



Certification Report

City of Grand Rapids

May 2018

MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Table of contents

Executive summary	4
Methodology	5
Best practice findings	
1.1—The plans.....	6
1.2—Public participation	8
2.1—Zoning regulations	9
3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures	10
3.2—Guide to Development.....	12
4.1—Recruitment and orientation	13
4.2—Education and Training.....	14
5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®	15
6.1—Economic development strategy.....	16
6.2—Marketing and promotion	17
Conclusion	18

Executive summary

Redevelopment Ready Communities® (RRC) is a certification program supporting community revitalization and the attraction and retention of businesses, entrepreneurs and talent throughout Michigan. RRC promotes communities to be development ready and competitive in today's economy by actively engaging stakeholders and proactively planning for the future—making them more attractive for projects that create places where people want to live, work and invest.

In September 2016, Grand Rapids received a baseline report after being evaluated under the statewide RRC program. The report identified several areas the city needed to address prior to receiving RRC certification. Communities must demonstrate that all best practice evaluation criteria have been met to be awarded RRC certification.

Grand Rapids is committed to the RRC best practices and has taken the necessary steps to ensure the city's long-term competitiveness. The city commission, planning commission and staff have worked diligently to bring their policies, procedures and plans up to date and in line with RRC best practice criteria. Grand Rapids is a forward-thinking community that has laid the groundwork for significant redevelopment and renewal.

Following the guidance of the 2016 RRC report of findings recommended actions, the capital improvements plan was extended an additional year, which identified projects that will support implementation for the vision of Grand Rapids city-wide. An economic development strategy was created, providing an overarching plan

with goals toward improving the economic health of the community. The strategy is organized under the guiding principles of a thriving and diverse economy, strong employment and job growth and access to economic opportunity. Most impressively, City of Grand Rapids created an online interconnected guide to development. The development center is truly a one-stop location where developers, business owners or residents can readily find information on permits, agendas and relevant zoning information. The process flowchart and development project process generator are key features that will surely assist City of Grand Rapids on continuing to streamline the development process.




The city should be proud of the hard work accomplished and transformations that have taken place to become the 20th community to be certified statewide. Grand Rapids has positioned itself to strengthen local quality of life. Achieving RRC certification is a statement to the private sector that the city has a vision for the future and the development process is streamlined, predictable and user-friendly. It is important to acknowledge that the work does not end here. Moving forward, Grand Rapids should build upon its successes by continuing to engage the public, strategically updating the master plan and capital improvements plan, proactively marketing prime redevelopment opportunities and implementing economic development and marketing strategies. RRC certification is effective for three years, provided the certification requirements are maintained throughout that time period.

The basic assessment tool for evaluation is the RRC best practices. These six standards were developed in conjunction with public and private sector experts and address key elements of community and economic development. A community must demonstrate all of the RRC best practice components have been met to become RRC certified. Once received, certification is valid for three years.

Measurement of a community to the best practices is completed through the RRC team’s research, observation and interviews, as well as the consulting advice and technical expertise of the RRC advisory council. The team analyzes a community’s development materials, including, but not limited to: the master plan;

redevelopment strategy; capital improvements plan; budget; public participation plan; zoning regulations; development procedures; applications; economic development strategy; marketing strategies; and website. Researchers observe the meetings of the community’s governing body, planning commission, zoning board of appeals and other committees as applicable. In confidential interviews, the team also records the input of local business owners and developers who have worked with the community.

A community’s degree of attainment for each best practice criteria is visually represented in this report by the following:

	Green indicates the best practice component is currently being met by the community.
	Yellow indicates some of the best practice component may be in place, but additional action is required.
	Red indicates the best practice component is not present or outdated.

This report represents the final findings of the evaluation of City of Grand Rapids redevelopment processes and practices. All questions should be directed to the RRC team at RRC@michigan.org.

Best practice findings

Best Practice 1.1—The plans

Best Practice 1.1 evaluates community planning and how the redevelopment vision is embedded in the master plan, downtown plan and capital improvements plan. The master plan sets expectations for those involved in new development and redevelopment, giving the public some degree of certainty about their vision for the future, while assisting the city in achieving its stated goals. Local plans can provide key stakeholders with a roadmap for navigating the development process in the context of market realities and community goals. The Michigan Planning Enabling Act (MPEA), Public Act 33 of 2008, requires that the planning commission approve a master plan as a guide for development and review the plan at least once every five years after adoption.

