

# Grand River Equity Framework

February 2023 | Final Draft



# Grand River Equity Framework Stakeholder Advisory Board Statement of Endorsement

February 2023

We, the undersigned members of the Grand River Equity Framework Stakeholder Advisory Board, unanimously endorse the following Equity Framework document. For the past eight months, we have actively overseen its community engagement process, its content creation, and its drafting. We confidently state this document is a community-led, credible, and implementable strategy for achieving greater regional equity in conjunction with pending investments into the Grand River Corridor.

Opportunity is often disguised. It can be undiscovered, undernourished, or impeded by decades or centuries of unequal or unjust conditions. Opportunity gaps can be justified and exacerbated by long-standing cultural and economic biases. Candidly, Western Michigan has a history of such conditions and biases. A racial and economic equity strategy is an intentional policy intervention to acknowledge historic inequities, begin a healing process, and mitigate current disparities by adopting measures intended to broaden opportunity and outcomes across all communities. In the context of river revitalization, it also seeks environmental justice. An equitable investment in the Grand River means investing in the underinvested, catalyzing not just a physical and ecological transformation, but a social transformation as well.

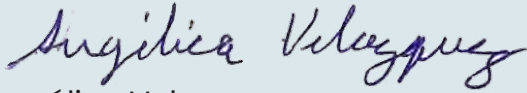
This framework document sets forth a vision and values, as well as goals and strategies, for the Greater Grand Rapids community to adopt and implement. It does not pick winners and losers – neither anointing specific places, projects or

organizations, nor proposing a budget. But it does set forth community-defined goals across six broad categories: Equitable Economic Development; An Accessible River; An Inviting, Inclusive River; A Healthy River; Engaged, Supported Youth; and Implementation and Accountability. The framework relies upon local stakeholders to endorse, adopt, and act upon the stated vision and goals. This hard work lies in front of us.

As an advisory board, we proudly represent a cross-section of the river community. We were selected to serve in a public and transparent process. We represent various geographies, cultures, professions, and interests that intersect with the Grand River. We are entrepreneurs and environmentalists, scientists and outdoor enthusiasts, activists and artists, urban planners and business chambers, funders and government staff. We are Black & Brown, White, Chippewa and Filipina, men and women, multilingual and multicultural, of various economic strata and residency. Simply put, we are authentic local stakeholders and the future users of a revitalized Grand River.

We strongly encourage you and your organizations to co-endorse this River Equity Framework and take action to help bring its vision to life. Without broad public endorsement of an equity framework, combined with transparency and accountability measures designed to continuously improve the process, West Michigan will continue to limit opportunity and repeat past mistakes as we revitalize our river.

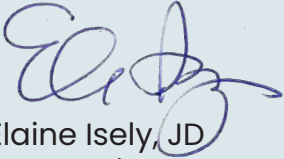
Sincerely, the Grand River Equity Framework Stakeholder Advisory Board.



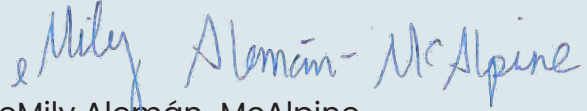
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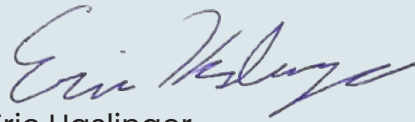
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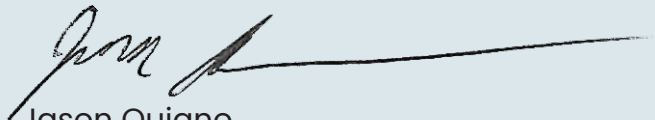
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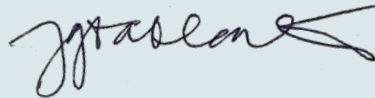
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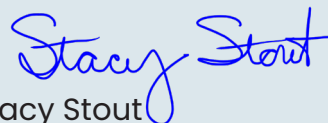
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Note: Organizational affiliations are for purposes of context only. Endorsements are of the individual.



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# I. Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

The Grand River restoration effort proposes to bring ecological, economic, and cultural activity back into and around our waterway. By all signals, the accelerating interest in river revitalization will result in a significant and sustained investment in the region. The revitalization initiative presents a once-in-a-generation for chance Grand Rapids and Kent County – a window to ensure future river-related programming, policies, and infrastructure benefit all local residents. It can focus on the unmet needs of those that have been disproportionately impacted by racial, environmental, or economic injustices. Just as the Grand River has flowed and nurtured indigenous communities for millenia, and birthed the city of Grand Rapids 200 years ago, it can once again catalyze opportunity and healing in modern day.

The call for shared benefit can no longer be ignored. The COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting economic recession, and our country's ongoing racial reckoning have brought matters of equity to the forefront of local and national conversation. West Michigan has been part of that conversation and laudable efforts to build a thriving community offering opportunity for all. But without a shared understanding of what "equity" means in the context of river corridor revitalization, we risk misunderstanding each other, dividing our community, and working in unproductive silos. Without intentionally bringing equity priorities into our policymaking, the region risks perpetuating historic inequities, calcifying inequality, and squandering opportunities for broad-based economic growth as it

remakes its river for the next century.

The Grand River Equity Framework is a guiding document. It establishes a common understanding for river equity and uplifts thematic goals and strategies that create opportunity and equitable outcomes via revitalization efforts. The Framework should be used by residents, policymakers, advocates, city and county departments, philanthropy, businesses, and others guiding future investment and activity along the Grand River, its tributaries, and adjacent communities.

The Framework's content is community-sourced. It distills longstanding stakeholder input given over decades, and incorporates new feedback from this project's public engagement process. It will direct the work of an independent nonprofit, Grand River Network, that serves as a backbone agency facilitating implementation of the community's vision for a revitalized Grand River. The Framework also calls out strategies and actions that can be naturally undertaken by engaged nonprofits and community groups as part of values-aligned collective action. To be clear, the river equity agenda will require many partners working together to drive successful implementation.

The Framework is organized across six community-defined priorities, which we label as Goals. A Goal is *What the Community Wants*. Within each goal, a subset of more honed Strategies is proposed. A Strategy suggests *How We Get There*. At a topline, our Goals and Strategies are as follows:



**Goal 1:  
Equitable Economic Development**

- Create quality jobs and career pathways through river programs and policies
- Support the sustainability and expansion of small, local, and BIPOC businesses
- Leverage river-related policy to catalyze community economic development and stabilize neighborhoods

**Goal 2:  
An Accessible River**

- Improve and expand equitable connections to the river
- Create vibrant and open public spaces

**Goal 3:  
An Inviting, Inclusive River**

- Provide free and low-cost, culturally-relevant programming
- Create and sustain a safe, welcoming river

Within the full Equity Framework document, each of the Goals and Strategies is detailed with a set of recommended Actions that emerged from community input and stakeholder advisors. An Action proposes *What Specific Steps We Take*. The Framework also proposes Metrics that can be used to track progress. A Metric is *What We Should Measure Along the Way*. While the report overwhelmingly avoids naming specific projects, partners, or budgets, it does propose a series of Priority Outcomes that we uplift as worthy

**Goal 4:  
A Healthy River and Community**

- Continue to monitor water quality, restore habitat health, and incorporate green stormwater infrastructure
- Work with communities to continue advancing environmental justice

**Goal 5:  
Engaged, Supported Youth**

- Create opportunities for youth to explore and play
- Create opportunities for youth to learn and work
- Foster youth agency and leadership

**Goal 6:  
Implementation and Accountability**

- Invest in a dedicated nonprofit for the River Project
- Build broad endorsements for the River Equity Framework
- Build social infrastructure to support the river ecosystem, including an ongoing feedback loop, transparency, and accountability mechanisms

measures of progress. A Priority Outcome is *Our Community's Resolution to Improve*. The Framework's Priority Outcomes by Goal are listed on the following page.

We hope that readers find the document to be useful and inspirational. We also hope it serves as an authentic foundation for community-first framing of this important restoration and revitalization initiative.

### Priority Outcomes: Equitable Economic Development

- Local hire goal of 30% of total work hours on City and County river contracts
- Targeted hire (BIPOC<sup>1</sup>, low-income, and underemployed communities) goal of 20% of total work hours on all City and County river contracts
- Double the number of MLBEs<sup>2</sup> on the City and County bench in 24 months
- MLBE, WBE<sup>3</sup>, MBE<sup>4</sup> or BIPOC spend goal of 30% of all City and County river contracts
- Integration of equity framework into City, County, township, and other planning documents
- Updated river planning overlays to codify key framework goals

### Priority Outcomes: An Accessible River

- 40 miles of new bike lanes, off-street trails, and public transit connections to the river
- 1,000,000 unique river visitors to special events by 2025
- 20% increase in active transportation and transit users accessing the river
- 100% of all undeveloped river's edge protected for public access
- New public shoreline access on previously inaccessible shoreline

- 50 acres of new and renovated riverfront park spaces in the urban core in 10 years
- 200 acres of new riverfront park spaces across Kent County in 10 years
- Provision or transfer of dedicated ceremonial river space for indigenous tribal communities
- 100% all redevelopment projects ADA-accessible and universally-designed

### Priority Outcomes: An Inviting, Inclusive River

- 350 events at the river per year, with an emphasis on community and cultural themes
- 3,000 hours of measurable river activation annually
- Demographic breakdown of river event attendees that mirrors regional demographics
- 35 new educational, art, and safety installations along the shoreline by 2025
- Public Wellness facilities every half-mile along the river trail or bike path from Millennium to Riverside Park
- Annual riverfront cleanliness indices that show year-over-year (YOY) improvement
- 90% of all Kent County Youth aged 7-18 can swim, or have the opportunity to take (or have taken) a water-safety class
- Repeal of ordinance prohibiting swimming in the river as soon as health & safety conditions allow
- 100% of visitors feel safe and welcomed at the river

<sup>1</sup> Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. See Key Terms.

<sup>2</sup> Micro Local Business Enterprise

<sup>3</sup> Women-owned Business Enterprise

<sup>4</sup> Minority-owned Business Enterprise

### Priority Outcomes: A Healthy River and Community

- Production of a public river report card with water quality and other key indicies.
- Reintroduction of sturgeon to Grand River
- Reintroduction of native Grand River plants
- 40% tree canopy coverage along the river corridor
- All new public and private projects incorporate green stormwater infrastructure or traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) practice
- Actively enforced local, state, and federal laws to protect and promote clean water
- Partnerships with Southside communities to clean adjacent river and tributaries, achieving equity in regional water quality

### Priority Outcomes: Engaged, Supported Youth

- 150 annual field trips to the river from low-income and communities of color
- Annual River Youth event planned by, and for, local youth
- Every student in Kent County takes a course on Environmental Studies that reviews concepts like stormwater, pollution, climate change, and ecosystem balance using the Grand River as a case study
- Deepen educational opportunities

via STEM Greenhouse, Grand Rapids Public Museum, GREEN, or equivalent programs

- 300 summer “river ambassador” or “river entrepreneur” internships for youth per year
- Creation of River Youth Advisory Council of diverse representation
- 10,000 river posts per year on youth-preferred social media
- “It’s my River” video competition

### Priority Outcomes: Implementation and Accountability

- Investment in a diverse organization whose sole focus is the river project, which adopts the Equity Framework, and acts as advocate and implementer
- Endorsement of the Equity Framework by key municipalities, civic institutions, business leaders, community advocates, and general population
- Establishment of an independent stakeholder body to review progress on river equity goals and publicly issue findings and recommendations



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## II. Vision and Values

# Vision and Values

## VISION

This Equity Framework embodies the necessary commitments to advancing environmental justice and social, racial, and economic equity along the Grand River and, as a ripple effect, throughout the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, and the West Michigan region. Building on the decades of engagement around river restoration and redevelopment, as well as more recent local efforts around equity and inclusion, this Framework imagines a Grand River for everyone.

*We envision a Grand River for All that honors both our history and our future by embedding racial and economic equity into all we do, both in the water and along the riverbanks. We envision restoration and resilience within the river's tributaries, its watershed, and its ecosystems, as well as environmental justice for our communities. We envision broadly shared commercial opportunities and accessible spaces and places as tangible outcomes from our investment in a thriving river corridor.*

## VALUES

The stakeholder engagement and design processes of the Equity Framework, and ultimately its implementation, are also driven by a core set of values that support its Vision. These values articulate foundational beliefs that embrace equity and opportunity as essential elements in the revitalization of the Grand River. Values are listed in alphabetical order.



### **Belonging:**

We believe everyone deserves to feel that they belong where they live, work, worship, and play, and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.



### **Community Voice:**

We believe in inclusive and robust community engagement, partnership, and decision-making opportunities. We acknowledge that not all voices have been equally heard or valued, and actively work to address this dynamic.



### **Healing:**

We acknowledge and work to address the historical and current trauma both individuals and communities have endured over time, especially Indigenous, Black, and other communities of color.



### **Justice:**

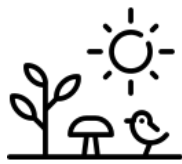
Our work is grounded in racial, economic, environmental, and gender justice. We believe in a deliberate, communal effort to

dismantle unjust systems and create new systems where every person has the right to opportunity, dignity, and quality of life.



### ***Partnership:***

We believe in breaking down silos and working together to generate better solutions to complex problems. Effective partnerships and coalitions include representatives from different disciplines, geographies, and life experiences to advance equity.



### ***Sustainability and Stewardship:***

We have a duty to create and nurture healthy, viable communities on and near the Grand River. We value both modern science and traditional ecological knowledge in restoring our river ecosystem. We recognize the historic stewardship of land and water by indigenous communities. We look to broad-based leadership to sustain the river for generations to come.



### ***Transparency and Accountability:***

Crucial to any community-centered process, we value individual leaders and project partners that can be trusted to be open about actions and processes, honor their commitments, and be responsive to community needs.



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## CAPTAINS

- MARIE HILL
- EUSTHER MAYFIELD
- LOUISE PARKS
- FOREST TOWNSEND
- EDDIE JORDAN
- RICHLER MANNING
- WELLAWEE HILL
- EASY PERRY
- TIMOTHY HILL
- JESSIE JACKSON

- MARTHA
- ELMIRA
- JACQUE
- JOHN W
- WILLIE H
- LULIA H
- SAM BU
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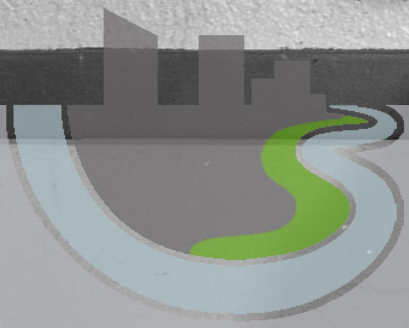
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## III. Historic and Contextual Background

# Historic and Contextual Background

## HISTORY OF GRAND RAPIDS AND THE GRAND RIVER

Indigenous peoples have been living in the Grand Rapids area since time immemorial. For the past 2,000 years, various tribes and cultures have been living, hunting, growing, and traveling along Owashtanong (“far-flowing river” in Anishinabek), also known as the Grand River. The People of the Three Fires – an alliance of the Ottawa (Odawa), Chippewa (Ojibwa), and Potawatomi (Bodewadi) – established villages across the region. One of the largest villages and main gathering places of the Ottawa was in present-day downtown Grand Rapids.<sup>1</sup> The people of the Three Fires remain present and connected to the area despite a history of colonization and displacement.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1: A painting by Sarah Nelson of the Grand River in 1856 (Courtesy | Grand Rapids History & Special Collections, Archives, Grand Rapids Public Library, Grand Rapids, MI | [www.mlive.com](http://www.mlive.com))

<sup>1</sup> *River for All*. (n.d.). *Our River's Story*. <https://www.riverforall.com/history/>

<sup>2</sup> *To this day, the U.S. federal government fails to recognize the indigenous Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians as a sovereign nation and people despite decades of petitions.*

Fur traders and missionaries from the United States and Europe traveled extensively throughout the region and colonizers soon followed, eager to permanently settle in the region – often by force. In 1821, the Treaty of Chicago gave the United States control of the land south of the Grand River, with exceptions for native reservations.<sup>3</sup> With the threat of forced removal after the 1830 Indian Removal Act, tribes also signed the unfavorable Treaty of 1836 and ceded millions more acres of land north of the Grand River.<sup>4</sup> At that point, the boundaries of today's Grand Rapids were now completely ceded to the U.S. government. As land was taken and native populations were displaced and institutionalized, the population of settlers continued to expand. The village of Grand Rapids, purchased and named by Louis Campau, grew from three-quarters of a mile to four square miles, and eventually to a city of 10.5 square miles in 1857.<sup>5</sup>

Industry in Grand Rapids shifted from fur-trading posts into a booming lumber and furniture hub. The region's industrialization greatly impacted the river – tree roots that held the riverbed in place were uprooted to support the passage of logs and logging boats along the waterway,

<sup>3</sup> *Experience Grand Rapids*. (2022, September 9). *History of Native Americans in GR*. <https://www.experiencegr.com/articles/post/history-of-native-americans-in-gr/>

<sup>4</sup> Hemenway, E. (2016, May 24). "It is a heart-rending thought to think of leaving our native country forever". National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/leaving-our-native-country-forever.htm>

<sup>5</sup> *City of Grand Rapids*. (n.d.). *Facts and History*. <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/About/City-of-Grand-Rapids-Facts-and-History>

and dams were installed to generate energy. The Grand River transformed from a precious natural asset to an industrial tool, growing more and more contaminated over time.<sup>6</sup> This transformation of a stewarded natural resource into a piece of industrial infrastructure is a common narrative among urban rivers during the industrial development of American cities, often resulting in environmental and social inequities. From roughly 1880 to 1970, the Grand River was filled with logging waste, mixed oil and gas, and human and industrial waste. Conditions worsened to the point that buildings built during this time deliberately lacked river-facing windows. The passage of the Federal Clean Water Act in 1972 created environmental regulation for the discharge of pollutants into surface waters like the Grand River. The passage of the Clean Water Act and other environmental regulations pushed cities like Grand Rapids to build out separate sanitary sewer systems that would eliminate raw sewage spills and begin to rehabilitate waterways.<sup>7</sup>

Since then, many organizations and residents have worked tirelessly to clean up the Grand River and invest in its future for all Grand Rapidians. Riverwalks, parks, and new buildings along the river have helped to reconnect locals and visitors to the waterway as an asset. However, much work remains to be done. Diverse partners and stakeholders, like those who have participated in the development of this

