

1.0 - Introduction

1.1 - Purpose

What is a Master Plan?

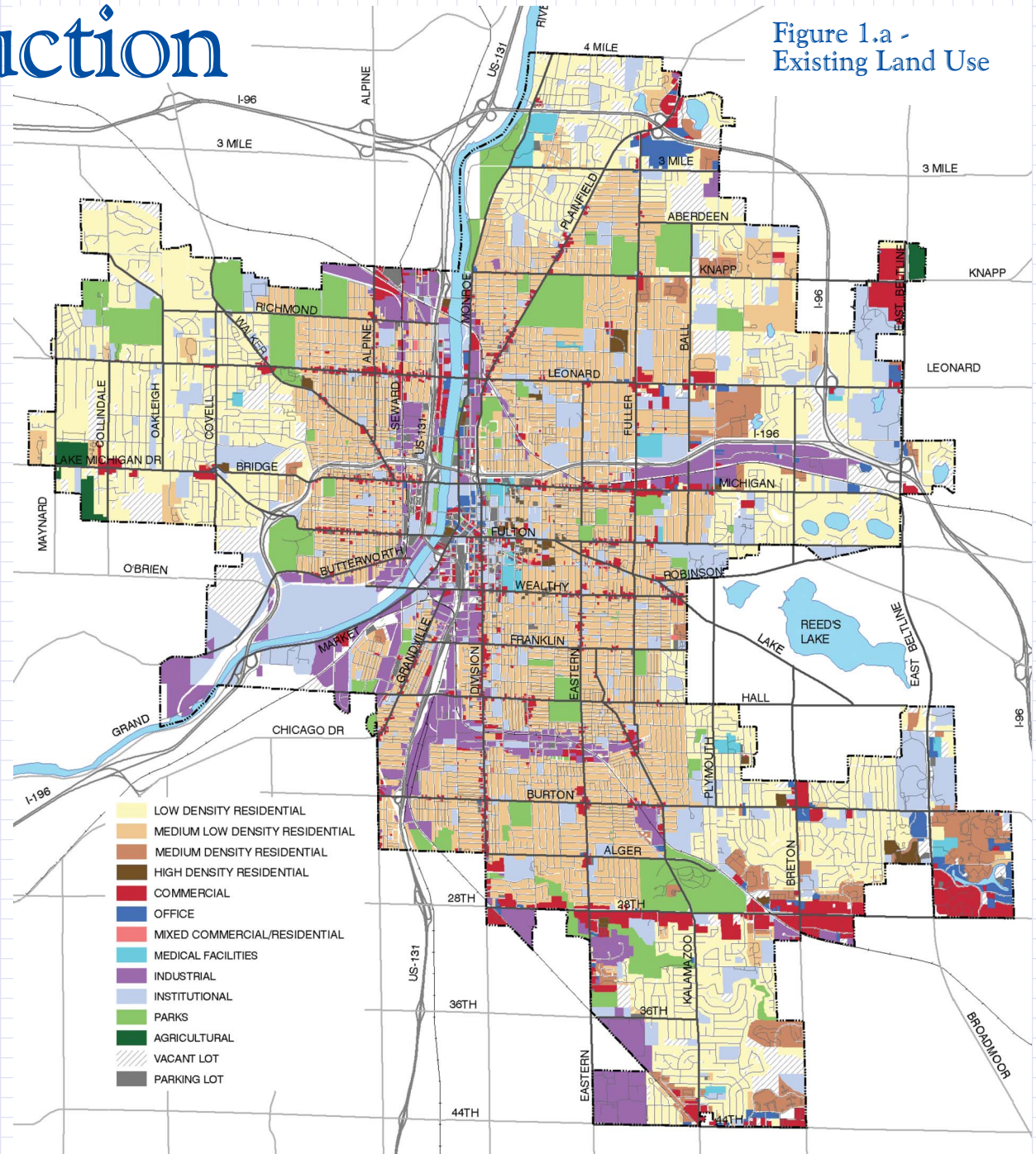


A master plan is a set of long-range objectives, policies and maps used to guide the growth and development of a community. In general, the goals of a master plan are to:

- identify existing conditions and trends, and the issues and opportunities they raise, as a basis for decision-making;
- clarify and gain consensus on goals and objectives for the future;
- establish policies to manage change and to guide decisions about future land use¹ and development;
- provide the foundation for setting capital improvement priorities, revising zoning regulations and developing other implementation tools.

¹Land can be used for a variety of purposes, for example housing, businesses or parks. The Master Plan recommends the future use of land within the city.

Figure 1.a - Existing Land Use





1.2 - Grand Rapids' Master Plan

While a master plan typically looks 20 years or more into the future, it must be re-assessed and updated at regular intervals. Grand Rapids' last Master Plan was adopted in 1963. Although the city has been continuously involved in planning (and the Master Plan has been amended many times), the community's vision for the future had not been comprehensively evaluated for a very long while.

This updated Master Plan records the community consensus on a new vision for Grand Rapids. That vision covers a broad range of topics that are important to quality of life (for example, schools, public safety or job training); however, the Master Plan focuses primarily on those land use, development and infrastructure issues on which city policy can have a direct impact.² This is because the Master Plan is used by the Planning Commission, City Commission and city staff as a guide for day-to-day decision-making in:

- developing and applying policies and regulations (for example, zoning and other ordinances, guidelines and area-specific plans that describe what kinds of development can occur where);
- approving (and/or suggesting modifications to) development proposals; and
- assigning resources for capital investments and programmatic initiatives.

The Master Plan is also an important vehicle for communicating Grand Rapids' policies for the future to adjacent jurisdictions as the basis for coordinating land use, open space and transportation decisions. Just as importantly, the Master Plan communicates expectations and preferences about future develop-

Purpose of a Master Plan

Planning is a process for reaching carefully considered decisions about what we want the future of our community to be. A master plan has multiple purposes.

Plan as Vision

- To reach consensus on, document and communicate the outcomes the community wants to achieve.
- To serve as a catalyst for private sector investments that support those outcomes.

Plan as Blueprint

- To translate the vision into land use and transportation patterns that can be used as the basis for zoning and for funding infrastructure improvements.

Plan as Strategy

- To describe the tools the community can use to encourage desired private investment (both "carrots" and "sticks").
- To coordinate city programs, policies and funding to support desired outcomes.

A master plan looks comprehensively at the range of factors that influence the physical development of a community. It establishes a citywide policy framework that provides clear direction for the future, while maintaining enough flexibility to respond to a variety of situations and changing conditions. A master plan establishes the type, density and character of development that is appropriate in different areas of the community, including where new development should occur and where resources should be directed to revitalize or reuse already developed areas. A master plan also identifies important natural and cultural resources to be protected and provides a framework for determining where streets and other public infrastructure will be needed.

²During the planning process, issues that were not directly related to the Master Plan were recorded and forwarded to appropriate city departments and Community Resource Teams (CRTs).

ment to property owners, developers and business people. As a result, the Master Plan can serve as a catalyst for change by introducing new ideas and development models. It can also eliminate much of the “guesswork” from the development approvals process.

It is important to remember that the public sector can help to encourage and guide investment; but it is the private sector – from individual homebuyers to major corporations and institutions – that will actually make investment happen. A clear understanding of what the citizens of Grand Rapids want, and how the city administration intends to support and manage development, will establish a more predictable climate for investment and encourage economic development.

What’s Special about this Master Plan?

While master plans share many common elements, each one is tailored to meet the particular needs of the city for which it is developed. It should reflect the values and visions of the citizens who participated in the planning process. The following characteristics distinguish the Grand Rapids Master Plan:

Public Involvement - The Plan is a citizen-driven effort based on extensive community participation.

Development Character - The Plan goes beyond broad, citywide policies for land use and transportation to make the quality and character of development a major planning consideration.

Downtown and the Balance of the Community - The Plan builds on previous planning for the future of the Downtown area, but focuses its attention on the balance of the community.

Utilities - The Plan establishes a framework for utilities master planning to be undertaken in 2002, but does not include specific utilities recommendations. (A separate, comprehensive utilities plan will be completed in 2003.)

Smart Growth Principles - The people of Grand Rapids have embedded the principles of Smart Growth in their Plan for the future.

Next Steps

The completion and adoption of the Master Plan is a significant milestone. But the process of implementing the Plan – through the many public and private decisions that influence the health and character of the city’s neighborhoods, business districts, economy, and the natural and built environment – is the real hard work. This will require:

- a clear understanding of plan recommendations;
- leadership of elected and appointed officials;
- coordination and commitment of city staff;
- cooperation of developers, investors and the business community;
- continuing participation of concerned citizens and community groups.