With the support of over 120 outreach meetings to identify area-specific values and issues, identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, City of Grand Rapids' master plan was adopted in 2002. The master plan is continually amended through the adoption of several area-specific plans, including the most recent downtown plan, "GR Forward," which was formally approved by the Grand Rapids city commission on December 15, 2015. The area-specific plans focus on providing appropriate recommendations that best suit the needs of area residents, business and property owners. The area-specific plans establish goals in order to insure consistency with the policies and recommendations of the master plan, such as:

- Promoting transit and walkability;
- Assigning appropriate and recreational land use classifications;
- Providing standards and design guidelines for land uses and development character consistent with the master plan.

The master plan, along with the area-specific plans identify priorities for redevelopment areas by encouraging mixed-use, new building designs to be compatible with value characteristics of an area, the visual quality and walkability of all area streets, and reducing dependence on the automobile by encouraging the use of transportation alternatives, including transit, cycling and walking. Chapter 6, "Balanced

Transportation," of the master plan embraces land-use decisions that will help reduce dependence on the automobile and guide infrastructure improvements that will shape the development of safe walkable streets and bike routes.

The implementation section of the master plan includes action items, identifies champions, and outlines an action summary and timelines to keep track of progress. Many of the items are ongoing efforts that are reviewed annually in order to ensure up-to-date policies, processes and strategies are in place. The plan also provides linkage between the future land use map, shown in Chapter 2 of the master plan, and the zoning designations, provided in the zone districts chart in Article 4 of the zoning ordinance.

"GR Forward" serves as a 10-year community plan focused on the future of downtown, the Grand River and public schools—important city and regional assets. "GR Forward" is focused around six goals that will assist the city in their vision to be a connector between great city neighborhoods, with opportunities for job growth, stimulation of private investment and a welcoming environment to all residents, and visitors to the area. The plan does an outstanding job identifying goals designed to enrich the quality of life for residents by building partnerships, providing design concepts, providing high quality education environments, identifying challenges and opportunities, and providing a set of recommendations, time frame, responsible party and source of funds in order to implement the vision.

An adopted capital improvements plan (CIP) provides a consensus document for city staff to coordinate and implement public improvements. To meet this best practice and the requirements of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, City of Grand Rapids needed to add an additional year to the CIP. The capital improvements plan is found online under the budget office webpage now provides an additional column for future funding requirements. All projects identified are essential for the city in order to achieve the connections and placemaking initiatives identified within the "GR Forward" plan and master plan.

Best Practice 1.1—The plans *continued*

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The governing body has adopted a master plan in the past five years.	✓
		The governing body has adopted a downtown plan.	✓
		The governing body has adopted a corridor plan.	✓
		The governing body has adopted a capital improvements plan.	✓

Best practice findings

Best Practice 1.2—Public participation

Best Practice 1.2 assesses how well the community identifies and engages its stakeholders on a continual basis. Stakeholders are frequently engaged in the planning process and City of Grand Rapids demonstrates that public participation efforts are proactive. Grand Rapids employs both traditional and proactive outreach and engagement activities, including but not limited to: charrettes, community workshops, focus groups and social networking which is evident from recently adopted documents. While Grand Rapids demonstrates excellent public engagement efforts, the city was tasked to develop a formalized public participation plan that can be used as a tool for incoming staff, stakeholders, applicants and elected officials on the best consistent method of public outreach.

Grand Rapids' public participation plan identifies key stakeholders to engage, methods for engagement and processes that need public participation. The plan includes 10 goals, including but not limited to:

- Conduct all aspects of public participation in an open manner, accessible to all interested persons;
- Identify and involve a broad and representative cross-section of the community's residents;
- Engage a diverse set of community stakeholders in community planning, land-use decision making, and development review process;
- Support and encourage effective participation by

making information available in a timely manner, so as to enable citizens to be involved in important decisions at various stages of the review and approval process.

The plan identifies the best public outreach methods specific to public participation in community planning and development review. City of Grand Rapids has included a set of strategies for public participation that are grouped together by their level of impact. Those groups include outreach tools for:

- Social and traditional media;
- Consultative methods;
- Involving methods;
- Collaborative methods.