<sup>6</sup> City of Grand Rapids. (n.d.). *Facts and History*. <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/About/City-of-Grand-Rapids-Facts-and-History>

<sup>7</sup> Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. (n.d.). *Clean Water Act 50th Anniversary*. <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/water-resources/clean-water-act-50th-anniversary>



Figure 2: Log jam on Grand River, 1883. [Grand Rapids Public Library](#)

Equity Framework, are working together to shape development along the river with a vision that allows all Grand River communities to participate and thrive.<sup>8</sup>

## POPULATION OF GRAND RAPIDS AND LINGERING INEQUITIES

Today, Grand Rapids is the second largest city in Michigan and the largest city in Western Michigan – and it continues to grow. In 2019, the Grand Rapids-Kentwood Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) led the state of Michigan in population growth according to U.S. Census estimates.<sup>9</sup> While Grand Rapids remains a moderately diverse city, according to a 2017 study of Grand Rapids population conducted by

<sup>8</sup> River for All. (n.d.). *Our River's Story*. <https://www.riverforall.com/history/>

<sup>9</sup> The Right Place. (2019, May 28). *Greater Grand Rapids Leads Population Growth for Michigan*. <https://www.rightplace.org/news/greater-grand-rapids-leads-population-growth-for-michigan>

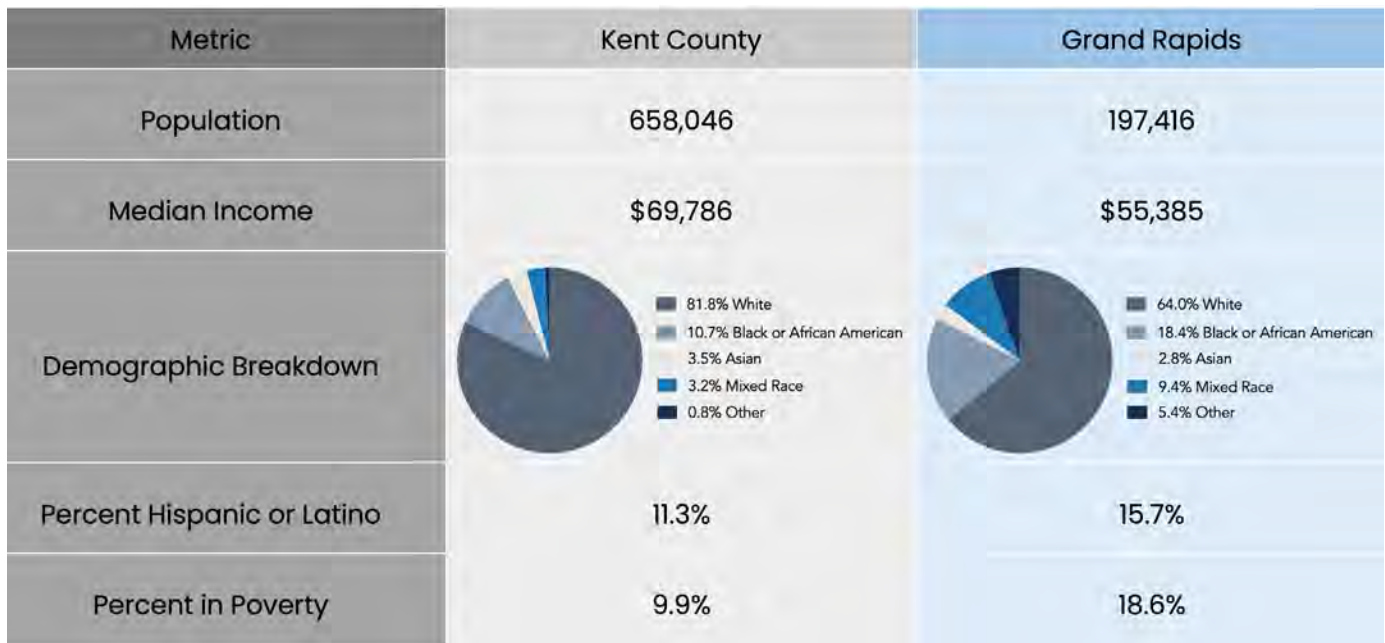


Figure 3: Source U.S. Census Bureau<sup>13</sup>

PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute, 100% of the net population growth in the City since 1980 is attributable to communities of color.<sup>10</sup> Kent County has also seen a demographic shift. These increases are fueled largely by Latino/Hispanic, Asian Pacific, and multiracial residents, along with a slow increase of Black residents in Grand Rapids’ suburbs.<sup>11</sup> <sup>12</sup> Both the City and County have lost a significant percentage of Native residents in recent decades.

As populations of color increase, the percentage of white residents has

declined from 66% in 2015 to 61% in 2020.<sup>14</sup> The PolicyLink study also found that a generational transformation is underway – 63% of youth under 18 in Grand Rapids are people of color compared to only 21% of people 65 or older.<sup>15</sup> With a young population of color emerging, investment in school-age individuals lacking multi-generational wealth will be essential for building equitable local economies with a workforce, tax base, and engaged citizenry that will define the region’s next century of economic success.

Current socioeconomic disparities for people of color in Grand Rapids are clear. In 2021 the City passed a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis based on the stark negative outcomes and inequities that Black, Latino, Asian, Native, and other populations face as residents.<sup>16</sup> In a 2020

<sup>10</sup> PolicyLink and USC ERI (formerly PERE). (2017). An Equity Profile of Grand Rapids. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids\\_final\\_profile.pdf](https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids_final_profile.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> McVicar, B. (2021, August 25). Kent County’s population growth fueled by people of color. MLive. <https://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/2021/08/kent-countys-population-growth-fueled-by-people-of-color.html>

<sup>12</sup> Roelofs, T. (2021, October 20). In booming Grand Rapids, many Black residents left out of city’s comeback. Bridge Michigan. <https://www.bridgemi.com/urban-affairs/booming-grand-rapids-many-black-residents-left-out-citys-comeback>

<sup>13</sup> United States Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kentcountymichigan,grandrapidscity-michigan/INC110221>

<sup>14</sup> PolicyLink and USC ERI (formerly PERE). (2017). An Equity Profile of Grand Rapids. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids\\_final\\_profile.pdf](https://nationalequityatlas.org/sites/default/files/GrandRapids_final_profile.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Grand Rapids City Commission. (2021). Resolution Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis. <https://www.>

### Median Household Income in Grand Rapids Above and Below Citywide Median of \$55,385 (2021)

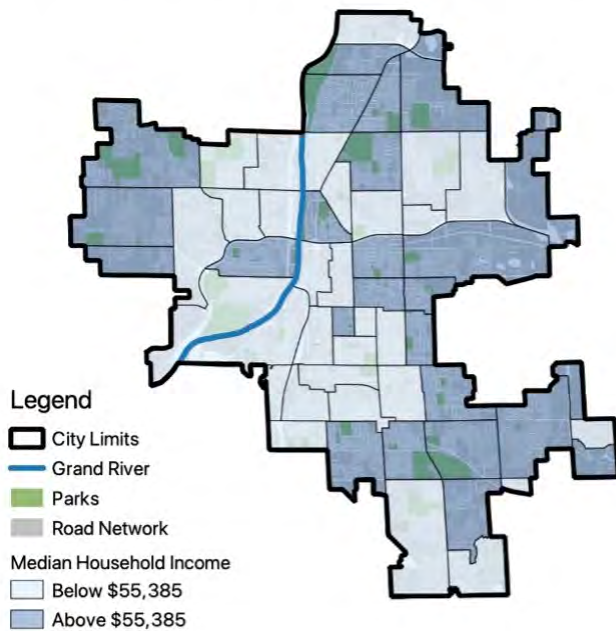


Figure 4: Source ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables S1903, Median Income in the Past 12 Months (2021). A significant number of Grand Rapids' lower-income communities are river-adjacent communities.

report, the annual median income of white residents (\$63,256) was nearly double that of Black residents (\$34,343) and almost 1.5 times more than Latino residents (\$43,442). Black residents face the highest unemployment rates in Grand Rapids, followed by Latino residents, Asian residents, then White residents.<sup>17</sup> These patterns are consistent in Kent County as a whole.<sup>18</sup> While not yet fully documented, it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these disparities in recent years.

[grandrapidsmi.gov/files/assets/public/departments/diversity-and-inclusion/files/resolution-to-declare-racism-a-public-health-crisis.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1673900999362633&usq=AOvVaw3M1wk2yudqNBp754Igh2Mk](https://grandrapidsmi.gov/files/assets/public/departments/diversity-and-inclusion/files/resolution-to-declare-racism-a-public-health-crisis.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1673900999362633&usq=AOvVaw3M1wk2yudqNBp754Igh2Mk)

<sup>17</sup> Urban Core Collective. (2020). *Equity Assessment Tool, Zero Cities Project, Grand Rapids, Michigan Addendum*. [https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mpsc/workgroups/eaac/Zero\\_Cities\\_UCC\\_GR\\_Equity\\_Assessment\\_Tool\\_Report\\_121820\\_1.pdf?rev=7071b395a6114fc2ae8d-92f0e493f6fc](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mpsc/workgroups/eaac/Zero_Cities_UCC_GR_Equity_Assessment_Tool_Report_121820_1.pdf?rev=7071b395a6114fc2ae8d-92f0e493f6fc)

<sup>18</sup> Kent County & City of Grand Rapids. (2021). *2021 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*. [https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CommunityAction/pdf/2021\\_RAIFHC.pdf](https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CommunityAction/pdf/2021_RAIFHC.pdf)

Income inequality and affordability continue to trouble the region. Since 2019, rental rates have risen 16% in Kent County, 19% in Muskegon County, and 12% in Ottawa County.<sup>19</sup> The 2020 Kent County Housing Needs Assessment estimated that almost 20% of homeowners and over 50% of renters are cost-burdened – meaning they are paying over 30% of their income toward housing.<sup>20</sup>

Maps of Grand Rapids' population by race show a segregated landscape. There is a patchwork of concentrations of distinct racial groups – Latino populations largely resides in the neighborhoods of Roosevelt Park and Burton Heights along the U.S. Highway 131 corridor and communities near the southwest segment of the Grand River. Black/African American populations are more concentrated to the west within the south-central neighborhoods near Madison, Baxter, and Fuller Avenue. There are large swaths of Grand Rapids that are majority and supermajority white. As with many American population centers, this segregation is by design and reflects a history of racist housing policies across the country.

Reasons for residential segregation date back almost a century. Some Black residents lived in Grand Rapids prior to the 20th century, but between 1910 and 1940, Grand Rapids' Black population grew by almost 10% as individuals and families fled

<sup>19</sup> Flores, A. (2022, July 14). *West Michigan families are being priced out of homes*. WZZM13. <https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/local/rising-rent-in-west-michigan-pricing-families-out-of-homes/69-c23d0f79-9d53-429b-a727-fb-254b85a036>

<sup>20</sup> Bowen National Research. (2020). *Grand Rapids/Kent County, Michigan Housing Needs Assessment*. <https://www.grandrapids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Housing.pdf>

the South during the first Great Migration, settling largely southeast of Downtown.<sup>21</sup> Small numbers of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans also migrated to Grand Rapids in the early and mid-20th Century for economic opportunity, grouping in the southwest area of the City as white residents left for suburbs in the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

While these Black and Latino Grand Rapidians searched for housing, jobs, and community, the federal home loan process discouraged investment in communities of color. Following World War II, the federal government created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to subsidize the building and purchasing of housing across the country.<sup>23</sup> The FHA used redlined maps created by the Homeowners Loan Corporation (HOLC) to distinguish which neighborhoods were eligible for federal housing loans and identified eligibility along racial lines. The HOLC created risk maps for 239 cities, including Grand Rapids using green as “best,” blue as “still desirable,” yellow as “declining,” and red as “hazardous.” “Hazardous” was used when Black families lived in an area and “declining” was used for the neighborhoods buffering “hazardous” neighborhoods. Below is the HOLC risk assessment map of Grand Rapids from November of 1937.<sup>24</sup>

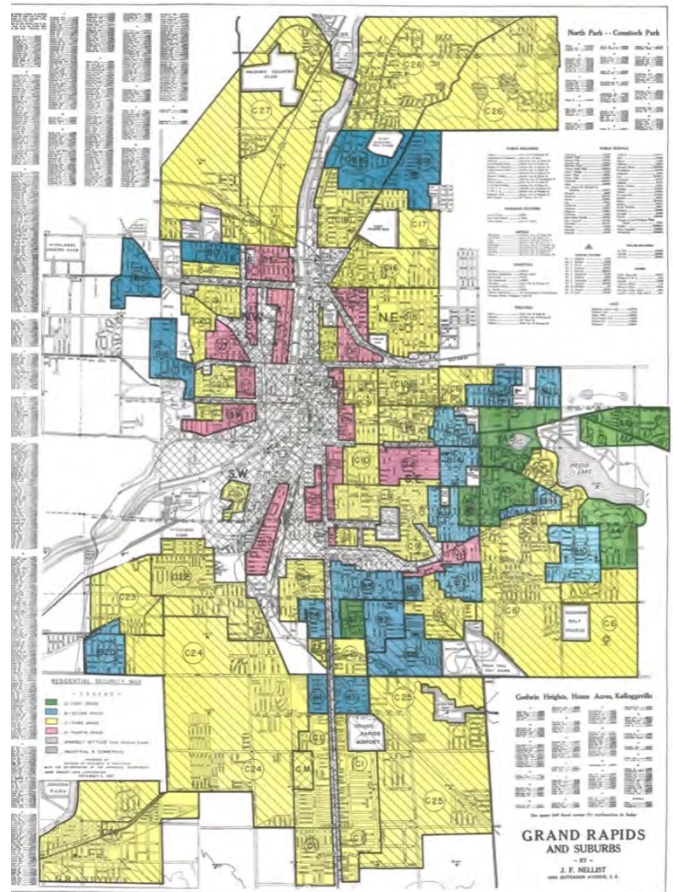


Figure 5: Grand Rapids and Suburbs HOLC Map (1937)  
Federal home loans were withheld in “redlined” areas deemed hazardous or declining along racial lines.

The neighborhoods of color which were marked “hazardous” were denied loans from banks to buy homes, blocking communities of color from building middle class wealth.<sup>25</sup> The maps also encouraged segregation of schools, racially restrictive covenants in white neighborhoods, and systemic disinvestment in communities of color in Grand Rapids. Black communities in particular were impacted.<sup>26 27</sup>

21 U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *The Great Migration, 1910 to 1970*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/020/508.php>

22 Fernández, D. (2015). *From Spanish-Speaking to Latino: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in West Michigan, 1924-1978* [Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1437439370](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1437439370)

23 Gross, T. (2017, May 3). A ‘Forgotten History’ Of How The U.S. Segregated America. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>

24 Carpenter, C.W. (n.d.). *Redlining in Michigan: Grand Rapids*. MSU Extension. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/redlining/grand-rapids>

25 Smith, J. (2019, January 15). *The racial segregation of housing in Grand Rapids: Past and Present*. Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy. <https://griid.org/2019/01/15/the-racial-segregation-of-housing-in-grand-rapids-past-and-present/>

26 Carpenter, C.W. (n.d.). *Redlining in Michigan: Grand Rapids*. MSU Extension. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/redlining/grand-rapids>

27 Smith, J. (2017, July 17). *50 years after the 1967 Riot in Grand Rapids: What we know and what can we learn?*. Grand Rapids People’s History Project.

The repercussions of redlining are significant in Grand Rapids. In 2021, researchers at Michigan State University overlaid the Grand Rapids redlining map from 1937 over the 2019 population demographics of the city. They found that the neighborhoods that the HOLC deemed high risk, hazardous (D-red) and declining (C-yellow), in 1937 remain the neighborhoods with the highest percentage of people of color and lowest incomes. This correlation is true for both historically Black and Latino neighborhoods, as well as for more recent immigrant diasporas arriving in Grand Rapids.

Constricting Black communities to specific parts of the city triggers significant discrepancies in education and job attainment. Housing discrimination paved the way for educational segregation, as officials drew school lines to aggregate Black students in inner-city schools and divert resources away from once-integrated areas. Schools in the middle of the city quickly became minority-majority schools by 1960.<sup>28</sup> The Grand Rapids School Board intensified these divides by allowing white families living near inner-city schools to send their children elsewhere, dramatically reducing white enrollment. As the school board built new schools further from inner-city neighborhoods, predominantly Black schools faced poor accommodations, old buildings, reduced class offerings, and crowded classrooms. With the quality of education

dropping and dropout rates increasing, Grand Rapids saw spillover effects into its workforce. A lack of resources led to lower Black educational attainment, which was used as a justification for exclusionary hiring practices. Many skilled and educated workers were not hired in both public and private employers, leading to high rates of Black unemployment and a large population of Black service workers who had been trained for careers in other sectors.

Highly segregated neighborhoods like Grand Rapids' redlined areas are associated with lower incomes, lower educational attainment, more crime, worse

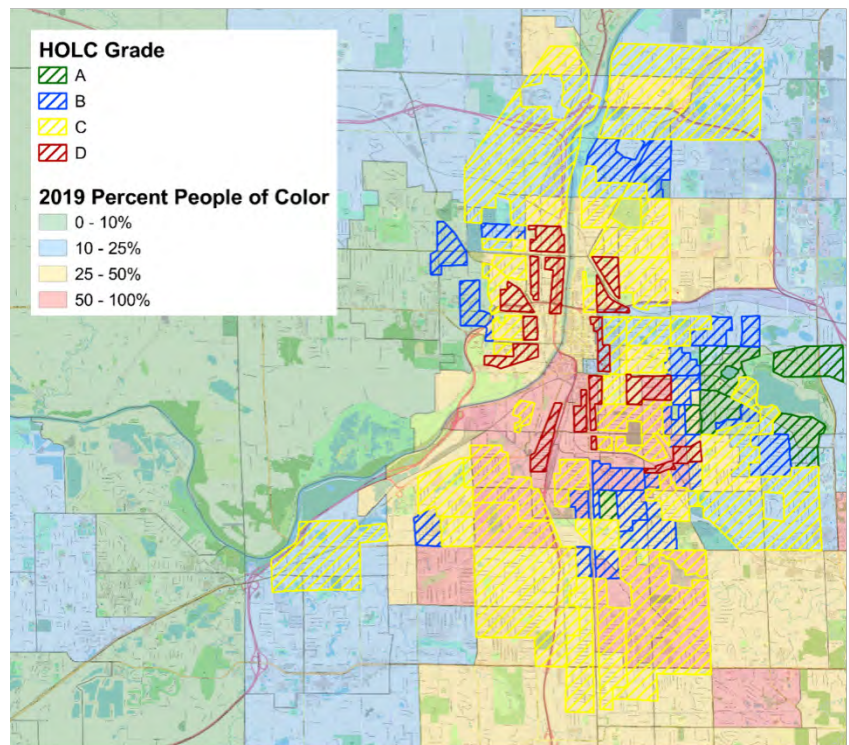


Figure 6: MSU Overlay of HOLC Map and Racial Concentrations (2021)  
Historically redlined areas remain the highest concentrations of people of color and low incomes.

health outcomes, and higher inequality.<sup>29</sup> Further, many of the socioeconomically distressed neighborhoods in the southeast

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, T. E. (2013). *A City Within a City: The Black Freedom Struggle in Grand Rapids, Michigan*. Temple University Press.