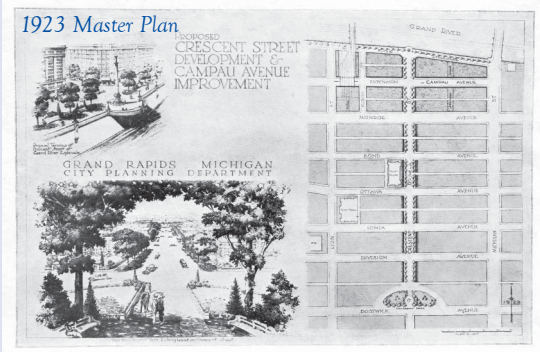
The process of developing a master plan identified the need for more detailed work on a variety of topics. First and foremost is the need to revise the city’s zoning ordinance to be consistent with, and to implement, plan recommendations. In addition, the preparation of area-specific plans that translate the Master Plan into more detailed recommendations for land use, transportation, open space and development character are anticipated. Other follow-up initiatives range from the development of an inventory of environmentally sensitive areas to the development of design guidelines that promote the compatibility of new development with the character of existing neighborhoods.



Principles of Smart Growth*

- Strengthen, and direct development towards, existing communities.
- Mix land uses.
- Encourage compact development patterns and building design.
- Create a range of housing choices and opportunities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Create walkable and accessible neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive development with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve farmland, open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas.
- Encourage stakeholder and community collaboration.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective.

*Adapted from The Smart Growth Network

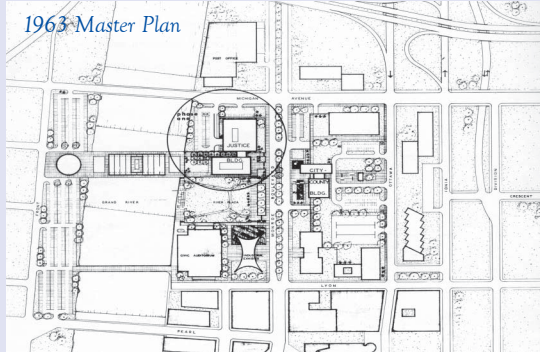


City of Grand Rapids Master Plans

This Master Plan is the city’s third comprehensive land use plan. The city’s first plan was developed in 1923 by Harland Bartholomew and the City Planning Department. The second plan was completed by J. Paul Jones, Planning Director, and his staff in 1963. Nearly forty years later this new Master Plan builds on past lessons learned and looks towards the future with great optimism. The four-decade time span between each plan provides an interesting perspective in changing planning philosophies and community goals as each clearly reflects the thinking of its time.

Master Plan	Planning Philosophy
1923	City Beautiful Movement
1963	Urban Renewal
2002	Urbanism (New or Old)

City Beautiful Movement - Urban spaces were intended to reflect culture, art and beauty during the early part of the 20th century. The creation of city parks and gathering places was important. By virtue of the city’s beauty and quality of life, an ever increasing number of residents would be attracted to Grand Rapids. This school of thought combined with the wide-



spread use of mass transit (buses, interurban lines, rail) envisioned a green, walkable, dense, and transit-friendly city.

Urban Renewal - A number of ideas within the 1963 Plan sought to drastically change the landscape of the core-city. The general philosophy was “out with the old and in with the new”. The central city was viewed as blighted and in need of modernizing. At the same time, the federal highway system was rapidly being developed. As a result, a number of historic and cultural resources were lost within the city and newly developed areas of the city were built for easy automobile access.

Urbanism (New or Old) - New Urbanism espouses the values of centuries-old traditional urban design to create, or re-create, communities. Ironically, many of the recommendations of the 1923 Master Plan closely reflect the values and ideas of Grand Rapids’ citizens in 2002. The concepts of sense of community, civic space, walkability, mixed-use, transit-friendly design, housing variety and a reduced dependency upon the automobile are central to both plans.

1.3 - Guiding Principles

Early in 2000, Mayor John H. Logie appointed a 31-member steering committee to guide the preparation of the city’s Master Plan. The Master Plan Committee selected a consultant team, helped to develop the planning process and worked with city staff and the consultants to maximize community participation and to shape the content of the Plan. In spring 2001, the Committee established the following guiding principles for their work. These principles influenced both the planning process and the content of the Plan; they also establish benchmarks for implementation.

Partnership

We make decisions and accomplish our plans in an open, inclusive and collaborative manner. We empower people to contribute their ideas, work toward consensus and take responsibility for achieving a shared vision of the future. We work in partnership - neighborhoods, businesses, investors, non-profits, institutions, schools, city government and surrounding jurisdictions - to capitalize on the synergy of pooled resources and expertise.

Leadership

We count on our community leaders and decision-makers to contribute to our vision and work creatively and aggressively to make it a reality. Our leaders encourage the early involvement of affected parties in developing appropriate planning strategies. They help us focus on shared goals to manage change.

Choice

We honor the diversity of our community by providing choices in housing and neighborhood types, transportation modes, shopping and job opportunities and recreational and cultural offerings.

Economic Health

We understand that our city's ability to attract and retain business, jobs and households is the economic engine that drives investment in new development and the improvement and reuse of older areas of the city. Our city's economic health also determines our fiscal capacity to provide public investments and quality public services. We recognize the importance of broadening access to economic opportunity for all our citizens.

Balance

We recognize the importance of maintaining a balance between economic (and job) growth, neighborhood preservation and environmental stewardship. We are committed to protecting and improving the valued characteristics of our central city while encouraging change that will make the best use of vacant and under-used land and buildings. We support a balanced transportation system that offers attractive alternatives to automobile use.

Quality

We believe that quality in the design and maintenance of private development and the public realm makes a difference to the quality of our lives. We support design approaches that honor context, compatibility, authenticity and the human scale. We support maintenance strategies that keep our city clean, green and safe.

Access

We are committed to creating a pedestrian-friendly city that also provides convenient connections over longer distances. We support transit, but we also need a quality roadway system that minimizes negative traffic impacts. We manage parking so that its impact on the pedestrian scale and visual quality of our city is minimized.

Sustainability

We care about the environment, the availability of resources for future generations and the integrity of natural systems. We aspire to the Hannover Principles (*Page 105*). The choices we make will protect natural resources, capitalize on existing infrastructure and honor the principles of Smart Growth. We support actions that conserve the cultural and physical heritage of our community.

La Grande Vitesse by Alexander Calder on Calder Plaza.



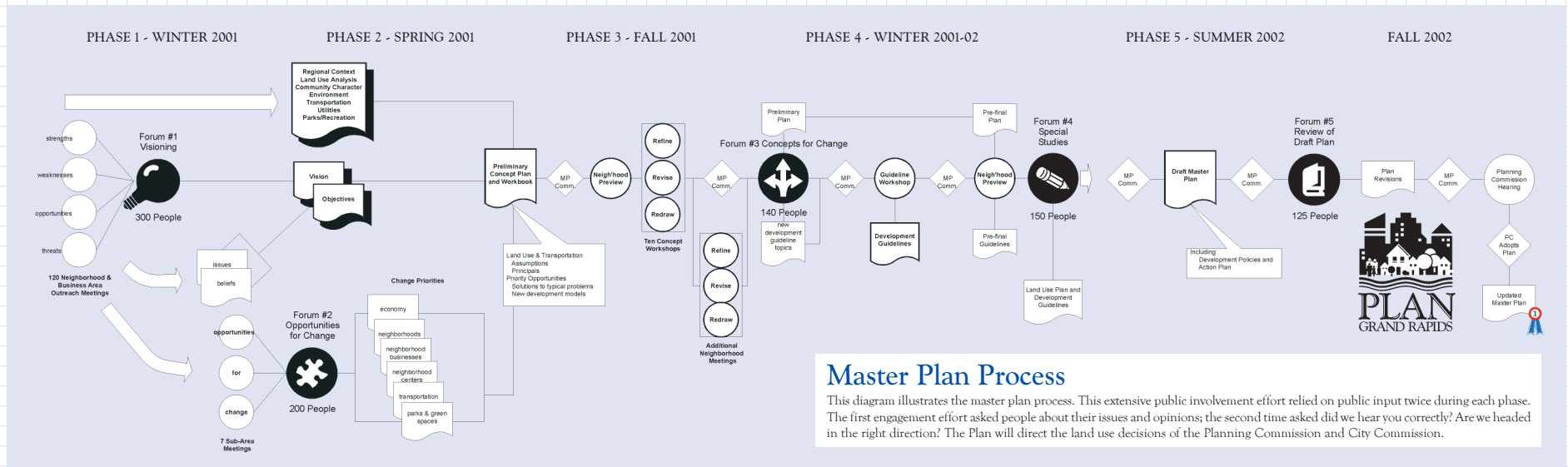


Figure 1.b - Master Plan Process

1.4 - Process

The master plan process officially began on January 8, 2001. This extensive public involvement effort relied on public input twice during each phase (*Figure 1.b - Master Plan Process - Page 6*). The first engagement effort asked people about their issues and what they thought; the second time asked: Did we hear you correctly? Are we headed in the right direction? The planning process was structured in five major phases that included the following tasks:

