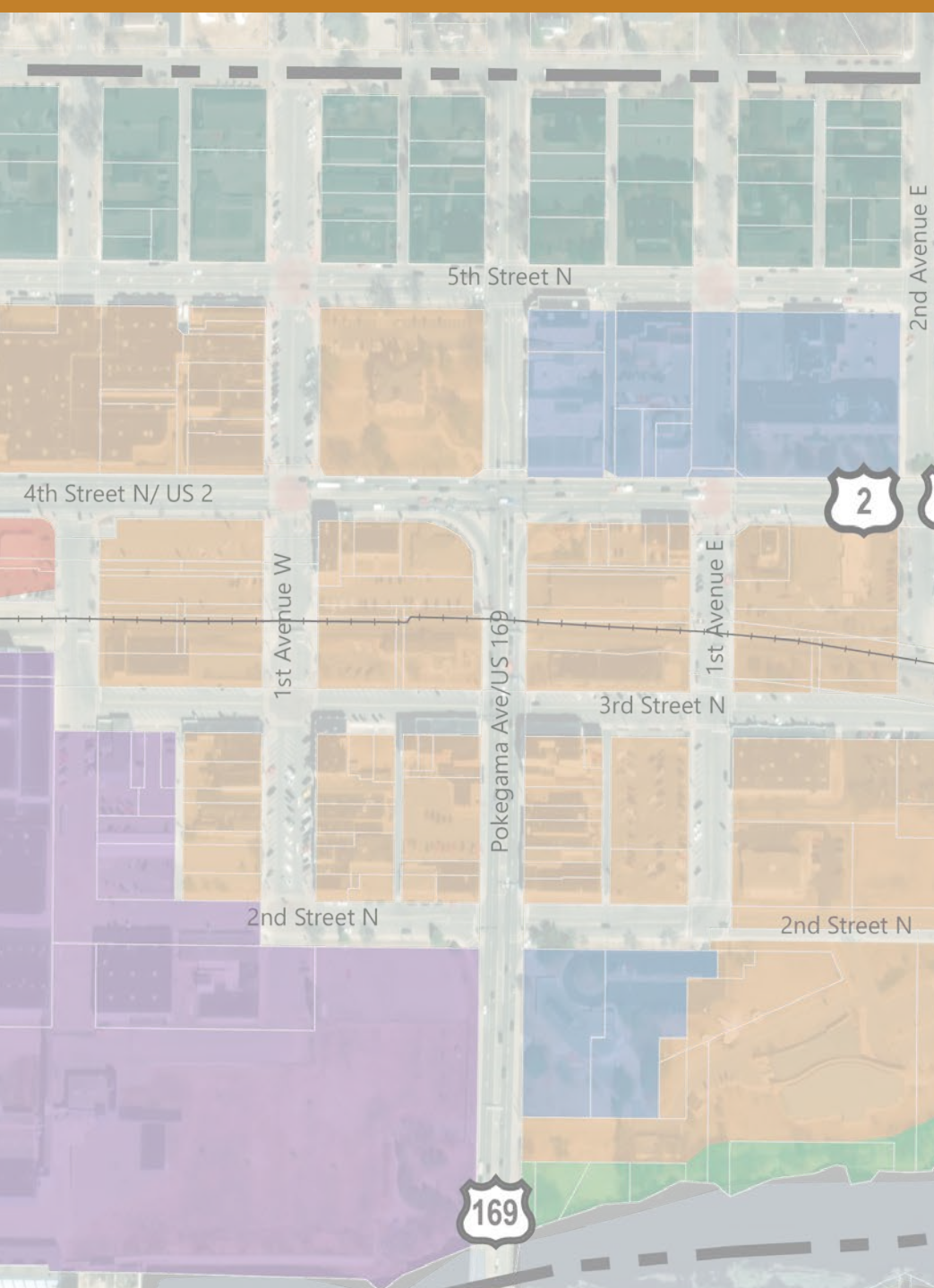




# Grand Rapids DOWNTOWN PLAN UPDATE



# Grand Rapids Downtown Plan DRAFT May 2023

## Acknowledgements

### Mayor and City Council

<b>Dale Christy</b> Mayor	<b>Dale Adams</b> Councilor	<b>Tasha Connelly</b> Councilor	<b>Molly MacGregor</b> Councilor	<b>Tom Sutherland</b> Councilor
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### Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority

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### With Support From



### With Participation From

The Community



Downtown Stakeholders



Community Visitors



### Prepared by

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# Introduction

A vibrant, active downtown can be the heart of a thriving community – playing a significant role in defining the community’s identity and providing a destination. Downtowns can provide places to live, work, and play, and reflect the shared values and heritage of the community. The City of Grand Rapids continues to invest in its downtown, exploring opportunities to invest and enhance the places, spaces, and experiences. The Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update charts a future path forward to support the community’s priorities, strengths, and resources. The Downtown Study Area was established early in the planning process, including 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue W to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue E from 6<sup>th</sup> Street N to the Mississippi River.



## Plan Purpose and Intent

In 2006, the Grand Rapids Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan set an ambitious path forward to establish and sustain the downtown desired by Grand Rapids. Since its adoption, significant progress has been made toward accomplishing the goals in the 2006 plan. Implementation has included public investments in public art and amenities and private investments in structures and uses. A summary of completed actions is included in [Appendix A](#). This progress, combined with ever-changing economic, social, and market conditions, created an opportunity to update the guiding plan. The Grand Rapids



Downtown Plan Update is designed to build and expand upon the 2006 Grand Rapids Downtown Plan and the GROW Grand Rapids 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2020). Its intent is to establish a community-supported vision and goals for Downtown, and provide an actionable, implementable “toolbox” of strategies that will guide investments and improvements for the next ten to fifteen years. Development of the Plan was a collaborative community process between local and regional stakeholders, including:

<b>Community members and visitors</b>	<b>Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA)</b>	<b>Downtown Property Owners</b>	<b>Downtown Residents</b>
<b>Downtown Business Owners</b>	<b>Grand Rapids Area Visitor and Convention Bureau</b>	<b>Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce</b>	<b>City Staff</b>

In combination with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update is intended to be utilized by the community to inform investment and policy decisions that support the vitality of Downtown Grand Rapids.

## How to Use the Plan

This Plan was designed to articulate the community’s preferences for a wide range of factors affecting Downtown, including its visual and physical character, services, amenities, transportation system, future development, and experiences. It is intended to be used by city staff, developers, elected officials, and economic development professionals as a framework for future decision making. As was the case with the 2006 Plan, the Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update should not be viewed as an uncompromising “blueprint” for what Downtown will look like, but rather a guide for decisions that support the community’s desires specific to Downtown. The Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update does not attempt to prescribe specific location, size, and use of structures; instead, it provides guidance for private and public investments in a manner that creates and maintains the downtown desired by Grand Rapids.

## Planning Process

The city utilized a four-step process to develop this Plan. The process began by exploring existing conditions through broad community engagement and data-gathering. This outreach was integrated into a second step to explore opportunities and develop a draft community vision for Downtown. These elements were discussed with the community and other stakeholders, which led to an analysis of potential solutions and recommendations. These solutions and recommendations were then operationalized into a range of implementation strategies to guide decision-makers to accomplish desired goals.



## Understand Current Conditions

The initial step set out to understand current conditions, experiences, and needs throughout Downtown Grand Rapids. This phase focused on exploring existing conditions within Downtown that would be combined with the engagement efforts of the next phase to fully understand opportunities and priorities. The project team analyzed existing and future land use, transportation safety and operations, physical conditions, economic data, and population growth forecasts, among other data to understand current conditions and the policies and actions that have informed these conditions.

In June 2022, the project team kicked off the process with a Kick-Off event with city staff and led a walking tour of Downtown Grand Rapids. Discussions included the Downtown visitor experience, potential economic development opportunities, and multimodal transportation challenges. The walking tour helped provide the project team with an understanding of existing conditions Downtown, including Downtown's unique character, aesthetics, and role within the city and region.

## Explore Opportunities and Vision

The second step built upon the understanding of current conditions to explore opportunities and priorities for Downtown from the community. In summer 2022, the project team initiated a multifaceted community engagement effort that encouraged stakeholders to share their perceptions and experiences, provide broad feedback, define issues, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The project team interacted with a broad base of stakeholders in various settings and formats to explore opportunities and visions. This allowed the team to achieve a deeper understanding of Downtown Grand Rapids' strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. These discussions included specific opportunities by topical area. Community and stakeholder comments, questions, concerns, and input were analyzed and informed the development to the Plan's draft vision, goals, and recommendations to achieve those goals. Engagement efforts undertaken during this step included:



Date	Activity	Description	Interactions
July 2022	Launch Project Website	<a href="http://www.GrandRapidsMNDowntown.com">www.GrandRapidsMNDowntown.com</a> was launched to share project updates, materials, and gather input.	
August to September 2022	Stakeholder Interviews	Interviews and focus groups with Downtown and community stakeholders with knowledge or interest in the future of Downtown. Retail and service businesses, property owners, and institution/community leaders were engaged to discuss strengths, challenges, opportunities, values, and desired outcomes	<b>40+</b>
August to September 2022	Community Survey	Gather input about current experiences within Downtown Grand Rapids. Explore future needs and desires from the community.	<b>800+</b>
August 2022	Tall Timber Days Pop-Up Event	Share the planning process with the community and engage with activities to understand Downtown experiences. Participants were asked to share what aspects of Downtown drew them to visit, and aspects of Downtown that they liked and disliked. They were ask invited to rank their preferences for future amenities and attractions, such as retail shopping, dining and entertainment, and employment.	<b>100+</b>
September 2022	Riverfest Pop-Up Event		<b>100+</b>



## Analyze Solutions/ Solidify Recommendations

The third step of the process utilized the feedback and analysis of the first two steps to explore and analyze solutions and recommendations for Downtown Grand Rapids. The project team analyzed the range of community input collected and developed draft strategies and recommendations to accomplish community desires. These draft strategies and recommendations were then reviewed with stakeholders to ensure that the final document would accurately reflect community understanding and support. This included direct stakeholder discussions and a community survey to gauge resident support for proposed recommendations. Strategies were adjusted based on stakeholder feedback to ensure maximum impact toward meeting intended goals. Engagement efforts undertaken during this step included:

Date	Activity	Description	Interactions
October 2022	Stakeholder Charette	Engage stakeholders to help define their vision for Downtown and potential solutions. Attendees were invited to identify key focus areas for improvement, and develop potential solutions to improve Downtown within a framework of Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development, and Public Realm.	30+
October 2022	Community Charette	The community was invited to a similar workshop where they worked together to explore activities and strategies for the future of Downtown.	20+
November to December 2022	Vision Survey	A second community survey gathered input on the draft vision and guiding principles for Downtown. Participants shared their thoughts on statements regarding future development, investments in the transportation network, future public and private investments, and connection to history and resources.	40+





## Implementation Strategies

The final step of the process analyzed the strategies and actions needed to implement the vision and guiding principles established throughout the process. Actions to support future economic development strategies, ongoing stakeholder coordination, Downtown’s physical design and appearance, and improvements to the transportation network were explored. Engagement efforts undertaken during this step included:

Date	Activity	Description	Interactions
January 2023	Community Open House	Community members were invited to two open houses to learn about the strategies and recommendations identified for Downtown and share feedback prior to the development of the plan.	20+
January 2023	Stakeholder Meeting	Downtown and Community Stakeholders engaged throughout the planning process were invited for a discussion of plan outcomes and strategies.	10+
January 2023	GREDA Update	The project team provided an update to the Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) and received their feedback.	10+

The following Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update is a culmination of this community engagement and partnership.

# Downtown Vision and Guiding Principles

Establishing a shared vision helps to coordinate the wide range of private and public decision-makers who influence Downtown's look, feel, and function. A vision helps lay a consensus path forward and clarifies expectations.

The vision for Downtown Grand Rapids is based on a set of Guiding Principles built from community input and needs. Taken together, these Guiding Principles describe the vision for the future of Downtown. They provide a framework for guiding both public and private investments. These principles are a significant aspect of this Plan, as they provide a clear and continuing statement of the objectives for transportation and development in Downtown. They provide a structure for evaluating proposals, projects, ideas and new directions. Selections of various solutions and recommendations can be measured by their consistency with these principles.

## Guiding Principles

**#1** Downtown Grand Rapids is a **thriving business destination** in northern Minnesota that **welcomes and serves the needs of area residents and visitors**.

By cultivating a business and amenity mix that meets the needs of area residents and visitors, we expand Downtown's role as a prosperous regional destination. Downtown embraces its role as a unique and memorable place for shopping, dining, and gathering.

**#2** Downtown Grand Rapids **celebrates its setting on the Mississippi** and its authentic heritage as a regional center for commerce, culture, employment, and social connections in Northern Minnesota, creating a **sense of place** that attracts area residents and visitors.

Public and private spaces express and celebrate Downtown Grand Rapids northern heritage, culture, and setting.

**#3** Downtown Grand Rapids feels **safe and attractive** throughout the year. Wayfinding for pedestrians and well-designed access and surroundings inspire downtown visitors to explore shopping, dining, cultural, and outdoor experiences.

Downtown Grand Rapids builds on its role as a historic downtown to create memorable shopping, dining, and gathering experiences. The design and appearance of public and private spaces in Downtown is attractive and well-maintained.

**#4** Downtown Grand Rapids has **transportation options for everyone, regardless of age or ability**, and the transportation network is safe to navigate and use whether walking, biking, rolling, or driving.

Maintaining and improving Downtown's transportation infrastructure provides the community and visitors the opportunity to travel safely to and between Downtown businesses, public spaces, and



community activities. To achieve this, we consider users of all ages and abilities when making decisions regarding infrastructure design.

## **#5** Downtown Grand Rapids **attracts and welcomes people of all ages, groups, and abilities** to shop, dine, gather, engage, enjoy, create, and learn.

Attractive spaces and memorable experiences draw people to the Downtown area throughout the seasons. Downtown is activated by special events as well as amenities that actively engage people like outdoor dining, trails, public art, musical and cultural events, historic and natural interpretation.

## **#6** Downtown Grand Rapids provides **convenient connections to the Mississippi River** and other natural amenities, providing opportunities to **interact and learn**.

Downtown's proximity to natural beauty, including the Mississippi River, is a distinct and invaluable feature of our area. Decision makers will consider the value brought by connections to nature when improving Downtown, and work to expand and improve natural connections.

## **#7** Downtown Grand Rapids has **adequate parking opportunities** that are **safe and convenient**.

By maintaining an appropriate parking supply within convenient proximity to destinations, we can ensure Downtown's features are available to visitors of all abilities. Decision makers will consider parking needs throughout Downtown when making decisions about how to utilize Downtown's limited land area.

## **#8** Downtown Grand Rapids **economic and cultural vitality** is informed by market insights and cultivated by local business and property owners, employers, and the public, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors.

Downtown Grand Rapids is made stronger by the broad range of individuals and groups contributing to its success. Downtown partners effectively organize to identify and address market challenges and opportunities and promote Downtown. Financing and technical assistance resources support investment in a vibrant downtown.

# Downtown Context

Downtown provides a unique function for the city. It provides physical gathering spaces for a broad range of local and regional activities, and as such, Downtown demonstrates unique characteristics and needs. For example, Downtown is an economic engine which provides workspace for many local and regional employers and the associated workforce. It provides a variety of goods, legal, accounting, health care, real estate and other services for the region. It also provides significant services for government administration and social assistance. Concurrently, Downtown provides a space for local housing, recreation, arts, culture, and a variety of local and regional community gatherings. Decisionmakers must consider all these functions and more when making decisions related to transportation, infrastructure, and municipal policy.



## Demographics

The population of the City of Grand Rapids continues to grow. The City’s 2010 population was 10,869 and grew to 11,126 in 2020, This represents a ten-year growth rate of 2.36 percent and average of 25 additional residents per year (U.S. Census). This growth rate outpaced the growth of the greater region, defined by Itasca County. Over the last ten years (2010 to 2020), Itasca County saw a slight population decrease. The 2010 population of Itasca County was 45,058 and declined to 45,014 in 2020. This represents a ten-year growth rate of negative 0.16 percent (U.S. Census). Over this time period, the city increased its share of the County population, growing from 24.1 percent to 24.7 percent.

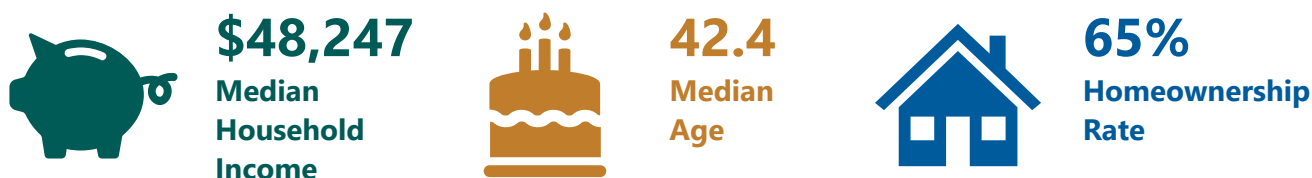
**Table 1 Population**

Geography	2010 Population	2020 Population	Percent increase
City of Grand Rapids	10,869	11,126	2.36%
Itasca County	45,058	45,014	-0.16%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



In addition to understanding the growth of the overall population, exploring the characteristics or specifics of the population can help to understand community needs and desires. The following characteristics correspond to the entire City of Grand Rapids.

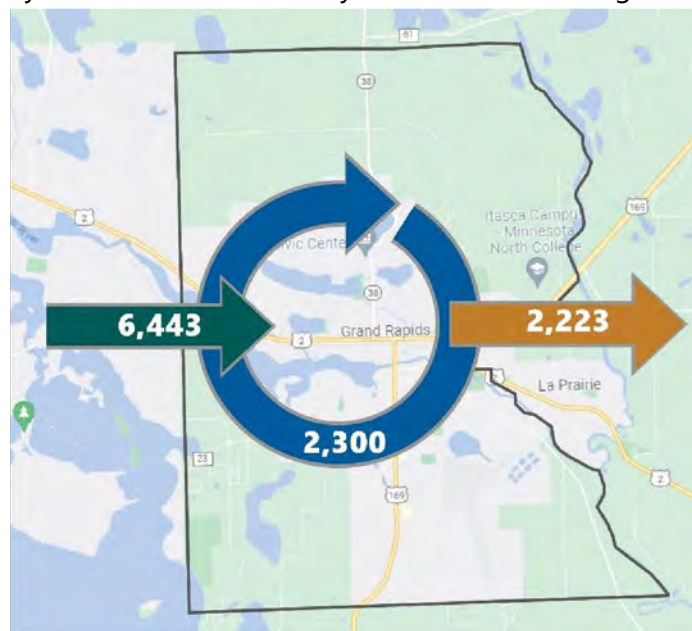


Source: US Census ACS 2020 5-year estimate

## Commuting Patterns

Analysis of commuting patterns provides an understanding of people's travel behaviors between home and work. For example, a certain number of people employed within an area may reside outside that area, and vice versa. Understanding local and regional commuting behaviors helps to better understand these locational relationships and their associated transportation activities.

A simple analysis of commuting patterns can be done using American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. Grand Rapids is a regional center, drawing employees into the community for work from the greater region. In 2020 the ACS estimated that 74 percent of the jobs within the community were held by someone living outside of the community. Additionally, 51 percent of employed community members were employed within the City of Grand Rapids. The Downtown study area is a subset of the greater community, but these characteristics hold true for Downtown employees as well. These transportation patterns help provide an understanding of transportation needs within Downtown. They also help decision-makers understand opportunities to alleviate congestion, reduce wear-and-tear on the roadway, and improve road safety by locating housing nearer to employment.



This data was also explored at the County scale. Over 80 percent of Itasca County residents also work within the county. Nearly 90 percent of these employees travel to work by car, truck, or van and almost 7 percent work from home.

## Employment Characteristics

Understanding the industries and employment types within Downtown can inform future opportunities and understanding of employee and employer needs. Like many other downtowns, there are three primary industries within Downtown Grand Rapids. The Public Administration industry includes City of Grand Rapids, Itasca County, and other local organization employment and is the largest industry in

Downtown. The second and third highest employment sectors Downtown are Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade. These two categories are the top two industries within the city as a whole. However, the Public Administration sector represents a much smaller proportion of the jobs citywide. Other major employment sectors supporting jobs Downtown include Finance and Insurance, Accommodation and Food Services, Manufacturing and Professional and Technical Services.

The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development monitors changes within each industry and the average annual wage of each. For Itasca County, the average annual wage for all industries was \$50,599 in 2022. The Public Administration industry recorded an average annual wage of \$58,494 in 2022 and the industry experienced a loss of 1.3 percent of its jobs from 2021 to 2022. The Health Care and Retail Trade industries recorded an average annual wage of \$47,996 and \$34,302, respectively.

Projected changes in employment and the labor force are explored at the county level by DEED. According to their 2022 data, Itasca County had 21,727 available workers in 2022. The labor force has shifted over the last 20 years. After a gain of over 400 workers each year from 1990 to 2000, the county then averaged a gain of 79 workers from 2000 to 2010, and recently an annual loss of 20 workers per year since 2010. DEED projections estimate a continued loss in labor force for the county, forecasting 20,148 available workers in 2025 and 19,693 in 2035.

**Table 2 Itasca County Labor Force Projections, 2025-2035**

		2022	2025	2035
<b>Available Workers</b>	16 to 24 years	2,800	2,823	2,693
	25 to 54 years	8,497	12,142	12,309
	55 to 64 years	4,236	3,692	3,363
	65 and over	6,194	1,491	1,327
<b>Total Labor Force</b>		<b>21,727</b>	<b>20,148</b>	<b>19,692</b>

## Land Use

Land use represents the general use of the property, including economic, cultural, and housing activities. The following land uses categories represent current and guided future uses within Downtown Grand Rapids and their general location is shown in the land use figures.

<b>Land Use Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Commercial	Commercial land use refers to traditional retail, service and office uses. Buildings in these areas consist of both one- and two-story structures.
Institutional	Institutional land use refers to uses for governmental, educational, social, religious, or cultural activities. Examples include city hall, county and state buildings, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, nursing homes, and museums.

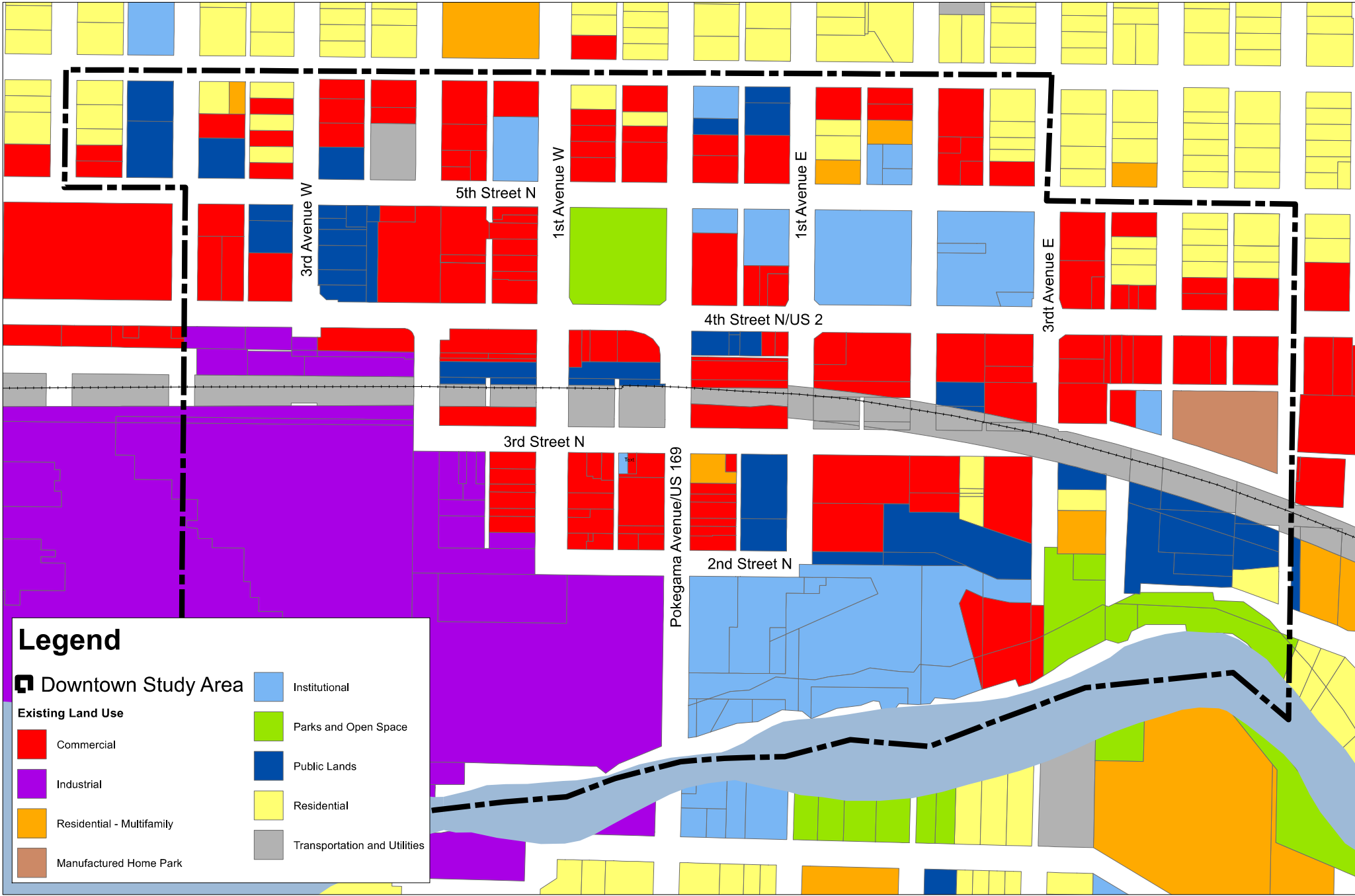
Land Use Category	Description
Industrial	Industrial land use refers to activities that involve the manufacturing of industrial products, factories, warehouses, and other uses. Industrial uses within the study area are primarily undertaken on land owned by Blandin Paper Company.
Park and Open Space	Park and Open Space land use refers to recreation, including public beaches, ice rinks, sports fields, gymnasiums, playgrounds, public parks and green areas, and camping sites.
Low Density Residential	Low Density Residential land uses primarily include single family homes and developments.
Medium to High Density Residential	Medium and High-Density Residential land uses generally represent multi-family residential uses, including apartments, condos, townhomes, and duplexes.
Mixed Use	Mixed use land uses include a combination of residential and commercial developments. Developments can include vertical mixed-use, where commercial uses are located on lower floors with residential above, or horizontal mixed-use, where commercial and residential uses are located on the same or adjacent lots.



## Existing Land Use

Downtown's existing land use is primarily divided among several single uses, meaning that commercial, industrial, public land, and institutional activities are allowed as the sole activity upon a given site or area Downtown. The Downtown core is dominated by a combination of commercial and institutional uses. The southwest quadrant is dominated by industrial areas owned by the Blandin Paper Company. In the center of Downtown, the block to the northwest quadrant of the US Highway 169/US Highway 2 intersection serving Old Central School and ad hoc community events is designated as parks and open space. Several areas are designated as institutional, including the sites of the Itasca County Sheriff's Office, the Itasca County Veterans Services, and the area abutting the Mississippi River just east of Pokegama Avenue servicing the Grand Rapids Area Library.





# Legend

 Downtown Study Area

## Existing Land Use

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Commercial                |  Institutional                |
|  Industrial                |  Parks and Open Space         |
|  Residential - Multifamily |  Public Lands                 |
|  Manufactured Home Park    |  Residential                  |
|   |  Transportation and Utilities |

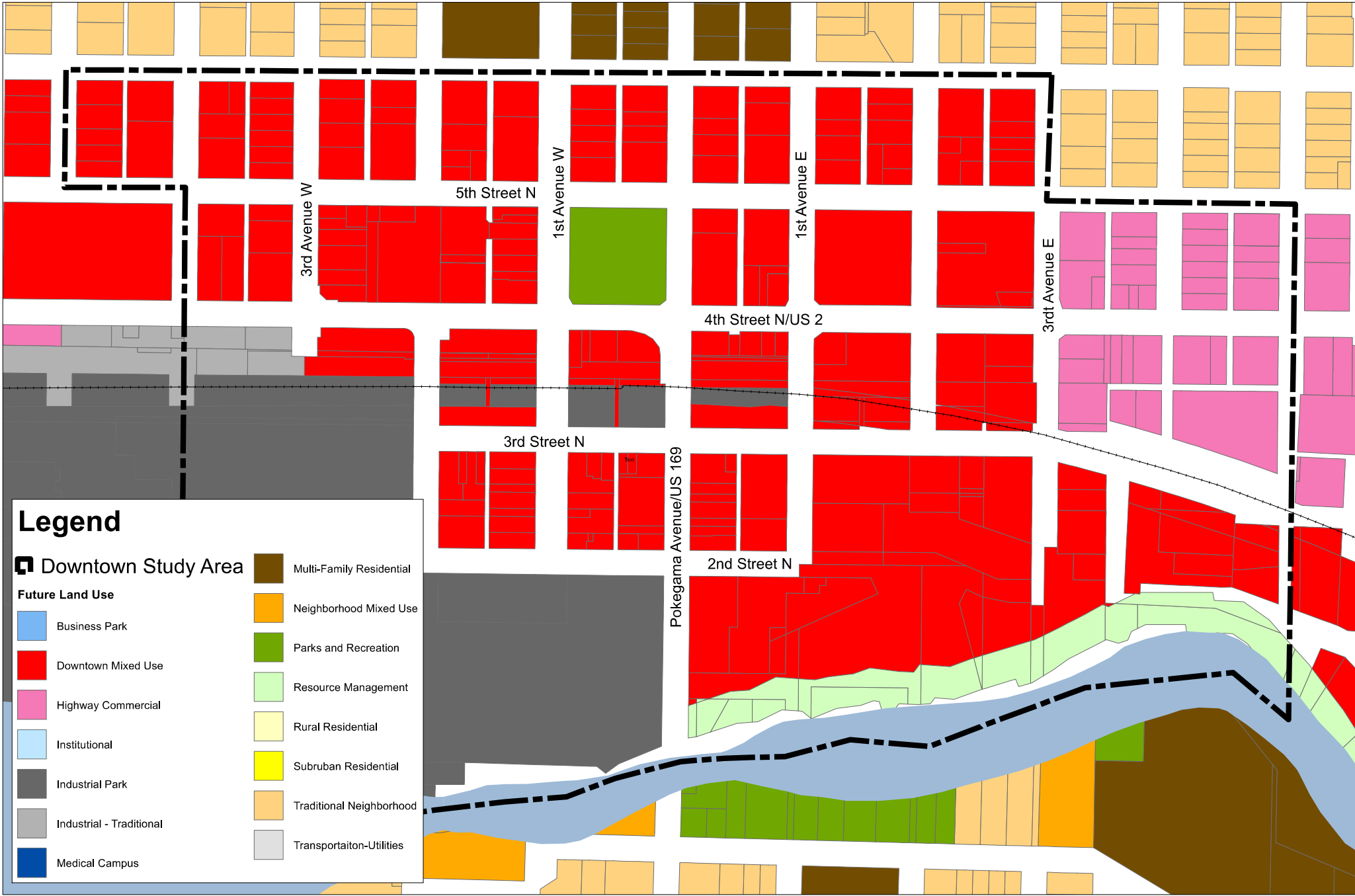
## Future Land Use

The City's future land use planning within the study area indicates a significant transition from single use to Downtown mixed-use activities. The Grand Rapids GROW Grand Rapids Plan defines mixed-use as "...traditional downtown development styles with commercial uses on lower floors and residential units on upper floors..." (4-20). This transition will allow for a more diverse range of activities to be undertaken in a single structure or on a shared block. These uses may include retail, office, institutional, civic, lodging, and residential.

## Zoning

The Downtown area is currently primarily zoned under the Central Business District (CBD) category with Limited Business (LB), General Business (GB) and General Industrial (I-2) also included. The city zoning ordinance specifies that this district correlates only with the Downtown area of the city and is intended to serve a regional clientele. It is highly diversified and intended to offer the full array of high value comparison goods and services; hotel, cultural, tourist and entertainment services; high density residential; finance; general office and public uses. The CBD is one of the city's high use intensity zones. It is fully developed, much of which occurred prior to the existence of zoning regulations. It is an area that requires the city to play a role in the provision of parking, upkeep, and public safety.





**Legend**

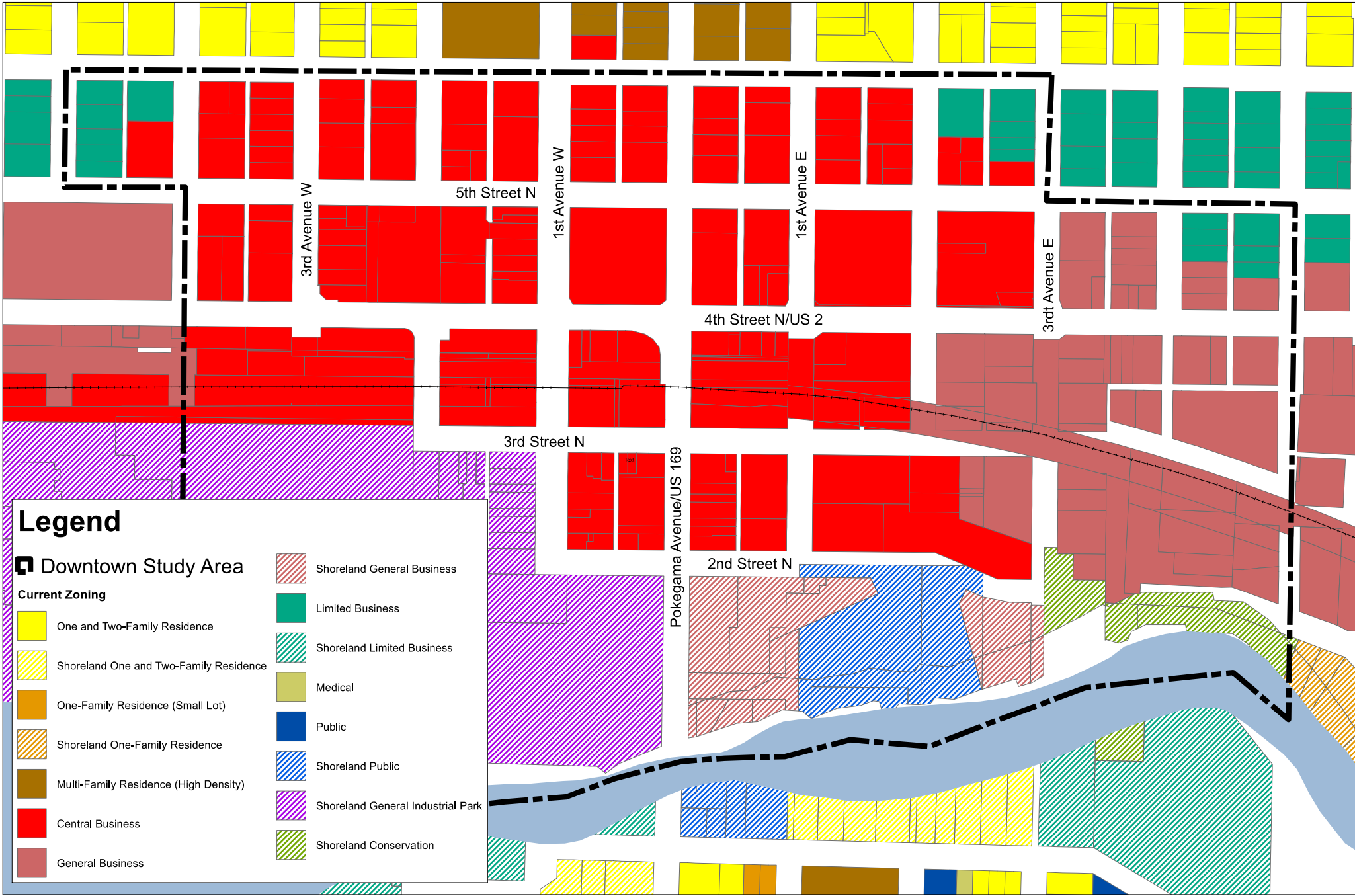
**Downtown Study Area**

**Future Land Use**

- Business Park
- Downtown Mixed Use
- Highway Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial Park
- Industrial - Traditional
- Medical Campus

- Multi-Family Residential
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Parks and Recreation
- Resource Management
- Rural Residential
- Suburban Residential
- Traditional Neighborhood
- Transportaiton-Utilities





## Transportation

Downtown is located at the intersection of two US highways: US Highway 2 (US 2) and US Highway 169 (US 169). State Highway 38 is the primary connection to Grand Rapids from the north. These highways form the key vehicular movements to and through Downtown. These transportation corridors provide regional access for the Downtown workforce, visitors, and customers. These highways are maintained under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The two US Highways carry not only local trips, but freight trips from Duluth to North Dakota and summer trips into the northern region. Additionally, the BNSF Railway rail line brings additional freight traffic through the downtown.