<sup>29</sup> Carpenter, C.W. (n.d.). *Redlining in Michigan: Grand Rapids*. MSU Extension. <https://www.canr.msu.edu/redlining/grand-rapids>

and southwest districts of Grand Rapids lack access to the Grand River and its revitalized green spaces – whether because of distance, lack of private transportation, or physical barriers like highways and industrial tracts along the river that don't allow for public access.

Black residents, in particular, have faced and fought these racial injustices since their arrival in Grand Rapids to the present day. Like in other cities in the United States, tensions erupted in the 1960s as Black Grand Rapidsians fought against discrimination and unjust policing but were denied any major policy changes, much less any intentional rebuilding or reparative initiatives with the Black community.<sup>30</sup> This civil unrest accelerated “white flight” – white residents moving out of the City – while Black neighborhoods in the southeast and southwest continued to be neglected, disinvested, and over-policed. In 2015, Grand Rapids was named one of the worst cities in the nation for Black Americans based on rates of homeownership, entrepreneurship, and median household income.<sup>31</sup> In 2022, Patrick Lyoya, who immigrated to Grand Rapids from the Democratic Republic of Congo eight years prior, was killed by police while unarmed during a traffic stop on the southeast side of the City. All the decades of unequal history has accumulated in Grand Rapids, illustrating a pattern of injustice particularly for its Black residents. Even within the context of

recent river engagement activities, Black stakeholders and other Southside residents have called out a lack of communication and partnership as visions and future opportunities are defined.

More recently, as land values rise, historically redlined neighborhoods face gentrification and displacement pressures. The City of Grand Rapids analyzed data between 2013–2017 in focus neighborhoods west of the Grand River – John Ball Park, Southwest Area Neighborhoods (SWAN), West Grand, and Westside Connection – based on increased development in the city. These areas have seen housing costs increase, coupled with large declines in the proportion of residents of color.<sup>32</sup> There has been a steady increase in white residents and a corresponding increase in area median income. Similarly on the Southeast side, Black-owned businesses have had to fight to stay open while the Black population has steadily declined over the past decade.<sup>33</sup> While neighborhood initiatives and local leaders are working to invest and provide opportunities for residents in these neighborhoods, this pattern, common in many American cities, illustrates how easily economic trends and land use factors can impact residences and displacement of long-time residents of color.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN GRAND RAPIDS

A redlining home lending system,

<sup>30</sup> Waxman, O. B. (2022, April 18). Behind ‘Grand Rapids Nice,’ Police Problems Run Deep in Michigan. *Time*. <https://time.com/6167659/grand-rapids-race-history/>

<sup>31</sup> Kotkin, J. (2015, January 15). The Cities Where African-Americans Are Doing the Best Economically. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2015/01/15/the-cities-where-african-americans-are-doing-the-best-economically/?sh=651a096164f2>

<sup>32</sup> City of Grand Rapids. (n.d.). Understanding impacts of Development on the cost of living. <https://grandrapids.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=156b6dad-d5c84530bb7d05e5ecf7c1af>

<sup>33</sup> Roelofs, T. (2021, October 20). In booming Grand Rapids, many Black residents left out of city's comeback. *Bridge Michigan*. <https://www.bridgemi.com/urban-affairs/booming-grand-rapids-many-black-residents-left-out-citys-comeback>



combined with racially restrictive housing covenants and late 1950s highway construction decisions, have isolated communities of color into a few areas of Grand Rapids. The areas where Black, Latino, and other communities of color largely reside not only cluster some of the lowest incomes and highest rates of unemployment, but also endure high levels of environmental contamination. Efforts to address this structural discrimination is underway in Grand Rapids through a rising environmental justice movement.<sup>34</sup>

The environmental justice movement is a product of the recognition that communities of color are more likely than others to be impacted by pollution. Some of the top pollutants in modern day cities (including sooty particulates from highway motors, toxic substances from industry or agriculture, and hazardous waste disposal sites) tend to be located in, around, and throughout low-income communities of color.<sup>35</sup> In a 2016 Neighborhood Environmental Action Report, a coalition of community organizations called out leading environmental justice issues in Grand Rapids, and actions to address them. Highlighted environmental injustices include vapor intrusion in the southeast Madison Square Neighborhood, high rates of lead poisoning, lack of access to healthy food, lack of access to green space, poor air quality, and climate change. All these issues disproportionately impacted Grand Rapids' communities of color.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> LINC UP & Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice. (2019). *Neighborhood Environmental Action Report: Health, Environment and Race in Grand Rapids*. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wjuz\\_8uv8OYqgRLEmRm5HzFu1WKL9Mo/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wjuz_8uv8OYqgRLEmRm5HzFu1WKL9Mo/view)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

## **RIVER INVESTMENT: An Opportunity To Address Historical Harm And Introduce A Healthier Future**

The restoration of the Grand River channel and development of the adjacent river corridor are unique opportunities to address long-standing inequities. Instead of river investments causing displacement amid rising costs for residents, the City and County can use the river's revitalization as a lever to mitigate disparities in income and opportunity, combat displacement, advance environmental justice, and improve overall outcomes for all residents. The transformation of the river and surrounding corridor presents an opportunity to enhance air quality by promoting biking, walking, and taking transit. It is an opportunity to increase access to green space by building parks, plazas, and trails along the river. Active outdoor lifestyles are a key component of stronger public health outcomes in distressed neighborhoods. New buildings and updated infrastructure can increase access to fresh food and replace lead pipes in historically underinvested communities. In addition to environmental and infrastructural updates, the river investment presents a unique opportunity to create jobs, job pipelines, and supportive programs that will help shrink the racial and gender wage gap in the region and promote equitable economic development regionwide. The Framework provides specific strategies and actions that will help achieve equity goals through the revitalization of the Grand River.





## **IV. Stakeholder Engagement and Community Feedback Loop**

# Stakeholder Engagement and Community Feedback Loop

In 2022 Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. (DGRI) engaged Angel City Advisors and its partners – Estolano Advisors and Khamai Strategies (collectively, the Consultant Team) – to carry out a comprehensive Equity Framework engagement and development process. From April 2022 to December 2022, the Consultant Team worked with DGRI, the City, a publicly-nominated Stakeholder Advisory Board, local leaders, and community members to identify priorities, concerns, strategies, and actions to embed equity into the redevelopment of the Grand River.

While the Consultant Team is the formal author of this document, the content within is community-generated. The Vision, Values, Goals, Strategies, Actions, Metrics, and Priority Outcomes, in particular, have come from current and future river stakeholders.

In the paragraphs below we detail our stakeholder engagement activity. We do so for two reasons. First, to document our methodology and efforts to collect community voice. Second, to leave behind technological and social infrastructure that can be transferred to local agencies who should sustain an ongoing community feedback loop for the river project.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Consultant Team designed, launched and maintained a multi-segment, multi-channel engagement strategy that collected community input over the course of over six months in 2022. The overarching brand of the engagement effort was called Grand River Voices and intended to invoke the past collaborative efforts and ethos of the River for All initiative. The various methods of engagement and information collection are described below.

### *Grand River Voices Website*

An independent Grand River Voices website was created as a key interface for two-way information sharing throughout the engagement process. Its primary URL is [www.GrandRiverVoices.org](http://www.GrandRiverVoices.org) with alternative URLs of [www.GrandRiverVoces.org](http://www.GrandRiverVoces.org) and [www.TuRioTuVoz.org](http://www.TuRioTuVoz.org). At any time, stakeholders can visit the site to receive information, make an open-ended comment, or participate in a digital survey about the river and the equity framework process. The website can be read in English or Spanish. The site has had over 1,600 visits

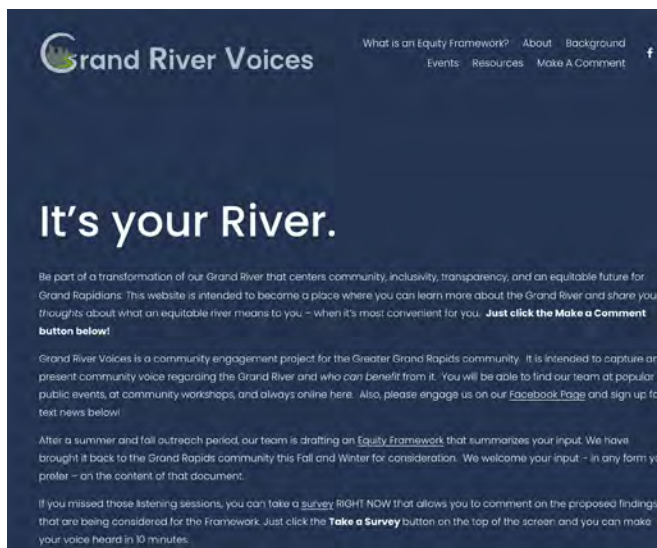


Figure 7: Home page of the [Grand River Voices website](http://www.GrandRiverVoices.org), designed as a two-way channel to distribute river information and solicit continuous feedback.

from over 1,000 unique visitors in its first 250 days and remains active.

### SMS Text Messaging

SMS text messaging was created through SimpleText to increase community participation for cellphone users through mass community update texts. The number is (616) 266-0301 and has more than 180 contacts receiving river equity news via text messages.

### Grand River Voices Facebook Page

A Grand River Voices Facebook page was created under the moniker "Our Grand River" and can be seen [here](#). As a compliment to the website and text messaging channels, Facebook was used for regular project updates and engagement reminders. The channel currently interfaces with more than 765 followers, who in turn "like" and "share" its posts to their networks. There have been 1,144 unique visits to the Facebook page in its first 250 days. Information posted on the page has been liked and shared to create a total reach of roughly 11,500 impressions in 250 days. Posts and community comments continue on Facebook.

### Surveys

Beginning in late September, digital surveys were promoted and shared on the Grand River Voices website and social media as a means of providing structured input outside of formal listening sessions. The goal was to allow stakeholders unable to participate in the in-person listening sessions to contribute online.

1. *Supplemental Outreach Survey #1* – a short "Share your thoughts!" survey was released online for the month of October



Figure 8: Bo Torres provides written and [TV interviews](#) explaining Grand River Voices to Spanish-speaking residents.

2022 to further engage local residents. The questions focused on residents' current river engagement and interests. Overall, 96 surveys were collected and analyzed. Summarized survey results can be viewed in Appendix C.

2. *Supplemental Outreach Survey #2* – a longer "Did we get it right?" survey was released online for the months of November and December 2022. This longer survey focused on the affirmation and prioritization of the proposed findings and actions to be contained in the framework document. 19 responses were submitted as of December 31, 2022, and are summarized in Appendix C.

### Advertising and Media Requests

The engagement and partnering activities of Grand River Voices, as well as the notion of a river equity framework, were also promoted and explained in print and digital outlets to increase awareness and participation. Examples included:

Grand River Equity Framework

- Coverage of the engagement process in a September 12th article of MLive
- Purchase of a weekly ad in Spanish-language *El Vocero* newspaper for 12 weeks from July through October promoting Grand River Voices
- A Spanish-language TV interview about river equity and the outreach process with advocate Adnoris “Bo” Torres with a corresponding September article in *El Vocero*
- Design, printing, and posting of street posters promoting engagement with Grand River Voices including a QR-code to drive traffic to the website. Posters were included in multiple languages including English, Spanish, Swahili, Anishinaabemowin, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai.



Figure 9: Multilingual street posters promoting links to website and text chains.

**Community Outreach and Engagement Events**

The Consultant Team offered multiple in-person and virtual engagement events for residents between May and October of 2022.

**Tabling:** Daylong presence was established at popular community events across the summer, sharing project information, dialoguing with local residents, and collecting contact information for interested stakeholders



Figure 10: Tabling events shared information on the equity framework process & built contacts databases

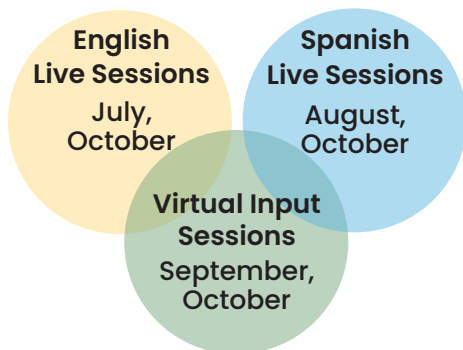


Figure 11: Stakeholder input session at LINC UP



Figure 12: Black Voices at the River in GRPM

**Community Listening Sessions:** Structured focus groups of up to 40 persons per event were held over the summer to present the notions of river equity and determine issue prioritization. Facilitators presented past river input for confirmation of community voice and sought new insights and input. The later October sessions presented the draft findings from the Equity Framework and sought comment on whether the findings indeed reflected community voices. Gift cards were provided to all listening session participants to acknowledge their time and contribution. Food and childcare were provided at all in-person sessions.

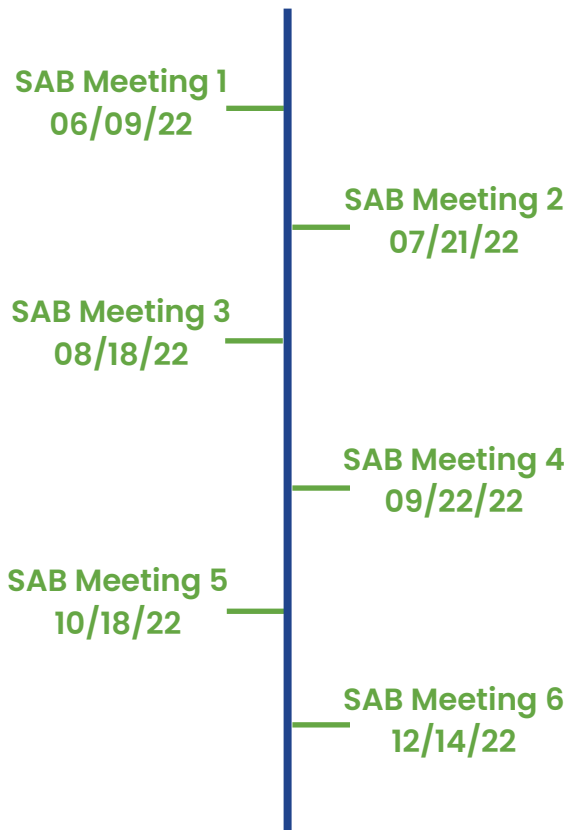


**Other Outreach and Events:** Additional efforts were undertaken to solicit input from multicultural segments that were deemed either hard-to-reach or requiring language capacity. They included:

- Black Voices @ The River was an October event hosted by the GR Public Museum in partnership with multiple advocacy groups. Presentations shared river project information and focused on commercial opportunities for black businesses as part of the upcoming investment
- Outreach to the leadership of the United Tribes of Michigan, including an October presentation, soliciting input from the 12 federally recognized tribes in the state.
- Outreach and in-language input solicited from Asian leaders lead by Stakeholder Advisory Board members in partnership with the West Michigan Asian American Association

### Stakeholder Advisory Board

Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) members were selected via a public process (see [website](#) for detailed description) and tasked to oversee the engagement process, drafting, and release of the Equity Framework document. Six SAB meetings were held throughout the project process:



Minutes of all meetings were posted online to provide transparency to the community (see [website](#) for posted minutes). SAB members were offered participation stipends to acknowledge their time and contribution – about half accepted them.

Other SAB members joined task-specific subcommittees focused on priorities such as enhanced outreach, survey development, and editorial review.



Figure 13: Grand Valley American Indian Lodge Pow Wow at Riverside Park, Community Charette

### Interviews

The Consultant Team carried out over 30 formal implementation interviews of key practitioners, civic leaders, government managers, advocates, and river stakeholders to review the priorities and implementation hurdles related to the execution of a river equity agenda. At least another 30 informal interviews and conversations were held over the course of the process. Participants are listed as contributors in the Acknowledgements section of the Framework.



## DESIGNING A FEEDBACK LOOP

Community partnership and idea exchange should not stop with the publication of this document. By design, the Consultant Team built a community feedback loop for our engagement process with an eye towards creating outreach assets that could be continued once the consultants depart. All stakeholder information and intellectual property associated with Grand River Voices will be transferred over to local river equity organizations to maintain two-way communication over time.

For this project, the Consultant Team's goals were to:

1. Create stakeholder relationships at multiple levels throughout Greater Grand Rapids, to access input from a broad cross-section of future users and implementers of a revitalized Grand River.
2. Synthesize and simplify all past river engagement and river planning work to make public participation easier for busy or fatigued participants. Honor past work by integrating it into our recommendations, and honor current input by adapting past requests to current conditions and sentiments.
3. Bring equity and facilitation tools from national models to Grand Rapids, but invest in local capacity and organizations to deliver them.
4. Draft an equity framework document and bring it back to the community for review and endorsement, prior to producing a final document to be presented to larger institutions.

The Consulting Team believes that we have executed on this engagement strategy and is prepared to deliver a community-generated framework for broader endorsement and implementation.



Figure 14: Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit





# V. Goals, Strategies, and Actions

# Goals, Strategies, and Actions

This section holds the greatest community-sourced detail underpinning the Equity Framework. It includes high-level goals for the community's equity ambitions for the revitalization of the river, strategies to support the advancement of each goal, actions to be taken to implement strategies, and potential metrics to measure success. It also recommends prioritized outcomes as tangible measures of progress.