Phase 1 - Issues and Opportunities

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analyses
- Community profile

Phase 2 - Opportunities for Change

- Visions
- Map locations where changes in land use or development are anticipated, desired or feared

Phase 3 - Concepts for Change

- Develop preliminary ideas for translating visions and prioritizing opportunities for change into a citywide approach to land use and transportation
- Concepts for change workbook and meetings

Phase 4 - Guidelines for Change

- Sample development guidelines (principles of the quality, character and compatibility of development)
- Special studies

Phase 5 - Plan Recommendations

- Draft plan report
- Community review
- Public hearing
- Adoption

1.5 - Community Participation

The planning process was designed to maximize citizen involvement and to gain consensus on plan recommendations. Hundreds of meetings held throughout the planning process were attended by more than 2,500 residents, business people, employers, property owners and institutional representatives.

Community participation was structured to balance the need to take the planning process to the people and the need to bring people from across the city together to share perspectives and confirm citywide directions at key milestones.

1.5.1 - Area- and Interest-Specific Workshops

At the start of the master planning process, over 120 outreach meetings were held to identify area-specific values and issues. Neighborhood and business organizations were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analyses) relating to their areas. Focus group meetings were also scheduled with various interest groups (i.e., major employers, environmental groups and developers) to get their special perspectives. As planning progressed, additional outreach meetings were held in different city sub-areas to identify and discuss opportunities for change, to review concepts for change and to evaluate special studies that illustrated how plan recommendations might be applied in four specific areas. These area- and interest- specific workshops allowed participants to share information, identify key issues and evaluate possible planning solutions.

The Master Plan process was designed to gain consensus on plan recommendations.

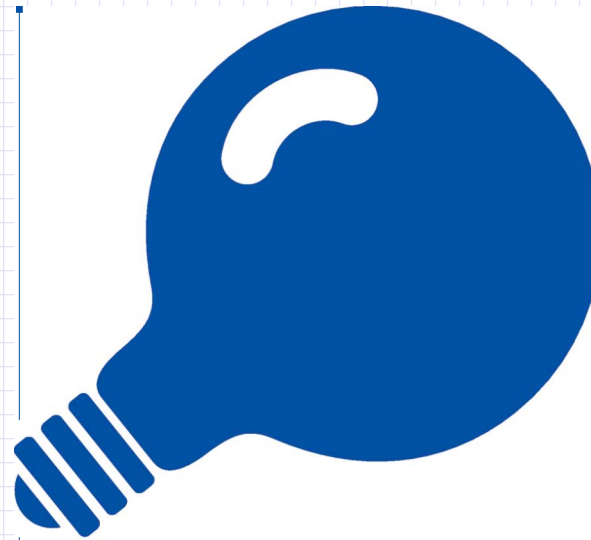




1.5.2 - Community Forums

At key milestones in the planning process community forums were held to encourage people from different parts of the city to share their perspectives and to solicit feedback on how accurately citizen input was being synthesized and interpreted. In addition to the community forums, in February 2002 a citywide workshop was held to help define the content of development guidelines for mixed-use, higher density residential development and green space in the central city. Nearly 100 people participated in the one-day workshop.

Five community forums, each attended by 125 - 300 people, focused on the following tasks:



PLAN AHEAD!

How would you like to see Grand Rapids change in the next 20 years? • Tell us on Tuesday, March 20th, at the first Master Plan Community Forum called "Visioning". That's when you and other people who live and work all over the city can put your heads together to help shape Grand Rapids' future • Find out how people view our City. What are its bright spots? What could be better? • Build on those ideas. In 20 years, what should Grand Rapids offer to people who live, work or visit here?

Plan ahead! Join us at Central High School on Tuesday, March 20th at 6:00PM. Park in the lots on Lyon Street or at City High/Middle. Please enter through the main front doors facing Fountain Street.



The parking lot at Fountain Street and Prospect Avenue NE and the west entrance will be reserved for the disabled. Questions? Please call us at (616)456-3031 or go to: www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us.

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2001 • 6-9PM
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL - 421 FOUNTAIN NE

Community Forum #1

Tasks: Prioritize beliefs and issues from SWOT analyses; develop visions for the future for priority topics. (March 2001)



GOT PLANS?

Share your ideas on June 19 at Community Forum #2 called "Opportunities for Change." • Join interested citizens as we look at Grand Rapids like a puzzle. Let's identify those areas that need a new "piece" of development. • Think about how the puzzle pieces of our community could be reworked to fit differently, function better and improve our quality of life. • Where do opportunities for change exist? • How should these areas be prioritized? • Which changes are most important?

Got Plans! Join us on June 19 from 7:00 - 9:00PM We will be meeting at Union High School, 1800 Tremont NW, (between Bridge Street and Leonard Street NW, one block east of Covell Avenue). The



school is ADA accessible. All Plan Grand Rapids events are open to the public. Questions? Call the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department at (616) 456-3031 or visit the web at: www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us.

TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2001 • 7-9PM
UNION HIGH SCHOOL - 1800 TREMONT NW

Community Forum #2

Tasks: Review, amend and prioritize opportunities for change ideas gathered from area-specific workshops. (June 2001)



MAKE PLANS!

On November 15, we'll be talking about "Concepts for Change" the first draft of ideas for Grand Rapids' new Master Plan. • Should we... Attract more people to live in Grand Rapids? Reconnect the Grand River to the West Side? Build walkable neighborhood centers? Create a competitive city? • Have we listened to the community? Is everything in the right place? Is anything missing? • Community Forum #3 is the halfway point in the planning process. • Help set the direction for the future!

Make Plans! Join us on November 15 at Ottawa Hills High School (south side of Burton SE, between Kalamazoo & Plymouth). Entrance is ADA accessible. Everyone is always welcome to attend any Plan Grand Rapids event. Questions? Phone (616)456-3646 or find our newsletter (in English and Spanish) at: www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us under Planning Department, Master Plan.



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2001 • 6:30-9PM
OTTAWA HILLS H.S. - 2055 ROSEWOOD SE

Community Forum #3

Tasks: Review and discuss modifications to the concepts for change draft plan (suggested in area-specific workshops). (November 2001)



PLAN ON IT!

Time is running out! • On Tuesday, March 26 at Creston High School we will be drawing Grand Rapids' future at Community Forum #4 called "Guidelines for Change". • What will be the contents of the Master Plan? • How will proposed changes in the City happen and what will they look like? • Test community goals and apply the tools we have learned to four special areas of the City! • Have we listened? • After tomorrow, there will be only one citywide meeting left to provide input on the Plan!

Plan On It! Join us on Tuesday, March 26 at Creston High School, 1720 Plainfield NE. Entrance is ADA accessible. Everyone is always welcome to attend any Plan Grand Rapids event. Questions? Phone 456-3646 or go to the web: www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us look under the Planning Department, Master Plan.



TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2002 • 6:30-9PM
CRESTON H.S. - 1720 PLAINFIELD NE

Community Forum #4

Tasks: Help to define the parameters for a series of four special studies that would illustrate how preliminary plan recommendations could be applied. (March 2002)



IT'S A PLAN!

For the first time in 40 years, a new Draft Master Plan and Future Land Use Map for the City of Grand Rapids will be unveiled to the public on Thursday, September 12. • You are invited to the 5th and final Community Forum for Plan Grand Rapids. • Tell us what you think about the Draft Master Plan and Future Land Use map, both developed from ideas proposed by hundreds of Grand Rapidians! • You also can see the Draft Master Plan at www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us, under "What's Hot!"

IT'S A PLAN! Join us on Thursday, September 12 at the Van Andel Museum Center, Public Museum of Grand Rapids, 272 Pearl Street NW. Open house begins at 5PM, Master Plan presentation at 6PM. Entrance is ADA accessible. Everyone is always welcome to attend. Questions? Phone (616)456-3031.



