

MEMORANDUM

CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

DATE: July 13, 2020

TO: **City Commission**

FROM: **Stacy Stout**
Assistant to the City Manager

CC: **Mark Washington**
City Manager

James Hurt
Public Services Director

SUBJECT: My GR City Points Program

The mygrcitypoints program began in 2011 as an incentive for residents to use the then-new single stream recycling system. Users could earn points for every tip of their recycling cart. Points could then be redeemed for rewards offered by local businesses. Phase 2 of the mygrcitypoints program allowed users to earn points for volunteering in the community.

While the program was successful in its early years, participation has plateaued and enrollment by local businesses has slowed considerably. For example, compared to the Grand Rapids estimated population of over 200,000, there are only 15,991 program participants and 10 different rewards being offered. We attempted to increase business rewards through staff outreach and contracts with diverse community partners, however the outcomes were not what we had hoped, and those contracts were not renewed when they ended in December 2018. It is also important to note that the key original purpose, single stream recycling, has become normalized and now there are more effective supports for Micro Local Business Enterprises (MLBE) being rolled out. We are shifting to more targeted and evidence-based approaches.

As a result, the City will be ending the mygrcitypoints program effective September 1, 2020. We will continue to encourage the community to recycle and volunteer in our neighborhoods and will explore new and creative ways to do so. With the mygrcitypoints ending, program staff will transition to work on various projects and efforts around City community engagement.

This decision was made with support from the Public Services Department, Office of Sustainability and Performance Management, and the Assistant City Manager.

Mygrcitypoints users may continue to earn points through August 8, 2020. These points must be redeemed by August 31, 2020. On September 1, 2020 all remaining points will

be surrendered. We requested and received a legal review that confirmed that the City is under no legal obligation to continue the program.

Public communication will strategically begin July 15th as the first two weeks of July have historically had high 311 call volume due to summer property tax notices. We expect an uptick in 311 calls due to this program announcement and will have scripts in place with 311.

Users will be sent individual communication notifying them of the program ending and encouraging them to continue to recycle and volunteer. Communication will also be sent directly to business vendors informing them of the program end date, offering them appreciation for their participation and support resources such as COVID-19 relief funding opportunities, MLBE registration information and other information they may find helpful.