The recommendations below reflect significant input from our 2022 community

engagement activities, as well as review of decades of river-related documents, plans, and feedback from the region. As such, the Consulting Team presents a framework that authentically reflects the equity and environmental justice priorities of the Greater Grand Rapids and Kent County community. The core of the framework is its Goals, Strategies, and Actions. We also propose Priority Outcomes and Metrics that are easier to track and report. Below is a description of how to understand each of them.

1

## **Goals**

Broad, aspirational statements of what stakeholders want to achieve.

2

## **Strategies**

Approaches that stakeholders may take to achieve a goal.

3

## **Actions**

Specific policies, programs or tools that may be used to support a strategy.

4

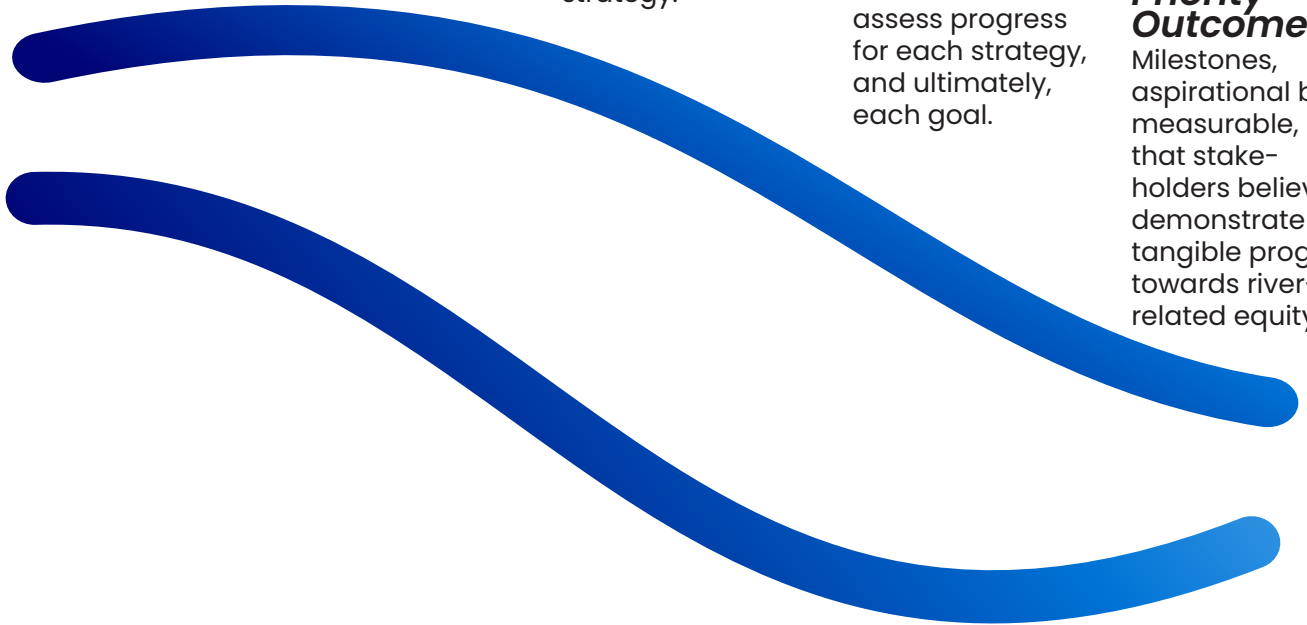
## **Metrics**

Quantifiable measures to assess progress for each strategy, and ultimately, each goal.

5

## **Priority Outcomes**

Milestones, aspirational but measurable, that stakeholders believe demonstrate tangible progress towards river-related equity.



The Framework is organized across six community-defined priorities, which we label as Goals. The Framework also proposes more specific Strategies, Actions, and Metrics that can be used to track progress. While the report overwhelmingly avoids naming projects, partners, or budgets, it does propose a series of Priority Outcomes that we uplift as worthy measures of progress to improve opportunity, equity, and inclusion.

- » A Goal is *What the Community Wants*. Within each goal, a subset of more honed Strategies is proposed.
- » A Strategy suggests *How We Get There*.
- » An Action proposes *What Specific Steps We Take*.
- » A Metric is *What We Should Measure Along the Way*.
- » A Priority Outcome is *Our Community's Resolution to Improve*. Consider these outcomes as the region's proposed stakes in the ground.

The six Goals and accompanying Strategies elaborated on in the following sections are:

### Goal 1: Equitable Economic Development

Create quality jobs and career pathways through river programs and policies

Support the sustainability and expansion of small, local, and BIPOC businesses

Leverage river-related policy to catalyze community economic development and stabilize neighborhoods

### Goal 2: An Accessible River

Improve and expand equitable connections to the river

Create vibrant and open public spaces

### Goal 3: An Inviting, Inclusive River

Provide free and low-cost, culturally-relevant programming

Create and sustain a safe, welcoming river

### Goal 4: A Healthy River and Community

Continue to monitor water quality, restore habitat health, and incorporate green stormwater infrastructure

Work with communities to continue advancing environmental justice

### Goal 5: Engaged, Supported Youth

Create opportunities for youth to explore and play

Create opportunities for youth to learn and work

Foster youth agency and leadership

### Goal 6: Implementation and Accountability

Invest in a dedicated nonprofit for the River Project

Build broad endorsements for the River Equity Framework

Build social infrastructure to support the river ecosystem, including an ongoing feedback loop, transparency, and accountability mechanisms



# GOAL 1: Equitable Economic Development

# Goal 1

## Equitable economic development

This goal focuses on ensuring that investments in, and redevelopment of, the Grand River corridor result in equitable economic development opportunities and good jobs for residents and small businesses, as well as multi-benefit development that is responsive to various local needs.

### Strategy 1.1

#### Create quality jobs and career pathways through programs and policies

River redevelopment will spur a variety of jobs, largely short-term construction and development jobs and long-term maintenance, operations, programming, and services jobs. The Framework recommends ensuring residents, especially underemployed and BIPOC communities, can access quality job opportunities and career ladders as a part of project implementation.

### 1.1 PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Local hire goal of 30% of total work hours on City and/or County river contracts
- Targeted hire (BIPOC, low-income, and underemployed communities) goal of 20% of total work hours on all City and/or County river contracts

### 1.1 ACTIONS

**ACTION 1.1.1.** As part of an ongoing River Engagement Plan and feedback loop, maintain and expand employment out-reach and education to residents, entrepreneurs, businesses, and community-based organizations (CBOs) about upcoming river redevelopment project job opportunities, both short-term and long-term.

**ACTION 1.1.2.** Analyze local data to set equitable local hire and targeted hire goals that convey legal requirements for contractors and operations partners for each river corridor and watershed-related project to maximize opportunities for residents, especially BIPOC, low-income, and residents with barriers to employment.

**ACTION 1.1.3.** Embed equity language into river construction, operations and maintenance contracts and Request for Proposal (RFP) solicitations related to local and targeted hire, equal opportunity, and living wages.

**ACTION 1.1.4.** Establish a capacity-building fund to support local workforce development partnerships focused on training and hiring pipelines with river contractors, as well as interventions that limit causes of attrition for entry-level hires.

**ACTION 1.1.5.** Continue to coordinate with local and regional workforce partners to sustain and expand paid construction training programs and apprenticeships that will lead to river-related jobs.

**ACTION 1.1.6.** Create a labor monitoring and reporting system that 1) holds contractors and local business partners responsible for providing workforce data for river projects and 2) tracks jobs created, demographics, wages, and other relevant statistics. Determine how to provide support and capacity to small businesses to not overburden them with reporting requirements.

**ACTION 1.1.7.** Set up a mechanism to track the number of jobs created with public dollars along with demographics of workers, wages, and other relevant statistics. The mechanism should share information across key partners and be independently verifiable. Incentivize measurement and performance under public contracts to meet equity goals.

**ACTION 1.1.8.** Building on River for All and other preliminary operations and maintenance (O&M) studies, develop a collaborative O&M plan for the river that estimates the demand for O&M jobs to sustain wet and dry river infrastructure, including green storm-water infrastructure, arboriculture, sanitation, security, landscapers, trail maintenance, and more.

**ACTION 1.1.9.** Fund the sustainability and expansion of water and green infrastructure training programs for youth and adults to connect to paid careers in green infrastructure and stormwater management.

**ACTION 1.1.10.** Expand local outreach to marginalized and underemployed communities to connect them to training and apprenticeship programs related to river redevelopment.

Grand Rapids has a number of robust workforce development organizations and programs that should align around preparing underrepresented groups to work in the river construction industry, and connecting them to tangible job opportunities and support services.

Potential partners include the [Grand Rapids Community College](#) programs, [Construction Allies](#), and the [Grand Rapids Center for Community Transformation](#). Other organizations can partner to groom and promote local firms to bid on contracts and subcontracts, like the [GR Chamber](#), [Hispanic Chamber](#), [GRABB](#), the [Asian Chamber](#), and [Latina Network](#). Key local construction partners like [Rockford Construction](#) can hire and subcontract to meet equity goals.

## 1.1 METRICS

- # of seasonal jobs created – construction, green infrastructure
- # of new permanent jobs created – operations & maintenance, green infrastructure, vendors, programming
- % of local workers hired per local hire policy or practice
- % of targeted workers hired per targeted hire policy or practice
- % of construction contracts or labor agreements including a minimum 30% local hire goal, 20% targeted hire goal, and 100% living wages
- % of construction contracts with stated BIPOC worker hiring goal above 15%
- % of construction contracts with



stated women worker hiring goal above 5%

- Michigan Global Domestic Product (GDP) for recreation industry
- Funding dollars allocated to workforce development programs
- # of workers trained through workforce development partnerships
- % of workers hired successfully from training programs
- Drafted and adopted River O&M Jobs Implementation Plan
- Decrease in unemployment, especially in targeted zip codes

## Strategy 1.2

### Support the sustainability and expansion of small, local, and BIPOC businesses

River redevelopment and ongoing maintenance will stimulate significant demand for contracting and subcontracting opportunities. The river corridor will also provide a platform for small businesses offering programming, meals, entertainment, and other services. The Framework recommends a variety of actions to ensure local firms, especially emerging and BIPOC-owned firms, access quality contracting and vending opportunities as a part of the river project.

## 1.2 PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Double the number of MLBEs in the City and County databases in 24 months
- MLBE, WBE or BIPOC spend goal of 30% of all City and County river contracts

## 1.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 1.2.1.** Support the creation and cultivation of local, small, and BIPOC businesses along the river corridor, positioned to capture commercial opportunities related to river redevelopment and likely to hire youth and nearby residents.

**ACTION 1.2.2.** Support the sustainability, capitalization, and expansion of existing local, small, and BIPOC businesses near the river corridor that provide products and services related to river activities.

**ACTION 1.2.2.1** Small business development actions above will require further economic planning for the future river corridor. Create a multidisciplinary working group to address the size and nature of small business opportunities, provide recommendations for river-specific small business development, identify required supports and onramps, and establish success metrics in alignment with the Framework. This might be called a River Economy implementation plan.

**ACTION 1.2.3.** Continue to promote and expand the Micro Local Business Enterprise Program to increase the number of MLBE-certified businesses related to construction, goods and services, and professional services in preparation for river projects. Evaluate requirements and restrictions to make it easier for businesses to apply for certification.

**ACTION 1.2.4.** Continue to partner with the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, the Grand Rapids Chamber, local BIPOC chambers

of commerce, and workforce partners to support entrepreneurs of color in starting a business. Provide technical assistance for the MLBE program or other certification programs and provide networking and community-building opportunities for local entrepreneurs and businesses.

**ACTION 1.2.5.** Engage small businesses to inform a river-adjacent commercial space and an incubation or accelerator program for MLBEs providing products/services related to the river or within the river corridor.

**ACTION 1.2.6.** Reduce barriers for contractors with the City of Grand Rapids by easing and streamlining procedural policies for Construction and Goods and Services Guidelines. Introduce a similar streamlining intervention for Kent County and local townships.

**ACTION 1.2.7.** Identify opportunity sites to add flexible-use open spaces and new affordable brick-and-mortar spaces for small businesses that seek to serve river visitors. Consider codifying these low-cost spaces as “pink zones” for pop-ups and other early entrepreneurs seeking to tap into the river-user customer segment.

## 1.2 METRICS

- # of new businesses within river corridor
- # of new BIPOC businesses
- # of women-owned businesses
- # of MLBE-certified businesses related to river redevelopment industries
- # of retained businesses

- # of businesses grown from micro to small, small to medium, etc.
- #/% of BIPOC contractors receiving river work
- Funding allocated for technical assistance to support new business creation or business expansion/pivot into river opportunities
- Expansion or creation of business accelerator program
- % of all City and/or County river contract dollars flowing to MLBE or BIPOC firms
- Year-over-year (YOY) increases in above metrics

## Strategy 1.3

### Initiate river-related policy to catalyze community economic development and stabilize neighborhoods

River investment is likely to catalyze adjacent real estate development – this can be positive in creating more resident-friendly spaces and amenities, but may also trigger rising residential and commercial costs and displacement of existing residents and businesses. This strategy identifies actions that can proactively meet local needs and stabilize neighborhoods beyond downtown Grand Rapids at-risk of gentrification and displacement.

## 1.3 PRIORITY OUTCOME(S):

- Integration of the Equity Framework into City, County, township, and other planning and zoning documents
- Updated river planning overlays that codify key Equity Framework goals

## 1.3 ACTIONS

**ACTION 1.3.1.** Integrate Equity Framework into City and County Planning documents such as the City Master Plan, Kent County Parks Master Plan, and others. Other municipalities and jurisdictions should also look to incorporate common goals into their planning processes.

**ACTION 1.3.2.** Update river-adjacent zoning and planning overlays to achieve corridor goals such as public access at the shoreline, stormwater management and flood control, density step-backs from the river, and auto parking/uses away from river.

**ACTION 1.3.3.** Explore commercial anti-displacement policies for businesses within the River Corridor that can also extend throughout the City such as zoning reforms, commercial tenant protections, and commercial property co-ownership.

**ACTION 1.3.4.** Support the City and County in meeting their housing needs – 8,921 rental units and 13,218 for-sale units County-wide by 2025 – by developing affordable housing, market rate housing, and other typologies via on-site development or payments to the City’s Affordable Housing Fund throughout the river corridor. In partnership with stakeholders, set a housing and affordable housing inventory goal for the river corridor.

**ACTION 1.3.5.** Pull local and federal levers to fund and actualize affordable housing development. Craft zoning to allow for significant residential growth that uses Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

Use creative funding solutions like combinations of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and bonds to build affordable units.

**ACTION 1.3.6.** Work with City and County agencies and existing nonprofits to preserve existing affordable housing, both rented and owned.

**ACTION 1.3.7.** Mitigate potential residential displacement pressures by promoting home ownership, expanding the capacity of community land trusts, or enacting deed restrictions on naturally occurring affordable housing stock.

## 1.3 METRICS

- # of new housing units and commercial square footage built
- # of affordable housing units built or preserved
- Change in # of vacant lots or underutilized lots
- Updated zoning and planning overlays proposed and/or implemented
- Dollars generated for the City’s Affordable Housing Fund
- Total dollars utilized towards affordable housing
- Commercial vacancy rates within the river corridor
- Demographic shifts (or stability) in historic communities of color within the river corridor
- Changes in property values for zip codes along the river corridor (against a regional baseline)

**GOAL 2:  
An Accessible River**



## Goal 2

# An accessible river

This goal encompasses strategies to ensure that the Grand River is accessible to all through enhanced physical connections, diverse transportation options, and preserved and expanded space for public use.

### Strategy 2.1

## Improve and expand equitable connections to the river

Not everyone has equal access to the Grand River, whether due to distance from the river, lack of private transportation, physical barriers like highways and industry, or cost. The actions below aim to improve access to the river for individuals from all neighborhoods and of all backgrounds, especially those who have historically been disconnected from the river.

### 2.1 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

- 40 miles of new bike lanes, off-street trails, and public transit connections to the river
- 1,000,000 unique river visitors to special event by 2025
- 20% increase in active transportation and transit users accessing the river

### 2.1 ACTIONS

**ACTION 2.1.1.** Based on current mobility strategies identified by local and regional planning and transportation

departments, advocate for and monitor active transportation-friendly streets and crossings for those who walk, bike, skate, or scoot to the river.

**ACTION 2.1.2.** Support the planned expansion of walking and biking path networks – both trails and paths that lead to the river and paths along the riverfront itself. Partner with river-adjacent communities to craft a River Access implementation plan that connects neighborhoods through active transportation updates and greenway projects. Remain focused on neighborhoods historically lacking access due to lack of transportation or physical barriers due to industry or infrastructure, such as prioritizing a project plan for a Plaster Creek Greenway and a rehabilitation plan for Oxford Trail.

**ACTION 2.1.3.** Support conceptual design, funding, and implementation of safer pedestrian and bike right of ways on river bridges.

**ACTION 2.1.4.** Partner with cities, transit agencies, and the County to implement pilots such as the Mobility Wallet with incentives and subsidies for walking, biking, taking transit or ride shares to access the river, especially for BIPOC communities and under-resourced neighborhoods outside of the city center.

**ACTION 2.1.5.** Engage local and regional transit agencies to plan and coordinate services to ensure the river corridor is served by a range of transportation options, as well as accommodations for items used in water-based activities, such as kayaks and fishing gear.

**ACTION 2.1.6.** Fund and publicize high-quality, frequent public transit that offers intuitive routes to the river and surrounding areas for residents, workers, and visitors.

**ACTION 2.1.7.** Create a river parking program with equitable access components such as close parking for people with mobility limitations, and affordable public parking options at key river nodes.

