proposals that include below-market retail, community facilities, or other public uses.
- **MWBE Contracting:** The City could require developers to meet certain MBE and WBE contracting targets.
- **Development without Displacement:** The City could work with local property owners and neighborhood business districts to put in place requirements to support development without displacement, such as requiring developers to provide letters of support from local community organizations, giving preference to proposals that include a local or cooperative ownership element.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** For sites in transit corridors, the City could require that development is aligned with Transit-Oriented Development goals.

**Development Mechanism.** Evaluate potential approaches to using public land to support development.

- **Restricted Sale of Land:** In most cases, the City would likely dispose of property through a competitive Request-for-Proposals process, identify specific public benefits or development targets required of the developer, and sell the property with the provision that those targets will be met.
- **Joint Development:** The City could develop a shared amenity – for example a parking structure – on public land to enhance the feasibility of adjacent private development.
- **Fee Simple Sale of Land:** In some cases, publicly-owned land may be sold to developers at market rates in order to generate funds for acquisition or other development activities.

For each target disposition site, the City should identify the goals and mechanism best suited to the successful disposition and development of that site.

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## CASE STUDIES

### Detroit Land Bank Authority

The Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) is a public authority that owns and manages public property, including tax-reverted properties. Created in 2008, and expanded in 2014 under Mayor Mike Duggan’s leadership as a partnership between the Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority and the City of Detroit to inventory and sell public land, the Land Bank is now the largest landowner in the city, and the largest land bank in the country. The primary goal of the Land Bank is to quickly buy and re-sell blighted or abandoned properties in the hopes of collecting property taxes to support the city’s revitalization efforts. Vacant land held by the DLBA is sold in one of two ways: homeowners can buy the “side lot” adjacent to their home for \$100, or property is sold through the DLBA’s online listings. Vacant homes can be demolished, which case they are re-classified as vacant and follow a similar process as previous described. Other vacant homes can either be sold at auction, or, in the case of a small number of homes, rehabbed by the DLBA and then sold at auction.



### Los Angeles Affordable Joint Development

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (METRO) is a major property owner within the region; METRO is currently in the process of expanding the system’s rail service and owns land in several neighborhoods to store the necessary construction equipment. When the agency no longer needs to hold onto those sites, METRO partners with developers to create new projects through a process called joint development. However, community residents do not always have the ability to provide input on the use of these projects. Over the last five years, community organizations have worked to reform METRO’s joint development policies to address the city’s affordable housing crisis and incorporate more below market rate housing into projects. Through effective advocacy and coalition building, communities have been able to make a business case that if developments near transit do not incorporate affordable housing, ridership would actually decrease. METRO’s joint development policy now includes a goal to create 35 percent affordable housing throughout the agency’s entire portfolio, as well as creating an affordable housing revolving loan fund.



# OBJECTIVE 5

## Description

To ensure the long-term strength of Grand Rapids' economy and its attractiveness to both residents and businesses, continue to promote job creation and high quality of life in Grand Rapids.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids has seen significant job growth in recent years, driven by core sectors including health care and manufacturing. The City's support for continued job growth and business retention in Grand Rapids, and for attraction of high-tech and high-growth industries, will be important to Grand Rapids' long-term economic health. Providing this support will require coordination with local and regional economic development partners.

## Outcomes

- Increased attraction of businesses, including high-tech, high growth industries
- Increased median household income and minority median household income
- Increased City income tax revenue

# ECONOMIC GROWTH

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
5.1   Support business attraction in priority sectors jointly with economic development partners	Near term (1 year)	 	Mobility 2.1, 2.3 (Transportation Demand Management), 7.1-7.4 (Strategic Partnerships)
5.2   Enhance the success of startups and maturing companies through new funding sources and dedicated facilities	Long Term (3-5 years)		
5.3   Support placemaking and quality of life improvements to make Grand Rapids a destination city.	Long Term (3-5 years)	   	Mobility 1.4 (Alignment), 5.1 (Asset Management)

## CASE STUDY

### Cincinnati Cintrifuse

As Greater Cincinnati's tech startup and innovation hub, Cintrifuse helps connect tech startups to the funding, resources, and space to grow and thrive. Cintrifuse's model brings entrepreneurs, large businesses, and capital together to support regional innovation and economic opportunity. Cintrifuse provides entrepreneurs with flexible coworking space and business accelerator services, and operates a venture fund with a pool of investors to finance entrepreneurship activities. It also provides connections for large companies to access innovative technologies. To align itself as a champion of inclusive innovation, Cintrifuse has launched a diversity and inclusion strategy that includes an ecosystem census to monitor minority growth and development, recruitment programs to attract founders of color and female founders to the region, and the creation of a Manager of Inclusive Innovation position focused on addressing issues facing diverse founders who are looking to raise capital or scale their businesses. In response to a call for more minorities in technology in Ohio, Cintrifuse also backed the Hillman Accelerator, the first and only full-time accelerator in the Midwest built specifically to attract and accelerate venture-backed tech companies founded by women and ethnic minorities. In Hillman's first cohort, three startups have received over \$3 million total and added 20 new jobs to the local tech ecosystem.

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# STRATEGY 5.1



## Support business attraction in priority sectors jointly with economic development partners

**Description** Partner with The Right Place, Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to develop an annual work plan for business attraction and retention that aligns efforts and priorities between all three entities to support business retention and growth in Grand Rapids. Target industries that have high potential for jobs with living wages, benefits, and career advancement. Coordinate business retention and attraction efforts with the City's Transportation Demand Management strategies.

**Implementation** 1. **Revise Partner Communications**

- Establish regular meetings with MEDC, The Right Place, and other economic development partners to review and align business retention and attraction priorities.
- Provide proactive updates about new and revised City policies and programs.

2. **Pilot New Initiatives**

- Identify opportunities for collaboration, such as: connecting businesses with hiring needs to workforce development organizations that can provide local inclusive hiring and training; jointly layering incentives to achieve multiple economic development objectives; assisting with site search and real estate development in coordination with neighborhood business district and transportation demand management strategies; or facilitating supplier diversity.
- Develop shared objectives and an annual work plan to coordinate efforts across multiple economic development programs.

3. **Review Impacts and Revise Practices**

- Measure progress and update work plans annually to reflect changing needs and priorities.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice  
New Staff

**Timeframe** Near Term (Within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Grand Rapids has a robust economic development ecosystem, with partners at the regional and state level providing business attraction and retention services that complement the City's economic development programs. However, the City could do more to proactively engage and partner with other economic development entities in order to ensure that programs are working as intended toward the common goal of promoting economic development, and to identify opportunities to promote equitable economic development programming across all four organizations.

**City Strategic Plan Alignment**

Economic Development and Prosperity Objective 5, Strategy 4

# STRATEGY 5.2



## Enhance the success of startups and maturing companies through new funding sources and dedicated facilities

**Description** Though Grand Rapids has services to support entrepreneurs in ideation and early concept development, there are limited facilities and programs to support startups and maturing companies to grow in place in Grand Rapids. The Edward Lowe Foundation, a Michigan-based foundation supporting entrepreneurship, characterizes maturing companies as "second stage," meaning companies that have moved beyond startup and have the aptitude and appetite to continue growing. Typically, these companies have between 10-99 employees and generate between \$1 million to \$50 million in annual revenue. To enhance the success of startups and maturing companies, use SmartZone to strengthen the local entrepreneurial community and expand access to capital, particularly for minority-owned companies. Open a business accelerator and coworking space to house startups that have "graduated" from early incubator programs and other maturing companies. Reduce regulatory burdens on SmartZone funding or identify other funding sources (such as philanthropic) to increase availability and accessibility of capital for startups and maturing businesses.

- Implementation**
- 1. Establish an Innovation Center in the SmartZone**
    - Identify partners (including nonprofits, philanthropists, major employers, economic development partners, and institutions) to assist with the visioning and implementation of an innovation center that combines a business accelerator with coworking space to allow startups and maturing companies to grow and "graduate" in place.
    - Conduct a feasibility analysis for the construction and operations of an innovation center located within the SmartZone. Establish governance needs and identify an organization to oversee operations.
    - Identify a site, secure funding, and build out the accelerator and coworking space.
  - 2. Pair Programming and Facilities with Capital**
    - Bring SmartZone capital, philanthropic funding, venture capital, and other funding sources to startups by developing investment pools, and marketing of investment opportunities to potential investors.
    - Design these capital investment programs with input from entrepreneurs of color to intentionally overcome traditional barriers to access.

**Mechanism** New Resource or Policy      **Timeframe** Long Term (3 to 5 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Grand Rapids' legacy industries of manufacturing and health care will likely continue to make up a large portion of employment. As industry trends shift nationwide, Grand Rapids can leverage its strength in these industries to support innovation in technology-driven industries such as advanced manufacturing and research. This will be an important way for Grand Rapids to ensure its long-term economic strength and competitiveness in business attraction. By supporting local companies that are maturing beyond a startup phase, the City can enhance its innovative capacity and support emerging industries.

- Metrics**
- Number of member or tenant businesses
  - Jobs added by member or tenant businesses
  - Capital invested in high-tech startups and maturing companies
  - Percent of member or tenant businesses owned by people of color
  - Participant satisfaction survey

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 2, Strategy 2  
Economic Prosperity and Affordability Objective 2, Strategy 5



# STRATEGY 5.3

Support placemaking and quality of life improvements to make Grand Rapids a destination city



**Description** Partner with and support the work of DGRI and the CIAs to implement aspects of area specific plans (ASPs) and other community-driven plans that create culturally vibrant places. Identify additional funding opportunities by coordinating with and leveraging other City infrastructure investments in coordination with the City’s Transportation Demand Management and Vision Zero strategies.

**Implementation** 1. **Invest in Priority Projects**

- Work with DGRI and CIAs to identify infrastructure improvements or development projects that align with ASPs, require City assistance, and have significant opportunities to impact quality of life by enhancing the safety and visual appeal of business districts and major corridors.
- Develop a schedule of improvements that reflects these priorities and available funding from Tax Increment Financing and other sources.
- Provide staff support to DGRI and CIAs to ensure the timely completion of projects, in coordination with Strategy 4.1

2. **Review Impacts and Revise Practices**

- Measure progress and update plans for investments annually to reflect changing needs and priorities.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice                      **Timeframe** Long Term (3 to 5 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Placemaking and quality of life improvements have the joint benefit of supporting businesses and residents. Residents are attracted to cities and neighborhoods with safe streets, parks, and cultural amenities. Businesses frequently locate in markets that are attractive to employees, to support workforce attraction and retention. Retail businesses benefit from locating in safe and attractive destinations anchored by cultural institutions and public spaces. By supporting the efforts of its local development authorities, the City can help make Grand Rapids a destination for businesses, residents, and visitors

- Metrics**
- Number of visitors annually
  - Population growth
  - Dollars invested, citywide and by business district
  - Number of projects successfully completed
  - Increase in TIF revenue by CIA

**City Strategic Plan Alignment** Economic Development and Prosperity Objective 5, Strategy 1  
 Economic Development and Prosperity Objective 5, Strategy 4  
 Economic Development and Prosperity Objective 5, Strategy 5



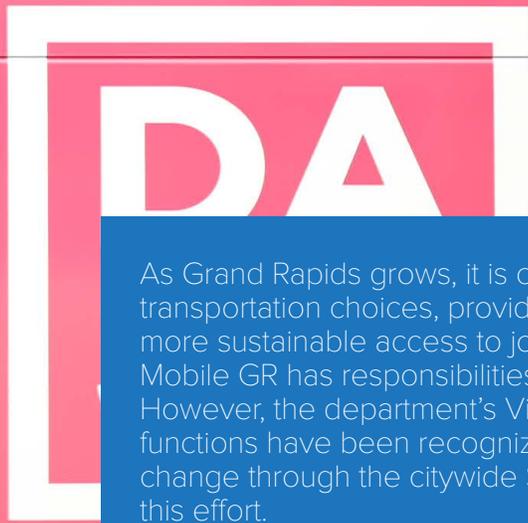
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**DOWNTOWN**

# **EQUITABLE MOBILITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

**ALL RIDES  
UNDER  
ONE MINUTE  
ARE FREE.**

**ATUITOS  
MINUTOS.**



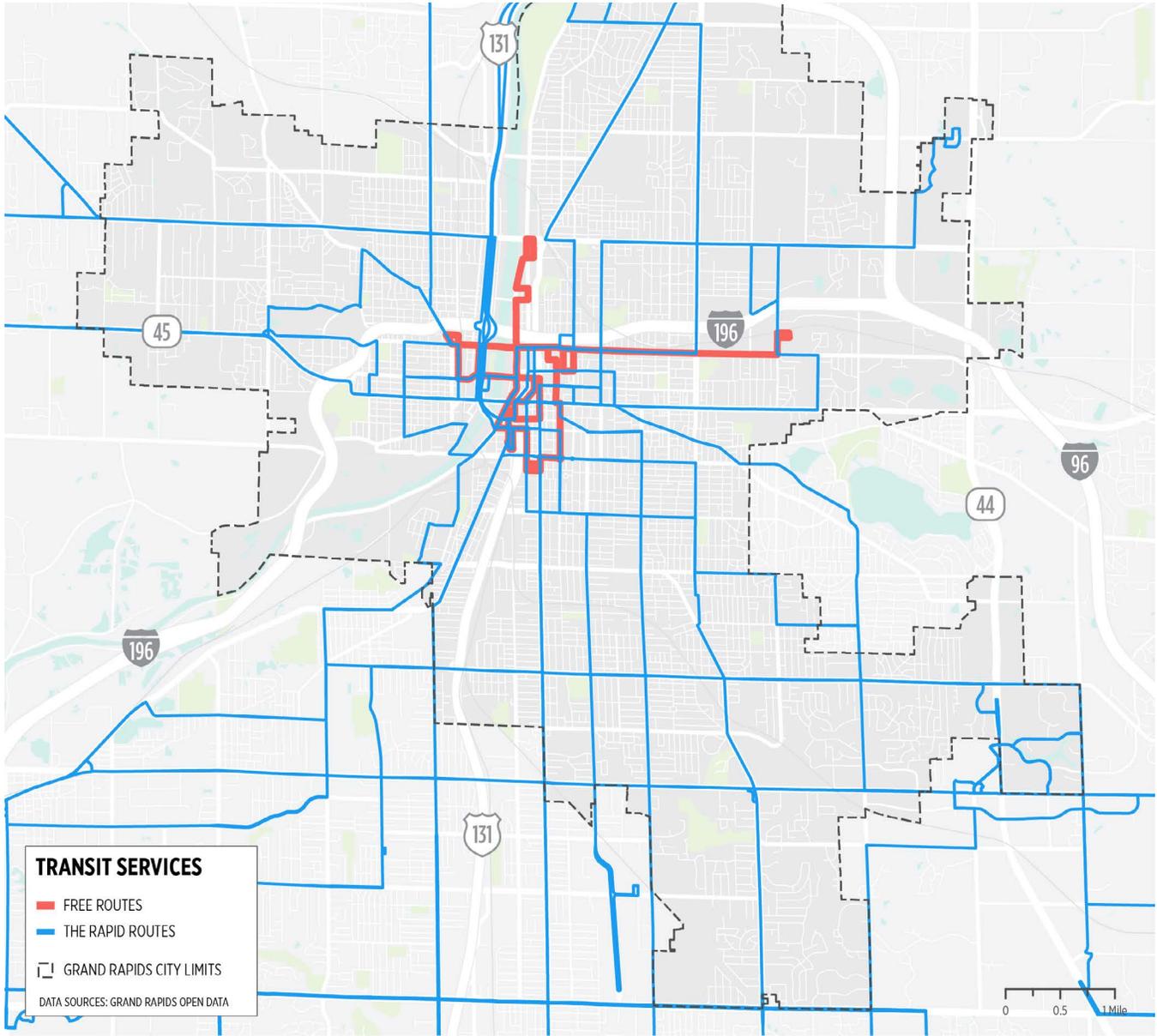
As Grand Rapids grows, it is critical that residents have better transportation choices, providing them with safer, more reliable, and more sustainable access to jobs, services, and amenities across the City. Mobile GR has responsibilities that go beyond the scope of this project. However, the department's Vision Zero, TDM, and parking management functions have been recognized as areas in need of investment and change through the citywide Strategic Plan process and are the focus of this effort.

