



January 2026 | Section A

SPECIAL HONOR FOR CITY HIGH: 4

UNION HIGH SCHOOL JROTC WINS GOLD: 6

Theme School Application Window Now Open

“We take pride in offering diverse educational experiences that empower every child to thrive. With graduation rates at record highs and historic investments transforming learning spaces across our city, now is the time to make GRPS your choice.”

— Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) — Grand Rapids Public Schools is now accepting theme school applications for the 2026–27 school year.

GRPS offers families a wide range of themed educational experiences designed to match scholars’ interests, strengths, and learning styles. Options include the nationally recognized Blue Ribbon City High Middle School, dual language immersion

at Southwest Académie Bilingüe, college and career preparatory pathways at Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy and Innovation Central High School, rigorous academics at Gerald R. Ford Academic Center, and creative arts programming at Coit Creative Arts Academy. Scholars can also engage in hands-on learning at multiple environmental science schools, explore Montessori programs across the district, and choose from many more options available at every grade level.

Theme School Application Windows

Round 1: Jan. 5 – Feb. 1

Round 2: Feb. 16 – March 15

Round 3: March 30 – May 1

The following GRPS Theme Schools are available by school application:

- Blandford School
- CA Frost Environmental Science Academy Elementary
- CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School
- Center for Economicology
- City High Middle School
- Coit Creative Arts Academy
- Gerald R. Ford Academic Center
- Grand Rapids Montessori Academy
- Grand Rapids Montessori Middle High School
- Grand Rapids Public Museum Middle School
- Grand Rapids Public Museum High School
- Grand Rapids University Preparatory Academy

APPLY TODAY TO A GRPS THEME SCHOOL!



The Theme School Application is *OPEN* for the 2026-2027 school year. Scan the QR code to learn more about the Theme School Application process and apply today!

Our Theme Schools



GRPS
my choice®

Grand Rapids Public Schools
(616) 819-2150 | enrollment@grps.org | apply.grps.org
Community & Student Services | 1331 Martin Luther King Jr St SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

- Innovation Central High School
- North Park Montessori
- Ottawa Hills High School Early Middle College & Academies
- Ridgemoor Park Montessori
- Sherwood Park Global Studies Academy
- Southwest Elementary School-Academie Bilingue
- Southwest Middle High School-Academie Bilingue
- Zoo School

SPECIAL EVENT

GRPS Expo & Information Fair

Families are invited to explore all GRPS schools, including neighborhood schools, and meet school leaders at the GRPS Expo and Information Fair on Wednesday, January 28, from 4:30–6:30 p.m. at GRPS University, 1400 Fuller Ave. NE. Free dinner will be provided by Dean Transportation.

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Union High School's Unified Program Builds Community Through Inclusion

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) - Thanks to its thriving Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Program, Union High School has been cultivating a culture where every scholar feels like they belong. The program uses sports, classroom activities, and school-wide events to foster acceptance and meaningful relationships among scholars of all abilities. Program teacher Nicholas Claus describes Unified as "a strategy aimed at empowering a generation of students to change school culture to be more socially inclusive."

A major focus of Union's approach is whole-school engagement. Activities are designed and led by a diverse group of scholars, ensuring that all Redhawks, including those with differing abilities, are welcomed and actively involved in daily school life.

Among the program's most popular components are the SOMIFit curriculum, which blends health lessons with learning a sport, and Unified Sports teams, where scholars play and compete together. Scholars have participated in a wide range of activities, including cornhole, track and field events, floor hockey, bowling, and basketball. Claus notes that these activities break down barriers, foster strong friendships, and

promote a deep sense of belonging. They also happen to be lots of fun for the participants.

The respect, teamwork, and inclusivity practiced on the court and in the classroom naturally extend beyond athletics. Scholars carry these values into shaping the broader school community, and many take their experiences further by stepping into leadership roles.

For example, some scholars recently attended the Special Olympics' Leadership Launch at Calvin University, gaining tools to amplify their voices and advocate for inclusion. Experiences like this support the program's core goal of empowering scholars to design and lead initiatives that positively impact their school environment.

Claus emphasized that this type of scholar-driven approach is essential. "Social inclusion is best fostered when classroom, school, and community initiatives are designed and implemented by a diverse group of students," he says. At Union, Unified Sports and student leadership continue to be powerful forces in creating connections and understanding across differences.

Now in its fourth year at Union, the Unified Program is helping scholars build a school where everyone feels welcome, connected, and valued.



Grand Rapids Public Schools

WE ARE GR

January 2026

Grand Rapids

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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.

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WILD ABOUT SUMMER: LEARN, EXPLORE & ADVENTURE AT GRPS!

JUNE 15 – JULY 23, 2026 | Monday – Thursday | 8:00 am – 12:30 pm

Breakfast and Lunch Included



Get ready for a summer full of adventure, discovery, and fun! This hands-on summer program for grades K–8, open to current GRPS students, features an exciting theme all about Michigan habitats. Scholars will explore local ecosystems, meet Michigan animals up close, build reading and math skills through engaging nature-based activities, and head out on interactive, hands-on field trip adventures.

Invitations will be sent by mail and email in late January, with registration open from January 20 to March 20, 2026. Learn more at grps.org/summer.

Three educators honored as Jean Hamilton Cope Teachers of the Year

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Three GRPS educators have been named the 2024-2025 Jean Hamilton Cope Teachers of the Year.

The honorees are, Kim Bradford at North Park Montessori Academy, Heather Lewis at CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School, and Christopher Woods at Southwest Middle High School – Academia Bilingüe.

This annual award, established by generous donors Laurie and Mark Grand in honor of Laurie's mother, former GRPS teacher Jean Hamilton Cope, recognizes outstanding educators. The honorees receive \$1,000 and nominated for the Michigan Teacher of the Year Award.

Elementary School Division Honoree: Kim Bradford, North Park Montessori

Kim Bradford serves as a Special Education Teacher at North Park Montessori, where she leads a self-contained classroom for scholars with



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). She joined GRPS in 2006. Known for going above and beyond, Kim creates a learning environment that balances structure, care, and opportunity.

Working closely with her classroom team, Ms. Bradford ensures that her scholars engage in school experiences that mirror the education all North Park scholars

receive each day. She integrates real-life skill development into daily instruction while also collaborating with her colleagues to incorporate Montessori materials and practices into her classroom whenever possible.

Her leadership extends beyond her own classroom. She actively fosters a culture of inclusion across the school by promoting opportunities for meaningful connections and friendships between her scholars and the wider school community. Through her dedication, innovation, and commitment to inclusion, Ms. Bradford exemplifies the Montessori philosophy of educating the whole child while championing equity and belonging for every scholar.

Middle School Division Honoree: Heather Lewis, CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School

Heather Lewis is a Social Studies Teacher at CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School, where she exemplifies excellence in teaching and learning by consistently going above and beyond for her scholars. She joined GRPS in 1996.

She is known for creating innovative, immersive experiences that bring social studies to life. Her classroom transforms into societies with functioning economies, governmental decisions, and daily opportunities for critical thinking. She provides culturally affirming instruction that highlights multiple perspectives and ensures all voices are represented throughout history. Her high expectations are paired



with engaging lessons that keep scholars actively involved from bell to bell, supported by strong routines and clear communication.

In the past year, Heather has given her scholars opportunities to shine on national and district stages. She guided scholars in a national brochure competition, with one advancing all the way to nationals, and coached her class in the District Court writing competition, where the top three winners were all from CA Frost. These experiences amplified scholar voices and showcased their skills and creativity beyond the classroom.

Ms. Lewis regularly brings in guest speakers, organizes numerous field trips, and leads the middle school section of Youth in Government. She facilitates both Middle and High School Youth in Government and holds We The People Congressional hearings in the spring for 8th graders. She maintains strong family partnerships through newsletters, phone calls, individual emails, and by welcoming parents as chaperones.

Through her innovation, high standards, and dedication to scholar success, Ms. Lewis has become a cornerstone of the CA Frost community.

High School Division Honoree: Christopher Woods, Southwest Middle High School – Academia Bilingüe

Christopher Woods is a Mathematics Teacher at Southwest Middle High School – Academia Bilingüe, where he is widely recognized for his unwavering commitment to scholars, families, colleagues, and the school community. He has more than 25



years of teaching experience, joining GRPS in 2020.

Chris loves finding creative ways to inspire students, especially by adding STEM to every classroom & making STEM accessible to families at home. He believes that STEM is not a class we teach, it's a culture we build.

In the classroom, Mr. Woods provides high-quality instruction while offering individualized support to ensure every scholar has the tools, encouragement, and confidence needed to succeed both academically and personally. His passion for teaching extends beyond academics, as he works intentionally to build strong relationships with families and colleagues, fostering a collaborative and supportive school environment.

As a member of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), he helps guide schoolwide decision-making and instructional improvement with a scholar-centered focus. He serves as the school's technology coordinator, supporting staff, students, and families in navigating an ever-changing digital landscape. His leadership in STEM education further highlights his innovative approach, as he inspires scholars to engage in critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving while exploring future career pathways.

Beyond his teaching and leadership roles, he was a member of the 2017-18 Michigan Department of Ed Teacher Leadership Advisory Council. He also wrote the book *Daily STEM: How to Create a STEM Culture in Your Classrooms & Communities*, shares free STEM resources on his website dailystem.com and @dailystem on social media, and is the host of *The STEM Everyday Podcast*.



ABESTOS 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.