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2002 • 5-7PM
PUBLIC MUSEUM OF GRAND RAPIDS • 272 PEARL ST. NW

Community Forum #5

Tasks: Review/comment on draft master plan recommendations, objectives and policies; sample development guidelines and implementation recommendations. (September 2002)



Updates on the Plan were broadcast on numerous television and radio stations.

1.5.3 - Neighborhood and Business Associations

Within the City of Grand Rapids there are more than 30 neighborhood associations and 20 business associations. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies supported the involvement of these organizations by funding staff time, copying costs, newsletters and meeting supplies. The involvement of these groups proved to be invaluable. The knowledge and experience of community organizers and Neighborhood Business Specialists Program staff allowed the public to become more informed about the master plan and increased levels of public involvement in the planning process. Regular meetings were held with organizers to provide updates, receive feedback and obtain their opinions on next steps in the process.

1.5.4 - Public Relations

A broad variety of tools and techniques were utilized to inform the public about the master plan and to solicit their involvement. The goal of the planning process was to ensure that everyone within the city had the opportunity to participate and be heard. Listed below are a number of the methods used to increase public awareness.

Plan Grand Rapids Newsletter - Four newsletter issues were released during the process to inform the community about upcoming meetings and where to find information. They also provided a feedback loop about what the consultant team/planning staff had learned during each particular planning phase.

News Coverage - Clare Wade Communications, Inc. worked with various media contacts and developed press releases and calendar listings. Master Plan articles appeared in the Grand Rapids Press, Advance, El Pulso Latino, Grand Rapids Times, The Paper,

Grand Rapids Business Journal, MiBIZ and Grand Rapids Magazine. In addition, stories concerning the plan were broadcast on numerous television and radio stations.

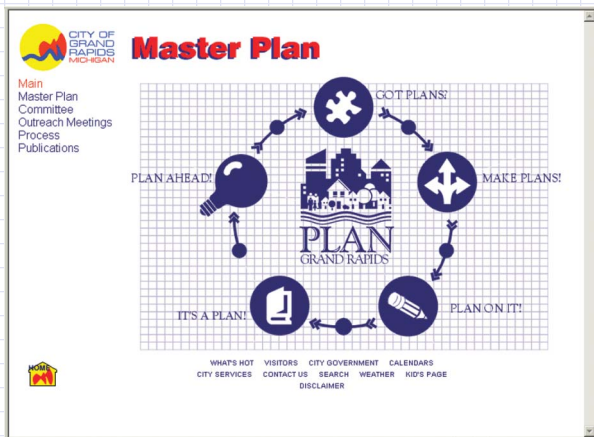
Advertisements - All major planning events were advertised in the Grand Rapids Press. Ads also appeared in the Advance, Grand Rapids Times, El Pulso Latino, El Vocero and El Hispano. A public service announcement, broadcast on major networks, was aired prior to Community Forum #3. In addition, billboards were used to advertise forums.

Grand Rapids Information Network - Five video segments that described the planning process were developed and aired on the City of Grand Rapids' cable broadcast channel, the Grand Rapids Information Network (GRIN), on a bi-weekly basis.

Minority Outreach - Special efforts were made to reach out to the Latino and African-American communities of the city. Bilingual materials were developed, translators made available and special meetings held with a group of Spanish speaking women, called Mujeres Unidas. Special meetings and presentations were held in predominately African-American churches and neighborhoods; flyers and posters were used to increase awareness.

Libraries - A binder containing critical master plan information was provided at each of the seven Grand Rapids Public Library locations.

Website - A Plan Grand Rapids website was developed that provided a complete digital information resource regarding the Master Plan. Master Plan Committee minutes, scope of work, project schedule, press releases, newsletters, community meeting notes, community forum results and documents prepared as part of the planning process (such as the Concept Plan Workbook) were posted on the web.



A Plan Grand Rapids website was developed that provided a complete digital information resource regarding the Master Plan.

1.6 - Summary Task Descriptions

Tasks in the first three planning phases served as building blocks that defined the direction, development and refinement of the Master Plan’s content. Each of these tasks is briefly described below and key findings are summarized. *Figure 1.c - Putting the Pieces Together: Housing Diversity - Page 11* illustrates how one idea – housing diversity – was developed through the sequence of tasks.

1.6.1 - Phase 1: Issues and Opportunities

SWOT Analyses

City Planning Department staff, Neighborhood Business Specialists Program staff and neighborhood organizers facilitated 120 meetings with residents and business owners across the city to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This information was summarized into a series of beliefs (strengths and opportunities) and issues (weaknesses and threats) under 11 topic headings³:

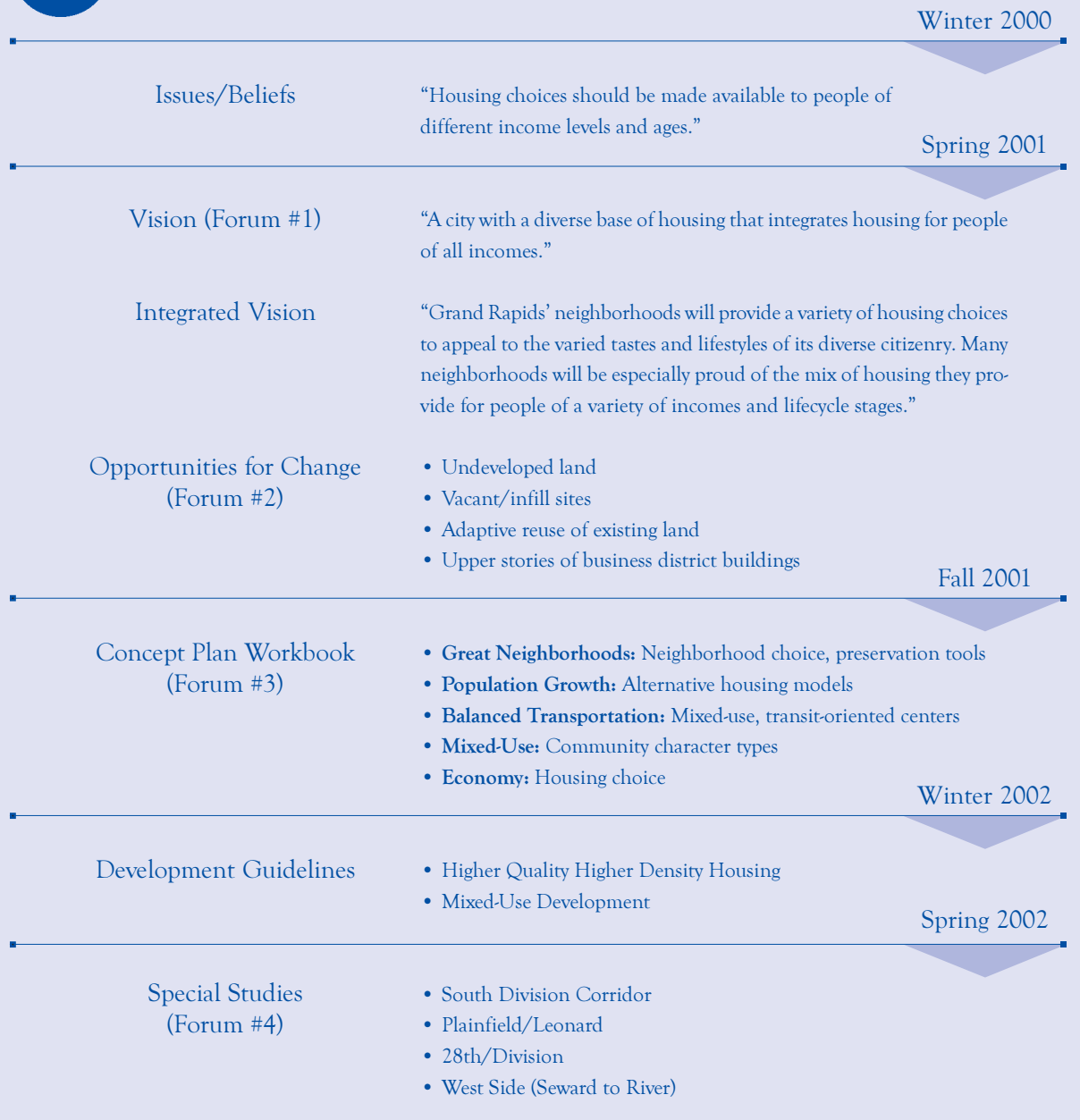
- sustainable environmental design;
- what makes great older neighborhoods;
- what makes great newer neighborhoods;
- housing choices;
- diversity;
- business/job opportunities;
- neighborhood businesses;
- getting places/moving people;
- streets, alleys and sidewalks;
- parks and green spaces;
- regional responsibility.