Results stemming from public participation will be made available to the community and participants via updated plans. City of Grand Rapids comprehends that as new technologies become available there will always be new and creative ways to engage citizens, and Grand Rapids will continually update the strategy as needed to ensure enhancements to the plan are implemented. The plan serves as the city's best practices for input and provides recognition of the value of public input throughout planning and policy development toward building consensus and buy-in from community stakeholders.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community has a public participation plan for engaging a diverse set of community stakeholders.	✓
		The community demonstrates that public participation efforts go beyond the basic methods.	✓
		The community shares outcomes of all public participation processes.	✓

Best Practice 2.1—Zoning regulations

Best Practice 2.1 evaluates the city’s zoning ordinance and assesses how well it regulates for and implements the goals of the master plan. Zoning is a significant mechanism for achieving desired land use patterns and quality development. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MZE), Public Act 110 of 2006, requires that a zoning ordinance be based on a plan to help guide zoning decisions. Grand Rapids’ zoning ordinance was adopted in 2007 and last amended in 2017. The zoning code can be found online under the city’s planning page. The zoning ordinance may be downloaded for free to save or print a copy if needed. A visually appealing 10-step illustration is also provided to show a resident, applicant or potential investor how to use the zoning ordinance. On this page, a series of tools are also provided to assist a user with initiating zoning text amendments, look up a location on a zoning map, reporting a zoning complaint, property use verification and a zoning ordinance abbreviations cheat sheet.

City of Grand Rapids code of ordinances meets all of the Best Practice 2 criteria, a code that truly reflects a consistent theme set by the master plan, area-specific

plans and the GR forward downtown plan. A vision that allows for:

- A wide range of types of housing;
- Building height, materials, façade variation, entrance, transparency and transitional features through form based code elements;
- Mixed-use by-right in concentrated areas of development;
- Options to develop for compact, walkable and mixed-use urban design through form based code elements;
- Diverse forms of development by allowing flexible parking standards and environmental preservation standards derived from the 2008 “Green Grand Rapids Plan.”

As City of Grand Rapids grows and the master plan evolves, Grand Rapids should continually ensure alignment between the zoning ordinance and master plan. Grand Rapids should also occasionally revisit allowable uses to ensure that the community will continue to attract desired new economy-type businesses.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The governing body has adopted a zoning ordinance that aligns with the goals of the current master plan.	✓
		The zoning ordinance provides for areas of concentrated development in appropriate locations and encourages the type and form of development desired.	✓
		The zoning ordinance contains flexible zoning tools to encourage development and redevelopment.	✓
		The zoning ordinance allows for a variety of housing options.	✓
		The zoning ordinance includes standards to improve non-motorized transportation.	✓
		The zoning ordinance includes flexible parking requirements.	✓
		The zoning ordinance includes standards for green infrastructure.	✓
		The zoning ordinance is user-friendly and accessible online.	✓

Best practice findings

Best Practice 3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures

Best Practice 3.1 evaluates the city's site plan review policies, project tracking and availability of development information. The purpose of the site plan review process is to ensure that plans for specific types of development comply with the zoning ordinance. An efficient site plan process is integral to being redevelopment ready and can assist a community in attracting investment dollars. The framework for City of Grand Rapids site plan review process is clearly documented under Title V, "Zoning and Planning Ordinance," including the roles of the governing body, staff, zoning board of appeals and the planning commission.

Excellent customer service is a priority for the city, as outlined in City of Grand Rapids' customer service standards. City staff has created a variety of methods to give applicants a better understanding of the site plan review process, some of those methods include:

- A visual development process flow chart that provides a timeline guidance on city process and presents a color coded system that identifies applicant action or city action required.
- A development project process generator. This is a unique user-friendly tool in which questions are provided pertaining to a development project and after those questions are answered the generator provides a "what you should do next?" informational page depending on the questions answered and saves all your data so it can be presented to the appropriate staff contact.

Both the flow chart provided and public participation plan encourage applicants to seek input from adjacent property owners/occupants. This is a key step as it has the potential to help with significant public opposition or concerns that can slow down the review and approval of a project and ultimately cost the developer time and money. Often, public concern arises out of limited or incorrect understanding of a project. By soliciting public input early in the process, well before required public meetings and hearings, neighboring residents

and business owners can make concerns known to the developer, potentially preventing or minimizing disputes before they become an obstacle.