City High Middle School Named Michigan Blue Ribbon School for Academic Achievement



LANSING – City High Middle School is one of 16 high-performing Michigan schools that are being recognized as Blue Ribbon Schools by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

“This honor is a direct reflection of the dedication our scholars and staff demonstrate every single day,” said GRPS Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. “Their hard work and commitment to growth make achievements like this possible. We are thrilled to be recognized with such a prestigious award, and it inspires us to continue striving for excellence.”

City High Middle School, which offers a comprehensive International Baccalaureate program at no cost to scholars, was first recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2019. In U.S. News & World Report’s 2025 rankings, it placed third among Michigan high schools and earned a spot in the nation’s top 50.

“It is a tremendous honor for City High Middle School to receive this recognition for a second time in six years,” said City High Middle School Principal Charlotte ‘Charlie’ Vandervliet. “We have worked to make our programming more accessible to scholars around the city by eliminating certain entrance criteria, yet still holding true to our high academic standards and maintaining the ability to not only meet, but exceed performance criteria. I am incredibly proud of the work our teachers and scholars put in each day and am beyond thankful for the support from our families and community.”

The State Board of Education will hold a special

ceremony at its Nov. 13 meeting to honor the Michigan public schools that the department nominated as Blue Ribbon Schools.

“Students and parents, school staff, and local communities deserve to be honored for the outstanding achievement by our Blue Ribbon Schools,” said Interim State Superintendent Dr. Sue C. Carnell. “These schools serve as an example to others and, at the same time, are representative of the accomplishments and progress at schools around the state.”

MDE nominated the schools for being Exemplary High-Performing Schools, which are among the state’s highest-performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.

In previous years, the U.S. Department of Education bestowed the prestigious National Blue Ribbon Schools designation in recognition of schools that excelled in academic performance or made significant

strides in closing achievement gaps among different student groups. However, this year the federal education department discontinued the national program after the nominations had been submitted.

“MDE and the State Board of Education want to make sure these outstanding schools in our state get the recognition they deserve,” said State Board of Education President Dr. Pamela Pugh. “These Michigan schools are worthy of national attention, so it is very disappointing that Blue Ribbon Schools no longer will be honored by the U.S. Department of Education. State board members are looking forward to learning more about the successes of these schools.”




Preescolar ¡Aquí voy! Casa abierta

VIERNES 27 DE FEBRERO | 9:00-11:00 AM

Visite las aulas preescolares del programa Great Start Readiness en todo el condado de Kent y las escuelas Thornapple Kellogg para -

- Más información sobre GSRP
- Ver nuestras aulas
- Conocer a nuestros increíbles maestros y hacer preguntas
- ¡Incluso completar una solicitud de preescolar!

Los horarios pueden variar según la ubicación. Visite nuestro sitio web para más detalles.



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Escanee para ver ubicaciones y horarios



Disponible sin costo como parte de la iniciativa PreK for All de Michigan.



These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.




Preschool – Here I Come! Open House

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27 | 9:00-11:00 AM

Visit Great Start Readiness Program preschool classrooms across Kent County and Thornapple Kellogg Schools to -

- Learn more about GSRP
- See our classrooms
- Meet our amazing teachers and ask questions
- Even complete a preschool application!

Schedules may vary by location. See our website for details.



freepreschoolkent.org



Scan for locations and schedules



GSRP is available at no cost as part of Michigan's PreK for All initiative.



These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.

GRPS Speech and Debate Team Prevails at State Championship

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Thirty-four GRPS high school and middle school scholars competed at the Michigan Interscholastic Forensics Association (MIFA) State Finals – the largest representation ever for the district.

In Varsity Public Forum debate, sophomores Colette Crowley and Mithil Joshi led the team to a bronze medal finish by winning more team speaker points than any other Varsity team and breaking to the semi-finals. A narrowly split 2-1 decision in the semis kept them out of the finals. In individual awards, Crowley placed 4th and Joshi 6th. Teammate Kailani Gardner came in at 11th.

In the Novice (JV) Public Forum division, the team of Ayan Shukla and Varun Vijay were one of only eight teams out of 54 to make it to the quarterfinals. Shukla and Vijay finished 5th. Overall, the nine high school teams finished with a combined win-loss record of 24-14. In the speaker awards, Vijay was 6th, and Shukla took home 1st. Teammates Aiden Wang and Derek Chen placed 3rd and 9th, respectively.

In the Congressional Debate event, Novices Ayaan Gupta and Jake Kooyman advanced to the Finals, with Gupta taking 11th and the Best Presiding Officer award, and Kooyman finishing 5th. In the Varsity Division Finals, senior Eli Hajjar finished

his career placing 8th with sophomore Fiona Rodrigues coming in 11th.

The 2025 MIFA State Finals was the largest tournament since the COVID pandemic, seeing 26 Michigan schools debating, with a record number of entries in each event. The finals were held on the campus of Wayne State University in Detroit on Saturday, Dec. 13.

Debate season is now officially over, and the Speech season begins after winter break.

GRPS's speech and debate program is coached by William Harris, a two-diamond National Speech & Debate Association coach and 30+ year volunteer with GRPS.

Team Awards

Public Forum Varsity:

3rd Place - GRPS Speech and Debate (led by Sophomores Colette Crowley and Mithil Joshi)

Team Awards

Public Forum Novice (JV):

5th Place - GRPS Speech and Debate (led by Freshmen Ayan Shukla and Varun Vijay)

Individual Speaker Awards

Public Forum Varsity:

4th Place - Colette Crowley, Sophomore
6th Place - Mithil Joshi, Sophomore
11th Place - Kailani Gardner, Sophomore

Individual Speaker Awards

Public Forum Novice (JV):

1st Place - Ayan Shukla, Freshman
3rd Place - Aiden Wang, Freshman
6th Place - Varun Vijay, Freshman
9th Place - Derek Chen, Freshman

Individual Speaker Awards

Congressional Debate Varsity:

8th Place - Eli Hajjar, Senior
11th Place - Fiona Rodrigues, Sophomore

Individual Speaker Awards

Congressional Debate Novice (JV):

Presiding Officer and 11th Place - Ayaan Gupta, Freshman
5th Place - Jacob Kooyman, Sophomore



Righting an Injustice: Cleo Cross Presented With Diploma Six Decades After Graduation

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Cleo Cross was a standout basketball player at South High School with plans to continue his career in college when, in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, he made a choice to take a stand that cost him his diploma for nearly six decades.

During his time at South, the principal implemented a ban on mustaches. Cross refused to shave and was suspended. His stance sparked a wave of solidarity, as 400 classmates walked out in protest. The protest drew national attention, including coverage in JET Magazine. Although Cross was eventually allowed to return to school and walk with the Class of 1967, he was never given his diploma.

That changed during the 2025 Grand Rapids African American Museum & Archives (GRAAMA) Gala Fundraiser when GRPS and GRAAMA partnered to right that wrong. Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby and Board of Education Treasurer Kimberley Williams presented Cross with an honorary diploma.

“You represent the very best of what we hope to nurture in our young people: courage, integrity, and the conviction to stand up for what’s right,” Dr. Roby told Cross during the gala. “Tonight, after a 60-year wait, Grand Rapids Public Schools is proud to honor you, to celebrate you, and to finally present you with your high school diploma.”

Cross also received proclamations from several elected leaders, including Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, Senator Elissa Slotkin, and Congresswoman Hillary Scholten.





The 3Rs Program at Ottawa Hills: Teaching Rights, Responsibilities, And the Realities of The Law

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) -- Ottawa Hills High School is home to a unique learning experience that brings the legal world directly into the classroom. The 3Rs Program—Rights, Responsibilities, and Realities of the Law—partners scholars with local lawyers, judges, and civil rights experts for monthly sessions designed to help young people better understand the laws that shape their lives.

Learning the Law from the People Who Uphold It

Each month, scholars meet with volunteers from the legal community to explore different aspects of our country's legal landscape. These professionals don't just lecture; they model real legal processes, guide discussions, and help scholars thoughtfully engage with constitutional issues.

For Kevin Jackson, investigator for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the goal is not only to teach scholars what the law says but also why it matters. "Today's lesson is on the right to vote, which is one of our constitutional issues and an important responsibility as an American," he said. "We'll get into some of the history—the laws and constitutional amendments—and then we'll have an opportunity to debate."

Debate as a Tool for Understanding

Debate is central to the 3Rs program. Each learning cycle ends with a scholar-led

debate, but long before that, legal mentors show students what strong argumentation looks like. In a recent session, mentors modeled this by debating a timely question: Should the United States build a border wall along the southern border with Mexico?

By walking through their arguments, the volunteers demonstrated how to present different perspectives, respond to opposing claims, and offer well-supported rebuttals while maintaining respect for their debate opponent. These demonstrations give scholars a clear framework for their own debates and build skills that support civic understanding, academic confidence, and real-world problem solving now and in the future.

Connecting the Law to Scholars' Lives

A major emphasis of the 3Rs program is showing scholars how legal rights and responsibilities directly shape their everyday experiences.

As attorney Laura Jeltema reminded the group during the Voting Rights lesson, "even the things you vote on in school can influence how your life is in this space."

That message resonated as scholars learned about the freedoms and responsibilities that come with turning 18—voting, signing contracts, making medical decisions, enlisting in the military, or legally marrying. To bring these ideas to life, the class simulated a vote on a provocative question:

Should the age of legal adulthood be lowered from 18 to 16?