³The summary of beliefs for each of these topics is presented in subsequent “theme” chapters.



Figure 1.c - Putting the Pieces Together: Housing Diversity

How one idea has been developed through the steps of the planning process:





Regional issues are identified in the Community Profile.

Community Profile

The consultant team prepared a profile of existing and projected conditions to provide an expanded perspective on the issues and opportunities facing Grand Rapids. This information is documented in a separate volume (*Community Profile*, July 2001) and addresses the following topics.

Regional Context - A regional plan of future land use prepared by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) and the major themes of GVMC's 1994 *Blueprint Report* are described. Additional regional issues are identified: economic polarization; population growth patterns and urban sprawl; transportation planning; water and sewer service; the environment; the Grand River; stormwater management.

Existing Land Use - This section provides a statistical profile of existing land use in Grand Rapids, describes existing land use patterns and compares existing land use with zoning. Ten key land use issues - from the future use of vacant lands to the revitalization of older neighborhoods and commercial corridors - are identified.

Community Character - Five existing neighborhood types are identified based on development patterns and visual character. These character typologies are described and mapped.

Utilities - This section provides an overview of the city's sanitary sewer system, water system, stormwater management system and solid waste disposal. As noted earlier, the city's sewer and water master plan is being updated.

Demographics - This section discusses trends for population and households, employment and industry, development and property taxes and retail sales and potential.⁴

Environment - Information on natural resources and sensitive environmental areas within the city's bound-

aries is extremely limited. This section suggests three major environmental themes: urban sprawl, stormwater management and greenway planning/stream corridor protection.

Transportation - An overview of the transportation network and long-range transportation planning, in the Greater Grand Rapids Area - including streets and highways, public transit, air, rail, bicycle and pedestrian systems - is provided.

Recreation - This section provides an inventory of recreation facilities and programs; national park and recreation planning standards; and existing recreation planning efforts as inputs to an update of the Grand Rapids *Park & Recreation Master Plan* that was prepared concurrent with this plan.

1.6.2 - Phase 2: Opportunities for Change

Visions

At the initial community forum, the summaries of beliefs and issues were reviewed and additions were encouraged. Participants selected a topic to work on and prioritized its beliefs and issues. Then they developed statements and images that described a vision, or preferred future, for Grand Rapids. The vision statements developed at Community Forum #1 addressed the following issues:

- urban sprawl;
- balanced transportation;
- automobile alternatives;
- energy use and waste minimization;
- pedestrian friendly streets and neighborhoods;
- absentee landlords;
- code enforcement;
- housing choice;

⁴At the time this evaluation was undertaken only limited information was available from the 2000 U.S. Census.

- neighborhood appearance;
- speeding traffic/traffic calming;
- litter and trash;
- youth and minority representation in business/neighborhood organizations;
- crime/drug activity;
- vacant/underutilized buildings and land;
- uncertainty concerning reuse of business/institutional buildings;
- job opportunities;
- alleys, street paving and maintenance;
- parking enforcement;
- streetscapes;
- façade design in business areas;
- walkable business districts;
- recreation opportunities for youth;
- green space as gathering places and to protect natural resources;
- park design for usability; and
- quality of neighborhood schools.

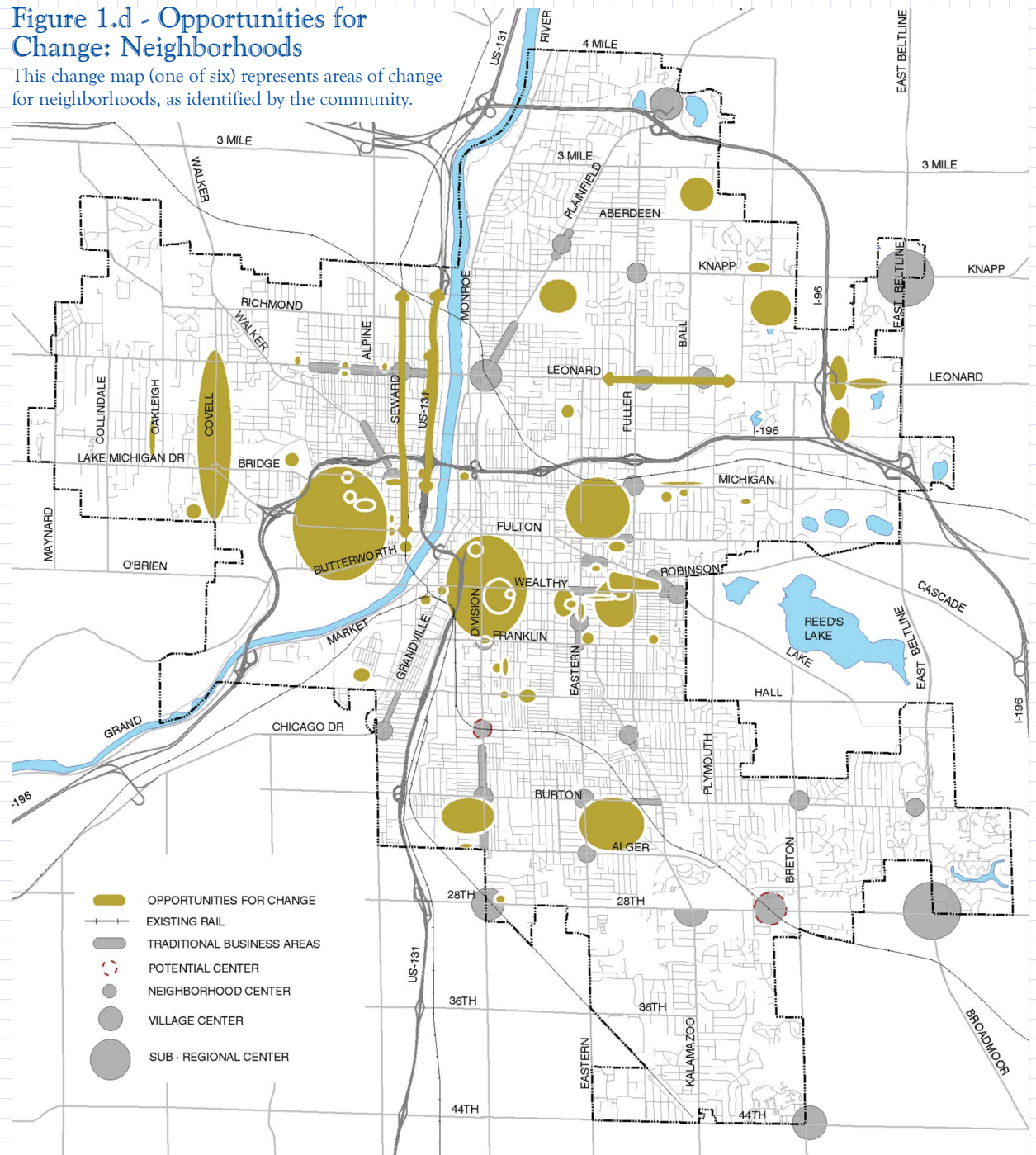
Mapping Locations

Participants at seven area-specific meetings across the city identified and mapped nearly 400 specific opportunities for change that were combined into citywide maps and tables listing anticipated, desired or feared changes in six categories:

- neighborhoods;
- neighborhood business districts;
- neighborhood centers (addressing both neighborhoods and business districts);
- economy;
- transportation; and
- parks and green spaces.

Figure 1.d - Opportunities for Change: Neighborhoods

This change map (one of six) represents areas of change for neighborhoods, as identified by the community.





People from throughout the city came to Community Forum #2 at Union High School to discuss Opportunities for Change.

At each meeting, participants were asked to identify the top priority change opportunities in each category. This information was synthesized into more general types of opportunities for change for discussion at Community Forum #2. Here, participants confirmed (and added to) the types of opportunities for change and identified those considered most important to the future of the city. The results are summarized below.

Neighborhoods

- Protect, sustain and revitalize neighborhoods.
- Improve compatibility between residential and non-residential uses.
- Address possible school closings and building/property reuse.
- Encourage appropriate infill housing in older neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Business Districts/Centers

- Establish/preserve public spaces.
- Reuse specific buildings for retail or other business use.
- Encourage building repair, renovation and façade improvement.
- Adaptively reuse commercial buildings for office, housing or mixed-use.
- Emphasize traditional business district character.
- Expand parking and improve its appearance.

Economy

- Make the Grand River a centerpiece of the economy (for example, by the addition of housing and mixed-use).