### Freight

US 2 from the west and US 169 to the east form a major trucking route between the Port of Duluth and the Dakotas. These highways are utilized by both local and non-local freight and manufacturing firms, including the Blandin Paper Company's downtown location. MnDOT has identified US 2 as a Corridor of Commerce, highlighting its role in fostering economic growth for the State of Minnesota through the transportation of goods and mobility to residents. The Corridor of Commerce designation opens additional funding opportunities for the highway as well, and the intersection of US 2 and US 169 has been identified as a proposed MnDOT Corridor of Commerce project for as a sum of \$600,000 in Urban Capacity Improvements.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway operates a Superior Class L rail line which bisects downtown from east to west. This rail line provides freight services to the Port of Duluth and into the Dakotas through Grand Forks, ND. According to the Federal Railroad Administration, in 2019 there were four trains traveling through Downtown Grand Rapids per day at a speed of 25 miles per hour.

### Multimodal Traffic

Downtown provides a variety of transportation facilities and infrastructure for Downtown visitors who may choose to walk, roll, ride, or drive. For example, Downtown patrons may choose to travel by walking, riding a bicycle, riding a bus, or by riding in a personal automobile. Existing infrastructure includes streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, a pedestrian bridge, and trail to the south, and both on-street and off-street bicycle infrastructure. Vehicle traffic patterns change in the summer, as a large number of seasonal visitors utilize the transportation network to travel to lakes, camping, and outdoor recreation throughout the region. The influx of vehicles in the summer months include recreational vehicles of varying size and vehicles equipped with towing equipment towing boats and nonmotorized recreational trailers.

### Parking

Downtown provides a range of automobile surface parking options throughout. Eleven public lots are disbursed throughout the area, notably several large lots to the east and south of Central Square Mall, at the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE in the south, as well as south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE. Ten private lots are available, most notably a large private lot east of the Itasca County Jail between 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE. Site constraints force the use of structured parking (decks, ramps, or underground) may meet the needs of larger projects. Structured parking typically costs three to five times more than surface parking.



## Parking Inventory

Grand Rapids Downtown Master Plan

Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority



## Access

The study area is comprised primarily of a traditional downtown grid network supporting many public and private uses on different parcels. As is the trend with similar downtown grids, most access points in the study area are public and private driveways.

## Volumes

North-south Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on US 169 / Pokegama Avenue was 16,400 in 2019. East-west AADT on US 169 / Fourth Street NE was 14,200 in 2019. East-west traffic along US 2 / Fourth Street NW was 16,300 in 2019. These volumes support both highways' importance as significant traffic corridors.

## Crash Data

Crashes classified as Fatal, Serious Injury, Minor Injury, Possible Injury, and Property Damage Only were analyzed for patterns. Injury crash clusters are evident at the intersections of N Pokegama Avenue at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, North Pokegama at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW, and N Pokegama at US 2. Serious injuries were recorded at the intersection of N Pokegama and US 2 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE between 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

**Table 3 All Crashes 2017 - 2021**

Crash Severity	Number
Fatal	0
Serious Injury	2
Minor Injury	19
Possible Injury	43
Property Damage Only	234

Source: MnDOT MNCMAT2

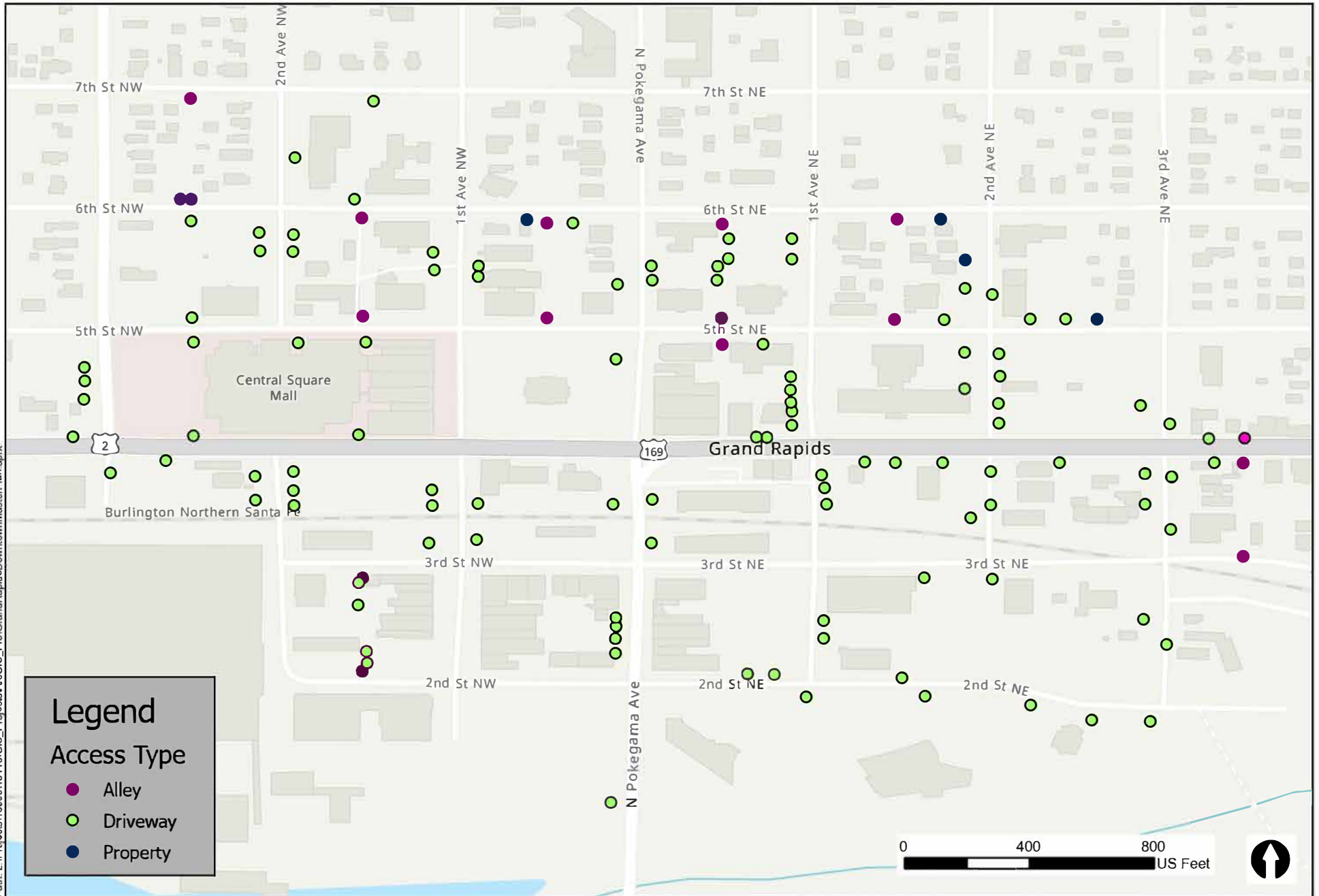
Pedestrian and bicycle crashes were analyzed for the time period of 2012 through 2022. The analysis indicated zero Fatal crashes, one Serious Injury (2018), four Minor Injuries, six Possible Injuries, and one Property Damage Only crash.

**Table 4 Pedestrian and Bike Crashes 2012 - 2022**

Crash Severity	Number
Fatal	0
Serious Injury	1
Minor Injury	4
Possible Injury	6
Property Damage Only	1

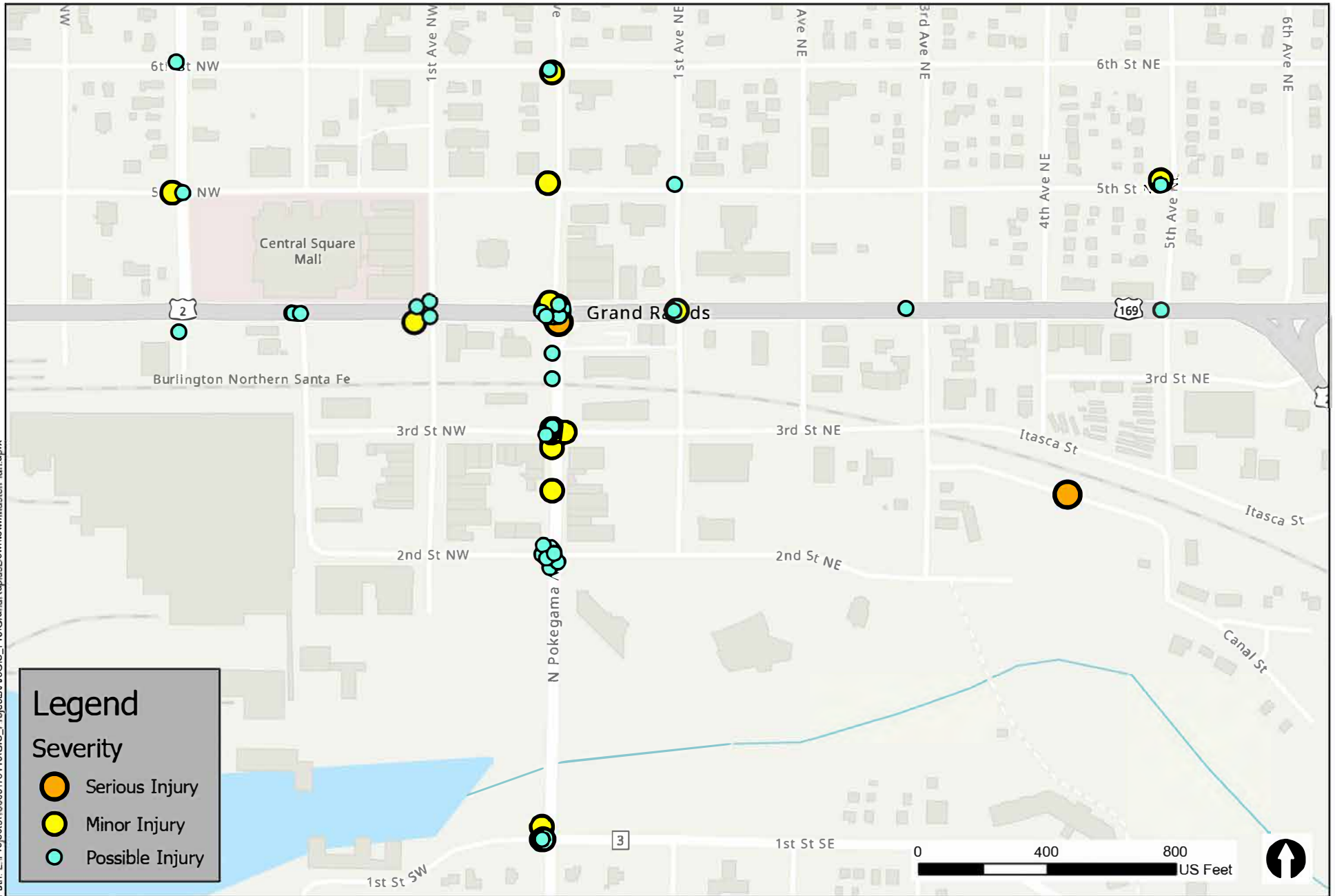
Source: MnDOT MNCMAT2

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## Access Inventory

Grand Rapids Downtown Master Plan  
Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority



## Crashes 2017-2021

Grand Rapids Downtown Master Plan  
Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority





## **Pedestrian and Bicyclist Infrastructure**

The study area provides a range of existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as opportunities to fill in gaps and several missing connections. The local street grid is well-equipped with sidewalks on both sides of most streets. There are several missing segments in the network, notably in the southeastern quadrant of the study area, along both sides of 4th Avenue NE, 5th Avenue NE, both sides of Itasca Street east of 3rd Avenue, and along the north side of 5th Avenue NE / 3rd Street NE. Additionally, there are gaps in the northern part of downtown, along 5th Street NE and 6th Street.

The southeast quadrant of the study area, which is least served for pedestrian infrastructure, is directly north of the southern trail and pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi River. These are important connections into Downtown from the south and east, creating an opportunity to close gaps and increase connectivity.

The majority of the street network does not provide on-street bicycle facilities, except for the entirety of the length of the east/west 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW corridor.

## **Economic Development**

Downtown is often referred to as the heart of the community. Its character and vitality impact the ability of a community to attract and retain businesses, talent, regional residents and visitors. Downtowns need to continuously evolve and adapt to changes in consumer preferences and behavior. This means that downtown property owners, business owners, the public sector and major employers need to share an understanding of the evolving niche of downtown in the context of the region, cultivate the physical environment and mix of business, arts, culture and entertainment, to attract and engage area residents and visitors.

### **Economic Niche and Strategic Business Mix**

Grand Rapids serves as a regional center for employment, health care, education, government, legal and professional services, retail trade, dining and entertainment for year-round residents, seasonal residents, students, and tourists.

**Downtown** Grand Rapids is characterized by:

- A significant concentration of federal, state and local government services with approximately 270 people employed in city and county offices north of US Highway 2 and east of Pokegama Ave.
- The manufacture of paper at UPM Blandin employs approximately 225 people at the mill on the Mississippi and generates significant truck and rail traffic.
- A concentration of business, health care and personal services (e.g., attorneys, accountants, dentists, orthodontists, financial planners, salons) located primarily north of 5<sup>th</sup> St. NW that meet the needs of residents from throughout the region.
- Arts, cultural, dining, shopping and entertainment opportunities including the Grand Rapids Area Library, the MacRostie Art Center, Center Square Mall and Historic Central School.
- A concentration of regional philanthropic and non-profit organizations including the Blandin Foundation, Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation, Itasca Economic Development

Corporation, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Itasca County Historical Society and others involved in charitable work and community development.

### **Trends**

Significant national/global trends impact downtown Grand Rapids including the long-term retail transition to large format stores with large parking lots located outside historic downtown districts, and the more recent transition to on-line shopping. While the historic structures found in traditional downtowns don't meet the needs of national chain retailers, these buildings have found an important niche in providing space for smaller locally owned businesses.

Responding to on-line and generational changes in consumer behavior, mall owners and property managers recognize that there is a decreased emphasis on purchasing goods in brick and mortar stores, and that the space can effectively be repurposed to create "experiences" and opportunities for social engagement. Businesses like breweries, restaurants, coffee shops, co-working spaces, galleries, yoga and art studios, maker space, a variety of exercise and learning opportunities generate regular traffic that is beneficial to goods-oriented retailers. More housing is also being introduced to malls and downtown areas. Such changes bring a sense of vitality into the evening hours and help generate traffic that can support dining, entertainment, and goods-oriented retail businesses. Consumer interest in local businesses has caused some national chains to find ways to introduce elements that create a "local feel" to their businesses.

### **Organization of Stakeholders, Business, and Property Owners**

The principal competition for downtowns since the 1960s has been shopping malls or large format retail chains. These retail competitors are strategically located, store hours are regulated, and the mix of goods and services are carefully curated to attract customers and generate sales. Information on the impact of advertising and promotions is carefully monitored and guides decision-making and investments. In downtown areas there are multiple *independent* property owners and multiple *independent* business owners. Consequently, if there is not a strong downtown association, vision, strategy, and information are not shared, resulting in lost opportunities for downtown business and property owners and a consumer experience that feels less coherent. Community identity and engagement are also affected.

When downtown stakeholders, including business and property owners, were interviewed in mid-2022, concerns were expressed about the lack of resources and organizational capacity devoted to Downtown Grand Rapids. Concerns were expressed about volunteer burnout and the need for some staff resources to be available to support Downtown Grand Rapids.

### **Investment**

Downtown Grand Rapids generally enjoys a good occupancy rate and properties in most areas of downtown are well maintained. The community has benefited from the interest and willingness of people from multiple generations to invest in the properties in Downtown Grand Rapids. The downtown area is relatively healthy compared to many other communities of similar size and young people are interested in investing in properties and businesses in Downtown Grand Rapids. Some potential investors, particularly less experienced investors, have been frustrated by the fact that Grand Rapids enforces the

state building code, which it cannot repeal as a city with a population greater than 5,000. “Change of use” code requirements can be significant, necessitating investments in updated electrical and HVAC systems, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and other expensive updates. The nature of leases in Block 17 reduces the incentive for businesses to invest in substantial improvements.

The Grand Rapids EDA has several local financing tools and helps businesses access other regional, state, and federal resources. Although the EDA distributes information about the financing tools annually, there was a lack of awareness of these resources among some parties interviewed.

## **Physical Design and Appearance**

Downtown Grand Rapids has a number of important assets – generally well-maintained building stock, the Mississippi River and adjacent trails, the pedestrian bridge, the historic Depot and Central School, a beautiful library, public art, and investment in streetscape and seasonal flowers. Downtown’s biggest physical challenge is the volume of traffic on US 2 and US 169. Pedestrians don’t feel safe crossing these corridors. The lack of wayfinding signage, especially for pedestrians, further reduces foot traffic throughout the downtown area.

Concentrating legal, professional, and smaller health care offices (e.g., optical, dental, insurance), which occurs north of 5<sup>th</sup> St. NW, is helpful. Retail businesses benefit from adjacency and visibility with other retailers and dining establishments because shoppers are inspired to make spontaneous stops and discretionary purchases. Increased property owner awareness of the impact of intermixing low traffic service businesses with retailers that value higher foot traffic could result in changes in leasing choices long term to strengthen the economic vitality of downtown.

## **Activation**

Activation of retail areas has become more important with generational change and with the movement to on-line shopping. People still seek social engagement and the opportunity to explore new ideas, goods, and experiences. An attractive, historic downtown like Grand Rapids offers great potential for attracting area residents and visitors to large events, arts classes, Classic Car gatherings, evening painting classes, karaoke, or spontaneous family activities like the Book Walk or the KAXE xylophones near the Mississippi. There are a number of well-planned events in Grand Rapids including Tall Timber Days and Riverfest. The first Friday Art Walk sponsored by the MacCrostie Center has been relied on as a monthly activity for a number of years. Participants in the interviews and focus groups indicated that the monthly event is suffering from volunteer burnout, reduced attendance, and concerns about bringing fresh new material to the public on a monthly basis.

## **Public Realm**

Public Realm refers to the important connection between building ground level, walkways, streets, and urban spaces. These elements of public space combine to create a destination’s sense of uniqueness, distinctiveness, and overall desirability. The Public Realm includes shops, awnings, shelters, parks, libraries, trails, promenades, throughways, and public art. The Public Realm also includes street surfaces. It contributes to the aesthetic and sensory comfort that Downtown visitors experience. The quality of an

area's Public Realm can wield significant influence on an area's attractiveness to live, work, and play, and can deeply impact property values, visitor satisfaction, and even visitor behavior. The Downtown study area exhibits a variety of Public Realm amenities and investments, including historic and heritage resources, public art, signage, recreational spaces, greenery, water access, and shading. Improvements in the public realm are needed to support and complement private investments.





# Downtown Plan

The Downtown Plan explores potential and opportunities for change, investment, and preservation throughout the study area. The following section provides the plan framework for the strategies and solutions for Downtown Grand Rapids, and involves the key elements of land use, transportation and mobility, economic development, and streetscape and public realm. This framework provides the overall concepts and solutions that will support movement in achieving the vision established through this process.

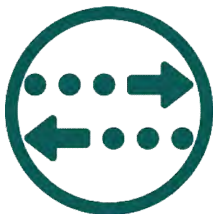
The recommendations identified within this section focus on the core concept of activation. Four focus areas support the concept of activation, including physical design & appearance, economic niche & business mix, investment strategies, and downtown organization.



Overall, the framework for each of the four areas looked to emphasize three key opportunities:



**ACTIVATION** is the opportunity to make and create places and spaces that provide experiences, connections, and memories. Activation within the Downtown can take many forms, from built improvements that create a new destination, from gathering spaces to facilitate connection to community events that draw the community and visitors to Downtown.



**MOBILITY** is the ability to move safely and efficiently from place to place. There are many varied priorities for mobility Downtown and opportunities must balance these varied priorities to continue to support access to destinations and through movements along US 2 and US 169.



**PLACEMAKING** is an opportunity to establish a sense of place or identity for Downtown. This identity can be used to solidify who Downtown is and how it connects to the broader community. Additionally, that identity can be further refined to support specific destinations and districts.

## Land Use and Development Strategies

By describing desired land uses and development strategies, this update establishes a framework for guiding how Downtown grows, changes, and responds to opportunities. This guidance is intended to help the community achieve the desired vision for the future. The Plan also recognizes the need to adapt to issues and opportunities that may occur in the future. This section explains the framework for land use and development strategies in Downtown Grand Rapids.

### Development Districts

To coordinate plan recommendations and provide guidance on future policy and development, a system of classifications known as **Districts** was created. The districts are intended to help manage development actions, enhance economic activity, and pair optimal activities and urban form with corresponding transportation infrastructure to improve the Downtown visitor experience. This guidance reflects existing conditions and sets an adaptive framework for the future. Downtown is a dynamic area, and a goal is to provide future decision makers flexibility to respond to changing resident and market preferences. The Downtown Districts category focuses on activities occurring in a given area.

These classifications help provide consistency and clarify community expectations for public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. The framework should be used by decision-makers when evaluating alternatives, weighing investments, and communicating with Downtown's diverse stakeholders.

#### Placemaking Opportunity



The Downtown District concept creates specific uses and guidance for defined geographic areas within Downtown. Each district supports placemaking opportunities through the grouping of similar uses and building forms to create connected destinations and experiences.

### **Shopping, Dining, Hospitality, and Higher-Density Residential**

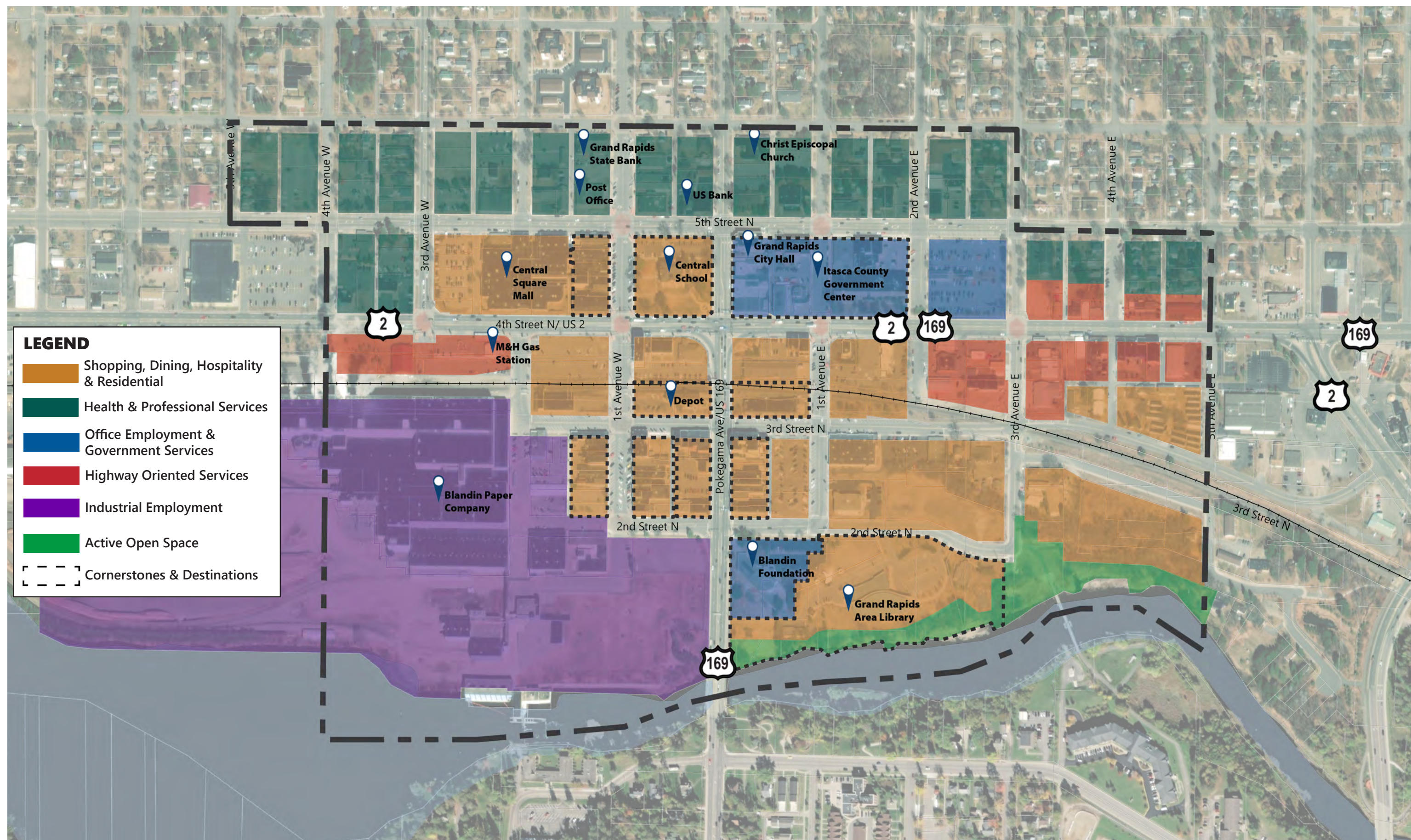
This District supports shopping, dining, cultural and entertainment activities, and higher-than-average density housing. The types of activities found in this District are more likely to serve as destinations for area residents and visitors. The business mix, public realm and cultural activities encourage curiosity and exploration. Visitors to one destination within the district may make unplanned visits to other destinations during the same trip. For example, visitors may stop at a local shop on their way to a restaurant or walk by the river after dining and then stop for ice cream. This District supports vertical mixed use, including residential uses on upper floors. This higher-density residential use provides a customer base for businesses within the district. Development in this district should be "human scale" and conducive to

convenient foot traffic, window shopping, and pedestrian comfort. Setbacks should be limited, and buildings should be massed in a manner to avoid shadowing of the throughway. Businesses in this District should be easily accessible with clear, convenient entry points.

### ***Health & Professional Services***

This District supports the types of activities that are non-retail and often attract residents from Grand Rapids and the surrounding region. Service businesses such as dentists, chiropractors, accountants, attorneys, financial planners and insurance agents typically operate with appointments during business hours, generate predictable traffic and parking, and invest in well-maintained properties. Employees and customers of these businesses are potential customers for area restaurants and retail stores. This District also includes residential uses in a mixed use and standalone capacity, supporting the existing residential uses in the northern part of the study area. Setbacks should be limited and buildings should be massed in a manner to avoid shadowing of the throughway. Businesses in this District should be easily accessible with clear, convenient entry points.





**LEGEND**

- Shopping, Dining, Hospitality & Residential
- Health & Professional Services
- Office Employment & Government Services
- Highway Oriented Services
- Industrial Employment
- Active Open Space
- Cornerstones & Destinations



### **Office Employment and Government Services**

This District supports employment activities that generate regular commuters as well as visitors associated with office services. They include City and County activities, including the Government Center, as well as state government, foundations, and non-profit organizations. These activities bring workers Downtown and provide a customer base for Downtown dining and retail businesses.

### **Residential**

This District supports residential activities, including single family homes and multifamily apartments. These activities bring a sense of life to Downtown and provide a customer base for Downtown dining and retail businesses.

### **Highway Oriented Services**

This District supports the types of activities typically found along higher-traffic transportation infrastructure, including auto oriented commercial services. In the Downtown area, it includes an auto repair shop and drive-through quick service restaurants.

### **Industrial Employment**

This District accommodates those areas and activities pertaining to Blandin Paper Company. This District generates truck traffic as well as a predictable number of employees who commute to the area daily.

### **Open Space**

This District supports Downtown's important connections to nature and open space, including access to the river, parks, and trails. Entry points should be convenient and accessible to persons of all ages and abilities.

## **Specific Development Strategies**

Certain areas within Downtown offer opportunities for investment and growth. For the purposes of coordination and identification, these areas have been designated as Opportunity Sites.

### **Opportunity Sites**

Opportunity Sites provide a possibility of economic, social, or aesthetic improvement, and may benefit from investment and uses that are more context-appropriate, thereby improving the District and the entire Downtown environment. These investments could include redevelopment, reinvestment, funding, programming, and coordinated partnership efforts. The majority of these Opportunity Sites are located in the Downtown core within the

### **Activation Opportunity**

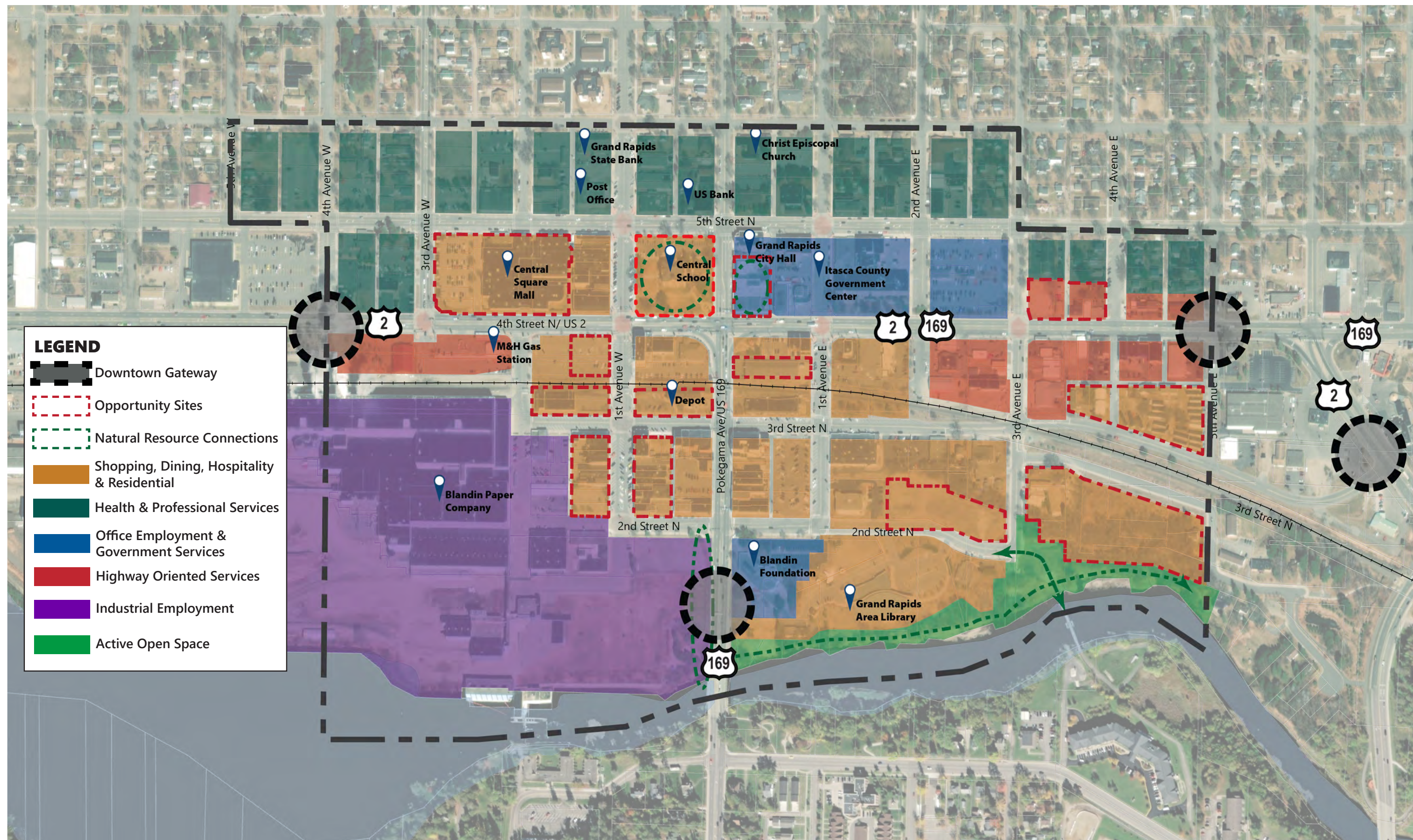


The opportunity sites define specific opportunities for action throughout Downtown.

These opportunities range from new development to creating new destinations or specific use changes to activate the space.

District, although there are several opportunities identified in the Residential, Office Employment and Government Services, and Industrial Employment Districts. These Opportunity Sites are indicated in the figure in the following pages. Additionally, specific implementation actions and opportunities are identified for each opportunity site within the **Implementation Plan**.







### **Cornerstones and Destinations**

Existing cornerstones and destinations are important aspects of Downtown Grand Rapids. Investments could be made to maintain these “anchors” and enhance their presence as a destination for both residents and visitors. Examples include several sites, including:

- Civic and institutional sites (City Hall, Library, Visitor’s Center)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West Retail Area
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North Retail Area
- Central School
- Central Square Mall
- Blandin Foundation

#### **Placemaking Opportunity**



The cornerstones and destinations represent locations that currently support the Downtown’s identity and provide destinations that are known and identifiable to community members and visitors.

### **Natural Resources Connections**

Access and connection to the natural resources and green spaces within Downtown is important to the community. This action supports investments in existing green spaces or creation of new green spaces that support the community’s connection to natural resources. Examples include the maintenance of the existing river walk and amenities along the Mississippi. This also includes green space within the design of the vacant space in the northeast quadrant of US 2 and Pokegama Avenue/US 169.



## Transportation and Mobility Strategies

The type of transportation infrastructure servicing an area should be appropriate for an area's intended activities. For example, a wide, multilane highway would not be appropriate to service a compact, walkable small town retail space. Conversely, a narrow, two-lane urban avenue would not be appropriate to service a high number of regional heavy truck movements.

### Transportation Corridor Concepts

To appropriately pair downtown transportation infrastructure to its proper context, the street types have been organized into four **Transportation Classifications**:

1. Highway Movement
2. Downtown Circulator
3. Local - Downtown
4. Active Alley

The following paragraphs describe how these Classifications differ in their design, intended function, primary users, and impact on the surrounding environment.

#### Highway Movement

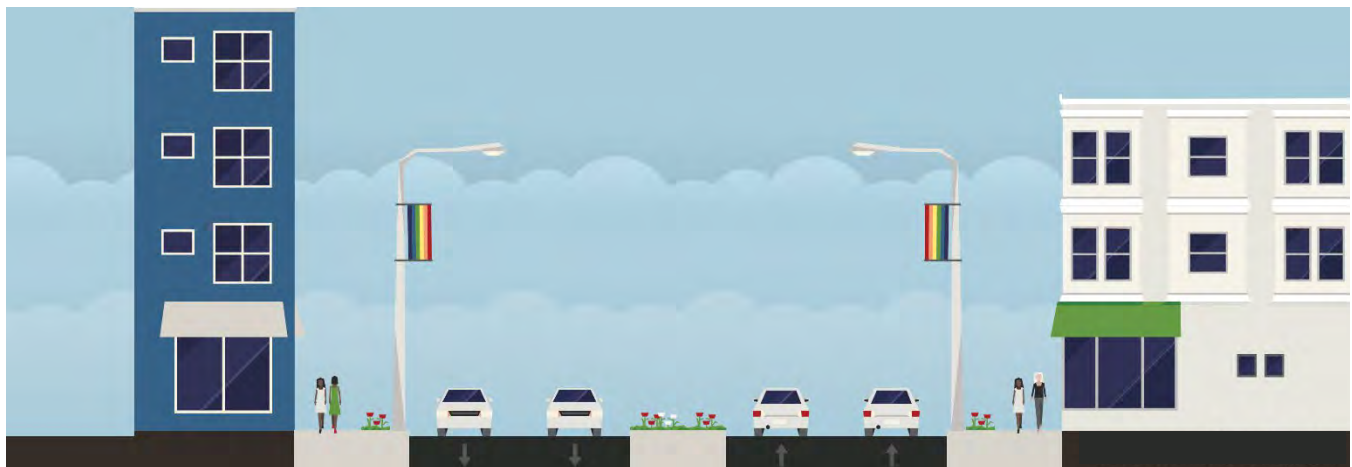
US Highway 169/Pokegama Avenue (US 169) and US Highway 2/4<sup>th</sup> Street N (US 2) serve an important local and regional role. Their function is to prioritize vehicle speed, efficiency, and safety. The primary users of the Highway Movement category are automobiles, trucks, heavy trucks, and buses. Land uses adjacent to the Highway Movement classification are impacted by their proximity to the high amount of moving traffic; traffic noise level, particulate emissions, and safety concerns generally limit the number of walkers and rollers sharing the space. Way-finding signage is oriented to people traveling by car or truck. The types of destinations along the Highway Movement corridors are auto oriented in nature and are not designed as places for people to linger. However, the design of these corridors should accommodate the safe and comfortable movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, and people using a mobile assistance device who need to pass through these corridors.