## 2.1 METRICS

- # of miles of new and existing bike lanes, walking trails, transit routes that connect to the river
- % increase in active transportation and transit users accessing the river
- % of residents within a 15-minute walk, bike, or transit ride from a park or green space
- # of unique visitors and average time of visit, frequency, and repetition of visits
- # of unique visitors from outside of Downtown Grand Rapids

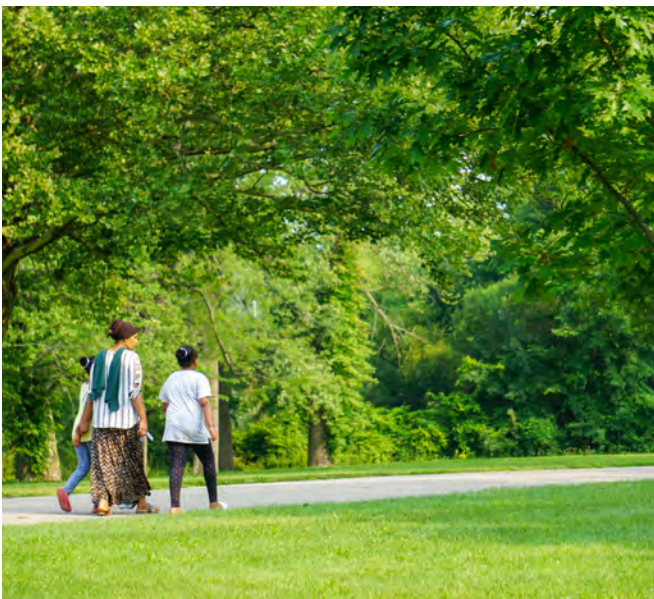


Figure 15: Riverside Trail

## Strategy 2.2

### Develop vibrant and open public spaces

As the river is redeveloped, public spaces should serve local needs for gathering and green space. The riverfront should offer passive, open space for unprogrammed enjoyment, as well as active and formalized spaces for recreation, events, and programs. The following actions aim to preserve and create as much public space as possible for residents and visitors to enjoy themselves along the river.

## 2.2 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

- 100% of all undeveloped river's edge protected for public access
- New public shoreline access on previously inaccessible shoreline
- 50 acres of new and renovated riverfront park spaces in the urban core in 10 years
- 200 acres of new riverfront park spaces in Kent County in 10 years
- Provision or transfer of dedicated ceremonial river space for indigenous tribal communities
- 100% all redevelopment projects ADA-accessible and universally-designed

## 2.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 2.2.1.** Prioritize publicly-owned property along the riverbanks to accommodate public gathering spaces, amenities, and connected river paths, whether via public or private development. Consider acquisition of easements to ensure public access in perpetuity.

**ACTION 2.2.2.** Wherever possible, build green space along both sides of the river that can be accessed by land or water, and does not require conflict with private property or vehicular traffic.

**ACTION 2.2.3.** Partner with local tribal communities to identify, evaluate, and establish dedicated sites and approved uses along the river for ceremony and cultural gatherings. Ensure that sites will be appropriately resourced and maintained.

**ACTION 2.2.4.** Explore feasibility of transfer of sacred land back to indigenous peoples from municipalities for tribal stewardship. Ensure that sites are appropriately resourced for long-term care.

**ACTION 2.2.5.** Work with elderly, disabled, and other communities to identify riverfront space prioritizing passive recreation – open spaces, unprogrammed and undesigned areas that offer quiet respite within the city center.

**ACTION 2.2.6.** Work directly with the elderly and disabled communities, as well as parents with children, to design riverfront spaces that ensure all river visitors can use amenities, easily navigate the surrounding area, and have safe water access points.

**ACTION 2.2.7.** Designate clear river access points (safe put-in and take-out points) with multilingual signage facing both in-channel waterways and on the riverbanks, prioritizing locations in BIPOC communities along the river (such as Wealthy Street bridge and riverfront to the south) without historically easy access.

**ACTION 2.2.8.** Designate spaces for recreation rentals like kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, and bikes.

**ACTION 2.2.9.** Aligned with the City's Parklet Program, encourage parklets in underutilized spaces along street corridors leading to the river or along the river itself.

**ACTION 2.2.10.** Equip riverfront public spaces with utility infrastructure (e.g. water, electricity, broadband, bike repair) to support vendors, businesses, events, and programming.

**ACTION 2.2.11.** Establish a river public art fund to hire local artists and community volunteers to develop art projects along the river corridor, in the downtown core, and other designated river areas throughout Kent County.

## 2.2 METRICS

- # of new parks and public spaces
- # acres of public space along the river corridor
- # put-in and take-out spaces on the river
- Linear feet of previously inaccessible private or public riverfront space now publicly accessible
- % ADA compliant and % universally designed (UD) public spaces
- # of unique visitors and average time of visit, frequency, and repetition of visits
- Amount of funding allocated to and spent on public art projects
- # of public art projects
- # of local artists, volunteers, or youth, etc. engaged in public art projects



**GOAL 3:**  
**An Inviting, Inclusive River**



**Goal  
3**

**An Inviting,  
Inclusive River**

This goal includes strategies to ensure that people from all walks of life feel safe, welcomed, and included when enjoying the river and its amenities.

**Strategy  
3.1**

**Provide free  
and low-cost,  
culturally relevant  
programming**

With a more accessible river and more public space comes the opportunity for activities, events, and programs in and along the river. This strategy suggests actions that aim to ensure river programming is offered for all ages, cultures, and interests. Appendix B offers a list of potential river-related activities, and programs for consideration.

**3.1 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:**

- 350 events at the river per year, with an emphasis on community and cultural themes
- 3,000 hours of measurable river activation annually
- Demographic breakdown of river event attendees that mirrors regional demographics

**3.1 ACTIONS**

**ACTION 3.1.1.** Take direction from community members and public agencies to develop and implement a Program and Activation Plan that delivers diverse activities, events, and programs in and along the river for all

cultures, ages, incomes, and backgrounds. For BIPOC-focused events, BIPOC and multicultural leadership of event planning should be encouraged.

**ACTION 3.1.2.** As part of a River Communications Plan, engage neighborhoods to inform residents about opportunities to enjoy the river. Integrate multicultural images and multiple languages to emphasize inclusive programming.

**ACTION 3.1.3.** Work with the City to improve the expensive and complicated permitting processes for events to allow smaller community-based organizations and small businesses easier opportunities to host events along the river.



Figure 17: After Dark Event Performer

### 3.1 METRICS

- Amount of allocated public and private funding to support river program
- # of community and cultural events held per year along the river
- # of people (and # of Kent County residents) attending community and cultural events
- # of programs offered in and along the river – breakdown by demographics
- # of program participants – breakdown % of participants by zip code, gender, race, age, income, primary language

### Strategy 3.2

#### Create and sustain a safe, welcoming river

Not all residents have historically had a connection to the river, nor felt that the river or even the region is a place where they belong due to historic segregation, lack of accessibility and other barriers. This strategy focuses on actions that support and uplift basic community care and accessibility, community-informed public safety and water safety, and the overlooked history of Indigenous and Black communities' relationship to the river.

### 3.2 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

- 35 new educational, art, and safety installations along the shoreline by 2025
- Public Wellness Facilities every half-mile along the river trail or bike path

from Millennium to Riverside Parks

- Annual riverfront cleanliness indices show year-over-year (YOY) improvement
- 90% of all Kent County Youth aged 7-18 can swim, or have the opportunity to take (or have taken) a water safety class
- Repeal ordinance prohibiting swimming in the river as soon as health & safety conditions allow
- 100% of visitors feel safe and welcomed at the river



Figure 17: Public educational, art, and safety installations can come in many forms, including street murals.

## 3.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 3.2.1.** As part of a River Communications Plan, develop a strategy to create public stanchions, art installations, and other structures that provide permanent, multilingual information about the river inclusive of local Indigenous and Black communities' relationships to the river, and environmental justice.

**ACTION 3.2.2.** Incorporate ADA-compliant wayfinding infrastructure for a variety of mobility needs – blindness, deafness, service dogs, wheelchairs, and other mobility devices.

**ACTION 3.2.3.** Determine locations for public wellness facilities along the river – restrooms with changing tables, seating, water fountains, heating stations, internet hotspots, and other public amenities – in the design of public river projects and ensure investment in their maintenance and cleaning. Wellness facilities should consider the needs of both visitors and the unhoused, seeking to serve both.

**ACTION 3.2.4.** Build capacity for local homelessness outreach teams – Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness, City of Grand Rapids Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), and other partners – to deliver coordinated services to unhoused river residents in a convenient and known river location.

**ACTION 3.2.5.** Convene river partners to create a community-informed Public Safety Strategy for the river corridor that identifies inclusive strategies for stewardship for the corridor.

**ACTION 3.2.6.** Consider repeal of the Grand Rapids ordinance in the Municipal Code, Sec. 9.186 regarding swimming in the river once access points and amenities are restored. Legal river swimming would need to be combined with water quality, water education and safety programs.

**ACTION 3.2.7.** Provide resources to community partners that offer certified swim programs in order to carry out a standardized, free water safety program to residents across the County. Take affirmative steps to enroll families who have had generational barriers to swimming and provide free safety and recreational gear at no cost for low-income families.

## 3.2 METRICS

- # of cultural landmarks in river corridor, especially focused on indigenous history, communities of color, and environmental justice
- % of visitors aware of historical/cultural assets along the river corridor
- Funding amount allocated to safety, access, and public amenities
- # of new amenities – restrooms, benches, water fountains, etc.
- # of newly housed individuals or individuals connected to services
- # of youth and adults completing water safety programs
- % of residents feeling safe and welcomed within the river corridor
- % reduction of crime within the river corridor
- # of ADA-compliant or UD features and wayfinding in each public space

**GOAL 4:  
A Healthy River and Community**



## Goal 4

# A healthy river and community

This goal aims to support the sustainability, health, and resilience of the Grand River, its watershed and regional ecosystem, and prioritize environmental justice for Grand Rapidsians through participation and local stewardship.

## Strategy 4.1

### Continue to monitor water quality, restore habitat health, and incorporate green stormwater infrastructure

Over time, investments in water quality monitoring, green stormwater infrastructure, and sewer improvements have improved water quality in the Grand River. There is still much more to do to restore the river ecosystem, and this strategy offers actions to expand upon existing work to ensure a healthy river and subsequently, healthy communities.

## 4.1 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

- Public release of a report card with river water quality and other key indices
- Year over year decrease in air particulate matter
- Measurable decrease in ambient sound levels
- Reintroduction of sturgeon to Grand River
- Reintroduction of native Grand River plants
- 40% tree canopy coverage along the river corridor

- All new public and private projects incorporate green stormwater infrastructure or traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) practice

## 4.1 ACTIONS

**ACTION 4.1.1.** Continue water sampling and real-time water quality measurements at Sixth Street Bridge, North Park Street Bridge, and Fulton Street Bridge. Consider expanding the program to more locations. Create a plan to communicate this information in a frequent, easy-to-understand format for all residents.

**ACTION 4.1.2.** Collaborate with and invest in local tribes, environmental justice communities, and community partners to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), local knowledge, historical context and lived experience into river and watershed management and protection.

**ACTION 4.1.3.** Seek out funding and partner with local research institution(s) to conduct long-range research on the impact of the river redevelopment on water quality and habitat health.

**ACTION 4.1.4.** Ensure 100% of river projects align with the Lower Grand River Watershed Management Plan (WMP) Best Management Practices (BMPs) that control sources or causes of pollution.

**ACTION 4.1.5.** Support the removal of aging dams and projects that restore habitat, improve fish passage, and control invasive species in line with current Grand Rapids White Water project plans and associated regulatory conditions.

**ACTION 4.1.6.** Work with the City and County to set state and federal advocacy targets related to river and watershed health and environmental justice.

**ACTION 4.1.7.** Consistent with the River for All design guidelines (2019), set City and County goals for green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) requirements within river projects that may include permeable paving, bioswales, rainwater harvesting, green streets, tree planting, and native plants; create O&M Plans to ensure longevity and success of GSI projects.

**ACTION 4.1.8.** Evaluate existing tree canopy and health through the river corridor and recommend strategies to achieve and maintain robust canopy coverage.

**ACTION 4.1.9.** As part of a River Communications Plan, create a public “River Report Card” to offer outreach and education to residents on the water quality of the river, including what impacts water quality (e.g., stormwater, litter), and how to understand data being monitored. A report card should exist in multiple languages and be published in both mainstream and multicultural media channels.

## 4.1 METRICS

- Improved water quality in the river and its tributaries
- % pathogen and bacteria reduction, such as concentration of E. Coli
- % sediment load reduction, such as sediment concentration and pebble counts
- % nutrient reduction, such as amount

of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water

- Average water temperature
- % riverbank and streambank erosion
- # of new trees planted in river corridor
- Improved air quality
- # of projects or activities incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Planned and implemented water quality monitoring plan
- Amount of funding allocated for green stormwater infrastructure projects
- Amount of funding allocated to improve water quality
- Operations and Maintenance Plans for every GSI project
- # of native plants planted in river corridor
- Implementation of new and existing anti-discharge policies
- # of advocacy/policy wins related to watershed health and environmental justice

### Key Environmental Success Metrics from [2022 City of Grand Rapids Strategic Plan](#):

- Grand River Water Quality Index at or above 70
- 100% of all [EGLE water quality standards](#) met
- 20 million gallons of stormwater infiltrated annually

## Strategy 4.2

### Work with communities to continue advancing environmental justice

Decades of work has been done to ease the burden of environmental hazards on Grand Rapids' most vulnerable, frontline communities, but much is left to be done. This strategy's actions focus on addressing environmental harms and creating a sense of community ownership in caring for the river's health.

#### 4.2 PRIORITY OUTCOMES:

- Actively enforced local, state, and federal laws to protect and promote clean water
- Partnerships with Southside communities to clean adjacent river and tributaries, achieving equity in regional water quality

#### 4.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 4.2.1.** Incorporate culturally-relevant environmental education in all languages represented in Kent County into programming and wayfinding along the river to help build awareness around clean water and connection to the river.

**ACTION 4.2.2.** Fund and expand existing education programs on climate change, watershed ecology, stormwater, rainwater, and more to help residents learn and be inspired to take environmental action.

**ACTION 4.2.3.** Fund and expand community clean-up opportunities that allow residents to help restore the river and tributaries, such as the Mayors' Grand River Cleanup event that is entering its 20th year of partnership.

**ACTION 4.2.4.** Work with public agencies to evaluate the feasibility of incorporating renewable energy strategies into river redevelopment projects.

**ACTION 4.2.5.** Evaluate the opportunities to integrate urban agriculture along the river to support food insecurity and food education, and build capacity for food justice organizations to serve local communities.

**ACTION 4.2.6.** Prohibit dumping and enforce anti-discharge policies to eliminate contaminant inputs into nearby tributaries and the Grand River.

**ACTION 4.2.7.** Work with the City, County, and local partners to increase local response to watershed pollution in local tributaries, with an emphasis on downstream communities.

#### 4.2 METRICS

- # of environmental education resources along the river corridor
- # of environmental education programs
- # of organizations providing education programs
- # of clean-ups within the river and its tributaries
- Plan for renewable energy opportunities
- # of urban agriculture sites
- Amount of funding allocated for environmental nonprofits
- Amount of funding allocated for river corridor clean ups
- # of community volunteers working on clean-ups, plantings, restoration projects



**GOAL 5:  
Engaged, Supported Youth**



## Goal 5

# Engaged, supported youth

This goal is focused on ensuring that local youth, specifically, feel included and empowered as part of the river revitalization initiative through opportunities to play, create, learn, explore, and work. River revitalization is a multi-decade project and requires a youth movement with a bright vision of the future to maintain momentum.

## Strategy 5.1

### Broaden opportunities for youth to explore and play

This strategy focuses on capacity building to offer youth more opportunities to engage with the river, especially individuals who traditionally lack access to the river and safe outdoor spaces.

## 5.1 PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- 150 annual field trips to the river from low-income and communities of color
- Annual River Youth event planned by, and for, local youth

## 5.1 ACTIONS

**ACTION 5.1.1.** Outreach to and partner with local youth-serving organizations and programs to 1) gather information about their offerings to identify gaps and opportunities for expansion, and 2) collaborate on a Youth Programming Strategy that takes account of previous and current efforts, builds them to scale,

and focuses on equity considerations.

**ACTION 5.1.2.** Create a source of funds to support and expand youth outdoors programming that is culturally-relevant, free or low-cost, and open to varying physical and developmental abilities.

**ACTION 5.1.3.** Develop an annual Youth & The River event that includes activities, food, music, and education targeted towards local youth.

**ACTION 5.1.4.** Target and expand programming for youth of color and youth from Southeast and Southwest communities to take place at the river.

## 5.1 METRICS

- # of youth programs
- # of local youth-serving organizations engaged
- Amount of funding allocated to new and existing youth outdoors programming
- # of participating youth from low-income and communities of color



Figure 18: [STEM Greenhouse](#) is committed to growing STEM proficiency in vulnerable children.

Strategy  
5.2

Deepen opportunities  
for youth to learn and  
work

With the construction of new amenities and the maintenance needed for the future of the river, youth are able to gain exposure, refine skills, explore career opportunities related to environmental sciences, construction and trades, and small business entrepreneurship. This strategy's actions focus on expanding those opportunities for learning, as well as paid job opportunities in related fields to create career pathways for youth.

5.2 PRIORITY OUTCOMES

- Every student in Kent County takes a course on Environmental Studies that reviews concepts like stormwater, pollution, climate change, ecosystem balance using the Grand River as a case study
- Deepen educational opportunities via STEM Greenhouse, Grand Rapids Public Museum, GREEN's partnership with Grand Rapids Public Schools, or equivalent programs
- 300 summer "river ambassador" or "river entrepreneur" paid internships for youth per year

5.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 5.2.1.** Fund and expand youth environmental science programs that offer hands-on engagement with investigation and analysis of water quality testing in the river and general watershed education.



Figure 19: A [collaboration](#) of Calvin University faculty, staff, and students working with local partners to restore Plaster Creek watershed.

**ACTION 5.2.2.** Work with local schools and higher education institutions to develop partnerships for career exploration in environmental science, building trades related to the river, engineering and hydrology, and other related pathways.

**ACTION 5.2.3.** Fund and expand paid job opportunities for young adults as part of local small businesses, green jobs training, tourism, operations and maintenance, public art projects, or other river-related opportunities.

5.2 METRICS

- # of youth environmental science program opportunities
- # of youth participants in programs – by race, language, neighborhood
- # of youth with paid job or internship opportunities and training
- # of partnerships with local schools and universities
- Amount of funding allocated to new and existing environmental science and job training programs



Figure 20: The [GREEN](#) partnership supports equitable access to environmental education. It ensures young people are environmentally literate, connected to the natural world, and prepared to protect Michigan’s natural resources.

**Strategy 5.3 Foster youth agency and leadership**

It is crucial for local youth to have a voice and agency to make an authentic impact on the future of their City and County. This strategy focuses on creating leadership opportunities for youth to engage with the river redevelopment as a launching point.

