

GRAND RAPIDS PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

February 9, 2017

This document summarizes community engagement actions and initiatives for the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department Strategic Master Plan from project startup in March 2016 to February 2017. Included are major public open houses for the master plan; other community events attended; meetings with neighborhood associations, business associations, and community organizations; committees and focus groups; surveys administered; and marketing strategies.

To date, an estimated total of 5,300 Grand Rapids residents have participated in the plan.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

- Open House #1
 - May 6: **First Friday at Avenue for the Arts** (Downtown) 150 participants
 - May 7: **Fulton Street Farmers Market** (Ward 2) 350 participants
 - 286 total comment cards received from participants
 - Goals:
 - Educate community on goals and process of plan and why parks are important in Grand Rapids.
 - Gain valuable feedback from residents on current park usage and desires for future of park space and recreation opportunities.
- Open House #2
 - July 22: **Movies at the Park** (Downtown) 110 participants
 - Goals:
 - Present findings to community of inventory, analysis, and community survey.
 - Solicit community priorities and vision for parks moving forward.
- Open House #3 117 participants
 - September 19: **Garfield Park** (Ward 1) and **Mulick Park** (Ward 3)
 - September 20: **Grand Rapids Art Museum** (downtown) and **Aberdeen Park** (Ward 2),
 - Goals:
 - Present vision phase of plan that has emerged from community feedback.
 - Solicit feedback on specific recommendations for the plan moving forward.
- Open House #4
 - December 2: **Light Up Downtown** Christmas celebration 500 participants
 - Goals:
 - Present implementation phase to community and build excitement for the plan.
 - Solicit feedback on specific recommendations for the plan moving forward.

ADDITIONAL MASTER PLAN EVENTS:

- Presentation of Draft Plan
 - January 12: **Your City, Your Parks Luncheon** (Downtown) 100 participants
 - Goals:
 - Present an overview of the draft Master Plan to the community.

- Inform community about opportunities for partnership and how to comment on the draft plan.
- **Public Hearing: February 21, 2017**
 - Details:
 - 7:00pm or soon thereafter at Commission Chambers, 9th Floor, City Hall (300 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
 - Goals:
 - Opportunity for the public to express concerns or support for the master plan prior to adoption of the plan by City Commission.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDED

- March 11: **Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit** (Ward 2) 200 participants

A city-wide summit with workshops on housing, race, economy, and education. Every attendee received a flyer with information about the plan/process along with information on how to stay involved.

- March 17: **North East Citizen’s Action Neighborhood Organization Meeting** 15 participants

Monthly neighborhood association meeting in Ward 2 to give a general update on the plan.

- March 31: **Conservation Collective** (Ward 2) 100 participants

An information fair with area conservation organizations. In addition to engaging in on-on-one conversations with Parks and Recreation staff about personal desires and concerns for parks, attendees received flyers with information about the plan and how to stay involved.

- April 12: **Open House for Neighborhood Associations & Elected Officials** 30 participants

An open house and work session hosted by Parks and Recreation and Sasaki team for neighborhood leaders and elected officials at City Hall to meet project leaders, learn about the master plan process and share ideas.

- April 22: **Kidspeak 2016 – Planting Seeds for a Greener Grand Rapids** 330 participants

An annual forum facilitated by the Mayor’s Youth Council, kindergarten through high school students were given the opportunity to speak directly to legislators and city leaders at City Hall regarding use and preservation of parks and green space in Grand Rapids. Thirty GRPS students ranging from third grade to seniors in high school spoke before 17 community leaders from the City of Grand Rapids, the State of Michigan, GRPS School Board, and community leaders. An additional 300 residents joined in the audience.

- April 28: **Neighborhood Associations monthly meeting** (Downtown) 30 participants

Meeting between neighborhood associations and city officials to share business, events, and concerns. Introduction of Master Plan process and distribution of MyPark surveys and marketing materials for Open House #1 on May 6 and 7.

- April 30: **LINC UP's Día de Niños** (Ward 1) 30 participants

Friends of GR Parks hosted an information booth to engage residents in this holiday festival setting. Bilingual MyPark Surveys and Master Plan general information flyers were available to the public.

- May 22: **DGRI Open Street Sunday** (Downtown) 60 participants

A day full of non-motorized activities on Ionia Street to celebrate community and active transportation in Grand Rapids. Parks and Recreation staff engaged attendees with mapping exercise and received valuable input from intentional conversations with residents about their desires and concerns for their community parks.

- June 1: **NAEP Family Picnic at Richmond Park** (Ward 1) 40 participants

Parks and Recreation staff attended Grand Rapids Public Schools' Native American Education Program (NAEP) end of year celebration to engage residents in a mapping exercise and receive valuable input from conversations with residents about their desires and concerns for their community parks.