Scholar Curiosity Drives Deeper Conversation

The 3Rs sessions thrive on scholar-driven questions, and this month's session delivered thoughtful inquiries that sparked meaningful dialogue between peers. Among them:

What if someone can't get to the polls because of work or family responsibilities? This question led to a discussion about early voting, absentee ballots, and expanding voter access.

Are people legally required to vote? This question opened a conversation about voting as a right, a responsibility, and a civic duty—though not a legal requirement.

What percentage of people actually vote? Is that number going up or down? These questions prompted exploration of voter turnout patterns, election cycles, and what issues typically motivate voters.

These questions show just how deeply scholars are thinking about their role in our democracy.

A Program That Enriches Everyone Involved

The success of the 3Rs program at Ottawa Hills is largely due to its partnership with the Grand Rapids Bar Association and the dedication of the educators who have supported it over the years. Program

coordinator Kristin Vanden Berg has been involved since the program's inception nearly 15 years ago. Likewise, teacher Whitley Morse—whom Vanden Berg calls "a fantastic ambassador for the program"—is serving her second stint as lead teacher.

Vanden Berg also highlights the commitment of volunteer faculty: "They are carefully selected and commit to the program for a full year. We ask them to keep in mind that these sessions are just as important on the calendar as being scheduled for court."

She added, "Our faculty often get as much out of the experience as our students do." With nearly all teachers returning this year, Vanden Berg expects the culminating debate to build on last year's success.

Empowering Scholars Through Civic Literacy

The 3Rs program does more than teach legal concepts. It empowers scholars to think critically, communicate effectively, and understand their place in the democratic process. By engaging directly with professionals who live and work within the legal system, Ottawa Hills scholars gain a rare, hands-on civic education.

As the program moves through another year of discussions and debates, it continues to reinforce a powerful message: knowing your rights, understanding your responsibilities, and recognizing the realities of the law are essential steps toward becoming an informed and engaged citizen.

GRPS ATHLETICS



Highlights From the Crosstown Classic At Van Andel Arena

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) — The Ottawa Hills Bengals and Union Redhawks faced off in two thrilling, hard-fought games, with the community showing up in full force to cheer them on at Van Andel Arena.

In the opener, the Union varsity girls closed strong with an impressive fourth quarter to secure the win. In the nightcap, the Ottawa Hills varsity boys withstood a late Redhawks rally to claim victory.





GRPS Turkey Trot Breaks All-Time Participation Record With More Than 6,500 Runners

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – The 33rd annual GRPS Turkey Trot made history on Thanksgiving morning, once again setting an all-time participation record.

A total of 6,509 runners, joggers, and walkers filled downtown Grand Rapids, surpassing last year's record of 6,435 participants and reinforcing the event's status as one of West Michigan's most beloved holiday traditions.

Luke Witvliet of Grandville was the top male finisher, completing the race in 15:07.27. The top female finisher was Alyssa McElheny from Belding, who finished 19th overall with a time of 16:45.6.

The event once again generated critical support for GRPS Athletics. This year's Turkey Trot raised more than \$275,000

through race participation, sponsorships, and community donations – funds that help offset participation and equipment costs for sports programs across the district.

This year also marked the launch of a new holiday food drive, which proved to be a major success. A large trailer placed outside Van Andel Arena was filled with nonperishable food items that are now on their way to local food pantries serving Grand Rapids families.

"Seeing thousands of people show up to support GRPS scholar-athletes and our community is nothing short of inspiring," said Stephanie Andrews, president and CEO of the GRPS Foundation. "This event continues to embody the spirit of Grand Rapids – neighbors lifting up neighbors.

The record-breaking turnout and the overwhelming food donations demonstrate the power of this community when we come together."

"The Turkey Trot is one of the most joyful days of the year for our district," added GRPS Superintendent Dr. Leadriane Roby. "To see thousands gathered in support of health, family, and our students reminds us why this community is so special. We are deeply grateful for everyone who participated, donated, or volunteered. Your support makes a direct difference in the lives of our scholars."

The 2025 Turkey Trot was once again presented by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network, which has supported the event for 11 consecutive

years. Nearly 100 employees took part in the race.

"Supporting events that strengthen community well-being is core to who we are at Blue Cross," said Joe Hune, vice president, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, and president, West Michigan & Upper Peninsula Region. "We're proud to continue our partnership with GRPS and thrilled to see this event reach new heights – not only in participation, but in the generosity shown through the food drive."

The LMCU Mini Trot, presented by Lake Michigan Credit Union, once again offered a free and festive race for children 12 and under. Mathnasium served as this year's Golden Drumstick Sponsor.

Ottawa Hills Cross Country Celebrates Two Collegiate Signings

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) — The Ottawa Hills High School Cross Country program is celebrating a milestone achievement as two scholar-athletes officially signed their National Letters of Intent to compete at the collegiate level.

Kelton Hoover (City High Middle School) and Liam Bingman (CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School) will both continue their academic and athletic careers in college beginning in the fall of 2026.

Hoover will attend Calvin University, where he plans to study Kinesiology and Exercise Science while competing in cross country and track and field for the Knights. This fall, Hoover earned OK White All-Conference honors and placed 8th at the conference meet, running a personal record of 16:16. His performance ranks sixth all-time in Ottawa Hills cross country history. Hoover was also named the team's Most Valuable Player and received the Captains Award for the 2026 season.

Bingman will attend Davenport University, where he plans to major in Sports Management and compete in cross country and track and field for the Panthers. Like Hoover, Bingman earned OK White All-Conference honors this fall. He recorded a personal record of 16:24 at the Ottawa Hills Invitational, placing him ninth all-time in Ottawa Hills cross country history.

Hoover and Bingman are the 11th and 12th distance runners from the Ottawa Hills program to earn collegiate scholarships since 2016, continuing a strong tradition of excellence and opportunity for student-athletes.

Congratulations to Kelton Hoover and Liam Bingman on this outstanding achievement!



PRINCIPAL PROFILE



From The Library To Leadership, Erica Patton's Path To Principal

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Erica Patton is back home in West Michigan, now leading scholars as Principal of Riverside Middle School at Innovation Central.

"I liked school, I liked education, I was always in a library," Patton said of her childhood. "I don't want to say I was a nerd, but I liked to read books. I was always in the library looking up something, looking for books in the archives."

After high school, she attended Alabama State University, a Historically Black University in Montgomery, where she majored in history.

"I saw so many people that looked like me that were in education," she explained. "It was just a breath of fresh air to see that."

After college, she taught in Alabama and Virginia before returning home to Michigan.

She joined GRPS in 2023, first serving with the Grand Rapids Southeast Promise Neighborhood, then as assistant principal at Alger Middle School, before becoming principal at Riverside Middle School.

"I know a lot of people say middle school is tough, but I like that they are so impressionable," she said. "This is where you help them discover things that they can do."

Patton says her goal as principal is to ensure every scholar feels seen, supported, and inspired.

"I hope my impact is that they know that they have support from me. I am there for them, that I am pulling for them, that they know that I want them to win," she said. "I want to be a collaborative leader. I want us to all work together."

'This would have been the perfect school for me'

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – Dr. Denise Flavin has loved hands-on learning since she was a child.

"I was the tomboy growing up," she explained. "I spent a lot of time in the forest with snakes and bugs - that hands-on that discovery, leaning into the curiosity of just life and how things worked, was very much what drew me to science."

Dr. Flavin began her career as a science teacher before moving into administrative roles in Chicago-area schools. Today, she serves as principal of CA Frost Environmental Science Middle High School and John Ball Zoo School.

"The way the students and the teachers interact are unlike any school I've ever been a part of," she said. "This would have been the perfect school for me when I was a middle and high schooler."

Her dream of becoming a teacher began early in life.

"I had some wonderful teachers when I was growing up," she recalled. "Mrs. Carroll, my second-grade teacher, was the one that probably cemented for me that that was the person that I wanted to be when I grew up."

Since joining CA Frost and John Ball Zoo, Dr. Flavin has come to appreciate just how special the staff is.



Teaching Business, Building Futures

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (GRPS) – At Innovation Central High School, Michelle Alber is helping drive the success of the Academy of Business, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship.

"I love the people I work with and the scholars and families I work for," Alber said. "They are the best parts of my chosen career."

Alber joined GRPS after discovering what makes the district so special.

"I chose GRPS because I fell in love with the rich diversity, beautiful cultures, and deep roots to the Grand Rapids community," she said. "Miracles are happening every day here at GRPS."

At Innovation Central, she guides seniors through the process of operating the school

store. It's just one way that she ensures scholars not only understand business concepts, but recognize how those skills can carry them throughout life.

"It is my deep honor to serve our scholars daily," she said. "I love being a small part of their success stories."

"I think my favorite impact daily at Innovation Central is showing scholars that adults in their community care for them deeply and that business skills are life skills that can take you anywhere, in any job, career, or profession,"

she explained.

Her pride in the school community is matched only by her pride in the scholars themselves.

Through her leadership and passion, Michelle Alber continues to embody what it means to be a GRPS Champion.



PRINCIPAL PROFILE



WE ARE GR

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A Look Back at 2025: Building Momentum for Grand Rapids' Future



Dear neighbors:

As America celebrates its 250th anniversary or semiquincentennial this year, we reflect on Grand Rapids' own milestone — our 175th anniversary, which we marked in 2025. That year was one of progress, partnership and promise as we worked together to strengthen neighborhoods, grow our economy and enhance the quality of life for everyone who calls this city home.

That year was one of progress, partnership and promise as we worked together to strengthen neighborhoods, grow our economy and enhance the quality of life for everyone who calls this city home.