#### Mobility Opportunity



The transportation corridor concept supports the various mobility priorities

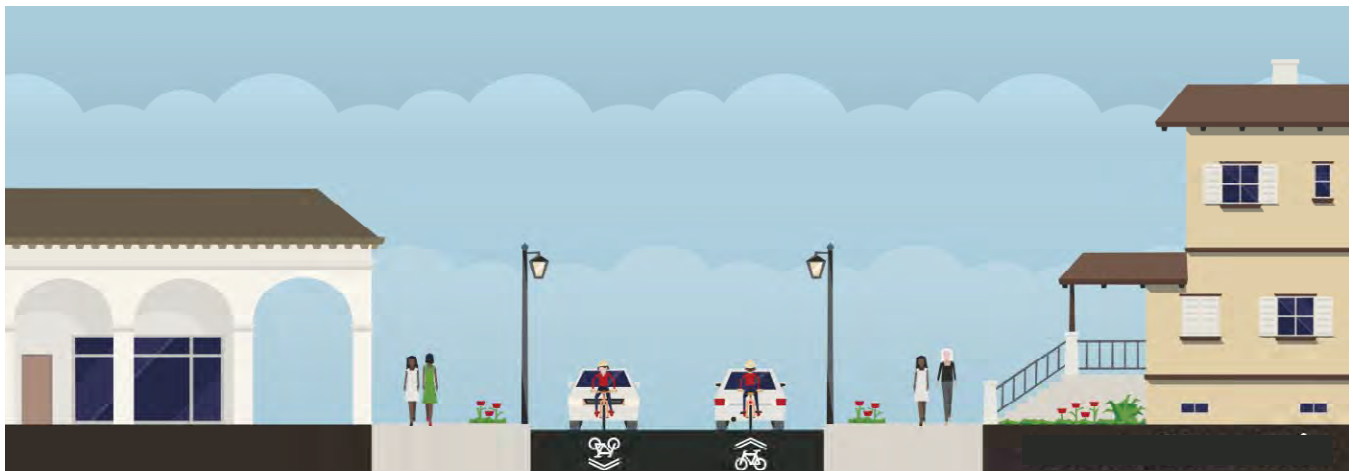
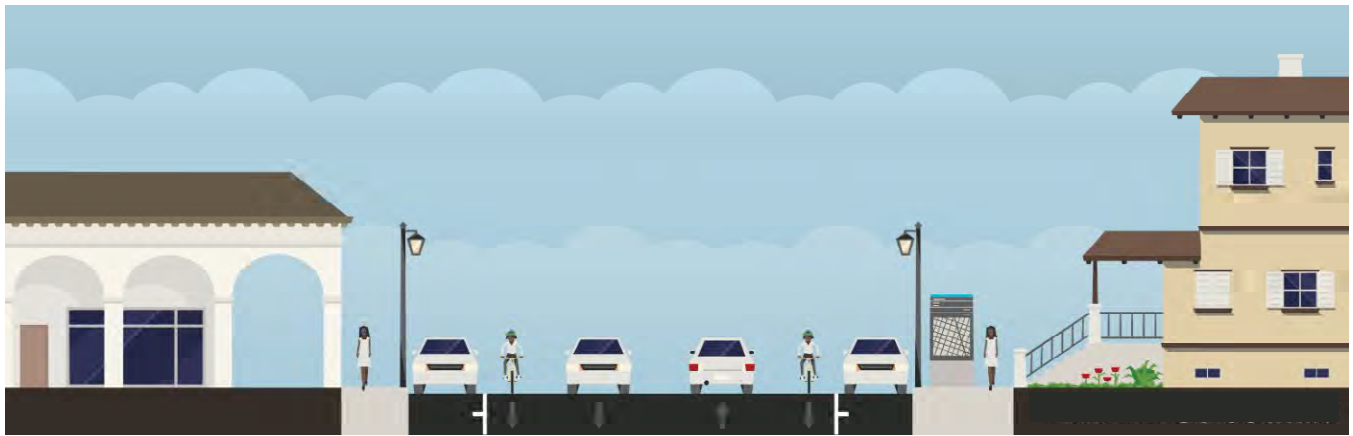
Downtown. Specifically, the corridor concept identifies a network of roadways that support through movements, separate from local and downtown traffic.



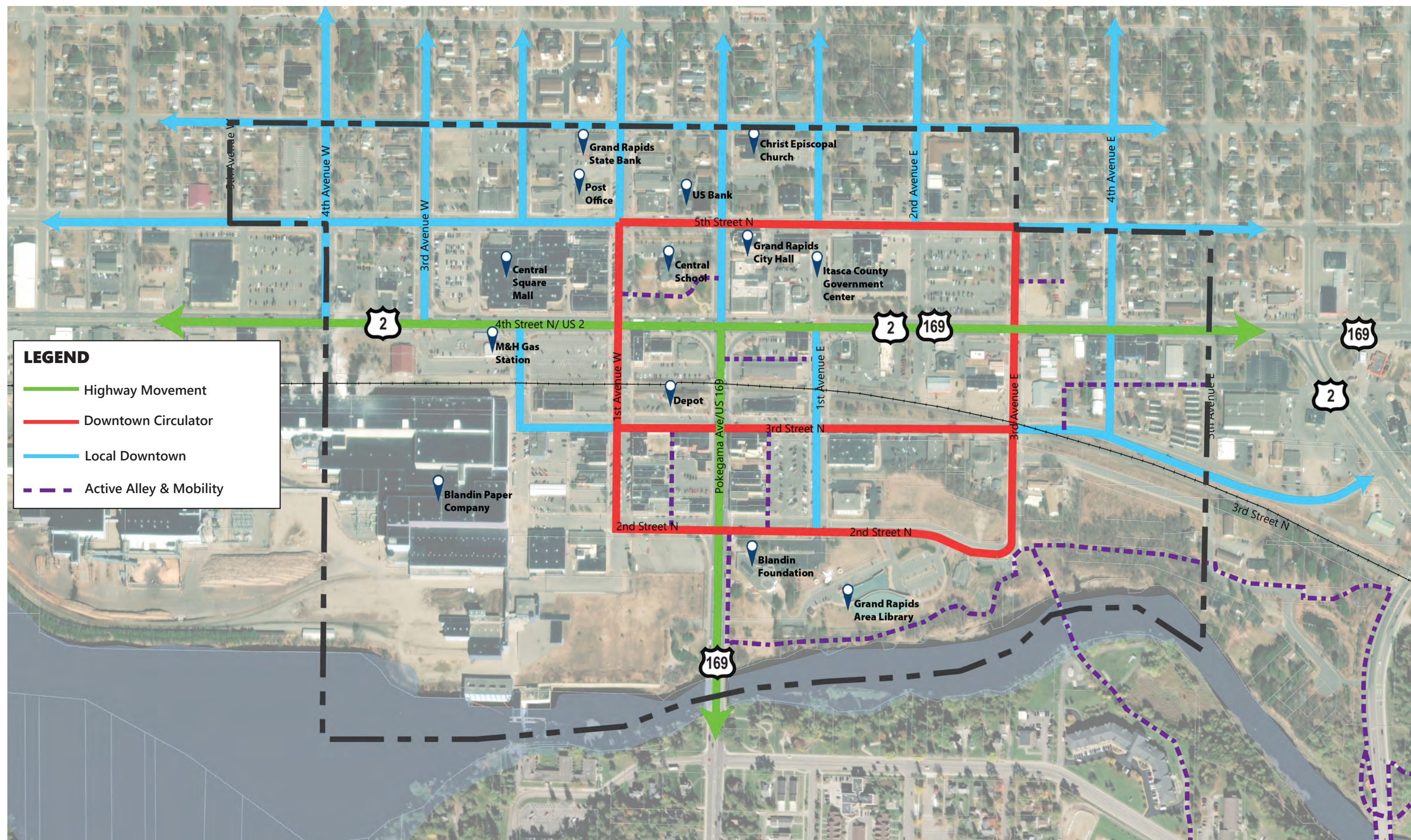
### ***Downtown Circulator***

The Downtown Circulator classification serves retail, service, and residential uses within Downtown and provides a looped system. It is intended to create a more comfortable environment where people enjoy spending time and interacting with nearby shops and amenities. The intent is a balanced transportation system that accommodates lower volume, local vehicular traffic where locals and visitors may walk and “roll” (utilize a wheelchair or assistance device) with ease. It serves a wide range of activities and is intended to create a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere where visitors may window shop, converse, and make unplanned visits to local businesses.

The Downtown Circulator classification serves as the “backbone” of mobility focused on *experiencing* Downtown Grand Rapids. This Transportation Category integrates pedestrian, bicycle and accessibility-oriented wayfinding and signage, meeting the needs and inspiring the curiosity of a broad audience, including tourists and visitors who may be unfamiliar with the local area.





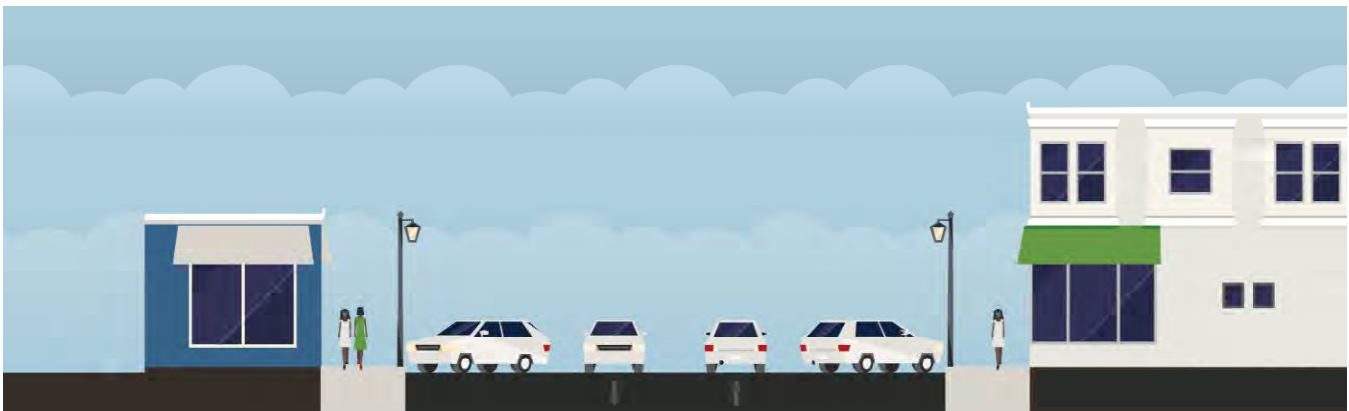




### **Local – Downtown**

The Local – Downtown Transportation classification serves as a connection through Downtown and between Downtown destinations. The types of activities found along the Local – Downtown category are not typically unplanned trips; they do not support casual window shopping. Instead, the types of activities found along this category more often serve as destinations, wherein visitors to a business have specifically entered the Downtown area to visit that site.

This category does have a higher emphasis on pedestrian comfort than the Highway Movement category, but not as high as the Downtown Circulator category. Strategic wayfinding is recommended to key destinations.



### **Active Alley**

The Active Alley classification serves to enhance Downtown’s transportation network by creating a “low stress” network for active transportation (walking, bicycling, and utilizing a mobile assistance device). This classification defines a system of pedestrian pathways - primarily by utilizing and improving the existing network of alleys and natural walking routes between buildings- that walkers and rollers may utilize to travel in a quieter, protected, low speed linked network. This format has found success statewide, including the network in Downtown Edina, and Mankato’s downtown “Entertainment Alley.”



The Active Alleys classification also serves to expand the public realm and to tap the potential of unused space. This concept interprets the alley as a social space, rather than just a channel for motor vehicle traffic. In some cases, this is done on a “time of day” basis, with the alley used for delivery and disposal functions early in the day and pedestrian and social activities later in the day. Internationally, this concept (sometimes referred to as a “woonerf” or Dutch for “living street”), has proven popular for outdoor dining, where restaurants can expand their seating capacity and patrons can enjoy a meal outdoors protected from motor vehicle traffic. For example, Fargo, North Dakota has successfully transformed Roberts Alley into a vibrant place where residents can gather for shopping and entertainment, as shown in the photos.



## Specific Transportation Strategies

In addition to the overall corridor concept that supports the overall form and function of the roadway network, specific spot improvements have also been identified to further support improvements in mobility and transportation safety.

### Key Intersection Improvements

Downtown is the location of a range of important roadways, including two US highways (US 2 and US 169, a State Highway (MN 38), and a local urban street grid. Intersections play a critical role in the Downtown transportation network, as they influence the speed, safety, and efficiency of several modes. For example, the intersection of US 2 and US 169 must provide traffic control services for personal automobiles and larger freight, as well as travelers walking, rolling, and biking.

The need for specific intersection improvements at key intersections that support movement of all transportation modes (e.g., walking, biking, driving) is highlighted at four intersections Downtown. These intersections were selected because they are the crossing point between the Downtown Circulator, which emphasizes biking and walking, and the Highway Movement network. Improvements may include updated signal timing to increase crossing time, pedestrian refuge locations, and wayfinding. The four intersections designated for potential intersection improvements are listed below:

- US 2 (4th Street N) and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue West
- US 169 (Pokegama Avenue) and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street North
- US 169 (Pokegama Avenue) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North
- US 2 (4th Street N) and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue East

### Pedestrian / Bicyclist Intersection Improvements

Improvements can be made to increase the safety and comfort of multimodal users while still providing adequate service to motor vehicles. Some of these improvements can be accomplished for very little cost, such as improving signal timing, refreshing or adding paint, or signage. Other improvements may involve a more significant financial investment, such as adding activated crosswalk enhancements, streets reconstruction, or grade separation.

Pedestrian enhancements at other intersections are also identified to support the safe and efficient movement for walkers, rollers, and bikers through Downtown. A standard intersection treatment should be identified for these intersections which may include marked crosswalks, flashing beacons/signage, or wayfinding.

Eight intersections are designated for potential Pedestrian/Bicyclist Improvements:

- US 2 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW
- US 2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW

### Placemaking Opportunity



The transportation strategies identify specific locational improvements that will inform the sense of place and identity. Specifically, these improvements include gateway signage that will welcome people into Downtown and being their experience.

- US 2 and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street NW and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW
- 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NW
- 5<sup>th</sup> Street N and Pokegama Avenue N
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE and 5<sup>th</sup> Street NE
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Street N and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE

### **US 2 / US 169 Intersection Improvements**

The US 2 and US 169 intersection is designed for the efficient movement of highway traffic. The free right turn lanes for northbound US 169 and eastbound US 2 allow for the efficient movement of vehicles but create design and sight line conflicts for bikes and pedestrians. Improvements for this intersection may include redesigning the free rights to reduce the radius of the curve, slow speeds, and improving sight lines. Details on specific improvements are identified in the **Implementation Plan**.

### **Sidewalk Gaps**

Sidewalks are the primary infrastructure for the movement of walkers and rollers within the community. A functioning sidewalk network is important to the entire community, and of particular importance to those who do not have ready and reliable access to a personal automobile. Sidewalk gaps are locations where there is no sidewalk available adjacent to the roadway. The Pedestrian Connectivity map identifies gaps which should be filled in based on community priority.

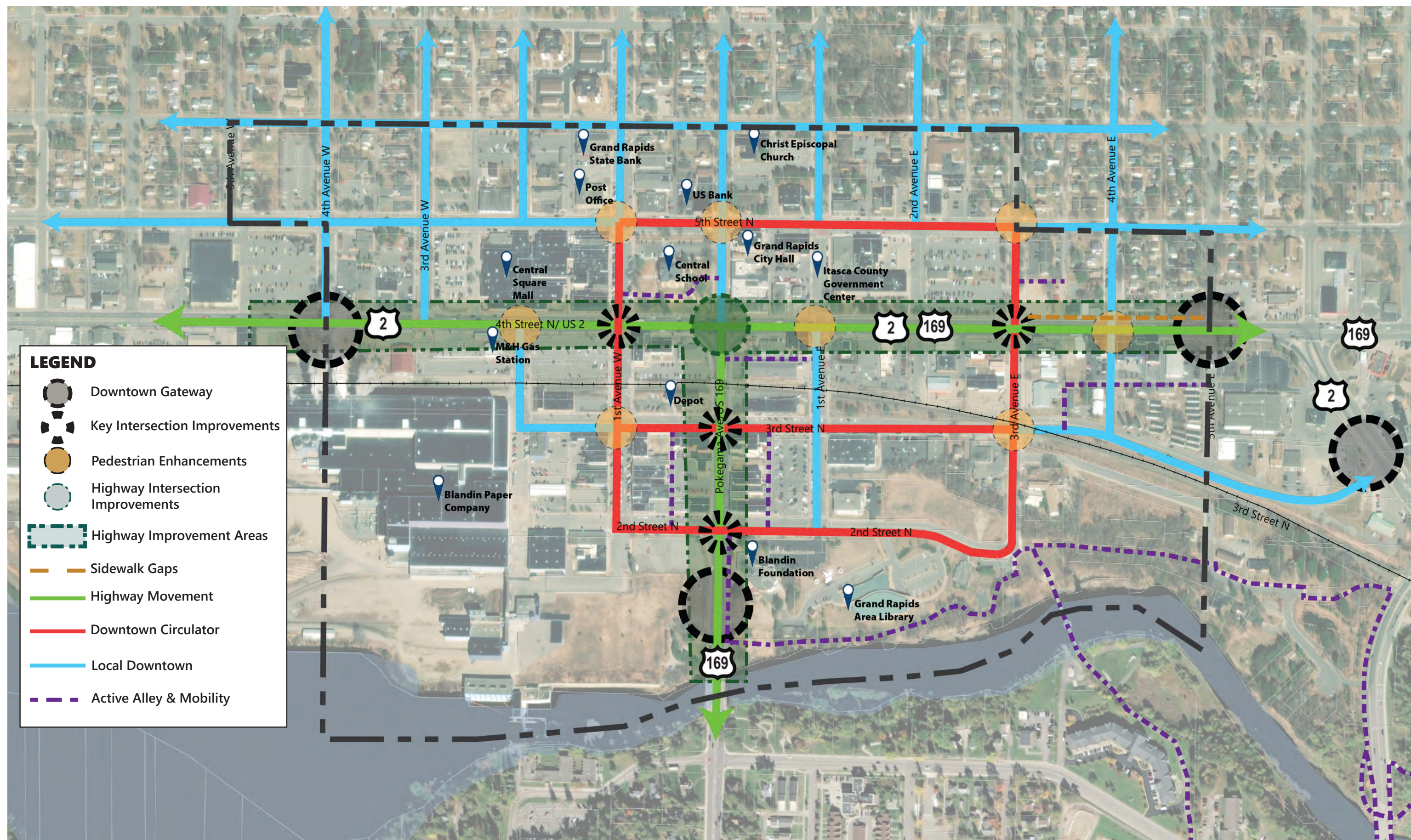
#### **Mobility Opportunity**



Generally, roadways are connected throughout Downtown to move goods and people. This network provides access to destinations.

Sidewalks are the key infrastructure to support pedestrian mobility and closing gaps in the network will improve mobility.







## Economic Development Strategies

To maintain a vibrant, well-activated downtown a community needs a downtown organization with the capacity to bring together private business and property owners, the public, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors. Large employers in the community with a vested interest in the success of downtown should be actively supportive and engaged. The organization should have the capacity to carry out research functions to clarify the evolving market niche of downtown Grand Rapids. The organization should encourage alignment of the downtown business mix, activation strategies, financing and technical assistance strategies, and physical design and appearance with these market insights. The organization needs the capacity to support a range of activation strategies and communicate effectively with targeted audiences.

### Organization of Stakeholders, Business, and Property Owners

At this time Grand Rapids lacks the organizational capacity to support a vibrant downtown. To create that capacity, the community should learn about the capabilities and effectiveness of downtown organizations in peer markets and use that information to guide the creation of an organization to support downtown Grand Rapids. A plan should be developed to create the appropriate organizational structure, leadership, goals, budget, and funding for a 3-to-5-year period. The new organization will need to raise funds and recruit volunteer leadership and appropriate staff, consultants, and/or contract with partner organizations to ensure that organizational goals can be accomplished. To be successful on an ongoing basis, systems should be put in place to measure progress and impact in achieving goals. This information should be used to refine and adjust the organization's strategies as needed. The organization also needs to establish and implement systems for communicating regularly with business and property owners, funders, community stakeholders and potential downtown investors. It is also essential to build the capacity to communicate effectively with area residents, visitors, and potential visitors, and support a range of events as a sponsor or partner.

### Economic Niche and Strategic Business Mix

Grand Rapids serves as a regional center for employment, health care, education, government, legal, business, personal and professional services, retail trade, dining, and entertainment, for year-round residents, seasonal residents, students, and tourists. Downtown Grand Rapids provides an authentic sense of place where people gather, interact and have access to a range of small, locally-owned businesses, government services, dining, entertainment, recreation, shopping, arts, and cultural experiences.

Downtown association strategists should consider a broad range of demographic groups (e.g., young families, older residents, students) and interest groups (e.g., youth, arts and culture, outdoor recreation, classic cars, and food) and imagine how the downtown can best attract and serve these groups. The downtown organization will need to take the lead in continuously monitoring and refining an understanding of local market challenges and opportunities drawing on data, surveys, the experiences and insights of local entrepreneurs, and ideas from peer markets. This information can help property owners and businesses cultivate a business mix that addresses evolving market opportunities. Emerging market opportunities can be addressed by existing local businesses, start-ups, or businesses attracted to



the community. Data can also be used to evaluate the impact of various activation strategies and guide investments in marketing and promotional activities.

## Physical Design and Appearance

The vitality of downtown, economically and as a social center, depends on everyone feeling welcome and enjoying safe access through downtown whether walking, bicycling, or rolling a wheelchair, walker, scooter or stroller. Improved wayfinding is needed downtown, particularly at the pedestrian scale to inform, inspire, and direct area residents and visitors to the discovery of downtown amenities and experiences.

The streetscape and appearance of downtown should be authentically Grand Rapids and honor the history, environmental, cultural, and economic context of community. Downtown's image should be aligned with an understanding of downtown's role in the community and should *attract* area residents and visitors. This image should be communicated as part of the area's branding and marketing strategies.

## Activation

While suburban-style retail stores can distribute goods efficiently, they do not typically provide meaningful or memorable experiences or build social connections. Downtown can differentiate itself by creating the types of relationships and experiences that locally owned small businesses can provide. Small businesses or landlords may want to consider including space or opportunities for gatherings or classes (e.g., cooking, making fishing lures, knitting, wine and watercolor, book clubs, karaoke, meat raffles).

Friends and families like to spontaneously access relatively low-cost treats like popcorn, ice cream, coffee, bakery goods and candy. While this involves the purchase of goods, the opportunity to gather in the public and/or private realm to enjoy the treat enhances the experience and builds social connections. To help downtown thrive economically, the larger public realm should also be designed to invite and support gathering and social engagement for small groups enjoying outdoor yoga, coffee, ice cream or a picnic as well as large, organized events like Riverfest or Tall Timber Days.

There should be a plan for activating downtown in ways that will engage diverse market segments throughout the year in public and private spaces, large and small.

An **annual calendar of larger community events** can be strategically developed to attract diverse market segments (e.g., arts, cars, outdoor). Families and people of all ages are typically attracted to events like a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade, Halloween, Christmas tree lighting, as well as special local events like RiverFest and Tall Timber Days. While the downtown organization can play a key role in supporting events, engaging a variety of other organizations, youth and service clubs can help distribute the workload and build community.

A **calendar of smaller events** can be set up for seasonal, monthly, or weekly activities like seasonal scavenger hunts, Food Truck Fridays, summertime vintage autos, and seasonal art crawl events.

**Unscheduled engagement opportunities** similar to the Bookwalk and the xylophones at KAXE can be developed. The possibilities are vast and include activities like orienteering courses, artistic hopscotch, photo opportunities, picnic locations and a sculpture walk.

Grand Rapids Book Walk along the Mississippi is an excellent example of an intergenerational activity that involves education, exercise, and access to nature.

**Effective marketing and promotion** are key to successful activation of the downtown area. It will be important to identify key audiences, key messages, and tactics to reach those audiences. And subsequently, to measure impact and adjust strategies based on performance.

## **Investment**

Grand Rapids has a well-organized EDA and array of financing tools. But a new downtown plan, evolving market conditions, and the entry of a new generation of younger entrepreneurs and investors call for an assessment and adjustments to the financing and technical assistance tools focused on downtown. A Downtown Finance & Technical Assistance Advisory Group could be created within a downtown organization to draw on the expertise of accountants, bankers, real estate professionals, entrepreneurs and the city's EDA to understand emerging challenges and recommend changes to the EDA's financing and technical assistance tools. An evaluation and update of community needs and financing tools could be done approximately every 3-4 years, or whenever there has been a significant economic disruption.

The advisory group should explore the need to create or restructure financing tools to meet emerging challenges and opportunities, address targeted revitalization areas, and "change of use" building code challenges.

There is a need to strengthen awareness and understanding of available financing tools, especially among young entrepreneurs. It may be helpful to sponsor a building renovation "boot camp" for entrepreneurs periodically, so that they are not surprised by state building code requirements for "change of use" situations.

To further engage the community downtown and build the entrepreneurial capacity of the next generation, the community could explore the possibility of working with an educational partner to establish a youth entrepreneurship enterprise downtown.

It may also be helpful to establish a development corporation funded by private investors or philanthropy.

## **Public Realm and Streetscape Strategies**

The public realm represents that space from the edge of the curb to the front of the building. It consists of street space, sidewalks, and other publicly accessible open spaces and infrastructure such as parks, promenades, plazas, footpaths, alleys, and waterfronts. There are several recommended strategies to improve the public realm and streetscape in Downtown Grand Rapids. The public realm and streetscape strategies are some of the key elements for solidifying and enhancing placemaking and identity within Downtown. These are many of the elements that are first seen or recognized by visitors and travelers and are also elements that help people navigate around Downtown.

## Downtown Gateway

Public feedback indicated a desire to enhance the entry experience to Downtown, particularly along the highway approaches (US 2 east of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, along US 2 west of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue West, and south along US 169/Pokagama Avenue south of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street North). By targeting visual and aesthetic investments along these areas, the city can enhance the “gateways” to Downtown. Gateways communicate visually to travelers that they are entering a specific downtown context. Gateways have the potential to strengthen downtown’s identity and branding, while additionally calming traffic and making a safer, more comfortable pedestrian and bicyclist environment.

### Gateway Examples



Downtown Gateway signage, Littleton, Colorado



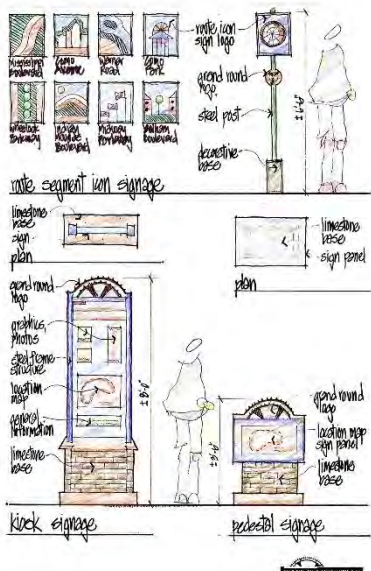
Downtown Gateway signage, Bemidji, Minnesota

## Wayfinding

Wayfinding refers to a range of intentionally provided information that guides people through a physical environment and enhances their understanding and experience of the space. Information can be provided via signage, braille, and audio for visitors with visual impairments. Wayfinding is important in built environments, particularly environments such as downtowns, to accommodate visitors who may be unfamiliar with their surroundings.



## Wayfinding Examples



Grand Rounds Wayfinding Plan, Minneapolis, Minnesota



Downtown Wayfinding, Omaha, Nebraska



Downtown Wayfinding, Northfield, Minnesota

## Public Art and Placemaking

Public art refers to works of art which are designed for and sited in a space accessible to the general public, typically sited on public property or within public right of way. Public art can include educational materials, sculptures, murals, memorials, integrated architectural or landscaping, community art, digital media, and performances. Public art is an important component of Placemaking, which is a collaborative process of creating distinctive, attractive places in which people want to live, work, play, and learn.

## Public Art and Placemaking Examples



US 169 Streetscape: St. Peter, Minnesota



Durham Bull: Durham, North Carolina



Omar, Mascot of Downtown Omaha, Nebraska



## Social Connection

Identifying public spaces that provide both a physical and social connection within Downtown is the first step of the process. Successful implementation will specifically explore tools and programs that will activate the space – drawing residents and visitors to the area to participate in a range of permanent and ephemeral activities. Activation can include new destinations, places of refuge and rest, event spaces, gathering locations, and beyond.

### Social Connection Examples



Woonerf in Raleigh, North Carolina



Bentleyville in Duluth, Minnesota



The "Passageway," a retrofitted covered alley in Omaha, Nebraska

# Implementation Plan

The Implementation Plan outlines specific actions and strategies to guide the City of Grand Rapids in decision making and investment to support the community's established vision. The actions identified within this section provide guidance for the city to achieve the vision and guiding principles identified in this process. The guidance includes actions, policies, and initiatives for the four plan focus areas to guide the development of work plans and efforts for years to come.

There are two elements of the implementation plan – implementation actions and opportunity site recommendations. The implementation actions identify broad actions that support the general investment for the downtown. The opportunity site recommendations identify specific opportunities and strategies for specific sites within Downtown Grand Rapids.

## Roles and Responsibilities

There is a temptation to give responsibility for implementation of the Downtown Master Plan to the City of Grand Rapids. Many of the powers and resources needed to undertake the actions described in this Plan are held by the city. The success of Downtown Grand Rapids cannot be made the sole responsibility of city government. Achieving the vision for Downtown requires on-going collaboration of both public and private stakeholders. This section describes the roles and responsibilities of key parties.

## Business and Property Owners

While the City influences the physical setting, Downtown remains a place of private activity. Individual businesses determine the type of goods and services available in Downtown. Individual businesses make decisions about how they operate. Property owners decide how to maintain and improve their buildings and owners of rental properties influence the business mix through their leasing choices. Each of these factors plays a role in the long-term success of Downtown.

## Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority

The Grand Rapids Economic Development Authority (GREDA) authorized the process that created the Downtown Plan Update. GREDA is in the best position to lead public efforts to implement the Plan. GREDA has been established to address the economic development and redevelopment needs of Grand Rapids. Many of the statutory powers required of implementation come to the GREDA through the housing and redevelopment powers of Minnesota Statutes, Section 469.001 through 469.047 (the "HRA Act"). GREDA should use these powers to undertake the following actions:

- Acquire real property for the purpose of removing, preventing, or reducing blight, blighting factors, or the causes of blight.
- As needed, clear any acquired areas and remediate environmental and soil issues.
- Sell or lease land acquired for uses in accordance with the plan.
- Prepare technical and financial plans and other arrangements for buildings, structures, and improvements and all other work in connection with the plan.

- Respond to the needs of downtown businesses with the establishment and administration of financial assistance programs for commercial building improvements.
- Work with prospective businesses/developers in accessing other financial assistance from regional, state and federal EDOs.

The Plan also anticipates that the GREDA will be the authority that recommends to the City Council the establishment and administration of tax increment financing districts in Downtown.

### **City Council**

The City Council must be committed to implementing this Plan. While GREDA leads the implementation process, important redevelopment powers reside solely with the City Council. Among the powers that may be needed to undertake redevelopment powers in the Downtown are:

- Install, construct, or reconstruct streets, utilities, and site improvements essential to the preparation of sites for uses in accordance with the plan.
- Operate and maintain public parking facilities.
- Approve the establishment of TIF districts.
- Consider the establishment of special services districts and the levy of service charges on properties in the district.
- Levy of special assessments for public improvements.
- Issue of general obligation bonds to finance redevelopment and improvement projects.
- Ensure compliance with the International Property Maintenance Code

Ensuring that the City Council is prepared to use these powers requires a close working relationship between the Council and GREDA. The City Council must be engaged in the redevelopment process and prepared to take action as needed. Actions by the City Council can enhance the Downtown in other ways. Some examples include:

- Community events to make Downtown a focal point.
- Keep civic institutions concentrated in Downtown.
- Avoid subsidizing projects elsewhere in the city that include businesses that should be located in Downtown.
- Provide staff capacity and resources needed to plan and undertake projects in Downtown.

### **Itasca Economic Development Corporation**

Itasca Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) is a non-profit economic development organization serving the Itasca area, including the City of Grand Rapids. They have provided input into this Plan. IEDC focuses on helping local businesses succeed and is uniquely positioned to understand business needs. For those reasons IEDC could participate in the implementation of this plan in the following ways:

- Assist GREDA in facilitating the expansion of existing businesses downtown.
- Assist GREDA in attracting new business to the downtown.
- Assist GREDA in securing project financing.



- Improving the business climate downtown.
- Promote availability of the GREDA and other local business improvement loan programs.
- Collaborate on innovative ways to advance implementation of the Plan.

### **Chamber of Commerce and Visit Grand Rapids**

The Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce and Visit Grand Rapids are two organizations that support local businesses and promote the community, Downtown, and events. Each organization has supported activities and partnerships within the community for many years and has capacity to support the implementation of this Downtown Plan. From the support of existing and future businesses through the Chamber's mission or the attraction to Downtown Grand Rapids for visitors and events, these organizations could support a number of activities.

### **Blandin Foundation**



The Blandin Foundation was a key partner in the development of this Downtown Plan Update, and it is likely that the Blandin Foundation will be requested to be a financial partner, in appropriate situations where steps in the implementation of the Plan are consistent with their charter. The Plan describes the need for this financial support. These projects provide opportunities to explore ways for the Blandin Foundation to facilitate community redevelopment in other places. Additionally, the Plan calls for the activation of spaces and solidification of the Downtown identity which are areas that align with the Blandin Foundation's goals and direction.

## **Implementation Actions**

The actions identified within the section were built from community input, staff recommendations, and plan analysis. Since the beginning of the Downtown Plan Update, a list of potential actions has been maintained and revised to respond to plan actions.

### **Structure**

Implementation actions are presented in the following pages by plan focus area (e.g., transportation and mobility) and include regulatory, programming, planning and guidance actions, and strategies. To support implementation of each action, supporting information is provided. This information represents the most recent data available.

Focus Area	Action	Benefit	Complexity	Partners
<b>What focus area does this action support?</b>	<b>What is the specific action statement?</b>	<b>What is the overall benefit of action?</b>	<b>How complex is the implementation of the action?</b>	<b>What community partners can assist in carrying out the action?</b>
Identifies which of the four focus areas are tied to the action.	Identifies the specific action identified by the planning team.	What is the overall benefit of the action. Factors that inform the one to three bubble system should directly support progress towards goals.	This category identifies the overall complexity of achieving the action and may include updates to respond to internal changes and external updates.	The category identifies community partners that could support implementation of the action. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.
<b>Land Use</b>	Example			List of partners

## Implementation Actions

Focus Area	Action	Benefit	Complexity	Partners
Land Use & Development	Facilitate investment of the opportunity sites identified in this plan. Investment includes redevelopment, new development and activation	● ● ●	● ● ●	GREDA, Blandin Foundation, Property Owners, IEDC
	Continue to use the Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Plan to support investment and diversification of uses within Downtown Grand Rapids.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	GREDA, Planning Commission, City Council
	Review development and design standards on a regular basis and pursue updates as needed to respond to trends and needs.	● ○ ○	● ○ ○	Planning Commission, City Council
	Through initial implementation consider overlay zones or ordinance modifications to support the guidance of the development districts.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	Planning Commission, City Council
	Continue to engage the development community and property owners with activities and investments within Downtown.	● ● ●	● ● ○	Property Owners, Developers, GREDA, Blandin Foundation
	Update design standards to facilitate the development along active alleys, allowing primary access from an alley.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	Planning Commission, City Council
Transportation & Mobility	Invest in streetscape investments that support the identity of downtown and promote socialization and refuge within city right of way.	● ● ○	● ● ○	Property Owners, City Council, GREDA
	Solidify the design standards and desired cross-section for the Downtown Circulator for future implementation.	● ● ○	● ● ○	City Council
	Identify construction timing and funding for the implementation of the Downtown Circulator.	● ● ●	● ● ●	City Council
	Continue to coordinate with MnDOT regarding the redesign and restriping of US 169 between the Mississippi River and US 2.	● ● ●	● ● ○	MnDOT, City Council



Focus Area	Action	Benefit	Complexity	Partners
Transportation & Mobility	Actively coordinate with MnDOT for the planning and execution of improvements and investments to US 2 through Downtown.	● ● ●	● ● ●	MnDOT, City Council
	Utilize the Corridor of Commerce Program to secure funding and assistance for investments along US 2.	● ● ○	● ● ○	MnDOT, City Council
	Continue to coordinate with the railroad regarding investments and needs through the downtown.	● ○ ○	● ● ○	Railroad, City Council
	Coordinate the redesign and construction of pedestrian and intersection improvements at the US 2 and Pokegama/US 169 intersection to reduce the free right movements and improve the pedestrian experience.	● ● ●	● ● ●	MnDOT, City Council
	Solidify signal timing changes or leading pedestrian intervals at the intersections of US 2 and 1 <sup>st</sup> Avenue; US 169 and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street; and US 169 and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street to improve pedestrian exposure and safety.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	MnDOT, City Council
	Explore pedestrian signage and detection at the US 2/US 169 and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Avenue E. intersection. Implementation may include a flashing beacon or HAWK system to provide traffic control and pedestrian awareness to increase safety and crossing opportunities.	● ● ●	● ● ●	MnDOT, City Council
	Explore signage and signal timing improvements at each of the intersections identified for pedestrian enhancement. Improvements may include dynamic or static signage, signal timing improvements or pedestrian refuge.	● ● ○	● ● ○	City Council, Police
	Program the closing of sidewalk gaps throughout the downtown into the city's Capital Improvement Plan.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	City Council

Focus Area	Action	Benefit	Complexity	Partners
Economic Development	Support the creation and operation of a public-private organization focused on long-term downtown vitality with the capacity to act strategically and respond to market challenges and opportunities.	● ● ●	● ● ○	GREDA, IEDC, Chamber of Commerce, Visit Grand Rapids, Businesses, Blandin Foundation, major employers and institutions
	Maintain up-to-date financing and technical assistance tools and work with the downtown organization to ensure awareness by current and prospective business and property owners. Provide support for new and emerging entrepreneurs.	● ● ○	● ● ○	GREDA, City Council, IEDC
	Promote activation through the hosting of community events (i.e., Riverfest) and a variety of engaging public, private and non-profit activities that address diverse ages and market segments throughout the year.	● ● ●	● ● ○	City Council, GREDA, Blandin Foundation, Event Committees, Business Owners
	Promote engagement and activation through the creation of destination-type activities (i.e., Book Walk, xylophones), public art or other features to create memorable experiences for a diverse members of the community and reinforce a positive image of Grand Rapids.	● ● ○	● ○ ○	City Council, Blandin Foundation, GREDA, Arts and Culture Commission, Businesses and property owners
	Assess land acquisition opportunities to facilitate investment and development activity.	● ● ○	● ● ●	GREDA, City Council
Public Realm & Streetscape	Develop a Downtown Wayfinding Plan to establish the design standards and overall network.	● ○ ○	● ○ ○	City Council, GREDA, Blandin Foundation

Focus Area	Action	Benefit	Complexity	Partners
	Execute the Downtown Wayfinding Plan to support connections and destinations within Downtown.	● ● ○	● ● ○	City Council, GREDA, Blandin Foundation,
	Include the installation of permanent or temporary public art as part of any public infrastructure project.	● ○ ○	● ● ○	City Council
	Explore opportunities for the inclusion of public resting, refuge, or gathering spaces within public infrastructure investments (i.e., placement of benches).	● ● ○	● ○ ○	GREDA, City Council
Public Realm & Streetscape	Update the Gateway Signage at the three locations and bring branding within other signage and streetscape opportunities.	● ● ○	● ● ○	City Council, MnDOT
	Explore opportunities to enforce the identity and sense of place through banners, hanging baskets and other investments within public right of way.	● ● ●	● ● ●	City Council,
	Identify public realm investments and wayfinding specific to the Downtown Circulator route, creating a destination that promote refuge, gathering and activation.	● ● ●	● ● ○	City Council,

## Implementation Case Studies

Roberts Alley,  
Fargo ND  
(Active Alley)





**City Center Market,  
Cambridge, MN  
(Activation)**



**US 169 Center  
Median, St. Peter,  
MN (Highway  
Improvements)**



## Opportunity Sites

The following pages highlight each of the identified opportunity sites Downtown. The opportunity sites identify locations and destinations within the Downtown that have potential for investment and growth. These investments could include redevelopment, reinvestment, funding, programming, and partnerships. The following pages organize the opportunities for each site. It is based on current conditions and strategies that identify potential solutions.