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## STRENGTHS

The strengths below represent the key assets and positive trends in Grand Rapids' transportation system and policies. The strengths inform opportunities by establishing potential areas where leveraging existing assets can improve equitable mobility objectives.

- **Prioritizing Mobility.** Mobility and safety are two of six city priorities highlighted in the City of Grand Rapids FY2020-2023 Strategic Plan.
- **Recent Community and Stakeholder Engagement.** Community and stakeholder engagement have been strong in parts of the community on transportation issues, as evidenced by the level of participation in the Vital Streets Plan, Bike Share Feasibility Study, Bicycle Action Plan, and recent areawide specific plans throughout the City.
- **Strong Planning Foundations & Goalsetting.** Recent planning efforts focus on holistic planning goals, including equity, mode share, safety, health, accessibility, and climate impacts, strategically positioning Grand Rapids for 21st Century mobility solutions.
- **Mobile GR is Well-Positioned to Move the Needle on Mobility.** The City's commitment to evolving the City's former Parking Services department into a multimodal mobility services department provides opportunities to pursue innovative projects, programs, and services that address the mobility needs of all Grand Rapidians.
- **The City has Strong Community Partners** that have helped explore, plan, and implement innovative programs that promote walking, biking, and transit in Grand Rapids.
- **Shared Investment in Mobility Improvements.** There is agreement among decision-makers and community members on the importance of investing in the transportation infrastructure system, as evidenced by:
  - o The Vital Streets Funds ballot measure approved in May 2014 renewed dedicated funding for transportation network investments, as outlined in the Vital Streets Plan.
  - o Addition of over 85 miles of on-street bikeways, bike parking, and bicycle repair stations throughout the City
  - o Funding partnerships that will support installation of 120 new bus shelters both Downtown and in various Grand Rapids neighborhoods
  - o Shared funding to provide enhanced service on the DASH, Route 19, and Silver Line transit routes
  - o Cost sharing efforts to install traffic calming and other safety improvements throughout the City



## Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Systems in Place

Grand Rapids possesses many of the foundational elements of a citywide TDM framework. Mobile GR and its partners have conducted a variety of planning efforts in recent years with goals of increasing travel options, reducing the burden on existing infrastructure, and shifting travel behaviors away from single-occupant-vehicle trips. A series of policies, programs, and services have established high-level direction for the implementation of TDM, in conjunction with investments in transit, bicycle & pedestrian infrastructure, and parking management improvements.

**Local and Regional Transit.** Grand Rapids is connected by a comprehensive bus network. Approximately 70% of Grand Rapids residents live within one-quarter mile of local and regional service, and over 81% of those working in Grand Rapids work at a job site within one-quarter mile of service.

**Active Transportation Mode Share.** According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 20.9% of trips to work in Grand Rapids were made by walking, bicycling, transit, or rideshare. The Vital Streets Plan identified a goal of shifting commuter trips to 57% non-drive-alone modes by 2035.

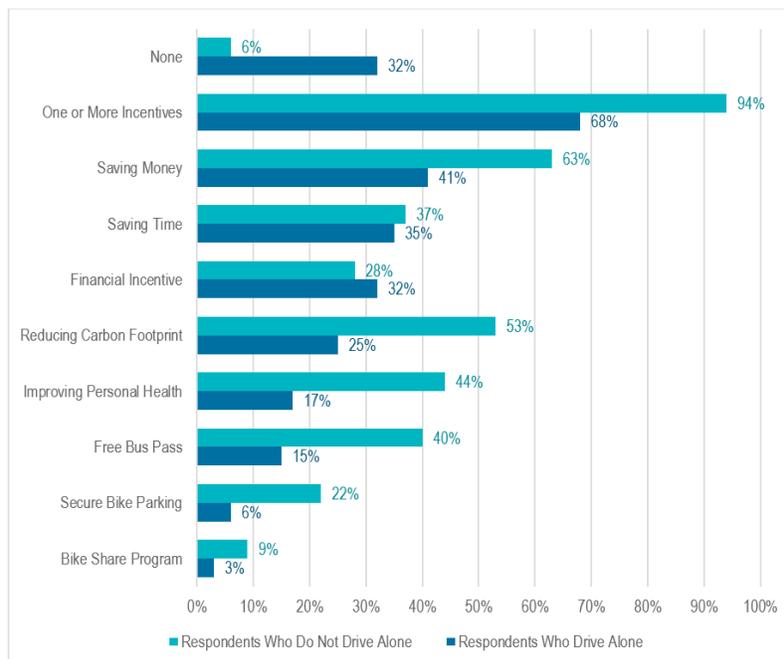
**Publicly Available TDM Programs.** Several options are available to all travelers in Grand Rapids, including offerings from

Mobile GR, The Rapid, MDOT, and other community partners:

- Carpool and Vanpool services
- Subsidized transit services
- Guaranteed Ride Home
- Free DASH shuttles
- Wheels to Work
- Promotional and informational resources
- Promotional events, such as Active Commute Week

**Limited-access TDM Programs.** Several employers and educational institutions in Grand Rapids provide transportation benefits to their employees or communities, including TDM programs like parking cash-out, free or discounted transit passes, and bicycle commuter incentives.

**Grand Rapids Commuter Census.** Mobile GR and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce collaborated to produce the City's first Commuter Census in 2017, fulfilling a near term action item from the GR Forward: Parking and Mobility Study. The Commuter Census is intended to be an annual survey and report, and in this way serves as an ongoing local record of commuter behavior and trends.



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## Investments in mobility improvements

There is agreement among decision-makers and community members on the importance of investing in the transportation infrastructure system, as evidenced by:



### Vital Streets Fund

Over 400-miles of roads and sidewalks updated



### Real-time Parking Data System



### Mobile Parking Payment



### 85 Miles

On-street bikeways added 2010-2017



### 120 New Bus Shelters

Mobile GR / DGRI / The Rapid Partnership

## Vision Zero (Traffic Safety)

The City of Grand Rapids recognizes the importance of safe streets for all, as can be seen through recent efforts such as the Vital Streets Plan, the FY2020-2023 Strategic Plan, and the Vision Zero resolution, which was adopted in 2018. The resolution adopts a goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries and endorses Vision Zero as a comprehensive and holistic approach to achieving this goal. Grand Rapids has committed resources to understanding and improving safety conditions for all travelers, through measures that include:

**Dedicated Traffic Safety Staff.** Mobile GR's Traffic Safety Division has dedicated staff and programs working to facilitate safety on Grand Rapids streets, including:

- Neighborhood Traffic Calming and other programs on residential streets
- City traffic signals and sign management
- Annual traffic counts in collaboration with GVMC and MDOT

**Crash Reporting.** Grand Rapids Police records on crashes are fairly robust with sufficient data to determine crash characteristics and locations. The data allows for the examination of crashes based on several different variables, such as vehicle/mode type, parties involved, time, location, and prior action. It serves as a valuable foundation for understanding locations with safety issues.

## Parking Management

Mobile GR has taken great strides in recent years to optimize the management and utilization of its considerable public parking network. A number of significant planning efforts, investments in existing and new facilities, upgrades to management technologies and applications, adoption of new policies, and facilitation of supportive programs & services have established a positive foundation for the City's parking system. Mobile GR has also successfully levied partnerships within the community to expand the capacity of the system to serve user needs. The following are specific examples of the City's strengths in this area.

**Robust System of Publicly Owned Parking Assets.** Over 9,600 combined on-street and off-street priced parking spaces are maintained and managed in Downtown Grand Rapids and neighborhood commercial districts. This system is supported by significant management resources, including:

- A proactive, and demonstrably effective pricing program for on-street parking.
- The City's Smarking parking data management system, which provides analytics on the supply, utilization, and management of parking assets.

**Investment in Parking Management Technologies.** The City has seen several technological advances in recent years, including smart pay stations, multiple payment options (i.e. coin, cash, or card), license plate recognition (LPR) technology, and mobile apps with real-time availability, routing, and payment options.

## CHALLENGES

The challenges below represent the areas in which barriers to equity exist, or capacities that the City lacks to influence equitable mobility. The challenges further inform the opportunities and objectives by identifying areas for improvement.

- **The Fast Pace of Development.** City integration of equity practices, TDM, safety, and parking programs lags behind the fast pace of development set by the market.
- **Human and Financial Capacity Challenges.** The growth in Mobile GR programs, services, and capital investments comes with human and financial capacity challenges related to the expanded mission of the department.
- **Reactive Transportation Investment Framework.** Current investment decisions are not always data- or equity-driven. Past transportation investments reflect a reactive prioritization process, while missing opportunities to proactively address issues before they reach critical levels.
- **Aging Capital Infrastructure.** The traffic signal system is one example of an aging capital system that is in need of significant investment in the face of uncertain future maintenance revenue sources are uncertain. As funding and needs shift, Grand Rapids will be hard-pressed to continue managing the local and regional systems, leading to a more acute focus on local needs and identifying new sources of funds to pay for improvements.

### Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Challenges

Currently, TDM programs and services are managed and promoted on an ad hoc basis. With no centralized or coordinated effort to develop, implement or expand programming, there is a general lack of understanding and utilization of offerings. Deficiencies exist in areas where services are needed and programs could clearly benefit travelers and help achieve broader community goals. Limitations in existing agency and organizational capacity further constrain the opportunity for TDM program expansion, speaking to the need for increased coordination and collaboration.

**Lack of Strategic Focus.** There is no centralized strategy, structure, funding, or lead organization for transportation demand management efforts at the local or regional scale.

**Lack of Local Regulatory Framework.** There is currently no definitive TDM ordinance in the City's zoning code, and existing TDM-related ordinances in the zoning code are not required or incentivized adequately to foster adoption and implementation.

**Insufficient Data and Monitoring.** There is a lack of defined metrics and a lack of consistent tracking and/or measuring of TDM performance across the City and among local travel demand generators, including large employers, universities, and visitor destinations.

**Limited Transit Service.** While Grand Rapids is served by a comprehensive regional transit network, the limited weekday and weekend evening hours and wide headways leave many areas and individuals underserved. East-west routes are also very limited, leading to the need for excessive travel times to reach destinations.

**Incomplete Bicycle Network.** Most of the City's existing bicycle network is in mixed-traffic conditions and the majority of the planned additions to the network are for similar conditions. A network that supports all users will require substantial investment in connected and protected bicycle facilities.

**Poor Utilization of Existing TDM Programs.** The City offers a parking cash out program for its employees. However, it is held back by challenges that include lack of awareness, lack of universal access, and poorly situated administrative structure. Other organizations that provide TDM benefits have likewise seen poor utilization of their programs.

**Poor Maintenance of Multimodal Facilities.** Consistent maintenance, including timely snow removal, are chief concerns for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

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## Vision Zero (Traffic Safety) Challenges

While the City of Grand Rapids allocates significant resources to addressing traffic safety issues, available data and the experience of many travelers illustrate that there are still many areas for concern in a transportation network that is all-too-often designed for the efficient movement of private automobiles. The findings of the Existing Conditions Assessment also show that the negative safety conditions are not distributed equitably across all traveler types, demographic groups, or geographies in Grand Rapids. There are several clear areas in need of improvement as the City and its partners consider equitable approaches to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries.

