



GRPS Launches Stop-Arm Camera School Bus Safety Program

“The safety and well-being of our scholars is our top priority every day. Not just inside our schools, but everywhere our scholars go as part of their school day,”

— Dr. Leadriane Roby,
Superintendent, GRPS

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Grand Rapids Public Schools today announced the launch of a new school bus stop-arm safety program designed to protect scholars as they travel to and from school and reduce dangerous driving behavior around stopped school buses.

The district and Dean Transportation have partnered with BusPatrol to deploy stop-arm safety technology across its entire school bus fleet at no cost to GRPS. The program focuses on preventing illegal school bus passings, a serious and ongoing safety risk for scholars as they board and exit buses at stops throughout the city.

The program begins with a 5-week warning period to educate drivers and raise awareness of Michigan’s school bus stop law. During this period, motorists who illegally pass a stopped school bus will receive warning notices by mail with no financial penalty. Full enforcement is scheduled to begin on April 27 after the warning period concludes.

As part of the initiative, 135 school buses will be equipped with stop-arm cameras. The technology is designed to capture evidence when a driver fails to stop for a school bus with its red lights flashing and stop arm extended. Recorded incidents are reviewed by the Grand Rapids Police Department before a citation is issued to the registered vehicle owner.

“The safety and well-being of our scholars is our top priority every day. Not just inside our schools, but everywhere our



scholars go as part of their school day,” said Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. “By adding stop-arm safety technology to our buses, we are creating safer conditions for scholars during one of the most vulnerable moments of their day.”

“More and more, drivers are choosing to ignore the flashing red lights on our school buses - putting our children at risk,” said Dean Transportation President and CEO Patrick Dean. “Dean Transportation is proud to partner with Grand Rapids Public Schools to stay at the cutting edge of safety and innovation.”

“This is a milestone day for safety in our community,” said Grand Rapids Police Department Interim Police Chief Joe Trigg. “Illegally passing a stopped school bus is one of the most dangerous traffic violations on our roads, and it is completely preventable. This program helps us address that risk by encouraging safer driving behavior around school buses.”

According to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, more than 2,200 drivers illegally pass stopped school buses in Michigan on a single day, adding up to over 400,000 violations each year. Each incident places

children at serious risk of injury or worse.

Under Michigan law, drivers must stop at least 20 feet away from a school bus when its stop signal is activated. Drivers must remain stopped until the bus resumes motion or the visual signals are deactivated.

The stop-arm cameras used on school buses are designed only to capture vehicles that illegally pass a stopped school bus. The enforcement cameras activate only when the bus’s stop arm and red lights are deployed. Footage of potential violations is securely stored and used solely for reviewing potential citations.

As part of the program, cameras will also be added to the interior of buses to add clarity when an incident occurs on the bus. This has been a top request of parents and caregivers during transportation town hall events and from the GRPS Parent Transportation Advisory Council.

The camera systems are provided at no cost to GRPS. A portion of ticket revenue will be utilized to pay for the program.

You can learn more about the school bus safety program on grps.org/departments/transportation/school-bus-safety-program.

NON-PROFIT ORG
ECRWSS
US POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT #319

GRPS
my choice
Grand Rapids Public Schools
1331 Franklin S.E., PO Box 117
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0117

ECRWSS
Postal Customer

'Warm, Safe, Dry, and Connected' Sinking Fund Millage on the August Ballot

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – A 'Warm, Safe, Dry, and Connected' sinking fund millage will be on the August ballot for Grand Rapids Public Schools.

GRPS is one of the few districts in the area without a sinking fund. These funds are primarily used for emergency repairs, building renovations, construction projects, technology upgrades, and school security improvements.

The Board of Education approved asking voters to consider a 0.95-mill sinking fund over 10 years. If approved, the owner of a home with a market value of \$300,000 would pay approximately \$11.88 per month. The sinking fund is expected to generate about \$7 million annually for the district.

Currently, GRPS has a total millage rate of

3.85, ranking 24th out of 27 school districts in Kent County. If approved, 20 other school districts would still have a higher millage rate than GRPS.

"Providing safe, well-maintained, and up-to-date learning environments is essential to supporting our scholars and staff," said Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. "Our district remains committed to being responsible stewards of our community's investment. We are grateful for the continued trust and support of our community."

"As the Board of Education, our responsibility is to ensure our schools are prepared to support learning every day," said Board of Education President José Rodriguez. "This proposal gives our community the opportunity to consider a

dedicated funding source to maintain and improve our facilities."

All sinking fund expenditures are audited annually by the Michigan Department of Treasury to ensure compliance.

Election Day is Tuesday, August 4.



Check Your Registration

Voters can check their voter registration status and look up their local clerk information at Michigan.gov/Vote.

If there are 15+ days before an election, voters can register online, by mail, or in person.

Within 14 days of an election, and on Election Day, voters may only register by visiting their local clerk's office to register in person with proof of residency documentation.

Make A Plan to Vote

Vote By Mail

If you are a registered Michigan voter, you may request an absentee ballot without requiring a reason, using either of the following methods:

Online (requires personal ID info, signature upload)—until 5 p.m. the Friday before Election Day

By mail—must be received by your local clerk by 5 p.m. the Friday before Election Day; best to mail at least 15 days early.

Vote In Person

At your polling location—find your polling location by visiting michigan.gov/vote.

Grand Rapids Public Schools

WE ARE GR

April 2026

Grand Rapids

Board of Education

José Rodriguez, President
Aarie Wade, Vice President
Amber Kilpatrick, Secretary
Eleanor Moreno, Treasurer
Kymberlie Buczek, Trustee
Sara Melton, Trustee
Erika VanDyke, Trustee
Kimberley Williams, Trustee
Richard Williamson, Trustee

*Leadriane Roby, Ph.D.,
 Superintendent of Schools*

Equal Opportunity Institution: Grand Rapids Public Schools, as an Equal Opportunity Institution, complies with federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and harassment, including Title IV and Title VII (with amendments) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Veterans Readjustment Act of 1974 as amended 38 USC 20-12 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. The District will not discriminate against any person based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, height, weight, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, disability or veteran status. The District's Civil Rights Compliance Officer is Thomas Cottle. Mr. Cottle may be contacted at 1331 Martin Luther King Jr. St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49501, (616) 819-2030 or (616) 819-2028. The District's Title IX Coordinator is Thomas Cottle. Mr. Cottle may be contacted at 1331 Martin Luther King Jr. St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49501 or (616) 819-6339 or titleix@grps.org.

Title IX Annual Athletics Compliance Report: Grand Rapids Public Schools is committed to securing athletic equity and provides annual Title IX reporting to the athletes and parents in an effort to bring increased attention and resources towards ensuring that gender equity as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments for 1972, Grand Rapids Public Schools annual report is available at www.grps.org.

To comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers.

Please contact Michelle Dexter, Director of Human Resources, in Human Resources via email atwoodc@grps.org or at (616) 819-2095.

WE ARE GR is published four times per year by GRPS Communications Office
 Grand Rapids Public Schools
 1331 MLK Jr St. SE, P.O. Box 117
 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501
 Phone: (616) 819-2149 Fax: (616) 819-3480
www.grps.org

*Luke Stier, Director of Communications +
 Community Liaison*
*Evan Linnert, Communications &
 Visual Content Mgr.*

Kaitlyn Califf, Webmaster+Multimedia Designer
Lynn Ritsema, Project Coordinator+Web Editor

12TH ANNUAL GRAND RAPIDS NEIGHBORHOOD SUMMIT

**SATURDAY
APRIL 25, 2026**



GRPS UNIVERSITY,
 1400 FULLER AVE SE,
 GRAND RAPIDS, MI
 49506

8:00A.M. - 4:00P.M.
 FOLLOWED BY A
 COMMUNITY
 CELEBRATION

Attendee Registration
 opens March 9th!

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Free to attend
- All ages welcome
- Breakfast & lunch included
- Keynote speaker experience
- 15+ workshops
- 20+ resource tables



Follow our Facebook page and website to stay up to date!

FACEBOOK.COM/EQUITYANDENGAGEMENT/

PUBLICINPUT.COM/GRSUMMIT26

Reimagine GRPS Projects Ramp Up This Summer

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – This summer will mark the busiest construction season yet under the Reimagine GRPS bond, approved overwhelmingly by voters in 2023. Major progress is expected on the district's new elementary school, along with multiple new playground installations and improvements to learning spaces across several schools.

"These projects reflect our commitment to providing every scholar with safe, modern, and inspiring learning environments," said Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. "We are deeply grateful to our community for their support of the Reimagine GRPS bond. Your investment is making these improvements possible."

Here's an overview of the big projects:

New Northeast Elementary School

Construction continued through the winter on a new, state-of-the-art elementary school on the site of Aberdeen Academy. The school will be the new home for scholars and staff from Aberdeen Academy and Palmer Elementary starting with the 2027-28 school year.

Foundations are now finished, and structural steel framing for the second floor is complete. Crews have also begun block work for the gymnasium.

Designed to reflect the spirit of the Redhawk, the school's mascot, the building will feature two classroom wings that extend from a central hub housing the gymnasium and cafeteria. Inside, warm, light wood tones will create a sense of stability and connection to nature, complemented by vibrant colors that spark creativity and energy.

Ottawa Hills High School

Significant renovations are underway at Ottawa Hills High School as the building prepares to welcome Alger Middle School scholars and staff this fall.

The first phase of construction includes a new middle school entrance, a dedicated drop-off and pickup area, a new cafeteria and kitchen, and upgraded HVAC systems. This portion of the project is expected to be completed by June, ensuring the building is ready for scholars and staff when the school year begins.

Additional improvements are also

planned throughout the campus over the next year. These include a full renovation of the auditorium, upgrades to the pool, and a complete rebuild of the practice football field and track — enhancements that will benefit both middle and high school scholars for years to come.

New Home For Brookside Elementary

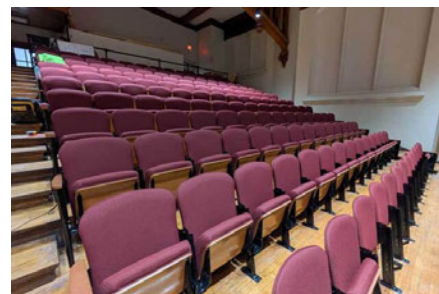
Construction is set to begin in June at Alger Middle School as the building is transformed into the future home of Brookside Elementary School.

The project will include converting existing classrooms to better support elementary learning. This work includes adding restrooms for pre-kindergarten classrooms, creating age-appropriate spaces designed to meet the needs of younger scholars.

Additional improvements throughout the building will include new interior flooring, fresh paint, and upgraded lighting to create bright, welcoming learning environments. HVAC upgrades are also planned to improve comfort and efficiency throughout the school.

Outdoor spaces will also see significant enhancements, with two new fully accessible playgrounds planned. In addition, the bus loop will be resurfaced to improve safety and accessibility for families, staff, and transportation services.

The building will reopen as an elementary school for the 2027-28 school year.



Innovation Central High School

Renovations are in the final stages at the historic Betty Bloomer Ford Auditorium inside Innovation Central High School.

Several major upgrades have now been completed, bringing the space closer to welcoming scholars and the community.



Construction continued through the winter on a new, state-of-the-art elementary school on the site of Aberdeen Academy.

New house lighting has been installed, along with brand-new seating to enhance comfort and visibility. Work continues on additional improvements, including the new rigging system and curtains.

With each milestone, the 1,000-seat auditorium is being transformed into a modern venue while preserving its historic character - creating an inspiring space for learning, creativity, and community events.

Kent Hills Elementary School

Big improvements are coming this summer at Kent Hills Elementary School as part of ongoing efforts to enhance learning environments for scholars and staff.

Upgrades include new lighting throughout the building, updated interior finishes, and renovations to restrooms. There will also be a new fully accessible playground, providing inclusive opportunities for play and physical activity for all scholars. This project will be completed in time for the start of school in August.

The updates build on improvements completed in the summer of 2025, which included a refinished parking lot to improve safety and accessibility for families, staff, and visitors.

New Southeast Environmental Science Academy

Exciting progress is underway for the new environmental science academy at Ken-O-Sha, marking a major step toward expanding hands-on learning opportunities for scholars on the southeast side of the city.

The project will fully renovate the building to bring together scholars and staff from Ken-O-Sha Park Elementary and Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy.

Crews have begun interior demolition

as preparations continue to transform the space into the future Environmental Science Academy. The new environmental science academy will open for the 2027-28 school year.

New Playgrounds

Three additional schools will also receive new playgrounds this summer. Construction is planned at Cesar E. Chavez Elementary School, Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Academy, and Gerald R. Ford Academic Center. These new playgrounds are designed to be fully accessible, ensuring scholars of all abilities can safely participate in outdoor play and physical activity.

Accessible playgrounds include features such as inclusive play equipment, accessible surfaces, and thoughtfully designed spaces that encourage interaction, movement, and collaboration among all children.

The new playground at Gerald R. Ford Academic Center is made possible through a partnership with the Grand Rapids Public Schools Foundation.

Reimagine GRPS Dashboard

You can follow the progress of these projects and learn more about the Reimagine GRPS initiative by visiting grps.org/reimagine.



Native American Education Program Library Celebrates Grand Opening

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Nearly a decade in the making, the new Native American Education Program Library is now open, featuring more than 3,000 books in 16 different languages.

"Today we gather to honor history and to make history," Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby said during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "This is a place where history is preserved and where young people can discover who they are as well as who they can become."

The collection highlights the histories and cultures of tribes from across the country, including many that are often underrepresented in traditional textbooks.

"Inside this library you will find over 3,000 books. Alongside historical texts, you will find games, coloring books, and even Native American comic books," explained Native American Education Program Coordinator Amy Westcott. "A selection like this does not exist anywhere in the state - it may be the only library of its kind anywhere within a public school."

"Through the program, I brought in my cultural awareness and learned more about native traditions and practices," said Willem Odykirk, a junior at City High Middle School.

The library is located inside Straight School, 850 Chatham St. NW. Scholars in the Native American Education Program will be able to check out books directly.

Teachers across the district will also have access to borrow materials to bring Native perspectives and learning into their classrooms.