- Convert existing industrial, commercial and institutional buildings to alternative uses.
- Support small business.
- Manage institutional growth for neighborhood compatibility.

Transportation

- Provide transit improvements.
- Provide bike improvements.
- Provide pedestrian improvements.
- Provide traffic calming.

Parks and Green Space

- Preserve natural/green areas.
- Preserve existing parks.
- Maintain existing parks.
- Create pedestrian and bike connections

This information helped to give focus to both the concepts for change and guidelines tasks (see below).

1.6.3 - Phase 3: Concepts for Change

Ten outreach meetings were held across the city to present preliminary ideas for translating the community's vision and priority opportunities for change into a citywide approach to future land use and transportation. A workbook describing and illustrating seven basic concepts (*Figure 1.e - Concepts - Page 15*) was distributed in advance of the workshops. These concepts were intended to be bold, to spur discussion and begin debate; they include:

Great Neighborhoods - All Grand Rapids neighborhoods can be places where people choose to live - not leave.

- Components of the ideal neighborhood.
- Three broad neighborhood types in Grand Rapids.
- Neighborhood conditions and related preservation/revitalization tools.

Population Growth - Grand Rapids can accommodate a growing population, but goals for population growth and related housing strategies are needed.

- The opportunities (from vacant land to infill).
- The benefits of growth.
- Alternative housing types and densities.

Balanced Transportation - We can create a more balanced transportation system emphasizing improved transit service, walkability and connectivity. Adopting a transit-oriented, mixed-use development approach to creating neighborhood, village and sub-regional centers can be a major step in acting on this commitment.

- Regional transit planning.
- Location of job centers.
- Transit-oriented mixed-use centers.
- Possible hierarchy of mixed-use centers.

Mixed-Use - Mixed-use development can make our city more walkable, convenient, diverse and vital - if we provide standards that demand a high quality of design and management.

- Benefits of mixed-use.
- Varying scales of areas.
- Neighborhood character types, a basis for urban form guidelines.

Figure 1.e - Concepts

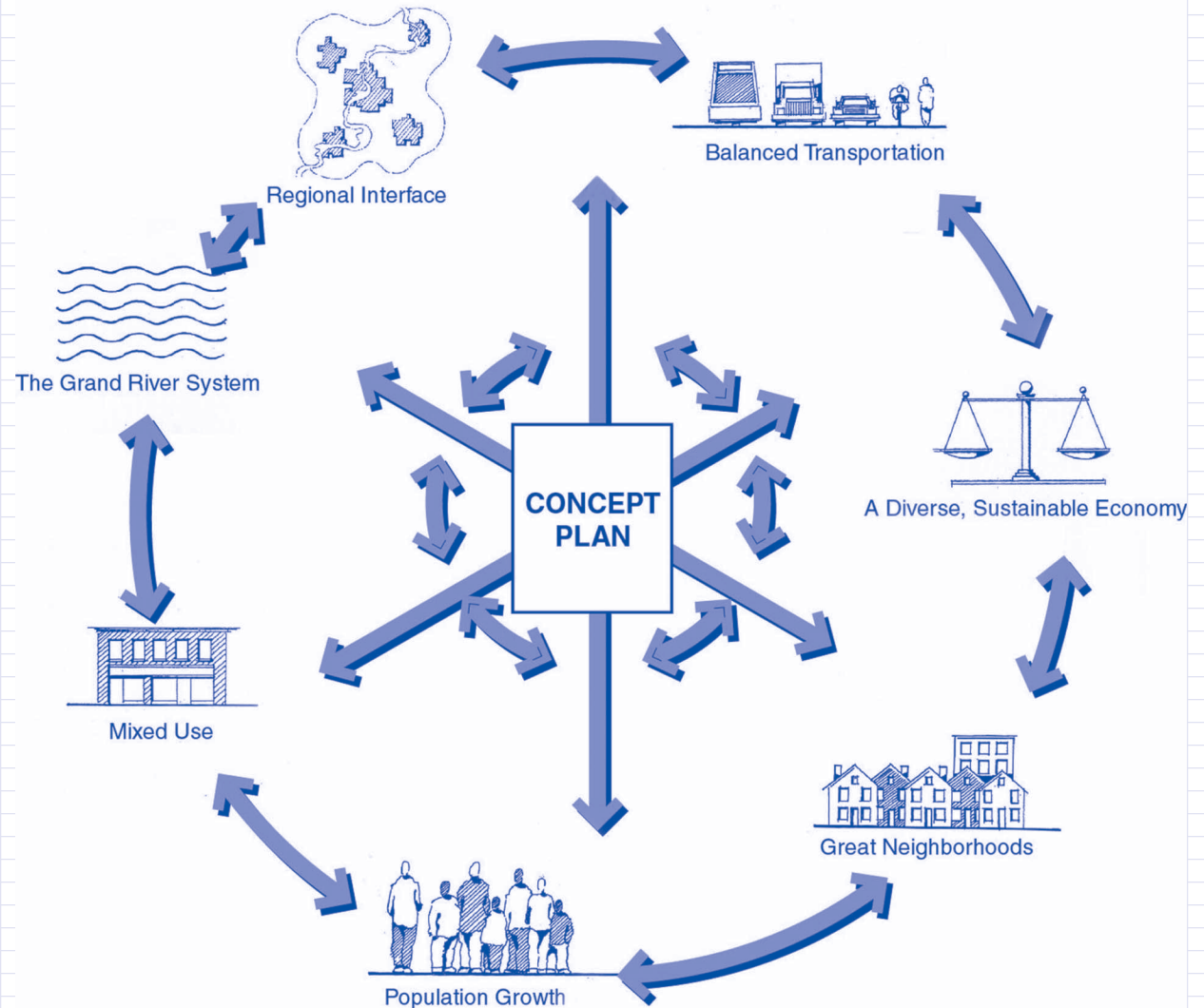
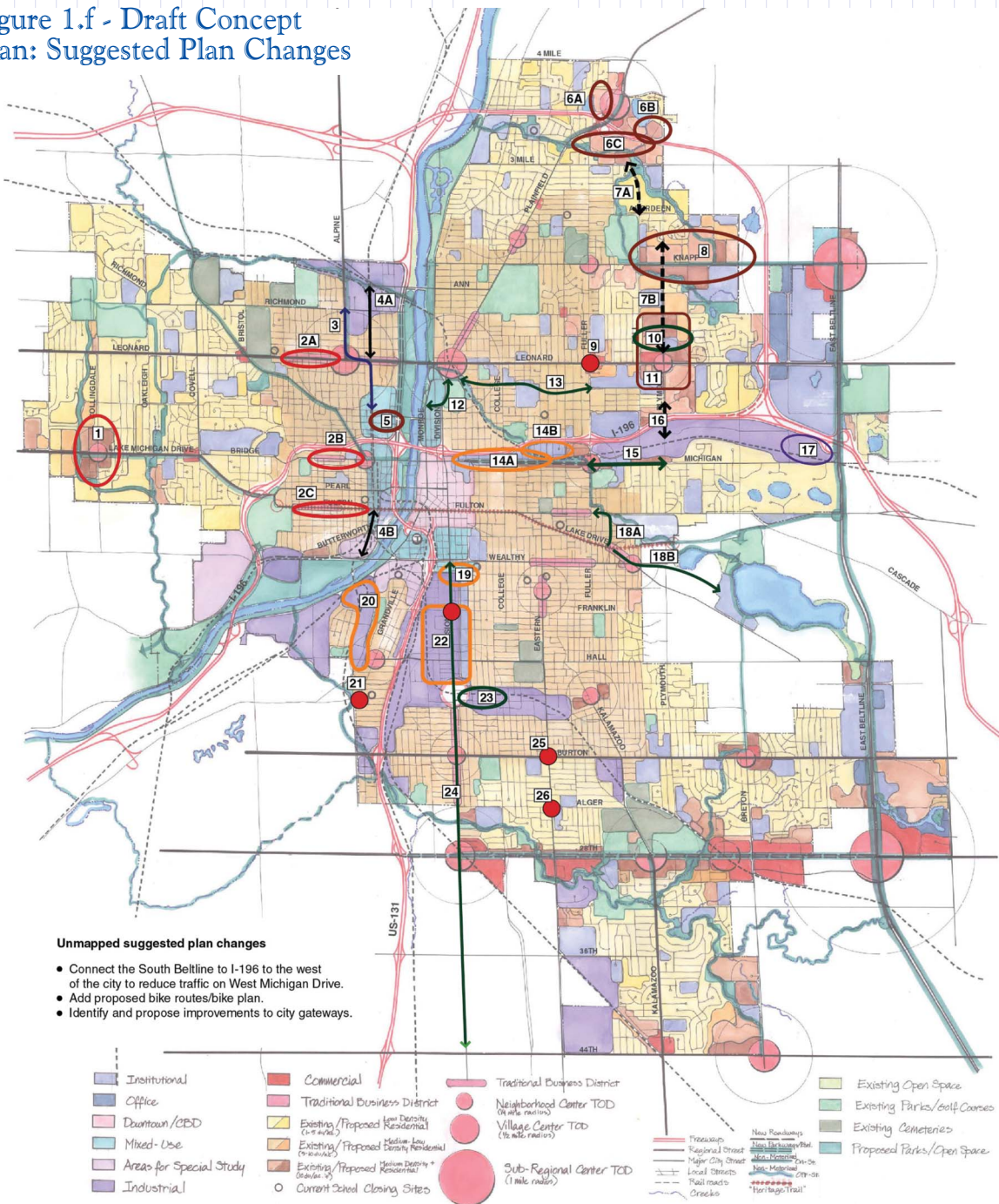


Figure 1.f - Draft Concept Plan: Suggested Plan Changes



The Grand River System - The Grand River can be re-emphasized as the key to understanding the city's past and planning its future.