### Vulnerable Road Users are Disproportionately Affected.

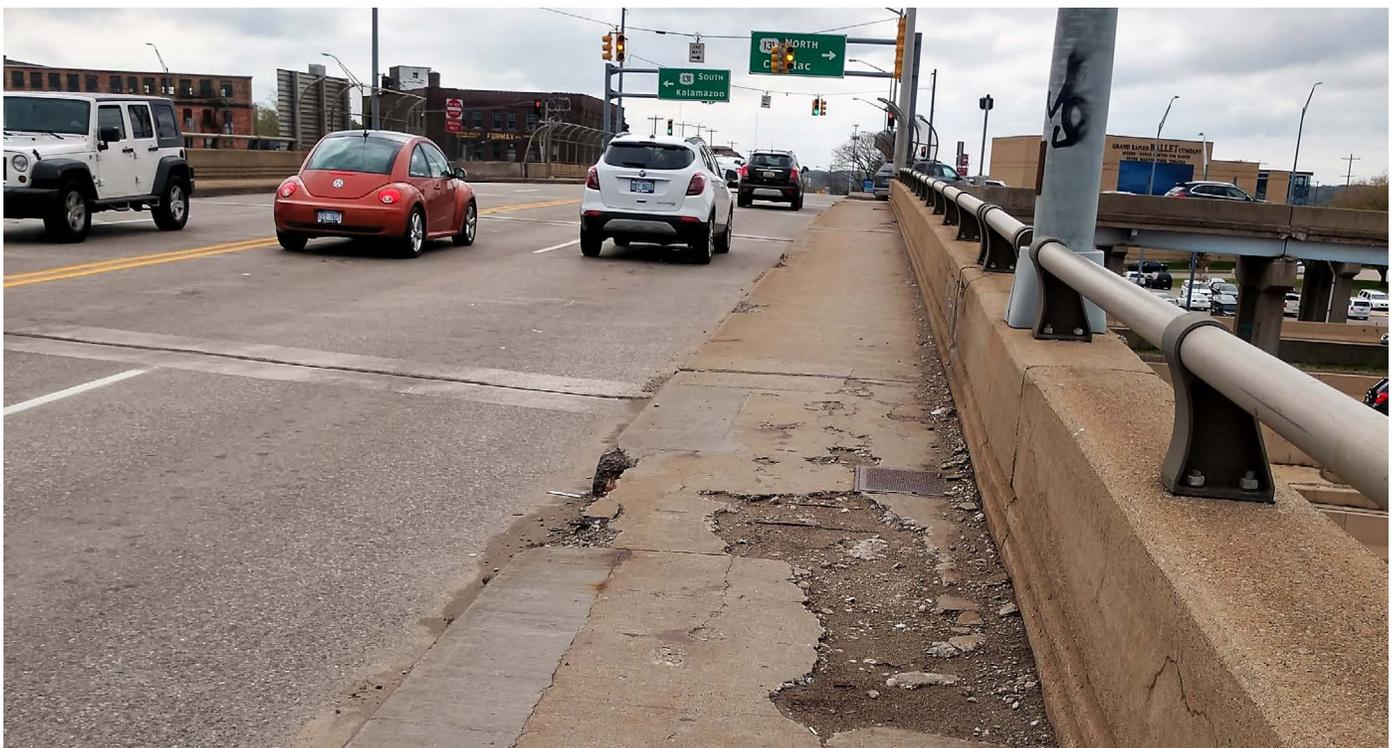
Crash data in Grand Rapids indicates that vulnerable road users (pedestrians and bicyclists) are disproportionately represented in crashes involving serious injuries and fatalities. Between 2009 and 2018, 20.3% of pedestrian crashes and 8.3% of bicycle crashes resulted in a fatality or serious injury. This compares to 5.3% for vehicle crashes.

**Data Limitations.** The City's analysis of safety is limited to police-reported crash data, which provides a valuable, but incomplete picture of the traffic safety concerns and conditions.

Transportation safety research has shown that many crashes go unreported, particularly in communities of color. Additionally, crash data does not reflect the number of near misses that occur on city streets or perceptions of both traffic safety and personal safety that may limit a community member's ability to travel by a mode other than the automobile, or to travel at all.

**A Disproportionate Number of Children and Young Adults are Involved in Crashes.** This may lead to a societal perception of normality regarding traffic crashes and the fatalities and injuries that result from them. As people experience or become accustomed to crashes during their formative years, it could make them less likely to adjust personal habits or support city-wide efforts to reduce crash frequency and severity.

**Existing Street Design.** Street design, which includes speed limits, number of lanes, lane widths, and other factors, is a challenge on local roads, in that they are predominantly designed for the expeditious movement of automobiles and not for human safety. This is the case both on streets that Grand Rapids controls and on those that are under the jurisdiction of other public agencies.



**Aging capital is in need of significant investment, while future maintenance revenue sources are uncertain.**

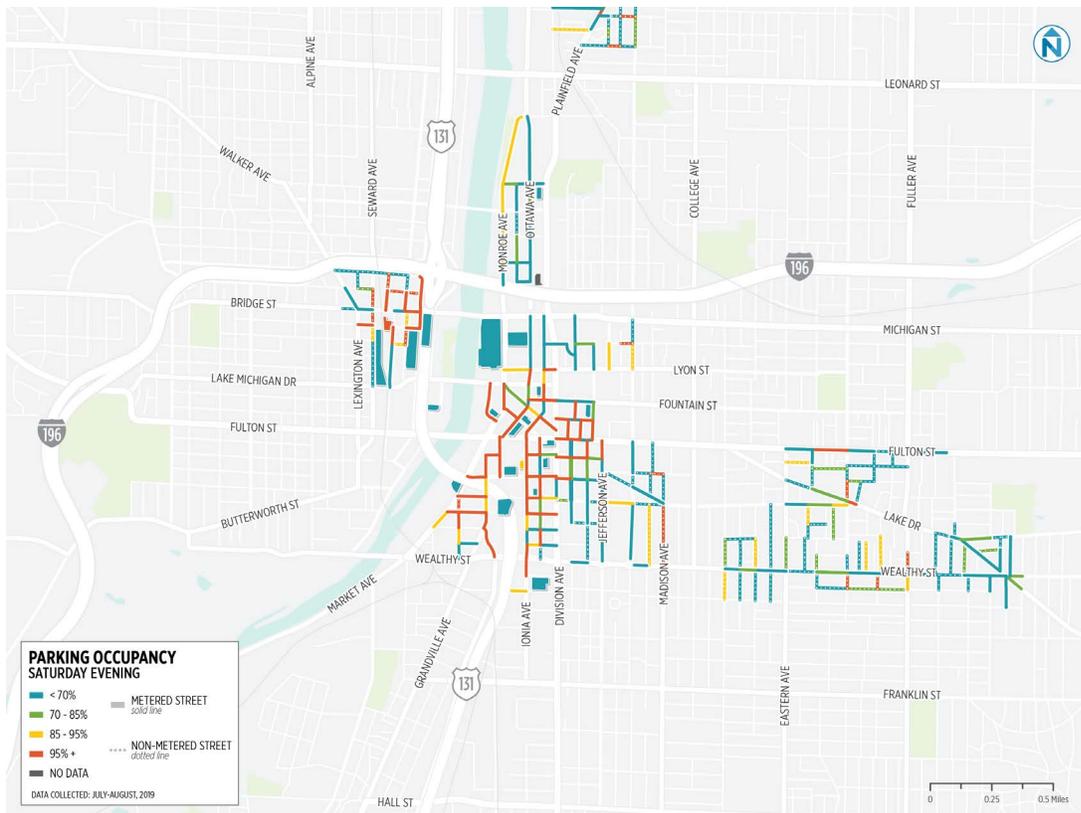
## Parking Management Challenges

As referenced previously, Mobile GR's parking system has very strong foundations, but there are several areas where management strategies and operational inefficiencies lead to constraints – whether real or perceived. These challenges are entwined with those in the TDM section, as effective management strategies can impact both travel and parking demand conditions. The following issues were identified through the Existing Conditions Assessment and each can be remedied through the strategies outlined later in this report

**Parking Policies and Regulations.** The value of the City's significant parking investments and curbside infrastructure are significantly undermined by not pricing on-street parking at night and on weekends and by too-modest oversell rates for monthly parkers in Mobile GR garages.

**Lack of Strategic, Coordinated TDM Programming.** The challenges cited in the previous section on the lack of strategic TDM programming carry through to the City's ability to effectively manage its parking resources. Strong, coordinated TDM programs can help to maximize the use of existing parking resources, reducing demand, increasing availability in constrained locations, and improving customer experience.

**Public Perception of Parking Constraints.** There is a perception of under supply of parking, both Downtown and in neighborhood commercial districts. The prevalence of this perception threatens efforts to better manage the parking system through interventions designed to facilitate greater availability of parking in these locations and to generate revenue for the maintenance and operation of parking and mobility facilities, programs and services.



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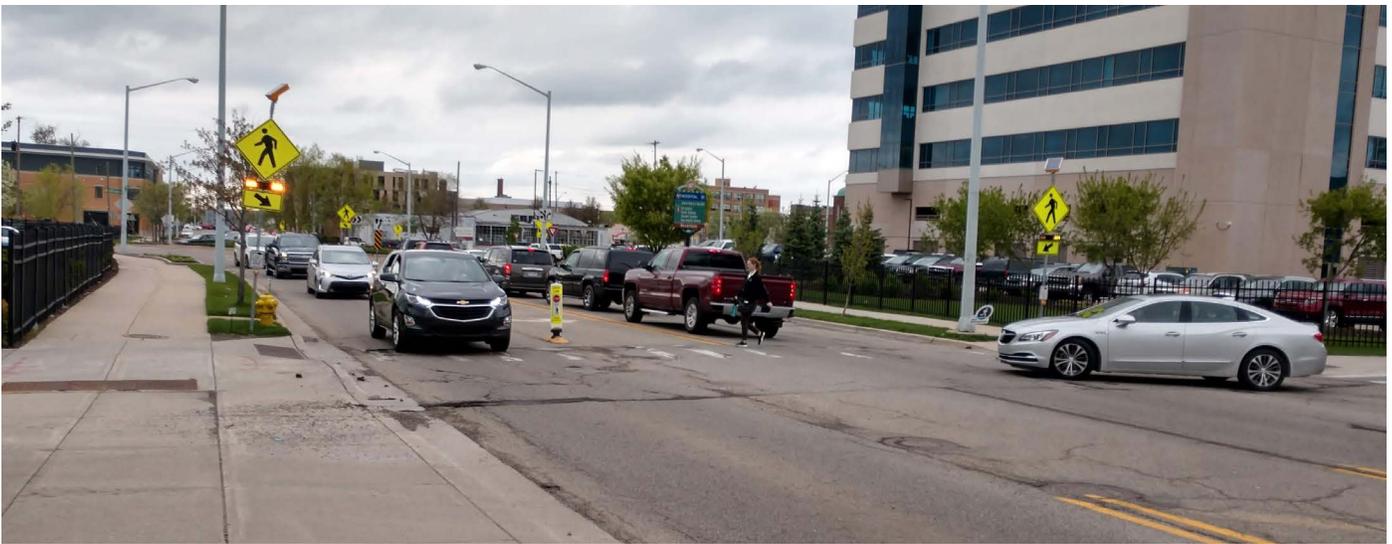
## Other Barriers to Equitable Mobility

**Racial and Neighborhood-level Disparities** exist in safe access to jobs and activities of daily living. The opportunity cost of these gaps has been well-documented by recent research and community initiatives and is reflected in health, economic development, and other outcomes.

**Community Engagement** often fails to include people who are unfamiliar with, unavailable to participate in, or wary of participating in community conversations. Transportation and safety issues are, thus, primarily informed by those who are more inclined to participate or have a conduit to staff and decision-makers.

**The “Customer First” Model and a Culture of Speed/Efficiency** creates a reactive system that interrupts staff workflows and systems, perpetuates inefficiencies in resource utilization, and prioritizes the concerns of those who speak loudest and most often.

**Individual and Societal Factors.** The culture of driving and speed, the market penetration of smart phones and use of them when people are driving, walking, or bicycling, and the use of alcohol and drugs are factors that have significant impacts on traffic safety, mobility and travel choices



**Vulnerable road users are disproportionately represented in crashes involving serious injuries and fatalities**



**Most of the City’s existing and planned bicycle network is in mixed-traffic conditions.**



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## Strategic Direction

In accordance with the City’s Strategic Plan, the goal of the Equitable Mobility Strategy is to ensure that the City’s mobility projects, programs, and services create and reinforce innovative, efficient, and equitable mobility solutions that are safe, affordable, and convenient to the community. Much as with the economic development strategy, effective mobility solutions rely upon a host of collaborative partnerships in planning, funding, and implementation across public, private, and nonprofit partners. This section, however, focuses most specifically on the strategies and tactics that the City of Grand Rapids’ Mobile GR Department can pursue to successfully achieve City and community objectives.

The Grand Rapids Equitable Mobility Strategic Plan will provide additional detail about each objective and strategy:

- 1. Alignment.** Align planning and capital investments to support economic development and promote equitable outcomes.
- 2. Transportation Demand Management.** Manage transportation demand by making programs, policies, and incentives more effective.
- 3. Curb Management.** Establish curb management practices that promote City goals.
- 4. Capacity.** Invest in staff and system capacity to meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids residents.
- 5. Asset Management.** Develop an asset management approach that will support the long-term health of the City’s mobility networks.
- 6. Communication.** Establish comprehensive communications, engagement, and education programs.
- 7. Strategic Partnerships.** Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships and collaboration opportunities to achieve the City’s equitable mobility goals.

For each objective, the plan will detail the need for and potential impact of pursuing that objective. For each strategy, the plan will include a description of the recommended strategy, actions needed for implementation, a timeline for implementation, and metrics of success for the City to measure the progress and impact of implementation. Case studies related to recommended strategies will further illustrate best practices and the recommended actions and potential impacts. For strategies marked with an asterisk (\*), the plan will include deeper detail about implementation needs and precedent examples as appropriate.



# OBJECTIVE 1

## Description

Align planning and capital investments around shared mobility and economic development solutions that promote equitable outcomes.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

The City has an opportunity to improve upon the delivery of equitable mobility and economic development solutions by aligning the projects, programs, and services that the Mobile GR, Economic Development, and Planning departments provide. Aligning tools & incentives, zoning regulations, decision making frameworks, capital investments, and data collection & reporting methods around shared goals will provide greater impact to the Grand Rapids community. This alignment will shift travel behaviors, increase safety outcomes, and improve parking management systems.

## Outcomes

- Dollars invested in mobility improvements directly related to incentive criteria
- Number of new development projects with TDM plans
- Number and total cost of traffic safety projects in Neighborhoods of Focus
- Number of annual crashes by mode and location, sorted by severity, age, race, income, ability, and gender
- Parking utilization rate by location and time of day

# ALIGNMENT

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
1.1   Integrate Vision Zero, transportation demand management, and parking priorities into economic development tools and incentives.	Near term (1 year)		Economic Development 1.1 (Information), 2.1 (Incentives)
1.2   Collaborate with the City Planning and Economic Development Departments to align & leverage zoning strategies and policies around mobility goals.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 1.1 (Information)
1.3   Use a Safe Systems Framework.	Near Term (1 year)		Economic Development 4.1 (Neighborhoods), 5.2 (Economic Growth)
1.4   Take a proactive and strategic approach to capital and safety investments, prioritizing projects that address safety and equity needs.	Near term (1 year) and Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
1.5   Increase the use of shared parking management strategies.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Mobility 1.1 – 1.2 (Alignment), Economic Development 1.1 (Information)
1.6   Develop a parking expansion decision tool.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
1.7   Track investment in mobility projects, programs, and services through an equitable mobility dashboard.	Near Term (1 year)		Mobility (Communication), Economic Development (Information)

# STRATEGY 1.1



## Integrate Vision Zero, transportation demand management, and parking priorities into economic development tools and incentives

**Description** Vision Zero, transportation demand management (TDM), and parking priorities can be integrated into existing and evolving economic development tools and incentives as part of a reconstituted “entitlements” program for businesses and developers investing in Grand Rapids (see Economic Development Strategy 2.1). As development expands throughout Grand Rapids, private sector contributions to community mobility resources will increase the equitable distribution of benefits to a broader cross section of the community and help to mitigate some of the negative externalities of these investments.