"The ripple effect of this resource will be powerful," Westcott said. "To everyone who worked for a decade to make this dream a reality, miigwech (thank you). Your commitment will shape generations of scholars."

"Programs like this and spaces like this library help our children see themselves, their history, and their future," said William Odykirk, Native American Education Program parent group chairperson.

GRPS is proud to offer the only Native American Education Program in West Michigan. The federally funded program serves more than 200 scholars representing 29 tribes across Turtle Island. The program provides academic support, advocacy, and opportunities to build cultural awareness while celebrating identity and heritage.

To learn more about the Native American Education Program, visit our website: <https://grps.org/departments/naep/>

"This space creates an opportunity for all of our scholars to learn from voices that they don't often hear - voices that are authentic and diverse,"

*— Board of Education President
José Rodriguez.*



Gov. Whitmer Visits Mulick Park to See Literacy Instruction in Action

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Governor Gretchen Whitmer visited Mulick Park Elementary to see firsthand how scholars are strengthening their reading skills through LETRS science of reading instruction.

During her visit, the governor observed a reading lesson in Cassandra Greig's first-grade classroom, where scholars are learning how to break down and understand words using structured literacy strategies.

"It's so cool to see why words are the way they are - and then for them to understand - so when they get to a word they don't know they can attack it," Greig explained to Gov. Whitmer.

Mulick Park Elementary is serving as a schoolwide pilot site for HMH science of reading curriculum this school year, and early results show promising growth. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth reading scores increased their median score by 14%

this winter, highlighting the impact of this instructional approach in just the first semester. The district plans to expand the curriculum to all schools beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

In addition to observing classroom instruction, Gov. Whitmer met with Greig and first-grade teacher Jennifer Delgado, both of whom have completed LETRS training - an evidence-based professional development program grounded in the science of reading. Currently, more than 200 GRPS teachers have completed or are in the process of completing this valuable training.

"I think it's made us much more intentional about our data," Delgado said.

"We had some reluctant writers that now - they're sounding out and building words and spelling them," Greig said. "They're really blossoming and writing."



JOIN US FOR AN INSPIRING EVENING

Thursday, May 7, 2026, 6pm at GRPS University

A fundraiser to spark opportunities for GRPS students

Tickets and Sponsorship
Information

[GRPSF.ORG/MINDSHARE](https://grpsf.org/mindshare)



GRPS Graduation Rates Continue Historic Rise

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – The Class of 2025 continued the historic rise of graduation rates at Grand Rapids Public Schools.

According to newly released data from the Michigan Department of Education, the GRPS Class of 2025 achieved a four-year graduation rate of 83.22%, the highest level in recent history. The rate increased from 82.53% in 2024 and is nearly 18 percentage points higher than it was a decade ago.

“The continued increase in our graduation rate shows what is possible when an entire district rallies around scholar success,” said Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. “Our educators are focused on ensuring every scholar has the support they need to graduate and prepare for what’s next. The Class of 2025 is proof that our collective efforts are making a real difference.”

GRPS Graduation Rates - Past 10 Years

2024-25:	83.22%
2023-24:	82.53%
2022-23:	82.39%
2021-22:	80.53%
2020-21:	78.93%
2019-20:	80.92%
2018-19:	76.20%
2017-18:	71.25%
2016-17:	66.58%
2015-16:	65.54%

GRPS proudly offers the largest selection of school choices in West Michigan. If you are interested in making GRPS your choice, visit grps.org/enroll.



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Scholars at Coit Creative Arts Academy brought four centuries of musical history to life during a powerful Black History Month concert celebrating the depth and influence of Black music.

“We’re representing over 400 years of Black History,” said Cora, a third-grader at Coit who performed “Defying Gravity” from Wicked.

The performance began with songs rooted in Africa centuries ago and moved chronologically through spirituals, gospel, jazz, soul and contemporary hits.

“What I wanted to do was tell history from a musical perspective,” explained Debra Perry, the Grammy-nominated music teacher at Coit. “The music of those times and why those different genres came about continuing to still tell the story of Black people down through the years.”

The concept resonated with the audience. Scholars delivered a moving performance while also demonstrating a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance behind each selection.

“My favorite part about music is when we learn and listen about Black History Month,” said Travis, a third-grader at Coit.

Perry said providing historical context helped scholars connect more meaningfully with the material.

“I did teach the history behind the songs, and then that resonated much more with the kids,” Perry said. “When they got up to perform they understood from a historical aspect the importance of them.”

By the final notes, pride filled the room - both on stage and in the audience.

“I am so proud of them,” Perry added. “They should feel very proud of themselves.”



Scan the QR code
to see the video

MLK Jr. Social Justice Contest Winners Announced

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Three GRPS scholars were announced as winners of the 21st Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Social Justice Legacy Contest.

The contest, open to all GRPS sixth graders, is sponsored by Seyferth PR. Scholars were asked to identify and react to a social justice issue that is meaningful to them. 183 scholars from nine schools submitted entries.

This year’s winners are:

- **Grand Prize:** Liyana Anderson, North Park Montessori Academy
Apple iPad, two tickets to The Lion King
- **First Runner Up:** My’on Welch, Grand Rapids Montessori Academy
Amazon Fire HD 8 plus tablet with a wireless charging dock, two tickets to The Lion King
- **Second Runner Up:** Rose Ward, Grand Rapids Montessori Academy
\$100 gift card to We are LIT!
Multicultural Bookshop, two tickets to The Lion King
- **Honorable mention** winners also received a \$25 gift card to We are LIT! Multicultural Bookshop.

“I hope they think about how how messed up is to treat somebody differently just because of their skin tone,” Liyana said. “If people read or see art that actually expresses that, then people may think, well, these kids are changing, so why shouldn’t we.”

ASBESTOS NOTICE

Asbestos is a general name for a group of naturally occurring minerals composed of small fibers. These fibers are very strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. The mere presence of asbestos in a building does not mean that the health of the building occupants is endangered. When left intact and undisturbed, asbestos-containing materials do not pose a health risk to building occupants. There is, however, the potential for exposure when the material becomes damaged or disturbed. Because of these problems associated with asbestos exposure, the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Act, or AHERA emphasizes that asbestos in school buildings must appropriately be managed.

The Grand Rapids Public Schools has an asbestos management plan that addresses contact persons, training, inspections, response actions, operation and maintenance activities, periodic surveillance, cleaning, disclosure efforts, and school building areas containing asbestos. Any person may review the management plan at the Grand Rapids Public School’s Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, during regular business hours (8:00 am to 4:00 pm). Alternatively, any person may request a copy of the plan by writing the Grand Rapids Public Schools Facilities Management Department, 900 Union, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503. There is a cost involved in reproducing the document of approximately 10 cents per page. The Grand Rapids Public Schools will send a copy out of the management plan within 5 business days of receiving the request.

Scholars Pitch Design Ideas at West Michigan Design Prize



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) — Scholars from Southwest Middle High School - Academia Bilingüe presented at West Michigan Design Prize at Kendall College of Art and Design. The design challenge this year was: How might we improve social connections within our school to support wellbeing and a sense of belonging?

A total of 53 teams entered the competition in the fall. Twenty finalists were invited to present for the final round of judging, including five teams from Southwest Middle High.

The Book Recommender presented by one of the finalists from Southwest Middle High placed second in the middle school division.

West Michigan Design Prize is a partnership between the Greater West Michigan MiSTEM Region, Ferris State University's Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Valley State University, The Right Place, Kent ISD, Muskegon Area ISD, and Ottawa Area ISD.

My Choice for *BELONGING*



ENROLL TODAY!
ENROLL.GRPS.ORG

Questions? ☎ 616.819.2150 ✉ Enrollment@grps.org



Cherry Health Completes Renovations at Union High School Health Center

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The Cherry Health Union High School Health Center has been fully remodeled, providing a more open and inviting space for scholars and families that includes medical, behavioral health and dental services.

Renovations to the 1,950-square-foot health center at 1800 Tremont Blvd NW included moving existing walls to improve layout and patient flow, and adding new lighting, paint, flooring, furniture, and signage. The Union High School Health Center includes three exam rooms, a behavioral health counseling office, and a dental area.

“Cherry Health is proud to partner with Grand Rapids Public Schools to celebrate the completion of the newly renovated Union High School Health Center,” said Cherry Health Chief Operating Officer Bill Joure. “This transformation creates a more welcoming, modern space that improves access to comprehensive, high-quality care for scholars without having to leave school.”

GRPS received a \$500,000 renovation grant from MDHHS and used some board of education funds to complete the project. Minor updates were also made at Cherry Health's other two school-based health centers within GRPS schools: Innovation Central High School Health Center and Ottawa Hills High School Health Center.

“By modernizing the Union High School Health Center, we are reinforcing our commitment to ensuring scholars have



convenient access to high-quality physical and behavioral health services in a safe and supportive environment,” said Kirstyn Wade, GRPS Director of Health Services. “When scholars can access care right in their school, it removes barriers and helps them stay healthy, focused, and ready to learn.”

Each Cherry Health school-based health center provides services including well-child and sports physicals, treatment of injuries and illnesses, immunizations, routine lab tests, and counseling. A consent form signed by a parent or guardian is required for these services. All youth and young adults ages 5-21 are welcome, regardless of ability to pay. Children ages 3-4 may be considered for services based on their symptoms. Cherry Health accepts Medicaid and most insurance plans. A sliding fee payment scale and interpretation services are available. For more information, visit cherryhealth.org/services/school-based.



GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2026 GRADUATION SCHEDULE Hosted at Houseman Field

Monday, May 18, 2026

- 5:00 PM: CA Frost Middle High School
- 7:30 PM: Union High School

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

- 5:00 PM: Southwest Middle High School
- 7:30 PM: Innovation Central High School and Grand Rapids Montessori High School

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

- 5:00 PM: Ottawa Hills High School
- 7:30 PM: Grand Rapids Public Museum High School

Thursday, May 21, 2026

- 5:00 PM: Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy
- 7:30 pm: City High Middle School

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

- 6:00 PM: Grand Rapids Learning Center (Ceremony will be held at GRCC Spectrum Theater)

GRPS ATHLETICS



Union Football Hosts Fourth Annual Youth Development Clinics

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- The Union High School Football Program is developing the next generation of Redhawks during the fourth annual off-season youth development clinics happening on Sundays in February and March.

Hosted at Union High School, the clinics focus on football fundamentals through skills, drills, formation work, and friendly competition. Sessions are divided by age group, with the first session serving third-through fifth-grade athletes and the second session designed for sixth- through eighth-grade players. More than 100 participants registered for the clinics.

The clinics are led by Union High School's coaching staff, with support from current varsity players who volunteer their time to mentor younger athletes. These players help lead drills, demonstrate techniques, and share insights from their own on-field experiences, creating a hands-on, supportive environment that helps the next generation of Redhawks develop both skills and confidence.

"These clinics are an important way for us to provide development opportunities for our young athletes while also building

continuity between our youth, middle school, and high school football programs," said Megan Persons, Union Youth Football Director. "It's exciting to see our older players mentoring the next generation of Redhawks and helping them grow their skills and passion for the game."

Varsity quarterback Chance Hammingh agreed.

"It's important for us to give kids the chance to develop skills and build relationships early so they can have a better future in the game and as people," Hammingh said.

The free clinics provide a valuable opportunity for young athletes to engage with the program while continuing to build the foundation for Union football's future.

The final two clinics are March 15 and 22. To sign up and learn more information about Union Football, please contact:

2nd–6th grade:

Megan Persons, Youth Director,
persons@grps.org

7th–12th grade:

Curtis Andrews, Varsity Coach,
andrews@grps.org



New Era Begins For Ottawa Hills Baseball

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – There's a new man in the dugout for the Ottawa Hills Varsity Baseball team, as Kevin Thompson takes the reigns of the program.

"I grew up in the dugout," Thompson explained. "What I like about baseball is it's kind of one of those sports where you don't have to be the best talent-wise. You can figure out a way to win."

Thompson grew up playing baseball at Petoskey High School. He continued at the next level as a pitcher and infielder at Alma College. Following college, he turned to coaching, serving as an assistant coach at the high school and collegiate level. He now brings that experience to Ottawa Hills.

"I've learned so many things through the game of baseball that have translated to my life outside of sports," he said. "It doesn't matter your skill level. We will find something that you can contribute to the team success."

If you are interested in playing baseball for the Bengals, complete this form to receive updates on the season.

"I've been fortunate enough to have great coaches throughout my life that have really made a difference in my life and helped me excel both on and off the field," he added. "I'm just really excited for that opportunity to hopefully give back to students and future generations."



Union HS Hosts Women in Sports Day

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Union High School hosted its second annual Women in Sports Day, providing high school female athletes with an inspiring platform to connect, share experiences, and learn from successful women in the sports world.

Scholars participated in a panel discussion with accomplished female athletes.

"As women, we need to make sure that we're sticking together and supporting each other," said panelist Jessalyn Johnson, assistant principal at Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy. "Find your community. Find your people. Some of my greatest friends came through sports."

"Work hard when no one's watching," said Tori Hoekstra, a counselor at Union High School. "Be a servant leader... be an encourager."



OTTAWA HILLS ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

Nominations due: November 13, 2026



Submit your nominations today!

This honor celebrates outstanding athletic accomplishments made during or after a career at OHHS.

Questions:

Marcus Harris, Athletic Director
616.819.2879 or HarrisMar@grps.org



Bengal Football Turns to Ottawa Hills Alum For New Era

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – The Ottawa Hills Bengal varsity football program has a new leader with deep ties to the school and community. James Jones, an Ottawa Hills High School graduate and former student-athlete, has been named head coach. Jones also works directly with scholars at Ottawa Hills as an in-house specialist.

“It’s a dream, a passion and a desire for me to help these young men in our community,” Jones said. “We are in a great place at Ottawa Hills to build - to restore pride.”

Football has long played a central role in Jones’ life. He began playing in the Ottawa Hills 78ers program as an eighth grader, starred for the team in high school and continued his playing career at Northwood University.

“My football journey has been very important to me and very impactful in my life,” he explained. “It changed my life in high school. It made me who I am today.”

As head coach, Jones plans to implement an up-tempo offense designed to put scholar-athletes in positions to make plays and succeed.