- June 8: **BBQ & Beautify at Garfield Park** (Ward 1) 40 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires and concerns for their community parks.

- June 11: **LINC Rock the Block Party** (Ward 3) 400 participants

Local street fair for community resources and fun at Madison Square. Parks and Recreation engaged residents for valuable input with mapping exercise and comment cards.

- June 23: **Neighborhood Associations monthly meeting** (Downtown) 30 participants

Meeting between neighborhood associations and city officials to share business, events, and concerns. Update on Master Plan process and distribution of Save the Date for Open House #2 on July 22.

- June 25: **Roosevelt Park Family Fiesta** (Ward 1) 400 participants

Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association's fiesta for community resources and fun at Roosevelt Park. Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents with mapping exercise and received valuable input from intentional conversations with residents about their desires and concerns for their community parks. Spanish-speaking staff present.

- June 28: **BBQ & Beautify at Ken-O-Sha Park** (Ward 3) 20 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires for their community parks.

- June 30: **Open House at Veteran’s Memorial Park** (Downtown) 10 participants

Director and Project Manager of Parks and Recreation were available in the Veteran’s Memorial Park building during Thursday’s Relax at Rosa to personally engage residents with information boards on Grand Rapids park history and currently master plan process.

- July 8: **Movies in the Park** (Downtown) 120 participants

Event attendees participated in mapping and visioning exercise for the Grand Rapids park system. Park staff engaged residents in one-on-one conversations about their desires and concerns for their community parks.

- July 13: **John Ball Area Neighbors July Meeting** (Ward 1) 15 participants

Monthly neighborhood association meeting to give a general update on the plan.

- July 14: **Garfield Park Neighborhood Association July Meeting** (Ward 1) 10 participants

Monthly neighborhood association meeting to give a general update on the plan.

- July 20: **DGRI’s Alliance for Vibrancy** (Downtown) 20 participants

Presentation of community responses in the process thus far and initial analysis from parks inventory.

- July 22: **Supporting Our Leaders (SOL) at City Hall** (Downtown) 60 participants

60 participants of West Michigan Hispanic Center’s Supporting Our Leaders (SOL) youth job-readiness program visited City Hall for an introduction to the life and practices of local government. Parks and Recreation staff described potential involvement in shaping the future of Grand Rapids’ parks through the Master Plan as well as presented current and future employment opportunities within the Parks and Recreation Department.

- July 25: **DGRI’s Alliance for Livability** (Downtown) 20 participants

Presentation of community responses and initial analysis from parks inventory, as well as engaging those attending in a mapping exercise with opportunity for direct input on parks and recreation.

- July 26: **BBQ & Beautify at Richmond Park** (Ward 1) 5 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks’ signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires for their community parks.

- August 2: **Meet the Machines at Downtown Market** (Downtown) 130 participants

A youth-oriented event with large trucks and cars from the City and community businesses. From their tent with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one dreaming about their desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities.

- August 2: **National Night Out at Briggs Park** (Ward 2) 100 participants

A community celebration with free activities and resources. From their station with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one dreaming about their desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities.

- August 11: **GRPS Back to School Celebration** (Ward 1) 185 participants

A festival setting with community resources and fun giveaways for GRPS students at John Ball Park. From their station with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one dreaming about their desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities.

- August 16: **BBQ & Beautify at Joe Taylor Park** (Ward 3) 10 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires for their community parks.

- August 20: **Rhythm Run & Heath Fair at MLK Park** (Ward 3) 90 participants

A 5-k race and fun community health fair organized by African American Health Institute and Urban Core Collective. From their station with information and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one conversations about desires for Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities.

- August 25: **Neighborhood Associations monthly meeting** (Downtown) 30 participants

Meeting between neighborhood associations and city officials to share business, events, and concerns. Update on Master Plan process from Director Marquardt and invitations to Open House #3.

- August 28: **Hispanic Festival** (Downtown) 90 participants

An annual festival to celebrate Hispanic life and traditions in Grand Rapids. From their station with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff will engage residents in one-on-one conversations about their desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities. Spanish-speaking staff present.

- August 31: **BBQ & Beautify at Sigsbee Park** (Ward 3) 10 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires for their community parks.

- September 8: **BBQ & Beautify at Martin Luther King Park** (Ward 3) 10 participants

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' signature summer event including park work project, dinner, and on-on-one conversations with residents about their desires for their community parks.

- September 16: **Mexican Festival** (Downtown) 20 participants

An annual festival to celebrate Mexican life and traditions in Grand Rapids. From their station with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one

conversations about desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities. Spanish-speaking staff present.