## Structure

The following structure highlights the opportunities and strategies for each site in the following pages.

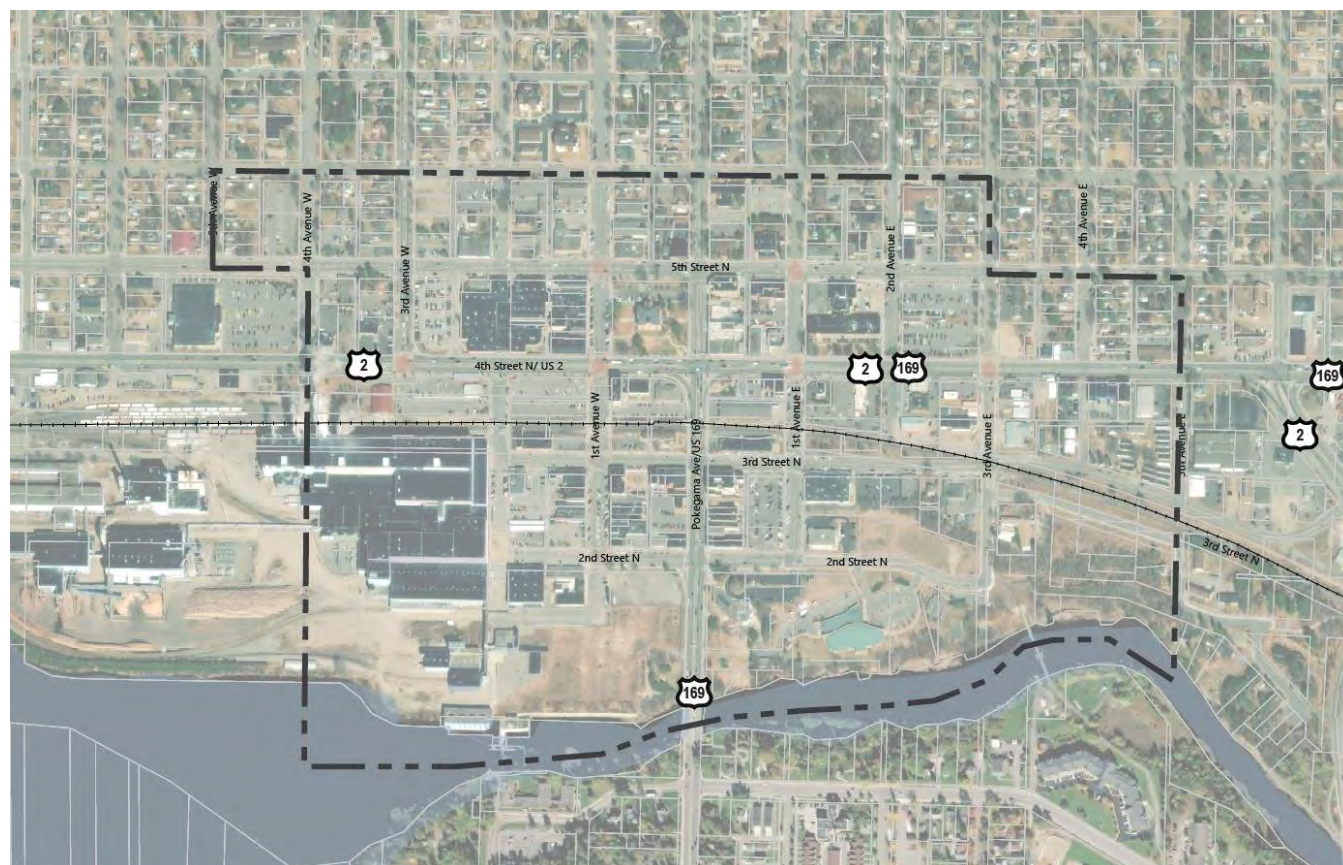
### OS# Opportunity Site Example

**Description:** Overall description of the sites and current or proposed conditions that will affect future site needs and conditions.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>New Development:</b>	Construction of new development area on a vacant property or through the demolition of a new building and reconstruction.
	<b>Structure Investment:</b>	Improvements to the interior or exterior of existing structures to meet the needs of the business or use. Investments could also include the introduction of new uses or expansion of offerings within a structure or area.

	<b>Public Amenities:</b>	Development of amenities and resources that would be available to the public, ranging from open space development to public restrooms.
	<b>Placemaking:</b>	Physical investments and policy updates to inform the look and feel (appearance) and overall welcoming sense of place (where everyone feels ok to be themselves).
	<b>Reuse:</b>	Due diligence and market studies to understand the reuse potential of the site. Reuse analysis will explore potential changes or additions of uses to enhance the site and local placemaking.
<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Activation/ Programming:</b>	Creation of programs or services and enhance offerings, investments, or education to the public.
	<b>Economic Development Tools:</b>	Development of new or use of existing financing tools and resources to implement opportunities.

## Study Area



## OS1 Central Square Mall

**Description:** Central Square Mall has been a fixture of Downtown Grand Rapids for many years, experiencing a variety of changes and investments. Currently, the mall includes retail, service and institutional uses.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>New Development:</b>	Over the course of time market opportunities may arise for redevelopment of the site into new uses. The City would be open to considering economic assistance if the opportunity presents itself.
	<b>Structure Investment:</b>	There are opportunities to continue to invest in the existing mall structure and welcome new uses and tenants into the structure.
	<b>Public Amenities:</b>	The large footprint creates opportunities for publicly available shading, trash receptacles, seating, and restrooms that can support Downtown visitors, employees, and residents.
	<b>Placemaking:</b>	There are opportunities to incorporate art, installations, or other elements within the interior or exterior of the mall to solidify its connection and location within Downtown.
	<b>Reuse:</b>	Be willing to explore potential reuse including uses within the existing structure or opportunities for new development on the site.
<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Activation/ Programming:</b>	Private businesses and common areas in the mall provide good opportunities for activation that are less sensitive to weather-related challenges.



## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS2 Central School

### Description:

Central School is a key element of the visual identity of Downtown Grand Rapids, providing a unique and authentic destination within Downtown. Residents and visitors continue to visit the building to learn about and celebrate its history. Current uses include a marketplace of small shops and uses that are leased on an individual basis. The site is currently owned by the City of Grand Rapids.

### Opportunities:

#### Structure Investment:

Opportunities existing for reinvestment in the interior layout, design, and function to support new uses and programming

Significant reinvestment is needed to maintain the structure in the long term and welcome opportunities for new tenants and activities. Current deferred maintenance costs are about \$5 million to support roof, HVAC, and elevator repairs.

#### Public Amenities:

Central School provides green space and outdoor amenities within the Downtown that are limited in other areas. Continued support and enhancement to these areas would support the community's goals.

#### Placemaking:

As a destination within Downtown, Central School is a key location for installations and uses that support the defined sense of place and activate open spaces.

#### Reuse:

Complete a reuse analysis to explore market potential and best uses for the site to refine the investment strategy. Consider the relocation of those service entities, which occupy key retail locations, to Central School.

#### Activation/ Programming:

Offers numerous opportunities. The historic building and outdoor spaces create opportunities for a wide range of arts, cultural, historic, food and recreation activities in all seasons.

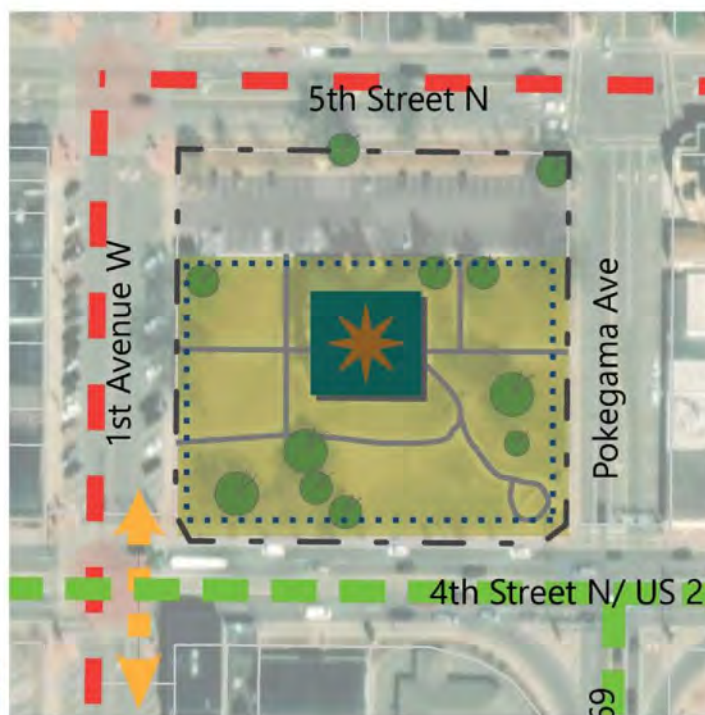
### Strategies:

#### Economic Development Tools:

Conduct a reuse analysis, including a business plan, to identify sustainable solutions consistent with district and community goals. Work with funders and investors on financing packages, including local, regional and state economic development assistance, to help achieve district goals.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement





## OS3 County Government Center Open Space

### Description:

The reconstruction and expansion of the Itasca County Government Center has reshaped the look and feel of the northeast quadrant of US Highway 2 and US Highway 169. A portion of the site is currently unprogrammed creating opportunities for public realm or green space investment.

### Opportunities:

#### Public Amenities:

The development of the space provides multiple opportunities for the inclusion of public amenities ranging from seating, public art, or landscaping.

#### Placemaking:

With proximity to the US 2 and US 169 intersection in the center of Downtown, there are multiple opportunities to support the sense of place with investments in this site. These investments may include amenities noted above, along with gateway and welcoming signage and wayfinding.

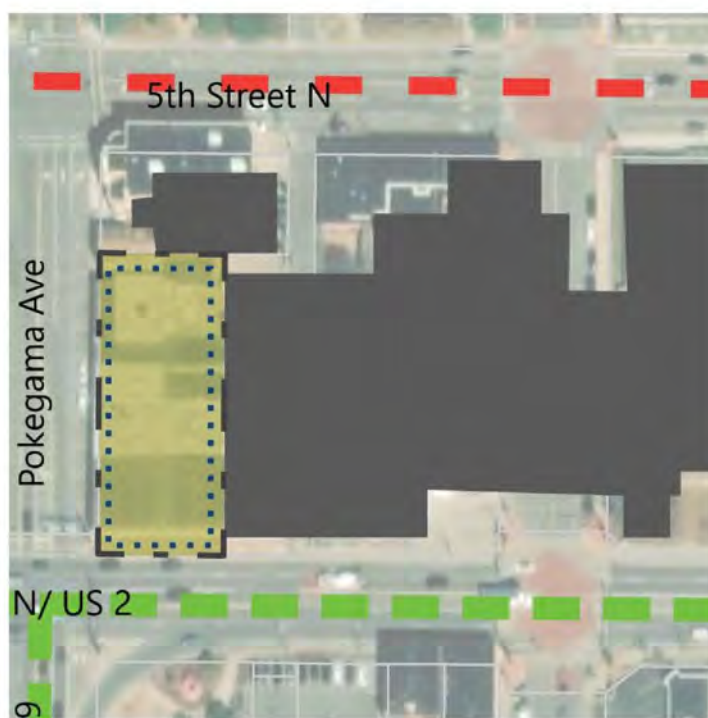
### Strategies:

#### Activation/ Programming:

There are a number of opportunities to explore with Itasca County for the site, including greenspace and permanent art or infrastructure installation.

### LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS4 300 Block of US Highway 2 East

### Description:

The East 300 Block to the north of US Highway 2 currently includes a number of small businesses that have historically provided construction, real estate or service offerings. There are a number of properties on US Highway 2 that are for sale or lease, creating an opportunity for revitalization of the area. Additionally, this location is well positioned as an entrance into Downtown from Westbound US 2 and Southbound and Eastbound US 169 traffic.

### Opportunities:

#### New Development:

#### Structure Investment:

#### Reuse:

The investment opportunities for the East 300 block are broad and could include a combination of new development or investment in existing structures to provide new offerings and uses.







Explore potential uses that may be best suited for this site based on location, size and exposure to US 2 and US 169.

### Strategies:

#### Activation/ Programming:

Creation of programs or services and enhance offerings, investments, or education to the public.

## LEGEND

-  New Development Opportunity
-  Structure Investment Opportunity
-  New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
-  Public Amenities
-  Placemaking
-  Reuse
-  Sidewalk
-  Highway Movement
-  Downtown Circulator
-  Active Alley
-  Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS5 Block 36

**Description:** The City of Grand Rapids currently owns the southern half of Block 36 and is in use for public parking. M&H owns the northern half of the area, serving parking needs as well with their gas station located directly to the west.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>New Development:</b>	The location and existing ownership of Block 36 creates a number of opportunities for redevelopment. However, coordination with M&H for a potential reconfiguration of ownership would create additional opportunities.
	<b>Placemaking:</b>	The location along US 2 creates an opportunity for this site to provide more connectivity between north and south downtown through infill development. Development can also support infrastructure to reinforce the physical connection between the two spaces.
	<b>Reuse:</b>	Explore market opportunities for future investment in the site as a city-leased or selling of the property.
<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Activation/ Programming:</b>	Explore potential for activation as future uses are explored, including the location of uses that support activity and programming for the community.
	<b>Economic Development Tools:</b>	Conduct a reuse analysis, including a business plan, to identify sustainable solutions consistent with district and community goals. Work with funders and investors on financing packages, including local, regional and state economic development assistance, to help achieve district goals.



## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure
- Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS6 Herald Review Building

**Description:** The Herald Review Building historically housed the operations and printing of the Herald Review in Downtown Grand Rapids. Since the relocation of these operations, the building provides opportunities for investment and potential reuse. This is one of the only sites with its own onsite parking within downtown, providing a valuable resource for some uses.

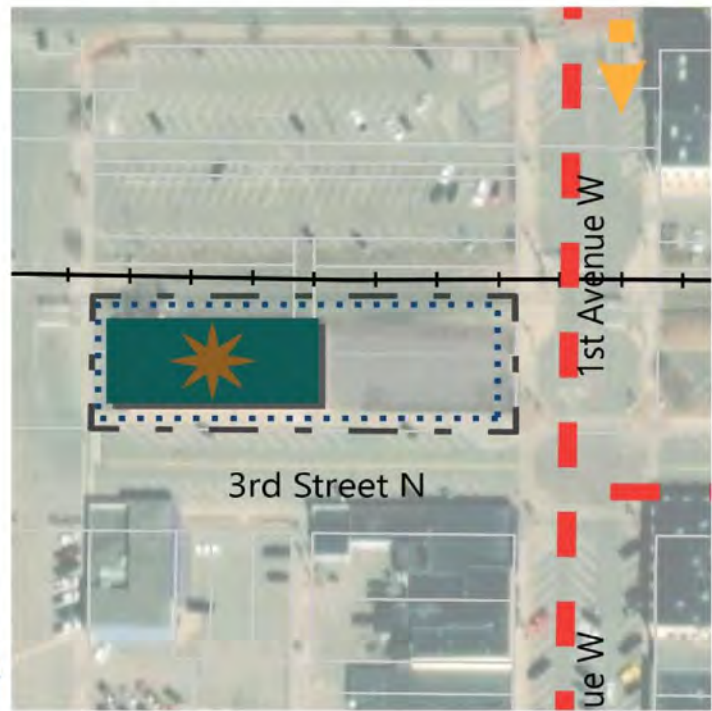
<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>Structure Investment:</b>	The site provides opportunities for both interior and exterior structure investment. Exterior repairs provide an opportunity to mend aging concerns and to solidify the new use of the structure. The interior can be rehabbed to align with the desired use. The location near retail centers to the north and south offer an opportunity for this site to connect north and south Downtown.
	<b>Reuse:</b>	Explore market opportunities for future investment in the site.

**Strategies:** **Economic  
Development  
Tools:**

The current ownership and lease agreements may hinder the ability to invest in the structure. Special financing tools may be needed to stimulate reuse.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement





## OS7 Depot

### Description:

The Depot is an important authentic feature of Downtown Grand Rapids, connecting visitors to the community's history and identity. The Depot has housed a number of uses in its history from long-term rail uses to non-profit uses like the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce.

### Opportunities:

#### Structure Investment:

Interior and exterior improvements will be needed to maintain the structure and modify it to align with future uses. The history and original use of the site should be considered through reinvestment analysis.

#### Public Amenities:

Public ownership by the City of Grand Rapids would create opportunities to make strategic decisions about retail/service offerings and public amenities that will strengthen the visitor experience to Downtown.

#### Placemaking:

The location and historic structure create opportunities for placemaking at the site.

#### Reuse:

Explore opportunities for retail uses that will activate the site and meet the goals of the district. Reuse of the site may also accommodate the need for a public restroom in the Downtown.

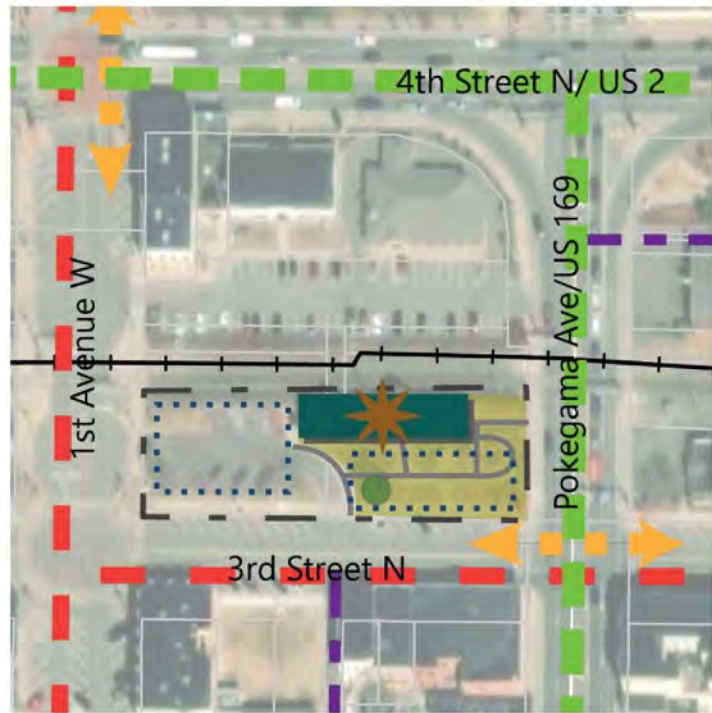
### Strategies:

#### Activation/ Programming:

The historic property is well located to provide a focal point for visitor and community-oriented activities. The re-establishment of public ownership could provide an opportunity to lease the property strategically to stimulate community revitalization and activation goals.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure
- Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS8 Former Pluemer's Furniture Building

### Description:

The building located at 316 N Pokegama Avenue is the former location of Pluemer's Furniture store and is currently on the market for uses that support the district goals of this Plan (e.g., retail uses). The central location and unique architecture of the site provide opportunities for investment.

### Opportunities:

#### Structure Investment:

Investments in the existing structure could open opportunities for the development of a variety of uses.

#### Placemaking:

The site is located near the parklet that hosts the Big Chair and offers opportunity for the vegetation and placemaking to extend to this site.

#### Reuse:












Continued retail uses of this site is supported to align with the goals of this Plan.

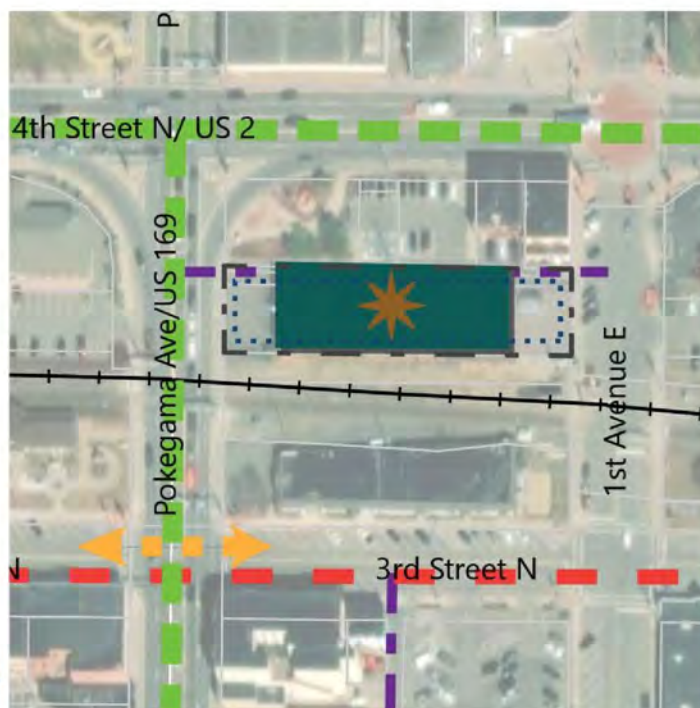
### Strategies:

#### Economic Development Tools:

Work with potential investors considering uses consistent with district goals on financing packages, including local, regional, and state economic development assistance.

### LEGEND

-  New Development Opportunity
-  Structure Investment Opportunity
-  New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
-  Public Amenities
-  Placemaking
-  Reuse
-  Sidewalk
-  Highway Movement
-  Downtown Circulator
-  Active Alley
-  Pedestrian Crossing Improvement





## OS9 Manufactured Home Park

**Description:** The existing manufactured home park includes residential land uses on the eastern edge of Downtown. Ownership of the site has changed since the 2006 Downtown Plan. Opportunities for redevelopment of the site were identified.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>New Development:</b>	Redevelopment of the site to support new residential use provides an opportunity to provide additional housing options within the Downtown. Support for new residential, commercial, and office uses.
	<b>Public Amenities:</b>	Redevelopment of the site would also open the opportunity to introduce public amenities, including social gathering and open spaces.
	<b>Reuse:</b>	Explore use potential of the site that may include some combination of residential, commercial, and office uses.

**Strategies:** **Economic Development Tools:**

Work with potential investors considering uses consistent with district goals on financing packages, including local, regional, and state economic development assistance.



## OS10 Block 17

**Description:** Block 17 includes a number of historic retail and services uses with individual and shared storefronts. Structures are located adjacent to the sidewalk within little to no side yard setback between buildings.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>Structure Investment:</b>	Improvements to the interior or exterior of existing structures to meet the needs of the business or use. Investments could also include the introduction of new uses or expansion of offerings within a structure or area. The site provides opportunities for both interior and exterior structure investment. Exterior repairs provide an opportunity to mend aging concerns and to solidify the new use of the structure.
	<b>Placemaking:</b>	With its location on the downtown circulator, the site has the opportunity to provide a destination for gathering, including benches, parklets, and cafes. Additionally, reduction of sign clutter will refine the overall appearance and improve wayfinding.
<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Economic Development Tools:</b>	The current ownership and lease agreements on site may hinder the ability to invest in the structure. Special financing tools would be helpful to support investment and economic vitality.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement





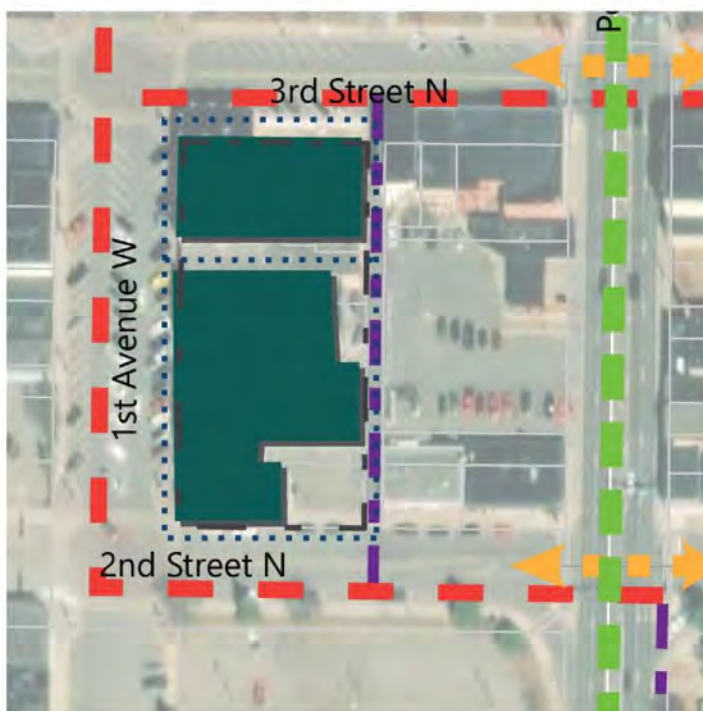
## OS11 Western Half of Block 18

**Description:** The western half of Block 18 includes a number of retail and service uses with individual and shared storefronts. Structures are located adjacent to the sidewalk within little to no side yard setback between buildings.

<b>Opportunities:</b>	<b>Structure Investment:</b>	Structural investments to the exterior and/or interior of Block 18 structures would enhance the quality of space for new and existing tenants. Visual identity improvements would aid in establishing the block as a destination. The establishment of an Active Alley along the east entrance to these buildings would provide an opportunity for enhancing their appearance and function.
	<b>Placemaking:</b>	With its location on the downtown circulator, the site has the opportunity to provide a destination for gathering, including benches, parklets, and cafes. Additionally, reduction of sign clutter will refine the overall appear and improve wayfinding. Add notating about Active Alley for placemaking.
<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Economic Development Tools:</b>	Local, regional and state building revitalization tools could be used to support investment consistent with district goals.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure
- Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS12 Blocks 20 & 21

### Description:

Blocks 20 and 21 are currently owned by GREDA and have been identified as an available shovel-ready development opportunity for a number of years. The site is currently vacant with opportunities for a variety of development types. The proximity to the library, pedestrian bridge and nearby commercial uses makes it an ideal location for mixed-use development including commercial and residential uses.

### Opportunities:

#### New Development:

Development of the site to support new residential and appropriate commercial uses provides an opportunity to complement and enhance the public spaces near the river and library.

#### Public Amenities:

New development of the site would also open the opportunity to introduce public amenities, including social gathering and open spaces.

#### Placemaking:

The proximity to the library and the investments to create an outdoor stage bring opportunities for future activation of this site as well. For example, future uses could complement and benefit from Riverfest activities and support activation during other community events.

### Strategies:

#### Activation/ Programming:

The public park and library space available for gathering along the Mississippi River create a unique asset for Grand Rapids. The development strategies for Blocks 20 and 21 should complement and enhance activation of this signature area.

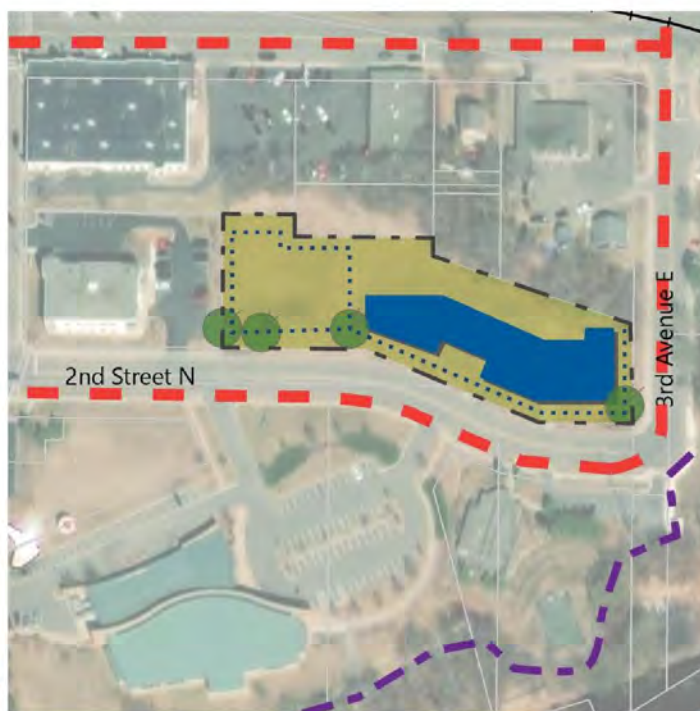
#### Economic Development Tools:

Local, regional and state building revitalization tools could be used to support investment consistent with district goals.



## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure
- Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



## OS13 Block 5 on the Bluff

### Description:

Block 5 is owned by GREDA and is marketed as a development opportunity within the downtown. The site is located on a bluff with views of the Mississippi River to the south. Connections to these natural resources provide a variety of benefits and assets for future uses. While the site is not located on a primary thoroughfare, its location provides opportunities for some commercial uses (e.g., distillery, office space, etc.)

### Opportunities: New Development:

The site is currently vacant, providing opportunities for a variety of sites to be explored. Additionally, the site is sizeable, creating opportunities for onsite parking to be provided. Development planning should capitalize on the views of the Mississippi and connection to resources.

### Opportunities: Public Amenities:

The site's connection to the Mississippi creates opportunities for public amenities that connect the community to resources for enjoyment and recreation.

### Placemaking:

Located on the eastern edge of Downtown, this site provides opportunities to reinforce the Downtown sense of place and expand it as a destination.

### Reuse:

The site could be viable for residential use, commercial use, or a combination.

### Strategies:

#### Activation/ Programming:

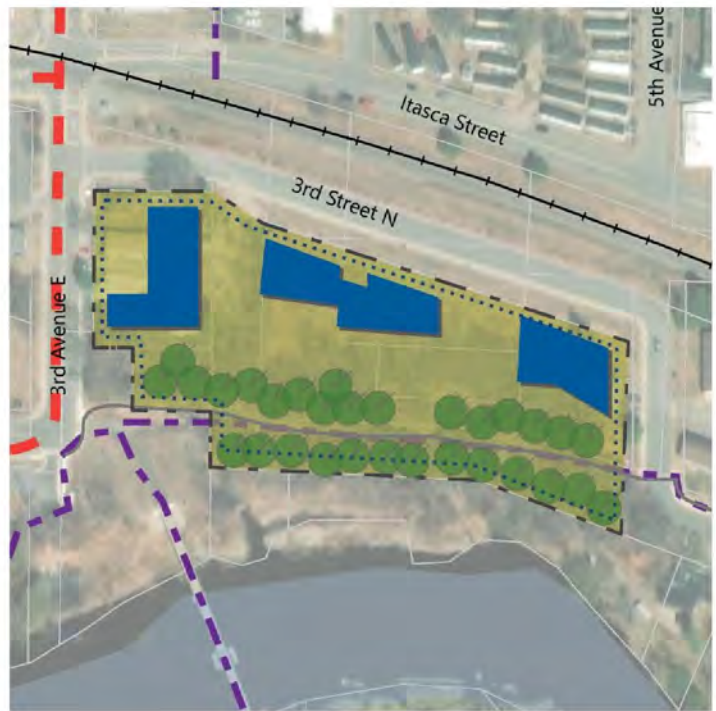
The proximity to the pedestrian bridge over the Mississippi provides opportunities for this site to host future programming for the community and property owner/tenant.

#### Economic Development Tools:

Local, regional and state building revitalization tools could be used to support investment consistent with district goals.

## LEGEND

- New Development Opportunity
- Structure Investment Opportunity
- New Development/Structure
- Investment Opportunity
- Public Amenities
- Placemaking
- Reuse
- Sidewalk
- Highway Movement
- Downtown Circulator
- Active Alley
- Pedestrian Crossing Improvement







Grand Rapids  
**DOWNTOWN**  
**PLAN UPDATE**

# **Appendix A: Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Previous Plan Assessment**

# Appendix A: Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Previous Plan Assessment


## Overview

The following document outlines an assessment of previously completed plans that relate to the current Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update effort. This assessment includes the identification of policies, goals, and actions that should be incorporated into the Downtown Plan. It also identifies the successes of past planning efforts, including implementation efforts that have been completed.

## 2006 Downtown Redevelopment Master Plan

### Implementation Actions that have been achieved:

The following table lists the actions that have been achieved as identified in the 2006 plan.

Library/ Blandin Foundation/ KAXE	
<b>2006 Plan Action:</b>	<p><i>Public investments have also been instrumental in the evolution of Downtown. Construction of a new library establishes a public presence on the Mississippi River. The library, combined with the Bland</i></p> <p><i>in Foundation and KAXE Radio, starts the process of linking Downtown with the riverfront. The City has enhanced the setting with streetscape improvements.</i></p>
<b>Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:</b>	<p>This area continues to be a focus area within the community. Current efforts include the construction of an outdoor stage and event area in the green space north of the Library. This space will have the capacity to hold a variety of events and activities.</p>  <p><i>Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019</i></p>

## Intersection of Pokegama and Hwy 2

### 2006 Plan Action:

The intersection of Pokegama Avenue and Highway 2 is the 100% intersection in Grand Rapids. All traffic moving through Grand Rapids passes this point. It should be a location that sets the positive tone for Downtown.

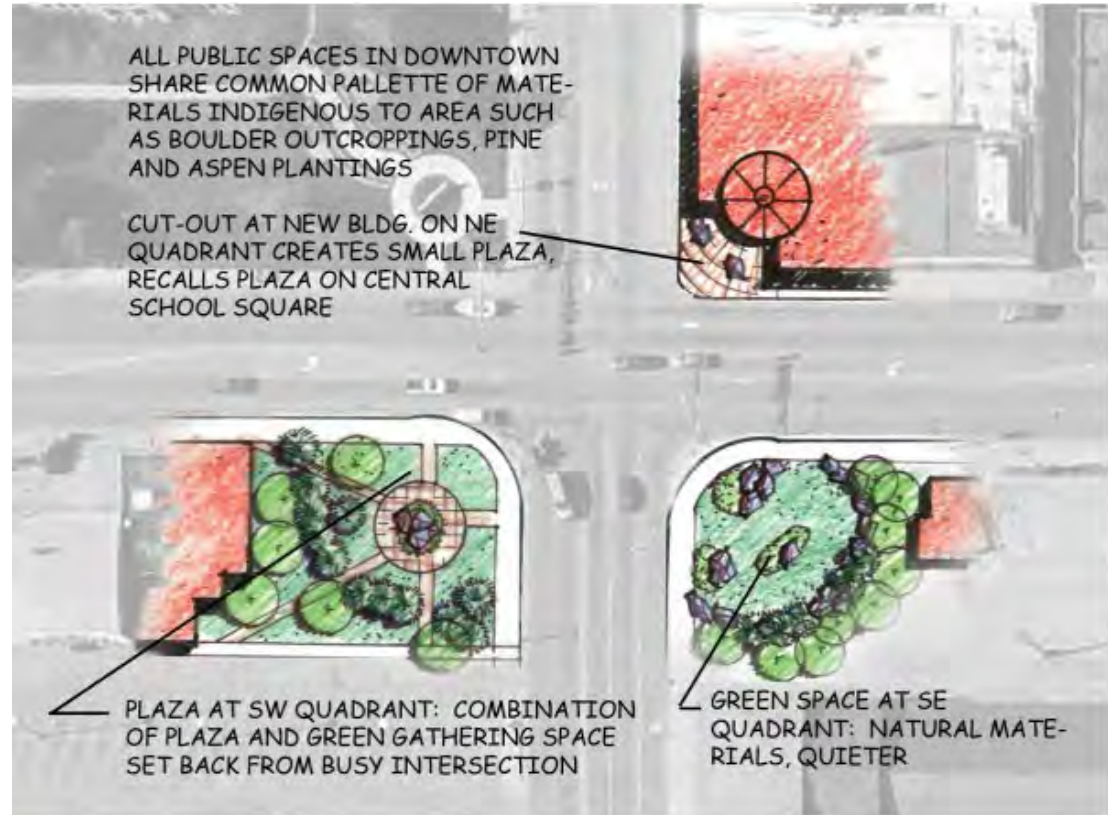


Figure 6  
Illustration of Potential Improvements for 100% Intersection

### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

Implementation of the improvements of the intersection of US 2 and Pokegama Avenue have continued to be constructed as construction and opportunity allows. The Southeast quadrant has been landscaped and includes “The Big Red Chair”. The northeast quadrant includes the new Itasca County Government Center that is nearing completion. The site includes an outdoor space along Pokegama that may be programed for future public use.