“It’s going to be tough. It’s going to be difficult,” he said. “But as long as you put the effort in, I’m going to put the effort here for you as well.”

Jones believes the lessons learned on the gridiron will translate directly to success in the classroom.

“I think a lot of our kids want to be a part of something,” he said. “There’s studies that show having a great football program drives your academics. We have to develop a foundation and a culture here that kids want to be a part of.”

His focus is on restoring the roar and building long-term success for the Bengal football program.

“We’re thinking about the long term, not the short term,” Jones promised. “I want to get started. I want to get going. I’m eager. I’m excited to get the process rolling.”

Ottawa Hills Celebrates Winter All-Conference Athletes

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- The Ottawa Hills Bengals are proud to announce their winter 2025-26 All-Conference selections. Competing in the OK White Division in all winter sports except swimming, which is in the OK Rainbow East Division, the Bengals made strong impressions throughout the season in basketball, bowling, wrestling, and boys’ swim and dive.

All-Conference First Team:

Daniel Gerber (10th grade, Museum) – Boys Bowling

India Hollis (12th grade, UPREP) – Girls Basketball

Ewan Jacques (10th grade, GR Montessori) – Boys Swim & Dive

Wyatt Jacques (11th grade, GR Montessori) – Boys Swim & Dive

Nicholas Ladamato-Fisher (12th grade, UPREP) – Wrestling

Coreyon Malone (12th grade, Ottawa Hills) – Boys Bowling

Bianca Pharms (11th grade, City) – Girls Bowling

Jameer Runyon (10th grade, Museum) – Wrestling

Isaiah Taylor (11th, UPREP) – Boys Basketball

All-Conference Honorable Mention:

James Coleman (11th, Ottawa Hills) – Boys Bowling

Bowling was a particular highlight for the Bengals this season. Daniel Gerber placed 7th at regionals, earning a spot at the Division 1 state meet and finishing in the top 50 statewide. Coreyon Malone and James Coleman dominated the conference, taking 1st and 2nd place at the OK White Conference Meet. On the girls’ side, Bianca Pharms led her team with a 1st-place finish at the conference meet and narrowly missed qualifying for state with an 8th-place regional finish.

In swimming, brothers Ewan and Wyatt Jacques both qualified for the Division 2 State Finals in individual and team events. Ewan earned 13th in the 50 freestyle and 14th in the 100 freestyle, while Wyatt placed 22nd in the 200 freestyle. The Bengals’ 200 freestyle relay team finished 19th, and the 400 freestyle relay team finished 20th at state.

Wrestling also featured standout performances. Nicholas Ladamato-Fisher and Jameer Runyon were both crowned conference champions in their respective weight classes at the OK White Conference Tournament. Ladamato-Fisher also finished 2nd in districts, becoming the first Ottawa Hills wrestler to qualify for regionals in multiple years.

*The Bengals congratulate all of their winter athletes
for their success this season!*

Union Celebrates Winter All-Conference Athletes

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- The Union Redhawks are proud to announce their winter 2025-26 All-Conference selections. Competing in the OK Gold Conference in all winter sports except swimming, which is in the OK Rainbow East Division, Union athletes made strong impressions throughout the season in basketball, boys' bowling, and boys' swim and dive.

All-Conference First Team:

Justin Hilliard (12th grade, CA Frost) – Boys Bowling

Kingston Jones (11th grade, CA Frost) – Boys Bowling

Jax Schottke (9th grade, City) – Boys Swim & Dive

All-Conference Honorable Mention:

Parker Bitson (11th grade, CA Frost) – Boys Basketball

Zyreair Craig (12th grade, Union) – Girls Basketball

Asiyah Green (12th grade, Union) – Girls Basketball

Union freshman Jax Schottke took first place in the diving competition at the OK Rainbow East Conference Championship, earning All-Conference honors and qualifying for the MHSAA Division 1 regional meet. Schottke finished 17th at regionals, an impressive result for his first high school season.

In bowling, Kingston Jones placed 11th at the Division 1 regional meet, narrowly missing a state finals berth, as only the top seven advance. Justin Hilliard finished 23rd at regionals. The Redhawks boys' bowling team also had a strong postseason, finishing third in the conference standings and placing among the top eight teams at regionals.

The Redhawks congratulate all of their winter athletes for their hard work and dedication throughout the season!

NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS UNION REDHAWKS INAUGURAL SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The Union Redhawks are now accepting nominations for the Inaugural Sports Hall of Fame—help us celebrate the athletes, coaches, and contributors who have made a lasting impact.

Nominations deadline: July 1, 2026



Submit your
nominations today!

Questions: Justin Walker, Athletic Director
WalkerJu@grps.org



PRESENTS

LEAD-SAFE CLEANING WORKSHOP SUMMER SERIES

Learn how to keep your home safe from lead with lead-safe cleaning tools and techniques and learn why it is a necessity to keep your home free of lead and environmental hazards.



SWIFFER &
CLEANING
SUPPLIES
GIVEAWAY!

SCAN TO



REGISTER

11AM - 12PM (VIRTUAL)

MAY 20 JULY 15

OR

JUNE 17 AUGUST 19

6PM - 7PM (IN-PERSON WITH DINNER
PROVIDED. CHILDREN WELCOME!)

In person workshops held at Genesis Suites
1333 Alger St SE | Grand Rapids, MI 49507

WWW.HEALTHYHOMESCOALITION.ORG | (616) 241-3300 | INFO@HEALTHYHOMESCOALITION.ORG



PRESENTA

TALLER DE LIMPIEZA SEGURA CON PLOMO SERIE DE VERANO

Aprenda cómo mantener su hogar libre de plomo con herramientas y técnicas de limpieza seguras y aprenda por qué es necesario mantener su hogar libre de plomo y peligros ambientales.



¡SORTEO DE
SWIFFER Y
ARTÍCULOS DE
LIMPIEZA!

ESCANEE AQUÍ



PARA
REGISTRARSE

11AM - 12PM (VIRTUAL)

MAYO 20

JUNIO 17

O

JULIO 15

6PM - 7PM (EN PERSONA, CON CENA

AGOSTO 19

INCLUIDA. ¡LOS NIÑOS SON BIENVENIDOS!)

Las clases presenciales serán en Genesis Suites
1333 Alger St SE | Grand Rapids, MI 49507

WWW.HEALTHYHOMESCOALITION.ORG | (616) 241-3300 | INFO@HEALTHYHOMESCOALITION.ORG

PRINCIPAL PROFILE



DOMINIC BIOLCHINI
PRINCIPAL, KENT HILLS ELEMENTARY

Kent Hills Principal Leading the School He Taught In

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Dominic Biolchini knows exactly what it's like to be a teacher at Kent Hills Elementary School - because he taught there before becoming principal. That experience gives him a unique perspective on how to support staff and scholars.

"I know what it's like to be supported in this building," he explained. "I know what it looks like, what it feels like, what the building sort of energy is like. Knowing what worked and what didn't work has really helped me."

Biolchini believes Kent Hills is a special place for scholars to learn and grow.

"It's just a very lively place. No matter where you go, there's learning happening," he said. "If you want your child to get to know all the different types of people that exist in the world and get a really high-quality education, this would be the place for you."

His interest in education began early, inspired by his grandmother.

"A lot of my consideration for teaching probably starts with her. She was an elementary teacher, just like me," he recalled.

Along the way, several of his own teachers helped shape his path by demonstrating what great educators can do.

"We all know the teachers that we really look back on positively and think, I want to be like them," he said. "Some of those teachers really helped me kind of understand this is what I think I want to do."

Now, as principal, Biolchini strives to lead by example and encourage the potential he sees in every scholar.

"There's so many things that they can do. Sometimes it just takes the right person motivating them."



GRPS Alum Returned Home to Lead Burton Elementary



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Amarena Nelson was destined for this role. A graduate of GRPS, she grew up in a family rooted in education, with a father who dedicated his career to teaching at the high school level.

"I recall very early on saying, 'I'm going to be a teacher one day,'" Nelson recalled.

Now serving as principal of Burton Elementary School, Nelson's leadership marks a meaningful homecoming. She began her educational career in Detroit Public Schools and Baltimore City Public Schools before returning to West Michigan.

"After starting my own family, the decision to move back to Grand Rapids seemed really easy," she said. Her daughters now attend Burton Elementary School, allowing her to experience the school community as both a principal and a parent. "It's so amazing seeing my own daughter's going through the school system."

Each day, Nelson is focused on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

"One thing that's very important is making sure that all of our scholars and family and staff feel like Burton Elementary is a place that they belong," she said.

She also values the unique structure of the Burton campus, where elementary and middle school scholars share the same building, creating continuity and strong relationships.

"Burton Elementary School is unique, that we have the middle school right upstairs, and we share many of the same spaces," she explained. "We're able to see our scholars grow from preschool all the way through eighth grade and see how they continue to develop as learners."

For Nelson, Burton Elementary represents the very best of what a school community can be.

"I think Burton Elementary is the best school on the planet. That rich history and the connection to community here is something I am so grateful to be a part of."

PRINCIPAL PROFILE



AMARENA NELSON
PRINCIPAL, BURTON ELEMENTARY



In This Issue:

Grand Rapids City News - Section B

Parks and Rec - pg. 18

Public Library News - pg. 24

Section B Contents:

New DASH Route - 12

RenewGR Initiative - 16

Grand River Updates - 17

Outdoor Fitness Schedule - 20

April 2026 | Vol. 24 | Issue 2 | Section B

Coming Together in Grand Rapids



Dear Neighbor,

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the United States in 2026, Grand Rapids will celebrate and commemorate this milestone through our local GR A250 initiative. This initiative will create space for reflection, education, and celebration – bringing people together to explore both our history and our shared future.

I understand that celebrating our nation's anniversary can prompt a range of emotions. Now, perhaps more than ever, there are many examples that highlight how deeply divided our society can feel. Differences in perspective – on national issues, statewide issues, local priorities, and even day-to-day concerns – can feel more pronounced than they once did. At times, that can make it harder to see what we share and can bring renewed attention to the complexities of our nation's history.

Yet I am also aware that there is cause for much celebration as we continue contributing to local and national history. Focusing on harm and learning from the past is part of the full story; however, we must also tell the story of how we have come together, demonstrated resilience and contributed to healthy innovation. As we prepare to celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary, it is more important now than ever to come together and show our community's capacity to do good.

We have found ways to unite in the face of uncertainty – whether rebuilding after conflict, responding to economic hardship, or working together through moments of national tragedy. Closer to home, Grand Rapids' 175-year history reflects that same

spirit. From the early days of a growing river city to more recent chapters of change and progress, our community has continued to move forward not by avoiding differences, but by acknowledging them and working through them together.

We have seen that spirit on display in recent years in very tangible ways.

The development of our Community Master Plan brought together thousands of residents from across the city over a multi-year planning process that began in 2022 and concluded with adoption by the City Commission in 2024. Through surveys, workshops, neighborhood meetings, and online engagement, people shared their experiences, priorities, and hopes for the future of Grand Rapids. The plan reflects common themes that emerged from those conversations – including the need for more housing options, safer and more connected transportation, strong and vibrant neighborhoods, and equitable access to opportunity. The result is not just a document – it is a shared vision shaped by voices from every part of our community, now being implemented through a comprehensive Zoning Ordinance rewrite.

Last year, during the commemoration of Grand Rapids' 175th anniversary, residents, organizations, and businesses came together to celebrate the city's history while also reflecting on its future. Events throughout the year created opportunities for connection, storytelling, and civic pride – reminding us of the many threads that make up our shared identity.

We have also seen this sense of community during other difficult times. When severe weather impacts neighborhoods, when families face unexpected hardship, or when incidents affect our sense of safety, residents consistently step forward to support one another. Neighbors organize to name

hardships and demand accountability and transparency. Neighbors check in on neighbors. Volunteers lend their time. Community organizations mobilize quickly. The City plays a role in coordinating response and recovery, but it is the collective effort that makes a lasting difference.

That same spirit of coming together continues to shape the opportunities ahead of us.

In the coming months, residents will have several ways to engage, connect, and contribute. The Neighborhood Summit, scheduled for Saturday, April 25, will once again bring people together from across the city for a day of learning, relationship-building, and shared problem-solving focused on strengthening our neighborhoods. The Mayor's River Cleanup will offer another opportunity to come together outdoors, working side by side to care for the Grand River and the surrounding environment – an effort that reflects both civic pride and a shared commitment to stewardship.

We encourage participation in upcoming elections, which remain one of the most direct ways residents can shape the direction of our community. Additionally, we are finding ways to better understand and improve what we have in common through our annual community survey that recently closed. The results, expected later this year, will inform future City planning and budget processes. Civic engagement, at its best, is not only about differences of opinion – it is about shared investment in the place we call home.

And as summer approaches, we are continuing to expand opportunities for young people. Programs like GRow 1000 connect youth to meaningful employment experiences, helping build skills and confidence while supporting local businesses and organizations. Applications are being

accepted at grandrapidsmi.gov/departments/our-community-s-children/grow1000/. At the same time, the City's Office of Public Accountability is partnering with community organizations to expand evening programming through initiatives such as NightQuest and City Vibes. These programs are designed to create safe, engaging spaces for young people during the summer months, while also supporting broader efforts to reduce violence and strengthen connections across our community. Together, these efforts reflect a shared commitment to supporting the next generation and ensuring that all young people have opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive.

Each of these opportunities, in different ways, is an invitation – to participate, to connect, and to contribute.

Grand Rapids has never been defined by unanimity. We are a diverse community with a wide range of perspectives and experiences. But time and again, we have shown that we can come together around what matters most: supporting one another, strengthening our neighborhoods, and building a future that reflects our shared values.

Thank you for the role you play in that ongoing work.

Sincerely,

Mark Washington
City Manager





City Launches Redesigned Website Focused on Resident Services

You can now explore the City of Grand Rapids' newly redesigned website at grandrapidsmi.gov, a major step forward in making it easier for you to find the information and services you use most.

The new site features a cleaner design, simpler navigation and a more efficient content management system that offers expanded capabilities at a lower cost. Most importantly, the site is now organized around your needs rather than City departments.