Grand Rapids on the Rise

This past year, our city earned national recognition as one of the fastest-growing metros for jobs and talent and was ranked among the best places to live and best-run cities in America. These accolades affirm what we already know: Grand Rapids is a vibrant, welcoming community with a bright future. Behind these achievements are engaged residents and dedicated public servants who make this city work every day.

Investing in Housing and Affordability

Housing remained a top priority in 2025. We celebrated the completion or launch of more than 1,600 affordable housing units, expanded programs to prevent homelessness, and implemented the Grand Rapids Land Bank Authority. These efforts are about more than bricks and mortar — they're about creating stability and opportunity for families across our city.

Connecting Our City and Implementing the Community Master Plan

We made significant strides in improving how people move through Grand Rapids, completing over 130 Vital Streets projects and adding miles of reconstructed roads, new sidewalks and upgraded bike facilities.

At the same time, we're moving forward with Community Master Plan implementation, beginning with a comprehensive zoning ordinance rewrite. This update will help ensure that future development reflects community priorities — supporting housing affordability, sustainability and vibrant neighborhoods.

Strengthening Public Safety and Community Wellbeing

Safety is foundational to a thriving city. In 2025, we expanded mental health co-response teams, advanced violence prevention programs, broke ground on a new fire training facility and new South Division fire station and opened our new Kendall Street Station to improve response times in the third ward. Our Fire Department maintained its ISO Class 1 rating — the only city in Michigan to do so and among the top two percent nationally — while our Police Department continued its focus on constitutional and community-oriented policing efforts that help keep violent crime among the lowest for mid-sized cities. Overall, crime statistics are trending in the right direction, giving our officers additional time for proactive problem solving and our detectives more time to devote to older cases to get answers for those families. GRPD continues to be successful in safely taking illegally possessed guns off our streets, on average more than

one per day in 2025. Our police department is actively working to plan for the growth in housing and community assets like the amphitheater and soccer stadium to provide a safe and secure environment for residents, businesses, visitors, and eventgoers.

Health and Environment

Grand Rapids continued to lead on environmental stewardship. We replaced more than 1,700 lead service lines and are moving forward with renewable energy projects like the Butterworth solar installation. We also finalized our Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, which includes 20 prioritized actions to reduce carbon emissions, improve resilience and advance environmental justice. These investments protect public health and position our city as a model for sustainability.

Major Facilities and Riverfront Transformation

We marked a significant milestone with the completion of the new Public Service Center on Scribner Avenue, which consolidates essential city services into a modern, efficient facility while opening up riverfront redevelopment opportunities.

Looking ahead, on February 21 we celebrate the grand opening of our brand-new MLK Community Center located in Martin Luther King Park. The result of a community-driven vision, the new community center will be a neighborhood hub for gatherings, celebrations and recreation activities.

The Acrisure Amphitheater is on track for completion in May, promising to bring world-class entertainment and economic activity to our downtown. Work also

continues on the soccer stadium, another transformational project that will strengthen our identity as a destination city and create new opportunities for local businesses and residents.

One of the most exciting opportunities ahead is the Grand River restoration and riverfront redevelopment. This project will reconnect neighborhoods to the river, create new spaces for recreation and culture, and drive economic growth through tourism and local business development. It's a bold vision that reflects our identity as a city that values both people and place. You'll see visible progress on the river restoration this year.

Maintaining Our Focus

As we enter 2026, our focus remains clear: building an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous Grand Rapids. Thank you for being part of this journey. Your engagement, ideas and partnership make all the difference. Together, we're shaping a future that works for everyone.

Wishing you a safe, healthy and hopeful start to the new year.

Mark Washington, City Manager



**CITY OF
GRAND
RAPIDS**



City Celebrates Grand Opening of New Public Service Center

City officials, staff, and community members gathered in December to celebrate the grand opening of the new Grand Rapids Public Service Center, a \$98.2 million investment that consolidates key City operations into a single, modern and sustainable facility. The ribbon cutting ceremony, held at 1500 Scribner Ave. NW, featured remarks from City leaders and project stakeholders, followed by tours of the 323,290-square-foot campus and light refreshments.

“This facility is a game-changer for how we serve the people of Grand Rapids,” said Mayor David LaGrand. “It brings together critical departments, improves efficiency, and reflects our commitment to sustainability, equity and innovation. It provides a healthier, more collaborative environment for our employees and includes public meeting spaces that make it easier for residents to engage with City services. This facility is designed to support both the people who work here and the people we serve.”

The new Public Service Center is now home to the City’s Public Works, Fleet and Facilities, and Parks and Recreation departments. The site replaces the former 201 Market Ave. SW location and supports more than 190 staff across 17 City divisions.

City Manager Mark Washington said relocating to the new Public Service Center also supports the City’s broader vision for

riverfront redevelopment while modernizing essential operations.

“Relocating our public works, recreation and other services from 201 Market Ave. was a strategic move that unlocked the potential of a prime riverfront site long envisioned for public use and redevelopment,” said Washington. “That location will be home to the Acrisure Amphitheater, an east riverfront park and will spark investments in housing projects aligned with our community’s vision for the riverfront. We also anticipate allocating some of the future proceeds from the sale of 201 Market Ave. to the affordable housing fund. At the same time, this new Public Service Center replaces century-old facilities with a modern campus that allows us to better protect our \$26.3 million vehicle inventory and extend the life of critical equipment as we serve our residents.”

Project Highlights

The Public Service Center supports a wide range of city services, including street maintenance, materials management and recycling, parks programming, forestry, cemetery operations, fleet management and special events. It also houses a 7,700-ton salt dome, vehicle wash facilities and a stockroom inventory valued at \$840,000.

Construction began in March 2024 following the City’s acquisition of the Scribner site in July 2023.

The project included multiple phases of construction, with contracts approved for demolition, fueling systems, salt dome construction, roofing, electrical and technology infrastructure.

The Public Service Center includes:

- Sustainability upgrades: 36 EV charging stations, 27 full EVs, 90 hybrids, natural lighting and advanced HVAC and lighting systems.
- Employee amenities: Fitness center, wellness rooms, café, gender-inclusive restrooms and riverfront green space.
- Fleet and operations: over 7,700-services annually, 13,000 vehicle washes annually and a \$26.3 million vehicle inventory.

The project also prioritized equity and inclusion, with 12.4% of total workforce hours completed by minority workers and 8.1% by micro-local workers.

Grand Rapids Income Tax Office Adds Evening & Weekend Hours to Assist You

Need help filing your income tax return? Our Income Tax Office is here to help – in fact, we are opening on select Wednesdays and Saturdays to help you file your city return.

The office will be open 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. the following Saturdays:

- March 14
- March 28
- April 11
- April 18
- April 25

The office will be open
Wednesdays 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
March 4 to April 29.

You can also visit the Income Tax office during regular hours Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Be sure to bring your photo ID, the first page and second page of your federal return and any W-2s, 1099s or schedules that you may have.

Walk-ins are welcome!

Who needs to file? Residents of Grand Rapids are required to file regardless of where the place of employment is located. Non-residents who work in Grand Rapids are required to file a non-resident return.

E-file – Certain e-file vendors do not send the Grand Rapids returns. If you use Turbo Tax or H & R block you can upload your return to <https://michigan-grand-rapids.insourcetax.com>. You can also use this site to prepare a form or submit a new form.

The Income Tax office is located on the third floor of City Hall, 300 Monroe Ave NW. Validated parking is available in the Government Center Parking Ramp off Monroe and Ottawa avenues.

The filing deadline for 2025 City of Grand Rapids income tax returns is Thursday April 30.



East Service Area:
Officer Austin Highlen



Central Service Area:
Officer Pat Martin



South Service Area:
Officer Roxanne Partak



West Service Area:
Officer Leon White

Building Stronger Neighborhoods: Meet Your Community Police Officers

The Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) is strengthening its connection with residents through a renewed focus on community-based policing. Five dedicated officers, each assigned to one of the City's five neighborhood service areas (North, West, Central, South, and East), are now serving in a hybrid role designed to bring policing closer to the people they protect.

These officers still respond to 911 calls and emergent situations, but they also serve as a direct, familiar point of contact for residents, neighborhood associations, businesses and community partners. Their mission goes beyond traditional patrol work. They are here to build relationships, address concerns before they escalate, and collaborate with City departments and social service organizations to improve quality of life across Grand Rapids.

By being consistently present and accessible, these officers are working proactively to reduce street-level crime, strengthen trust and help residents feel connected to the resources they need.



North Service Area:
Officer Andrew Smith

GRPD's long-term vision is to transition these positions into full-time community police officer roles as staffing levels allow.

"We recognize the value to neighborhood safety and effective policing when we can build personal relationships, people have a known and trusted police contact, and officers and communities work collaboratively to solve problems," said GRPD Chief Eric Winstrom. "Long term, we'd like to expand the program to multiple community police officers for each neighborhood when we have the personnel to do so without impacting a timely response to 911 calls."



Grand Rapids announces proactive civilian violence prevention and intervention strategy

The Civilian Violence Prevention and Intervention Initiative, part of the Office of Oversight & Public Accountability, leads the city's civilian violence prevention efforts. It serves as a hub for community strategies. This work promotes safety and healing through proactive, people-focused methods.

By addressing violence at its roots, building partnerships, and giving residents tools and resources, the initiative strengthens neighborhoods. It supports other city departments working to reduce violence.

Using data, fair resource distribution, and strong community input, the initiative builds strategies that foster trust, reduce harm, and improve life for all Grand Rapids residents.