The status of both planning and building permits can be tracked by the public via an online, interactive web portal that allows for quick search by address or through the map. Developers, residents, business owners and neighbors can view a brief description of the work, including issuance date and current status of the permit. A dashboard link on the development center webpage provides an at-a-glance look at major project permits issued in the previous month, and permitting trends over time. Project status transparency through use of the web-based tracking tool provides greater likelihood of a smooth and predictable experience for developers, residents and business owners, and offers Grand Rapids a competitive advantage for attraction of new investment. The internal review team, comprised of planning, building, traffic, engineering, water, sewer and stormwater, meets weekly to review the site plan process and project status. These regular meetings are highly important, as stakeholder feedback emphasized the need for continued focus on managing and continuously improving coordination between planning staff and building staff in order to provide ample opportunity for identification of potential barriers and issues early on.

The opportunity for customers to give additional feedback regarding services is provided on the development center webpage, by clicking on the inspection services customer feedback or development center feedback links. The planning commission annual report provides an opportunity to highlight the results of the development review process feedback, including instances where changes were integrated. Maintaining streamlined, well-documented development review policies and procedures ensures a smooth and predictable experience during the city's development review process; this is key to enticing investment to a community.

Best Practice 3.1—Site plan review policy and procedures *continued*

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The zoning ordinance articulates a thorough site plan review process.	✓
		The community has a qualified intake professional.	✓
		The community defines and offers conceptual site plan review meetings for applicants.	✓
		The community encourages a developer to seek input from neighboring residents and businesses at the onset of the application process.	✓
		The appropriate departments engage in joint site plan reviews.	✓
		The community has a clearly documented internal staff review policy.	✓
		The community promptly acts on development requests.	✓
		The community has a method to track development projects.	✓
		The community annually reviews the successes and challenges with the site plan review and approval procedures.	✓

Best practice findings

Best Practice 3.2—Guide to Development

Best Practice 3.2 evaluates the availability of the community’s development information. Land use planning and development is a process that involves a wide range of stakeholders. For the process to work effectively, everyone involved must know their roles and responsibilities. Development materials should be assembled to help citizens, developers and public officials gain a better understanding of how the development process works.

City of Grand Rapids has assembled all required documents into their webpage, “Development Center.” If a developer is looking to locate a project in the city of Grand Rapids, or a person is looking to build a home, do any electrical work, know applicable fees, or access

permit information, the development center provides links, process information and permit applications all in one location. Finding all the information in one place is important as it saves time, and makes it easier to do business with City of Grand Rapids.

Conveniently, Grand Rapids’ fee schedule is reviewed annually during the budget process to ensure that costs are fair and affordable for their customers. Building permit fees are listed by permit type on the development center webpage, as are the land-use development services fees. Applicants can get an estimate of their building permit fees by using the fee calculator tool. The city accepts credit cards as a form of payment which provides customers with a convenient method to pay development fees.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community maintains an online “Guide to Development” that explains policies, procedures and steps to obtain approvals.	✓
		The community annually reviews the fee schedule.	✓

Best Practice 4.1—Recruitment and orientation

Best Practice 4.1 evaluates how a community conducts recruitment and orientation for newly appointed or elected officials and board members. Numerous boards, commissions and committees advise city leaders on key policy decisions. City of Grand Rapids maintains an elaborate boards and commission's webpage that provides information on existing boards and commissions, promotes board diversity and lists information on regional boards and commissions. A description is included for each board, identifying what they do. By clicking on the identified board or commission one is interested in, more detailed information about the board is provided along with meeting details, current members, and requirements for membership.

City staff has created an application for open board and commission seats that is available online and can be submitted by mail or email to the city clerk's office. The

applicant provides information that includes residency, property ownership, past or current service on a board or commission and references. City staff also provides a citizen board or commission member handbook and statement of privileges and duties describes the responsibilities of the boards and commissions, which details the number of members, term length and service limitations.