Instead of navigating through multiple pages to find what you're looking for, you'll now see information grouped into four easy to browse sections:

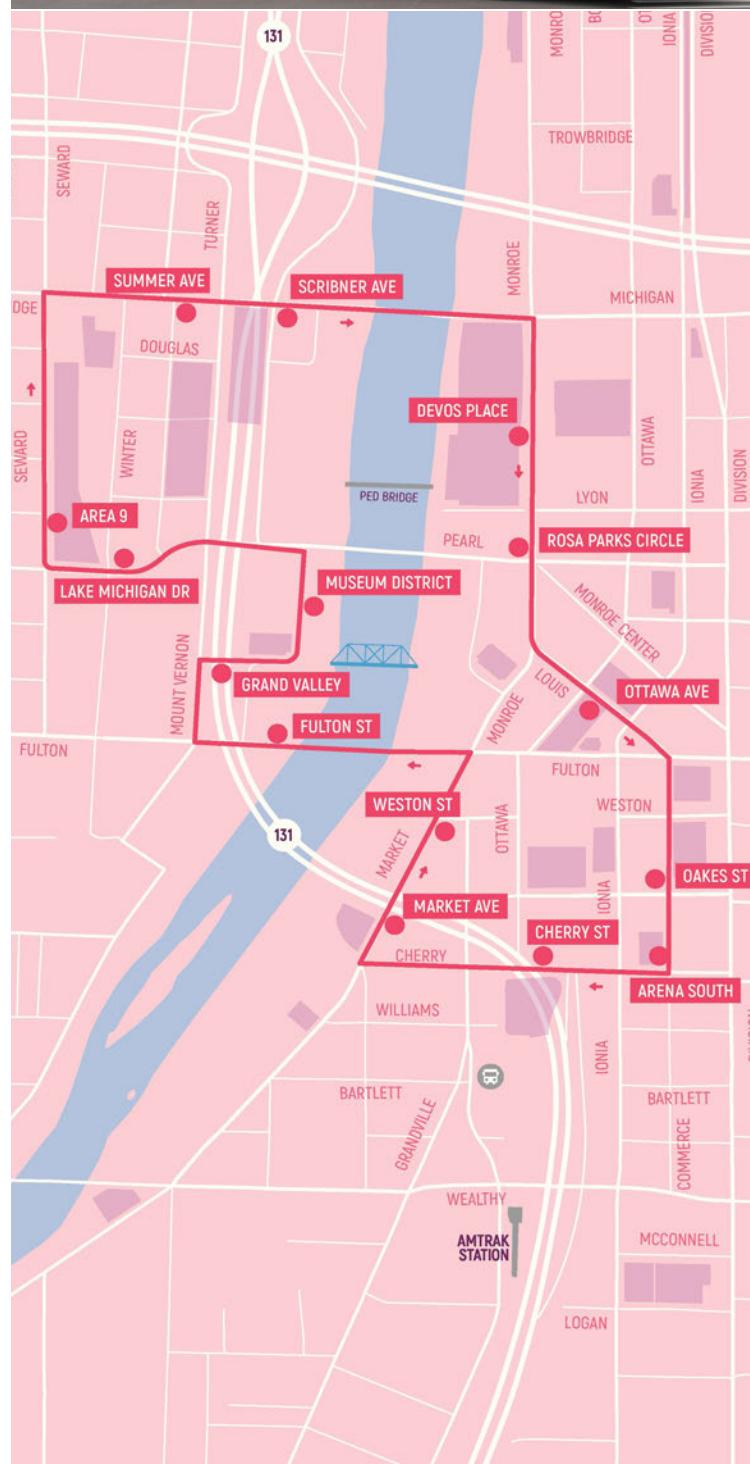
- Government
- Living in GR
- Grow and Thrive
- Explore and Play

A new "I Want To..." menu at the top of the homepage helps you quickly access Online Information, Payment Services and ways to Engage with the City. You'll also find quick links to the most visited services, including Make a Payment, Report an Issue, Waste Services, Water & Sewer, Find Parking and Employment.

The redesigned site also includes a robust calendar of events and the latest City news, making it easier for you to stay connected to what's happening across Grand Rapids.

"Our goal has been to make it easier for residents, businesses and visitors to find what they need, when they need it," said Communications Director David Green. "This new design reflects extensive feedback and modern best practices, and it provides a more intuitive and welcoming digital front door for our community."

You can explore the redesigned website now at grandrapidsmi.gov.



New DASH Route Brings You Quicker Trips Through Downtown

You will soon have a new way to get around downtown Grand Rapids. The City's Mobile GR Department is launching a reimagined DASH shuttle pilot that gives you faster, more reliable service right in the heart of the city. The one-year pilot begins Monday, May 4, with buses arriving every eight minutes instead of every 15.

Mobile GR made these changes to keep the service financially sustainable. Under the current operating agreement with The Rapid, the contracted hourly rate for DASH was projected to increase by approximately 28 percent in the new fiscal year, after analysis of DASH's direct operating cost to the Rapid's entire system. By concentrating the DASH into a more focused route, the City avoids more than \$7 million in projected costs through 2031 while keeping annual operating costs targeted at \$2 million.

Even with a smaller service area, you get better service. The new design nearly doubles bus frequency, shortens trip times and creates a simple one-way loop that makes it easier for you to hop on and off. A map of the pilot route is included with this announcement.

Mobile GR Commission Chair Chad Patton said the update responds directly to what people have said they want. "An apparent pain point to Mobile GR Commissioners was the stop frequency of the DASH," Patton said. "The updated DASH Pilot is an assertive response to that pain point through an increase in service frequency and a decrease in wait time."

Mayor David LaGrand said the new route helps make downtown easier for everyone to use. "This updated DASH pilot route is a smart use of public resources and gives riders a better experience with more frequent service, shorter trips and a simpler route designed around what people need," he said. "More frequent service is what people value most, and lets us all blend riding with walking, or driving and parking."

The redesigned route works as a compact, free shuttle that connects you to major downtown locations, including DeVos Place, Van Andel Arena, Acrisure Amphitheater, City parking ramps and the future Amway Soccer Stadium. The simplified loop helps keep buses on time, especially during busy events. The pilot will run seven days a week.

"The previous model was not financially sustainable, and it wasn't delivering the frequency riders need to rely on transit," said Jessica Smith, Mobile GR director. "With this pilot, we're running buses nearly twice as often, with shorter trip times, at a cost the City can sustain long-term."

Mobile GR will gather your feedback throughout the summer and fall to evaluate the pilot and decide what long-term downtown transit should look like. Your input will help shape the future of DASH service.

To learn more about the DASH pilot route, visit the City of Grand Rapids' Mobile GR Department website or contact 311 Customer Service at 616-456-3000 or 311.

Help Keep Your Neighborhood Clean

Spring is a great time to refresh your property. As the snow melts, it often reveals trash, branches and other debris built up over the winter. Cleaning up now helps keep your neighborhood safe, clean and welcoming.

The City of Grand Rapids’ 2026 Trash Reduction Program is underway and will run through late fall. City staff check designated areas for common nuisance code violations in yards and alleys such as trash or rubbish, brush piles, tall grass or weeds, dead or damaged trees or limbs, and inoperable or unlicensed vehicles. If a violation is found, the property owner will receive a courtesy notice in the mail giving seven days to fix the issue. This allows the problem to be resolved without enforcement action or fees.



Street Sweeping Season Has Arrived

It’s that time of year again — when you might catch a glimpse of what looks like a bird, a plane... or maybe just one of our hard working street sweepers rolling through your neighborhood. Each spring and fall, the City’s Public Works team sweeps every public street in Grand Rapids to clear away leaves, salt, and debris that build up over the seasons.

Grand Rapids is divided into 41 sweeping routes, and crews work around the clock for about four weeks each season. The goal is to sweep every route at least twice in both spring and fall.

Here’s how the schedule works:

- First, sweepers focus on First Attention streets — the major corridors and business districts. These areas collect the most debris and leftover winter materials.

Nuisance complaints can be prevented by following a few simple steps:

- Remove trash, litter and unwanted items from your yard and alley.
- Keep grass and weeds below 12 inches.
- Bundle or dispose of brush and yard waste properly.
- Repair or remove inoperable vehicles and make sure all vehicles are licensed.
- Remove dead trees or hanging limbs that could be dangerous.

Keeping your yard clean does more than improve how it looks. It helps prevent rodents and pests and keeps debris out of storm drains, local streams and waterways. To see when your neighborhood is scheduled for the Trash Reduction Program, visit the City’s website for maps and details.



Get Ready for Spring Cleanup: Your Guide to Yard Waste Services

Spring is officially here and that means it’s time to start tackling yard cleanup across Grand Rapids. The City offers several easy ways for you to dispose of yard waste safely and responsibly.

Curbside Yard Waste Carts

If you want the convenience of curbside pickup, you can order a yard waste cart for **\$30**. Each time you want it emptied, attach a **yellow Yard Waste Tag** before your regular trash and recycling day. Tags cost **\$6.50 each**. Curbside yard waste collection runs April through December, and you can buy tags and paper yard waste bags at City Hall or at many local grocery and hardware stores.

Yard Waste Drop Off Site

Prefer to drop off your yard waste yourself? The City’s Yard Waste Site at **2001 Butterworth St. SW** is open **year round** at **no out of pocket cost** for Grand Rapids residents – just bring your ID. Yard waste must be loose or in **paper bags only** (no plastic bags). Hours from April through December are **Monday–Saturday, 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.**

As a resident, you can also pick up **1 cubic yard of mulch** and compost at no cost. Additional material is available for a fee.

What You CAN Bring:

- Grass clippings
- Leaves
- Brush
- Twigs (less than 2 inches in diameter)
- Garden plants
- Tree limbs (cut to 5 feet or less)
- Logs (cut to 5 feet or less)

What You CAN’T Bring:

- Sod
- Dirt
- Stones
- Broken concrete
- Whole trees
- Railroad ties
- Stumps
- Animal waste or dead animals

For full details, visit the City’s website and search yard waste services.



Planning a Backyard Fire This Spring? Make Sure You Have a Permit

As spring finally settles in and you start spending more evenings outside, the Grand Rapids Fire Department wants to remind you about an important safety step: you need a permit before having a wood burning recreational fire on private property.

Fire Marshal William Smith says the department has recently seen an increase in fires happening without permits, and he wants residents to stay safe and considerate of their neighbors.

“Our goal is to allow safe and responsible enjoyment of recreational fires while protecting public health and adhering to environmental standards,” he said. “The permit process ensures that fires are controlled, properly located and respectful of neighbors.”

Here’s what you need to know before you light that first fire of the season.

When You Need a Permit

You must get a permit if you plan to have a wood burning recreational fire.

If you’re using a gas or propane fire pit, you don’t need a permit — just make sure you follow the manufacturer’s instructions and any housing/property rules.

Permit Costs and Who Can Apply

- Initial permit: \$60
- Annual renewal: \$10

Permits are valid for one year and are available for:

- Properties with up to two dwelling units
- Renters (you just need written permission from your property owner)

How to Apply

You can apply through Citizen Access by creating a free account. The online application takes about 10 minutes and requires:

- A detailed, to scale site plan showing your property layout and fire location
- Credit or debit card payment

Once you apply, neighbors within 120 feet will be notified and have 21 days to share any concerns. Permits may be denied if there are worries about public health or safety.

Where and When You Can Burn

If you’re approved, your recreational fire must be:

- In your backyard or side yard
- At least 20 feet from buildings, lot lines, roads, alleys, fences or anything that can burn
- At least 15 feet from overhead lines
- Supported by a garden hose or fire extinguisher on site

You can burn **between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.**, and **only seasoned, dry firewood** is allowed — no yard waste, leaves, trash or building materials.

Fires are not allowed on high risk or Ozone Action Days, or when the fire chief determines conditions are unsafe.

If You See an Unsafe Fire

Call 911 to report emergency fire hazards or a recreational fire without a permit. Unsafe or illegal fires may lead to citations, fines or abatement orders, and the City may revoke permits or re notify neighbors if violations occur.

Ready, Set, Spring: Weather Safety Essentials

Spring in Grand Rapids brings warmer temperatures, longer days and, sometimes, fast changing weather. Heavy rain, strong winds, hail, street flooding and even the occasional tornado can develop quickly. As we move through the season, a little preparation now can help keep you and your household safe.

Stay Safe During Heavy Rain

Fast moving water is more dangerous than it looks. Just six inches can knock an adult off their feet, and one foot of water can carry away most cars. Never walk, ride or drive through standing or moving water. If you see water covering a roadway, turn around. Floodwater can be deeper and faster than it appears. Remember: “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.”

Know the Difference: Watch vs. Warning

Weather alerts help you respond quickly as conditions change.

- A watch means the ingredients for severe weather are present. Stay alert and check for updates.
- A warning means severe weather is happening or about to happen. Take action immediately and move to a safe location.

Stay informed by signing up for Grand Rapids emergency alerts at grandrapidsmi.gov/EmergencyAlerts or by texting GrandRapids to 888777.

Easy Ways to Prepare at Home

Protect your home and reduce storm impacts with a few quick steps:

- Clear leaves and debris from nearby street drains to prevent backups.
- Check your gutters, downspouts and sump pump so they’re ready for heavy rain.
- If your street or yard floods often, move your car to higher ground and protect important belongings before storms move in.
- If you see a clogged drain you can’t safely clear, call 311.

Strong winds can also create hazards. Bring in or secure things like patio furniture, toys, trash bins and lawn equipment. Trim loose or overhanging branches that might fall. For tornadoes or very strong wind events, make sure everyone in your home knows the safest interior room or lowest level space to shelter in.

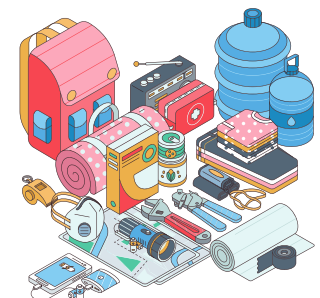
Create an Emergency Plan and Build a Supplies Kit

Discuss with your household how you’ll communicate, where you’ll meet and how you’ll evacuate if needed. A plan helps reduce confusion in stressful moments.

You should also prepare a three day emergency supplies kit for each person in your home. Include:

- Water and non perishable food
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid supplies
- A NOAA weather radio

Find more ideas at ready.gov/kit.