**5.3 PRIORITY OUTCOMES**

- Creation of River Youth Advisory Council of diverse representation
- 10,000 river posts per year on youth-preferred social media
- “It’s my River” video competition

**5.3 ACTIONS**

**ACTION 5.3.1.** As part of a River Communications Plan, create an outreach strategy to reach, inform, and activate youth directly as a primary audience.

**ACTION 5.3.2.** Create a River Youth Advisory Council made up of diverse youth

ambassadors that would meet regularly to 1) lead the regional youth vision for the river and 2) promote opportunities and provide education via social media.

**ACTION 5.3.3.** Create an “It’s My River” video competition promoting experiences on the river, and a youth-centric vision of the future of the river.

**5.3 METRICS**

- Development of Youth outreach plan
- # of youth engaged through outreach
- # posts/impressions about the river
- Establishment of Youth River Advisory Council



Figure 21: Summer Science and Leadership Camp held at the GRPM (2022).



**GOAL 6:  
Implementation and Accountability**

## Goal 6

# Implementation and Accountability

This goal focuses on promoting the longevity of a thriving Grand River Corridor through the establishment of dedicated organizational infrastructure that can act as a liaison with the City, County, and other key implementation partners, maintain an ongoing feedback loop with stakeholders, manage river-focused resources, collect data, and hold agencies and themselves accountable for carrying out equitable river work. A dedicated organization, called Grand River Network, has recently been created.

## Strategy 6.1

### Invest in a nonprofit for the River Project

The following actions outline the early core roles of nonprofit Grand River Network that can initiate the implementation of this Framework and position itself as an advocate and central convener for all river equity matters.

## 6.1 PRIORITY OUTCOME

- Investment in Grand River Network as a diverse organization whose sole focus is the collaborative implementation of the community's vision for Grand River corridor revitalization and greenway-building, which adopts this Equity Framework in full, and acts as advocate and implementer for river equity

## 6.1 ACTIONS

**ACTION 6.1.1.** Establish the nonprofit with a sole focus of collaborative implementation of a community vision for the Grand River revitalization, which adopts the Equity Framework as a core element of its mission, and acts as an advocate, convener, intermediary, and implementer within the ecosystem of river stakeholders.

**ACTION 6.1.2.** Adopt a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) Plan at Grand River Network to guide organizational development and growth, governance, and operations. Establish a broadly representative board and standing committees. Consider a public selection process similar to that utilized to create the Stakeholder Advisory Board for this Framework.

**ACTION 6.1.3.** Develop partnerships and working groups around river-related issues, such as environment, workforce, engagement, and programming.

**ACTION 6.1.4.** Initiate a series of implementation and action plans that detail the strategies, projects, programs, partners, funding sources, budgets, and timelines to execute the larger river project in alignment with this Framework.

**ACTION 6.1.5** Review the Equity Framework every two (2) years to assess progress and make strategic adjustments, sharing progress publicly with stakeholders.

## 6.1 METRICS

- Establishment of river nonprofit operational guidelines and DEIA Plan
- # of community partnerships
- # of working groups

## Strategy 6.2

### Acquire broad endorsements for the River Equity Framework

Crucial to achieving the goals in this Framework is ensuring community buy-in – this strategy’s actions focus on broad adoption of the Framework and continuing to build trust and momentum through partnerships and outreach.

## 6.2 PRIORITY OUTCOME

- Endorsement of Equity Framework by key municipalities, civic institutions, business leaders, community advocates, and general population

## 6.2 ACTIONS

**ACTION 6.2.1.** Advocate for early adoption of the River Equity Framework by the City of Grand Rapids, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., the Grand Rapids Public Museum, Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority, and Grand Rapids Whitewater as sponsors of early river projects.

**ACTION 6.2.2.** Build out a broader umbrella of organizational endorsements among chambers of commerce, civic institutions, tribal bands, community advocacy groups, educational institutions, neighborhood

associations, corporations, Kent County, and other municipalities over time.

**ACTION 6.2.2.1** Be intentional in engaging the Black community, as well as other historically oppressed communities, who have explicitly expressed longstanding concerns about being shut out of opportunities.

**ACTION 6.2.2.2** Be intentional in engaging diverse viewpoints, including across the political spectrum and rural stakeholders within all of Kent County.

**ACTION 6.2.3.** Launch an online campaign allowing residents and regional stakeholders to endorse the River Equity Framework as a groundswell.

## 6.2 METRICS

- # of organizational endorsements of River Equity Framework
- # of engagements with online campaign

## Strategy 6.3

### Build social infrastructure to support the river ecosystem, including an ongoing feedback loop, data transparency, and an accountability mechanisms

True equity in the success of the river redevelopment depends on continual engagement that does not stop with the development of this Framework. This strategy focuses on actions that use various methods to continue to engage

community members and organizations, as well as mechanisms to maintain accountability and continuously improve.

## 6.3 PRIORITY OUTCOME

- Establishment of an independent stakeholder body to review progress on river equity goals and publicly issue findings and recommendations

## 6.3 ACTIONS

**ACTION 6.3.1.** In collaboration with river partners, create a River Communications Plan that outlines regular communications strategies for river project updates, resident and visitor access, river workforce opportunities, environmental health, community engagement, and youth opportunities.

**ACTION 6.3.2.** Apply the Framework towards the Equitable Engagement, Community Engagement Planning Guide and Progress Tracker tools developed by Public Agency/Community Catalysts to drive river-related public outreach and engagement.

**ACTION 6.3.3.** Deliver regular communications to inform the public about ongoing river updates based on topics in the River Communications Plan.

**ACTION 6.3.4.** Establish an oversight body, coordinated and supported by the river nonprofit, to ensure continued engagement, feedback, and accountability for the implementation of the Equity Framework.

**ACTION 6.3.5.** Develop a data collection

system that can aggregate and present key performance indicators (KPIs) based upon stated Priority Outcomes from existing (or if necessary, new) data sources. Engage existing organizations to collect existing river-relevant metrics that align with other advocates. Present data impartially to the oversight body and general public.

**ACTION 6.3.6.** Develop a River Funders Collaborative, within or independent from the river nonprofit, as a dedicated source of grant funds for community engagement, programming, education, and other activations based on the Equity Framework and additional community input.

**ACTION 6.3.7.** Using the List of Local Agencies and Organizations (Appendix A) as a starting point, develop an updatable online directory of river-related organizations that could serve as a resource for stakeholders interested in connecting to organizations for future partnerships. The directory could be hosted on the Grand River Network or Grand River Voices website, and could contain a sortable list of organizations, with links to websites and contact information.

## 6.3 METRICS

- Establishment of River Communications Plan
- Establishment of River Equity Oversight Body
- Establishment of River Funders Collaborative
- Consistent flow of information and decisions to the public
- Amount of funding given as grants through Funders Collaborative







## VI. Recommendations for Implementation

## VI. Recommendations for Implementation

The Equity Framework offers strategies to advance environmental justice and social, racial, and economic equity along the Grand River. Upon publication of the Framework, we believe there are several immediate steps that can be taken to help realize its intentions. Immediate steps include broad endorsement of the Framework, standing up of river equity infrastructure, and integration of Framework goals into current projects, programs, and activities.



### HOW CAN STAKEHOLDERS ENDORSE THE FRAMEWORK?

Buy-in and endorsement of the Framework by multi-sector organizations is essential to the success of the recommendations described in this document. Below is a list of tangible ways in which stakeholders – public agencies, non-profit organizations, philanthropy – can meaningfully endorse the Equity Framework and integrate its recommendations into their everyday work.

#### *Public Agencies*

Public agency leadership is uniquely positioned to articulate the values of the agency and direct staff to investigate the feasibility of the Framework's various program and policy recommendations. Public agency leadership can request a briefing on the Framework at an upcoming public board, council, or City, County, or other municipality commission meeting.

Public agency leadership, boards, councils or commissioners can introduce a Motion or Resolution affirming support for the Equity Framework and direct staff to review the document and: 1) identify tangible ways to incorporate relevant recommendations into an agency's policies, programs, or practices; and 2) identify where additional opportunities exist, or where supports and partnerships may be needed.

#### *Community Based Organizations*

Community based organizations (CBOs) have been a driving force in efforts to advance environmental, social, and racial, equity along the Grand River and throughout the city. Ongoing CBO engagement in the Equity Framework implementation is crucial to success.

Organizations are encouraged to review the Framework thoroughly for alignment with their own mission, vision, and values. Further, organizations are encouraged to submit endorsement letters to the Grand River Network and the public, indicating their support of the Equity Framework. Community organizations will be critical partners to the Grand River Network

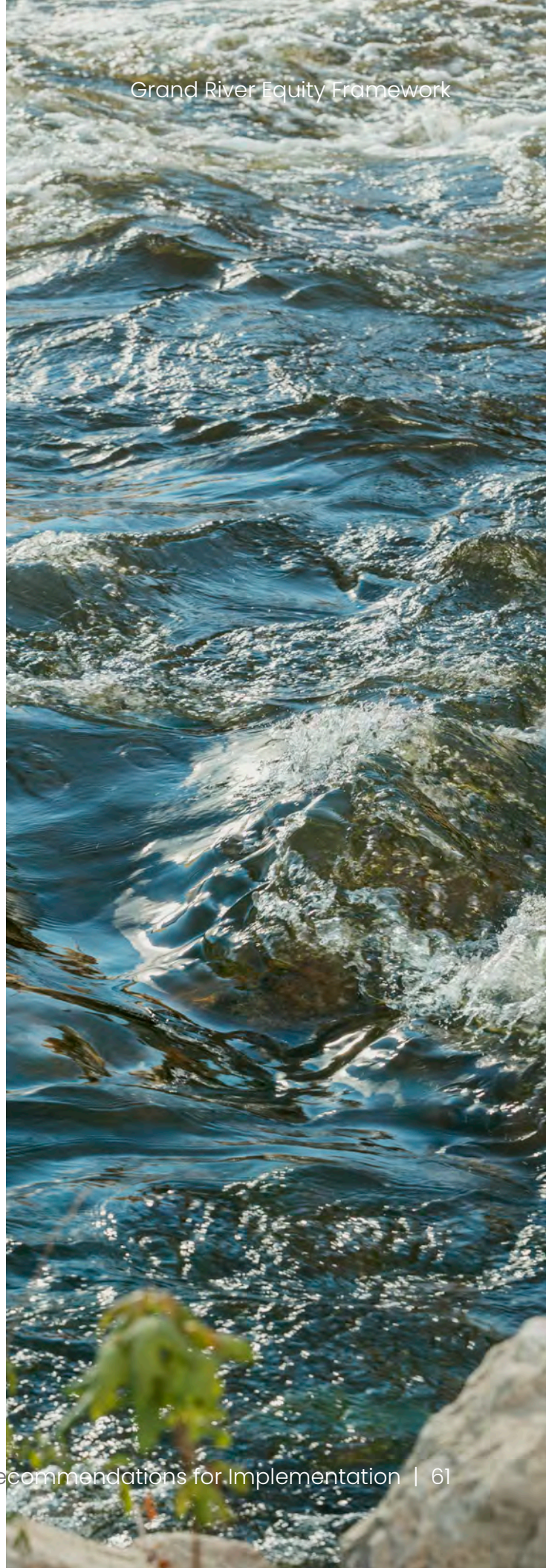
in disseminating timely and accurate information concerning river programming and development, establishing future partnerships, running programs, and holding themselves and agencies accountable for carrying out river work.

### ***Philanthropic Organizations***

Philanthropic organizations play a key role in supporting and furthering river equity-related initiatives. Relevant program staff are encouraged to review the recommendations of the Framework to determine how the recommendations support, advance, or surface potential gaps in their current grantmaking strategy. Organizational leadership can request a briefing of the Framework at an upcoming board meeting. Further, philanthropic organizations are encouraged to submit an endorsement letter to the Grand River Network and the public, indicating their support of the Framework.

### ***Individuals and Informal Groups***

In addition, we believe there is value in creating a community-wide, open-invite digital platform when people and organizations can publicly “sign on” to the Framework’s vision, values, and recommendations. This platform could exist on the Framework’s existing digital platform ([www.GrandRiverVoices.org](http://www.GrandRiverVoices.org)), or it could exist on the river nonprofit’s website or a standalone campaign platform. Until such time, we note that many West Michigan individuals and nonprofits engage on social media, including significant numbers on Facebook and LinkedIn, where statements can be made, shared, and liked. Individual endorsements should also tag Grand River Network and the general public.



### ***River Implementation Plans***

The Framework anticipates that Grand River Network and other public or community agencies will develop implementation plans in accordance with the Framework's direction. While the content and formality of the plans may vary, we would suggest the following as potential plans to detail specific projects/programs, budgets, and schedules to execute upon:

- DEIA Plan for Grand River Network
- River Communications & Engagement Plan
- River Built Projects Plan
- River Greenway Projects Plan
- River Access Plan (incl access points and transportation options)
- River Programming & Activation Plan (incl River Youth Programming Plan)
- River Operations & Management Plan (incl River Jobs plan)
- River Economy Plan (incl land economics, assessments, and small business development)
- River Environmental Plan (incl greening, tree canopy, and habitat restoration)
- River Public Safety Plan
- River Renewable Energy & Urban Agriculture Plan

## **HOW IS RIVER EQUITY INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIVATED?**

Early organizational infrastructure will help bring the ideas in the Framework to life. The three most important pieces have already been called out in the Goals, Strategies, and Actions section within Goal #6.

First, the recently established river nonprofit Grand River Network should step forward as the backbone of the river equity work. Specifically, that means endorsing and adopting the Framework Goals as part of their governing vision, undertaking implementation plans that help drive the Strategies, and embedding equity outcomes into their governance, organizational structure, and agenda.

Second, the feedback loop infrastructure created by Grand River Voices as part of the 2022 community engagement process requires a new program manager and local champions. These assets include the website, social media assets, stakeholder lists, SMS text lists, and other intellectual property that should be part of an ongoing engagement process. While multiple partners can undertake this role, the Community Engagement Committee of the new river nonprofit is a logical first option.

Third, an independent commission or advisory body should be formed to review equity outcomes, such as our recommended Priority Outcomes, on a periodic basis. The commission should have a diversity of interests and perspectives, and not be materially invested (financially) in the outcomes of the river project. Data can be collected and presented to the commission, where public evaluation and

recommendations can be issued in the spirit of continuous improvement.

## HOW ARE FRAMEWORK GOALS INTEGRATED INTO CURRENT ACTIVITIES?

Perhaps the easiest way to endorse and adopt the Framework Goals is to immediately incorporate aspects into current activities. The Consultant Team's interviews indicate there is significant interest in initiating (or continuing) work that broadens opportunity and access in the early phases of the river project.

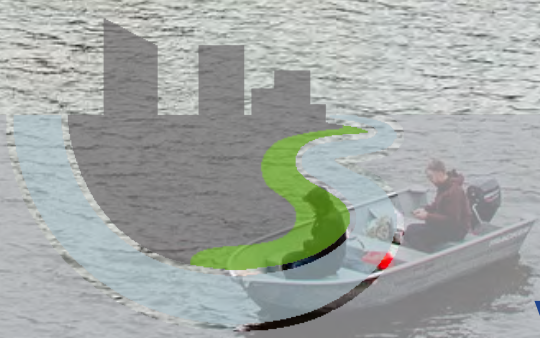
For example, as of early 2023 are at least four significant river development projects deep into predevelopment that can take advantage of Equitable Economic Development Goals within this Framework. Project sponsors, construction managers, and public agencies can work together to set hiring and subcontracting goals that support the Framework's Priority Outcomes.

Similarly, existing environmental and educational programs and advocates can look to the Framework to integrate longstanding agendas and work to align with an equity agenda. Funders can continue to support these programs and encourage grantees to contribute to the collective outcomes stated in the Framework.

Simply put, actions speak louder than words. How local stakeholders demonstrate equitable intentions immediately (and voluntarily) will speak volumes about the possibility for long-term and institutional adoption of the regional river project.







## VII. Key Terms

## Key Terms

Our words and language matter. When discussing topics related to equity, often two individuals might use the same term to mean different things, or they might interchange words that are not actually synonyms. We acknowledge there are always limitations to defining terms, especially related to equity and environmental justice, and over time, definitions may change and progress. This Framework offers a place to start for shared understanding of key terms used throughout the report. Sources include national organizations leading on equity as well as state and local sources, when possible.

**Accessibility:** The extent to which a space is readily approachable and usable by people with disabilities. A space can be described as a physical or literal space, such as a facility, website, conference room, office, or bathroom, or a figurative space, such as a conversation or activity.<sup>1</sup> Most people might think of the term “ADA Accessible,” referring to accessibility standards set by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) – these are the *minimum* standards for physical access to places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities in new construction, alterations, and additions.<sup>2</sup>

**BIPOC:** An acronym for Black, Indigenous, People of Color meant to highlight communities most impacted by a history of racism in the United States and to build

solidarity between communities of color.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We acknowledge that this term can fall short in its intention as an all-encompassing term for non-white people and that it is important to identify people according to their specific racial/ethnic group whenever possible. We also recognize that terms related to identity are not always mutually exclusive, as someone could be a combination of races and ethnicities.

**Community:** The whole of Grand Rapids including residents, visitors, businesses, and others with a vested interest in the Grand River.<sup>5</sup>

**Communities of Color / People of Color:** A term used primarily in the United States to describe communities of people who are not identified as white, emphasizing common experiences of racism.<sup>6</sup>

**Displacement:** Displacement is often used interchangeably with the word “gentrification,” but displacement is distinct and often considered the ultimate result of gentrification. “Direct displacement” is when residents are forced to move because of rent increases and/or building renovations. “Exclusionary displacement” is when housing choices for low-income residents are limited. “Displacement pressures” are when supports and services that low-income families rely on disappear from the neighborhood.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The BIPOC Project, [The BIPOC Project](#), (n.d.)

<sup>4</sup> YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish, [Why we use BIPOC](#), (2022)

<sup>5</sup> WMCAT Public Agency, [Grand River Corridor Community Engagement Tools and Recommendations](#) (2022)

<sup>6</sup> Portland Parks and Recreation, [Racial Equity Plan](#), (n.d.)