- September 24: **African American Art Festival** (Downtown) 100 participants

An annual festival to celebrate African American culture and art in Grand Rapids. From their station with information posters and prizes, Parks and Recreation staff engaged residents in one-on-one dreaming about their desires for the future of Grand Rapids park space and recreation opportunities. Spanish-speaking staff present.

- February 12: **Winter West** (Ward 1)

A community winter event with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Kent County Health Department, and other community organizations. Parks and Recreation staff share the final draft plan with the public, with information on where they can read it and how they can comment.

- February 25: **Mulick Park Snow Fest** (Ward 3)

A community winter event with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Kent County Health Department, and other community organizations. Parks and Recreation staff share the final draft plan with the public, with information on where they can read it and how they can comment.

NEIGHBORHOOD and BUSINESS ASSOCIATION MEETINGS (September – October)

Each neighborhood association in the city has been contacted to hear a presentation of the vision plan will be given at each association’s regular monthly meeting. In neighborhoods where there is no formal association, community organizations were contacted.

- Midtown Neighborhood Association (Ward 2) September 7
- Seeds of Promise (Ward 3) September 8
- East Hills Council of Neighbors (Ward 2) September 12
- Heartside Business Association (Ward 1) September 22
- Stockbridge Business Association (Ward 1) September 22
- Creston Neighborhood Association (Ward 2) September 22
- Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association (Ward 1) September 27
- Grand Rapids Urban League (Ward 3) September 28
- Northeast Citizens Action Association (Ward 2) September 29
- Oakdale Neighbors (Ward 3) October 10
- Garfield Park Neighborhood Association (Ward 1) October 13
- West Grand Neighborhood Association (Ward 1) October 17
- Creston Neighborhood Association Annual meeting (Ward 2) October 27
- Monroe North Business Association (Ward 2) November 11

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK WALKS (September – November)

Each neighborhood association in the city has been contacted to schedule a park walk-through with the Director of Parks and Recreation to hear personal ideas or concerns in each neighborhood of the city. In neighborhoods where there is no formal association, community organizations were contacted.

- Roosevelt Park (Ward 1) October 5
- Alger Park (Ward 3) October 6
- Pleasant Park (Ward 3) October 7
- Kensington Park (Ward 2) October 16
- Huff Park (Ward 2) October 18
- Oakdale Gardens (Ward 3) October 19
- Richmond Park (Ward 1) October 19
- Coit Park (Ward 2) October 20
- Westown Commons (Ward 1) October 20
- Sigsbee School (Ward 3) October 21
- Foster Park (Ward 2) October 21
- Wilcox Park (Ward 2) October 26
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (Ward 3) November 4
- Douglas Park (Ward 1) November 10
- Ken-O-Sha Park (Ward 3) November 17

Total number of community events and meetings by Ward:

Ward 1: 17

Ward 2: 17

Ward 3: 17

Downtown: 22

COMMITTEES

Parks Advisory Board

9 members; Monthly meetings

- Lee Mueller (Chair)
- Rachel Skylis (Vice-Chair)
- Mel Atkins II
- Tim Kelly
- Tracy Smith Martin
- Katrina Queenan
- Ryan Waalkes
- Miranda Ward

Citizen’s Committee

24 Members; 8 meetings

- Andy Guy, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.
- Chris Reader
- Chris Wessely, Grand Rapids Sport and Social Club
- Cynthia Burkhour, Access Recreation Group and Disability Advocates of Kent County
- Elaine Isely, West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Gail Heffner, Plaster Creek Stewards
- Hanna Jaworski, MD, Children's Hospital
- Janet Korn, Experience Grand Rapids
- Johanna Jelks, She Rides Her Own Way
- John Helmholtz, GRPS
- Jon Carfagno, Grand Rapids Art Museum
- Jonathan Rinehart, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi
- Julio Cano Villalobos, Spectrum Health
- Kelsey Perdue, YMCA

- Kim VanDriel, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.
- Kyle Pray, Grand Rapids Public Schools

- Monica Steimle, 616 Development
- Rhondo Cooper, GRCC Upward Bound
- Richard App, Richard App Galleries
- Sam Cummings, CWD Real Estate
- Shawnte Williams, SAAK Solutions
- Tracey Flower, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

(Citizen’s Committee, cont.)