Where to Get Help After Storm Damage

If your home is damaged, contact your insurance provider right away. You can also call 211 or **1-800-887-1107** to connect with volunteer organizations that assist with cleanup and basic needs.

A little preparation goes a long way in keeping you safe and confident during spring storm season. For more tips and local updates, follow the Grand Rapids Office of Emergency Management [@ReadyGrandRapids](https://twitter.com/ReadyGrandRapids) or visit grandrapidsmi.gov/departments/emergency-management.

GRVOTES

**We've got you covered for the
2026 Elections**

It's a busy year of elections, and City Clerk Joel Hondorp wants to make sure you're prepared. Here are important dates and information for each election:

August 4: Partisan Primary election for federal and state offices – Democratic and Republicans candidates are listed on the ballot. You need to select one or the other – can't cross between parties. There may also be a Non-Partisan Primary for City Comptroller, City Commission, Library Board, Judges and proposals.

November 3: Governor General election – You may vote a straight party for partisan offices or select candidates individually. This ballot includes federal, state, judicial, city and school offices as well as proposals.

Proposal 2 of 2022 gives voters more options.

- Early Voting - Voters may go to an early voting site to get a ballot, vote and place the ballot in the tabulator during a nine-day period between the two Saturdays before the election through the Sunday before the election. Hours of operations are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. You may also bring your absentee ballot to the EV site to tabulate that ballot.

- Sts Peter and Paul School 1430 Quarry NW
- GRPS University 1400 Fuller NE
- Ottawa Hills High School 2055 Rosewood SE

- Absentee Voting – Voters may choose to be placed on a Permanent Ballot List. A voter will apply once for all future elections. A voter may still choose to fill out an application for every election.

Some reminders before you head to the polls:

- Voter registration – Residents who are 18 or older and a United States Citizen are automatically registered to vote when they make a transaction with the Secretary of State. You may register to vote by mail up to 15 days before an election and in person at the City Clerk's Office within 14 days of the election up to Election Day. You need to prove residency in the city. Check your registration information at www.michigan.gov/vote.
- Check your voter registration status, register to vote, view a sample ballot, apply for and absentee ballot or find your polling location at www.michigan.gov/vote.

Get involved – Become an Election Inspector

- In order to run successful elections, we need help from the community. Election inspectors are on the frontline of democracy. You will be able to see firsthand how the election process works. Election inspectors report how rewarding it is to experience the voting process, especially when you see someone vote for the first time. Please check out this website about becoming an election inspector. <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/departments/clerks-office/elections/election-inspectors/>

Registration Now Open for the 2026 Neighborhood Summit

If you're looking for a chance to connect with neighbors, learn from local leaders and help shape the future of Grand Rapids, you can now register for the 2026 Neighborhood Summit. The City's Office of Equity and Engagement will host this year's event on Saturday, April 25 at GRPS University (1400 Fuller Ave. SE).

Now in its 12th year, Neighborhood Summit brings together up to 500 residents, community organizations, City staff and partners for a free, full day experience centered on connection, collaboration and community building.

This year's theme "Stronger Together: Building Community through Connection, Care and Collaboration" focuses on strengthening relationships, elevating community voice and advancing equity across Grand Rapids neighborhoods.

When you attend, you'll experience a welcoming and accessible day that includes:

- Free breakfast, lunch and refreshments
- Free on site childcare (with registration)
- Interactive workshops
- Resource tables featuring local programs and services
- Opportunities to connect directly with City staff and community leaders



GRAND RAPIDS NEIGHBORHOOD SUMMIT

You can find registration and application links at: publicinput.com/grsummit26.

"Neighborhood Summit is one of the most meaningful spaces we create each year because it brings residents, organizations, and City staff together to listen, learn, and build solutions as a community," said Lilibeth Genao, equity analyst and summit coordinator. "Centering community voice and lived experience helps strengthen trust and deepen the connections that make residents feel seen, valued and included."

Brandon Davis, managing director of the Office of Equity and Engagement, added, "Our work is rooted in strengthening partnerships with the communities we serve and creating space for shared learning. Neighborhood Summit helps deepen those relationships and supports a more responsive and inclusive Grand Rapids for all."

Grand Rapids Homeowners

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HOME REPAIRS & LEAD REMEDIATION

616 - 456-3030



Housing Rehabilitation Program

Up to \$24,000 for needed repairs such as:

- Roofing
- Furnace and water heater
- Electrical panel upgrade
- Other items as determined upon inspection

Income and occupancy restrictions apply. Balance repaid in monthly installments with matching grant. Secured by a mortgage on the property.



Lead Hazard Control Program

Up to \$20,000 per unit to address lead-based paint hazards. Common activities include:

- Window replacement, exterior painting/siding, interior painting

Income restrictions apply. A child under the age of 6 must reside at the property or visit for childcare. Secured by a mortgage on the property.



National Recognition Fuels Momentum For Renew Grand Rapids, Michigan's First Fully Circular Composting Pilot

Renew Grand Rapids is a brand-new pilot coming to City of Grand Rapids residents. In the coming weeks, you'll be able to sign-up to participate in this food scrap program, which will include the ability to bring your food scraps to drop off bins across the city and receive compost in return.

As we inch closer to launching Renew Grand Rapids, we wanted to share some cool news! Last month, Renew Grand Rapids was recognized by the US Composting Council (USCC), a nationwide organization committed to the growth of the compost industry. The USCC shared some of the Renew GR story across their social media platforms as well as their newsletter.

We're proud to be featured by the USCC for an abundance of reasons, but we wanted to highlight three big ones.

- First, our focus on local circularity. Once Renew Grand Rapids is up and running, we will be the first city in Michigan to have a fully circular food scrap program. This means there are no third-party contracts or organizations involved; the City will collect the food scraps, turn them into compost ourselves, then return the compost to the community, all as a city service.
- Second, we're doing this to address real, pertinent concerns. Grand Rapids residents currently send around 13,000 tons of food waste to a landfill or incineration every year. 13,000 tons. There are SO many scraps we can divert AND turn into food for our plants. Not only will we return the compost to our residents, but the compost will be utilized in City forestry operations and other soil projects. Renew Grand Rapids renews Grand Rapids in multiple ways!



GRow1000 2026

Summer Youth Employment Program

**NOW ACCEPTING
BUSINESS PARTNER REGISTRATIONS**

Why Participate as a GRow1000 Worksite?

- Provide **6 weeks** of meaningful employment for **young people ages 15-24!**
- Expand your recruitment capacity to reach a new generation of workers!
- Demonstrate leading industry habits for talent development!
- Discover your Return-on-Investment in mere weeks through your commitment to youth employment.



Please contact Our Community's Children at occyouth@city.us or 616.456.3102 with questions.



www.grandrapidsmi.gov/GRow1000
Or scan the QR Code above to register as a GRow1000 Worksite

Sponsor or Donate to GRow1000

1. Please visit <https://payments.grandrapidsmi.gov/>
2. Click "Pay As Guest."
3. Click "Our Community's Children Donations."
4. Look for Donation Categories and select "GRow1000 Summer Youth Employment Program (Ages 15 - 24)."

- Finally, your participation. In March, we held three engagement events across the city where over 150 people showed up to provide their input on bin locations and compost delivery methods. On top of that, hundreds of people joined our waitlist to be the first to sign up for the Pilot when registration opens. This resident excitement along with things like our email communications and project page show how intentional we want to be about involving you, our community, in this pilot. We tried to hammer this point home during our engagement events, but this is just step one of Renew Grand Rapids. We want your input from the very beginning. As the USCC points out, our engagement events, "...were structured following Grand Rapids' carefully crafted community engagement framework to generate deep and critical feedback on the program and make sure it's serving the needs of residents."

Renew Grand Rapids will continue to develop over the coming weeks and months. Be on the lookout SOON for information on the program sign-up opening. To learn more, head to publicinput.com/renewgr and sign up for our waitlist by clicking the "Stay Informed" tab. We'll be in touch.



Grand River Revitalization Moves Into Construction After Final Federal Approval

A major milestone for the Grand River has officially arrived – and you're about to start seeing work on the water downtown. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has authorized more than \$11 million in federal funding for the Lower Grand River Habitat Restoration Project, better known as the Grand River Revitalization. With this approval, every major state and federal authorization is now complete, clearing the way for construction to begin.

For nearly 20 years, community partners, scientists and river advocates have been working toward this moment. Grand Rapids Whitewater first imagined restoring the river's natural rapids and improving habitat, safety and access. That vision grew into a regional partnership with local, state, federal and tribal collaborators, all focused on creating a healthier river and reconnecting you and your neighbors to one of Grand Rapids' most important natural assets.

The City of Grand Rapids is now leading the next step: construction of the Lower Reach, the first phase of the revitalization

from I 196 to Fulton Street. The City Commission recently approved a \$14.56 million construction contract with Taplin Group LLC. Over the next two years, this phase will remove four low head dams and install natural rock structures designed to boost river flow, improve fish and mussel habitat, increase safety and open new possibilities for river access.

Mayor David LaGrand called the milestone a transformative achievement.

"This is a historic moment for Grand Rapids," he said. "After 17 years of planning and collaboration, we are finally bringing the rapids back to the Grand River. This project will improve access to the water, strengthen our riverfront and create a more vibrant river for generations."

Grand Rapids Whitewater Executive Director Matt Chapman also noted the significance of the federal approval.

"We've worked tirelessly with partners and the community to make this vision a reality," he said. "This funding marks the shift from planning to implementation — and it's a proud moment for everyone who believed in restoring the river."

To learn more about NRCS programs, visit nrcs.usda.gov.

For updates on the Grand River Revitalization, visit grandrapidswhitewater.org.

Thinking About a Career in Fire Service? Here's Your Chance to Join GRFD

If you've ever pictured yourself stepping into a role that protects and serves your community, the Grand Rapids Fire Department (GRFD) wants to meet you. GRFD has opened its 2026 recruitment cycle, giving you several ways to explore a future in fire service.

Now through May 30, you can apply to become a full time firefighter. You can also consider the paid Fire Cadet program or encourage a young person in your life to join the Fire Youth Academy, a one week summer program for teens ages 15–18.

To help you feel prepared, GRFD is hosting a series of recruitment open houses this spring at East Leonard Elementary School. When you attend, you'll learn what to expect from the hiring process, hear interview tips from a deputy chief and even try parts of the physical agility test. It's a great way to get a real feel for the profession — whether you're ready to apply or simply exploring your options.

Fire Chief Brad Brown describes firefighting as a meaningful and community centered career.

"Being a firefighter is more than a job; it's a calling to serve and protect our family, friends and neighbors," he said. "If you've ever thought about joining the fire service, now is the time."

If you join GRFD, you'll earn a competitive starting salary of \$55,401, along with paid leave, comprehensive health benefits, tuition reimbursement, a pension plan and access to more than 40 specialty programs designed to help you grow and advance.

You can learn more or start your application at JoinGRFire.com, or call 616 456 3176. Recruitment Open House Dates

East Leonard Elementary School, 410 Barnett St NE

- Thursday, April 23 – 4 to 7 p.m.
- Saturday, May 16 – 9 a.m. to noon
- Thursday, May 28 – 4 to 7 p.m.

Fire Youth Academy

If you know a teen in Grand Rapids or Kent County who enjoys hands on learning or wants to explore a future in fire service, encourage them to join the Fire Youth Academy. Over one week, teens will train with tools and techniques similar to a real Fire Academy, including SCBA use, search and rescue drills, hose operations, extinguisher skills, hands only CPR and team building activities.

Registration is available at joiningfire.com/fire-youth-academy-1



Protecting Our Parks: Conservation Efforts to Manage Invasive Species

BY FRIENDS OF GRAND RAPIDS PARKS

Not all plants are the same. Most non-native plants are not invasive, but about 0.1% harm our ecosystems, economy, or human health. We refer to these harmful plants as invasive species.

Why Are There Invasive Species in Our Parks?

86% of all invasive shrubs, vines, and trees are from the nursery industry. Many of today's biggest problems like invasive bittersweet, privet, and buckthorn, were planted in yards, schools, and businesses. From there, birds, other wildlife, and even people have inadvertently tracked or brought seeds into parks. These aggressive species do not have the checks and balances from their native ecosystems, which results in them outcompeting the native trees, plants, and flowers wildlife depends on, creating low-biodiversity environments. This means parks with fewer plants, trees, and wildlife.

Managing Invasive Species Benefits Everyone

Low biodiversity has been tied to lower human health. For example, studies have shown invasive species like Japanese barberry harbor black-legged ticks that carry bacteria that cause Lyme Disease. However, the greatest reason for managing invasive species is because they are one of the greatest threats to park

biodiversity. Sixty percent of all extinctions are from invasive species. The living networks of our world are rooted in the plants that support the wildlife that are dependent upon them. These ecosystems fail when native plants are displaced by invasive plants.

How Friends and the City are Managing Invasive Species

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks and Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation has a strategy for targeted invasive species management.

- 1. Prevention.** If an invasive plant never makes it to a park, it will never cause damage. Cleaning boots and equipment is much cheaper than restoring a park!
- 2. Detect early and respond quickly.** Monitoring for new invasive species and removing a few plants is considerably less costly than removing an established population. Plus, if we remove an invasive species quickly, we'll have a better chance at protecting native plant species and wildlife that support them.
- 3. Work in high quality areas first.** There is a matrix of fungi, insects, and other animals that have relationships with native plants; removing invasives protects this system.

Often, if a site is high quality, there are uncommon or rare species that need protection.