Assisting newly elected officials and appointees with learning basic information about the structure and processes of government and community and economic development is vital to them playing a part in the city achieving its goals and objectives. Orientation prepares officials to understand roles, and promote trust and a good working relationship between staff and officials it also helps them become more effective when making decisions for City of Grand Rapids.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community sets expectations for board and commission positions.	✓
		The community provides orientation packets to all appointed and elected members of development-related boards and commissions.	✓

Best practice findings

Best Practice 4.2—Education and training

Best Practice 4.2 assesses how a community encourages training and tracks training needs for appointed and elected officials, board members and staff. Grand Rapids has a training budget allocated for appointed officials and staff. Trainings provide officials and staff with an opportunity to expand their knowledge and ultimately make more informed decisions about land use and redevelopment issues. Tracking training is a useful way to identify future training needs by documenting education received, identifying gaps and determining what types of training should be focused on in the future. The human resource department uses the “City University” system to track training attendance. Keeping staff and elected officials up-to-date on knowledge obtained from training is essential, a summary of completed training opportunities will now be added to the planning commission’s annual report. The planning commission and city commission meet annually to discuss the planning commission’s annual report and work on goals for the following year.

On-going communication between the governing

body, boards, and staff provides an opportunity to share new and relevant information resulting in more consistent land use processes and decisions. Elected and appointed officials are provided with pertinent training announcements through email and staff keeps a list of trainings offered by the Michigan Association of Planners, Michigan State University citizen planner series, and in-house training sessions.

Continued education is very important to keep up with policy changes and staying up to date with new planning practices. Below is a list of organizations that can provide training resources the city can continually explore and even possibly share on the city’s intranet:

- MEDC
- Michigan Municipal League
- MSU Extension
- Urban Core Collective
- Planetizen
- The Right Place
- Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community has a dedicated source of funding for training.	✓
		The community identifies training needs and tracks attendance for the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓
		The community encourages the governing body, boards, commissions and staff to attend trainings.	✓
		The community shares information between the governing body, boards, commissions and staff.	✓

Best Practice 5.1—Redevelopment Ready Sites®

Best Practice 5.1 assesses how a community identifies, visions and markets their priority redevelopment sites. Communities must think strategically about the redevelopment of properties, and investments should be targeted in areas and properties that have the potential for positive future redevelopment. Focusing on the redevelopment and reuse of a single property can catalyze further development around it. Grand Rapids identifies and prioritizes priority redevelopment sites, as listed on the economic development webpage. Two sites are actively being marketed online with a detailed map, desired uses, utilities available, parcel description, property photos, city amenities, and owner information. The existing sites identified are:

- Walker View Site
- Grand Rapids Commerce Center

The Walker View property information package is a

visually-pleasing publication, which provides a wealth of community information to assist a prospective investor in learning about the Grand Rapids community. The package includes property highlights, “Why West Michigan” highlights, and background community demographic data, identifying how Grand Rapids fits into the region.

On the same webpage in which the sites are located, City of Grand Rapids provides a number of financing and incentive options to help a business grow. Incentives vary depending on location and type of development proposed. A business guide, an overview of Grand Rapids, maps, and plenty of other resources are offered on the same webpage. Continued collaboration with local stakeholders identified in the public participation plan and other partner organizations for the promotion of properties will provide maximum exposure of priority Grand Rapids sites both statewide and nationally.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites.	✓
		The community gathers preliminary development information for prioritized redevelopment sites.	✓
		The community has developed a vision for the priority redevelopment site(s).	✓
		The community identifies available resources and incentives for prioritized redevelopment sites.	✓
		A “Property Information Package” for the prioritized redevelopment site(s) is assembled.	✓
		Prioritized redevelopment sites are actively marketed.	✓

Best practice findings

Best Practice 6.1—Economic development strategy

Best Practice 6.1 evaluates what goals and actions a community has identified to assist in strengthening its overall economic health. Strategic economic development planning is critical to attract jobs and new investment in communities. City of Grand Rapids economic development roadmap is found in the objectives and policies of the master plan. The city has taken great measures to develop an overarching economic development strategy, called “City of Grand Rapids Economic Development Current State,” that implements key strategies from existing plans by providing goals, actions, timelines and responsible parties. The mission of the plan is to, “Retain and foster employment opportunities by improving our business environment and encouraging sustainable business development. Our economic development effort is aimed at facilitating greater levels of economic prosperity through innovation, collaboration and the linking and leveraging of resources.”