We welcome your ideas. Tell us what a safe, thriving neighborhood looks like. Use the QR code to help shape the community's vision, values, and goals for violence prevention.

Latesha Lipscomb, JD, is the city's civilian violence prevention and intervention manager. She leads this work to help transform public safety in Grand Rapids.

For questions or comments about violence prevention, the SAFE Taskforce, or the Cure Violence Program, contact Latesha at 616-456-3846 or llipscomb@grand-rapids.mi.us.



CONTACT US:
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO
LEARN MORE, PLEASE
CONTACT:
LATESHA LIPSCOMB
CIVILIAN VIOLENCE
PREVENTION +
INTERVENTION MANAGER
CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

616.456.3846



PUBLIC INPUT PAGE

We welcome your feedback and input on what a thriving, safe neighborhood free of harm looks like. Your interactive participation will inform the community vision, values and goals for violence prevention strategies that will help push the community forward.

LLIPSCOMB@GRCITY.US



City Commission Approves Noise Control Ordinance Updates and Makes Ethics Policy Revision

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – On January 13, 2025, The Grand Rapids City Commission amended two ordinances and updated an existing policy. The ordinance amendments include updates to noise control regulations and civil infractions enforcement. The policy update applies to the City's ethics and financial disclosure policy.

Noise control ordinance amendment

The first ordinance amendment approved Tuesday, prohibits operating any device that creates amplified sound within 100 feet of a hospital or clinic, measured from the property line. This change is intended to protect patients and staff from disruptive noise near entrances and exits. The ordinance updates Section 9.63 – Prohibited Noise, which outlines restrictions on noise disturbances, including amplified sound, construction equipment, loud music, and other sources.

The new prohibited conduct that was added to the existing ordinance is:

- Amplified sound is prohibited within 100 feet of a health care hospital or clinic.

A companion amendment updates the Municipal Civil Infractions ordinance by

removing the option for a misdemeanor charge for multiple noise violations within six months, aligning enforcement with the updated noise ordinance.

The ordinance revisions will take effect Feb. 12.

Financial Disclosure Policy update

Also, on Tuesday, the Commission also adopted revisions to its "Conflicts of Interest, Ethics, and Financial Disclosure Policy." The updated policy sets a minimum expectation of transparency and encourages elected officials to disclose more than the required information. Beginning in 2026, each elected official must file an annual financial disclosure report with the City Clerk by May 15. The disclosure report will include spousal information, employment and income, organizational roles, assets, liabilities and employment agreements.

The revised policy also defines key terms such as "blind trust," "business partner," "earned income," "gift," and "liabilities," and clarifies reporting requirements for elected officials, including the Mayor, City Commissioners and the City Comptroller.

For more information and to view the full ordinance language and policy updates, visit grandrapidsmi.gov.



"Bridge to Our Future" Moves Forward as City Begins Major Zoning Update

The City's Planning Department has begun the process to update the City's Zoning Ordinance, which is the first step in implementing Bridge to Our Future, Grand Rapids' new Community Master Plan (CMP). The CMP is the land use blueprint for how our community will grow and develop over the next 20 years and was adopted by the Planning and City Commission in December 2024.

The Zoning Ordinance is a set of local laws that creates a framework for land use and development and implements the themes, policies and goals of the CMP. Zoning protects the public health, safety and general welfare by:

- protecting property values
- preserving natural resources
- preventing nuisances
- ensuring land use compatibility
- maintaining or creating development character
- incentivizing desired development

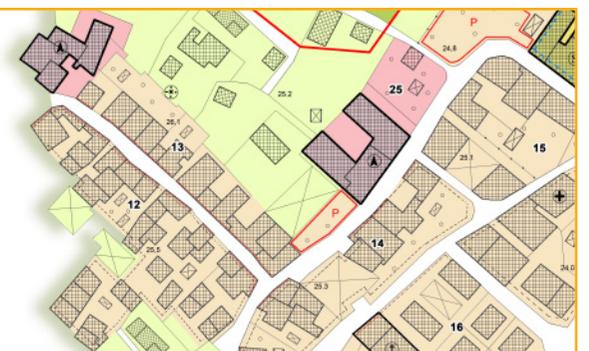
Zoning does have some limits in that it cannot regulate or prioritize ownership, cannot prohibit certain uses outright and must treat all properties similarly unless there is a valid reason for different treatment.

Throughout the winter, Planning staff will be out in the community giving presentations to introduce residents to zoning. The City also recently hired a consultant team to assist with the update and initial public engagement will happen in the spring.

To request a zoning introduction presentation for your neighborhood or group, to keep updated on future public meetings, or sign up for our e-mail list, please visit grandrapidsmi.gov/zoning-update or e-mail planning@grcity.us.

We Want to Hear From You!

The City of Grand Rapids Planning Department is excited to invite your comments and suggestions for the new Zoning Ordinance! Several community engagement events are anticipated, but until then, please direct your feedback to Planning@grcity.us or you may contact Sarah Ithani, Planning Aide, at sithani@grcity.us with direct questions about engagement dates, locations, and other logistic information.





City Welcomes New Parks And Recreation, Community Development And Utilities Directors

The City of Grand Rapids recently appointed three veteran leaders to serve as department directors following rigorous selection processes. Laura Cleypool has been named parks and recreation director, Selma Tucker has been appointed community development director and Wayne Jernberg will serve as the utilities director.

Cleypool has served as interim parks and recreation director after previously serving as the department's assistant director. She brings more than 25 years of experience in municipal and non-profit leadership, with a specialized focus on capital planning, recreation facility management and financial oversight. Cleypool holds a bachelor's degree from Aquinas College and a master's in business administration from Western Michigan University.

As parks and recreation director, Cleypool will lead the department's strategic goals and oversee the City's vast network of parks, programming and recreational facilities. She will be responsible for aligning the department's mission with the City's broader community health and wellness objectives.

"Laura distinguished herself as interim director and has a proven track record of aligning strategic goals with our mission," City Manager Mark Washington said. "She brings a unique blend of institutional knowledge and innovative vision to this permanent role."

Tucker joins the City leadership in February with an extensive background in strategy, policy development and community wealth building. He previously worked for the City from 2010 to 2013 and most recently served as the principal of local consulting firm, GSO Solutions and has served as director of strategic communications for the Michigan Municipal League. He holds a master's degree in public administration from Grand Valley State University.

As community development director, Tucker will oversee the City's efforts in identifying solutions for complex systemic problems by working with community-based organizations, housing developers and service providers. His role will focus on resident needs, urban development and fostering inclusive community growth.

"Selma's deep understanding of our community's needs and his expertise in policy development make him an ideal fit for this role," Washington said. "His previous experience with the City and his continued engagement in the community provides a solid foundation for his leadership."

Tucker and Cleypool will serve in the Community Services Group, under the direction of Connie Bohatch, senior managing director. She will work closely with both, especially focusing support on Tucker's work around housing affordability, homelessness response and inclusive community building.

Jernberg has most recently served as interim managing director of utilities and has been with the City of Grand Rapids since 2006. A licensed professional engineer with over 25 years of experience, he has led critical initiatives including the Lead Service Line Replacement program and the Lake Michigan Filtration Plant solar array project. He currently chairs the Michigan Drinking Water Advisory Council.

As utilities director, Jernberg will oversee the City's water, wastewater, and electric, lighting and communications (ELC) services. He will be responsible for the modernization and sustainability of the City's environmental services and vital water infrastructure.

"Wayne is a recognized leader whose technical expertise and commitment to modernization have already served our residents well," Washington said. "His leadership ensures that our most vital infrastructure remains resilient and sustainable for future generations."

Each director will oversee their respective departments' multi-million-dollar budgets and lead hundreds of public servants in the delivery of essential city services.

Grand Rapids Property Owners

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HOME REPAIRS



- *Repair Your Home*
- *Protect Your Investment*
- *Protect a Child from Lead Poisoning*

Homeowners, to be eligible you must:

- Live in the City of Grand Rapids
- Have a child five years old or younger, and
- Income qualify

Landlords, to be eligible your rental property must:

- Be in the City of Grand Rapids
- Be home to a child five years old or younger (or vacant), and
- The tenant must income qualify



Lead Hazard Control Program
616-456-3030
LHCP@grcity.us



Sidewalk Snow Clearing Protocol

Safety is important! Residents – including seniors, children and individuals with disabilities – remain safe when our sidewalks are clear of snow and ice. The City ordinance for sidewalk snow removal says:

- The clearing of ice and snow on sidewalks is the property owner's responsibility.
- The full width of the sidewalk needs to be cleared down to the concrete within 24 hours after the end of a snowfall.
- Sidewalks not cleared of snow and ice after notification from the City may be cleared by a City contractor at the property owner's expense.

Our primary goal is to remove snow from the streets. There is frustration when plows push snow into driveways, sidewalks, fire hydrants and mailboxes. Here's how you can avoid frustration and help:

- If you have a driveway, park on it and leave the road clear for snowplows.
- If on-street parking is your only option, change where you park throughout the week so that the snowplows can catch excess snow.
- Follow all parking restrictions – map is at grandrapidsmi.gov/oddeven
- Don't shovel or blow snow into the street – shovel it into your yard – to avoid a ticket and having it pushed back into your driveway by traveling vehicles and snowplows.
- Never bury a fire hydrant with shoveled snow and try to keep the hydrant accessible in case of an emergency. This means keeping a cleared area around a fire hydrant of at least 3 feet.