- Implementation**
- 1. Establish Scoring Criteria**
    - Review and refine a preliminary scorecard to reflect the City’s preferred baseline requirements and incentive levels.
    - Conduct early outreach and conversations with the development community, businesses, and the public to inform the design of the scorecard.
    - Adopt the scorecard as official City policy for all incentive programs.
  - 2. Communicate New Policies**
    - Proactively communicate the City’s new incentive policy to developers, employers, and economic development partners.
    - Work with incentives applicants to identify opportunities to increase scoring and encourage equitable outcomes of projects receiving incentives.
    - Conduct ongoing outreach and conversations with the development community, businesses, and the public to inform the implementation and future revisions to the scorecard.
  - 3. Review Impacts and Revise Practices**
    - Track metrics of success and incorporate equity outputs into reporting on the impact of incentives.
    - Highlight successful programs developed by incentive recipients to increase inclusivity and mobility, such as TDM programs, in coordination with Economic Development Strategy 2.1.
    - Raise participation and impact over time by increasing the minimum criteria or score required to qualify for City incentives and revising scoring criteria to reach higher targets.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice                      **Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Integrating equitable mobility and economic development goals at the forefront of evolving approaches to the City’s incentive programs has the potential to yield much greater benefits to the community, including those directly and indirectly impacted by projects and investments. Valuable incentives will still be offered to investors, who will have a broader set of community goals to consider, including contributions to mobility solutions that increase traffic safety outcomes, provision of new or improved accessibility for non-driving travelers, and more efficient parking systems that reduce demand on existing or proposed parking supply.

- Metrics**
- Number or share of applications for incentives that include mobility investments
  - Dollars invested in mobility improvements directly related to incentive criteria
  - Dollars or share of incentive related mobility improvements in Neighborhoods of Focus

**Sample** See Economic Development Strategy 2.1

# STRATEGY 1.2



## Collaborate with the City Planning and Economic Development Departments to align & leverage zoning strategies and policies around mobility goals

**Description** Collaboration between Mobile GR, City Planning, and Economic Development to align & leverage zoning strategies and policies will enable greater implementation and adoption of existing and new approaches that can help achieve mobility goals. These include TDM incentives, safety improvements, shared parking, parking maximums, in-lieu fees, and bicycle parking requirements. The specific approach can be customized to reflect the needs and opportunities presented in different contexts throughout the City and Neighborhoods of Focus.

**Implementation** 1. **Expand Coordination**

- Establish regular (bi-weekly or monthly) cross-departmental meetings to facilitate dialogue on strategies, current projects, and policies that can serve interdepartmental goals. Identify early opportunities and modify policies to incorporate traffic safety, TDM, and parking management objectives.
- Work with The Rapid on TOD projects, including the South Division Corridor TOD Plan, to align transit and other mobility priorities with land use plans, zoning, economic development, and other regulatory policies.

2. **Revise Policies**

- Revise the City’s bicycle parking requirements, in line with recommendations from the Bicycle Action Plan, to include more specific bike parking requirements across all land use types and to include end-of-trip support facilities like showers and lockers.
- Require TDM plans in new development above a minimum threshold -- typically between 5,000 and 20,000 SF of land uses -- to reduce traffic and parking demand impacts on existing networks and infrastructure, and deliver positive health and safety outcome.

3. **Communicate Changes**

- Proactively communicate new and revised policies to developers and community partners through development of a suite of easy-to-understand materials that explain the process and benefits of policy compliance.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice                      **Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)  
New/Revised Policy

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Grand Rapids has laid a solid foundation of mobility related zoning policies in the downtown area, but the impact has not yet been fully realized in developments to date. By aligning mobility, economic development, and planning objectives beyond the incentive toolkit referenced in Strategy 1.1, these policies can normalize development practices that integrate progressive mobility solutions. Further, they can extend the impacts beyond downtown into additional neighborhoods where development is taking place.

- Metrics**
- Number of policy changes to reflect mobility objectives
  - Dollars spent on or number of new, privately funding bike racks and end-of-trip facilities
  - Number of new development projects with TDM plans

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## CASE STUDIES

### San Francisco, CA – “shift” TDM Program

San Francisco’s citywide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program was established in 2016 to facilitate mode shift and reduce vehicle miles traveled generated by new real estate development projects. The program applies to nearly all types of new development and changes in land use. The objective of the program is to establish more sustainable transportation options for a property’s tenants and visitors, while also benefiting the local neighborhood and the broader city. The program requires that applicable projects develop a TDM plan as a “condition of approval” and that the property owner regularly monitor and report on plan measures. Measures are chosen from one of 26 options provided in the TDM “menu of options,” which includes a variety of active transportation strategies, incentive programs, shared vehicle and shuttle services, and provision of on-site uses like grocery stores (in food deserts) or affordable housing.

The TDM program is one of the three interrelated policy initiatives comprising San Francisco’s Transportation Sustainability Program, which is focused on improving and expanding the transportation system to help accommodate new growth and create a policy framework for private development to contribute to the system’s enhancement and expansion.



### Washington, DC Commuter Benefits Ordinances

As of 2016, employers in Washington, DC, with 20 or more employees are required to provide at least one of the following commuter benefit options:

- Employee-Paid Pre-Tax Benefit - Allow employees to set aside income on a pre-tax basis to cover the cost of commuting by mass transit or vanpools, up to \$260 per month
- Employer-Paid Direct Benefit - Offer a tax-free subsidy for transit up to \$260 per month
- Employer-Provided Transportation - Provide shuttle or vanpool service at no cost to employees

The District Department of Employment Services sends an annual survey to employers to assess compliance. goDCgo, part of the District Department of Transportation, uses the survey results to conduct follow-up with employers and assist with compliance and performance improvements.



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# STRATEGY 1.3



## Use a Safe Systems Framework

**Description** The Safe Systems approach to transportation safety has five key principles: 1) humans make errors; 2) humans are vulnerable to injury; 3) responsibility is shared; 4) no death or serious injury is acceptable; and 5) success in transportation safety requires a proactive rather than a reactive approach. This framework for the development of the Vision Zero action plan emphasizes the importance of collaboration and coordination with internal and external department and agency partners, such as Mobile GR, Planning, Economic Development, Grand Rapids Police, Fire and EMS, regional trauma centers, Grand Rapids Public Schools, and The Rapid, to proactively improve transportation safety, for the health and mobility of all Grand Rapid residents and visitors.

**Implementation** **1. Convene Stakeholders**

- Establish a transportation safety working group for proactive information exchange, collaboration on transportation safety issues and projects, and the development of a Safe Systems/ Vision Zero Action Plan. This working group could be a subcommittee of the Mobile GR Commission or be established in concert with the equitable mobility working group outlined in Mobility Strategy 7.1.
- Include organizations such as Age Friendly GR and Disability Advocates of Kent County in transportation safety planning efforts in order to understand and address areas of concern for people across age, ability and mobility spectrums.

**2. Establish channels for collaboration**

- Institute a data sharing agreement between regional trauma, public safety and Mobile GR to develop a comprehensive transportation system crash database that expands the amount and type of data collected.
- Engage with Grand Rapids Public Schools to facilitate a comprehensive Safe Routes effort, including a system-wide plan and plans for individual schools.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice;  
Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** A proactive, collaborative Safe Systems approach to transportation safety will enable a more comprehensive look at the systemic issues related to transportation safety to reduce the number of persons who die or are seriously injured on the City of Grand Rapids streets.

- Metrics**
- Public awareness of Mobile GR traffic safety efforts via intercept survey
  - Internal perception of responsibility in shifting to a traffic safety culture, via interdepartmental survey
  - Development & implementation of framework, with endorsement from internal and external partners

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# STRATEGY 1.4



## Take a proactive and strategic approach to capital and safety investments, prioritizing projects that address safety and equity needs

**Description** Establishing clear techniques and systemic safety analyses will allow Mobile GR to be proactive in the identification of historical and potential locations of traffic safety concerns and support a new focus on cost-effective capital and safety investments. Mobile GR should lead with a data-driven approach to its analysis, followed by revision of key internal and external policies and practices, leading to a clear and comprehensive plan for investment priorities and public-facing reporting tools that communicate progress to the Grand Rapids community.

**Implementation** 1. **Gather Data**

- Develop a data analysis and collision reporting tool that City staff can use to regularly identify high crash locations and corridors throughout the City.
- Conduct systemic safety analyses on corridors, guided by the equity framework and Safe Systems Approach (Mobility Strategy 1.3).

2. **Revise Practices**

- Develop and promote pedestrian crossing guidelines, including a public facing “checklist” of criteria that communicates clearly what conditions must be met to warrant consideration of marked crosswalks and accompanying signage.
- Revise the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, including a public facing “checklist” of criteria that communicates clearly what conditions must be met to support installation of traffic safety measures.
- Publish placemaking application and approval guidelines in support of the above.

3. **Prioritize Improvements**

- Develop and utilize an equity framework that considers health and economic impact of investments to guide the prioritization of capital projects; lead with equity (race, income, disability, age, gender) to address root causes of disparities and shift the focus of capital investments to respond to conditions in the Neighborhoods of Focus.
- Prioritize capital projects that address safety and equity needs, starting with Neighborhoods of Focus and locations with high levels of use by the most vulnerable users (e.g.: children, seniors, and people with disabilities).
- Identify sources of funding that target projects focusing on safety, health, and environmental outcomes.

4. **Track Implementation Progress**

- Tie performance measures to recently completed planning efforts, equity goals, and Vision Zero objectives.
- Create a public facing dashboard that tracks and reports on crashes, including the equity, health, and economic impact of crashes.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice; Revised Policy; **Timeframe** 1-2: Near-Term (within 1 year)  
New Resource; Budget Allocation 3-4: Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Data-driven, proactive investment in safety can lead to cost efficiencies in capital investments and reduce the demand for and financial impact of crashes on emergency response services. Revised practices can clarify and streamline the application and implementation process for safety improvements throughout the city. Coordinated asset management will support more efficient utilization of limited resources across City departments and with other external partners and project prioritization will ensure that the projects with the greatest equity and safety impacts will move forward. Ongoing measurement and reporting through the data dashboard will increase public awareness of transportation safety and the potential impact of investments, promoting data-driven decision-making and increasing the transparency of the decision-making process.

**Metrics**

- Number of projects that explicitly include transportation safety outcomes for walking and bicycling facilities in planning and design
- Number and total cost of traffic safety related investments in Neighborhoods of Focus
- Number of annual crashes by mode, age, race, income, disability, and gender, as data is available
- Number of crashes per capita in Neighborhoods of Focus

# STRATEGY 1.5



## Increase the use of shared parking management strategies

**Description** Existing data shows that the off-street parking assets owned by Mobile GR are currently underutilized, even during peak periods. Yet, wait lists for City garages still exist and the public perception in some locations is still that there is a shortage of available parking. Mobile GR should promote increased use of shared parking management strategies that take advantage of the City’s robust public and commercial parking assets and excess capacity. In so doing, they can forestall future public investment in parking expansion projects that might otherwise seem justified by current monthly-parking waitlists at Mobile GR facilities.

**Implementation** 1. **Gather Data, Conduct Outreach, and Build Capacity**

- Assemble parking supply and utilization data across public and private facilities in areas demonstrating capacity constraints.
- Communicate shared parking market opportunities to owners of parking assets in terms of both new revenue and simplified management.
- Identify barriers faced by property owners, developers, and major employers in using shared parking agreements

2. **Revise Practices**

- Increase oversell rates in public garages regularly refresh wait lists to reduce frustration over perceived parking shortages.
- Consider a shift to daily parking permits in select garages (i.e.: those that are identified as most constrained), both to manage management and decipher market acceptance of this approach.
- Modify City policies identified as barriers to shared parking agreements during the “Conduct Outreach” stage.
- Encourage property owners, developers, and major employers to provide/use shared parking by integrating new incentives into planning and economic development tools, in line with Economic Development Strategy 1.1 and Mobility Strategies 1.1 and 1.2. -- for example, by setting a maximum limit on accessory parking unless it is shared or publicly available at key times.
- Provide tools for private sharing arrangements, including agreement templates, funding to cover any assumed liability-increase costs, and access to pay-by-phone systems that facilitate monetizing off-hour parking capacity through paid, public parking.

3. **Develop New Resources**

- Create simple shared parking agreement templates and compliance monitoring protocols that are manageable for both parking owners and City staff responsible for review and approval.
- Over time, develop new tools, including online parking maps and payment platforms that enable easy adoption of shared parking strategies by parking owners/operators and seamless use of facilities by parkers.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice;  
Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Under Sections 5.10.05.A. and 5.10.05.E of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Director can approve reductions in a project’s cumulative parking requirement for up to 50% per use. Encouraging and facilitating increased use of shared parking can help reduce the amount of new parking supply built, especially when there is existing capacity available. Forestalling construction of excess new parking can preserve public resources, maintain land to be used for development, generate new economic activity, and foster a more people-oriented sense of place.

**Metrics**

- Number of shared parking agreements in the city
- Number or percent of off-street parking stalls in shared parking agreements
- Dollars in off-street parking construction saved by using shared parking agreements (this is a factor of the average cost per new parking stall)
- Share of occupied off-street parking in Downtown and neighborhood business districts (City Strategic Plan)

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## CASE STUDIES

### Safe Mobility Santa Ana – Santa Ana, CA (Strategy 1.4)

Safe Mobility Santa Ana is the City of Santa Ana’s road map for creating safe streets, with a specific focus on prioritizing vulnerable roadway user safety and de-emphasizing congestion management. The City’s data analysis clearly demonstrated that that people living in areas with higher concentrations of poverty, low education, youth, and Latino populations were exposed to more collisions, while at the same time being more reliant on active transportation. Council’s adoption of the plan signaled a recognition that people should not face additional hazards when traveling simply because they cannot afford to drive or are not old enough to do so.

Resulting changes in internal practices include the prioritization of transportation investments that support the reduction of health and wealth disparities, ticket diversion programs, and funding of several miles of road buffets to redesign streets for slower speeds and protected walking and bikeways on high collision corridors.



### Omaha, NE – Park Omaha Shared Parking Platform (Strategy 1.5)

The City’s Parking Division, Park Omaha, is responsible for providing coordinated and strategic management of public and shared on- and off-street parking resources. Their goals are to maximize efficiency, minimize frustrations, and develop an extensive shared parking network. A key component of Park Omaha’s mission was establishing a system to incorporate private parking facilities into a unified network as a way of increasing supply without building more facilities.