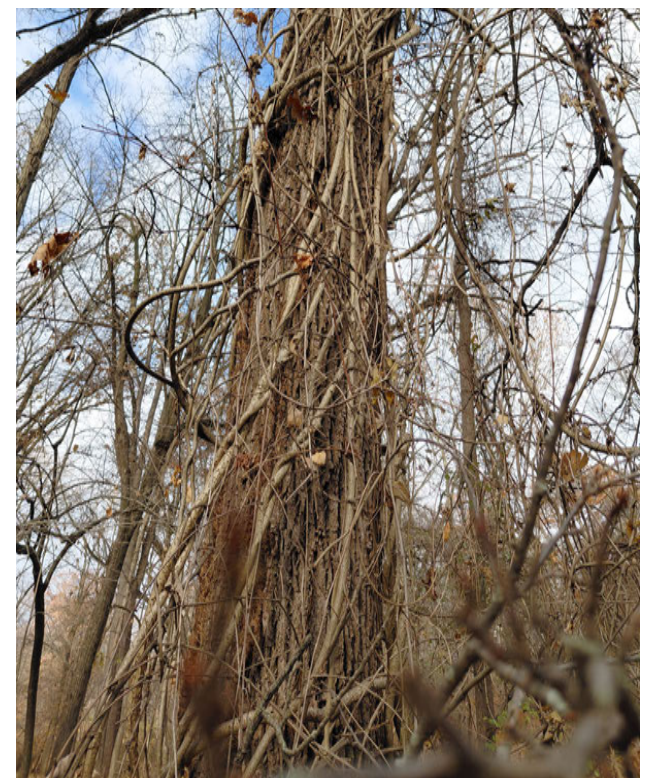
- 4. Protect beloved places.** If one person is passionate about restoring a park, miraculous things can happen. 100 hours of work in a low-quality area can bring back species that had disappeared years before!
- 5. Work smart.** Management strategies are not one-size fits all. Work on the species that can spread fast and do the most damage.

How to Help

Being informed about invasive species is a great way to protect our parks. Be careful about what you use as landscape or decoration around your house as these plants will make their way into parks. Native plants are a great option for landscaping.

You can also volunteer with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks who offers many volunteer opportunities removing invasive species in parks and planting native species. Everyone is welcome. Learn more at friendsofgrparks.org/volunteer.

Photos below, left to right: Volunteers with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks work to clear invasive species in local parks and an invasive bittersweet vine winding up a tree.





Discover the Hidden Creek Shaping a New Southside Trail Network

When you walk or drive along Cottage Grove between Division Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue, you may not know there’s an underground creek beneath you. It’s called Silver Creek, and its history is one of the stories the Southside Creekways project aims to lift up.

This project builds on years of community-led planning in the Southtown, South Division and Grandville Avenue neighborhoods.

Since early 2025, the City’s Parks and Recreation Department has been studying possible trail routes from the Boston Square area to Roosevelt Park, following the buried Silver Creek. The team is also looking for ways to close gaps along the Plaster Creek Trail, with the goal of creating a connected southside trail network that reaches downtown and the Grand River.

You have played a major role in shaping this work. Through community feedback and guidance from the 17-member Southside Creekways Community Leadership Team, the project is exploring how future trail development can support existing residents and small businesses. This includes strategies to prevent displacement, reduce inequities and build local wealth.

Your stories and input continue to guide the project’s goals. Community members have said they want a trail that connects to key destinations, offers safe and accessible green space and reflects the history and culture of the neighborhoods it serves.

The planning process is expected to wrap up in November, with recommendations for future trail projects. To learn more or share your thoughts, visit publicinput.com/southsidecreekways. If you want to support the Community Leadership Team, please reach out to parksandrec@grcity.us.



Scan the QR code with your phone’s camera to visit the project website.

Photos clockwise from top: Community members attend an informational presentation on the project; Community team leaders and project partners evaluate route options through southern Grand Rapids; A neighbor considers what style of trail system they like best.



Join GR Parks and Rec for free outdoor fitness classes at parks around Grand Rapids this summer! The Free Outdoor Summer Fitness Series is made possible thanks to partnership with Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. and Priority Health. Classes may be photographed for promotional purposes.

POUND @ Lyon Square

Dates: Mondays through Aug. 17
Time: 5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 296 Lyon St. NW

Yoga @ Mulick Park

Dates: Mondays through Aug. 17
Time: 6 – 6:45 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 1632 Sylvan Ave SE

Zumba @ Rosa Parks Cicle

Dates: Mondays through Aug. 17
Time: 6:30 – 7:15 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 135 Monroe Center St NW

**Line Dancing @
MLK Park Tennis Court**

Dates: Mondays through Aug. 17
Time: 7 – 7:45 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 900 Fuller Ave SE

Barre @ The Blue Bridge

Dates: Tuesdays through Aug. 18
Time: 5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: The Blue Bridge spans the Grand River between Fulton St. and Pearl St. bridges

**HIGH Fitness @
Briggs Park Tennis Court**

Dates: Tuesdays through Aug. 18
Time: 6 – 6:45 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 324 Knapp St. NE

Glute Aerobics @ The Blue Bridge

Dates: Tuesdays through Aug. 18
Time: 6:30 – 7:15 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: The Blue Bridge spans the Grand River between Fulton St. and Pearl St. bridges

Sunset Yoga @ Lookout Park

Dates: Tuesdays through Aug. 18
Time: 7 – 7:45 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 801 Fairview Ave NE

**Circuit Training @
Ottawa Hills Fitness Court**

Dates: Wednesdays through Aug. 19
Time: 10:30 – 11:15 a.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 2060 Oakfield Ave SE

**Pumped Up Strength @
Cherry Park**

Dates: Wednesdays through Aug. 19
Time: 5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water; a set of 5-10 lb. dumbbells is optional
Address: 725 Cherry St SE

Total Body Power @ Roosevelt Park

Dates: Wednesdays through Aug. 19
Time: 6:30 – 7:15 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 739 Van Raalte Dr SW

WERQ @ Highland Park

Dates: Wednesdays through Aug. 19
Time: 7 – 7:45 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 700 College Ave NE

**Sunrise Yoga @
Indian Trails Golf Course**

Dates: Thursdays through Aug. 20
Time: 6:30 – 7:15 a.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 2776 Kalamazoo Ave SE

Mat Pilates @ Riverside Park

Dates: Thursdays through Aug. 20
Time: 10:30 – 11:15 a.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: Bandshell entrance to the park

Hip Hop Barre @ Pleasant Park

Dates: Thursdays through Aug. 20
Time: 5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Equipment: mat, towel, water
Address: 630 Madison Ave SE

**TurnUP Dance Fitness @
Garfield Park Futsal Court**

Dates: Thursdays through Aug. 20
Time: 6:30 – 7:15 p.m.
Equipment: water
Address: 2111 Madison Ave SE

For additional class information and cancellations, please like and follow GR Parks and Rec on Facebook (@GRParksandRec). Class descriptions are available at griparks.info/outdoorfitness. Cancellations will also be posted to the cancellation hotline at 616-456-3699.

City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation

SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER CATALOG

Registration is open for spring classes and activities with GR Parks and Recreation! From family-friendly activities like kayaking and tae-kwon-do, to sports lessons and camps for youth, to pickleball and fitness classes for adults, GR Parks & Rec is your place for summer fun.

To learn more and register for classes, please visit the GR Parks and Recreation online recreation catalog at grparks.info/reccatalog.

For additional recreation offerings, information about the MLK Community Center and more, please visit the department’s website at grparks.info/home.

OUTDOOR POOLS & PASSES

Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation is excited to provide free outdoor pool passes for City resident youth who are registered before 11:59 p.m. on May 25. Youth ages 17 and under who live within Grand Rapids City limits are eligible for a free season pass.

Free Pass Registration Deadline: 11:59 p.m. on May 25

Ages: City youth ages 17 and under

Season Pass Cost:

- City Resident Youth (May 26 onward): \$5
- City Resident Adult: \$10
- Nonresident Youth: \$10
- Nonresident Adult: \$20

Registration is open for all passes and will continue through the pool season.

Outdoor City pools and splashpads are set to open on Saturday, June 6. Pools will have the same hours for open swim.

- Mondays: closed for routine cleaning and maintenance
- Tuesdays through Thursdays: noon to 7 p.m.
- Fridays: noon to 8 p.m.
- Saturdays: noon to 7 p.m.
- Sundays: noon to 5 p.m.

WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

Kayaking on the Grand River

For those who love the water, Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation is offering free and affordable kayaking

options at the Riverside Park Lagoon, making it easier than ever to get out and paddle. No registration required for kayaking – walkups welcome!

Free Paddle Weekends – These 30-minute kayak rides are open to City residents of all skill levels. Rentals will still be available during free weekends for those who would like a longer time on the water.

Dates: June 12-14; July 10-12

Time: Fridays 4 to 8 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Hourly Kayak Rentals – Available during late spring and summer weekends, visitors can rent a kayak by the hour and explore the Grand River.

Dates: May 22 – August 30

Time: Fridays 4 to 8 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cost: \$5/hr for youth 17 and under; \$10/hr for adults ages 18 and up

At all kayaking events, participants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian on the water. Children ages 10 and older may ride in a solo kayak, while those under 10 may ride in tandem with an adult. Lifejackets are provided.

Adult Outdoor Swim Lessons (Swimming Essentials)

Swimming essentials is great for individuals who are brand new to swimming or have an existing fear of water. This class will develop fundamental swim skills including floating, water safety, breathing techniques, and foundational swim strokes while allowing participants to gain confidence in a safe, controlled setting.

Ages: Ages 16 and up

Dates: Multiple sessions from June 20 to August 1

Location: MLK Park, Richmond Park

Cost: \$45 for residents, \$55 for nonresidents

Aqua Zumba

Aqua Zumba blends the Zumba fitness philosophy with water resistance for a pool party you won’t want to miss! This class is perfect for those looking to make a splash by adding a low-impact, high energy aquatic exercise to their routine. All fitness levels welcome!

Ages: Ages 18 and up

Dates: Wednesdays, June 10 - August 12

Scan the QR code with your phone’s camera to view the full recreation catalog



Location: Briggs Park Pool

Cost: \$51 for residents, \$61 for nonresidents

Youth Outdoor Swim Lessons

Our swim lessons start at six months old with a parent and continue through age 14 with four different levels, giving young swimmers a supportive place to learn essential skills and grow at their own pace.

Ages: 6 months (with a parent) to 14

Dates: Multiple sessions from June into August

Location: Briggs Park, MLK Park, Richmond Park

Cost: \$45 for residents, \$55 for nonresidents

Water Aerobics

Build core strength, conditioning, endurance, and all-over toning. Class features deep and shallow water exercises. A great low/non-impact workout. Float belts are available.

Ages: Ages 18 and up

Dates: Multiple class options from June into August

Location: Briggs Park

Cost: \$51 for residents, \$61 for nonresidents

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Golf Lessons with First Tee

The First Tee Program teaches the game of golf in a fun, safe, and empowering environment. Participants will get active and play golf with their peers to help them build inner strength, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for the game.

Ages: 7-11

Dates: Multiple sessions from June 15 to October 1

Location: Indian Trails Golf Course

Cost: \$45 per session

Guitar Lessons with Riverside Guitar School

Is your child curious about the guitar but unsure about lessons or committing to a session? Try a short, no-pressure introduction with four group classes or private lessons at Riverside Guitar School. After you register, Riverside Guitar School will contact you to schedule a time that works for you.

- A parent or guardian must stay with children ages

- 12 and under during class.
- A guitar will be provided for your child to use during lessons.
- This offer may be used only once per person. If you'd like to continue after the four lessons, Riverside Guitar School will be happy to discuss ongoing options with you.
- Ages:** 4 and up
- Dates:** Year-round
- Cost:** \$68 for residents, \$78 for nonresidents

OnBase Baseball Clinics with GRPD

The Grand Rapids Police Department, in partnership with the Parks & Recreation Department, is entering its eighth season of OnBase with GRPD. This will be a time for officers of the Community Police Specialist Unit to interact with kids in a positive, non-enforcement capacity. The program is geared towards kids who have little to no experience with baseball, but all experience levels are welcome! The objective is to not only teach the game, but also give kids a chance to get to know their local officers. Thanks to generous donations by local individuals and businesses, there is no cost to participate.

Ages: 9-12

Dates: Three session options: June 16-18, July 14-16, August 4-6

Locations: Huff Park, MLK Park, Sullivan Field

Run Club

Join us for Run Club 2026! With a focus on running for wellness, participants will work on endurance, speed, agility, breathing, form, strength training, and stretching.

Ages: 5-12

Dates: Wednesdays, June 3 –July 8

Location: MacKay Jaycees Park

Cost: \$50 for residents, \$60 for nonresidents

Summer Day Camps

- Ages:** 6-12 years old
- Registration:** Online registration is open and waitlists are available. Walk-up registrations are welcome during camp days, subject to available camp spots for that day.
- Sessions:** Each camp will meet for three separate sessions throughout the summer. A camper must be register for each session individually to attend all three sessions.
- Session 1: June 15 – July 3

- Sesssion 2: July 6 – July 24
 - Session 3: July 27 – August 14
- Locations and Times:**
- Garfield Park Camp @ Garfield Park**
- Weekdays, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- MLK Park Camp @ MLK Park Community Center**
- Weekdays, 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Roosevelt Park Camp @ Roosevelt Park**
- Weekdays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Summer Soccer: Train & Play

Keep your kids active while continuing to build their skills through our summer soccer program. Learn from club coaches from MPFA with extensive soccer experience as they lead age-appropriate drills on Mondays and small-sided game play on Wednesdays. This is NOT like our Spring and Fall leagues. There are no official teams.

Ages: 5-12

Dates: Mondays and Wednesdays, June 29 –July 15

Location: MacKay Jaycees Park

Cost: \$60 for residents, \$70 for nonresidents

Tae Kwon Do

Discover the fundamentals of Tae Kwon Do, the dynamic Korean martial art that emphasizes flexibility, concentration, balance, and self-defense. Under the guidance of a skilled instructor, participants will:

- Improve physical fitness and flexibility
- Enhance focus and mental discipline
- Develop balance and coordination
- Learn practical self-defense techniques
- Build confidence and self-respect

This class is perfect for kids, adults of all ages, and even families looking for a fun and empowering activity to do together. Whether you're a beginning or looking to sharpen your skills, Tae Kwon Do offers something for everyone!

Ages: 7 and up

Location: Garfield Park Community Gym

Time: 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Sessions: Tuesdays, May 19 to June 30 (no class June 2 and June 9)

Cost: \$30 for residents, \$40 for non-residents

Trampoline & Tumbling Gymnastics

GR Parks & Rec is partnering with GR Trampoline Academy to bring you recreational Trampoline,

Tumbling, and Gymnastics classes! Our beginner level Trampoline & Tumbling (T&T) classes are the perfect way to launch into this thrilling sport. T&T is an official USA Gymnastics discipline that combines power tumbling, double mini trampoline, and Olympic-style trampoline.