Additionally, improvements to pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure have been made to US 2 between 3rd Avenue West and 3rd Avenue East. These improvements have include the addition of colored concrete at the intersections, improved ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) ramps, and other updates.



## Redevelopment Opportunity Site – Block 19

### Recent Activities:

Rapids Brewing Co. has located within Block 19 to include the taproom, brewery, and outdoor seating. Expansion plans are near completion with the expansion to the building to the south to expand seating and event space.



*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019*

## Redevelopment Opportunity Site – Old Block 19 E Side

### Recent Activities:

Improvements to building character, site design, and public realm continue to be made to enhance the gateway into downtown.

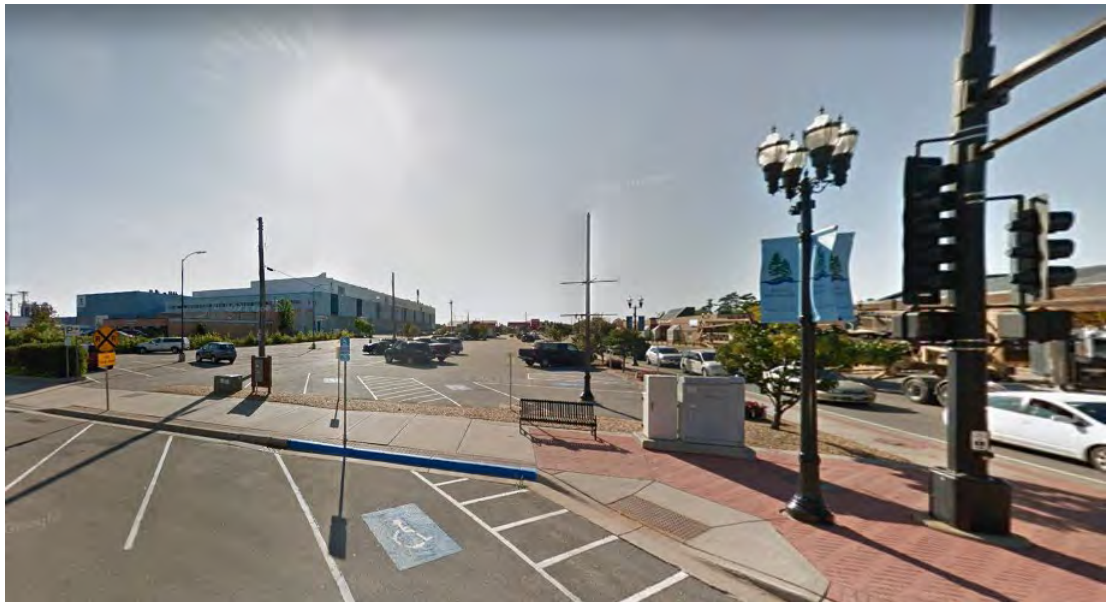


*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2012*

## Redevelopment Opportunity Site – Block 36

### Recent Activities:

Block 36 was identified as the only vacant redevelopment opportunity site within the 2006 plan. Improvements have been made to the property to create public parking opportunities. While improvements have been made, this site continues to poise opportunities for further investment within the Downtown.



*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2018*

## Redevelopment Opportunity Site – Block 37

### Recent Activities:

The 2006 Plan identified opportunities for redevelopment of Block 37, including the expansion of retail, enhancing street character, and visual improvements at the intersection of Pokégama and US 2. Redevelopment activities have included the construction of multiple retail businesses and the maintenance of the existing “Wings and

Willows” building. Specifically, improvements included: improved landscaping at corner of block, expanded retail, increase in building setback to increase sidewalk space.



Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019

## Additional Improvements and Additions

The following list includes additional updates that have been made within Downtown Grand Rapids, including new community events and infrastructure improvements.

### Bike Lanes

#### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

On-street bike lanes were installed on 5th Street North between 3rd Avenue East and 5th Avenue West. These bike lanes provide a dedicated travel lane for bicyclists on either side of the roadway through downtown. The lanes are denoted with pavement markings.



Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019



## Pedestrian Bridge

### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

A pedestrian bridge was constructed over the Mississippi River in 2019 to connect Downtown to areas south of the Mississippi River. The bridge and trail connect to NE 2nd Street to the east of the Grand Rapids Library and Northern Community Radio on the north side, and connect to an existing public water access on the south side with trails connecting to River Road and city trails.



*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019*

The trail has also presented opportunities for public art installations with new connections in the community.



*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019*

## Commercial Building Façade Improvements

### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

A number of commercial building façade improvements have been made within the downtown using the City's Commercial Building Revitalization Fund. This fund is established using a EDA revolving fund through the Small Cities Development Program. The following businesses have made improvements through this program:

- Benders Shoes
- MacRostie Art Center
- Hopperton's
- Thousand Lakes Sporting Goods
- Margo Office Building



*Photo from Google Maps street view, 2019*

## First Friday Art Walk

### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

First Friday Art Walk is a monthly event hosted by Grand Rapids Arts that welcomes people to downtown to celebrate art and creativity. Events range monthly, including classes, gallery viewings, shopping opportunities and pop-up stores, and live entertainment.

## Public Art

### Summary of Achievements and Future Steps:

The Grand Rapids Arts and Culture Commission continues to identify opportunities for public art to be installed throughout Downtown Grand Rapids. Installations range from sculptures to pavement art.

# **Appendix B:**

# **Downtown Context**

# **Memorandum**



## Appendix B: Downtown Context Memorandum

### Introduction

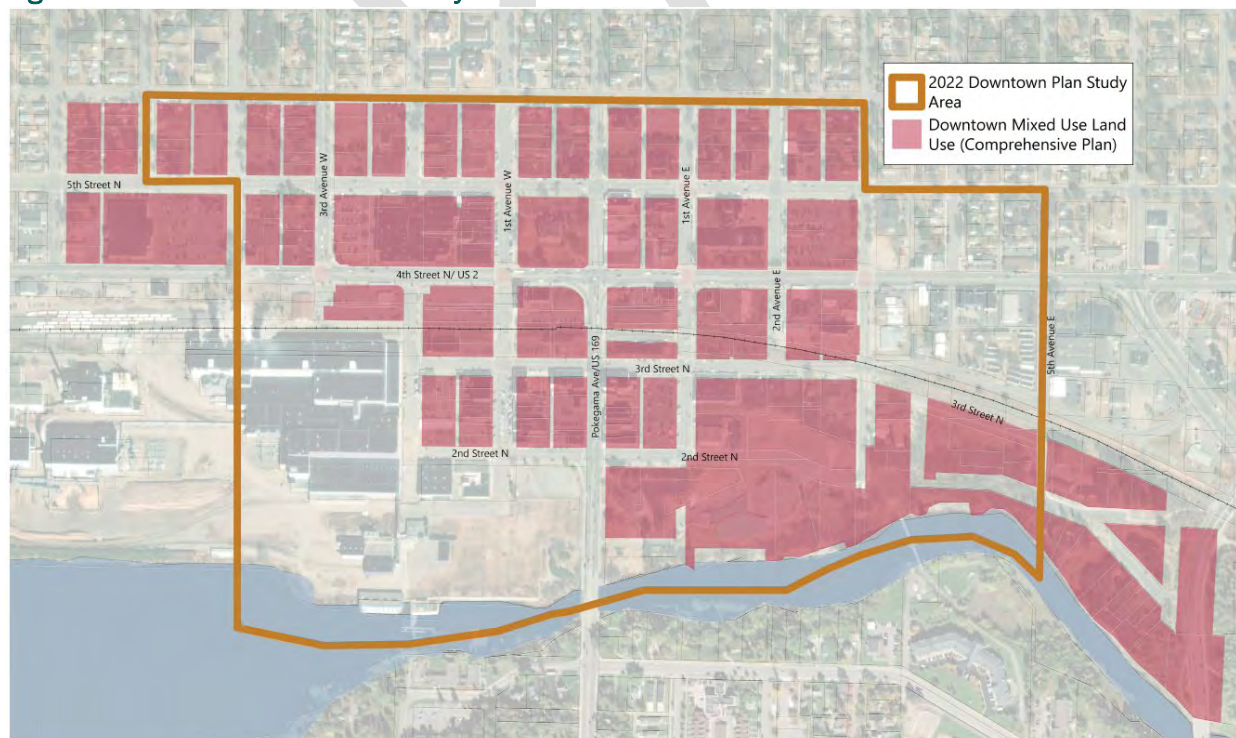
In 2020, the City of Grand Rapids, Minnesota completed the GROW Grand Rapids 2040 Comprehensive Plan to provide a framework for citywide growth and development. In 2023, the city completed the Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update to serve as a continuation and enhancement of the GROW Grand Rapids plan with a strengthened focus on establishing a vision, goals, and actions that will guide future investments and improvements for the downtown study area (**Figure 1**).

Downtown Grand Rapids serves as a local and regional destination for employment, shopping, recreation, administration, human services, dining, and cultural enrichment. Visitors may dine at the variety of food and beverage options, purchase goods from the range of local and regional businesses, or conduct professional services at several financial, government, and legal institutions. They may enjoy the scenic beauty of the Mississippi River to the south, visit the Grand Rapids Area Library, or take in the area's rich heritage via the historic character of Old Central School or the Yellow Brick Road educational marker. Visitors may frequent the area on weekday basis, as is the case for over 1,300 workers, or they may visit much less frequently, as is the case for regional visitors on weekend shopping trips or attending Tall Timber Days or Riverfest.

The study area is bound by the Mississippi River to the south, Sixth Street to the north, Fourth Avenue West, and Fifth Avenue East (**Figure 1**). The area supports a diverse and robust labor force of over 1,300 jobs, the majority of which are occupied by employees residing outside of the study area (**Figure 3**).

Downtown is situated along several important transportation corridors; US Highway 2 (US 2), US Highway 169 (US 169), and Minnesota Trunk Highway 38 (TH 38). South Pokegama Avenue (US 169) serves as a primary commercial corridor, attracting big box retailers, while US 2 supports a mixture of commercial, industrial, and civic uses. Downtown is also bisected by an active BNSF railroad line.

**Figure 1** Downtown Plan Study Area





The Downtown Plan Update uses public input, existing conditions, and changing trends to explore redevelopment opportunities, improvements to the public realm (e.g., streetscape, open spaces), changes to parking opportunities, and transportation safety considerations. The plan solidifies goals for Downtown Grand Rapids and provides a plan for implementation. The Plan focuses on four components of Downtown:

**Land Use and Development** – Opportunities for future development and redevelopment within Downtown – from new construction to building façade improvements.

**Transportation and Infrastructure** – Creating a Downtown that is accessible by all modes of transportation, to visitors of all ages and abilities, with access to quality services and facilities.

**Urban Design and Sense of Place** – Solidifying the look and feel of Downtown Grand Rapids through infrastructure, art, and public spaces.

**Market and Economics** – Supporting a healthy market of employment, shopping, dining, and service options that support a thriving Downtown.

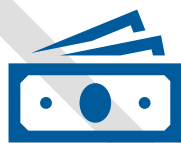
## Demographics

The growth rate of the City of Grand Rapids outpaced the growth of the greater region, defined by Itasca County. Across years 2010 – 2020, Itasca County saw a slight population decrease. The 2010 population of Itasca County was 45,058. The 2020 population was 45,014, a ten-year growth rate of negative approximately 0.2 percent (U.S. Census). The City of Grand Rapids 2010 population was 10,869. The 2020 population was 11,126, a ten-year growth rate of 2.36 percent and annual approximate growth rate of 2.4 percent (U.S. Census). Over this time period, the City increased its share of the County population, growing from 24.1% to 24.7%.

**Table 1 Population**

Geography	2010 Population	2020 Population	Percent Increase
City of Grand Rapids	10,869	11,126	2.4%
Itasca County	45,058	45,014	-0.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



City of Grand Rapids median household income:  
**\$48,247** source: ACS 2020 5-year estimates



City of Grand Rapids median age:  
**42.4 years.** Source: ACS 2020 5-year estimates

## Employment Characteristics

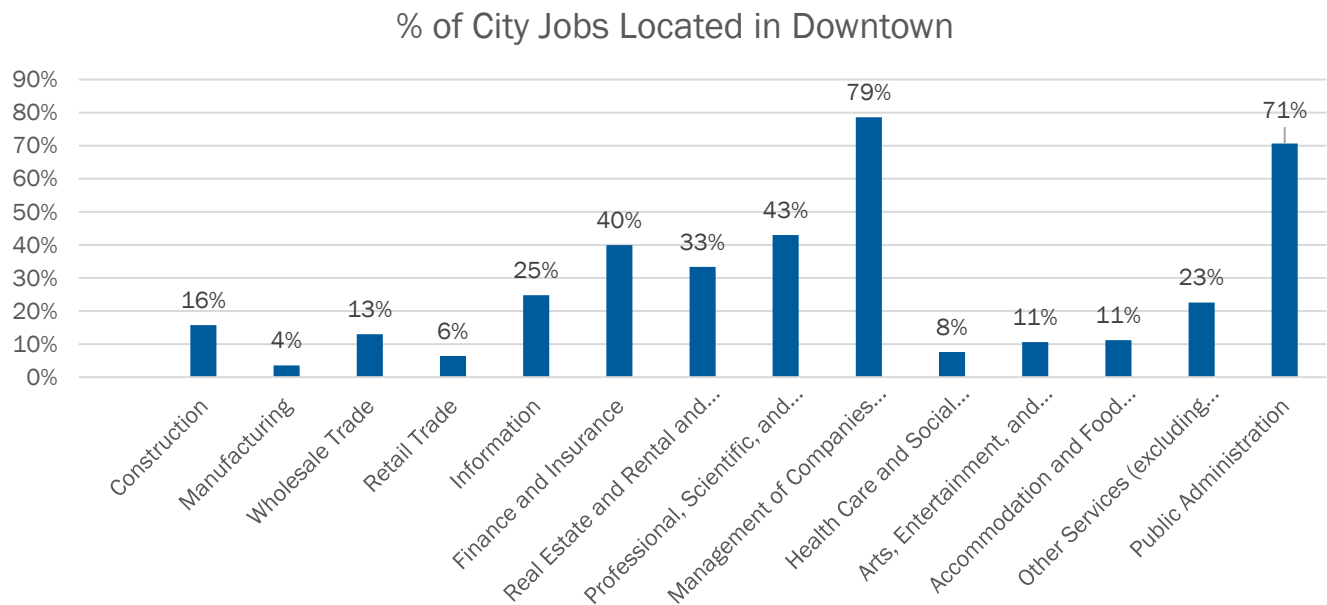
Federal statistical agencies classify types of employment into the North American Industry Classification (NAICS) system. NAICS data was utilized to perform a comparative analysis of jobs located within the downtown study area and the City of Grand Rapids. Downtown is the collection point for several types of Information sector job classifications within the City, including Management of Companies and Enterprises (79% of the entire City's jobs of this type are localized in the study area), Public Administration (71%), and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (43%).

**Table 2 Employment Sector Comparison by Location**

Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	Downtown Study Area		City of Grand Rapids	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Public Administration	527	37.9%	746	7.6%
Health Care and Social Assistance	205	14.7%	2,698	27.5%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	121	8.7	536	5.5%
Retail Trade	113	8.1%	1,770	18.1%
Finance and Insurance	99	7.1%	248	2.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	97	7.0%	868	8.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	89	6.4%	207	2.1%
Construction	40	2.9%	254	2.6%
Information	28	2.0%	113	1.2%
Manufacturing	20	1.4%	561	5.7%
Wholesale Trade	17	1.2%	131	1.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12	0.9%	36	0.4%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	11	0.8%	14	0.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	7	0.5%	66	0.7%
Educational Services	5	0.4%	793	8.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	0	0.0%	12	0.1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%	7	0.1%
Utilities	0	0.0%	58	0.6%
Administration, & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	0	0.0%	646	6.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

**Figure 2**      **Percentage of City Jobs Located in Downtown**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

### **Inflow/Outflow**

Inflow/outflow analysis provides an understanding of people's travel behaviors between home and work. For example, a certain number of people employed within an area may reside outside that area, and vice versa. Inflow/Outflow analysis helps us to better understand these locational relationships and their associated transportation behaviors.

### **Study Area Inflow/Outflow**

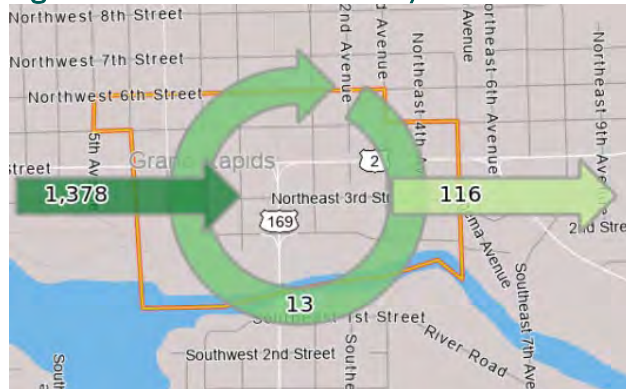
13 residents both live and work within the City of Grand Rapids. 1,378 workers travel to employment within the study area from residences outside the study area. 116 workers residing in the study area travel to employment outside the study area. The proportion of people who both live and work within the downtown study area is anticipated to increase due to the City's planned land use improvements, which will allow more people to live in proximity to their employment.

### **City of Grand Rapids Inflow/Outflow**

2,547 residents both live and work within the City of Grand Rapids. 7,257 workers travel to employment within the city from residences outside the city. 2,146 City residents travel to employment outside the city. From this analysis, we can conclude that Grand Rapids is a regional jobs generator and a net exporter of jobs to the wider region.

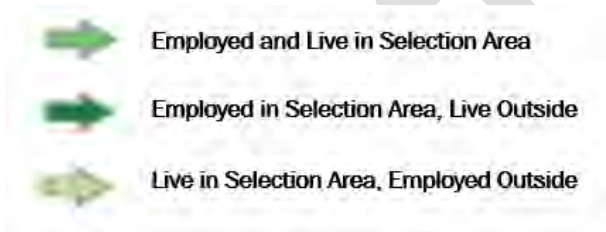
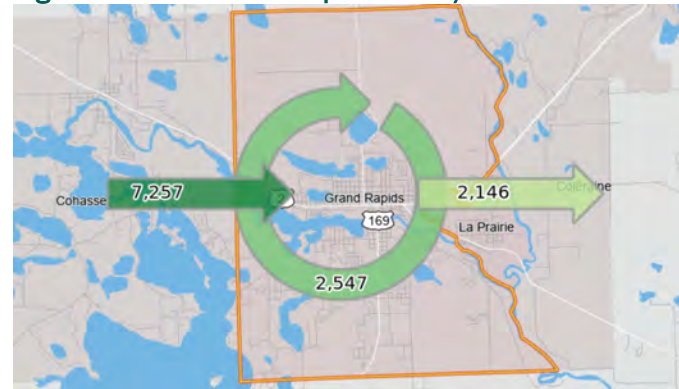


**Figure 3 Downtown Inflow/Outflow**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

**Figure 4 Grand Rapids Inflow/Outflow**



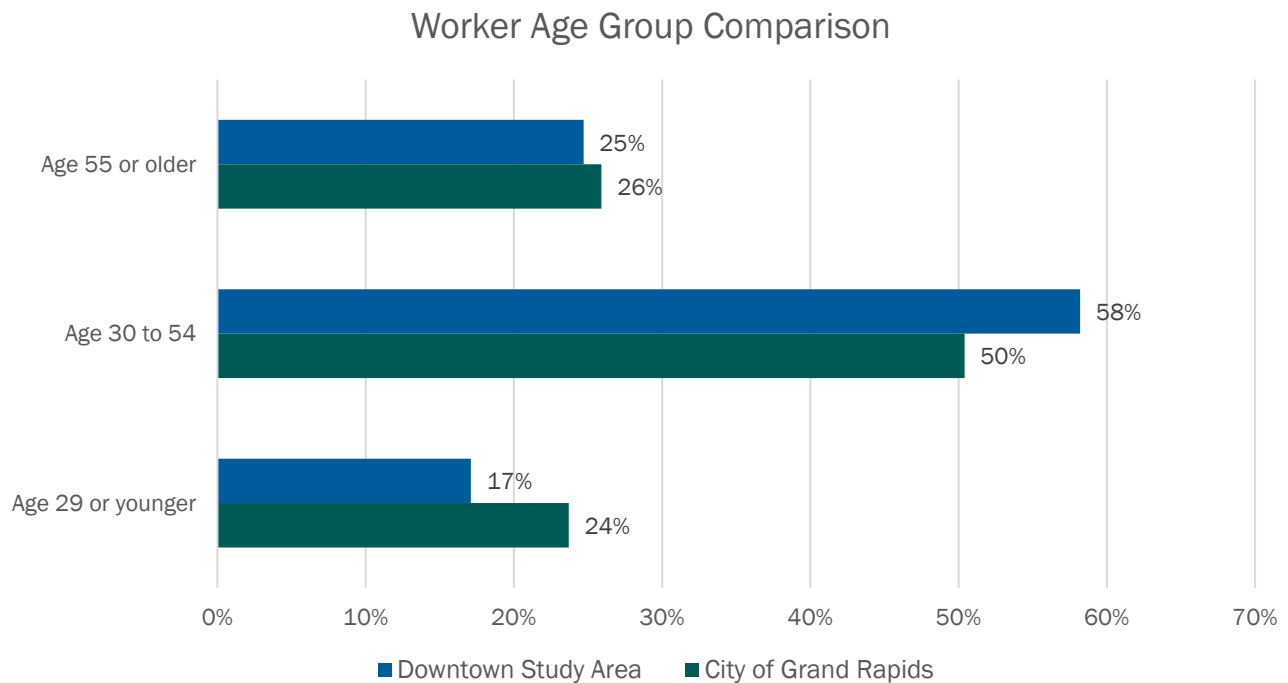
### Worker Age

An analysis of worker age groups provides a greater understanding of where workers find employment. Of note, the Worker Age Group 29 years and younger has a lower share in the study area (17.1%) than that of the City as a whole (23.7%).

Worker Age Group	Downtown Study Area		City of Grand Rapids	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Age 29 or younger	238	17.1%	2,322	23.7%
Age 30 to 54	810	58.2%	4,945	50.4%
Age 55 or older	343	24.7%	2,537	25.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

**Figure 5 Worker Age Group Comparison**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

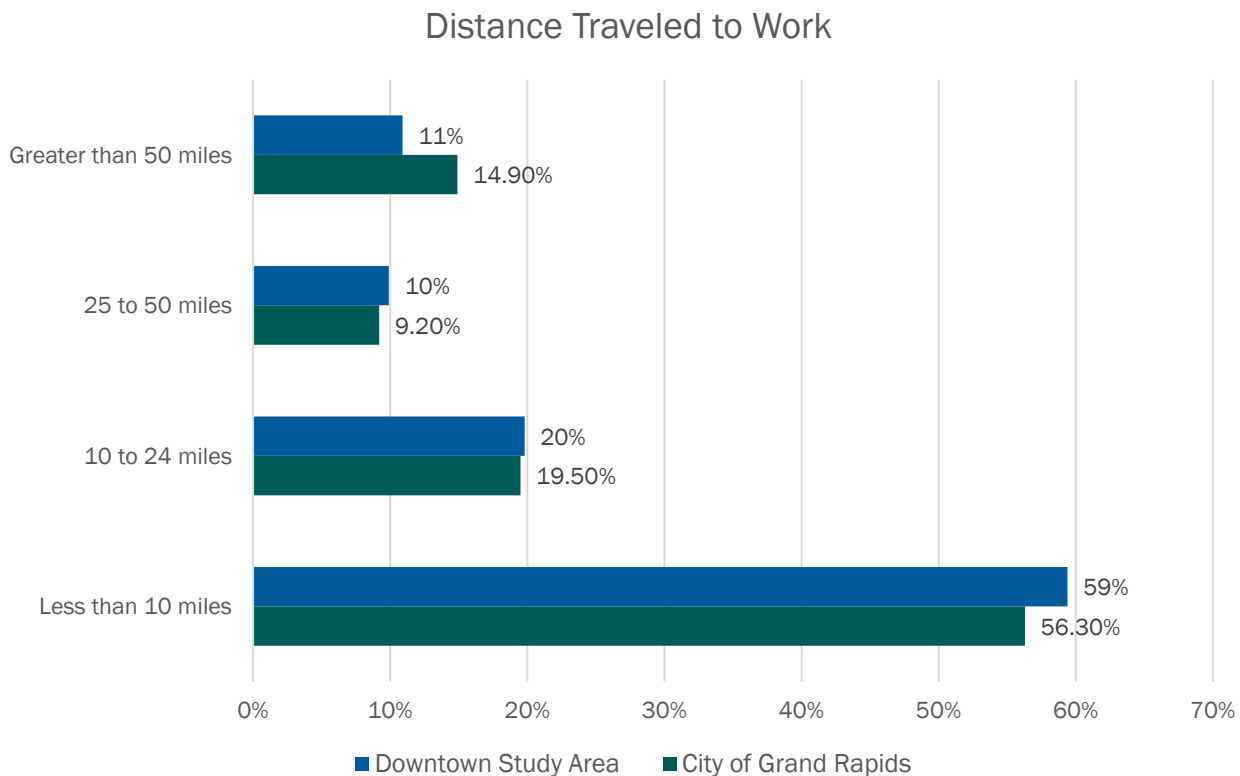
#### **Distance Traveled to Work**

Within the downtown study area, the majority of commuters (59.4%) travel less than 10 miles to work. This distance to work is also the City's largest home-work travel category, at 56.3%.

Distance Traveled to Work	Downtown Study Area		City of Grand Rapids	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
Total All Jobs	1,391	100.0%	9,804	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	826	59.4%	5,520	56.3%
10 to 24 miles	275	19.8%	1,913	19.5%
25 to 50 miles	138	9.9%	906	9.2%
Greater than 50 miles	152	10.9%	1,465	14.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

**Figure 6** Distance Traveled to Work



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 data

## Land Use

The City’s future land use planning within the study area indicates a significant transition from single-use to downtown mixed-use activities. The Grand Rapids GROW Grand Rapids Plan defines mixed-use as “...traditional downtown development styles with commercial uses on lower floors and residential units on upper floors...” (4-20). This transition will allow for a more diverse range of activities to be undertaken in a single structure or on a shared block. These uses may include retail, office, institutional, civic, lodging, and residential. This type of mixed land use is anticipated to have positive economic, social, and environmental benefits.

## Transportation

### Context

The study area provides a variety of transportation facilities and infrastructure for downtown visitors who may choose to walk, roll, ride, or drive. For example, weekday commuters or attendees to a downtown event may choose to travel by walking, riding a bicycle, riding a bus, or by riding in a personal automobile. Existing infrastructure includes streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, a pedestrian bridge and trail to the south, and both on-street and off-street bicycle infrastructure.

### Parking

The study area provides a range of automobile surface parking options throughout. Eleven public lots are disbursed throughout the area, notably several large lots to the east and south of Central Square Mall, at the

corner of Second St NE and First Avenue Northeast in the south, as well as south of Second Street NE. Ten private lots are available, most notably a large private lot east of the Itasca County Jail between Second Avenue NE and Third Avenue NE.

### Access

The study area is comprised primarily of a traditional downtown grid network supporting a range of public and private uses on different parcels. As is the tendency with similar downtown grids, most access points in the study area are public and private driveways.

### Volumes

North-south Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on US 169 / Pokegama Avenue was 16,400 in 2019. East-west AADT on US 169 / Fourth Street NE was 14,200 in 2019. East-west traffic along US 2 / Fourth Street NW was 16,300 in 2019. These volumes support both highways' importance as significant traffic corridors to and through the study area.

### Crash Data

Crashes from the period 2017 – 2021 classified as Serious Injury, Minor Injury, Possible Injury, and Property Damage Only were analyzed. Crash severity and frequency are correlated with the primary downtown traffic routes of US 169 and US 2. These roadways are the highest volume routes for trips to, from, and through downtown.

A primary cluster of Serious Injury, Minor Injury, and Possible Injury crashes was observed at the intersection of US 169 and US 2. Smaller clusters were observed emanating outward at adjacent intersections in each highway east-west approach direction (US 2 at First Avenue NW to the west, US 169 at First Avenue NE to the east).

To the immediate south of the US 169 / US 2 intersection, a cluster of both Minor Injury and Possible Injury crashes was observed at the intersection of North Pokegama at Third Street NW. A cluster of Possible Injury crashes was observed at the next southward intersection, Second Street NW at North Pokegama.

A smaller cluster of Minor Injury and Possible Injury crashes was observed at the southern approach to the bridge entering downtown, at the intersection of First Street SW and North Pokegama Avenue.

Two Serious Injury crashes were observed. One Serious Injury crash was located at the cluster at the intersection of US 169 and US 2 noted above, and one isolated Serious Injury crash was observed on Canal Street east of Third Avenue NE in the study area's southeastern quadrant.

Property Damage Only crashes were observed throughout the downtown network. The locational frequency of these crashes is correlated with the locational frequency of other crash classifications. For example, Property Damage Only crashes are clustered at the Injury crash clusters described above, but Property Damage Only crashes are also disbursed throughout the downtown grid. These crash types were observed along the lengths of both US 169 and US 2 throughout the study area.

### Ped/Bike Infrastructure

The study area provides a range of existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as opportunities to fill in gaps and several missing connections. The local street grid is well-equipped with sidewalks on both sides of most streets. There are several missing segments in the network, notably in the southeastern quadrant of the study area, along both sides of Fourth Avenue NE, Fifth Avenue NE, both sides of Itasca Street east of Third Avenue, and along the north side of NE Fifth Avenue / Third Street NE.



This area, which is least served for pedestrian infrastructure, is directly north of the southern trail and pedestrian bridge. Efforts should be made to fill in these gaps, as this area is the primary receiving / departing area for pedestrians entering and existing downtown using the pedestrian bridge.

The majority of the street network does not provide on-street bicycle facilities, except for the entirety of the length of the east/west Fifth Street NW corridor.

## **Public Realm**

Public Realm refers to the important connection between building ground level, walkways, streets, and urban spaces. These elements of public space combine to create a destination's sense of uniqueness, distinctiveness, and overall desirability. The Public Realm includes shops, awnings, shelters, parks, libraries, trails, promenades, thoroughways, and public art. The Public Realm also includes street surfaces. It contributes to the aesthetic and sensory comfort that downtown visitors experience. The quality of an area's Public Realm can wield significant influence on an area's attractiveness to live, work, and play, and can deeply impact property values, visitor satisfaction, and even visitor behavior. The downtown study area exhibits a variety of Public Realm amenities and investments, including historic and heritage resources, public art, signage, recreational spaces, greenery, water access, and shading.



# Appendix C:

# Engagement Summary

**C1: Early Survey Summary**

**C2: Tall Timber Days Pop-Up Summary**

**C3: Riverfest Pop-Up Summary**

**C4: Stakeholder Design Event Summary**

**C5: Community Design Event Summary**

**C6: Vision and Implementation Survey Summary**

**C7: Plan Recommendations Event Summary**

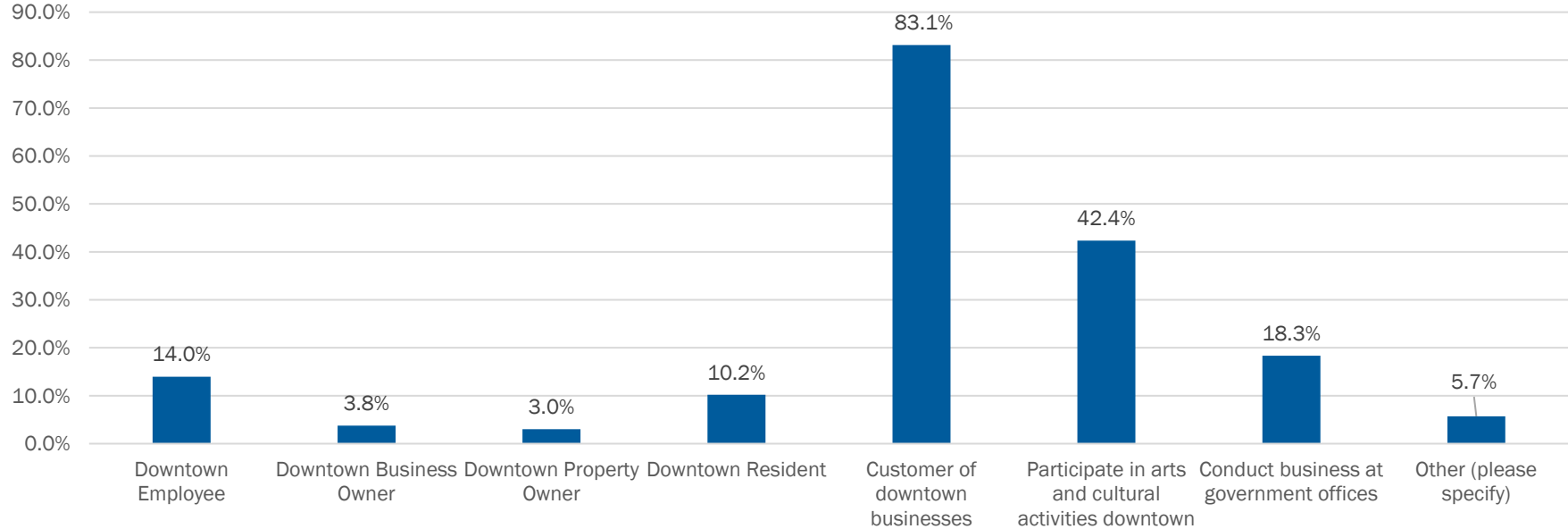
# Appendix C1: Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Survey Response Summary

Question 1: Describe your relationship to Downtown Grand Rapids (select all that apply).