Plowing City Streets

The primary goal of city plowing is to clear all roads of snow within 24-36 hours of a weather event.

Our plow operators use de-icing materials on major streets to minimize snow and ice. Pretreating material may be applied to bridges, hills and curves before a snow event, if needed. We work hard to minimize our salt use as part of our commitment to environmental sustainability as it reduces runoff in our rivers and streams. This is also part of our commitment to being a good steward of funds. Plus, many of our plow trucks have side wings that plow an additional half lane of snow. When we do have to use salt, our plow trucks have liquid storage capabilities. This allows for the pre-wetting of salt as plows spread it on street surfaces. Pre-wetting salt reduces the bounce to keep it on the road. It also helps us reduce the amount of salt we use by 30 percent – another money saver. Plus, salt activates faster when treated in this way.

Priority Plowing on First-Attention Routes

The major high-traffic roads in our city are first-attention streets for snow plowing. We apply salt to all first-attention streets.

Examples of first attention streets include but are not limited to:

- Burton
- Division
- Fulton
- Leonard
- Monroe

When do plows go onto secondary (local) streets and alleys? We monitor weather conditions and clear secondary streets and alleys when there are more than 3 inches of snow. De-icing salt typically is not applied to

secondary streets. We may salt these streets if there are hills, severe curves or special circumstances in the city.

Extended snow events may require snowplow crews to leave secondary streets and return to first-attention roads to ensure safety on high traffic streets. While we make every effort to clear bike lanes our main priority is to keep the automobile travel lanes clear of snow and ice.



Refuse and Recycling Winter Reminders for Customers

- Residents must shovel and clear areas more than 3 feet apart for proper cart placement. At no time should residents place carts on top of snowbanks, bury carts in snow, or position any cart within a snowbank.
- Remember to try to keep your refuse and recycle carts off the street during a snow event and immediately after, if possible. When carts are left on the street it can make it difficult for snowplows to plow the entire street and up to the curb.
- Freezing temperatures means freezing trash. To stop your trash from freezing to your cart and not getting tipped in the trucks during pickup, try putting some rock salt at the bottom of your

cart before super cold or wet nights. Bagging trash before tossing it in the trash cart also helps items from freezing to the cart.

Odd / Even Parking Reminders

Seasonal parking restrictions allow us to sweep and plow the streets during the fall and winter months more effectively. It also helps us prevent the City's street from becoming flooded in the winter due to clogged catch basins and helps emergency vehicles access neighborhoods during heavy snow seasons.

Storm Drain Clearing

"Melting Snow Needs Somewhere to Go!"

Winter arrived quickly this year, bringing record early snowfall! As we manage the snow, it's very important to keep storm drains clear so they can properly collect melting snow and runoff.

Catch basins—the metal grates located along the sides of roads—collect snowmelt and help prevent streets from flooding or turning into ice skating rinks. Residents can help by shoveling snow away from storm drains and removing any trash or debris. Keeping these drains clear helps prevent clogs and protects both city streets and nearby homes from flooding.

Water that enters storm drains flows directly to the Grand River and eventually to Lake Michigan without being treated. By keeping trash, sand, and salt out of the storm sewer system, we can help protect our waterways and keep them as clean as possible.

NWS Winter Weather Products
Warning, Watch, or Advisory – Details Matter!

<p>Winter Weather Advisory</p> <p>Wintry Weather Expected. Exercise Caution.</p> <p>Light amounts of wintry precipitation or blowing snow will cause slick conditions and could affect travel if precautions are not taken.</p>	<p>Winter Storm Watch</p> <p>Snow, Sleet, or Ice Possible! Be Prepared.</p> <p>Winter storm could produce heavy snow, sleet or freezing rain and cause significant impacts.</p>	<p>Winter Storm Warning</p> <p>Snow, Sleet, or Ice Expected! Take Action!</p> <p>Winter storm will produce heavy snow, sleet or freezing rain and cause significant impacts.</p>
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Snow, Ice And Alerts: A Guide To Staying Safe This Winter

Winter has officially arrived in Grand Rapids with heavy snow, icy sidewalks and slippery roads. As colder days continue, now is a great time for our community to prepare for winter weather and learn how to stay safe.

One important way to stay prepared is by understanding winter weather alerts. These alerts are issued by our local National Weather Service and help to let us know what kind of weather to expect. Knowing the difference between them can help you plan ahead and protect yourself and others.

A Winter Storm Watch means a winter storm could happen but is not currently occurring. Snow, ice, sleet, or strong winds are possible, but it is not certain yet. A watch is a reminder to stay alert for changing conditions. This is a good time to check your winter supplies, make sure your phone is charged, and think about backup plans in case travel becomes difficult.

A Winter Weather Advisory means winter conditions like snow, ice or blowing snow are expected, but they are not extreme. Roads may be slick, and visibility may be reduced. An advisory is a “heads up” to prepare for bad weather. During an advisory, drivers should slow down, allow extra travel time, and use caution. It’s also a good idea to check on neighbors who may need help.

A Winter Storm Warning is the most serious of the three alerts. It means dangerous winter weather is happening or will start very soon. Travel can be very risky due to icy or snow-covered roads. If a warning is issued, the safest choice is often to stay home, avoid unnecessary trips and keep warm indoors.

Quick Winter Checklist

- Keep extra blankets, warm clothing and a flashlight at home
- Have enough food, water and medications for several days
- Charge phones and devices before storms
- Keep a shovel, ice melt and winter boots available
- Drive slowly and keep a basic emergency kit in your vehicle



Winter in Grand Rapids can change quickly, but being prepared makes a big difference. By understanding winter weather alerts, taking simple steps at home and looking out for neighbors, we can all help keep our community safe.

Stay informed by signing up for free City of Grand Rapids emergency alerts at grandrapidsmi.gov/EmergencyAlerts.

For more winter safety tips and local updates, follow the Grand Rapids Office of Emergency Management @ReadyGrandRapids or visit grandrapidsmi.gov and search Emergency Management.

Cold weather, smart choices:

How to prevent winter home fires



Home fires happen more often in winter and storms can bring unexpected challenges. Prepare now to keep your family safe.

Before Winter:

- Have a qualified professional inspect and maintain your chimney and furnace.
- Install and test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly.
- Keep battery-powered lights and fresh batteries ready.

During Winter:

- Keep anything that burns at least three feet from heat sources like heaters, wood stoves or fireplaces.
- Use portable generators outside as far away from your home as possible.
- Plug only one heat-producing appliance per outlet at a time.
- Never use your stove for heat.

After a Storm:

- Check on your neighbors and anyone who may need help.
- Avoid downed wires; call 911 to report.
- Turn off portable heaters when leaving your room or home.

Be fire smart and enjoy the season!

Learn more at usfa.fema.gov/winter and nfsa.org/winter.

Need smoke or CO alarms? Call 311 or 616-456-3966 to see if you qualify for free ones from the local Fire Dept.

Hey, Grand Rapidians.

SEE THESE SIGNS?

Then, **think ahead before bed.** Odd-even parking is enforced on this street.



- On even dates, park on the side of the street with even addresses (1 AM – 6 PM).
- For 7 hours each night (6 PM - 1 AM), you can park on either side of the street. Just make sure to **think ahead before bed and move your vehicle** to the side of the road matching the next day's date by 1 AM.
- On odd dates, park on the side of the street with odd addresses (1 AM – 6 PM).



Extra batteries



Battery-powered or hand crank radio



Whistle to signal for help



Dust mask to help filter contaminated air



Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities



Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery

EMERGENCY KIT

After an emergency, you may not have easy access to stores for food, water, and supplies. Every home should have a basic disaster supplies kit that will last you several days. A basic emergency supply kit should include:



First aid kit



Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place



Flashlight



Manual can opener

Food (at least a three day supply of non-perishable foods)



Water (at least one gallon per person per day for three days)



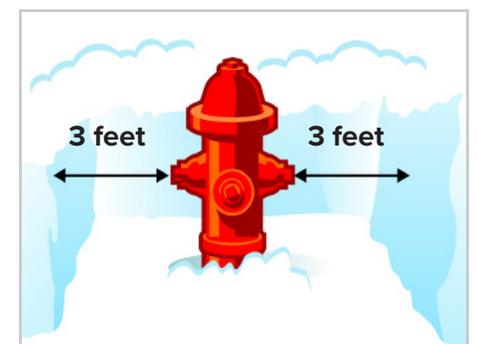
Moist towelettes and trash bags for personal sanitation



Snow Shoveling Tips

Our primary goal is to remove snow from the streets. There is frustration when plows push snow into driveways, sidewalks, fire hydrants and mailboxes. Here's how you can avoid frustration and help:

- If you have a driveway, park on it and leave the road clear for plowing
- If on-street parking is your only option, change where you park throughout the week
- Follow all parking restrictions – map is at grandrapidsmi.gov/oddeven
- Don't shovel or blow snow into the street – shovel it into your yard – to avoid a ticket and having it pushed back into your driveway by traveling vehicles
- Never bury a fire hydrant with shoveled snow and try to keep the hydrant accessible in case of an emergency.



Store your items in airtight plastic bags, and place all supplies in one or two easy-to-carry containers (i.e. plastic bins or duffel bags). Keep the kits in an easy-to-access location and consider keeping additional supplies at work and in your car. Maintain your kit and update supplies as needed each year.

For a full list of recommended emergency kit supplies, visit <https://www.ready.gov/kit>.