- Riverfront land use changes to open space and mixed-use.
- US-131 connections.
- Primary open space network.

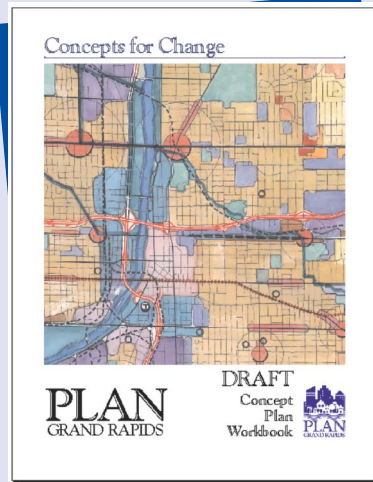
A Diverse, Sustainable Economy - Job creating/revenue producing initiatives can be balanced with quality of life/revenue consuming initiatives to ensure a diverse economy and fiscal sustainability.

- Mixed-use.
- Industrial use.
- Education and health care.
- Housing choice.
- Quality of life.

Regional Interface - The interrelationship between the city and the region can be recognized in all planning decisions.

- Urban Metro Subregion meetings.

At Community Forum #3, Concept Plan changes suggested in the preceding workshops were reviewed and confirmed (Figure 1.f - Draft Concept Plan: Suggested Plan Changes - Page 16 and Community Response to Concept Plan Workbook sidebar - Page 17). These changes were incorporated in preparing a draft future land use map and plan text.



Community Response to Concept Plan Workbook

Overall, the community's response to the concepts for change workbook was very positive, but important revisions to the concept plan (a preliminary draft of the official Future Land Use Map) were also identified.



In general, the community liked the following ideas:

Great Neighborhoods

- Maintaining a choice in neighborhood types.
- The idea of tying neighborhood self-assessments of physical condition to suggested preservation/revitalization tools and strategies (including restricting conversions of single-family homes to multifamily occupancy).
- Developing guidelines for renovation and new development that ensure compatibility with the character of the existing neighborhood context.

Balanced Transportation

- Promoting people-centered, rather than car-centered development patterns (walkability).
- Emphasizing transit.
- Pursuing the concept of transit-oriented, mixed-use development.
- Creating boulevards on 28th Street and Michigan Street.

Mixed-Use

- Encouraging a mix of uses (and a mix of housing types, resident ages and incomes) in most neighborhoods.
- Developing "urban form" rules and performance standards to promote compatibility with context and among the use mix.
- Emphasizing mixed-use in areas that are already predominantly non-residential.

Grand River System

- A transition from industry and heavy commercial to open space and mixed-use on the riverfront.
- The creation of a framework of greenways and trails.
- Adding parks and open spaces.

Diverse, Sustainable Economy

- Restructuring land use along the 28th Street corridor to include housing and more green space and to improve walkability.
- Planning for the future growth of educational and health care anchors.
- Expanding housing choice.

Regional Interface

- Cooperation on regional transportation, utilities, economic development, environmental and land use issues to control sprawl.
- Meeting with neighboring jurisdictions on shared planning issues.



There was divided opinion about other ideas:

Population Growth

- Capitalizing on vacant land, unassembled large lots and agricultural land to accommodate population growth and expand housing choices.
- The benefits and costs of population growth.
- Concern about growing for growth's sake without improving quality of life.

The Grand River

- Planning for the eventual re-design of US-131 as an at-grade, urban parkway to reconnect the West Side to the Grand River



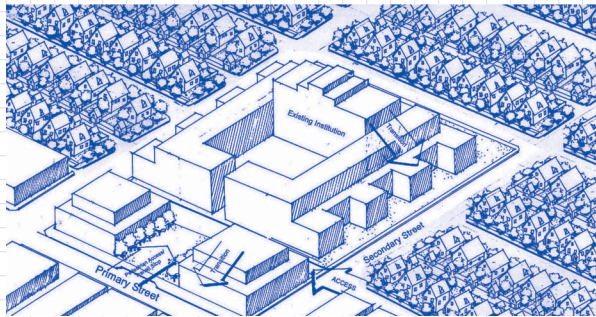
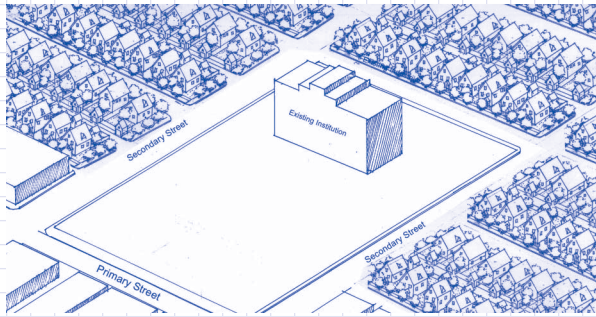
People didn't like the following ideas:

Population Growth

- Expanding medium-density residential and institutional development on the south side of Knapp, east of Ball.
- Incorporating medium-low-density and medium-density residential development around proposed neighborhood-scale transit-oriented developments at Leonard and Plymouth (northeast) and Lake Michigan Drive and Collindale (northwest).

Balanced Transportation/ Diverse, Sustainable Economy

- Extending Plymouth Road to connect to Knapp, north of Leonard and extending Ball to connect between Aberdeen and 3 Mile.
- Planning for the future expansion of industrial use along South Division and on Michigan east of the East Beltline.



Sample development guidelines illustrate how to increase compatibility and preserve neighborhood character.

1.6.4 - Phase 4: Guidelines for Change

Sample Development Guidelines

Throughout the planning process, it was clear that people in Grand Rapids were as concerned about the quality and character of development as they were about what kinds of uses and densities were proposed for different locations. As a result, it was agreed that the preparation of sample development guidelines should be included in the Master Plan. Feedback from the second and third forums helped to define priority topics for this task. These topics included:

Mixed-Use – how to maximize the compatibility between different uses, densities and building types. Four situations were addressed in the context of the city’s older neighborhoods:

- infill development and parking in a traditional business area;
- institutional mixed-use;
- industrial mixed-use; and
- reuse of a school site.

In addition, guidelines were recommended for improving the visual quality and walkability of auto-oriented strip commercial development.

Higher Quality, Higher Density Residential Development – how to encourage medium- and high-density residential development that is located and designed to complement existing development patterns.

Green Space in the Central City – how to provide more green space in already developed areas.

Preliminary materials were developed and used as the basis for discussion in a one-day workshop. Nearly 100 people participated in shaping the content of the guidelines (See Chapter 10 - Development Character - Page 117).

Special Studies

Four specific locations within the city were selected for special study to illustrate and test how concepts for change and sample guidelines might be applied in preparing more detailed development plans. These selected special study locations are listed below.

South Division Avenue and 28th Street - This special study illustrated how an auto-oriented commercial intersection could be redeveloped as a mixed-use, transit-oriented development (mixed-use center) at a village scale. Two alternatives were developed to illustrate future development potentials if the existing rail line was abandoned and if it was retained.

Plainfield Avenue and Leonard Street - This special study also illustrated how an auto-oriented commercial area can be re-structured as a mixed-use, transit-oriented development. This area connects new mixed-use development in the North Monroe area (south) to the Creston Business District (north). Improved pedestrian/bicycle connections between the Grand River, adjacent mixed-use areas and inland neighborhoods were also illustrated.