The Park Omaha Partners program provides a user-friendly, online process for property owners to offer their unused spaces, at a specified schedule, to the Park Omaha network through a shared parking agreement. Mobile payment is available via the Park Omaha App with each respective partner facility receiving revenue directly, thereby removing the need for each operator to establish its own system. While the City of Omaha leads the effort, operators and a parking advisory committee provide guidance and ensure system optimization.

# STRATEGY 1.6



## Develop a parking expansion decision tool

**Description** The City of Grand Rapids owns a substantial amount of public parking, including both on- and off-street resources throughout the City. Faced with persistent calls for more parking in constrained markets, Mobile GR should develop a parking expansion decision tool to inform public investments in the provision of new parking supply, aligning with mobility, economic development, and fiscal sustainability goals.

**Implementation** 1. **Align Goals and Metrics**

- Identify and align parking supply, mobility, economic development, and fiscal sustainability goals, including those outlined in this plan.
- Align metrics that can be used to set target ranges, thresholds, or scoring for conditions that must be met to justify increases in parking supply.

2. **Establish Key Scoring Criteria**

- Market demand: use quantitative measures (parking pricing, utilization counts, future development projections, etc.) to assess market demand.
- Capacity created: quantify the number of new public parking spaces created.
- Economic development impact: identify the level of private investment proposed jointly or concurrently with the proposed public parking facility, as well as future potential development that could be supported by the proposed investment in the new parking facility.

3. **Communicate New Priorities**

- Coordinate utilization of the parking expansion tool across City departments, in line with Mobile GR parking and TDM priorities and the City's land acquisition and disposition strategies (Economic Development Strategy 4.3)
- Publish metrics and report publicly for transparency in use of the tool.

**Mechanism** New Tool; Revised Practice; Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Parking supply is expensive to construct and maintain. An effective parking expansion decision tool can enable the City to make data-based determinations on whether to allocated public dollars for supply expansion in a transparent and justifiable way. The proposed new tool – beta version and overview memo provided as an appendix -- can also be coordinated with the proposed public land acquisition and disposition strategy in this plan, for more strategic management of City land resources and economic development outcomes.

**Metrics** Return-on-Investment measures of:

- **Market Demand I** The relative value of the potential new parking supply, based on nearby parking rates and peak-hour utilization levels
- **Public Capacity Created I** The number of public and shared (half-credit) parking spaces created.
- **Private Investment Returned I** The value of private land use development directly linked to the proposed parking facility, relative to the public investment in the proposed parking.
- **Indirect Private Investment Facilitated I** The value of private land use development that is likely to be facilitated by the proposed parking facility, relative to the public investment in the proposed parking.

**New Tool** See Parking Strategies Memo for Expansion Decision Tool Detail

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## CASE STUDY

### Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) – Parking Replacement Policy and Evaluation Tool

As a result of its station-area holdings across the San Francisco Bay Area, BART is one of the larger landowners in this rapidly growing region, with the bulk of its properties located in the most central, high-demand areas of the communities they serve. Faced with continued and intensifying developer interest in these properties, the agency reassessed a longstanding 1-for-1 parking replacement policy, developing a new approach to evaluating development proposals that weighed the cost-benefit of maintaining all parking with parking that is partly or completely replaced by land uses.

The cost of full parking replacement was and remains expensive. As the ridership and investment-return benefits of transit-oriented development projects became more well-documented, BART came to realize that, in some circumstances, giving up some parking capacity might be the best thing for the ridership and fiscal bottom lines.

Before abandoning the old replacement policy, however, BART needed to develop tools to help determine 1) the right circumstances for accepting less than full parking replacement, and 2) the optimal balance of parking replacement and redevelopment at these locations. The primary tool it developed to fill this need is a Parking Replacement Model that incorporates the following measurable outcomes into its scenario-based cost-benefit projections:

- **Ridership:** The net effect of any access/replacement parking decision should be to increase BART ridership.
  - Measured as net changes in boardings associated with the parking/development levels in each scenario, based on ride-generation rates from parking versus on-site dwelling units and destinations.
- **Revenue:** Impacts to BART's net expenses and revenues for the station.
  - Inclusive of revenue from fares, parking fees, and ground rents from development
  - Measured against changes to annualized capital and operating costs
- **Mode Shift:** Impact on achieving BART's goal of gradually reducing the drive-alone share for station-based travel
- **Growth Capacity:** Impact on the long-term management of BART's system and station capacity, recognizing that long-term growth in ridership will put pressure on all access modes.
- **Station Plan Support:** Access/replacement parking decisions should contribute to achievement of the Weekday riders associated with joint development

This tool allows BART's real estate department to make strategic adjustments to its parking replacement requirements when presented with station redevelopment opportunities, to seek the optimal balance for its mission and service objectives.

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# STRATEGY 1.7



## Track investment in mobility projects, programs, & services through an equitable mobility dashboard

**Description** Each of the above strategies stands to significantly advance mobility objectives that promote equitable outcomes for Grand Rapidians. In order to measure the impacts of these efforts, Mobile GR and its partners should track investment in mobility projects, programs, & services through an equitable mobility dashboard that tracks key mobility and transportation safety indicators across geographic and demographic areas of focus. Consistent collection of data and other indicators will enable Mobile GR and its partners to more clearly communicate the benefits of new policies, tools, programs, and capital investments to communities of color, in particular, as well as to the community as a whole. Communication strategies are highlighted further under Objective 6. Opportunities to align these efforts with those under Economic Development Objective 1 should also be maximized.

- Implementation**
- 1. Develop an Equitable Mobility Dashboard**
    - Identify key performance indicators (KPI) to track progress and parties responsible for collecting/managing data. Include relevant metrics from the lists provided above, being mindful to select indicators that truly convey impact and are realistic/practical to monitor and track.
    - Establish the Equitable Mobility Dashboard, including a design that is easily managed and can readily communicate progress to both internal and external audiences. See below for an example.
  - 2. Track Progress and Communicate Results**
    - Distribute results internally, sharing across departments to communicate progress on shared goals and objective, as well as areas in need of additional attention or refinement.
    - Share results with the community on a regular basis in formats that are accessible and through mediums readily available

**Mechanism** New Tool; Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Tracking investments and impacts of mobility projects, programs, & services will enable Mobile GR and its partners to more clearly communicate the costs and benefits of their efforts. The Equitable Mobility Dashboard will improve community understanding of traffic safety, travel demand, and parking issues and resolutions, including changes to policies, programs, and capital projects. The dashboard will also help to inform City decision making in these critical areas.

- Metrics**
- Number of Dashboard indicators
  - Dashboard utilization – internally and externally
  - Dashboard understanding (qualitative) – internally and externally

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## CASE STUDY

### Plan Bay Area 2040, San Francisco, CA

Plan Bay Area 2040 is the state-mandated, integrated long-range transportation and land use plan for the San Francisco Bay Area. Per state law, all metropolitan regions in California must complete a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) as part of a Regional Transportation Plan that integrates transportation, land use, and housing to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets set by the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The Plan includes seven goals and 13 performance targets that focus, in part, on reducing the Bay Area's inequities through improved affordability and lessened displacement risk, ensuring a robust economy, and protecting the environment for future generations.

Performance-based planning is at the core of the Plan, which includes performance targets, project-level evaluation, and scenario assessment to better inform policy decisions and the public at large. A "Performance Assessment Report" was published in 2017 and included an "Equity Analysis Report" as a supplement. An interactive Project Dashboard, hosted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, enables the public to review project level results across financial (benefit-cost), climate, health, economic, access, and equity measures.



# OBJECTIVE 2

**Description** Manage transportation demand with effective TDM programs, policies, and incentives.

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** The City has an opportunity to improve upon the delivery of equitable mobility and economic development solutions by aligning the projects, programs, and services that the Mobile GR, Economic Development, and Planning departments provide. Aligning tools & incentives, zoning regulations, decision making frameworks, capital investments, and data collection & reporting methods around shared goals will provide greater impact to the Grand Rapids community. This alignment will shift travel behaviors, increase safety outcomes, and improve parking management systems.

- Outcomes**
- Project/program partners
  - Program funding
  - Program reach
  - New/additional services
  - Number of engaged organizations, workplaces etc.

# TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
2.1   Work with The Rapid to pursue equity and service goals.	Near term (1 year)		Economic Development 5.1
2.2   Establish a lead TDM provider and coordinator for Grand Rapids.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		
2.3   Expand established services.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1
2.4   Explore new mobility and transportation technologies.	Long Term (3-5 years)		
2.5   Pilot expanded TDM incentive programs.	Near term (1 year)		

## CASE STUDY

### Denver Ecopass Program, Denver, CO



Denver RTD established a formal extension of their transit pass program, requiring participating employers to offer passes to all full-time employees, the pass cost is determined by employer location, number of employees, and nearby transit options. It provides unlimited rides on a bus or train for up to one year, allows for the use of pre-tax dollars, and automatic enrollment with Guaranteed Ride Home. RTD advertises Ecopass as a recruitment and retention tool for employers. RTD also has the Neighborhood EcoPass – purchased in bulk by specific neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are eligible if they have County or City government representation or a registered homeowner association. All homes within the neighborhood are included in the contract.

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# STRATEGY 2.1



## Work with The Rapid to pursue equity and service goals

**Description** Work with The Rapid to pursue equity and service goals outlined in the 2018 ALIGN Rapid Transit Improvement Study and under development in their Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA), looking for opportunities to increase service provision and quality to Grand Rapids residents and workers.

Explore opportunities to support specific employment zones or employers, to enhance workforce transportation. Working together to explore feasibility of new pilots and partnerships that design and implement workforce transportation pilots.

**Implementation** 1. **Continue the existing working relationship with the Rapid**

- Focus the relationship on understanding the opportunities to support The Rapid in achieving the equity and service goals in the 2018 ALIGN Study and in-progress COA.
- Identify opportunities to support The Rapid in achieving goals through collaborative TDM efforts.

2. **Review and assess the previous studies**

- Assess how Neighborhoods of Focus and employment zones are being addressed in both studies, and the extent to which they promote equitable and adequate service.
- Identify any gaps in the studies to begin developing strategies together to ensure equitable access.

3. **Coordinate Regular Meetings to Discuss Opportunities for Shared Projects**

- The meetings should be focused on discussing ideas for pilots, programs and strategies that could be shared between The Rapid and Mobile GR, identifying how the projects can help both agencies achieve their goals.
- The meetings should also include a discussion to identify roles and responsibilities, funding options, and identify necessary approvals.
- Where possible, include discussions of capital and project budgeting.

4. **Identify new opportunities to improve working relationship with The Rapid**

- Create new ways to improve working relationship and leverage and maximize information related to both agencies by identifying a shared organization chart, scheduling regular meetings, and identifying opportunities to overlap and maximize resources.
- Address gaps in the annual budgeting process, relative to the staggered timelines of each agency.
- Identify data sharing opportunities and establish data sharing practices.
- Work together to identify opportunities to share costs and increase efficiencies on shared initiatives.

**Mechanism** Continued Practice

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** By increasing coordination with The Rapid, Mobile GR will increase its ability to provide programs and services and solicit support, when needed. A stronger partnership can increase the capacity of each organization, leveraging opportunities to achieve equitable TDM and service goals.

- Metrics**
- Service levels, service area and reach
  - Shared annual joint budgeting session
  - Metrics or goals identified in identified in recent planning documents and studies, such as the 2018 Align Study and in-progress COA and TOD studies

# STRATEGY 2.2



## Establish a lead TDM provider and coordinator for Grand Rapids

**Description** Grand Rapids needs a dedicated program coordinator for the variety of programs and services that are aimed at changing travel behaviors, leveraging existing or new transportation options, and reducing the demand for single occupant vehicle trips in Grand Rapids. The coordinator would serve as a recognizable, easy-to-use resource for all TDM related program and service offerings, and would lead development of programs and incentives to encourage Grand Rapids employers and employees to utilize TDM programs and shift travel behaviors. The coordinator would further develop a robust marketing plan that supports trip planning, promotes TDM programs, and increases use of commuter incentives.

- Implementation**
- 1. Establish the process necessary to gain approval to become the City’s designated TDM provider and coordinator**
    - Create an Inventory of agencies, organizations and departments from the City of Grand Rapids and elsewhere in the region that provide TDM services within the City (including regional agencies whose services are available within the City).
    - Prepare a plan to proceed through the process to gain approval and buy-in from other TDM providers in becoming the City and/or region’s designated TDM provider.
  - 2. Establish a regional TDM working group to define roles and responsibilities in program delivery and communication**
    - In line with Mobility Strategy 7.2, a regional working group will promote collaboration with key partners to define roles and responsibilities in communication, service provision, and program delivery.
    - Engage with the working group on a regular basis beyond the formal designation of a lead TDM provider to promote program optimization and utilization.
  - 3. Identify program staffing needs**
    - Identify the required staffing levels at coordinating agencies to both centralize and support regional TDM programs and services.
    - Perform an organizational review at Mobile GR of current staffing levels, roles and responsibilities to identify current capacity and additional staffing needs to enable Mobile GR to fill this role.
  - 4. Develop a business plan, to secure and organize program funding**
    - Develop a business plan to plan and manage program funding, tying it to planned programming, staffing needs etc.
    - Identify different financial models and funding options, such as membership-based models.
  - 5. Develop a marketing plan**
    - Develop a marketing plan that supports the goals of the business plan and extends the reach and awareness of the program.
    - Develop a new brand that reflects the centralized delivery of TDM programs, and increases awareness of TDM program options.

**Mechanism** New Practice, Budget Allocation, New Resource, Added Staff Capacity      **Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Centralized TDM offerings in Grand Rapids will help ensure unified and effective implementation of TDM programs and services across the city, supporting an increased awareness of TDM programs and services, and subsequently facilitating an increase in their use. Several existing agencies, including Mobile GR, The Rapid, and Grand Valley Metro Council, could serve in this role, and further negotiation and program development with these and other parties will help to identify the appropriate lead agency (or agencies).

- Metrics**
- Program consolidation
  - Program funding sources
  - Staffing
  - Program partners
  - Program reach

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## CASE STUDIES

### **Ann Arbor, MI – getDowntown Program (Strategy 2.1)**

The getDowntown program provides commuting programs and services to Downtown Ann Arbor employees and employers. Programs and services include the go!pass, the Commuter Challenge, Conquer the Cold Challenge, bike locker rentals, and free commuting assistance, materials and ridesharing information. Since 2010, the program has been housed by TheRide, the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority and public transit provider, with additional support from program partners, including the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and the City of Ann Arbor. TheRide administers the getDowntown program, and program staff are employees of TheRide. The City of Ann Arbor provides funding for the Commuter Challenge Campaigns, and the DDA provides project funding and financial sponsorship for the go!pass.