<sup>7</sup> National Low-Income Housing Coalition, [Gentrification and](#)

<sup>1</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, [Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding](#), (2019)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Access Board, [About the ADA Accessibility Standards](#), (n.d.)



**Diversity:** A synonym for variety. It is possible to name, acknowledge, and celebrate diversity without doing anything to transform the institutional or structural systems that produce, and maintain, racialized injustices in our communities.<sup>8</sup> Valuing diversity means recognizing differences between people, acknowledging that these differences are a valued asset, and striving for diverse representation as a critical step towards equity.<sup>9</sup>

**Engagement:** A process that includes a spectrum of activities to generate input for making better decisions, incorporates the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders, and meets the needs of the decision-making body.<sup>10</sup>

**Environmental Racism:** Describes how people of color are more exposed than white people to harmful and deadly environmental factors while often not having a voice in the policy and decision-making about their communities.<sup>11</sup>

**Environmental Justice:** Environmental justice is the equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, ability, or income and is critical to the development and application of laws, regulations, and policies that affect the environment.<sup>12</sup> This plan uses the Principles of Environmental

Justice from the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in 1991 as a guide.<sup>13</sup>

**Environmental Justice (EJ) Communities (also Vulnerable or Frontline Communities):** These terms refer to the “people who are both highly exposed to climate risks (because of the places they live, and the projected changes expected to occur in those places) and have fewer resources, capacity, safety nets, or political power to respond to those risks (e.g. people who may lack insurance or savings, have inflexible jobs, or low levels of influence over elected officials, etc.)” These communities experience the “first and worst” consequences of climate change, often BIPOC, low-income communities, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations.<sup>14</sup>

**Equity:** The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual’s or group’s needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes.<sup>15</sup> Similar to equality, equity is used to discuss scenarios where all people have the same ability to thrive in a community. Equity differs from equality in that it takes into consideration how the past has shaped the present state of access to power amongst groups when addressing ways to promote justice and fairness.<sup>16</sup>

**Equitable Economic Development:** Equitable economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding

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[Neighborhood Revitalization: WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?](#) (2019)

<sup>8</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

<sup>9</sup> Race Forward, [Race Reporting Guide](#), (2015)

<sup>10</sup> WMCAT Public Agency, *Grand River Corridor Community Engagement Tools and Recommendations* (2022)

<sup>11</sup> United Way for Southeastern Michigan, [Day 13: Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice](#), (n.d.)

<sup>12</sup> Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, [Learn About Environmental Justice](#), (n.d.)

<sup>13</sup> EJnet.org, [The Principles of Environmental Justice](#), (n.d.)

<sup>14</sup> Georgetown Climate Center *Adaptation Clearinghouse, Equitable Adaptation Legal & Policy Toolkit*, (n.d.)

<sup>15</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

<sup>16</sup> Michigan Department of Civil Rights, [Racial Equity Toolkit](#), (n.d.)

opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through accountable public action and investment, it grows quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth.<sup>17</sup> This means shifting how capital is generated and deployed to deliver economic benefits, workforce opportunities, sustainable development, and social and cultural resources to underinvested communities.

**Gentrification:** Gentrification refers to the process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood – by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in – as well as demographic change – not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents. Gentrification is complex – to understand it, there are three key things to consider: 1) Historic conditions, especially policies and practices that made communities susceptible to gentrification, 2) Disinvestment and investment patterns of the central city taking place today because of these conditions, 3) Impact on communities.<sup>18</sup>

**Good Jobs:** National workforce leaders and advocates established a shared definition for job quality in 2022 that consists of three parts<sup>19</sup>:

***Economic stability:*** Good jobs provide workers with confidence that they can

meet their basic needs – for healthy food, a safe place to live, healthcare, and other essentials – for themselves and their families now and in the future.

***Economic mobility:*** Good jobs provide clear pathways into them and an equitable chance at hiring. They provide mobility over a career through opportunities to learn, to advance to new positions, to be recognized for accomplishments, to save, and to build wealth.

***Equity, respect, and voice:*** Good jobs respect the contributions that people bring to an organization, without regard to their gender, race, ethnicity, level of educational attainment, or other demographic characteristics. They engage workers in understanding their work and how it advances the goals of the organization. Workers in good jobs have the power to ensure that concerns about working conditions or ideas for improving workplaces will be fairly considered and acted upon.

When we mention good jobs in this report, we are referring to jobs that offer stability, mobility, equity, respect, and worker voice.

**Grand River Corridor:** For purposes of the Framework, the “Grand River Corridor” or “river corridor” generally refers to a one-mile radius along the length of the Grand River in Kent County that will likely be most impacted by river development. We acknowledge the impact of investment in the river will reach beyond this distance.

**Green Stormwater Infrastructure:** Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) is the

<sup>17</sup> PolicyLink, [Equitable Economic Development: The Why and the How](#), (2017)

<sup>18</sup> Urban Displacement Project, [What Are Gentrification and Displacement?](#), (n.d.)

<sup>19</sup> Aspen Institute, [Good Jobs: A Working Definition](#), (2022), [Statement on Good Jobs](#)

practice of infiltrating stormwater by use of natural systems to reestablish a healthy water flow. These systems allow for the infiltration of stormwater before it is released into conventional storm and sewer system, protecting our lakes, rivers, and streams from harmful pollutants. There are many GSI strategies that range from planting trees to installing porous pavement.<sup>20</sup>

**Inclusion:** A state of belonging, when persons of different backgrounds and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers and collaborators. Inclusion is intentional and involves people being given the opportunity to grow and feel/know they belong. Diversity efforts alone do not create inclusive environments. Inclusion involves a sense of coming as you are and being accepted, rather than feeling the need to assimilate.<sup>21</sup>

**Latino:** members of the global diaspora descendant from Latin America. While we endorse terms such as Latinx (as a term more inclusive of gender fluidity) and *Latine* (as an inclusive term more aligned with Spanish language), our report chooses to use Latino as an accessible term and the one overwhelming used by Spanish-speakers across nationality and age.

**Living Wage:** A living wage is the hourly rate that an individual in a household must earn to support him or herself and their family. The assumption is the sole provider is working full-time (2080 hours per year). This is an alternative to federal poverty levels

which are regularly underestimated.<sup>22</sup>

**Local and Targeted Hire Policies:** Local and targeted hiring programs require or incentivize businesses that receive public dollars to hire workers from the local community, or from targeted populations in the community, to address racial discrimination and other barriers to employment.<sup>23</sup> Local hiring sets hiring preferences for people from specific geographic areas while targeted hiring refers to hiring preferences for different worker characteristics such as race, veteran status, gender, disability, having been formerly incarcerated, or other barriers to employment / long-term unemployment.

**Low-Income Resident / Low-Income Community:** The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) categorizes “low-income” as households whose incomes are at or below 80% of the area median income. This intends to indicate that residents do not have enough resources to meet basic needs such as housing and food.<sup>24</sup>

**MBE:** MBE is a company level ownership/diversity certification. MBE certifications are usually issued by the federal, state or local government. Eligibility for certification as a Minority Business Enterprise varies depending on the issuer but generally requires that a company be predominantly (51%) owned and operated by a member of a minority group such as African American, Native American, Asian or Hispanic American.

<sup>20</sup> Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW), *Stormwater*, (n.d.)

<sup>21</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

<sup>22</sup> Amy K. Glasmeier, *Living Wage Calculation for Kent County, Michigan*, (2020) Massachusetts Institute of Technology

<sup>23</sup> Julian Gross, *Local and Targeted Hiring*, PolicyLink (n.d.)

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), *HUD's Public Housing Program* (2017)

MBE certification is non-industry specific.

**MLBE:** MLBE is a company level ownership/diversity certification issued by the City of Grand Rapids for businesses within Kent County. Eligibility for certification as a Micro-Local Business Enterprise requires that a company be operating within Kent County, operate at a revenue or employment size defined as a small business by the SBA, and have a net worth below a stated threshold.<sup>25</sup>

**Parklet:** A parklet repurposes part of a street into public space for people, contributing to streetscape aesthetics and public open space. Parklets provide amenities like seating, planting, bike parking, and art. The City of Grand Rapids published a Parklet Manual in 2018.<sup>26</sup>

**Partner:** any individual, group, or entity that has a delineated and formally adopted relationship with Grand River Network.<sup>27</sup>

**Pink Zone:** A pink zone is a term for a tool to spur revitalization, engage excluded populations, sustain sustainable economic activity, and address physical and social community assets in a local neighborhood geography. It emphasizes streamlined processes for small-scale development, local regulations, building codes, and land use zoning.<sup>28</sup>

**Race:** A social and political construction

<sup>25</sup> City of Grand Rapids. [Apply for a Micro-Local Business Enterprise Certification](#). (n.d.)

<sup>26</sup> Downtown Grand Rapids. [Grand Rapids Parklet Manual](#). (2018).

<sup>27</sup> WMCAT Public Agency, *Grand River Corridor Community Engagement Tools and Recommendations* (2022)

<sup>28</sup> Lean Urbanism, [The Pink Zone – Where Small is Possible](#). (n.d.)

– with no inherent genetic or biological basis – used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history, and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify the domination, exploitation, and violence against people who are racialized as non-White.<sup>29</sup>

**Racial Justice:** The proactive process of reinforcing and establishing a set of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all individuals and groups impacted by racism. The goal, however, is not only the eradication of racism, but also the presence of deliberate social systems and structures that sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.<sup>30</sup>

**Racism:** Racism is the systematic subjugation of members of targeted racial groups, who hold less socio-political power and/or are racialized as non-White.<sup>31</sup> There are multiple levels or types of racism –

1. Individual Racism – private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas held by individuals
2. Interpersonal Racism – the expression of racism between individuals, whether conscious or unconscious
3. Institutional Racism – discriminatory treatment, policies, or practices within organizations/institutions
4. Structural or Cultural Racism – historical,

<sup>29</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

<sup>30</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

<sup>31</sup> Center for Study of Social Policy, *Key Equity Terms & Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding*

social, political, institutional, and cultural factors that contribute to, legitimize, and maintain racial inequities.

**Resourced:** The allocation of adequate time, materials, tools, people, and money in the development of initiatives.<sup>32</sup>

**Settler-Colonialism:** This Framework refers to settlers as part of the history of Grand Rapids. The term “settler-colonialism” refers to the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to take land for use by settlers in perpetuity.<sup>33</sup> Historically, the settler-colonial agenda involved committing genocide by murdering Indigenous peoples, and today, settler-colonialism plays out in the erasure of Indigenous presence. The United States and Michigan would not exist without this history.

**Stakeholder:** Any individual, group of individuals, organizations, or political entity that will be impacted by the outcome of a decision. This may be inclusive of the public who may not be involved in the decision-making process.<sup>34</sup>

**Stormwater:** Stormwater runoff is generated from rain and snowmelt that flows over land or impervious surfaces, such as paved roads, parking lots or building rooftops, that does not soak into the ground. Stormwater flows into drains that take it directly to nearby lakes, rivers, and streams.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> WMCAT Public Agency, *Grand River Corridor Community Engagement Tools and Recommendations* (2022)

<sup>33</sup> Amanda Morris, *What is Settler-Colonialism?*, (2019), *Learning for Justice*

<sup>34</sup> WMCAT Public Agency, *Grand River Corridor Community Engagement Tools and Recommendations* (2022)

<sup>35</sup> Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW), *Stormwater*

### **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK):**

In this Framework, traditional ecological knowledge refers to indigenous knowledge specific to the environment and the linked cultural practices, relationships, and philosophies that build said knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Before colonization, native peoples successfully stewarded the land and water of what is now West Michigan using TEK. To ensure climate resilience, restoration, and conservation of the Grand River, TEK is fundamental to local goals and strategies.

**Universal Design:** Design that is usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.<sup>37</sup>

**Watershed:** A watershed is an area of land that drains rainfall into a common body of water, such as a stream, river, bay, or a lake. The watershed consists of surface water – lakes, streams, reservoirs, and wetlands – and all the underlying groundwater below the surface.<sup>38</sup>

**WBE:** WBE is a company level ownership/diversity certification. WBE certifications are usually issued by the federal, state or local government. Eligibility for certification as a Woman-owned Business Enterprise varies depending on the issuer but generally requires that a company be predominantly (51%) owned and operated by a women group of members of U.S. citizenry and have good moral character.

<sup>36</sup> US Caucus of the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Task Team, *Guidance Document on Traditional Ecological Knowledge Pursuant to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement*, (2021)

<sup>37</sup> The Universal Design Project, *What is Universal Design?*, (n.d.)

<sup>38</sup> USGS Water Science School, *Watersheds and Drainage Basins*, (2019)

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a black t-shirt, dark leggings, and a light-colored jacket tied around her waist, is fishing from a rocky shore. She is holding a fishing rod that extends across the water. The water is blue with white foam from a small waterfall or dam in the background. A large, multi-story brick building with many windows is visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

## **APPENDIX A: List of Local Agencies and Organizations**

## Government

Below are local government departments and agencies relevant to the redevelopment and conservation of the Grand River.

### Planning / Transportation

- [City of Grand Rapids Office of Mobile GR](#)
- [Grand Valley Metropolitan Council \(GVMC\)](#)
- [The Rapid](#)

### Parks / Sustainability

- [City of Grand Rapids Office of Sustainability](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Environmental Services](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation](#)
- [Kent County Health Department](#)
- [Kent County Parks Department](#)
- [Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds](#)
- [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [Michigan Office of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy](#)
- [Ottawa County Parks and Recreation](#)

### Community and Economic Development

- [City of Grand Rapids Planning Department](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Community Development](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Economic Development](#)
- [City of Grand Rapids Equity and Engagement](#)
- [Downtown Grand Rapids Inc](#)
- [Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority](#)
- [Grand Rapids Housing Commission](#)
- [Kent County Community Action](#)
- [Kent County Essential Needs Task Force](#)
- [Kent County Facilities Management](#)
- [Monroe North Tax Increment Finance Authority](#)
- [North Quarter Corridor Improvement Authority](#)
- [South Division/Grandville Avenue Corridor](#)

### Improvement Authority

- [WestSide Corridor Improvement Authority](#)

### Arts, Culture, & Education

- [City of Grand Rapids Office of Special Events](#)
- [Grand Rapids Public Library](#)
- [Grand Rapids Public Schools](#)
- [Kent Intermediate School District](#)

## Community Organizations and Institutions

Below is a list of local organizations related to the Framework's goal areas. Some organizations may have more than one focus area. The Consultant Team notes the list is not exhaustive, but rather representative of the breadth of available partners (including many BIPOC-led and BIPOC-serving) that should be engaged in realizing the Framework's Vision, Goals, and Outcomes.

### Accessibility

- [Arts in Motion](#)
- [Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired \(ABVI\)](#)
- [Disability Advocates](#)
- [Disability Network](#)
- [Hope Network](#)
- [Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital](#)

### Arts, Culture, & Education

- [ArtPrize](#)
- [Artists Creating Together](#)
- [Gerald R. Ford Museum](#)
- [Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives](#)
- [Grand Rapids Art Museum](#)
- [Grand Rapids Public Museum](#)
- [Grand Rapids Public Schools Foundation](#)
- [Groundswell Stewardship Initiative](#)
- [John Ball Zoo](#)
- [Kendall College](#)

## Grand River Equity Framework

- [Muse GR](#)
- [Native American Student Association](#)
- [Native American Education Program](#)
- [West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology \(WMCAT\)](#)

### ***Community Development***

- [Amplify GR](#)
- [Asian Community Outreach](#)
- [Baxter Community Center](#)
- [Center for Community Transformation](#)
- [Dwelling Place](#)
- [Grand Rapids African American Health Institute](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity](#)
- [Hispanic Center](#)
- [Heart of West Michigan United Way](#)
- [Housing Next](#)
- [Inner City Christian Federation](#)
- [Latina Network of West Michigan](#)
- [LINC UP](#)
- [NAACP](#)
- [New Development Corporation](#)
- [Opportunity Resource Fund](#)
- [Refugee Education Center](#)
- [Seeds of Promise](#)
- [Urban Core Collective](#)
- [Urban League of West Michigan](#)
- [West Michigan Asian American Association](#)

### ***Economic / Workforce Development***

- [Building Bridges](#)
- [Construction Allies in Action](#)
- [Construction Workforce Development Alliance of West Michigan](#)
- [Good for Michigan:](#)
- [Grand Action](#)
- [Grand Rapids Area Black Businesses](#)
- [Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Grand Rapids Homes for All](#)
- [Great Lakes Women Business Council](#)
- [Local First](#)

- [Michigan Minority Contractors Association](#)
- [Michigan Minority Supplier Development Council](#)
- [Next Step of West Michigan](#)
- [Project Green](#)
- [Spring GR](#)
- [Start Garden](#)
- [The Right Place](#)
- [Steepletown Neighborhood Services](#)
- [Treetops Collective](#)
- [West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [West Michigan Works!](#)

### ***Higher Education and Research***

- [Aquinas College](#)
- [Calvin University](#)
- [Cornerstone University](#)
- [Davenport University](#)
- [Ferris State University](#)
- [Grace Christian University](#)
- [Grand Valley State University](#)
- [Grand Rapids Community College](#)
- [GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute](#)
- [Kuyper College](#)
- [MSU Grand Rapids Innovation Park](#)
- [Spectrum Health](#)
- [Van Andel Institute](#)
- [Western Michigan University – Grand Rapids](#)

### ***Neighborhood Associations***

- [Baxter Neighborhood Association\\*](#)
- [Creston Neighborhood Association](#)
- [Eastgate Neighborhood Association](#)
- [East Hills Council of Neighbors](#)
- [Eastown Community Association](#)
- [Fulton Heights Neighborhood Association](#)
- [Garfield Park Neighborhoods Association](#)
- [Heartside Downtown Neighborhood Association\\*](#)
- [Heritage Hill Association](#)
- [Highland Park Neighborhood Association](#)



- [John Ball Area Neighbors\\*](#)
- [Michigan Oaks Neighborhood Association](#)
- [Midtown Neighborhood Association](#)
- [MLK Park Neighborhood Association / King Park Neighbors\\*](#)
- [Milbrook Neighborhood Association](#)
- [Neighbors of Belknap Lookout\\*](#)
- [North East Citizen Action Association](#)
- [Oakdale Neighbors](#)
- [Ottawa Hills Neighborhood Association](#)
- [Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association\\*](#)
- [West Grand Neighborhood Organization\\*](#)
- [Westside Connection](#)