- Lee Mueller, Parks Advisory Board representative
- Mike Guswiler, West Michigan Sports Commission

Steering Committee

14 Members; 6 anticipated meetings

- Carrie Rivett, City of Grand Rapids Environmental Services
- Suzanne Schultz, City of Grand Rapids Planning Department
- Dotti Clune, Urban Forestry Committee Chair
- John Judnich, City of Grand Rapids Recreation
- Jono Klooster, City of Grand Rapids Economic Development
- Lynn Heemstra, City of Grand Rapids Our Community's Children
- Joe Sulak, City of Grand Rapids Park Superintendent
- Steve Krogman, City of Grand Rapids Park Operations Supervisor
- Connie Bohatch, City of Grand Rapids Community Services Managing Director
- Greg Sundstrom, City of Grand Rapids Manager
- John Helmholdt, GRPS Director of Communications
- Jill Meyer, Kent County Health Organization

FOCUS GROUPS

Small focus groups made up of 5-10 Grand Rapids residents discussed opportunities and challenges on following categories in depth:

- Athletics and Outdoor Recreation
- Accessibility and Disability Advocacy
- Teenagers
- Diversity and Inclusion

FOUNDATION MEETINGS July 21-22

- Dyer-Ives Foundation
- Frey Foundation
- GR Community Foundation
- Kellogg Foundation
- RDV Corporation
- Steelcase Foundation
- Wege Foundation

SURVEYS

1) MyPark Survey

Goal:

- Capture qualitative responses that may not come across in statistically valid survey
- Create user-friendly interface that encourages overall response and allows users to convey more specific information
- Keep responders engaged in the process by developing the ideal survey length

Final Count: **680 participants**

Distribution:

- Link & English/Spanish pdfs hosted on website main page
- Link hosted on Instagram & Facebook page, with promotional contest for shares
 - FB with promotional contest for shares
- Hard copies given to Neighborhood associations in English (1,000 copies) and Spanish (300 copies)
- Link hosted on City website's main page
- May 3 We Are GR article
- Promotional posters placed in 10 high traffic parks with link to survey

2) ETC Survey

Goal:

- Obtain a minimum of 400 completed surveys that contain quantifiable responses to inform needs assessment
- Assure quality control through training phone interviewers, comprehensive survey design and review process, data entry fields limited to specific ranges to minimize the probability of error, and sampling methodology
- Integrate the survey findings into the plan analysis and recommendations

Final Count: **409 participants**

Distribution: ETC Institute administered the survey through a combination of a mail/phone survey.

3) Rock Climbing & Outdoor Recreation Survey

Goal:

- Gather opinions from Grand Rapids climbing community to assist discussion in Athletics and Outdoor Recreation focus group.

Count to date: **93 responses**

Distribution: Online survey was distributed to focus group participant's personal contacts.

Refer to <https://www.facebook.com/grboulderproject/> to stay informed with the continued volunteer effort (Note: separate from Parks and Recreation initiatives)

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Facebook

Goal:

- Spread project awareness, encourage public participation, and promote online project discussion across all age groups.
- Anticipate public event attendance through published events.
- Events were shared by community partners including City of Grand Rapids, City of Grand Rapids Community Relations, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc., and Grand Rapids Public Schools.

To date, our Facebook page has over **2,800** followers, with an increase of over **900** followers since the beginning of the plan (early March).

Instagram

Goal:

- Spread project awareness, encourage public participation, and promote online project discussion across all age groups.
- Reach younger demographic who may not use Facebook as frequently.
- Post impressionable photos of GR parks and rec or planning process.
- Establish unique and memorable hashtags that resonate across age groups.
- Create Instagram community that actively posts about the plan to further spread awareness and expand audience.
- Convey GR Park system's natural beauty and active population.

To date, our Instagram account has grown by nearly **500** followers since the beginning of the plan.

Posters & Flyers

- Unmanned informational stations set up at public libraries, City Hall, and Baxter Community Center (including poster, flyers, & comment cards).
- Event posters: neighborhood associations, libraries, local businesses & nonprofits
 - Distribution help of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks & Progressive AE
- Over 10,000 backpack Flyers to GRPS elementary & middle schools for Open House #1
- Over 1,500 flyers to GRPS elementary schools surrounding Open House #3 event locations
- 100 flyers distributed to homes surrounding Open House #3 event locations
- Posters and advertisements on Monroe and Plaza level of City Hall (English/Spanish)
- Generic flyers at every secondary event with process timeline, major dates, & contact info.

Email Updates

- MyPark Survey & Open House invitations, and regular updates on the plan were sent to committee members, City employees, neighborhood leaders, Recreation program users, and residents across the city, totaling over **7,000** contacts.

Local Media

- City of Grand Rapids media release of Public Open Houses dates/information.
- Public Open House dates sent to GR Now, Rapidian, Mlive, GR Kids, and Experience GR.
- Director David Marquardt - various interviews with all local papers and TV stations.
- 30 second announcement on 311 prompt a week prior to each public open house.