### **Santa Monica, CA – GoSaMo (Strategy 2.2)**

GoSaMo is a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) organized and funded by the City of Santa Monica. GoSaMo works directly with employers and property manager, offering free consultation to help them meet TDM requirements. GoSaMo provides a centralized location of resources of TDM services, including worksite events to encourage sustainable commutes, personalized one-on-one trip planning assistance for workers, residents and visitors, and helps create resources and materials for Employee Transportation Coordinators. GoSaMo Incentivizes employers with “GoSaMo Achievement Awards”, which recognizes employers with exemplary TDM practices, providing favorable press, social media coverage, City Council recognition, and an Awards Lunch. It also helps emphasize the City’s brand for centralized TDM services.



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# STRATEGY 2.3



## Expand established services

**Description** Expand upon established services like The Rapid's Wave card program, West Michigan Rideshare, and employer-based programs that promote access to and utilization of the region's transit network. Explore new pilots and replicate partnership efforts that address specific access needs and increase the attractiveness of transit as an affordable and desirable travel choice.

**Implementation** 1. **Work with key partners to identify and assess feasibility for the expansion of established services**

- Identify transit network, program, and service gaps and opportunities to expand existing services or complement existing networks and programs with strategic partners, in a way that ensures equitable provision of options and access to all users.
- Assess the feasibility of extending programs to address the identified network and service gaps with respect to financial, staff, and organizational capacity.

2. **Develop specific strategies with partners for expansion of established services, to extend reach of services**

- Ensure any collaborative expansion strategy, such as employer-based transit pass programs, identifies roles and responsibilities and critical partnerships with employers and community organizations that are needed for successful implementation.
- Establish key metrics, evaluation frameworks, and meeting schedules to evaluate the effectiveness of the service expansion, and to identify where adjustments should be made.

**Mechanism** New Practice, Budget Allocation, New Resource, Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Closing gaps in the provision of transit programs and services will increase effectiveness of TDM efforts and increase access to regional destinations, including employment opportunities, health care, and educational resources, for all Grand Rapidsians. Starting with pilots gives Mobile GR and its partners the opportunity to test ideas and build support for permanent implementation, prior to committing dedicated funding.

- Metrics**
- Amount of program funding
  - Number of program staff
  - Number of program participants
  - Geographic service area
  - Number of new/additional services

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# STRATEGY 2.4



## Explore new mobility and transportation technologies

**Description** Explore new mobility and transportation technologies to provide additional programs and services support, enhance, and improve connections, facilitate non-drive-alone trips, and increase utilization of TDM programs and services. Pilot promising micromobility services, including carshare, scooters and bicycles. These services should focus on making connections between low-cost parking and key destinations, creating opportunities to complete workforce commute and other trips that are not fully served by existing transit networks, and supporting first-mile, last-mile gaps, especially in low-income and zero vehicle households.

- Implementation**
- 1. Assess opportunities to determine where new mobility services and technologies could serve specific communities and evaluate cost effectiveness of new services**
    - Assess transportation network gaps and opportunities to identify areas that would most benefit from investments in new mobility and technology services.
    - Identify which new mobility services and technologies would be suitable for implementation to address gaps, and review case studies to understand how they've been applied in other cities and how they could be applied in Grand Rapids to support TDM and access goals.
    - Assess the cost effectiveness of investing in new mobility services and technologies, considering the impacts of investing in the services, such as utilization, mode shift, first-mile last-mile support etc.
  - 2. Establish partnerships and sponsorships with City departments, specific employers or organizations for a pilot rollout**
    - Identify key partnerships to help deploy, promote and manage new services.
    - To support effective implementation, work with key partners to develop shared strategies for effective implementation.
    - Identify and assign roles and responsibilities, such as funding support, and public engagement and education.
  - 3. Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan**
    - Establish key metrics, and an evaluation and monitoring schedule for any pilot to determine how new mobility achieves community goals and to gain support for permanent implementation following a pilot.
    - Upon completion of the pilot, submit the report to relevant stakeholders and decision makers to evaluate the feasibility of extending the pilot into a long-term project or permanent service.

**Mechanism** New Practice, Budget Allocation, New Resource, Added Staff Capacity      **Timeframe** Long Term (3-5 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** By piloting new services, Mobile GR will have the opportunity to determine if they are suitable for longer-time investment, and to make adjustments where necessary. These will also help provide increased connections to transit, and provide additional mobility options.

- Metrics**
- Pilot utilization
  - Cost effectiveness of 'opportunities'
  - Number of connections/reach of pilot/service area
  - Number of people served

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# STRATEGY 2.5



## Pilot expanded TDM incentive programs

**Description** Mobile GR should work with a small number of employers and service providers to pilot TDM incentive programs in strategic markets with the aim of increasing adoption and developing local best practices. The 12-24-month pilot should focus on customizing programs and incentives to address near-term opportunities and should feature collaboration with participating employers and service providers to prioritize marketing and promotion of the pilot programs. The City of Grand Rapids should lead by example, as one of the initial program participants, and should solicit participation by other agencies who have a role to play in providing TDM services. This strategy can be linked to the evolution of the equitable development scorecard (Economic Development Strategy 2.1), which includes points for approved TDM plans.

- Implementation**
- 1. Assess which markets may be limited or underserved by existing transportation and mobility options, with a focus on first-mile last-mile connections**
    - Evaluate underserved markets – including employers, employees, and geographies – that would benefit from piloting a new program or service.
    - Research these markets to decipher partners who are primed or ready for the introduction of a new program or service.
  - 2. Identify potential pilots and participants**
    - Identify strategic partners to participate in the pilot, aiming to cover a cross-section of future markets and geographies, including public agencies, financial sector firms, hospitality industry, non-profits, etc.
    - Identify potential programs – such as shuttles, incentives, and ridematching services – that could help address gaps, and begin to identify interest within these markets.
    - Develop and deliver a survey to potential pilot participants to gauge and generate interest in the pilot, both at the employer and employee level.
    - Determine which partners to include in the initial pilot.
  - 3. Solicit interest from strategic partners for development and implementation of a pilot**
    - Identify strategic partners needed to fund and deliver the pilot programs, including potential for a third-party firm to serve as coordinator during the pilot period.
    - Establish financial and program support from the City of Grand Rapids, other public agencies, philanthropic organizations, and employers to support a pilot.
  - 4. Establish and monitor clear pilot parameters**
    - Design the pilot with a timeframe that allows for substantial participation, allowing for effective monitoring and evaluation of the pilot.
    - Establish clear roles and responsibilities.
    - Work with program participants to establish baseline measures.
  - 5. Launch, administer and monitor the pilot**
    - Work with strategic partners to launch, promote, and continually monitor the pilot.
    - Identify opportunities for adjustments throughout the pilot.
    - Conduct post-pilot evaluation and reporting.

**Mechanism** New Practice, Budget Allocation, New Resource, Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

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**Potential Impact  
for Grand Rapids**

Piloting TDM programs will help Mobile GR to explore and test solutions within a range of markets, allowing the City and its partners to evaluate its potential to address specific gaps in the transportation network, while simultaneously growing partnerships and collaboration among service providers. The pilot will also help Mobile GR and its partners understand the financial and staffing capacity needed to execute a comprehensive and sustainable program in the future.

**Metrics**

- Number of pilots initiated
- Number of pilot participants
- Number of single occupant vehicle (SOV) trips reduced
- Geographic reach of new services
- Cost effectiveness
- Staffing requirements

## CASE STUDIES

### **Car4You, Detroit, MI (Strategy 2.4)**

Project Kinetic's Car4You program in Detroit provides low-cost vehicle access by the hour to customers in the Osborn neighborhood of Detroit, a low-income community with a high percentage of "unbanked" residents. The pilot program was launched in August 2019 by General Motors and the City of Detroit. Two vehicles are available to residents at \$7 per hour, parked at a community center, and are available 24 hours a day and 7/days a week. The program is overseen by Maven with support from the Osborn Neighborhood Alliance.

### **King County Metro Transit Connections Program, Seattle, WA (Strategy 2.5)**

King County Metro Transit has a reputation for creatively adapting to demand and changes in the transportation environment. To provide more effective connections, King County Metro explored leveraging alternative services and technology to increase first-mile last-mile connections. They established a transit connections program, which allows customers within predetermined service areas to use a smartphone app to request to be picked up on-demand and share rides with other customers to the nearest transit hub. The program is also available through call centers and wheelchair accessibility is offered. King County Metro programs goals include growth of fixed-route transit ridership, improved access to transit hubs in low density areas or overcrowded park-rides/limited fixed route connections, focus on equity and fairness, and the collection of operational data to inform future planning efforts.

# OBJECTIVE 3

**Description** Manage transportation demand with effective TDM programs, policies, and incentives.

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** The City has an opportunity to improve upon the delivery of equitable mobility and economic development solutions by aligning the projects, programs, and services that the Mobile GR, Economic Development, and Planning departments provide. Aligning tools & incentives, zoning regulations, decision making frameworks, capital investments, and data collection & reporting methods around shared goals will provide greater impact to the Grand Rapids community. This alignment will shift travel behaviors, increase safety outcomes, and improve parking management systems.

- Outcomes**
- Project/program partners
  - Program funding
  - Program reach
  - New/additional services
  - Number of engaged organizations, workplaces etc.

# CURB MANAGEMENT

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
3.1   Pursue an incremental approach to modifying on-street parking management and curbside regulations based on data and metrics.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
3.2   Take a proactive approach to curbside management to achieve broader mobility and economic development goals.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)

## CASE STUDY

### Seattle, WA – Curb Management

Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) manages and regulates curb space for the City of Seattle. SDOT has moved away from the idea of curbside spaces as ‘for-parking-only’ and towards planning for a variety of street and curbside functions, within each block’s mobility and land use context. This approach began with simply defining curb-use priorities, based on whether the block was located in a primarily commercial or residential context. It has since evolved to redefine curb-lane areas as “flex zones” within which a wide range of functions will complete for space. The department aims to carefully balance competing needs in curbside flex zones.

SDOT defines flex zones as the street areas between the sidewalk and travel lanes, where vehicles can park or pick up and drop off people and goods. Sometimes called the curb lane or parking area, flex zones can also be used as parklets and space for outdoor eating. Flex zone functionality can vary geographically and temporally, based on the needs of various right of way users, adjacent land uses, and the broader area. Flex Zone management seeks to allocate curb space to “safely and efficiently connect and move people and goods to their destinations while creating inviting spaces within the right-of-way.” The City views flex zones as an important tool in achieving this goal with limited street space. The City’s policies on flex zones attempt to prioritize short and flexible uses, by:

- Assessing the adequacy of the pedestrian realm before allocating space to the travel way or flex zones.
- Allocating flex zone space to accommodate access, greening, and activation functions except when the need to accommodate mobility is critical.
- Assigning space in the flex zone to support nearby land uses, support modal plan priorities, and perform multiple functions.

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# STRATEGY 3.1



## Pursue an incremental approach to modifying on-street parking management and curbside regulations, based on data and metrics

**Description** Mobile GR can utilize its investment in parking-metrics and performance-tracking systems to support an incremental approach to modifying parking regulations, rates, and enforcement methods, based on utilization data. This approach can support both the efficient operation of the public parking system – both on-street and off-street – as well as the expanding the variety of public uses of the curb space in urban and mixed-use settings.

**Implementation** 1. **Pilot Parking Program Improvements**

- Use study data to expand the downtown meter-enforcement schedule into evenings (until 10PM) and the weekends (at least Saturdays) to extend the demonstrated availability benefits of metering into these critical times.
- Monitor results and adjust schedules as necessary, including potential evening/weekend metering beyond downtown.
- Use Smarking, Motu, and ParkMobile data platform to base all adjustments on measure of availability/utilization, and a target availability range of between 75-90%.

2. **Track Progress and Refine Practices**

- Confirm “space availability” as the Key Performance Indicator for setting/adjusting parking rates and enforcement schedules
- Compile results and analyze for changes, starting with annual updates, providing a summary report of findings and responsive actions taken to provide public transparency.
- Incrementally manage public parking supplies, based on observed data across time and for defined periods, to improve utilization.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice,  
Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Parking regulations, rates, and enforcement times are not one-size fits all strategies in parking management. Rather they are all levers that can be used to encourage more balanced use of the system. An incremental approach aims for the right balance of adjusting the system to incentivize more balanced utilization, while minimizing sticker shock or punitive receptions.

**Metrics**

- Share of occupied on-street parking in Downtown and neighborhood business districts, across hours of day and days of week (Strategic Plan, with addition)
- Share of occupied off-street parking in Downtown and neighborhood business districts, across hours of day and days of week (Strategic Plan, with addition)

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## CASE STUDY

### Seattle, WA – Performance Based Pricing (Strategy 3.1)

SDOT was an “early adopter” of performance-based pricing, which uses demand-responsive parking rates to manage the impact of demand on curbside space availability throughout the city. Put simply, it charges more in locations and at times that consistently generate the most demand, and less for locations and times of reduced demand. In doing so, it rebalances demand/supply conditions at the district level, creating consistent availability where it had been lacking, by making other options more attractive to the most cost-sensitive drivers.

This approach, formally implemented in late 2010, focused on measurable performance and specified technical criteria for setting and adjusting parking rates based on availability conditions. The program’s authorizing ordinance identified an availability target of 1-2 spaces for every 8 spaces on any given block. It also directed SDOT to collect field data to track conditions against this target and determine whether rate/schedule changes should be made.

SDOT was given leeway to adjust hourly rates within a range, specified as between \$1 and \$4, in 23 paid parking areas. SDOT is authorized to vary rates by location, time of day, and other considerations, within this range, in pursuit of the availability target. The authorizing ordinance established the following objectives for establishing performance-based pricing.

- Maintain adequate turnover of on-street parking spaces and reduce incidents of meter feeding in commercial districts;
- Encourage an adequate amount of on-street parking availability for a variety of parking users, efficient use of off-street parking facilities, and enhanced use of transit and other transportation alternatives; and
- Reduce congestion in travel lanes caused by drivers seeking on-street parking.

Since implementation, SDOT has regularly documented on-street parking utilization within designated neighborhood parking districts as the basis for adjusting parking rates. SDOT has made considerable changes to rates and hours of operation based on annual assessments of parking data. The changes have varied depending on neighborhood conditions and include rate increases, rate decreases, maximum time limit increases, and evening hour extensions.

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## STRATEGY 3.2



Take a proactive approach to curbside management to achieve broader mobility and economic development goals

**Description** As in the previous strategy, Mobile GR can utilize the robust data tools at its disposal to facilitate improvements to the broader mobility network. The effective use of curbspace will factor for street typologies (as established in the Vital Streets Plan), safety criteria (as developed via Mobility Strategies 1.3 and 1.4), adjacent uses (including the needs of local businesses), and emerging technologies to make the most efficient use of this shared public space.