With a progression-based curriculum, athletes learn safely while building strength, confidence, and jaw-dropping skills. Whether you're bouncing for fun or dreaming big, this is where it all starts!

Ages: 2-10

Dates: Wednesdays, April 29 – June 3

Locations: Garfield Park Community Gym

Cost: \$50 for residents, \$60 for nonresidents

Youth Dance

In partnership with The Den, GR Parks and Recreation is offering ballet and hip-hop dance classes for ages 3 to 10. From learning basics and understanding technique and musicality to introducing new moves and terminology, young dancers will enjoy fostering creative expression and building confidence in a supportive environment.

Ages: 3-10

Dates: May 11 – June 22

Locations: 1500 Scribner and MLK Park Community Center

Cost: \$50 for residents, \$60 for nonresidents

Youth Soccer Camp

Participants will learn ball work, dribbling, shooting, passing, and control. Skills will be taught using drills, games, and competitions. Teamwork, sportsmanship, and safety will be emphasized.

Ages: 5-12

Dates: June 22 –June 25

Location: MacKay Jaycees Park

Cost: \$50 for residents, \$60 for nonresidents

Youth Tennis in the Park

GR Parks and Rec is partnering with West Michigan Community Tennis to offer a tennis and learning experience for kids ages 5-14 this summer. Lessons are scheduled for Mondays through Thursdays, with Fridays as make-up days if any lesson is cancelled due to weather.

WMCT is part of the USTA's NJTL program and we are offering tennis lessons with the addition of an academic portion to help youth in developing and

growing skills both on and off the court.

This will include an hour of tennis instruction from local pros and high school players followed by a 15-minute off-court lesson utilizing Be Nice Curriculum from the West Michigan Mental Health Organization.

- Ages:** 5-14
- Dates:** Multiple session options running from June 8 to July 30
- Locations:** Aberdeen Park, Martin Luther King Park, Ottawa Hills High School, Union High School
- Cost:** \$25 for residents, \$35 for nonresidents

ADULT CLASSES (Ages 18+)

Fitness Gold: Free Classes for Adults

Open to all adults ages 18 and up but designed with ages 50+ in mind, Fitness Gold offers a variety of lower impact fitness classes, pickleball, and social outings each month. Classes include Zumba Gold, Pilates, ballroom dancing, barre, cardio & strength, and more. The schedule varies month to month. Classes are held at MLK Park Community Center.

Calendars are available for download at grparks.info/fitnessgold.

Aqua Zumba

Aqua Zumba blends the Zumba fitness philosophy with water resistance for a pool party you won't want to miss! This class is perfect for those looking to make a splash by adding a low-impact, high energy aquatic exercise to their routine. All fitness levels welcome!

- Dates:** Wednesdays, June 10 - August 12
- Location:** Briggs Park Pool
- Cost:** \$51 for residents, \$61 for nonresidents

Adult Outdoor Swim Lessons (Swimming Essentials)

Swimming essentials is great for individuals who are brand new to swimming or have an existing fear of water. This class will develop fundamental swim skills including floating, water safety, breathing techniques, and foundational swim strokes while allowing participants to gain confidence in a safe, controlled setting.

- Ages:** Ages 16 and up
- Dates:** Multiple sessions from June 20 to August 1
- Location:** MLK Park, Richmond Park
- Cost:** \$45 for residents, \$55 for nonresidents

Ballroom Dancing

A beginner class targeted toward couples wanting to learn ballroom dancing. Learn the Salsa, Foxtrot, East Coast Swing, Cha Cha, Rumba and Tango. This class is for couples. Each person is required to register.

- Dates:** Tuesdays, May 12 to June 23
- Location:** Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Barre

Barre is a low impact, high intensity total body workout that incorporates elements of Pilates, ballet, and yoga. Set to fun, upbeat music, this class uses light hand weights, resistance bands, and your own body weight to complete range movements at high repetitions to fatigue your muscles and build strength and endurance. Stretching is also incorporated to increase flexibility. Great for all fitness levels!

- Dates:** Multiple class options; May 12 - June 27
- Location:** Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Beginner Pickleball

Learn the basic rules, skills, and strategies needed to play pickleball.

- Dates:** Mondays, April 27 - May 18
- Location:** Garfield Park Community Gym
- Cost:** \$28 for residents, \$38 for nonresidents

Cycle & Strength

A combination of high-intensity cycling intervals followed by full-body strength exercises that target muscle groups in the arms, abs, and lower back.

- Dates:** Multiple classes; May 12 through June 24
- Location:** Ford Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Cycling

Reach your fitness goals while building leg and core strength. Powerful music and pace-setting instruction helps you climb steep hills, move across flat road, and master intense cycling intervals.

- Dates:** Mondays, May 11 - June 22 (No class May 25)
- Location:** Ford Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$36 for residents, \$46 for nonresidents

Guitar Lessons with Riverside Guitar School

Are you curious about the guitar but unsure about

lessons or committing to a session? Try a short, no-pressure introduction with four group classes or private lessons at Riverside Guitar School.

After you register, Riverside Guitar School will contact you to schedule a time that works for you. A guitar will be provided to use during lessons.

This offer may be used only once per person. If you'd like to continue after the four lessons, Riverside Guitar School will be happy to discuss ongoing options with you.

- Ages:** 4 and up
- Dates:** Year-round
- Cost:** \$68 for residents, \$78 for nonresidents

HIGH Low Fitness (HIGH Fitness)

A lower impact (not intensity!) workout, HIGH Low is the sister format to HIGH Fitness. Offering impact progressions for every move, HIGH Low is a steady state cardio workout tailored to the individual, by the individual. Highly adaptable to all fitness levels, this lower impact format focuses on the same elements of the HIGH brand: fun, fabulous music, and a community-based inclusive environment!

- Dates:** Thursdays, May 14 - June 25
- Location:** Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Hip Hop Step

Perfect for all fitness levels, this beginner-friendly class guides youth through the basics of aerobic step while progressively building your skills each week to the beat of your favorite pop, R&B, and hip-hop tunes.

- Dates:** Thursdays, May 14 - June 25
- Location:** MLK Park Community Center
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Kettlebell AMPD

Kettlebell AMPD is a group fitness format that takes heart-pumping music and kettlebell moves and combines them into a calorie torching fun workout! The program uses lightweight kettlebells in both traditional and non-traditional ways to create an effective full body workout. Combining the benefits of strength training, functional movements, and cardiovascular exercises, this program is a safe and effective workout for all ages and fitness levels.

- Dates:** Thursdays, May 14 - June 25
- Location:** Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
- Cost:** \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Pilates

Tone muscles, improve posture, and learn flexibility and balance. Focus on moving as one unit with control and grace. Improve circulation and endurance and reduce stress. Resistance bands, pilates balls, and pilates rings are used during class. All exercises are done a mat.

Dates: Wednesdays, May 13 - June 24
Location: MLK Park Community Center
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

POUND

Using Ripstix (available for use during class) - lightly weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising - POUND transforms drumming into an effective full-body workout. Become the music in this class that combines cardio, conditioning, and strength training with yoga and pilates-inspired movements. This class is designed for all fitness levels and is easily modifiable.

Dates: Thursdays, May 14 - June 25
Location: Ford Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Pumped Up Strength

This resistance training workout uses medium to heavy dumbbells to build lean muscle, boost metabolism, and enhance total-body strength. Through progressive layering and compound movement patterns, each class targets every major muscle group within a structured, beat-driven format that will keep you engaged, challenged, and progressing.

Dates: Tuesdays, May 12 - June 23
Location: Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Strength, Core, & Balance

This full-body training class combines dumbbells and bodyweight exercises to challenge your muscles, strengthen your core, and improve stability. Whether you're just starting out or looking to level up your routine, this well-rounded class will leave you feeling stronger, more balanced, and ready to take on anything!

Dates: Tuesdays, May 12 - June 23
Location: Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Strength & Row Circuit

This high intensity class will improve endurance

and strength through a mix of rowing distances and strength training circuits.

Dates: Multiple classes, May 11 - June 24
Location: Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$36/\$41for residents, \$46/\$51for nonresidents

Strength & Power

This strength class will work all your muscle groups with a variety of exercises to elevate your current routine. It combines compound exercises to engage as many muscles as possible in a single move, as well as incorporate isolation moves. Modifications and challenges will be offered to make the class appropriate for all levels.

Dates: Multiple classes, May 11 - June 26
Location: Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

Tae Kwon Do

Discover the fundamentals of Tae Kwon Do, the dynamic Korean martial art that emphasizes flexibility, concentration, balance, and self-defense. Under the guidance of a skilled instructor, participants will:

- Improve physical fitness and flexibility
- Enhance focus and mental discipline
- Develop balance and coordination
- Learn practical self-defense techniques
- Build confidence and self-respect

This class is perfect for kids, adults of all ages, and even families looking for a fun and empowering activity to do together. Whether you're a beginning or looking to sharpen your skills, Tae Kwon Do offers something for everyone!

Ages: 7 and up
Location: Garfield Park Community Gym
Time: 6 – 7:30 p.m.
Sessions: Tuesdays, May 19 to June 30 (no class June 2 and June 9)
Cost: \$30 for residents, \$40 for non-residents

Water Aerobics

Build core strength, conditioning, endurance, and all-over toning. Class features deep and shallow water exercises. A great low/non-impact workout. Float belts are available.

Dates: Multiple class options from June into August
Location: Briggs Park
Cost: \$51 for residents, \$61 for nonresidents

Yoga (Basic)

Discover your inner yogi in a class that builds strength and body awareness. Class will begin with gentle movement and breathing, progressing to standing sequences and finally ending with calm resting poses.

Dates: Multiple classes, May 11 - June 27
Location: Riverside and Ford Studios @ 1500 Scribner Ave and Virtual options
Cost: \$36/\$41for residents, \$46/\$51for nonresidents

Yoga (Gentle)

Discover your inner yogi in a class that builds strength and body awareness. Class will begin with gentle movement and breathing, progressing to standing sequences and finally ending with calm resting poses.

Dates: Thursdays, May 14 - June 24
Location: Virtual
Cost: \$41

Yoga (Power)

This energetic class is designed to build strength, flexibility, and balance! Challenging peak posts, breath to movement flows, and mind body connections will encourage students to find their edge. Modifications are always offered and body awareness is always encouraged.

Dates: Tuesdays, May 12 - June 23
Location: Virtual
Cost: \$41

Zumba

Zumba is a fast, fun, and upbeat dance fitness class that incorporates Latin and international music. Every class feels like a party! All levels welcome.

Dates: Multiple classes; May 14 - June 27
Location: Riverside Studio @ 1500 Scribner Ave
Cost: \$41 for residents, \$51 for nonresidents

For more information on upcoming activities, fitness classes, and recreation events in Grand Rapids, visit grparks.info/home or call 616-456-3696, for more information and follow Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation (@grparksandrec) on social media for updates.

Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to view the full recreation catalog





Main Library

111 Library St NE
616.988.5400

Madison Square

1201 Madison Ave SE
616.988.5411

Ottawa Hills

1150 Giddings Ave SE
616.988.5412

Seymour

2350 Eastern Ave SE
616.988.5413

Van Belkum

1563 Plainfield Ave NE
616.988.5410

West Leonard

1017 Leonard St NW
616.988.5416

West Side

713 Bridge St NW
616.988.5414

Yankee Clipper

2025 Leonard St NE
616.988.5415

grpl.org

Storytimes

Pajama Time

Get cozy in your pajamas, grab your favorite stuffed animals or blanket, and come to the library for a special bedtime event! Listen to stories, sing songs, and get those wiggles out before bed. Great for working parents and caregivers! For ages 0–5 years.

Mondays, June 1 – August 3 (excludes June 29)
6:30 pm West Leonard

Family Storytime

These storytimes feature great books, songs, fingerplays, and hands-on fun. Classes end with an art activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow. For ages 0–5 years.

Fridays, June 5 – August 7 (excludes July 3)
10:30 am Ottawa Hills

Fridays, June 5 – August 7 (excludes July 3)
10:30 am Van Belkum



Storytime on the Lawn

Join us for this outdoor storytime held on the lawn! Children and their caregivers will love this 30-minute event that features stories, songs, rhymes, and playing on the lawn. In case of inclement weather, this event series will be moved indoors. For ages 0–5 years.

Wednesdays, June 3 – August 5 (excludes July 1)
10:30 am Seymour

Thursdays, June 4 – August 6 (excludes July 2)
10:30 am Yankee Clipper

Outdoor Storytime

If you love stories, songs, and rhymes, join GRPL for outdoor storytime. This fun event for kids is the perfect way to get some wiggles out. Each child will take home a free storytime kit at the end of the program while supplies last. For ages 0–5 years.

Mondays, May 11, June 8, July 13, August 10
10:30 am Mulick Park
1632 Sylvan Ave SE

Mondays, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17
10:30 am Lincoln Park
231 Marion Ave NW

Storytime Kits

Through April 30, 2026
Designed for kids 0–5.

Our Storytime Kits include a book and age-appropriate activities for toddlers and kids. They also include helpful resources in English and Spanish which support early literacy skills like reading, singing, talking, playing, and writing. Available at all GRPL locations while supplies last.

Book Clubs

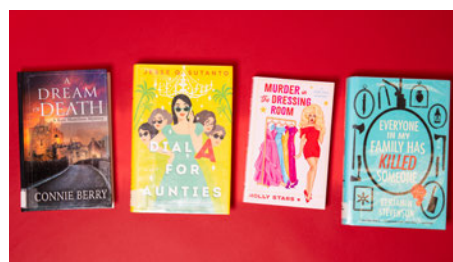


Sci-Fi Book Club

Wednesdays, May 6, June 10, July 8, August 12
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Join other science-fiction readers for a book club led by GRPL staff. Participate in a discussion about each book with members of the community. This book club is designed for adults.