Answer Choices	Responses
Downtown Employee	115
Downtown Business Owner	31
Downtown Property Owner	25
Downtown Resident	84
Customer of downtown businesses	685
Participate in arts and cultural activities downtown	349
Conduct business at government offices	151
Other (please specify)	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>824</b>

## Open-ended response themes (Other)

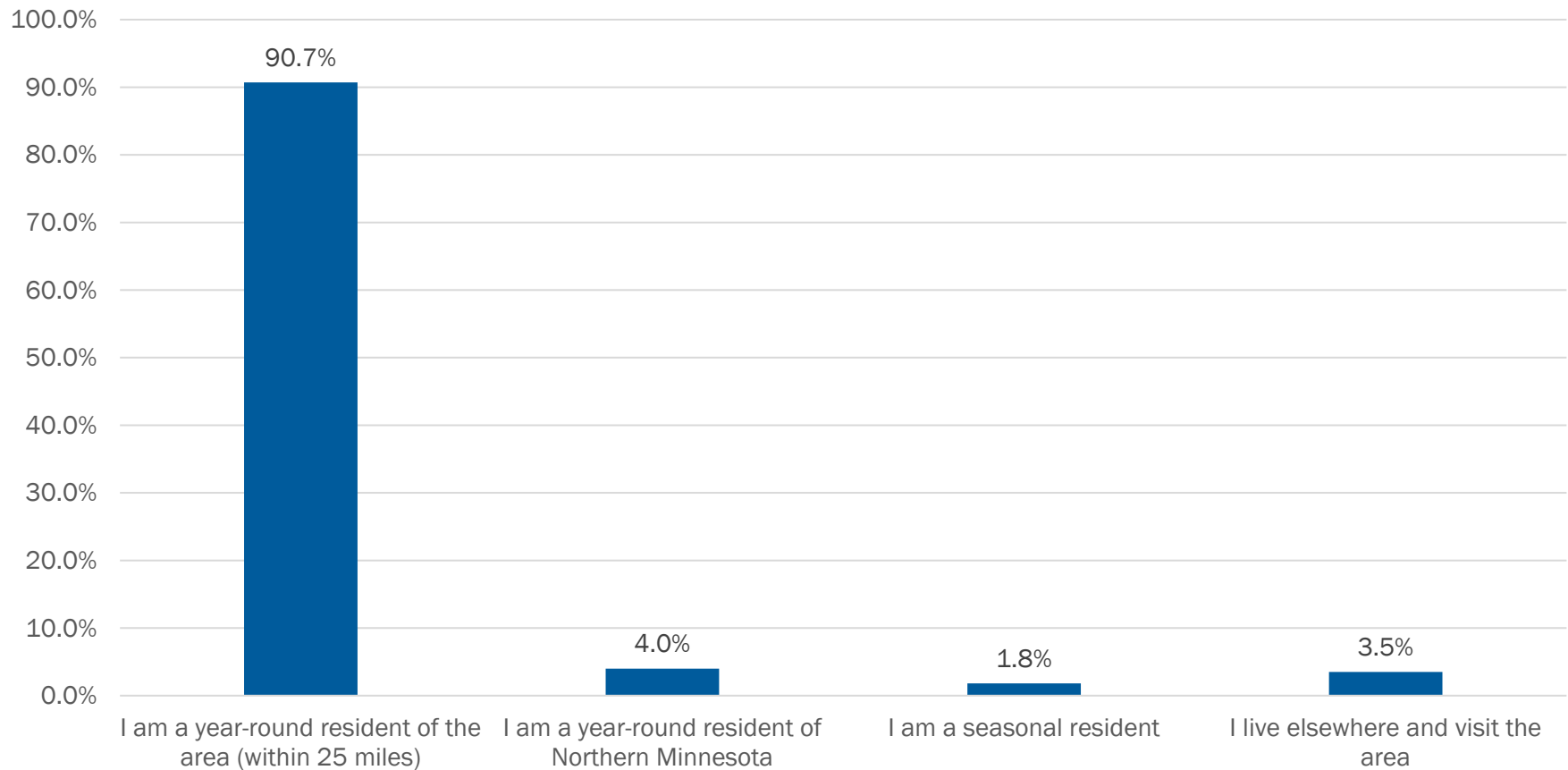
- Visit Retail / Food options
- Enjoyment / Social
- Prospective resident
- Visiting family
- Curiosity / Heritage
- Visiting downtown employee
- Traveling through to another destination



## Question 2: Are you a resident of the Grand Rapids Area?

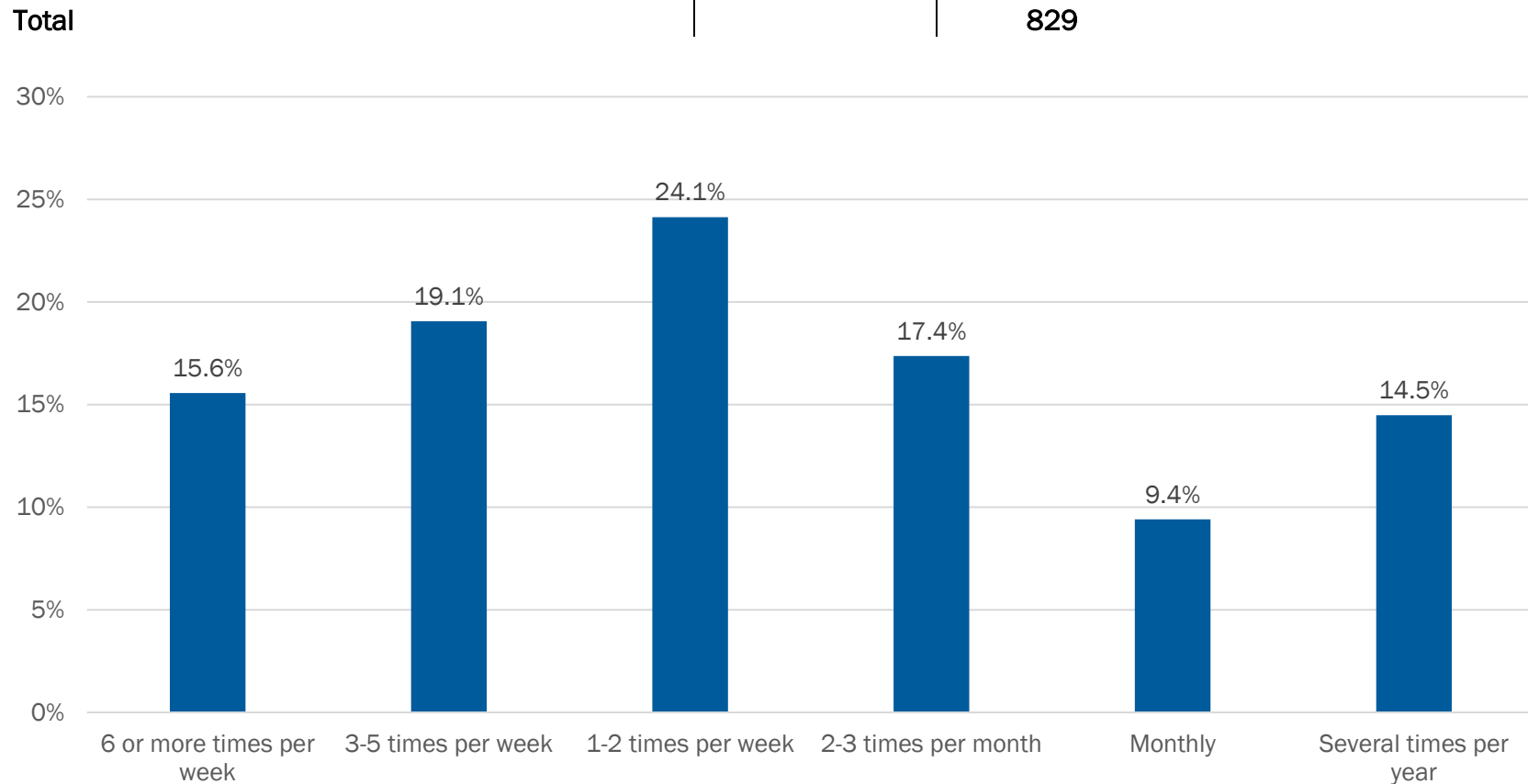
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (#)
I am a year-round resident of the area (within 25 miles)	90.7%	752
I am a year-round resident of Northern Minnesota	4.0%	33
I am a seasonal resident	1.8%	15
I live elsewhere and visit the area	3.5%	29
<b>Total</b>		<b>829</b>





### Question 3: On average, how often do you visit downtown and purchase goods or services at a downtown business?

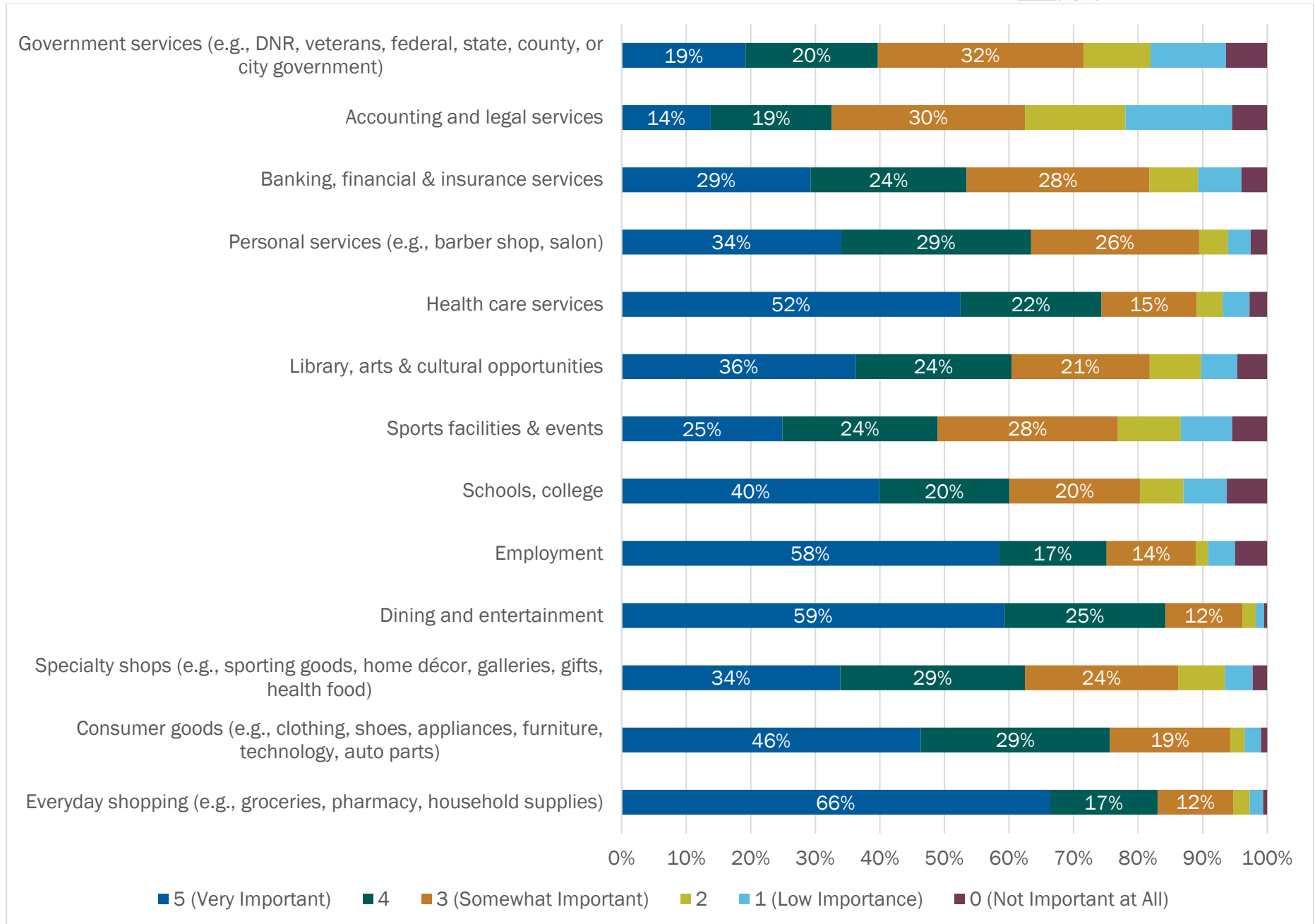
Answer Choices	Responses (%)	Responses (#)
6 or more times per week	15.6%	129
3-5 times per week	19.1%	158
1-2 times per week	24.1%	200
2-3 times per month	17.4%	144
Monthly	9.4%	78
Several times per year	14.5%	120



**Question 4:** Grand Rapids serves as a regional center in Northern Minnesota for employment, health care, education, shopping, arts and culture, government, business, professional and personal services. Rank the importance of each of the following in attracting you and your family to the community as a whole for goods and services. (5 = very important, 3= somewhat important, 1= low importance, 0=not at all important)

	5 (Very Important)	4	3 (Somewhat Important)	2	1 (Low Importance)	0 (Not Important at all)	Total	Weighted Average
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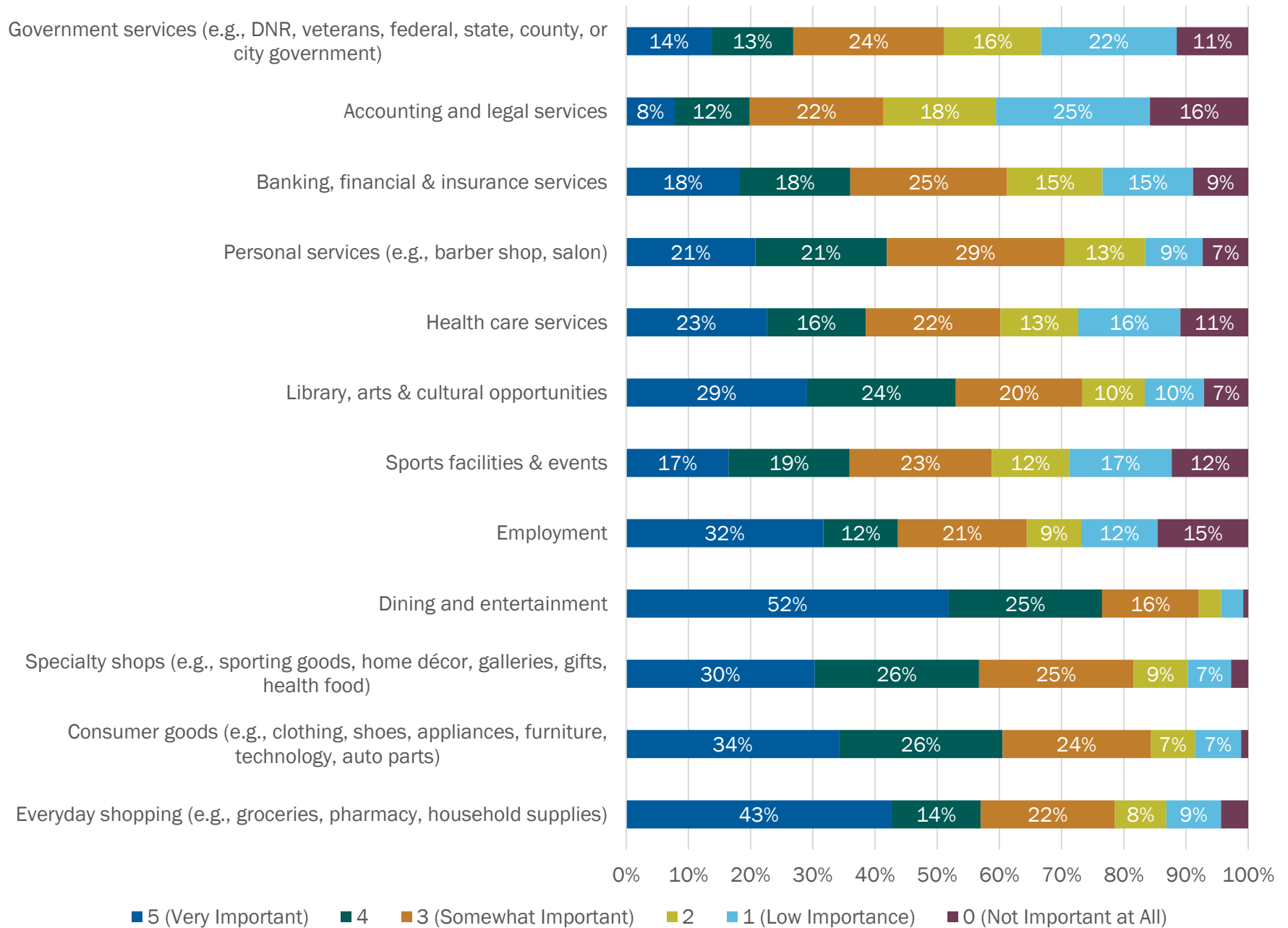
Everyday shopping (e.g., groceries, pharmacy, household supplies)	66.3%	16.8%	11.7%	2.6%	2.1%	0.6%	626	4.4
Consumer goods (e.g., clothing, shoes, appliances, furniture, technology, auto parts)	46.3%	29.3%	18.6%	2.2%	2.6%	1.0%	628	4.1
Specialty shops (e.g., sporting goods, home décor, galleries, gifts, health food)	33.9%	28.6%	23.8%	7.2%	4.3%	2.2%	626	3.7
Dining and entertainment	59.3%	24.9%	11.9%	2.1%	1.3%	0.5%	622	4.4
Employment	58.4%	16.7%	13.8%	1.9%	4.2%	5.0%	623	4.1
Schools, college	39.9%	20.2%	20.2%	6.7%	6.7%	6.3%	624	3.6
Sports facilities & events	24.9%	24.1%	27.9%	9.7%	8.0%	5.4%	627	3.3
Library, arts & cultural opportunities	36.3%	24.1%	21.4%	8.0%	5.6%	4.6%	626	3.6
Health care services	52.5%	21.8%	14.8%	4.0%	4.2%	2.7%	623	4.1
Personal services (e.g., barber shop, salon)	34.0%	29.4%	26.0%	4.5%	3.5%	2.6%	626	3.8
Banking, financial & insurance services	29.3%	24.2%	28.3%	7.5%	6.7%	4.0%	625	3.5
Accounting and legal services	13.8%	18.8%	30.0%	15.5%	16.5%	5.5%	624	2.8
Government services (e.g., DNR, veterans, federal, state, county, or city government)	19.2%	20.5%	31.8%	10.4%	11.7%	6.4%	625	3.1





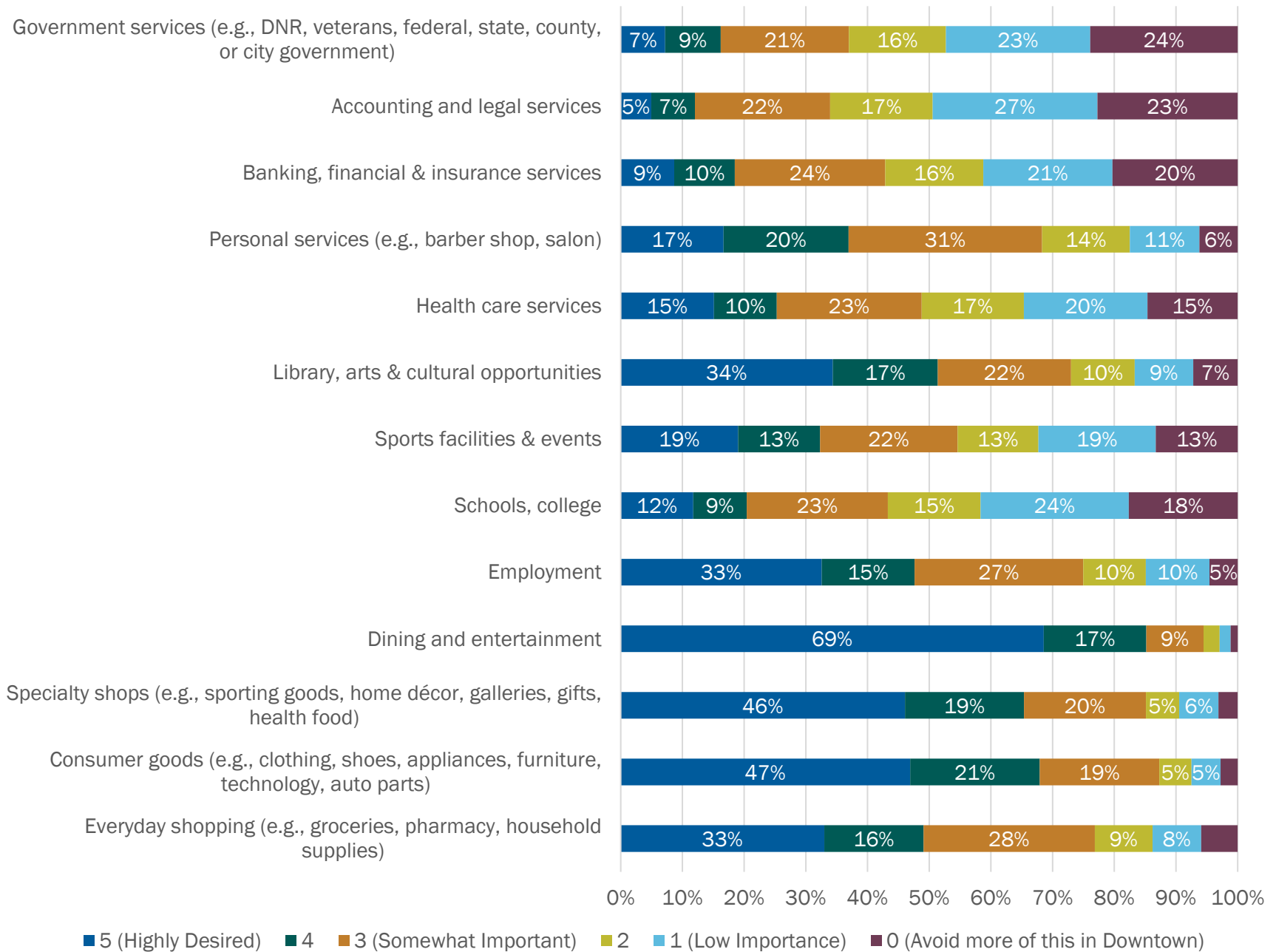
Question 5: Rank the importance of the following reasons for you and your family to come to Downtown Grand Rapids. (5 = very important, 3= somewhat important, 1= low importance, 0=not at all important)

	5 (Very Important)	4	3 (Somewhat Important)	2	1 (Low Importance)	0 (Not Important at all)	Total	Weighted Average
Everyday shopping (e.g., groceries, pharmacy, household supplies)	42.7%	14.3%	21.6%	8.3%	8.8%	4.4%	616	3.6
Consumer goods (e.g., clothing, shoes, appliances, furniture, technology, auto parts)	34.3%	26.2%	23.8%	7.1%	7.4%	1.1%	618	3.7
Specialty shops (e.g., sporting goods, home décor, galleries, gifts, health food)	30.3%	26.4%	24.8%	8.8%	7.0%	2.8%	617	3.6
Dining and entertainment	51.9%	24.6%	15.6%	3.6%	3.6%	0.8%	617	4.2
Employment	31.7%	12.0%	20.7%	8.7%	12.3%	14.6%	618	3.0
Sports facilities & events	16.5%	19.4%	22.8%	12.5%	16.5%	12.3%	618	2.7
Library, arts & cultural opportunities	29.1%	23.9%	20.4%	10.0%	9.5%	7.1%	619	3.3
Health care services	22.6%	15.9%	21.6%	12.5%	16.4%	10.9%	615	2.8
Personal services (e.g., barber shop, salon)	20.8%	21.1%	28.6%	13.0%	9.3%	7.3%	616	3.1
Banking, financial & insurance services	18.3%	17.8%	25.2%	15.4%	14.5%	8.9%	619	2.8
Accounting and legal services	7.8%	12.1%	21.5%	18.1%	24.8%	15.8%	614	2.1
Government services (e.g., DNR, veterans, federal, state, county, or city government)	13.8%	13.1%	24.3%	15.5%	21.8%	11.5%	618	2.5



Question 6: What would you like to see more of in the Downtown area? (5= highly desired; 3= somewhat important; 1= not important; 0 = avoid more of this in downtown)

	5 (Highly Desired)	4	3 (Somewhat Important)	2	1 (Low Importance)	0 (Avoid more of this Downtown)	Total	Weighted Average
Everyday shopping (e.g., groceries, pharmacy, household supplies)	33.0%	16.1%	27.8%	9.4%	7.9%	5.9%	609	3.4
Consumer goods (e.g., clothing, shoes, appliances, furniture, technology, auto parts)	46.9%	21.0%	19.4%	5.2%	4.7%	2.8%	614	3.9
Specialty shops (e.g., sporting goods, home décor, galleries, gifts, health food)	46.1%	19.3%	19.8%	5.4%	6.4%	3.1%	612	3.8
Dining and entertainment	68.6%	16.6%	9.3%	2.6%	1.8%	1.1%	614	4.4
Employment	32.6%	15.1%	27.3%	10.2%	10.3%	4.6%	611	3.4
Schools, college	11.8%	8.7%	22.9%	15.0%	24.0%	17.7%	612	2.2
Sports facilities & events	19.0%	13.3%	22.3%	13.1%	19.0%	13.3%	610	2.7
Library, arts & cultural opportunities	34.4%	17.0%	21.6%	10.3%	9.5%	7.2%	611	3.4
Health care services	15.1%	10.2%	23.5%	16.6%	20.0%	14.6%	609	2.0
Personal services (e.g., barber shop, salon)	16.7%	20.3%	31.4%	14.2%	11.3%	6.2%	612	3.0
Banking, financial & insurance services	8.7%	9.8%	24.4%	15.9%	21.0%	20.3%	611	2.1
Accounting and legal services	4.9%	7.1%	21.9%	16.6%	26.7%	22.7%	607	1.8
Government services (e.g., DNR, veterans, federal, state, county, or city government)	7.2%	9.0%	20.8%	15.7%	23.4%	23.9%	611	1.9





Question 7: In two or three words, describe what you enjoy most about Downtown Grand Rapids.

High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Shops	65	Type, diversity, and proximity of shopping opportunities.
Historic	47	Aesthetics, beauty, atmosphere, and interest created by historic buildings and built environment. Connection to local culture, history, and heritage.
Walkable	31	Ability to experience downtown amenities without a vehicle. Benefit by utility and convenience, as well as enhances downtown experience.
Art	29	Aesthetic, cultural, and community-building benefits of visual arts and music. Includes both artwalk and ability to purchase art at shops.
Dining	26	Quality and diversity of dining options.
Central School	25	Aesthetic and historic aspects of Central School.
Community	19	Sense of community afforded by downtown amenities and downtown events.
Visual Character	15	Visual appearance.
Small Town Feel	15	Overall atmosphere
Clean	12	Cleanliness and upkeep
Benders	11	Bender's Shoes, Clothing, and Gifts
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>501</b>	

Question 7: In two or three words, describe what you enjoy most about Downtown Grand Rapids.



Question 8: In two or three words, describe what you dislike about Downtown Grand Rapids.

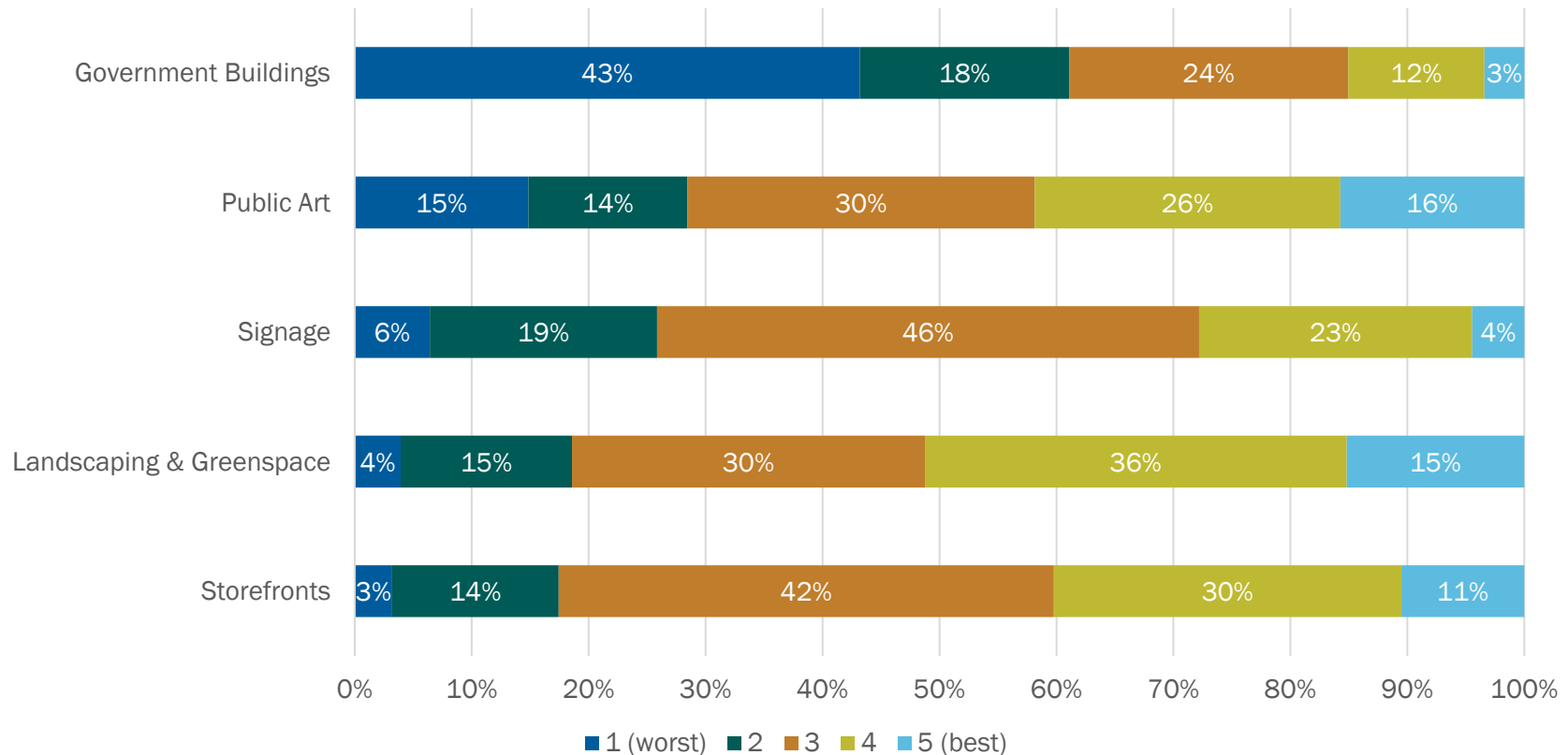
High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Lack of shopping/dining options	154	Desire for increase in quantity and diversity of shopping and dining options
Jail	109	Presence, location, and appearance of Justice Center
Traffic	84	Amount, flow, and ancillary byproducts of motor vehicle traffic including congestion, noise, signal timing, crossing difficulties, and signal timing.
Visual Character	66	Appearance of building facades and building materials, lack of building upkeep, vacant lots, and dissatisfaction with artwork.
Lack of cohesion	29	Physical layout of downtown. "Too spread out" ... "discombobulated" ... "disconnected" ... "disjointed" ... "lacks focus"
Parking	20	Lack of parking convenient to destinations.
Highway	10	Division created by Highway 2 and Highway 3, including pedestrian crossing challenges.
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>524</b>	





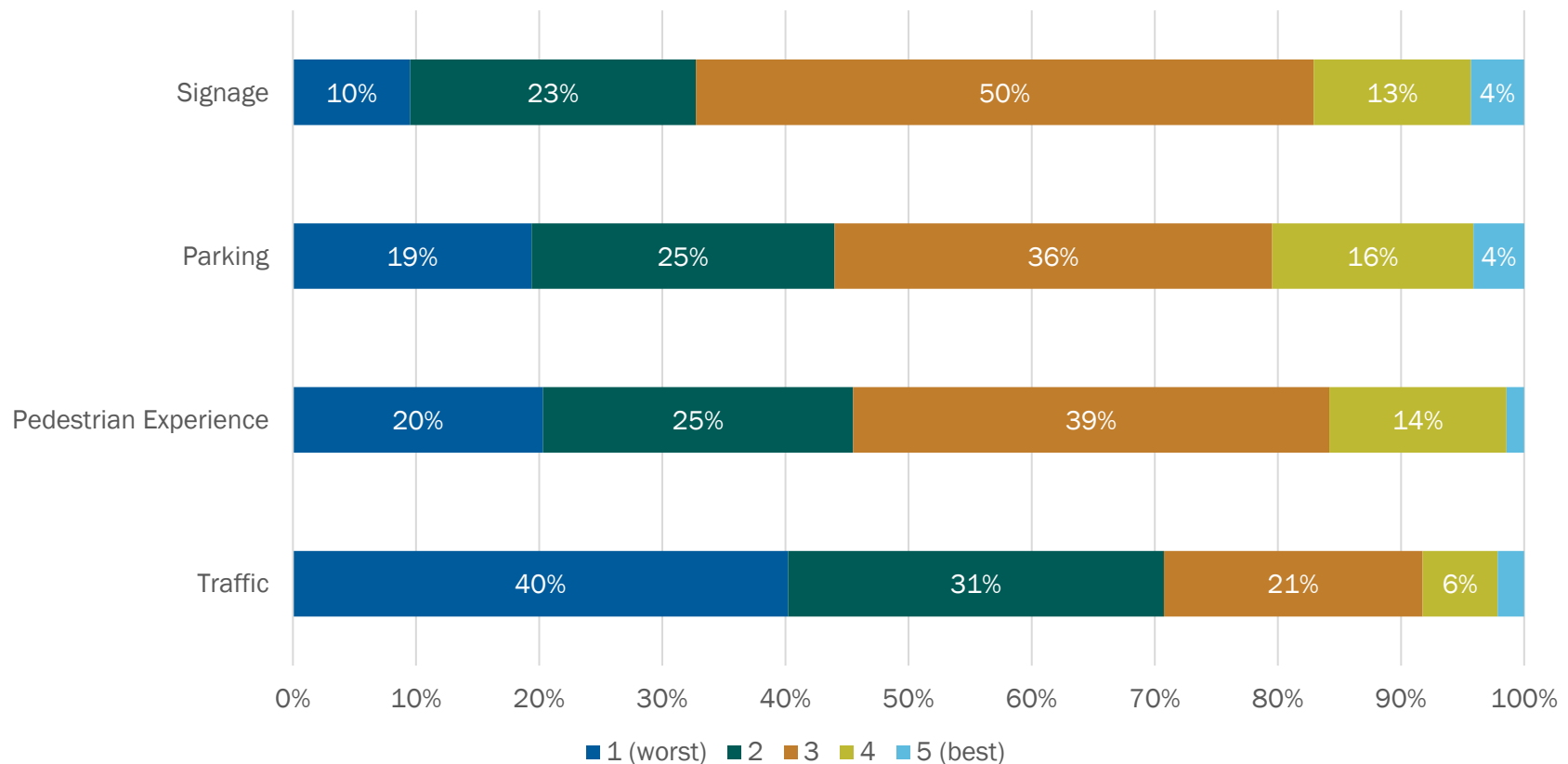
Question 9: Rate the appearance of the following elements in Downtown Grand Rapids (1 being the worst and 5 being the best).

	1	2	3	4	5
Storefronts	3.2%	14.2%	42.4%	29.7%	10.5%
Landscaping & Greenspace	3.9%	14.6%	30.2%	36.1%	15.2%
Signage	6.4%	19.4%	46.4%	23.4%	4.5%
Public Art	14.9%	13.6%	29.7%	26.1%	15.7%
Government Buildings	43.2%	17.9%	23.8%	11.7%	3.4%



Question 10: Rate the appearance of the following elements in Downtown Grand Rapids (1 being the worst and 5 being the best).

	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic	40.2%	30.5%	21.0%	6.1%	2.2%
Pedestrian Experience	20.3%	25.2%	38.7%	14.4%	1.4%
Parking	19.4%	24.6%	35.6%	16.3%	4.1%
Signage	9.5%	23.2%	50.2%	12.8%	4.3%



## Question 11: What is the most important thing to change to make downtown more attractive to you?

High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
More Shops	54	Increase in quantity and diversity of shopping options.
Traffic Congestion	53	Amount of and efficiency of traffic flow. Includes dissatisfaction with amount of signals downtown and associated signal timing.
More Family Friendly	42	Increase amount of and diversity of amenities for families with school-aged children.
Visual Character	41	Overall appearance and maintenance of built environment. Includes upkeep of building facades, dissatisfaction with vacant lots, landscaping, and theming.
Move Jail	28	Desire to relocate the Justice Center.
More Dining	27	Increase in quantity and diversity of dining options.
Pedestrian Environment	24	Increase pedestrian safety and convenience traveling to and throughout downtown. Includes crossing difficulties at streets and highways.
More Green Space	21	Increase opportunities to interact with and enjoy green spaces, parks, and landscaping.
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>476</b>	





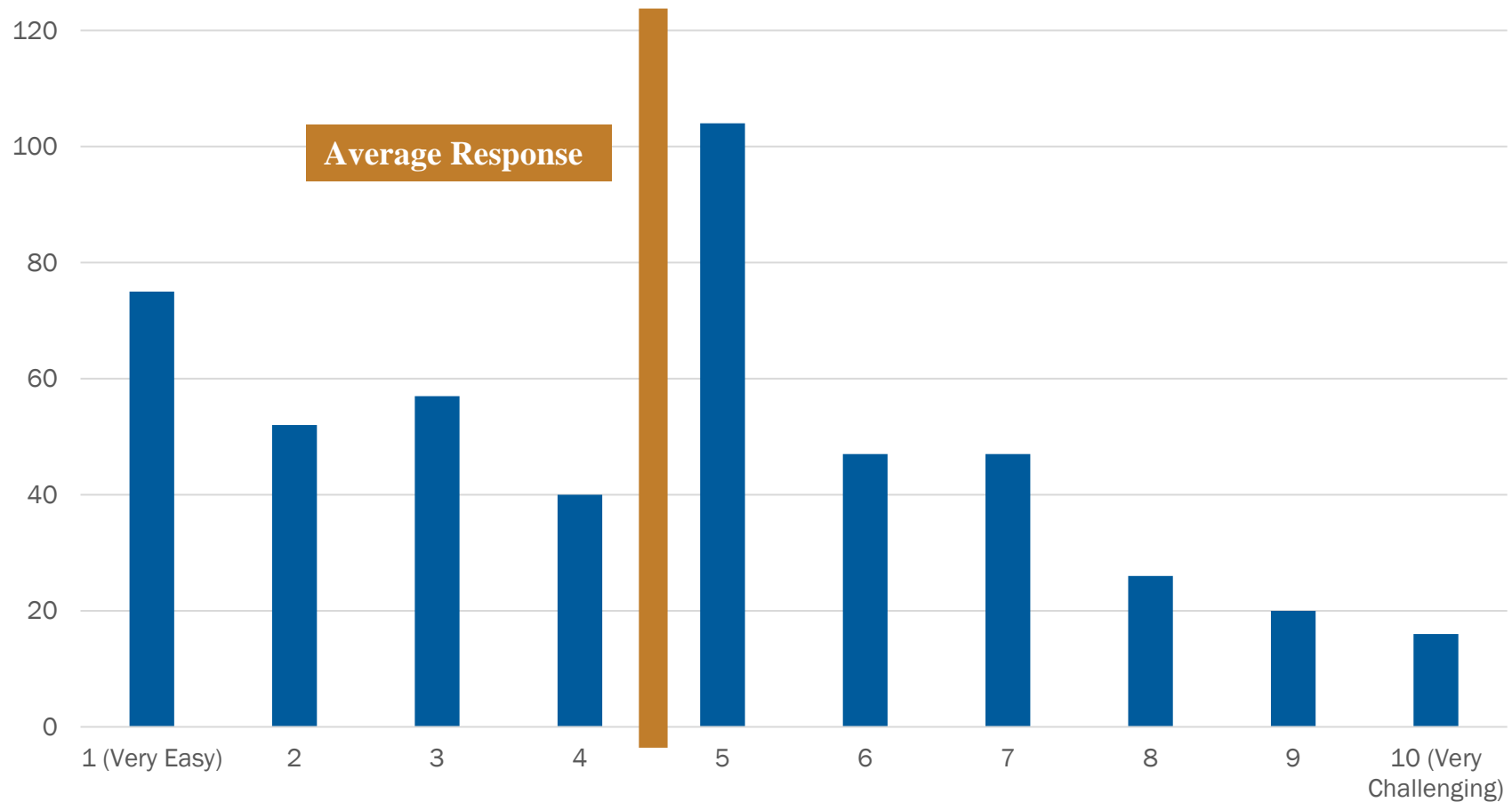
Question 12: Are there businesses or activities that exist outside of Downtown Grand Rapids or in other communities that you wish existed in Downtown? If yes, please describe.