### **Recreation**

- [Color Outside](#)
- [Grand Kayak Adventures](#)
- [Grand Rapids Youth Soccer](#)
- [Healthy Eating Active Living \(HEAL\) Task Force \(Kent County Health Connect\)](#)
- [Latino Outdoors](#)
- [I9 Sports](#)
- [MVP Sports Plex](#)
- [North End Wellness Coalition](#)
- [Outdoor Afro](#)
- [YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids](#)

### **Sustainability**

- [Blandford Nature Center](#)
- [Community Collaboration on Climate Change \(C4\)](#)
- [Friends of Grand Rapids Parks](#)
- [Grand Rapids Whitewater](#)
- [GVSU Student Environmental Coalition](#)
- [JustAir](#)
- [Kent County Parks Foundation](#)
- [Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds](#)
- [Our Kitchen Table](#)
- [Plaster Creek Stewards](#)
- [Power to the People 616](#)
- [Sierra Club Michigan Chapter](#)

- [STEM Greenhouse](#)
- [Trout Unlimited Michigan](#)
- [West Michigan Environmental Action Council](#)

### **Youth**

- [AYA Youth Collective](#)
- [Boys and Girls Club of Grand Rapids](#)
- [Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative](#)
- [Endless Opportunities](#)
- [Expanded Learning Opportunities Network](#)
- [Grandville Avenue for Arts and Humanities](#)
- [New City Kids](#)
- [Our Community's Children](#)
- [Strong Beginnings](#)
- [Succeeding While Achieving Greatness \(SWAG\)](#)
- [The Diatribe](#)
- [We Matter Now](#)

### **Philanthropic Organizations**

- [42 North Partners](#)
- [AQUME Foundation](#)
- [Consumers Energy Foundation](#)
- [Cook Foundation](#)
- [Council of Michigan Foundations](#)
- [DeVos Family Foundations](#)
- [Dorothy A. Johnson Center](#)
- [DTE Foundation](#)
- [Frey Foundation](#)
- [Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation](#)
- [Grand Rapids Community Foundation](#)
- [Heart of West Michigan United Way](#)
- [Keller Foundation](#)
- [Meijer Foundation](#)
- [Steelcase Foundation](#)
- [Wege Foundation](#)
- [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#)

## APPENDIX B: List of Potential River-Related Programs



The following is a list of potential activities that could be programmed in and along the Grand River:

- Biking
- Birding
- Canoeing
- Crafting
- Cross-country skiing
- Cultural gatherings
- Day Camps
- Environmental Education
- Festivals
- Fishing
- Food events
- Gardening
- Geocatching
- Ice skating
- Indigenous ceremonies
- Jogging
- Kayaking
- Literacy programs
- Music programs
- Music performances
- Native plant/herb walks
- Outdoor movies
- Paddleboarding
- Pop-up markets
- Skating
- Snowshoeing
- Swimming
- Tai Chi
- Team sports
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Walking/Rolling – group, exercise, strollers, mobility devices

- Water Education
- Whitewater Rafting
- Yoga

We would also call out three recent community-led efforts as additional resources on river activities:

- *Top Ten Programming Interventions, Public Agency/Community Catalysts, 2020*
- *Strategic BIPOC/NOF Outdoor Engagement Framework, River Equity Board, City of Grand Rapids Office of Equity & Engagement, 2021*
- *River Activation Steering Committee, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., 2021*

**APPENDIX C:  
Grand River Voices Survey Results**



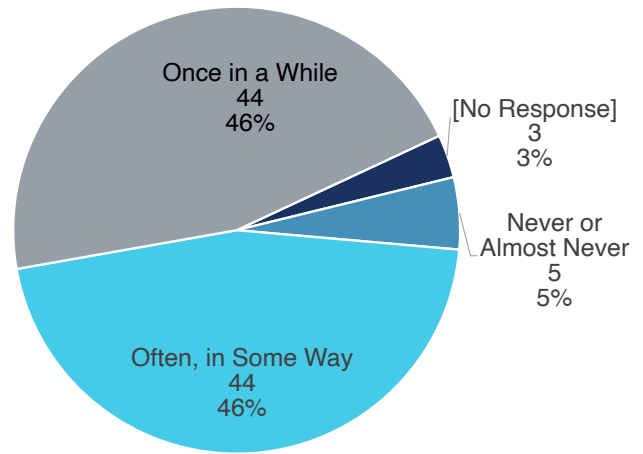
Grand River Voices conducted two surveys. The first was to gather feedback and input from Grand Rapids residents their feelings towards the river and how they engage with it. The second was to gather feedback on the recommendations developed over the course of Grand River Voice’s engagement work. The following provides an overview of the key results and takeaways from the two surveys. The full results analysis for both surveys is available upon request.

### River Sentiments Survey

The survey was promoted on the GRV website, social media, and as a means of providing input outside of listening sessions. Responses were received between Sept 28th and Nov 4th 2022.

The survey received 99 respondents, not all questions were answered by all respondents. 96 responses were analyzed as there were three duplicate responses, where respondents answered the questions differently but provided the same

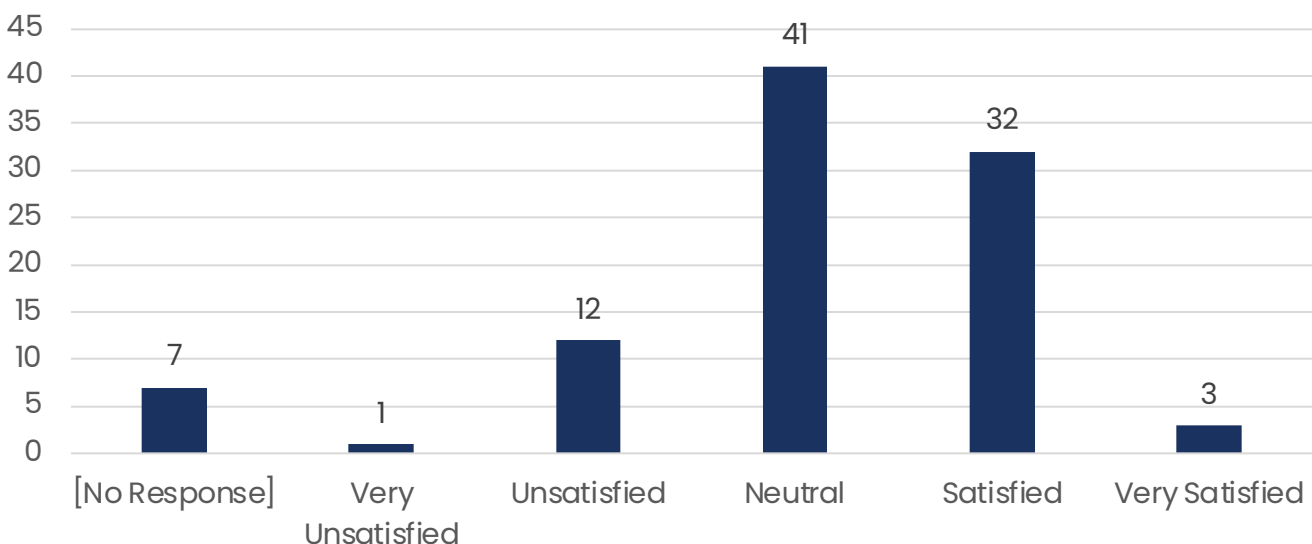
### Responses to “I am on or near the river...”



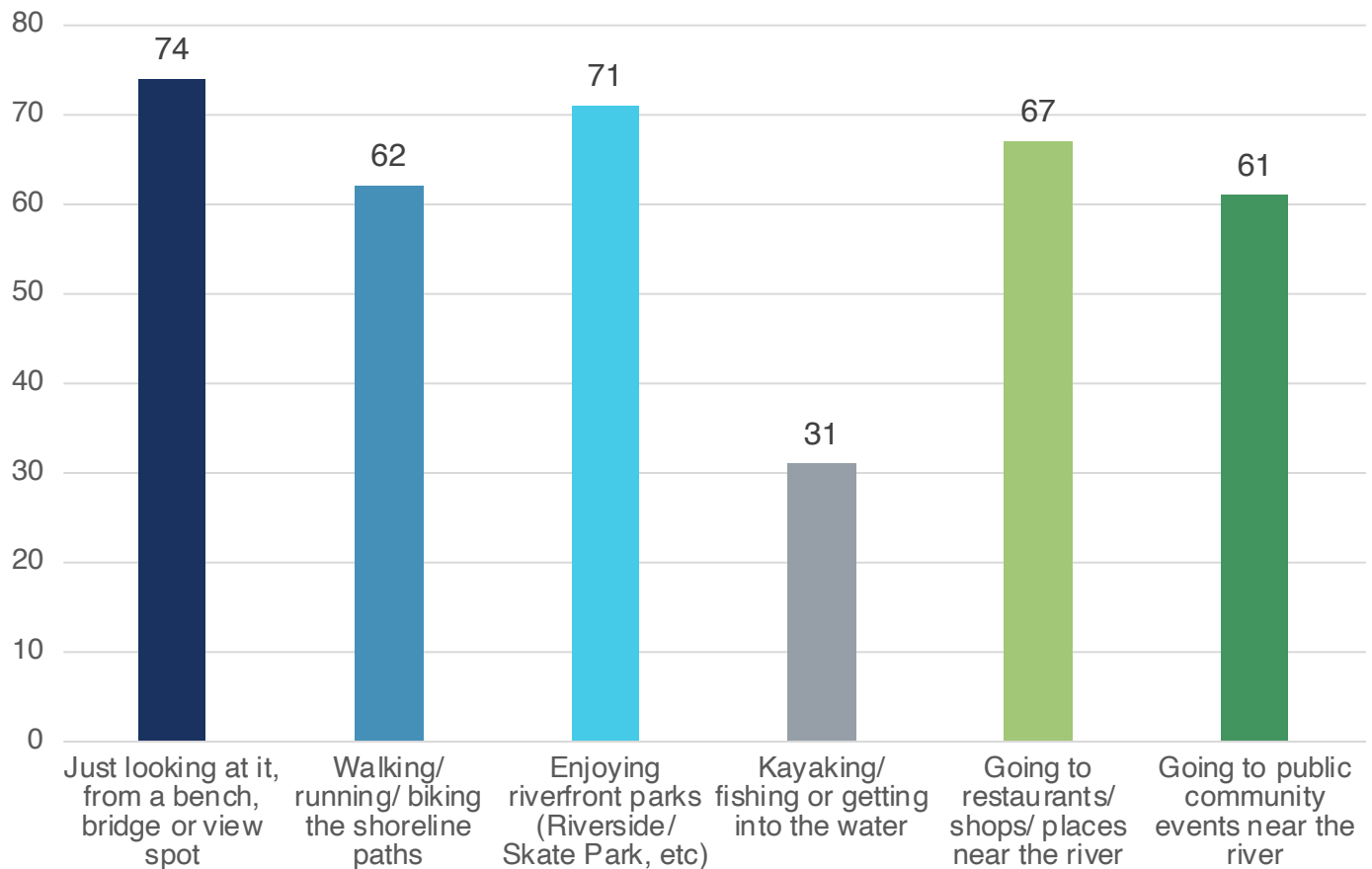
email address; the first response for each was excluded from the analysis on the assumption that the respondents wished to enter an updated response.

Respondents report a median age of 44 years old. Additionally, respondents report having lived in Grand Rapids for a median of 21 years.

### Responses to “How would you rate your current experience with the Grand River”



**Responses to “I currently enjoy the river...”**



*Note: Five responses were excluded from this graph. Three for other and two no responses.*

When asked how they travel to the river, most respondents drive. Some respondents, presumably living closer, walk or bike to the river. Notably ride/bike share or take public transportation, indicating opportunity for expanded access.

The survey also found that 76% of respondents are either neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied with the river currently – only 13% are unsatisfied. This question can be asked to residents over time as a benchmark of river sentiments.

Among other activities, 84% of respondents said they can swim, 50% boat, and 45% fish.

In prioritizing wishes for the river, all goals were supported. Most desired was environmental resilience (87.5%), then equitable river access (82%), a thriving river corridor (72%), and equitable economic development (67%).

## Framework Validation

Grand River Voices spent six months looking at past public comment, convening stakeholders, and listening to community priorities for the river. That work led to a set of Strategies and Actions included in the River Equity Framework document.

Recommendations include aspects of: Equitable Economic Development; Accessibility; Inclusion; Environmental Resilience; Youth Engagement; and Public Accountability. Across a number of related topics, the survey simply asked “Did We Get It Right?” and asked respondent to rank a large number of priorities in their own minds.

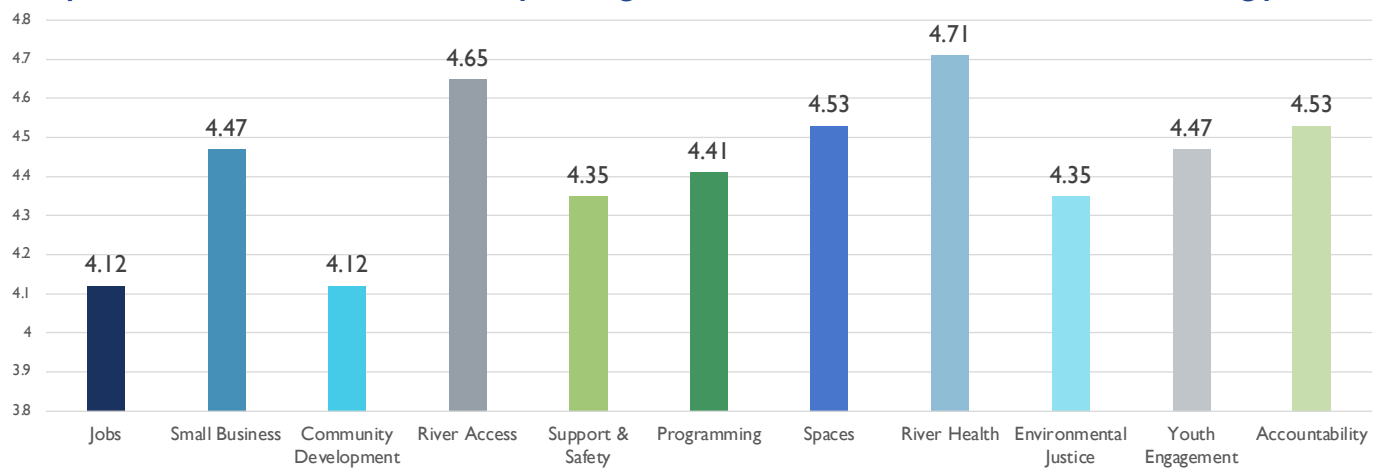
The project outcomes survey was promoted on the GRV website, social media, and as a means of providing outside feedback from GRV leadership committee. Responses were received between Nov 7th and Jan 3rd.

The survey had 19 respondents but 17 were analyzed as there were two duplicate responses, where respondents answered the questions differently but provided the same email address. The first response for each was excluded on the assumption that the respondents wished to enter an updated response.

The survey found that River Health, followed closely by River Access, were the most highly recommended strategies across all respondents while jobs and community development strategies were ranked lowest. Nonetheless, all strategies received an average of agree or higher with very few respondents disagreeing with any of the recommended strategies.

These findings closely mirror the findings from the River Sentiments Survey, giving them credence even with the smaller sample size.

### Responses to “How much do you agree with this recommended strategy?”



Possible Answers (select one): Strongly Disagree [1], Disagree [2], Neutral [3], Agree [4], Strongly Agree [5]. This chart shows the numerical average of the 17 survey respondents to the question of “how much do you agree with this recommended strategy?” for each strategic area (jobs, small business, etc.).

# Acknowledgments

**BAW-WA-TING**

Long before contact with Euro-Americans, Native Americans lived near Baw-wa-ting, "the rapids." Some 2000 years ago Hopewellian Indians built numerous burial mounds in the area. This mound group became known as the Converse Mounds. As early as the 18th century Ottawa Indians lived near the rapids at a village called Noaquageshik. Ojibwa and Potawatomi also lived in this vicinity. The development of Grand Rapids during the late 19th century destroyed the burial mounds; however, archaeological excavations in 1999 revealed occupations dating back more than 5000 years, as well as evidence of an 18th and 19th century Native American presence. In 2000 the Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians worked with Grand Valley State University to establish this park on the site of their ancestors' village.

GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
1000 WEST WALTON AVENUE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503  
TEL: 616-771-1100 FAX: 616-771-1101



## Land Acknowledgment

We first recognize that the Grand River flows through the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, the People of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewademi. We acknowledge that the development of the Grand River is occurring on this colonized land, ceded under duress, that has been cared for from time immemorial by the indigenous people of West Michigan. We recognize the resilience and resistance efforts of the native and traditional people of this land, many of whom are still present in Grand Rapids and throughout Kent County, as well as those who have been forcibly removed from this land. An acknowledgment of land is only a small gesture and is meant to be a first step in the collective action to combat the erasure of Indigenous people's history, language, and culture and work towards returning the land to its rightful stewards.

## Contributors

The Grand River Equity Framework was developed in partnership with the local community. We acknowledge and thank those who contributed to the development of this plan:

### *Community Members*

We thank all the individuals who participated in Grand River Voices workshops, the individuals who submitted comments on the Grand River Voices website, the individuals who took interviews, the individuals and organizations that convened audiences, and the individuals who completed the online survey on the Grand River Voices website. We also thank the thousands who participated in various engagement

processes over the past years. Your participation is central to the development of the Framework and its priorities.

We are most grateful for the significant and ongoing stewardship of the Framework process by our Stakeholder Advisory Board as well as support staff from the City of Grand Rapids and Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. over the past year. Without your knowledge and dedication, the Framework document would not be possible.

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### *Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc*

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### *City of Grand Rapids*

- Ciarra Adkins, JD, Equity Analyst, Office of Equity and Engagement

We would also like to thank many individual contributors who lent their time, subject matter expertise, and personal experience to the framework’s content in formal and informal interviews. Your contributions helped refine our recommendations and will be invaluable to the implementation of this vision. Please forgive any incidental omissions or inaccuracies.

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- Ron Yob, Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Ryan Kilpatrick, Housing Next; DeVos Family Foundations
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- Scott Lewis, YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids
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- Steve Heacock, Grand Rapids WhiteWater
- Stephanie Ogren, Grand Rapids Public Museum
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