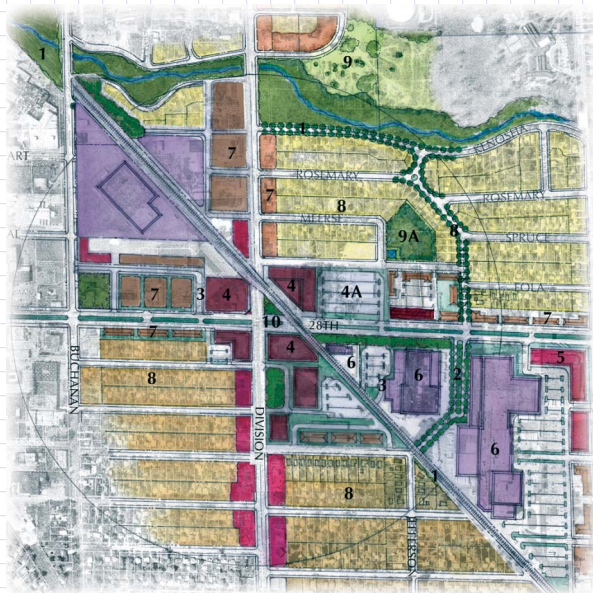
West Side/Seward Avenue. This special study illustrated how the Near West Side could be reconnected to the Grand River without major reconstruction of US-131. In addition, it suggests how new mixed-use development, both on the riverfront and inland, can be structured to capitalize on these improvements, as well as reinvestments in Downtown and the North Monroe area.

South Division Avenue - This special study illustrated how South Division Avenue, between Wealthy Street and the Cottage Grove industrial corridor, could be restructured to:

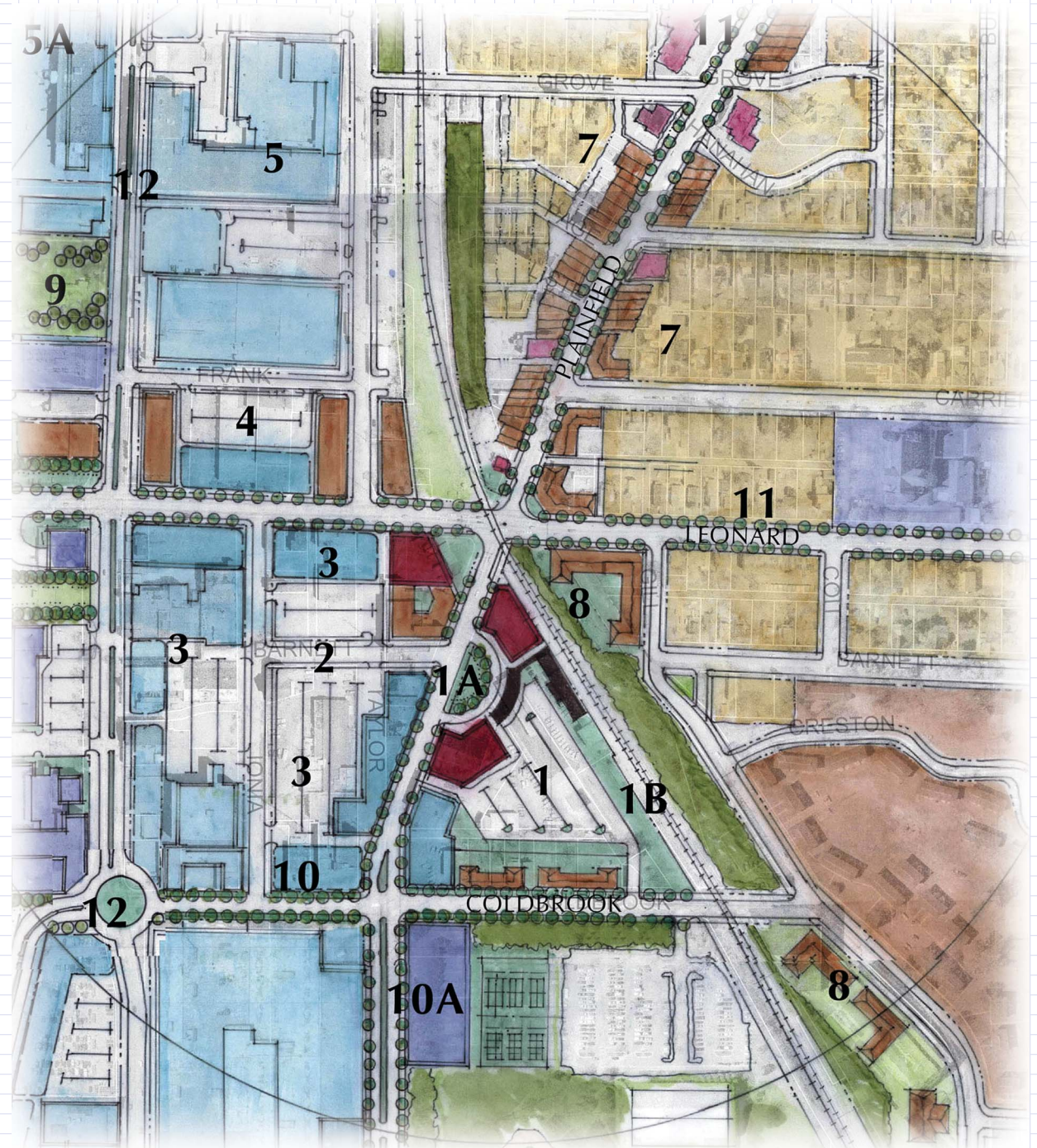
- create a neighborhood-scale mixed-use, transit-oriented center at Division and Franklin;
- improve Campau Commons public housing area;

- reconnect the residential areas located to the west of Division to the balance of the South East Community Association (SECA) neighborhood to encourage reinvestment;
- provide transitions between industrial and residential areas; and
- create a gateway to Downtown.

The special studies were reviewed by stakeholders in each area. In general, the illustrative ideas were well received. In the South Division area, however, neither business or resident groups supported the ideas illustrated in the special study drawing. As a result, this special study has not been included in the Master Plan supplement. (The three remaining special studies, and the comments received on them, are presented in *Supplement B*).



South Division Avenue and 28th Street Special Study (above) and Plainfield Avenue and Leonard Street Special Study (right).





The Master Plan process was based on community participation.

1.7 - Participants

Community involvement has been a cornerstone of the planning process and many people have played a role in the preparation of the Master Plan.

Citizens

Residents, business people, employers, property owners, developers and representatives of area institutions and non-profit organizations participated in area-specific workshops, focus groups and citywide Community Forums. Over one thousand people who gave their time, energy and insight in shaping of content of the Master Plan are listed in the acknowledgement section of this plan.

Master Plan Committee

Members of the Master Plan Committee, chaired by Jack Hoffman and co-chaired by Eva Aguirre Cooper and Dr. Rick Sullivan, provided countless hours of volunteer time over the 30 months during which the study process was planned and conducted; and draft materials were prepared, reviewed and revised. Their expertise and varying perspectives provided valuable guidance throughout the planning process.

Planning Commission

Three Planning Commissioners served on the Master Plan Committee and city staff briefed the Planning Commission as a whole at regular intervals on the progress of the planning process.

City Staff

Planning Department and the Parks and Recreation Department staff played especially important roles in the planning process. In addition, all city employees were invited to participate in regular management forums to discuss the progress of the Master Plan.

Consultants

A team of consultants with extensive professional experience in community planning, urban design, neighborhood improvement, meeting facilitation and media relations provided technical assistance throughout the planning process. The consultant team was lead by SmithGroup JJR of Ann Arbor and Wade-Trim of Taylor MI.

Funders

The Grand Rapids Master Plan was funded by a grant from the Frey Foundation (with grant administration provided by The Right Place Program) and the City of Grand Rapids.

1.8 - Plan Review and Adoption

In August, 2002 a Draft Master Plan was released for public review and comment. A copy of the Executive Summary was mailed to everyone who participated in earlier phases of the planning process, and copies of the full text were available for review at many locations. Participants were also invited to attend a final community-wide forum. The participants attending the forum provided feedback to facilitators and were asked to complete a comment card.

On September 26, 2002, the Grand Rapids Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Draft Master Plan. About eighty people attended.

For each comment received, a formal response was provided and several changes incorporated into the plan. The revised Master Plan was presented to the Planning Commission and, as authorized by Public Act 285 of 1931 and Chapter 62 of the city code, adopted by the Grand Rapids Planning Commission on November 14, 2002 as the Master Plan for the City of Grand Rapids.