High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Dining	111	Increase the amount and diversity of dining options. Emphasis on mid-to high-end dining.
Shops	68	Increase the amount of and diversity of retail options. Ideas include clothing, Jenson's, Home Goods, Hobby Lobby, and Maurice's.
Splashpad	48	An all-ages Splashpad as an amenity for local use and to drive tourism to downtown.
Department Store	19	Desire for large multi-product retail store.
Entertainment	17	Desire for more entertainment for all ages. Ideas include both private enterprises (axe-throwing, escape room, cat café) and community programming (festivals, farmers market, live music, art sculpture garden).
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>407</b>	



Question 13: How easy is it walk, bike, and roll (e.g., scooter, wheelchair, walker, etc.) around Downtown Grand Rapids? (1 being very easy with no barriers and 10 being very challenging)

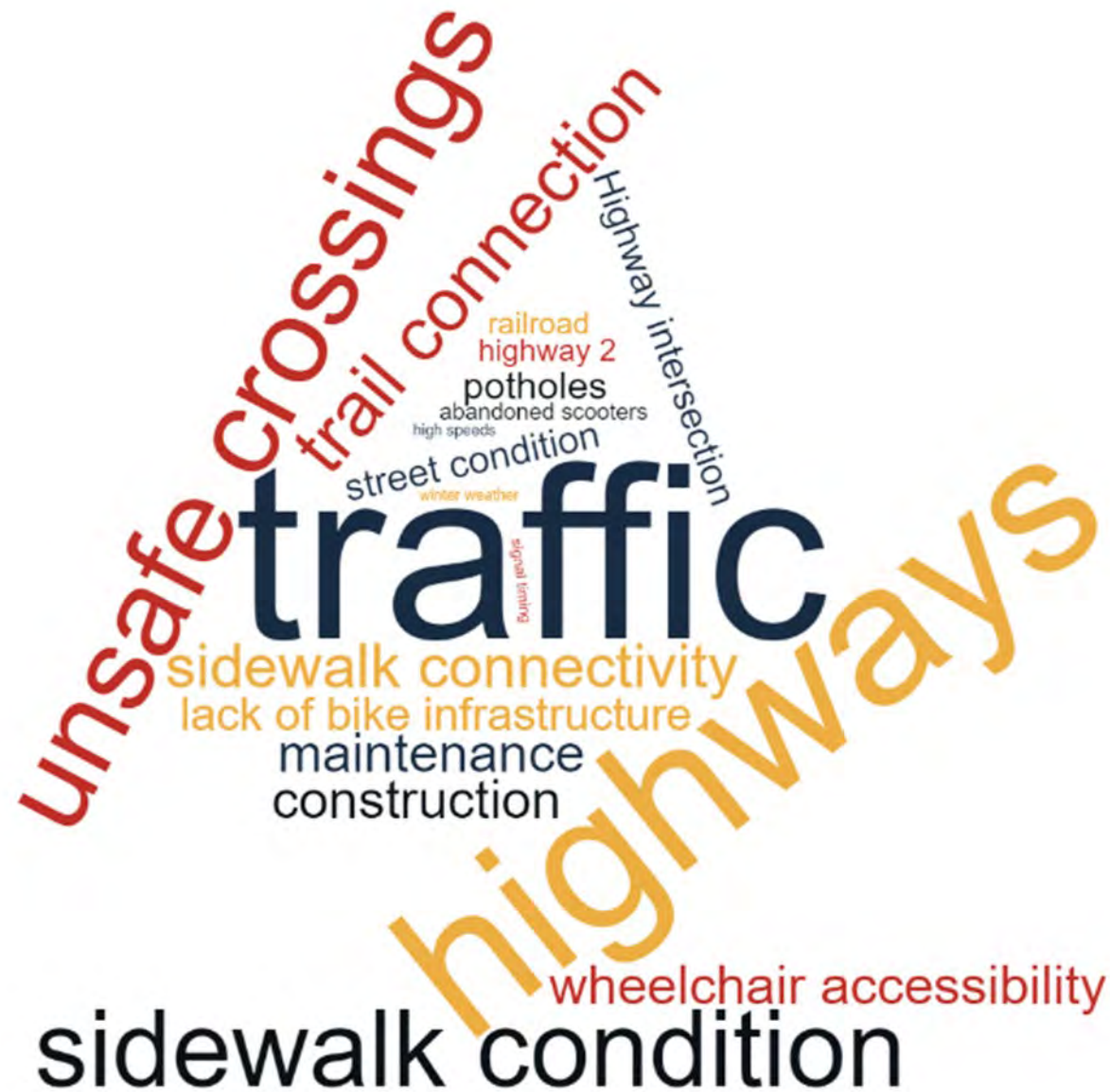
Average Response: 4.5



## Question 14: What barriers to walking, biking, and rolling have you experienced or are you aware of?

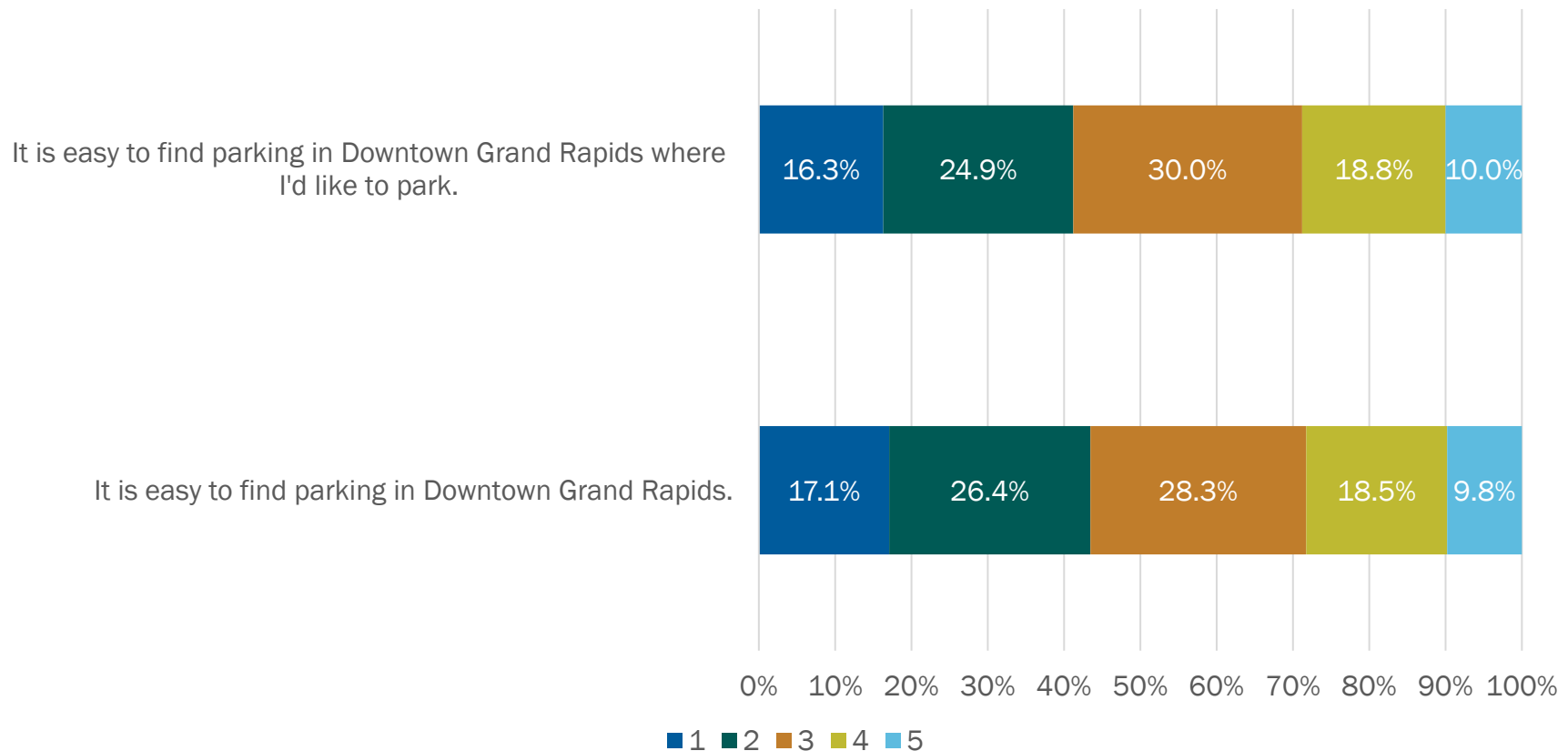
High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Traffic	107	Includes amount of traffic and associated congestion. Includes difficulties driving, bicycling in bike lanes, and perceptions of safety concerns.
Unsafe Crossings	51	Comments specifically focused on dissatisfaction with street crossings. Includes crossing streets (such as First Avenue, Fourth, and Second), as well as crossing US 2 and US 169. Concerns include driver behavior and cross signal timing.
Highways	27	Comments focused on the divisionary and separating impacts of US 2 and US 14.
Sidewalk Conditions	15	Includes both upkeep and maintenance (cracked and crumbling sidewalk infrastructure), as well as lack of connectivity.
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>311</b>	





Question 15: Rate your level of agreement with the following statements. (1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree)

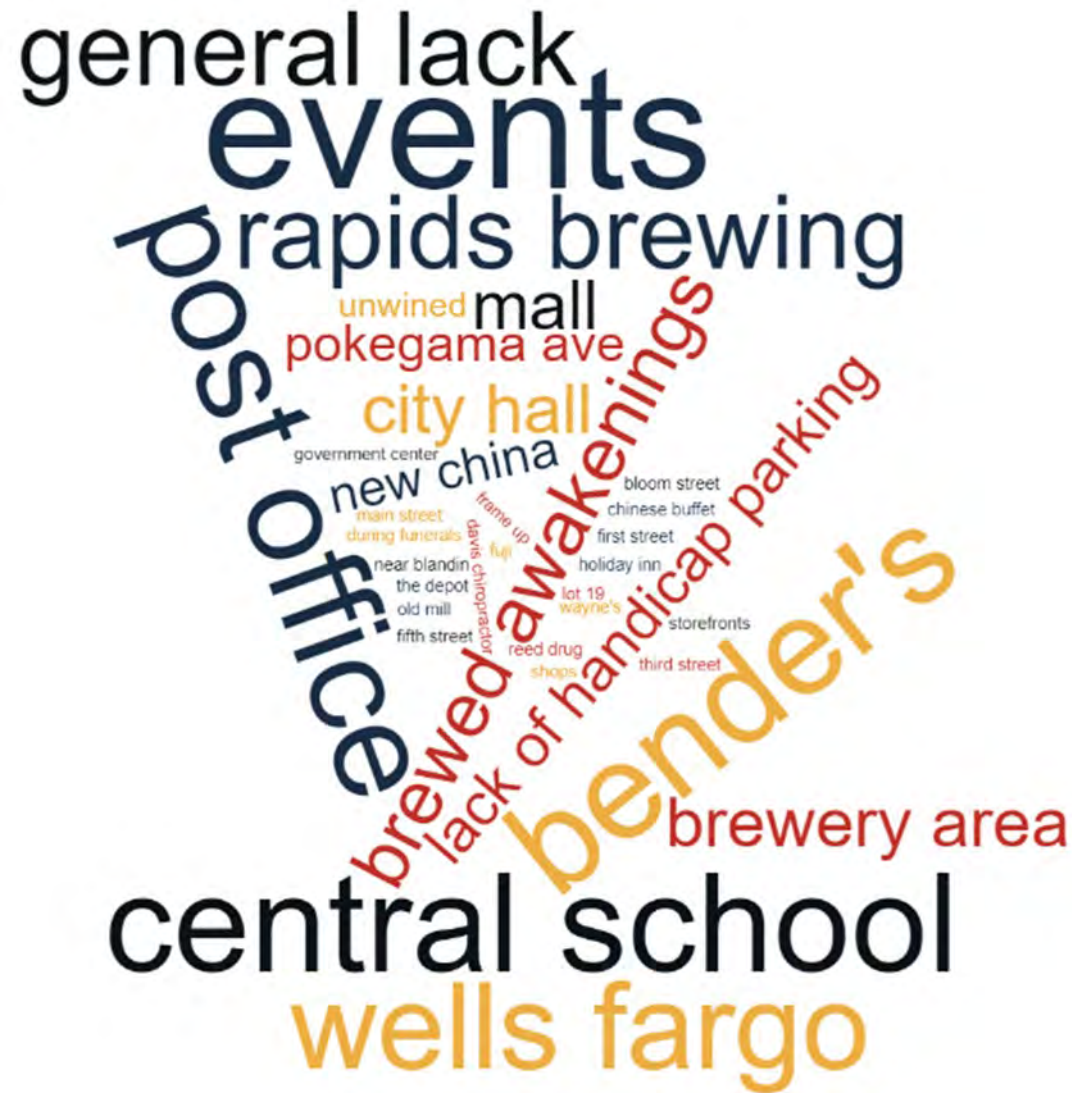
	1	2	3	4	5
It is easy to find parking in Downtown Grand Rapids.	17.1%	26.4%	28.3%	18.5%	9.8%
It is easy to find parking in Downtown Grand Rapids where I'd like to park.	16.3%	24.9%	30.0%	18.8%	10.0%



## Question 16: Describe specific areas with parking or disability access issues.

High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
During Events	10	Acute parking issues occurring during downtown events. Examples include Tall Timber Days, etc. when residents had to park up to one mile away.
Lack of Handicap Accessibility	9	Comments focused specifically on handicap accessibility to various locations, including Kramer's, the mall, Mad Dogs, Third Street, Rapids Brewing, and general lack of handicapped parking spaces downtown.
Post Office	9	Lack of available parking spots and lack of handicap accessibility.
Wells Fargo	7	Lack of available parking and dissatisfaction with maneuvering space.
Rapids Brewing Area	6	Lack of parking lot capacity.
General Lack	6	Comments focused on general lack of parking throughout downtown.
Brewed Awakenings	5	Lack of parking lot capacity.
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>178</b>	

Question 16: Describe specific areas with parking or disability access issues.





Question 17: Are there things about the physical design and appearance of downtown that could be improved? (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, road condition, etc.) What suggestions do you have to improve the design and appearance?

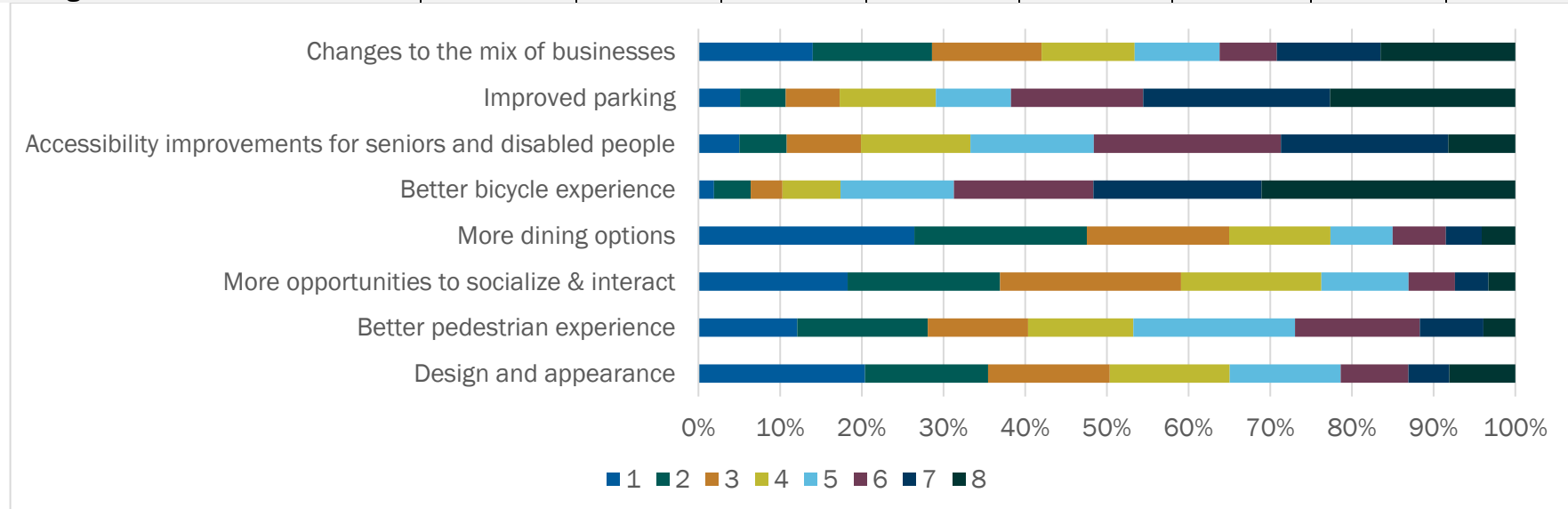
High-level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Streetscape Elements	39	Includes storefront façade aesthetics and public realm landscaping, including flower plantings.
Traffic Operations Concerns	29	Includes driver behaviors such as speeding and reckless driving. Dissatisfaction with roundabouts, intersections, and turning movements.
Relocate / Obscure Jail	28	Desire to relocate, obscure, or beautify the Justice Center.
Green Space	19	Desire for dedicated green space. Ideas include utilizing green space on Blandin property and increasing trees, bushes, and shrubs.
Pedestrian Safety	14	Comments specifically focused on pedestrian safety. Includes challenges crossing streets and buffering sidewalks from traffic.
Maintenance	14	General maintenance to built environment. Includes building facades, the Blandin block, red pavers, potholes, and general modernization.
Vacant Lots	12	Desire to activate vacant lots, including Kramer's, Blandin, and UPM.
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>268</b>	

Question 17: Are there things about the physical design and appearance of downtown that could be improved? (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, road condition, etc.)  
What suggestions do you have to improve the design and appearance?



**Question 18: What issues or opportunities do you think need to be prioritized in Downtown Grand Rapids in the next 10 years? (Identify the priority of each item with 1 as the top priority and 8 as the lowest priority).**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Design and appearance	20.4%	15.1%	14.9%	14.7%	13.6%	8.3%	5.0%	8.1%
Better pedestrian experience	12.1%	16.0%	12.3%	12.9%	19.8%	15.3%	7.8%	3.9%
More opportunities to socialize & interact	18.3%	18.7%	22.2%	17.2%	10.7%	5.7%	4.1%	3.3%
More dining options	26.4%	21.1%	17.4%	12.4%	7.6%	6.5%	4.4%	4.1%
Better bicycle experience	1.9%	4.5%	3.9%	7.1%	13.9%	17.1%	20.6%	31.1%
Accessibility improvements for seniors and disabled people	5.0%	5.8%	9.1%	13.4%	15.1%	22.9%	20.5%	8.2%
Improved parking	5.1%	5.6%	6.6%	11.8%	9.2%	16.2%	22.9%	22.7%
Changes to the mix of businesses	14.0%	14.6%	13.4%	11.4%	10.4%	7.0%	12.7%	16.5%



## Question 19: Regardless of any barrier (funding, support, etc.) what is one big idea for the future of Downtown Grand Rapids?

High-Level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Nurture New & Existing Business	52	Take actions to incentivize and aid a diverse mix of new business development downtown; including dining, recreation, and retail goods. Emphasize local ownership and employment.
Family Friendly	29	Downtown should provide a variety of safe all-age activities. Ideas include an ADA-inclusive playground, water activities, mini golf, all-weather sports, and arcade.
Splashpad	28	An all-ages Splashpad as an amenity for local use and to drive tourism to downtown.
Placemaking	24	Downtown should have a pleasant and unified visual aesthetic and flow. Ideas include art, sculptures, design guidelines, cohesion, and theming.
Concentrate Development Downtown	14	Direct private and public investments downtown, incentivize development within the downtown area.
Convert Central School to different use	12	Assess opportunities to better utilize Central School, including housing, commercial, and community uses.
Improve Mall Area	12	Ideas include conversion to mixed use, residential, commercial, theater, dining, and youth programming.
Green Space	11	All visitors should be able to enjoy a variety of plant life, including trees, flowers, and landscaping.
Small Town Feel	11	Emphasize a sense and feel of community and local ownership to appeal to locals and drive tourism.
Community Space / Programming	10	A designated space to be utilized for community events and gatherings. Ideas include a teaching area, a band shell, weekly activities.
Balanced Transportation System	10	Transportation system should accommodate needs of all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, ADA, transit, and vehicles. Includes connectivity and infrastructure maintenance.
Improve Traffic	10	Improve vehicle flow and efficiency throughout downtown.
Indoor Park	9	Indoor park to allow for all-weather activities.



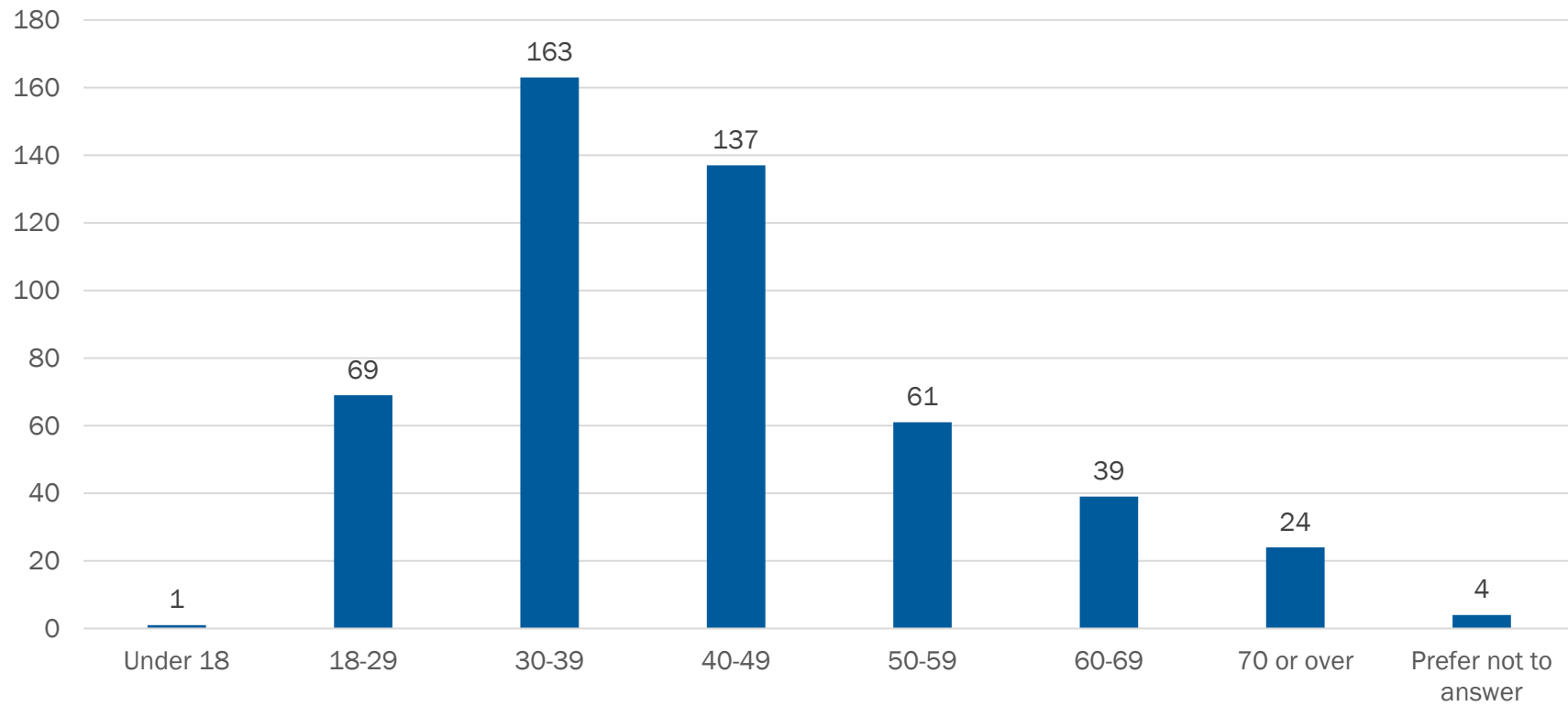
High-Level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Anchor Store	6	A large department store to drive local and regional visitation downtown. Ideas include Kohl's, Costco, Sam's Club, Menards, and JC Penny.
Connect to Nature / Riverfront Park	6	Downtown should enhance connections to nature, including wooded areas and the river.
Honor History	6	Downtown's history should be preserved and emphasized.
Fiscal Responsibility	5	Public investments should be strategically targeted to uphold high fiscal responsibility standards.
Co-op Grocery	4	Co-op grocery to potentially serve as a downtown anchor.

## Question 20: Please share any additional comments or questions about the Grand Rapids Downtown Plan.

High-Level Themes	No. of appearances	Description
Nurture New & Existing Business	26	Take actions to incentivize and aid a diverse mix of new business development downtown; including dining, recreation, and retail goods. Emphasize local ownership and employment.
Fiscal Responsibility	25	Public investments should be strategically targeted to uphold high fiscal responsibility standards.
Dissatisfaction with jail	19	Dissatisfaction with jail
Visual Character	10	Built environment should present a pleasant and unified aesthetic. Includes building facades, public realm, landscaping, and theming.
Small Town Feel		Emphasize a sense and feel of community and local ownership to appeal to locals and drive tourism.
Balanced Transportation System	8	Transportation system should accommodate needs of all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, ADA, transit, and vehicles. Includes connectivity and infrastructure maintenance.
Improve Traffic / Street Condition	8	Improve vehicle flow and efficiency throughout downtown.
Youth Activities	6	Downtown should provide a variety of safe all-age activities. Includes both children and teens.
Convert Central School to different use	4	Assess opportunities to better utilize Central School, including housing, commercial, and community uses.
Honor History	4	Downtown's history should be preserved and emphasized.

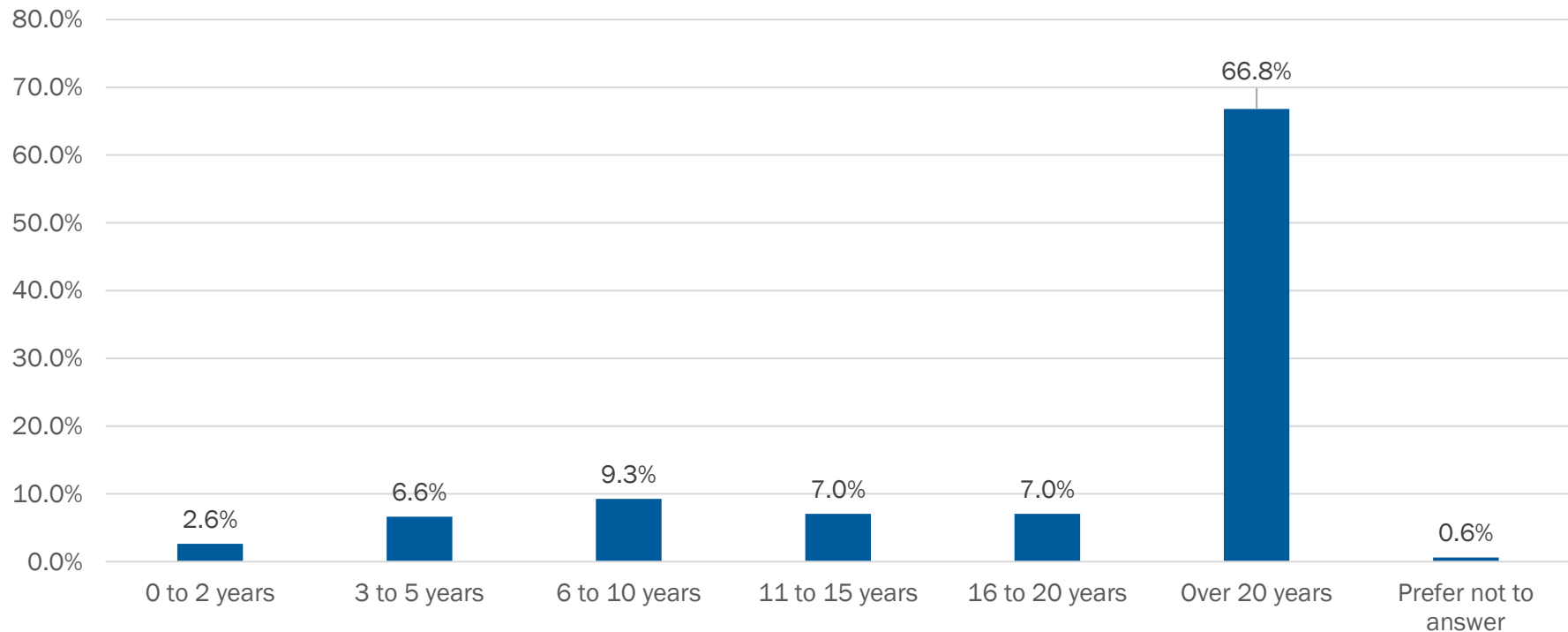
### Question 21: What is your age?

	Percentage	Number
Under 18	0.2%	1
18-29	13.8%	69
30-39	32.7%	163
40-49	27.5%	137
50-59	12.2%	61
60-69	7.8%	39
70 or over	4.8%	24
Prefer not to answer	0.8%	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>498</b>



## Question 22: How long have you been a Grand Rapids area resident or visitor to the Grand Rapids area?

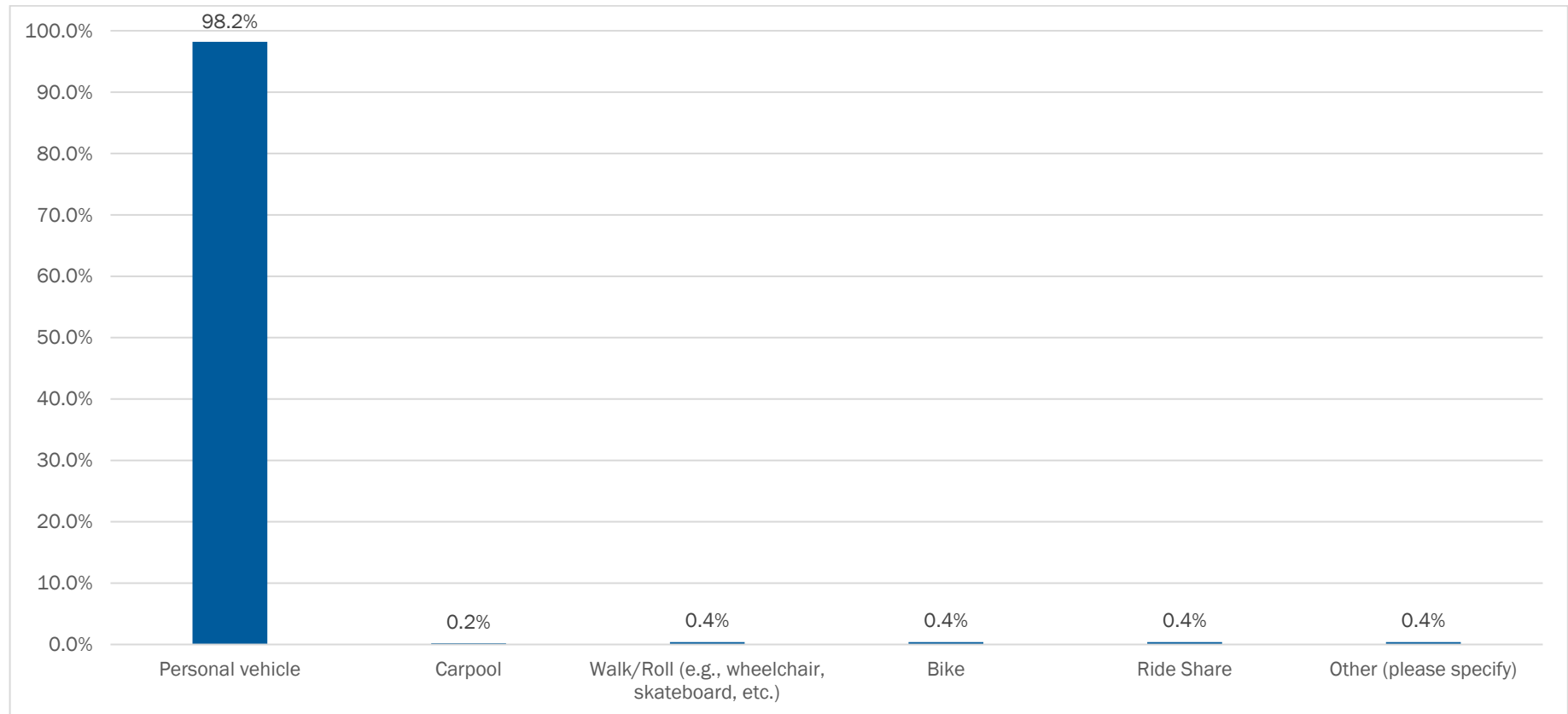
	Percentage	Number
0 to 2 years	2.6%	13
3 to 5 years	6.6%	33
6 to 10 years	9.3%	46
11 to 15 years	7.0%	35
16 to 20 years	7.0%	35
Over 20 years	66.8%	332
Prefer not to answer	0.6%	3
<b>Total Responses</b>		<b>497</b>





### Question 23: What is your primary mode of transportation?

	Percentage	Number
Personal vehicle	98.19%	489
Carpool	0.20%	1
Walk/Roll (e.g., wheelchair, skateboard, etc.)	0.40%	2
Bike	0.40%	2
Ride Share	0.40%	2
Other (please specify)	0.40%	2
<b>Total Responses</b>		<b>494</b>



# Appendix C2: Tall Timber Days Pop-Up Summary

## EVENT SUMMARY

The Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update team set up a station at Tall Timber Days on August 6, 2022, from 11am to 2pm. The intent of the event was to introduce people to the planning process and gather initial feedback. A total of 114 people were actively engaged through the three hour event, participating in activities or having conversations with project team members. A total of four activities were available for interested parties to participate in. The results are summarized below.

### ACTIVITY 1: In two or three words, describe what you enjoy about Downtown Grand Rapids:

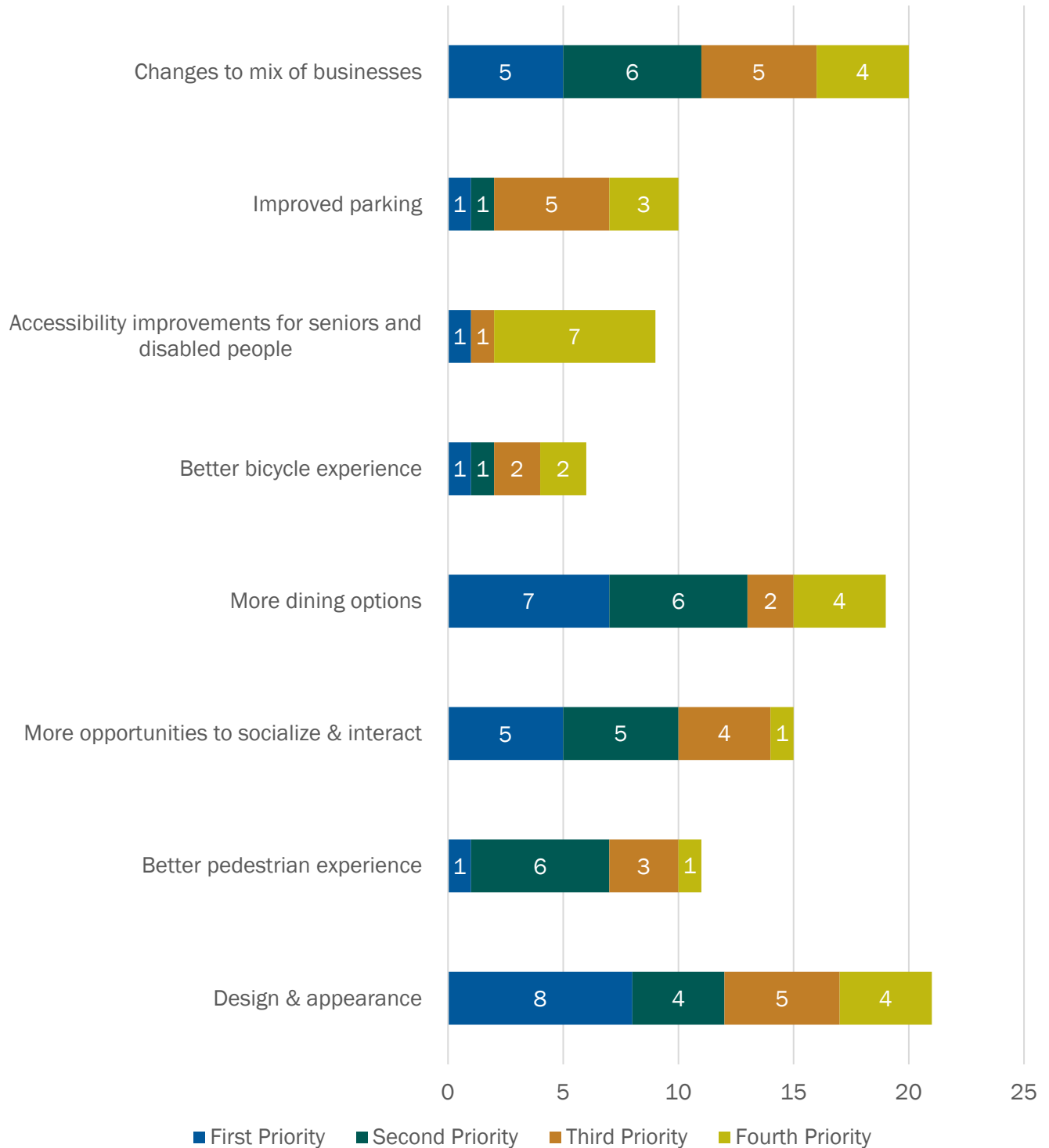
- Beauty of the central square/flowers
- It's accessible to neighboring communities
- Older blighted buildings have been torn down
- Central School is an asset
- Amount and diversity of shops downtown

### ACTIVITY 2: In two or three words, describe what you dislike about Downtown Grand Rapids:

- Need more stores and restaurants
- We need more shopping – too many dollars leave Grand Rapids
- Study area should extend west to the Mini mart
- Where's Kohls?
- Not enough middle-class shopping
- No basic grocery needs
- Noise ordinance for loud trucks and motorcycles enforced
- Need to enforce sound ordinances – particularly vehicles with illegal mufflers / j-braking / etc.
- The highways through downtown are a barrier for people walking and biking
- Need drugstore
- Need to reroute truck traffic (x2)
- Old Central School is functionally and economically obsolete – replace for higher tax base
  - Note \*\*there was a follow-up comment opposing the original comment
- Need more food options and restaurants
- Create tunnel under Hwy 2 underground through downtown?
- Need to enforce speed / sound ordinance
- Extend library hours beyond 9 – 5 and open up on Saturdays again (x2)
- Store front aesthetics / landscaping (x3)
- Truck bypass for Highway 2 and 169 – reroute out of downtown.

