



## **The Vision Zero 2018 Campaign & New Pedestrian Crossing Ordinance** *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **What is the City's new pedestrian crossing ordinance?**

The City Commission approved a new ordinance that beginning Feb. 6, 2018, will require drivers to stop for pedestrians at all crosswalks as part of a comprehensive effort to lower Grand Rapids' higher-than-state-average rate of pedestrian-involved crashes with motor vehicles.

### **How is the new ordinance a change from the City's past statute on pedestrian crossings?**

The previous City ordinance required vehicle operators to simply "yield" the right of way instead of coming to a complete stop. The new ordinance calls on motorists to fully stop for pedestrians at marked and unmarked crosswalks, except at intersections where the movement of traffic is regulated by a police officer or a traffic signal. In these cases, pedestrians will need to wait for the pedestrian "walk" signal to properly cross.

### **What is the Vision Zero Campaign?**

The City Commission's pedestrian crossing action is part of a new Vision Zero initiative to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries by promoting safe driving behaviors and addressing pedestrians' vulnerability when crossing city streets. The goal of the Vision Zero campaign is to reduce crashes, prevent injuries and save lives by creating a culture of respect for all road users – pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers.

### **Who supports the Vision Zero campaign?**

Grand Rapids' Vision Zero initiative was unanimously approved Jan. 11 by the advisory Mobile GR Commission and recommended for City Commission authorization along with the more stringent policy at city crosswalks. A public hearing on the proposed ordinance amendment was held Nov. 28, 2017, where no opposition was expressed.

### **Who is most at risk from crashes with motor vehicles?**

People walking and bicycling, children, the elderly, people of color and people in low-income communities face a disproportionate risk of traffic injuries and fatalities. The intent of Vision Zero is to demonstrate the City's belief and commitment that even one traffic-related fatality or serious injury in Grand Rapids is too many. The City's new ordinance reflects that the safety of people walking, bicycling, using transit or operating a motor vehicle is of the utmost importance when designing, maintaining and operating city streets. The City Commission's responsibility is to support policies that can help Grand Rapids combat pedestrian injuries and fatalities and create more walkable communities within Kent County that everybody can enjoy without fear.

### **Have Vision Zero campaigns worked successfully elsewhere?**

Yes. Vision Zero was first implemented in the 1990s in Sweden, which now has the world's lowest annual traffic-related death rate. Vision Zero has proved successful across Europe and is embraced in many U.S. cities, such as Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle.

### **Why is the new pedestrian crossing ordinance in Grand Rapids necessary?**

The Commission's decision will help Grand Rapids achieve significant, lasting improvements in pedestrian safety. Reported traffic crashes are increasing nationally, statewide and locally, including a nearly 21 percent increase in Grand Rapids between 2009 and 2016, based on the most recent data available. Nationally, pedestrian deaths now make up 14 percent of the total traffic deaths in the United States, up from 11 percent in 2011. The National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) attributes this uptick to the decreasing deaths of motorists and increasing numbers of Americans walking for transportation and recreation.

### **Does additional data exist that supports the City's new pedestrian crossing ordinance?**

Yes. State data show that Kent County reported 790 pedestrian-involved crashes between 2012 and 2015, the third highest among all Michigan counties and just below Oakland County's 866 crashes – despite Kent County having only roughly half of Oakland County's population.

Among the Kent County pedestrian-involved crashes between 2012 and 2015, 439 occurred in Grand Rapids – or 56 percent of all crashes in the county. Additionally, 51.7 percent of pedestrian-involved crashes in the city during that span happened in or near an intersection, compared with 36.4 percent statewide, indicating a significant need for improvements at or near intersections.

**Is the new ordinance prompted by the tragic Jan. 25 death of retired 87-year-old Grand Rapids banker and philanthropist John Canepa in a car-pedestrian accident?**

Discussion about implementing a new Grand Rapids pedestrian crossing ordinance began last year. But Mr. Canepa's Jan. 25 passing reinforces the need for the ordinance change. Mr. Canepa, co-founder of the Grand Action Committee that built the Van Andel Arena, DeVos Place Convention Center, Grand Rapids Civic Theatre's renovation and Michigan State University School of Human Medicine, was injured Jan. 22 in a car-pedestrian accident on Leonard Street NW between Seward and Quarry streets.

No one should die or be seriously injured while traveling our city streets. The City Commission extends our deepest condolences to the family of a civic leader who was a titan of the Greater Grand Rapids banking and philanthropic communities. We pray that the City's new ordinance will help to avoid such unfortunate tragedies in the future.

**What factors account for the rise in pedestrian crashes?**

Among the trends associated with the rise in pedestrian fatalities – beyond the growing number of people walking for health, economic or environmental reasons – are increased motor vehicle traffic as gas prices remain stable, an improving economy that's putting more drivers on the road and the sharp rise in smartphone use, resulting in distracted pedestrians and drivers, according to a 2016 NCSL report. Alcohol is also a major factor in pedestrian fatalities: 36 percent of pedestrians killed in 2012 had a blood alcohol count above the legal driving limit, although that number is down from 44 percent from the early 1980s, the NCSL noted. At least 27 states now mandate that drivers use necessary precaution if they observe an obviously intoxicated or incapacitated pedestrian, the NCSL reports.

**How will Grand Rapids promote and enforce the new pedestrian crossing ordinance moving forward in 2018?**

The campaign will involve public education activities as well as high-visibility enforcement zones at intersections throughout the city where Grand Rapids police officers will observe pedestrian/motorist interactions and provide warnings and education about pedestrian safety laws. Issuing tickets is not the sole focus of the City's high-visibility enforcement program in 2018. Rather, the City plans to help people understand Grand Rapids' safety concerns regarding motorist and pedestrian interactions and advocate for them to encourage others to promote safe driving behavior.

**Do other municipalities in Michigan have similar pedestrian crosswalk ordinances to Grand Rapids' new statute?**

Yes. The cities of Ann Arbor and East Lansing have long enforced ordinances requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians at marked and uncontrolled crosswalks. An uncontrolled crosswalk typically means that a traffic control device is either not in place or in operation to dictate pedestrian movement. Most recently, Traverse City in 2011 passed an ordinance requiring drivers to halt their vehicles for pedestrians in marked and posted crosswalks, followed by a public education and enforcement campaign that began in 2014.

**How is the pedestrian safety campaign funded?**

Grand Rapids will announce this spring the City's second annual pedestrian safety campaign, a multiyear effort that kicked off last year through a \$120,000 grant from the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.

**How does the pedestrian safety campaign align with the City's Driving Change campaign that promotes bicycle safety?**

The City's pedestrian safety initiative follows the nationally heralded Driving Change bicycle education campaign that Grand Rapids launched in 2016 with Michigan Department of Transportation support. The campaign helped publicize Grand Rapids' 2015 "safe passing" ordinance, which requires that motorists

keep at least 5 feet between the right side of their vehicle and the bicyclist they are passing, as well as other bicycle safety rules.

During the Driving Change campaign's five-month reporting period in May through September 2016, police reports show fatal or serious-injury crashes involving bicycles in Grand Rapids dropped to two compared with 11 during the same period of 2015. The two fatal/serious crashes between May and September 2016 represented an 81 percent decrease – and the lowest total in Grand Rapids since 2010. Total crashes involving bicyclists decreased by more than 40 percent in 2016 for the same five-month reporting period. The 42 crashes in 2016 was the lowest number of bicycle-involved crashes reported in Grand Rapids between May and September going back to 2004, the first year of available data.

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