Photos, Clockwise from top left: MLK Playground rendering (ParkVision), Community Center rendering (IVNA); MLK Center under construction (Erhardt Construction); Groundbreaking by City and community leaders, April 2024

Community Roots Shape New MLK Park Community Center

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — On the city's southeast side, Erhardt Construction Company workers and their subcontractors are putting the finishing touches on the MLK Community Center, marking a new chapter for Martin Luther King Park. The nearly 25,000-square-foot center stands as both a modern recreation hub and a testament to City and neighborhood collaboration.

A Project Shaped by Public Input

From the outset, the Department of Parks and Recreation emphasized that renovations to the original park lodge would be guided by people who use the park most.

Community engagement started in 2018 with the MLK Quality of Life Study where MLK Park neighbors gathered to create a shared vision for their neighborhood park which included long-term goals like activation, updates to the then park lodge, and rentable space.

To provide architectural support, a community stakeholder group selected Isaac V. Norris & Associates, P.C. (IVNA), to complete a feasibility study and environmental assessment on the existing lodge. The results were presented to the community with a survey to determine if they preferred a lodge renovation or complete rebuild. Community members voted in majority for a complete rebuild that honored the park's cultural and historical significance.

"It quickly became clear that this wasn't just about renovations or quick fixes," said Karie Enriquez, planning and project manager for the department. "It was important to us, as a City department, to elevate the neighborhood voices and prioritize them in the project."

Neighbors also engaged in discussions about pool house layout, worked with the department to address safety

concerns, and provided input and voted on the external aesthetics of the buildings as well as playground elements and fitness loop. This included a focus group with Campus Elementary students who provided input on which play structures they'd like to see in the park space.

"We built real relationships throughout this process," said Dervin Figueroe, community engagement specialist for the department. "The center reflects years of consistent, face-to-face dialogue, listening with care, and following through. It's been an honor to help shape a space rooted in the community's voice and vision."

The department estimates over 7,400 engagement participants through events, surveys, website visits, postcards, canvassing, and more. Through years of work, the team connected with individual participants multiple times and for different components of the project.

Community input informed the final plans designed by IVNA, which include multipurpose rooms, a gymnasium with multi-use sports court lines for basketball, volleyball, and pickleball, rentable event space, and improved access to year-round programming.

The input also led to a brand-new pool house, expanded parking lot, fitness loop with outside exercise equipment, and moving the park playground from alongside the busy Fuller Ave to the corner of Benjamin and Alexander streets, providing a safer play experience.

The center will also provide administrative space for Our Community's Children and the King Park Neighbors, the local neighborhood association.

In total, the MLK Community Center and park improvements represent a \$19.7 million investment in the neighborhood.

More Than Bricks and Mortar

Aside from a community-led design, the center also includes community-inspired programming and rentable space to strengthen connections.

"We're eager to open our doors and provide a welcoming space for our neighbors," said Kourtney Perkins, Recreation Operations Supervisor for the center. "We'll have programming that welcomes all ages and abilities through fitness classes, open gym hours, and an after-school program for teens. We look forward to seeing neighbors connecting, friendships being built, and celebrations in the event space."

Programming is set to start in March, and details will be shared to the City website and department social media accounts. Event space reservations will open for City residents the end of February and be available for events occurring in May 2026 onward.

Looking Ahead

A grand opening celebration is scheduled for 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on 21 Feb. 2026 that will include a ribbon cutting, program previews, and more for the community to enjoy.

As final construction details are completed, excitement continues to build among neighbors eager to step inside a space they helped imagine. The MLK Park Community Center stands as a reminder that when community voices guide public projects, the result can be something lasting and shared by all.



MLK COMMUNITY CENTER

Saturday, February 21, 2026

1200 M.L.K Jr. St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI, 49506

Please join us for a community celebration to mark the Grand Opening of the new MLK Community Center.

More information to come! Follow @grparksandrec on social media to learn more about the event.

SAVE THE DATE!

SOUTHSIDE CREEKWAYS ENGAGEMENT EVENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

at MLK Community Center
1200 M.L.K. Jr St SE

WHAT IS SOUTHSIDE CREEKWAYS?

Southside Creekways is a community-driven engagement project to help reimagine the Silver Creek and Plaster Creek corridors as a connected trail system that improves the quality of life for Southside residents and businesses while celebrating local culture and inspiring inclusive and equitable growth.

To learn more, please visit: grparks.info/southsidecreekways



Community members are invited to save the date for the **12th Annual Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit**, a citywide gathering focused on connection, learning and strengthening neighborhoods across Grand Rapids.

The 2026 Summit will bring residents, neighborhood leaders and community partners together for a full day of engagement, shared learning and collaboration centered on building stronger, more connected communities.

As part of early planning efforts, community members are encouraged to share their ideas and input to help shape the Summit experience. Public input for Summit 2026 is now open and will continue to evolve as planning progresses.



**APRIL
2026**

MORE INFO:

 PUBLICINPUT.COM/GRSUMMIT26



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



9:00A.M. - 4:30P.M.
FOLLOWED BY A COMMUNITY
CELEBRATION





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

Competition & Curriculum Connections

58th Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition

The Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition was started in 1968 by poet James Allen at the urging of John Hunting, the founder of the Dyer-Ives Foundation, to encourage excellence in writing and to provide recognition for local work of high quality. The annual contest is open to poets ages 5 through adults who reside in Kent County.

Submissions are open February 1–28, 2026. Winners selected in different categories have their poems published in *Voices*, receive a cash award, and participate in a reading in June.

This program is supported by the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation, Dyer-Ives Foundation Poetry Fund.

One Book, One City for Kids



One Book, One City for Kids is an annual reading program that encourages all 5th graders in the city to read and discuss the same book. The 2026 selection is *A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation* by Pablo Cartaya.

One Book, One City for Kids is funded by the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation and The Wege Foundation. Book Sponsors: Independent Bank and Brad and Gail Kessel

About the author:

Pablo Cartaya is a *New York Times* bestselling author, screenwriter, actor, and speaker. His work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, NBC, and on Oprah's Booklist. Pablo has worked with Disney, Apple TV+, and Sesame Street on projects adapted from television series and features. His novels, plays, and translations have been published by Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, McGraw Hill, and Disney Publishing Worldwide.

About the book:

Gonzalo Alberto Sánchez García has never considered himself the hero of his own story. He's an observer, quietly snapshotting landscapes and drawing the creatures he imagines emerging from them. Forced to spend the summer with his estranged grandfather, Alberto William García—the very famous reclusive author—Gonzalo doesn't expect to learn that heroes and monsters are not only the stuff of fantasy. Over the course of ten epic days on the highway, they will slay demons, real and imagined; confront old stories to write new ones; and learn what it truly means to show up for your family.

Grab and Go Kits



Storytime Kits

Available 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.

Family History Kit

Available February 1 – 28, 2026
Designed for kids 5–12.

In our 2026 One Book, Once City selection, *A Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation*, Gonzalo learns about his grandfather's past when the two take a cross-country road trip. Use the activities and resources in this kit to explore your own family's story!

Events for Everyone

FOR KIDS

LEGO Robotics

Saturdays, February 7, March 7, April 4
10:00 am – 12:00 pm Main Library

Kids can build and code their own robots using LEGO's Spike Prime sets. High school students from local robotics teams will be on hand to help participants and to answer questions about robotics. Laptops will be provided, but attendees are encouraged to bring their own devices and use LEGO's free app to code. This is a self-guided, drop-in event. Space is limited and first come, first served. Designed for ages 8 and up.

Tails & Tales: Read to Therapy Dogs

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.

Wednesdays, February 11, March 11, April 8
6:00 – 7:00 pm Van Belkum

Thursdays, February 19, March 19, April 16
6:00 – 7:00 pm Madison Square

Introduction to Clay for Kids

Saturdays, February 28, March 28
10:00 am – 12:00 pm Main Library

Participants will learn different hand building techniques and create a small project of their own. No experience with clay is necessary. Finished pieces will be able to be picked up at the library at a later date. Space is limited and first come, first served. For ages 6–12.

Adventurer Club: Role Playing Games for Kids

Is your child interested in tabletop roleplaying games but still a bit young for Dungeons & Dragons? Library staff will lead kids (and their grown-ups too if they want!) in some fun, easy-to-learn games. No supplies or experience necessary! Designed for ages 8–11.

Thursday, February 19
4:30 – 6:00 pm Main Library

Tuesday, March 10
4:30 – 6:00 pm Yankee Clipper

FOR TEENS

Dungeons & Dragons for Teens

Thursdays, February 12, March 12, April 9
4:00 – 7:00 pm Main Library

Want to try Dungeons & Dragons but don't know where to start? Already love D&D but don't have a party? Come to the library for monthly drop-in sessions, open to players of all skill levels.

You don't need to commit to multiple sessions. And like any good D&D session, we will have snacks. Bring your own character or get a premade one from us. Space is limited and first come, first served. Designed for ages 11–18.

Teen Anime Club

Thursdays, January 29, February 26, March 26
4:00 – 6:00 pm West Side

Join Teen Anime Club to chat with other enthusiasts about your favorite anime and manga! Chat about what you're currently reading and watch anime episodes together! Snacks are provided and attendees can enter a drawing to win a prize. Designed for teens ages 13–19.



Teen Printmaking and Zine Workshop with Octavia Ink

Wednesday, February 18
4:00 – 7:00 pm Main Library

Join local artist Octavia Ink for a hands-on workshop where you'll create prints using stamps made from her original artwork. She'll also teach you how to use stamps to craft your very own zine. Leave with a one-of-a-kind creation to take home! All materials and snacks will be provided and each attendee will receive a copy of *Black Artists Shaping the World* by Sharna Johnson.