**Implementation** 1. **Establish Multimodal Curbside Regulations and Overlays**

- Collaborate across departments (including Mobile GR, Engineering, Planning, and Economic Development) to identify curb use priorities.
- Establish curb use regulations and overlays in both Downtown and neighborhood business districts, balancing street typologies, adjacent land uses, multimodal networks, and parking needs.
- Identify target areas for near-term intervention where conflicts exist, based on available data and community/user feedback.

2. **Implement Available Enforcement Tools**

- Issue & implement work orders to revise parking around non-compliant transit stops.
- Integrate Vital Streets Parking Management Plan and Curbside Management Best Practices into new curbside management strategies.
- Pilot new curbside approaches in strategic business districts and neighborhoods of focus to achieve improved shared access, safety, and economic development goals.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice;  
New/Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Curbspace is a limited resource in high demand, requiring a careful balance between competing needs. By taking a proactive approach to aligning multi-modal, economic development, and planning objectives to plan curbspace, the city can make this space better suited to the needs and conditions of blocks across the city, and yield greater function than possible when only planning for the needs of one travel mode.

**Metrics**

- Number of transit stop zones fully accessible (cleared of parking impeding bus path to stop)
- Modes accessible per blockface
- People/user capacity per mode per block
- Safety rating per intended user, by street typology



# OBJECTIVE 4

## Description

Invest in staff and system capacity to enable equitable and effective delivery of services that meet the mobility needs of all Grand Rapids residents.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Expanding Mobile GR objectives and responsibilities without adequately aligning staff and departmental resources will limit the potential achievement of the City's mobility goals. Success in this objective will enable Mobile GR to proactively lead the City in efforts to achieve safety, travel demand, and parking management goals, while also cultivating new leaders and champions within the community who can support and expand the benefits more broadly.

## Outcomes

- Mobile GR department budget and operating surplus/deficit
- Annual dollars and number of FTE dedicated to addressing equitable mobility objectives and core capacity areas (Vision Zero, TDM, and parking management)
- Dollars secured for expanded Mobile GR capacity from outside sources (including incentive fees, community partners, non-local government programs, etc.)
- Number or dollars of new program support in the Neighborhoods of Focus

# CAPACITY

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
4.11 Align Mobile GR strategies and department capacity.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		

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# STRATEGY 4.1



## Align Mobile GR strategies and department capacity

**Description** The growth in Mobile GR programs, services, and capital investments comes with human and financial capacity challenges related to the expanded mission and responsibilities of the department. Follow-through on the goals and objectives outlined in this plan and the citywide Strategic Plan will require Mobile GR to develop new partnerships and secure additional financial resources, aligning staff and departmental resources. The Equitable Mobility Strategic Plan and Mobile GR Organizational Assessment are being completed in tandem and should be used to align the department's strategic priorities with existing and future capacity needs. This should include the assessment of the relative balance or workload priorities that may require a tradeoff that prioritizes proactive program delivery over rapid response to community concerns

**Implementation** **1. Continue Current Efforts**

- Integrate Equitable Mobility Strategic Plan strategies into the Organizational Assessment, identifying areas of need to sustain existing programs and expand to those identified as highest near-term priorities.
- Communicate existing Mobile GR roles and responsibilities within the City administration and between departments to improve understanding and more accurately align expectations and resources.
- At a minimum, maintain existing resources for Mobile GR programs and services.

**2. Secure New Resources**

- Clarify budgetary needs for existing and expanded Mobile GR programs and services; secure City funding support to expand capacity in these areas through annual budget allocation.
- Develop existing and new partnerships to bring additional resources that support expanded mobility efforts – either through direct contributions to Mobile GR or provision of collaborative programs and services; these may relate directly to successful implementation of Mobility Strategy 1.1 and Economic Development Strategy 2.1.
- Identify new, external funding sources and opportunities to support basic and expanded Mobile GR operations, programs, and services, including signal maintenance, road maintenance, capital project and program delivery.

**3. Add Staff and Program Capacity**

- Hire new Mobile GR staff to address gaps in existing program delivery and expand efforts to new strategic priority areas.
- Develop new program tools and resources to increase efficiency and effectiveness of program delivery.

**Mechanism** Budget Allocation,  
Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

With adequate staff and financial capacity, Mobile GR and its partners can accelerate pursuit of safety, travel demand, and parking management goals, directly supporting objectives and strategies in this plan. Added capacity will also provide the department with opportunities to cultivate new leaders and champions within the community and respond directly to the need to increase understanding of mobility programs and expand the benefits more broadly, in particular in the Neighborhoods of Focus.

**Metrics**

- Mobile GR department budget and operating surplus/deficit
- Annual dollars and number of FTE dedicated to addressing equitable mobility objectives and core capacity areas (Vision Zero, TDM, and parking management)
- Dollars secured for expanded Mobile GR capacity from outside sources (including incentive fees, community partners, non-local government programs, etc.)
- Number or dollars of new program support in the Neighborhoods of Focus



# OBJECTIVE 5

## Description

Develop an asset management approach that promotes the long-term viability of the City's mobility networks.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

Asset management is key to equitably and sustainably balancing and maintaining resources in the long-term. All capital investments in modal capacity come with their own implementation, operation, and maintenance costs. As capacity increases to meet new demands, so do the other elements of management. Effective decision-making for building out and maintaining multi-modal services is therefore dependent on effective asset management. The following asset management strategies can enable the City to gain better control of existing mobility capital and operations, and make better-informed decisions about future advancements

## Outcomes

- Priced and non-priced on-street parking supply
- Annual dollars and number of FTE dedicated to addressing equitable mobility objectives and core capacity areas (Vision Zero, TDM, and parking management)
- Parking utilization across time, day, and location
- Amenities per bus stop (sign, shelter, bench, pad, waste bin, lighting, etc.)
- Percent of roads in state of good repair
- Percent of signals meeting state of good repair

# ASSET MANAGEMENT

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
5.1   Develop an asset management strategy that specifies and prioritizes safe and accessible walking and bicycling facilities and supports transit investments.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
5.2   Continually assess and evaluate the utilization and conditions of Mobile GR's parking assets.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)	  	Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods)
5.3   Establish a formal transit stop asset management program.	Near term (1 year)	   	Mobility 1.1 – 1.2 (Alignment), Economic Development 2.1 (Incentives)

## CASE STUDY

### City of Oakland 3-Year Paving Plan



Like many local jurisdictions, the City of Oakland has historically had insufficient funds to maintain street pavement quality. Passage of a local infrastructure bond and allocation of new statewide gas tax revenues increased the City's annual pavement maintenance budget three-fold.

To ensure judicious use of these new funds, City staff developed a plan to prioritize paving on streets throughout the city based on equity, street condition and safety. The plan, which was adopted by City Council in May 2019, provides a prioritization methodology for major streets and for local streets to improve neighborhood quality of life. Major streets are prioritized based on street condition and traffic safety history. Local streets are prioritized based on equity, street condition, and proximity to schools.

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# STRATEGY 5.1



Develop an asset management strategy that specifies and prioritizes safe and accessible walking and bicycling facilities and supports transit investments

**Description** Develop an asset management approach (with collaboration from Engineering, Public Services, Parks, Code Enforcement) that specifies and prioritizes safe and accessible walking, bicycling facilities and supports transit investments.

**Implementation** 1. **Coordinate Asset Management Activities**

- Develop an asset management approach (with collaboration from Engineering, Public Services, Parks, Code Enforcement) that specifies and prioritizes safe and accessible walking and bicycling facilities and supports transit investments.
- Establish a cross-departmental asset management working group that meets quarterly to develop, implement and review an asset management strategy that considers and coordinates with transportation safety for all modes in planning and design.
- Identify how assets under management of each department impact safe and accessible walking and bicycling, particularly to key destinations such as schools, healthcare, parks, employment, and shopping, and connections to transit.

2. **Prioritize Improvements**

- Utilize the equity framework to prioritize coordinated investment in asset improvement and maintenance.
- Leverage resources (funding and staff time) across departments to increase safe and accessible walking and bicycling.

**Mechanism** Revised Practice;  
Revised Policy

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** The actions of city departments are grounded in the same overall goals. However, efforts can often become siloed and lose focus on how daily activities are connected to the goals and to each other's work. An asset management strategy can lead to better coordination of project prioritization, more efficient utilization of limited resources, and increased transparency on the equitable impacts of assets on safe and accessible mobility for more vulnerable road users.

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## STRATEGY 5.2



### Continually assess and evaluate the utilization and conditions of Mobile GR's parking assets

**Description** Mobile GR should continually assess and evaluate the utilization and conditions of its publicly held parking assets in order to proactively regulate and manage what it controls, and decipher and plan for investment, acquisition, and disposition decisions. This strategy builds from the implementation of Mobility Strategies 1.5 – 1.6 and 3.1 – 3.2, while also integrating well with Economic Development Strategy 4.3 (relative to developing a public land acquisition and disposition strategy).

**Implementation** 1. **Utilize Mobile GR's Significant Data Management Resources**

- Continue to monitor utilization of the City's robust on- and off-street parking assets to inform regular adjustments
- Use parking-metrics and performance tracking systems to make incremental changes to parking management (regulations, rates, etc.), improve parking utilization, and increase the supply of available parking, where needed.

2. **Secure New Resources**

- Utilize the parking expansion decision tool (Mobility Strategy 1.6) to guide strategic investments in new parking assets, where needed.
- Consider short-term investments to support incremental growth in both downtown and neighborhood commercial districts, and long-term investments in capital facilities to support mobility, economic development, and fiscal objectives.

3. **Track Implementation, Revise Practices, and Communicate Results**

- Continually track and evaluate utilization, regulatory changes, and results.
- Communicate progress through the City's network of public agency and community partners to both inform the public of changes and share feedback on results.

**Mechanism** New Practice, New Policy, New Tool, Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 Years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Parking supply is expensive to construct and maintain. Continuous assessment of utilization and conditions enable the City to keep records and make informed data-based decisions on system balancing. This can also feed the parking expansion decision tool in Strategy 1.6, and be coordinated with the proposed public land acquisition and disposition strategy in this plan, for more strategic management of City land resources.

- Metrics**
- Priced and non-priced on-street parking supply
  - Priced and non-priced off-street parking supply
  - On-street parking utilization across time, day, and location
  - Off-street parking utilization across time, day, and location
  - Available parking supply within 0.25 mile of full-capacity facilities during peak times

**New Tool** See Parking Strategies Memo for Expansion Decision Tool Detail

# STRATEGY 5.3

## Establish a formal transit stop asset management program



**Description** Transit stops throughout the City include a range of fixtures, amenities, and physical conditions that support and sometimes hinder rider experience. Mobile GR can work with The Rapid and other community partners who own or maintain transit stop fixtures to establish a framework for transit stop asset management that assesses these conditions and creates an objective and sustainable installation and maintenance approach. There is an immediate opportunity to do this in line with The Rapid’s Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA) and the upcoming shared investment in 120 new bus shelters throughout the City.

- Implementation**
- 1. Continue Current Efforts**
    - Complete memorandum of understanding with The Rapid on transit stop asset management standards and responsibilities; include other community partners as appropriate.
    - Catalogue (or confirm, via the COA) all existing and planned transit stops, their associated amenities, ownership, and maintenance responsibilities.
  - 2. Establish New Standards**
    - Review current thresholds for transit assets like benches, shelters; identify and specify new thresholds for other transit stop elements such as trash cans, real time signage, etc.
    - Codify standard stop designs, including spacing between front/rear vehicle doors, bench, shelter, trash receptacle standards, etc. and incorporation of clear stop zone requirements.
    - Work with The Rapid to develop a bus stop network plan that articulates a long-term plan for network changes, such as stop relocations or amenity installations.
  - 3. Develop Supportive Tools and Resources**
    - Develop a public facing “checklist” of criteria that communicates clearly what conditions must be met to warrant certain stop improvements.
    - Develop an operational transit stop sponsorship program for third-party support of stop elements, including approaches to sponsor recognition and equitable distribution of benefits across the system; this can be coordinated alongside Mobility Strategies 1.1 – 1.2 and Economic Development Strategy 2.1.

<b>Mechanism</b>	New Practice, New Policy, New Tool, Added Staff Capacity	<b>Timeframe</b>	Near-term (within 1 year)
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**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** This strategy will help to expand the capacity of existing supporting agencies, like Mobile GR, The Rapid, and DGRI, to improve and maintain transit stop infrastructure throughout Grand Rapids. It will also clarify the standards, process, and responsibilities for adding and maintaining stop amenities. An equitable approach will address gaps in accessibility and service quality for people with disabilities across all City geographies, regardless of access to financial capital. For example, sponsorships for Downtown stations can be matched with “buddy” stops in Neighborhoods of Focus, ensuring investment and improvement in both locations simultaneously.

- Metrics**
- Number and share of ADA compliant transit stops
  - Number and share of stops compliant with newly codified standards
  - Dollars of sponsorships and investments at stops systemwide and in Neighborhoods of Focus



# OBJECTIVE 6

## Description

Establish comprehensive communications, outreach, and education programs that reach and engage Grand Rapids residents, workers, and visitors.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

While many recent planning efforts have incorporated transportation planning principles and priorities, often in direct response to community inputs, there remains a general lack of understanding and awareness of the resources available within the community and of the decisions that are being made on a regular basis about the mobility systems that Grand Rapidians rely upon every day. Whether a resident of the 3rd Ward, a school principal in Roosevelt Park, a developer in Downtown, or a business owner in the West Side, improved communications, outreach, and education programs can improve the City's understanding of the issues that most affect its citizens and elevate the community's role in the process of devising and implementing solutions. As with each of these objectives and their supporting strategies, this stands to engender plans and investments that benefit a broader cross-section of the community and promote equitable mobility outcomes, while also aligning with the City's Strategic Plan priority for an "engaged and connected community."