The plan provides a number of goals toward improving the economic health of the community, organized under the guiding principles of a thriving and diverse economy, strong employment and job growth and access to economic opportunity. Main goals derived from common themes from various plans include:

- Reuse of brownfield property
- Predictability for the development and investor community
- Sustainable development
- Job creation
- Public/private partnerships

- Mobility: Coordinate job centers with transit
- Broaden access to economic opportunity for all citizens
- Quality of development
- Diverse economic base

Coordination with the regional economic development strategy and regional partners is key to economic development; the economic development plan does a great job identifying partners to support goals that will drive economic development opportunity in Grand Rapids. Continuing to work with community and regional partners to offer diverse employment opportunities, support existing businesses and continued efforts to sustain vital, vibrant downtown and neighborhood business districts is the aim for City of Grand Rapids. The economic development strategy is intended to be reviewed periodically in order to insure community progress toward its goals as the economy changes over time.

A key piece to accomplishing the strategies identified is having a capital improvements plan to implement and support the vision. As mentioned earlier the comprehensive capital improvements plan is an essential tool for the planning and development of the physical and economic well-being of a community. The capital improvements plan for City of Grand Rapids does just that, and includes various projects ranging from landscaping, construction of pathways, roadwork, traffic safety, non-motorized transportation and water/sewer improvements. All projects play a significant role in how the city builds itself in order to attract outside investment.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The governing body has approved an economic development strategy.	✓
		The governing body annually reviews the economic development strategy.	✓

Best Practice 6.2—Marketing and promotion

Best Practice 6.2 evaluates how the community promotes and markets itself. Community marketing and promotion can take many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that rekindles community pride and improves consumer and investor confidence. Grand Rapids has a variety of amenities and assets that sets them apart from other communities; from being an arts and entertainment hub to providing top notch education and health care. Promoting the city as a destination for locally sourced food and drink boosts culinary tourism and draws in individuals seeking an authentic experience of the local heritage and culture. A formal marketing and branding campaign has been developed in collaboration with the city’s regional economic development partner, The Right Place Inc. The marketing strategy does an outstanding job providing guidance on how to promote a positive city image that will attract people to live, work, invest and explore the community.

The steps addressed in the plan will help ensure coordination with local, regional and state partners, as

this strategy includes promoting existing plans, sites, opportunities, and priorities for what the city wants to become. The marketing strategies outlined will direct efforts to positively market the Grand Rapids community to state, national and international investors who are seeking a vibrant, action-oriented and coordinated community in which to invest.

Key to the marketing efforts is Grand Rapids’ city website, designed to provide relevant information in a succinct, user-friendly and visually appealing way. City of Grand Rapids has recently launched a new website that was updated and redesigned in order to be easy to navigate, with pertinent planning, zoning and economic development information. Anything pertaining to planning can be found in the “Development Center” webpage. Links to property information packages have been added to the city website. Grand Rapids has several social media pages that are updated on a regular basis with various announcements and events, providing an excellent means of engaging a broad group of stakeholders.

Initial RRC evaluation Sept 2016	Final RRC evaluation May 2018	Evaluation criteria	Recommended actions for certification
		The community has developed a marketing strategy.	✓
		The community has an updated, user-friendly municipal website.	✓

Conclusion

City of Grand Rapids has exhibited a strong commitment to improving their redevelopment readiness and has worked diligently to meet the best practice criteria and achieve the Redevelopment Ready Certified Community® designation. The city has found a balance between removing unnecessary delays and hurdles, while preserving the integrity of the community's vision and goals, positioning the city for success. Grand Rapids has set an example for the region as a leader in community revitalization. Certified communities signal a proactive, business friendly environment to developers and investors. Upon certification, the MEDC will assist in marketing a certified community's top Redevelopment Ready Sites® if packaged to the best practice standard.

RRC certification lasts for three years, if all best practice criteria are maintained and the city will be required to submit biannual progress reports to the RRC team.

In today's competitive economy, developers and businesses can invest anywhere. Certified Redevelopment Ready Communities® signal that locating a new business or growing an existing one within their municipality is straightforward. Grand Rapids, like many other communities will have challenges ahead. The city has developed the tools to address those challenges by streamlining the review process and improving customer service, to ensure the city remains a competitive and attractive community for business and talent attraction.



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is the state's marketing arm and lead advocate for business development, talent and jobs, tourism, arts and cultural grants, and overall economic growth. The MEDC offers a number of business assistance services and capital programs for business attraction and acceleration, entrepreneurship, strategic partnerships, talent enhancement, and urban and community development.