May: *Service Model* by Adrian Tchaikovsky
June: *The Three Body Problem* by Cixin Liu
July: *A Prayer for the Crown Shy* by Becky Chambers
August: *Even Greater Mistakes* by Charlie Jane Anders



Cozy Mystery Book Club

Wednesdays, May 6, June 3, July 1, August 5
6:00 – 7:00 pm Van Belkum

Curl up with a good mystery and join us each month for a cozy book club. We'll read charming and suspenseful mystery titles that spark fun conversation and connection with fellow readers and library staff. For adults.

May: *Dial A for Aunties* by Jesse Q. Sutanto
June: *Murder in the Dressing Room* by Holly Stars
July: *A Dream of Death* by Connie Berry
August: *Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone* by Benjamin Stevenson

Popular Pages Book Club

Join us for our monthly book club! Enjoy popular fiction and nonfiction titles selected by GRPL librarians and participate in a discussion about each reading with members of the community and library staff. For adults.

Popular Pages at Seymour

Mondays, May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8
12:00 – 1:00 pm Seymour

May: *Emperor of Gladness* by Ocean Vuong
June: *Paved Paradise* by Henry Grabar
July: *Wild Dark Shore* by Charlotte McConaghy
August: *Burn the Place* by Iliana Regan

Popular Pages at Yankee Clipper

Mondays, May 18, June 15, July 20, August 17
6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper

May: *Yellowface* by R.F. Kuang
June: *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune
July: *The Office of Historical Corrections* by Danielle Evans
August: *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel

Celebrate Asian American Pacific Islander Month



Ohajiki Kits

May 1–31, 2026

All GRPL locations

Designed for kids ages 5 and up.

Ohajiki is a traditional Japanese children's game, similar to marbles but played with small, flat, coin-shaped pieces (also called ohajiki) made of glass or ceramic. Players flick their piece with a finger to hit other pieces, aiming to collect the most pieces by the end of the game. It's a simple, nostalgic game requiring precision and a gentle touch.

These kits will have small flat marbles, which will not be suitable for small children.

Grand Rapids' Asian History Exhibit

May 1 – 31, 2026

Main Library

Visit the Main Library during the month of May to explore the Grand Rapids Asian Pacific Foundation's Local Asian History exhibit.



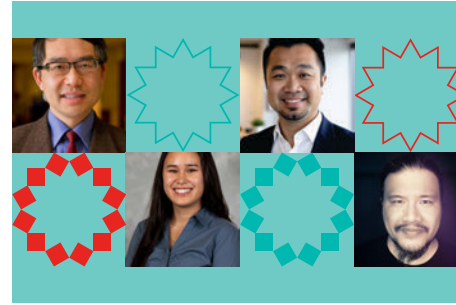
Jiraiya the Hero: Silent Film Screening with Live Improvised Score

Saturday, May 9

3:00 – 4:00 pm Main Library

Experience the amazing trio of Kioto Aoki on taiko drums, Haruhi Kobayashi on voice and electronics, and Mai Sugimoto on saxophone as they perform an improvised soundtrack for the classic Japanese silent film Gouketsu Jiraiya (Jiraiya the Hero).

After the film, Aoki, Kobayashi, and Sugimoto will be joined by artist Chien-An Yuan to talk about how they create live music for films and the technical details behind the movie. For teens and adults.



Make Tomorrow Today: Challenges, Solutions, and the Path Forward

Thursday, May 21

6:30 – 7:30 pm Main Library

Join us for a meaningful conversation on the social and cultural challenges facing AAPI communities. Panelists include Dr. Kin M. Ma, Associate Professor at Grand Valley State University (GVSU); Anna Miller, Assistant Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs at GVSU; Eric Van, Program Director at the Grand Rapids Asian Pacific Foundation; and Chien-An Yuan, artist and community advocate.

Panelists will explore issues that affect daily life, discuss practical solutions, and share ways to raise awareness and support. Together, we'll consider how to take thoughtful action now to build a more inclusive and just world for generations to come. For teens and adults.



Taiko Drumming with Kioto Aoki

Saturday, May 23

11:00 am – 12:00 pm Main Library

Join us for a performance by Tsukasa Taiko, a program of Asian Improv aRts Midwest. Taiko drumming is a Japanese tradition that's over 2,000 years old! This exciting performance features taiko drums and shinobue (bamboo flute) and combines music, dance, and theater. It's a fun and educational experience the whole family can enjoy! For all ages.

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation and Wege Foundation for their support of these programs.

Ways to Support GRPL



Get a Library Card!

Get a complimentary bag when you sign up for a library card. Already have a Grand Rapids Public Library card? Visit any of our 8 locations and donate \$1.00 to receive one.

Special thanks to Friends of the Grand Rapids Public Library for their support of this item.



Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale

Join us at one of the library's biggest book sales of the year! During this popular fundraiser, find bargains to help fill your home bookshelf, office, or classroom. Materials are added throughout the day. Cash, Venmo, and credit cards are accepted at this event.

Saturday, April 25

9:00 am – 4:00 pm Main Library

All books are 50 cents each.

Sunday, April 26

1:00 – 4:00 pm Main Library

Fill a bag for \$5.00. Bring your own bag. Specialty items are not included.

This event is presented by the Friends of the Grand Rapids Public Library.

Events for Everyone

FOR KIDS



Tails & Tales: Read to Therapy Dogs

Literacy is a fundamental skill that takes practice. In this program, kids are invited to practice reading to a licensed therapy dog from West Michigan Therapy Dogs Ruff Readers!

Attendees will be able to read to a therapy dog for 10–15 minutes. While kids wait for their chance to read, the library will provide a small craft or activity. Reading spots with dogs are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Designed for ages 6–13.

Wednesday, April 16

6:00 – 7:00 pm Madison Square

Comedy Magic with Cameron Zvara

Cameron's magic show is filled with mind-blowing magic, comedy, juggling, music, and tons of audience participation. For ages 6–11.

Tuesday, June 9

2:00 – 2:45 pm Yankee Clipper

Tuesday, July 14

3:30 – 4:15 pm Main Library

Tuesday, July 28

2:00 – 2:45 pm Seymour

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, the Edsko & Claire Hekman Family Fund, and the Meijer Fund.

Bubble Science Party

Pop into the exciting universe of bubble science! Uncover the secrets of Bubble Geometry, Color Theory, and learn how to hold your very own bubble! This presentation will be followed by an hour-long hands-on bubble lab where the audience can try some hands-on experiments for some educational bubble science. Attendees are encouraged to bring a plastic bottle to experiment with. For ages 0–11.

Monday, June 22

2:30 – 4:30 pm Main Library

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, the Edsko & Claire Hekman Family Fund, and the Meijer Fund.

FOR TEENS

Stop Motion Movie Workshop for Teens

Join us for this three-hour movie-making workshop! Learn from experts how to tell a story, create characters, and record a stop-motion film. The library will provide all materials and snacks. Participants may use their own device or the library's equipment to record their finished project. Space is limited and first come, first served. For ages 12–18.

Tuesday, June 16

3:00 – 6:00 pm Main Library

Wednesday, June 17

3:00 – 6:00 pm Seymour

Thursday, June 18

4:30 – 7:30 pm West Side

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, the Edsko & Claire Hekman Family Fund, and the Meijer Fund.

Dungeons & Dragons for Teens

Whether you're new to D&D or a seasoned player seeking a fresh adventure, join us at the library for drop-in fun! Each session features a unique one-shot campaign. Bring your own character or use one of our premade options—no materials needed! Space is limited and first come, first served. For ages 11–18.

Thursday, June 11

1:00 – 4:00 pm Main Library

Tuesday, July 21

4:00 – 7:00 pm Seymour

Thursday, August 6

2:30 – 5:30 pm West Side

FOR ALL AGES

Juggling Club

Join the GRPL Juggling Club, a welcoming space for jugglers of all levels—from beginners to experienced performers. Sessions focus on open practice. Bring your own props, or take part in a special segment to make homemade juggling props to take home! For all ages.

Monday, May 4

6:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Monday, June 1

6:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Monday, July 6

6:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Monday, August 3

6:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

58th Annual Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition Reception

Listen to poems read aloud by the winners in each category. Copies of this year's *Voices* publication will be available at the ceremony. For all ages.

Saturday, June 13

2:00 – 3:00 pm Main Library

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation — Dyer-Ives Foundation Poetry Fund for their support of this program.



Black History Museum

Experience the nation's premiere Black History traveling exhibit. During this drop-in event, explore Dr. el-Hakin's collection of over 7,000 original artifacts of Black memorabilia dating from the trans-Atlantic slave trade era to hip-hop culture. For all ages.

Wednesday, June 17

12:00 – 5:00 pm Main Library

Special thanks to the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation and the Vander Veen Center for the Book Fund.

FOR ADULTS

Crafternoons

Join us for an afternoon of coffee, cookies, and crafts. Bring your own project or make a craft with the supplies provided by the library. Meet new friends and chat with neighbors while you get creative.

Thursday, April 17

1:00 – 2:00 pm Yankee Clipper

Conversation Circle | English

Each week, join others who are practicing English through conversations centered around topics like music, food, sports, travel, and more! These casual and fun events are designed for adult English language learners.

Wednesdays, April 22, 29, May 6, 20, 27, June 3, 10, 17, 24

7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Conversation Circle | Spanish

Each month, join others who are practicing Spanish through conversations centered around topics like music, food, sports, travel, and more! These casual and fun events are designed for adult Spanish language learners.

Saturdays, May 2, June 27, July 11, August 8

2:00 – 3:00 pm Main Library

Grand River Walking Tour

During this interactive walking tour, local experts will speak about the river's ecosystem, fishery, and water protection efforts. Speakers include experts from the Grand River Watershed Arts and Music Council, Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, and the DNR.

Saturday, May 2

1:00 – 3:00 pm Canal Street Park
941 Monroe Ave NW, 49503

Introduction to Pocket Prairies & Container Gardening

Karyn from Nature's Balance Gardening will explain how small pocket prairies in your yard can help pollinators by connecting their habitats. She will also teach how to create native plant container gardens for people who do not have access to a yard. For adults. Space is limited and first come, first served.

Tuesday, May 12

6:30 – 7:30 pm Yankee Clipper

Tuesday, May 19

6:30 – 7:30 pm Seymour

For more events, visit www.grpl.org/events.






Support library events.

Donate today.



Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation

www.grplfoundation.org

GRPL Announces 5-year Strategic Vision



To our community,

Over the last few months, we've asked for your help shaping the library's future. After reviewing community data, studying national trends, talking with Grand Rapids leaders, and conducting a community survey, we're proud to share our newly adopted 5-year strategic vision. (www.grpl.org/reports)

In this plan, GRPL will become a Community Hub—working with partner organizations to expand our collective reach and impact through shared resources and connections.

Our 5-year strategic vision also allows us to better support core services—such as our collections, early literacy initiatives, and the Grand Rapids History Center—while also ensuring the flexibility to provide programming for emerging community needs.

We look forward to this next chapter and thank you for your continued support. Questions? Contact 616.988.5400 or email custserv@grpl.org.

John McNaughton,
Grand Rapids Public Library Director

A nuestra comunidad:

Durante los últimos meses, les hemos pedido su ayuda para dar forma al futuro de la biblioteca.

Después de revisar datos de la comunidad, analizar tendencias nacionales, conversar con líderes de Grand Rapids y realizar una encuesta comunitaria, nos enorgullece compartir nuestra visión estratégica recientemente adoptada para los próximos cinco años. (www.grpl.org/reports/)

Con este plan, GRPL se convertirá en un Centro Comunitario, colaborando con organizaciones aliadas para ampliar nuestro alcance e impacto colectivo mediante el uso compartido de recursos y conexiones.

Nuestra visión estratégica a cinco años también nos permite fortalecer mejor los servicios fundamentales —como nuestras colecciones, las iniciativas de alfabetización temprana y el Centro de Historia de Grand Rapids— al tiempo que garantiza la flexibilidad necesaria para ofrecer programas que respondan a las necesidades emergentes de la comunidad.

Esperamos con entusiasmo este nuevo capítulo y agradecemos su continuo apoyo. ¿Tiene preguntas? Comuníquese al 616.988.5400 o escriba a custserv@grpl.org.

John McNaughton,
Director de la Biblioteca Pública de
Grand Rapids

Board of Library Commissioners

Rachel S. Anderson

Kelly Boston

Justine Bryant

Kathryn Dilley

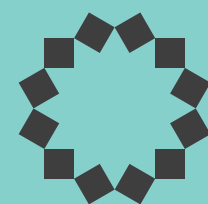
Bryan Holt

Kevin Peterson

Lauren Woolsey

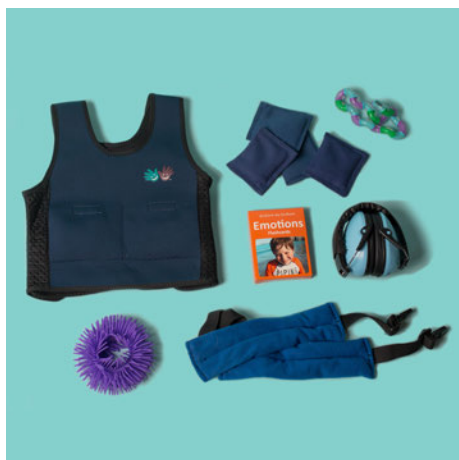
Library Director

John J. McNaughton



GRAND
RAPIDS
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Featured Services



Sensory Toolkit

If you need some extra sensory support during your visit to the library, we're here to help! Ask to use a Sensory Tool Kit during your visit to any Grand Rapids Public Library location. Questions? Contact 616.988.5400.

Kit includes:

- Emotion Flashcards
- Fidget Bracelet
- Weighted Vest
- Tangle Therapy Toy
- Noise Reduction Headphones
- Weighted Suspenders
- Social Story Guide

Books by Mail

The Grand Rapids Public Library offers a free Books by Mail Program to those who are homebound due to illness, disability, or old age. Residents of the city of Grand Rapids may participate.



The Books by Mail Program provides participants with:

- Delivery to your door or mailbox
- Many current titles and authors, including some in large-print format
- A selection of books-on-CD
- Easy, postage-free return

To qualify for this service you must be a resident of the City of Grand Rapids and unable to come to the library or any of its branches because of illness, disability or old age. This service is only available to patrons 18 years or older.