## Outcomes

- Number of community members engaged in Mobile GR efforts, including demographic indicators, where available
- Number of community engagement "events" led by Mobile GR
- Number of mobility related engagement "events" led by community partners
- Qualitative feedback from community members on participation and sense of involvement/inclusion

# COMMUNICATION

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
6.1   Commit to the process of engaging community.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods), 5.3 (Economic Growth)
6.2   Empower community members to shape the shift to a traffic safety culture.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		
6.3   Implement a comprehensive communication strategy.	Immediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 4.3 (Neighborhoods), 5.3 (Economic Growth)

## CASE STUDY

### Rochester, NY – Neighborhood Service Centers



Rochester’s Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs) bring City administrative resources together with neighborhood residents to collaboratively respond to community issues where they are happening. Each of Rochester’s four geographic quadrants is home to a center and a “Quadrant Team,” which is comprised of City staff across departments who are equipped to address problems, cultivate community partnerships, and “promote strength, stability, pride and empowerment” in Rochester’s neighborhoods. The teams serve as champions for citizens and other stakeholders by eliminating barriers to providing results oriented, cost effective services. The NSCs achieve these goals in the community through various outreach efforts, including job fairs, community walks, home repair workshops, open houses, and annual reports to the communities they serve.

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# STRATEGY 6.1



## Commit to the process of engaging community

**Description** Mobile GR and its partners should commit to the process of engaging the community by meeting people where they are, learning from the dialogue & process, and budgeting for people’s time and efforts. This strategy should focus on a series of efforts to inform, solicit feedback, and empower the community around mobility priorities. Following this approach has yielded dividends in past work, as a deeper level of involvement in all stages of a planning and project development process engenders greater buy-in and follow-through once the plan and/or resulting project are complete.

**Implementation** 1. **Continue Current Efforts**

- Build on past successful efforts, including Vital Streets, Green Grand Rapids, and GR Forward, each of which engaged a broad cross-section of the community and led to actionable plans with demonstrable results.

2. **Expand Efforts to Increase Impact & Reach**

- Hire neighborhood residents as facilitators and ambassadors in neighborhood-level planning processes; retain them beyond the planning stage to serve as stewards and champions of the plan through implementation.

3. **Provide Resource Hubs**

- In coordination with other City departments, open a series of community-based "resource hubs," employing local residents and providing mobility, economic development, planning, and other information and resources.
- Prioritize the Neighborhoods of Focus for early implementation.
- Explore opportunities to expand into additional locations.
- This strategy may be implemented in coordination with the Economic Development "Information" objective.

4. **Provide Resource Hubs**

- Track community participation and leadership in these efforts and the level of collaboration with external partners working to advance Grand Rapids mobility objectives; include these measures in the Equitable Mobility Dashboard referenced in Strategy 1.7.

**Mechanism** Added Staff Capacity,  
Budget Allocation

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

By engaging the community in meaningful ways, Grand Rapids can elevate the levels of participation across the community and in geographic or demographic areas where engagement has typically been more challenging and less productive. Properly valuing the contributions of community members who are willing to invest significant time and effort in these efforts through financial compensation will help to engender additional buy-in and support from community leaders, further sustaining this work from planning through implementation and evaluation.

**Metrics**

- Number of community members engaged in Mobile GR efforts, including demographic indicators, where available
- Number of community engagement "events" led by Mobile GR
- Number of mobility related engagement "events" led by community partners
- Qualitative feedback from community members on participation and sense of involvement/inclusion (see objectives 2-4 in the City's Strategic Plan)

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## STRATEGY 6.2



### Empower community members to shape the shift to a traffic safety culture

**Description** Engaging the broad community of Grand Rapids is critical in order to build and maintain trust, identify missing data, and to move toward a culture of prevention in transportation safety through an understanding and empathy of transportation modes, rights, and “rules of the road.”

**Implementation** 1. **Work with Community Organizations to Design Engagement**

- Develop contextual transportation safety messaging and resources with neighborhood associations, CIAs and community organizations
- Collaborate with these organizations to design events for engagement on transportation safety

2. **Provide Channels for Local Advocacy and Involvement**

- Develop a community liaison/ambassador program
- Amplify the voices and perspectives of youth, older adults, families, persons with disabilities and communities of color

**Mechanism** Revised Practice,  
Added Staff Capacity,  
New Tools

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Engaging the community is critical for the development and maintenance of credibility and trust.

- Metrics**
- Number of community engagement activities per year
  - Distribution of community engagement activities throughout Grand Rapids
  - Percent of community reached/engaged at engagement activities, by demographics such as age, race, and gender
  - Percent change in community culture around transportation modes, rights, and "rules of the road"
  - Meeting participation by people of color and low income

## CASE STUDY

### Vision Zero, Portland OR

The Portland Bureau of Transportation convened a 26-member task force including agency and civilian representatives to help shape its Vision Zero Action Plan. Although community groups working in high collision corridors (who did not have traffic safety as an organizing principle) were included in the task force, the absence of African American members made it unreasonable to develop key positions about the role of law enforcement. The Committee recognized that race and law enforcement could not be discussed in an informed way, with people who regularly experience systemic racial bias, with potentially deadly consequences. The recruitment of Black voices onto the Task Force, enabled conversation which concluded in a decision not to increase police activity, and to limit the enforcement actions in the plan in order to reduce the possibility of racial profiling and disparate economic impacts.



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# STRATEGY 6.3

## Implement a comprehensive communication strategy



**Description** Working across disciplines and departments, Mobile GR and its partners should implement a comprehensive communication strategy that connects the dots between the goals, objectives, strategies, and implementation efforts of the Equitable Economic Development and Mobility Strategic Plan. A unified strategy can help to communicate capacity needs and advance critical partnerships, both internally and externally, while also increasing understanding of issues and awareness of resources available to the community.

**Implementation** 1. **Establish Guiding Principles**

- Confirm the purpose of each engagement effort, whether to inform, solicit feedback or empower the community, as outlined in Strategy 6.1.
- Ensure consistency and clarity in message, process and timelines; these are important to establishing community trust and credibility.
- Establish ongoing communication between project development and delivery teams; consider having one or two project development staff stay engaged during the delivery phase, and one or two delivery staff engaged with project during project development phase.

2. **Facilitate Interdepartmental Collaboration**

- Coordinate communication efforts across Mobile GR, Economic Development, Planning, the Office of Communications, and other departments to ensure comprehension and consistency, as well as efficiency in messaging and delivery.

3. **Share Reports on Key Performance Indicators**

- Share the Equitable Mobility Dashboard (Strategy 1.7) internally and with the community at large, ensuring that it is readily available and easy to understand.

**Mechanism** New Practice, New Tool, Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1-3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

A consistent, clear, and comprehensive communication strategy can help to establish trust, transparency, and awareness, while also alleviating confusion (and resulting opposition) relative to Mobile GR's efforts at policy and/or program changes that improve service delivery and efficiency and provide broad community benefits.

**Metrics**

- Number of messages/reports to the community
- Qualitative feedback from community members on understanding of mobility goals, objectives, strategies, and implementation efforts



# OBJECTIVE 7

## Description

Cultivate and capitalize upon strategic partnerships and collaboration opportunities to achieve the City's equitable mobility goals.

## Potential Impact for Grand Rapids

By establishing and building upon strategic partnerships, Mobile GR will be better equipped to identify opportunities to align strategies, work toward shared goals, and increase the capacity of both the City and its partners in achieving equitable mobility goals.

## Outcomes

- Number of community members engaged in Mobile GR efforts, including demographic indicators, where available
- Number of community engagement “events” led by Mobile GR
- Number of mobility related engagement “events” led by community partners
- Qualitative feedback from community members on participation and sense of involvement/inclusion

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

## Strategies

Strategy	Timeframe	Focus Areas	Integration
7.1   Partner with strategically positioned employers, institutions, public agencies and community organizations.	Near Term (1 year)	  	Economic Development 1.2 (Information)
7.2   Collaborate at a regional level to pursue TDM opportunities.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1 (Economic Growth)
7.3   Partner with local agencies and institutions to leverage safe systems improvements.	Intermediate Term (1-3 years)		Economic Development 5.1 (Economic Growth)

## CASE STUDY

### Seattle, WA – Transportation Equity Workgroup

The Seattle Department of Transportation established their Transportation Equity Program in 2017 and subsequently adopted a Transportation Equity Resolution to confirm the City’s commitment to providing “safe, accessible, affordable, and environmentally sustainable transportation options to people experiencing disproportionate transportation equity outcomes.” The Transportation Equity Workgroup (TEW) launched in 2019 to contribute to the development of a Transportation Equity Agenda, which will serve as a framework for transportation equity goals and priorities. TEW members will provide valuable community-guided insights into recommendations for solutions to eliminate racially disparate outcomes related to transportation in Seattle. The workgroup will also develop leadership capacity and a deeper understanding of the issues within the community, while building community trust and partnership. The TEW will initially endeavor to meet once per month over the course of one year, meeting with the community, City staff, and other transportation partners in facilitated discussions. Members were selected from the City’s marginalized communities and are compensated for their time.

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# STRATEGY 7.1



## Partner with strategically positioned employers, institutions, public agencies and community organizations

**Description** Mobile GR's existing capacity limits its ability to serve all Grand Rapidians adequately across the strategies outlined above. Partnering with strategically positioned employers, institutions, public agencies, and community organizations can significantly increase the City's reach, comprehension, and legitimacy in planning, implementing, and evaluating projects, programs, & services that improve safety outcomes and increase access to jobs, education, and essential services.

**Implementation** 1. **Define Needs**

- Identify gaps in Mobile GR's service delivery that can be addressed by community partners.
- Evaluate which communities and employers have mobility gaps – especially with respect to transit access – to identify which employers and organizations will be most critical in establishing partnerships.
- Identify current level of engagement with the identified employers and organizations to inform an engagement strategy.

2. **Facilitate Collaboration**

- Create an equitable mobility working group comprised of community organizations, service agencies, public officials, and individuals to continue a focused dialogue on transportation equity and drive change. This group can be advisory to the Mobile GR Commission and can coincide with the transportation safety working group identified in Mobility Strategy 1.3.
- Outline opportunities for collaboration to address shared goals, focusing on non-traditional models that will resonate with prospective partners and target audiences.
- Develop an engagement and outreach strategy to promote existing programs, services, and benefits; uncover new capacity, and execute new approaches

**Mechanism** Revised Practice,  
Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Near-Term (within 1 year)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

Strategic partnerships can increase Mobile GR's reach, in terms of engagement, understanding, program development, service delivery, and evaluation. Not only will community members, companies, and organizations be more involved in developing and delivering critical services, they (and their constituents) will also benefit from improved access to social, cultural, and economic opportunities throughout the region.

**Metrics**

- Number of relationships and strategic partnerships
- Number of engaged partners
- Leveraged resources
- Number of shared strategies and goals
- Additional community members served by new services

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## STRATEGY 7.2



### Collaborate at a regional level to pursue TDM opportunities

**Description** Collaborate at a regional level with Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, The Rapid, Kent County, MDOT, and other agencies and regional partners on TDM programs and services. Evaluate opportunities to coordinate on existing planning efforts (for instance, through The Rapid’s Comprehensive Operations Analysis), and work to promote existing programs available in Grand Rapids, such as West Michigan Rideshare. Together, a collaborative approach will increase visibility and use by individuals and employers throughout the region, and will increase the capacity of local partners, including Mobile GR and DGRI, to reach the region’s workforce commuters and travelers of all types who need increased access to jobs, services, education, etc.

- Implementation**
- 1. Identify regional partners that currently provide TDM programs and services**
    - Confirm the status of partnerships and relationships with regional partners, to determine if there are opportunities to improve collaboration.
    - Review and assess planning documents to identify opportunities to align goals and programming through collaborative efforts and reduce duplicative efforts.
  - 2. Establish a regional TDM working group**
    - Establishing a regional TDM working group will allow regional partners to identify opportunities to work together, develop a shared approach, and to provide an opportunity to share progress updates, changes and other performance related updates.
    - Identify opportunities where Mobile GR can promote and leverage existing regional TDM programs and services and increase their staffing capacity by leveraging shared strategies and programming with regional partners.

**Mechanism** Added Staff Capacity;  
Revised Practice

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1 – 3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids** Centralizing TDM programs and services will better enable Mobile GR to focus efforts and work directly with the County and other partners in succinctly coordinating TDM efforts and strengthening a coordinated regional effort.

- Metrics**
- Number of shared initiatives
  - Number of coordinating meetings
  - Incorporation of shared goals in regional strategy and planning documents
  - Dollars in regional/pooled funding

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# STRATEGY 7.3



## Partner with local agencies and institutions to leverage safe systems improvements

**Description** Partnerships with local agencies and institutions – including first responders, hospitals, schools, and service agencies – can increase Mobile GR’s capacity to proactively identify, target, fund, implement, and monitor priorities for safety investments and change. Working closely with these local partners can help to advance a safe systems approach and pursue a proactive and strategic approach to capital and safety investments, in line with Mobility Strategies 1.3 and 1.4.

**Implementation** 1. **Engage and Collaborate with Partners**

- Work with Disability Advocates of Kent County, The Rapid and others to understand and address areas of acute concern for people with mobility challenges.
- Develop a data sharing agreement between regional trauma, public safety and Mobile GR to enable a more complete understanding of collisions and the parties involved in them.
- Support Age Friendly GR, Safe Routes to School, and Safe Routes to Parks efforts.
- Engage with Grand Rapids Public Schools to identify needs and facilitate a comprehensive safety effort, including a system-wide plan and plans for individual schools.

**Mechanism** New Practice, Added Staff Capacity

**Timeframe** Intermediate Term (1 – 3 years)

**Potential Impact for Grand Rapids**

There are several organizations and agencies working in the area of transportation safety within Grand Rapids, either directly or indirectly. Better communication and coordination of both infrastructure and programming activities can increase transparency, allow partners to proactively respond to opportunities such as funding and program development, and increase the efficient use of resources. Data sharing can also help the community better identify areas of concern and opportunity for transportation safety, in particular, data sets that are not currently available and that can help promote equity outcomes.

- Metrics**
- Number of ongoing relationships (i.e. through boards, committees, standing meetings, etc.) between various local and regional agencies.
  - Number of priorities or investments identified as a direct result of partnerships and collaboration.
  - Leveraged resources (time, data, funds) due to partnerships and collaboration

## CASE STUDY

### Safe Routes to School, Los Angeles CA

The Los Angeles Unified School District has more than 500 campuses in the City of Los Angeles. For many years school related traffic safety concerns were addressed on a case by case basis by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), via communication from District Facilities staff. In order to systematically identify schools of highest need for upcoming funding opportunities the Los Angeles Department of Transportation developed a prioritization methodology that used four key factors to determine which schools would receive a suite of infrastructure and non-infrastructure countermeasures. The four factors include number of bicycle or pedestrian involved collisions, proportion of student residences within ¼ mile from school, number of students eligible for Free-Reduced Price Meals, and lack of prior state or federal Safe Routes to School funding. The data sharing partnership required a shared commitment to equitably improving school zone safety, that developed through regularly occurring meetings and relationship building.



# GRAND RAPIDS

## EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY STRATEGIC PLAN

January 2020