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

FOR ALL AGES

Music in the Stacks

Enjoy local music at the Grand Rapids Public Library! Featuring emerging and established talent, Music in the Stacks is a fun and lively event designed for all ages.

Promotional support for GRPL's musical events is provided in part by 88.1 FM WYCE.

Whorled
Thursday, January 22
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Adrian Wright
Thursday, February 19
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Audrey Pearson
Thursday, March 19
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Samuel Nalangira
Thursday, April 16
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

Black Folktales with John Steven Crowley

Saturday, February 28
11:30 – 12:30 pm Main Library

John Steven Crowley will share tales from the African American tradition with stories, songs, and drums. Each family that attends will go home with a copy of the book *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* by Virginia Hamilton.

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

Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale

Join us at one of the library's biggest book sales of the year! Both cash and credit cards are accepted at this event. All proceeds benefit the Grand Rapids Public Library.

Saturday, April 25
9:00 am – 4:00 pm Main Library
All books are 50 cents each. Specialty items are marked separately.

Sunday, April 26
1:00 – 4:00 pm Main Library
Fill a grocery 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.

FOR ADULTS

Conversation Circle: English

Wednesdays, January 14 – April 29
7:00 – 8:00 pm Main Library

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.

Conversation Circle: Spanish

Saturdays, February 7, March 7, April 4
2:00 – 3:00 pm Main Library

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.

History of the Blues with Asamu Johnson and the Associates of the Blues

Saturday, February 21
1:00 – 2:30 pm Main Library

Experience live music while discovering the rich history of blues as a vital part of Black American culture—all performed by some of Grand Rapids' finest musicians. Don't miss this unforgettable celebration of music, heritage, and heart. Attendees will receive a free copy of the book *A Little Devil in America: Notes on Black Performance* by Hanif Abdurraqib.

This program is supported by the Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation and the Wege Foundation.

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

Support library events.
Donate today.

Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation
www.grplfoundation.org

Storytimes



Baby & Me

Bring your baby and bounce along to fun stories, songs, and rhymes. Baby & Me is a 15-minute storytime followed by a relaxed playtime where you and baby will meet new friends. For ages 0 – 18 months.

Fridays, January 16 – March 27
10:30 am Ottawa Hills

Fridays, January 16 – March 27
10:30 am Van Belkum

Toddler Time

Bring your toddlers to share fun stories, songs, and rhymes and learn together! Toddler Time is a 25-minute long storytime followed by a hands-on activity and playtime designed to help your child's brain grow. For ages 18 months – 3 years.

Tuesdays, January 13 – March 24
10:30 am West Side

Bilingual Family Time

Join us for a bilingual storytime filled with fun stories, movement, and music activities. The 30-minute English and Spanish storytime is followed by a hands-on activity and playtime. For families with children ages 0 – 5 years.

Tuesdays, January 13 – March 24
10:30 am Madison Square

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 old.

Mondays, January 12 – March 23
10:30 am Main Library

Wednesdays, January 14 – March 25
10:30 am Seymour

Thursdays, January 15 – March 26
10:30 am Yankee Clipper

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, January 12 – March 23
6:30 pm West Leonard

Book Clubs



Cozy Mystery Book Club

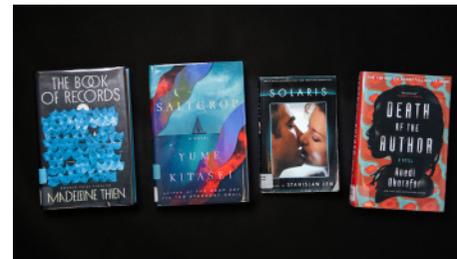
Wednesdays, February 4, March 4, April 1
6:00 – 7:00 pm Van Belkum

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. This book club is designed for adults.

February 4: *History Lessons*
by Zoe B. Wallbrook

March 4: *A Most Agreeable Murder*
by Julie Seales

April 1: *The Framed Women of Ardmore House*
by Brandy Schillace



Sci-Fi Book Club

Wednesdays, February 11, March 4, April 8
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.

February 11: *Death of the Author*
by Nnedi Okorafor

March 4: *Saltcrop* by Yume Kitasei

April 8: *The Book of Records*
by Madeleine Thien

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. This book club is designed for adults and is a great way to meet new friends, explore real and imagined worlds, and discover new perspectives.

Popular Pages at Yankee Clipper

Mondays, February 16, March 16, April 20
6:00 – 7:00 pm Yankee Clipper

February 16: *Chain Gang All-Stars*
by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

March 16: *Ducks* by Kate Beaton

April 20: *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*
by Gabrielle Zevin

Popular Pages at West Leonard

Tuesdays, February 3, March 3, April 7
6:00 – 7:00 pm West Leonard

February 3: *You'll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey* by Amber Ruffin

March 3: *Hood Feminism* by Mikki Kendall

April 7: *The Nineties* by Chuck Klosterman

Popular Pages at Seymour

Saturdays, February 7, March 7, April 4
12:00 – 1:00 pm Seymour Branch

February 7: *A Little Devil in America*
by Hanif Abdurraqib

March 7: *The Dream Hotel* by Laila Lalami

April 4: *Say Nothing* by Patrick Radden Keefe

Computer & Technology Classes

Building Basic Computer Skills

Wednesday, February 4

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Are you often confused by computer terms and lingo? In this class, you will gain skills to help you start navigating the Internet, mobile devices, and many types of software. Learn basic terminology used in technology to build a foundation for digital literacy.

Discovering the Internet

Wednesday, February 11

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Using the Internet can be an intimidating experience for many people. In this class, you will learn how the Internet works and basic definitions for the most common Internet terms. Discover tips and tricks on how to protect your information and identity while searching, shopping, and browsing the web.

Exploring Email

Wednesday, February 18

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

The Internet is always evolving and developing new services and functions. But as services and social networks have come and gone, email has remained constant. In this class, you will explore how to secure your email account and regain access if you forget your password. You will also discover how to use two-factor authentication to protect your accounts.

Managing Your Digital Footprint

Wednesday, February 25

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Have you ever forgotten a password? Do you wish you had a plan to manage your online information and protect your privacy? Managing your digital footprint may seem hard, but with a plan and the right tools you can stay safe online. This class will offer methods and tools to manage your online profiles and passwords.

Backup Basics: How to Secure Your Data

Wednesday, March 4

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

From family photos to business documents, your digital data is valuable. In this class, we discuss how to ensure your digital data is kept safe and secure. Learn how to back up your data with thumb drives, hard drives, and cloud storage.

Internet Privacy: Protecting Yourself in the Digital Age

Wednesday, March 11

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Join us in learning how to secure information and manage your digital footprint. Topics include securing your Internet connection and browser, creating and managing effective passwords, and using email aliases to keep your information more secure.

Google Drive Basics: Google Docs

Wednesday, March 18

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

Cloud storage services like Google Drive allow you to store and edit documents online. These documents can be accessed or edited on any device with an Internet connection. In this class, we will discuss how to create, edit, and share word processing files.

Learning Online: Free Tools and Classes

Wednesday, March 25

11:30 am – 1:00 pm Main Library

In this class, we will explore free tools and sources for online education, including LinkedIn Learning, Learning Express, MOOCs, and more. Whether you are a beginner to online education or a graduate, you'll find plenty of tools in this class to keep learning for a lifetime.

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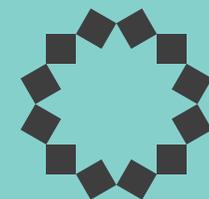
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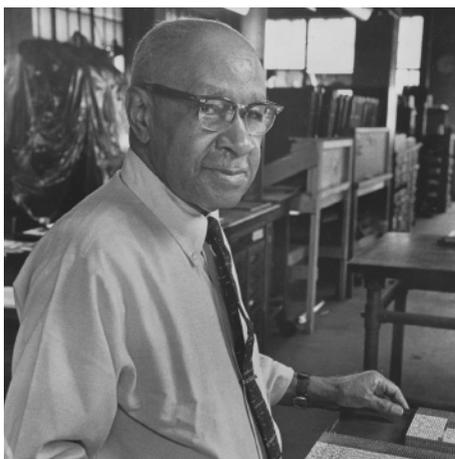
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GRAND
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Grand Rapids History Center Spotlight



The Grand Rapids History Center is pleased to share a rare and important piece of Grand Rapids' early-20th century Black experience. Published in Grand Rapids from 1920-1924, the *Michigan State News* was an African American-owned newspaper. Only two issues of this newspaper are known to exist today. One, dated April 26, 1920, is in our archival collections and is also available on our Digital Collections page. The only other known issue, dated November 8, 1924, is held by the Grand Rapids Public Museum and is available on their website.

The paper's founder and editor, George Marion Smith (1884-1970), was also a founding member of Grand Rapids' NAACP chapter in 1919. The Michigan State News assistant editor, Percival Leroy Prattis (1895-1980), would go on to write for the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier, two of the most prominent African American newspapers in the country. Historian Dr. Randal Jelks notes that "[a]lthough short lived, the *State News* articulated a viewpoint that helped to galvanize the fight against Jim Crow" and that it "[gave] African Americans a statewide journalistic voice."

The Grand Rapids History Center is committed to preserving the *Michigan State News* and continuing to make it accessible for future generations. We're searching for additional issues that might be long stored away and we need your help. Please contact the library with any information on potential copies.