### ACTIVITY 3: What should be prioritized in Downtown Grand Rapids?

Participants were asked to identify their top issues or opportunities that should be prioritized through this planning process. They were given four dots, numbered 1 to 4, and were asked to identify their top priorities by placing a dot near each issue/opportunity.



	First Priority	Second Priority	Third Priority	Fourth Priority
Design & appearance	8	4	5	4
Better pedestrian experience	1	6	3	1
More opportunities to socialize & interact	5	5	4	1
More dining options	7	6	2	4
Better bicycle experience	1	1	2	2
Accessibility improvements for seniors and disabled people	1	0	1	7
Improved parking	1	1	5	3
Changes to mix of businesses	5	6	5	4
Other	0	0	0	0

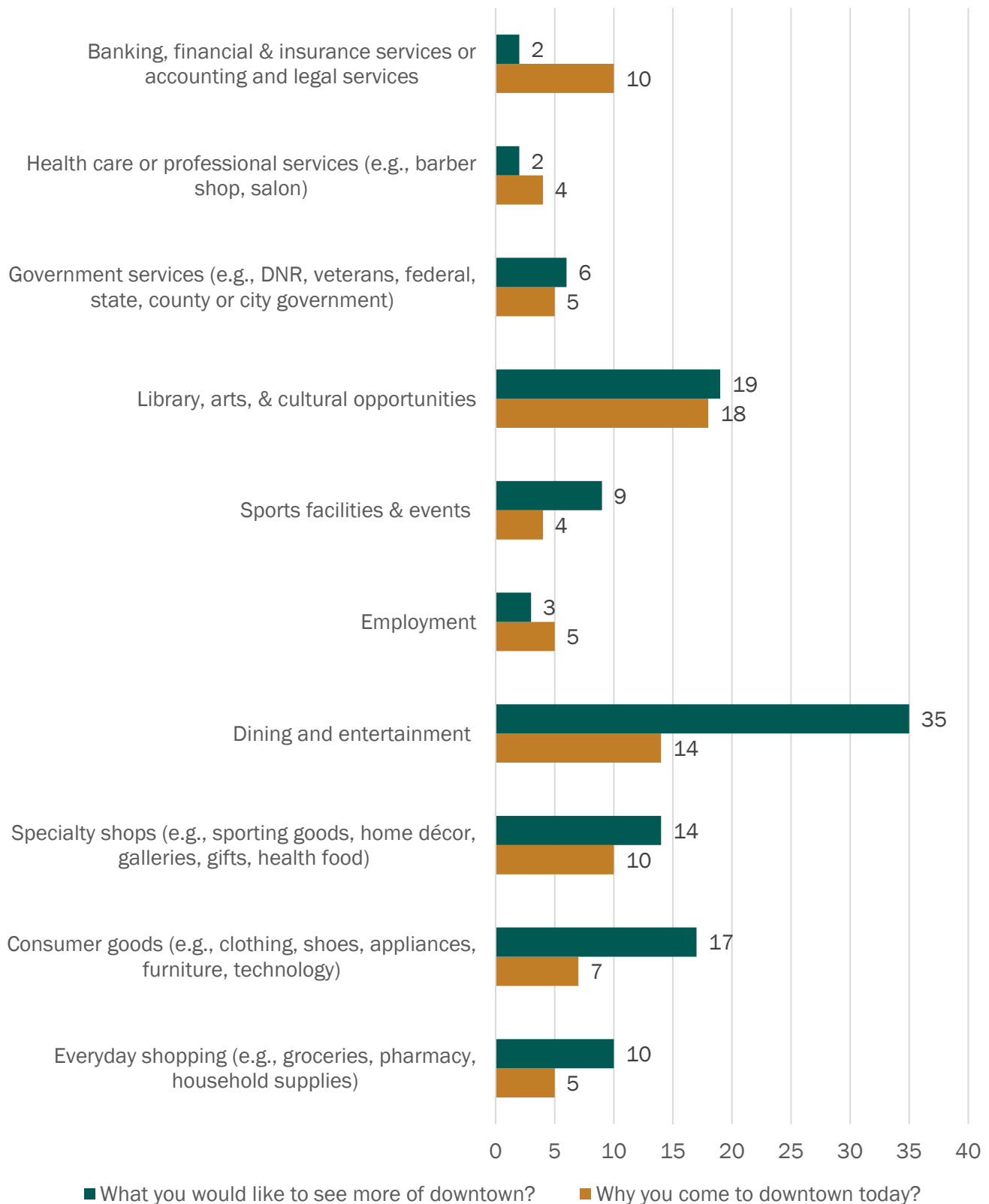
#### ACTIVITY 4: What brings you to Downtown and what do you want more of?

Participants were asked to identify what brings them Downtown and what do they want more of using the following instructions:

- Using five blue marbles, identify the top five reasons why you and your family come to Downtown Grand Rapids by placing a marble in the corresponding jars.
- Using five clear marbles, identify the top five things you would like to see more of in the Downtown Area by placing a marble in the corresponding jars.

	Why you come to downtown today?	What you would like to see more of downtown?
Everyday shopping (e.g., groceries, pharmacy, household supplies)	5	10
Consumer goods (e.g., clothing, shoes, appliances, furniture, technology)	7	17
Specialty shops (e.g., sporting goods, home décor, galleries, gifts, health food)	10	14
Dining and entertainment	14	35
Employment	5	3
Sports facilities & events	4	9
Library, arts, & cultural opportunities	18	19
Government services (e.g., DNR, veterans, federal, state, county or city government)	5	6
Health care or professional services (e.g., barber shop, salon)	4	2
Banking, financial & insurance services or accounting and legal services	10	2





## APPENDIX C3: RIVERFEST POP-UP SUMMARY

### EVENT SUMMARY

The Grand Rapids Downtown Plan Update team set up a station at Riverfest on September 10, 2022, from 12am to 5pm. The intent of the event was to introduce people to the planning process and gather initial feedback. Over 100 attendees were actively engaged through the event, participating in activities or having conversations with project team members. Project staff engaged with a variety of local and non-local attendees. A total of four activities were available for interested parties to participate in. The results are summarized below.

#### ACTIVITY 1: In two or three words, describe what you enjoy about Downtown Grand Rapids:

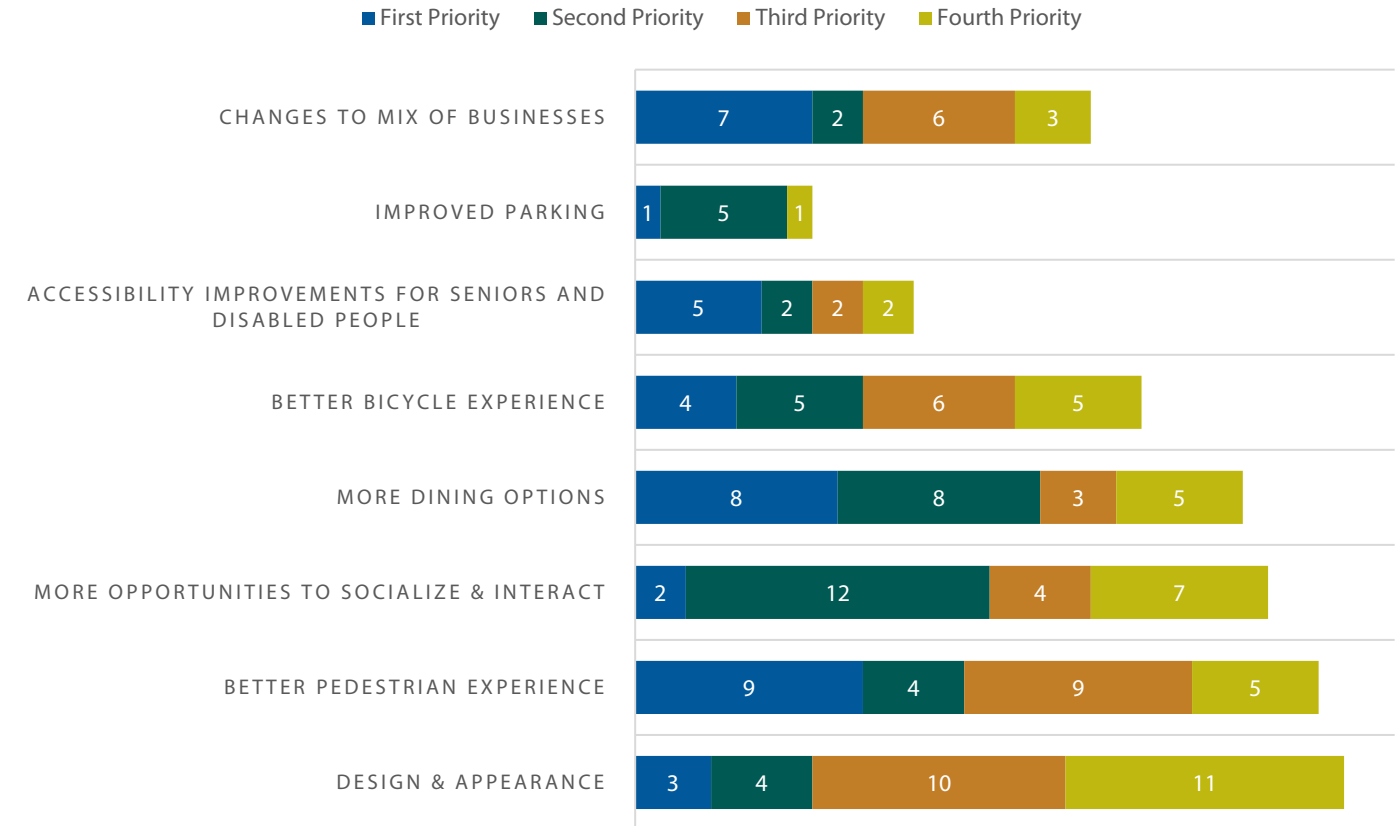
- Social experience / culture (3)
- Local shops / businesses (9)
- Library (4)
- Public Art / landscaping (2)
- Breweries (Rapids Brewing Co., Brewed Awakenings, Unwined) (6)
- Walkability
- Location (central, accessible)
- Green Space
- Pedestrian bridge
- Central school
- Riverfest
- Revitalization planning

#### ACTIVITY 2: In two or three words, describe what you dislike about Downtown Grand Rapids:

- Jail (5)
- Safe pedestrian crossings (3)
- More accessibility to the Mississippi (2)
- More bike paths
- Empty Blandin lots
- UPM stalled out area
- Need to connect downtown & Southtown (the hill) (2)
- More apartments
- Strip
- More greenspace
- Traffic – reroute 169 to bypass?
- Central School not used well
- Lack of camping

### ACTIVITY 3: What should be prioritized in Downtown Grand Rapids?

Participants were asked to identify their top issues or opportunities that should be prioritized through this planning process. They were given four dots, numbered 1 to 4, and were asked to identify their top priorities by placing a dot near each issue/opportunity.



	First Priority	Second Priority	Third Priority	Fourth Priority
Design & appearance	3	4	10	11
Better pedestrian experience	9	4	9	5
More opportunities to socialize & interact	2	12	4	7
More dining options	8	8	3	5
Better bicycle experience	4	5	6	5
Accessibility improvements for seniors and disabled people	5	2	2	2
Improved parking	1	5	0	1
Changes to mix of businesses	7	2	6	3
Other	3	0	1	1

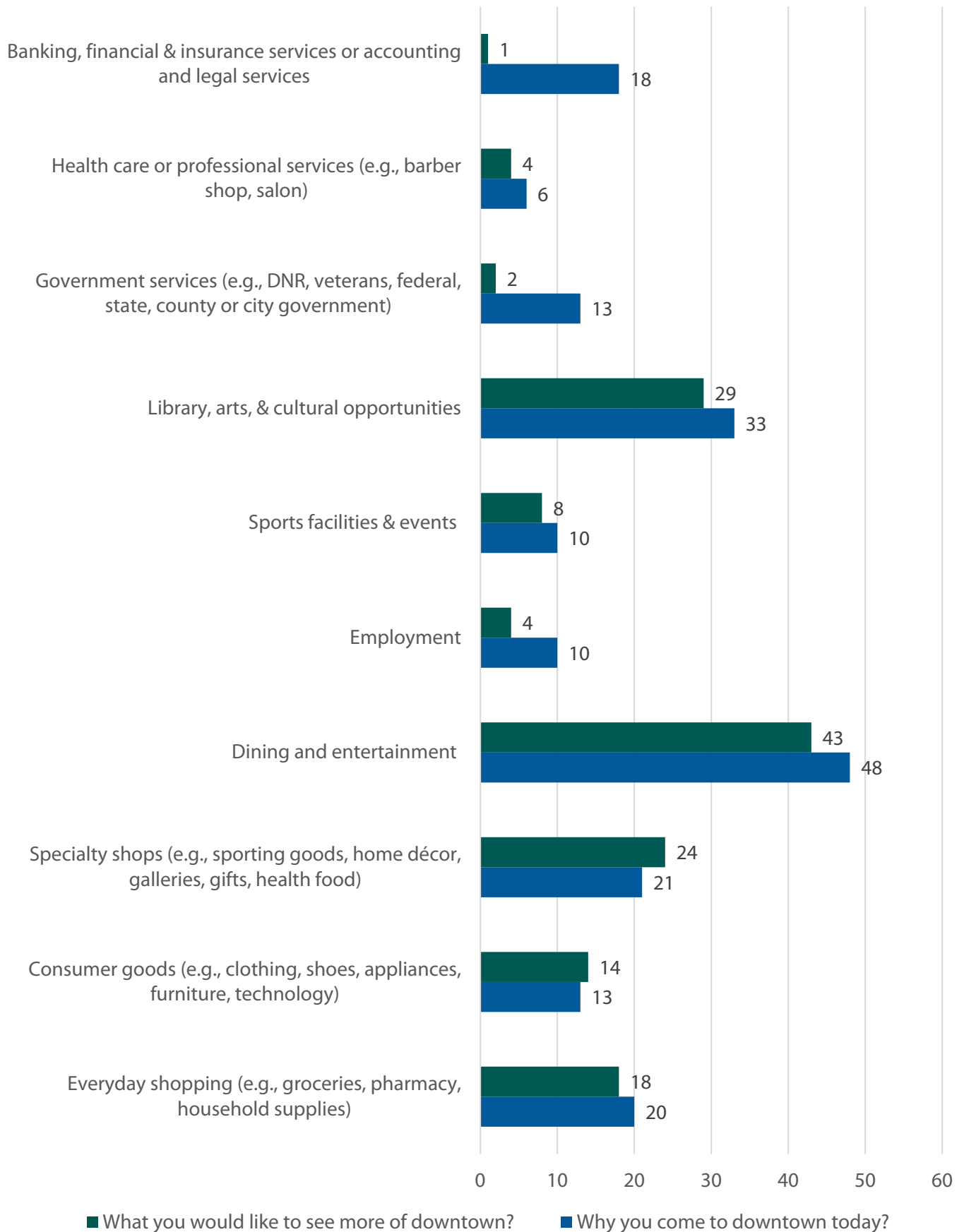
## ACTIVITY 4: What brings you to Downtown and what do you want more of?

Participants were asked to identify what brings them Downtown and what do they want more of using the following instructions:

- Using five blue marbles, identify the top five reasons why you and your family come to Downtown Grand Rapids by placing a marble in the corresponding jars.
- Using five clear marbles, identify the top five things you would like to see more of in the Downtown Area by placing a marble in the corresponding jars.

	Why you come to downtown today?	What you would like to see more of downtown?
Everyday shopping (e.g., groceries, pharmacy, household supplies)	20	18
Consumer goods (e.g., clothing, shoes, appliances, furniture, technology)	13	14
Specialty shops (e.g., sporting goods, home décor, galleries, gifts, health food)	21	24
Dining and entertainment	48	43
Employment	10	4
Sports facilities & events	10	8
Library, arts, & cultural opportunities	33	29
Government services (e.g., DNR, veterans, federal, state, county or city government)	13	2
Health care or professional services (e.g., barber shop, salon)	6	4
Banking, financial & insurance services or accounting and legal services	18	1





# Appendix C4: Stakeholder Design Event Summary

October 11, 2022

Bracketed descriptions for locational context added by SRF

## Transportation (traffic operations, need for enhanced multimodality, walkability)

- City parking ramp [north of study boundary on Third Avenue W]
- Recreational bike system
- Highway reroute [north at 3rd Ave, west at 5th St]
- Slow road (Main Street like) [169 through downtown]
- Re-route 169 to the south, WB at 2nd street around downtown, WB at 2nd St
- Ped Over / Under pass [RR just east of Blandin Paper Company]
- Connection [across 169 at base of bridge into downtown]
- Ped Rail solution [base of pedestrian bridge away from downtown]
- Parking (diagonal) [base of pedestrian bridge approach away from downtown]
- Under road bridge [169 bridge]
- Signal timing / Ped crossings [near 169 bridge]

## All-ages environment

- Aging / elders, mid age, young adult, child. Good place to work - good place to play

## Dining, art, music

- Coffee [southeast quadrant of US 2 at First Avenue E]
- Phase 1 - Food Trucks [southwest quadrant of Second St N at Pokegama Avenue]
- Music. Art. Food. [waterfront near Grand Rapids Area Library]
- Ice Cream, Beer, Development [Blandin-owned space at waterfront]

## Redevelopment / Repurposing

- Event center? Convention center? [northwest of study area]
- Central School
  - Farmers market? [Central School]
  - Repurpose [Central School area]
- Market? Rec? [First Avenue E between Third Street N and US 2]
- Repurpose [Depot]
- Empty. Repurpose. [northeast quadrant of Pokegama Avenue at Third Street N]
- Redevelopment [Fifth Avenue E between Third Street N and US 2]
- Condos? [Fifth Avenue E just north of Third Street N]
- Cohesive uses [adjacent to Pokegama between 2nd and 3rd]
- Woonerf [alley in southeastern quadrant of Pokegama and Third Street N]
- Caribou [east of study area]
- Limited investment opps. [adjacent to Blandin Paper Company]

- Hotel? Apts? Mixed use [EDA owned Blocks 20 & 21]
- Condo. River view. [EDA owned Block 5]
- Repurpose? [southeastern quadrant of Second Street N at Pokegama Ave]
- Future ideas! [Blandin-owned space at waterfront]
- move to Justice Center [waterfront east of 169 bridge into downtown]
- Connect [waterfront area to 169 SB at waterfront]
- Free Range co-op + Apts. [near River Grand Senior Living]
- Mixed use space for stakeholders (EDA owned blocks 20 & 21)

### **Placemaking, Visual Aesthetic, and Green Space**

- Yellow Brick Road [WB along 3rd St at 1st Ave E, SB at 3rd St N at 1st Ave W, EB at 1st Ave W at 2nd St N all the way to waterfront.]
- Gateway [Pokegama at Second Street N]
- Another park / walking space [waterfront east of pedestrian bridge]
- gathering place [waterfront west of pedestrian bridge]
- Billboard welcome to Downtown? Signage? [Third Street North at westbound approach to study area]
- Rose Garden [Blandin-owned space at waterfront]
- Placemaking. 3 gen. Rapids Experience. [waterfront near Grand Rapids Area Library]
- Welcome to downtown [on 169 bridge]
- Street Tree (you get the idea) [along SE First Street south of study area]
- View [northbound, approaching downtown from 169 bridge]

### **Economic / organizational collaboration, partnerships, and synergies**

- Districts [multiblock area around City Hall / Government Center]
- Event partnerships [west of study area]
- Yellow Brick Road [WB along 3rd St at 1st Ave E, SB at 3rd St N at 1st Ave W, EB at 1st Ave W at 2nd St N all the way to waterfront.]
- How do we build organizational capacity?
- Engage as stakeholder [Blandin Paper Company]
- Chamber / City position? [Blandin-owned space at waterfront]
- Community activation space, gathering, social programming [Blandin-owned space at waterfront]
- Policies that inhibit activation [waterfront west of study area]

### **Other (ad hoc information and input, specific use suggestions)**

- Green energy
- Dream plan. Send to DOT.
- Not downtown [north of Fifth Street]
- Ice \* Walgreens or CVS pharm @ DT
- Winter snow maintenance [Fifth Street N, west of study area]
- Close the disconnect -Activate the "blank" spaces
- How to change perception? Knowing, experiencing change
- B / UPM
- KAXE [Grand Rapids Area Library]

# Appendix C5: Community Design Event Summary

October 12, 2022

Bracketed descriptions for locational context added by SRF

## Transportation (traffic operations, need for enhanced multimodality, walkability)

- Trail. Increase bike connectivity
- Better circulation and wayfinding [near Third Street at Third Avenue E]
- Enhanced ped crossing here [by Benders]
- Bike Mad -Design changes - Make easier to read
- Unsafe for bikes [US 169 near Third Avenue E and Fourth Avenue E]
- Stop light [169 at Third Avenue E]
- Enhanced ped crossing here [169 at Third Avenue E]
- Slow down traffic - Boulevards / traffic slowing [169 at Second Avenue E]
- Bike path [Third Avenue E north of RR tracks]
- major vehicle route [US 2 western approach to the Hwy 169 southern approach]
- pedestrian crossing here [across Third Street N at Second Avenue E]
- Foot traffic [First Avenue W north of Second Street N]
- Foot traffic focused [First Avenue W between Second St N and Third Street N]
- one-way (2nd Street, traffic traveling EB)
- one-way [2nd Street, traffic traveling EB]
- River Walk connected under 169 to encourage walking
- Generally - plow for pedestrians -sidewalks - crosswalks clear [169 bridge across river]
- Make it walkable [intersection of US 169 and US 2]
- Walk under bridge [169 bridge]
- Pokegama Avenue at Second Street N – 3 comments
  - Traffic backup [Pokegama Avenue at Second Street N]
  - Speed control [Pokegama Avenue just south of Second Street N]
  - Parking [southeast quadrant of Second Street N and Pokegama Avenue]

## All-ages environment

- Playscape or other use for similar splashpad
- Kid Play. Kid food. [EDA owned blocks 20 & 21]
- Park? Playground like King Elementary? [southeastern quadrant of Second Street N and Pokegama Avenue?]

## Dining, art, music

- Art studios - have a feeder program for artists through the mall
- Food trucks? [southeast quadrant of Second Street N and Pokegama Avenue]



## **Redevelopment / Repurposing**

- Enhancement [southeast quadrant of Second Street N and Pokegama Avenue]
- Mall
  - Tear down, half of mall for co-op
  - Redevelop?
- Central School
  - United Way, Visit GR, IEDC Chamber in Central School
- Limited opportunity [block across US 2 from Central Sq. Mall]
- Reuse [Depot]
- Retail [block directly east of Blandin Paper Company]
- Reclaim from UPM [lot at corner of Second Street N and First Avenue W]
- Develop half for multi-purpose retail / studio space / apartments [EDA owned blocks 20 & 21]
- Could move? Disconnect [housing south of RR on Fifth Avenue E]
- Tiny houses? [EDA blocks 20 & 21]
- Tiny houses? [EDA block 5]
- Change in use [industrial area north of EDA-owned block 5]

## **Placemaking, Visual Aesthetic, and Green Space**

- Places to randomly meet
- Green Space [southeast quadrant of Second Street N and Pokegama Avenue]
- Blandin Green Space at waterfront– 4 comments
  - Gazebo
  - Green Space
  - Rose Garden
  - Eco-tourism. Walks. Overlooks the river.
- Gateway with amenities (somewhere to stop) + more restrooms [Highway 2 at Third Avenue W]
- Move the big chair.
- Photographers, wedding, high school photos [Blandin-owned block at waterfront west of 169 bridge]

## **Economic / organizational collaboration, partnerships, and synergies**

- Building owners would rather see buildings sit than sell, this is a problem
- Land swap [corner of Fourth Street N/US 2 and First Avenue W]
- Co-op
  - Co-op [Fourth Street North between First Avenue W and Third Avenue W]
  - Food Hall or co-op office [southeastern quadrant of US 2 and First Avenue E]
  - Co-op [Third Street North between First Avenue W and Third Avenue W]
  - Co-op parking [Third Street N between First Avenue W and Third Avenue W]
  - Co-op location w/ residential on top [EDA blocks 20 and 21]

## **Other (ad hoc information and input, specific use suggestions)**

- Influx of new remote workers
- Looks ST/SD
- Check out Sheridan, Wyoming downtown
- Adhere to design standards
- Building water issues [Fourth Street North between First Avenue W and Third Avenue W]

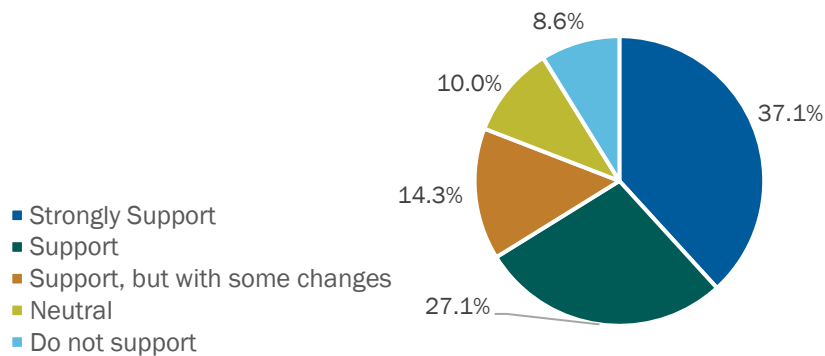
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- High crime [undeveloped area east of EDA blocks 20 and 21]
  - Hours [Grand Rapids Area Library]
  - Safe fishing space [ both sides of river east of 169 bridge]
  - Designated homeless area somewhere
  - Sound control on events

### **EDA Blocks 20, 21, & 5**

- Kid Play. Kid food. [EDA owned blocks 20 & 21]
- Develop half for multi-purpose retail / studio space / apartments [EDA owned blocks 20 & 21]
- Co-op location w/ residential on top [EDA blocks 20 and 21]
- Tiny houses? [EDA owned blocks 20 & 21]
- Tiny houses? [EDA owned block 5]

# Appendix C6: Vision and Implementation Survey Summary

Question 1: Downtown Grand Rapids has transportation options for everyone, and the transportation network is safe to navigate and use whether walking, biking, rolling, or driving.

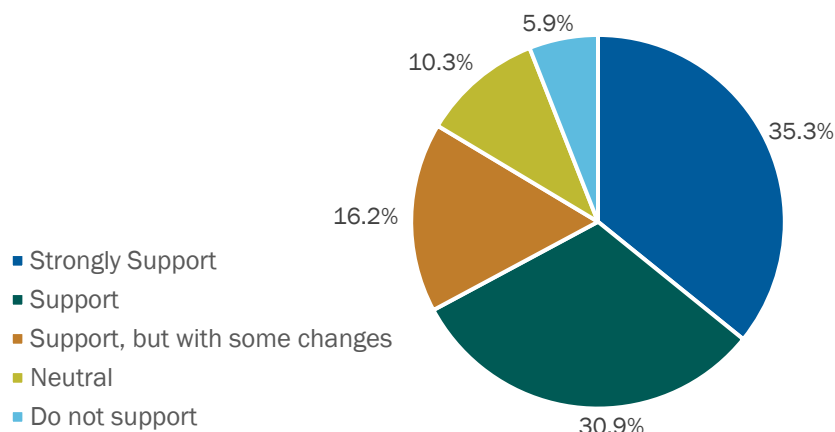


## How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- There are dangerous pedestrian crossings.
- Add Skating, skateboarding is a health activity and heavily done in the community. Barring it from downtown does not make sense.
- I don't understand what rolling is? Wheelchair? Is there a more clear way to say that- personal mobility device?
- Making bike lanes or more sidewalks.
- Need a defined walking/ biking path from the trail by the library across Highway 2.
- Non-driving transportation is tricky from near Taco Bell to RJEMS. It would be nice to have more safety added to that stretch of what is likely a direct way to school for teens over by the YMCA. The intersection of 5th Street(?) On the same path is also dangerous since the cross traffic doesn't stop and there can be blind spots.
- Crossing hwy 2 to the Kremers lot can be very dangerous
- A better organized way to bring in visitors from Duluth or Hibbing or even the cities for stays in GR. Currently it is just Jefferson lines and not many people know about it or how to use it.
- Crossing the highways on foot or by bike is not safe.
- Do we need more transportation options in Grand Rapids? I currently feel we have good access for everyone right now. Lets use funds elsewhere.
- Double turn lane on 38 and 2
- Weird way to word it, but biking is pretty much limited to sidewalks, which is not the best idea. Especially if you are coming in from the south. Ride in the street on Pokegama??? I don't think so. Hwy2??? No! Good bike paths on 5th street, but that not where businesses are.

- As a pedestrian I often encounter very long ways to cross 4th and 5th streets. I am often in need of going two or more blocks out of my way to cross. Drivers rarely yield to peds in a crosswalk.
- More crosswalk flashing signs, walking paths around main areas
- Cross walks at the busy lights in town could be repainted to be white strips indicating it is a crossing area at the light.
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

## Question 2: Downtown Grand Rapids is a place where all ages and groups can find a place to shop, dine, and gather.

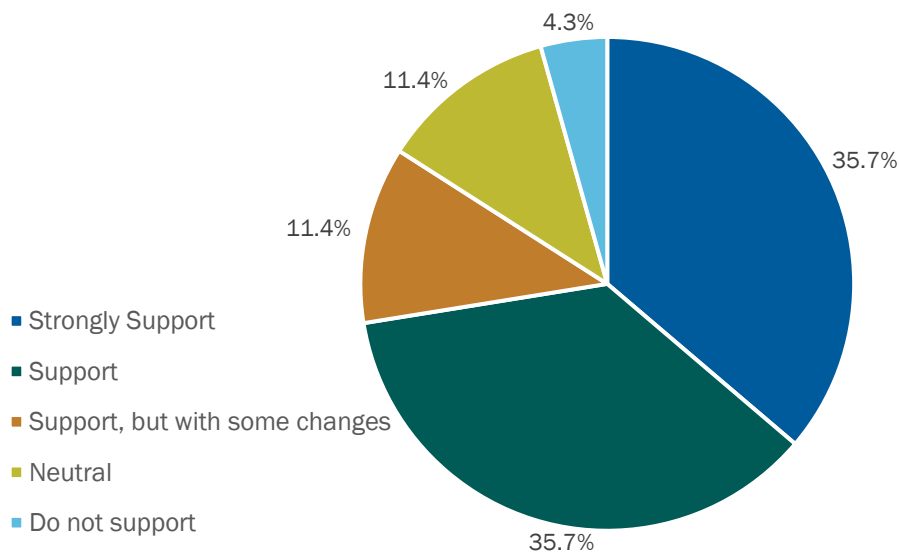


## How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Shopping is limited, dining is limited
- That it be true. It is perfect if you are not a minority.
- Dining?? A good restaurant, better then coffee, buffet or fast food would be nice.
- Maybe something like-“ feel welcomed to “instead of “find a place
- Public places like the library or court house are not open to work folks or children in schools. Extended hours would make this true.
- Little shops on the block across from the information center need better advertising/awareness. Marked walking path could help identify!
- More dining options would help
- While we do have many good places to eat, if you are Vegan or even Gluten Free there are not many great options currently.
- nothing for kids/families
- There aren't many options for our youth, the movie theater that's it. Maybe ask what type of things you'd like to see brought into Grand Rapids.
- Dining is somewhat limited if you don't drink alcohol. There are two Chinese places and one Japanese and one that's too healthy for me! Lots of places south of downtown.
- Very few dining options.
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.



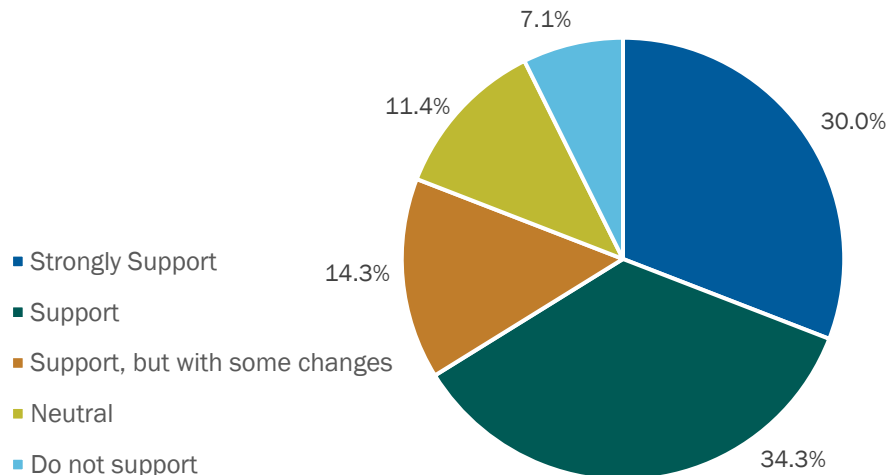
Question 3: Downtown Grand Rapids is a home to businesses that provide a diverse range of goods and services to the community.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Downtown Grand Rapids is a home to businesses that provide a wide variety of goods and services to the community.
- We have very little clothing and shoe boutiques. Our town is full of used antique shopping.
- I don't think the range of services needs to be diverse - just desired so that the businesses thrive
- Again, people don't seek out shops they aren't aware of
- "locally owned businesses" maybe; I don't want a wallmart in downtown...
- We can use more businesses
- Would like to see more Asian stores/restaurants
- More activities for kids, indoor playground for winter.
- Would like to see a bakery, and family friendly activities for weekend given library is closed.
- We need more businesses ..including you all..people have to shop out of town..
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

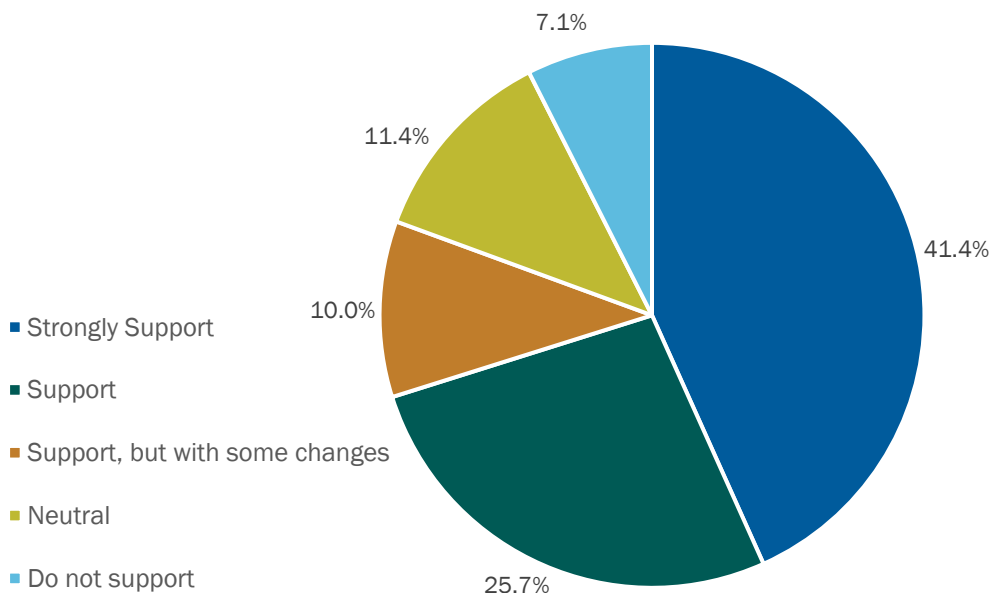
Question 4: Downtown Grand Rapids has the resources and services that residents and visitors want in downtown and are convenient and accessible for all.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Saying stores are accessible is wrong. Few even have door buttons. And we don't have moderately priced options for clothing downtown. Most local residents can't afford Bender's clothes or Brier's clothes. If we want to say this in 15 years, much work has to be done.
- Good statement as it includes visitors and accessibility
- Not accessible. Very few places are wheel chair accessible.
- Need a food service in or near central school.
- Clarify resources and services.
- consider moving the Farmer's Market to the old school square...similar to the Madison Wisconsin Farmer's Market.
- Our downtown is kinda spread out and piecemeal to be convenient. I don't think there's anything you can do about that. Kramers and the Itasca are gone, ancient history...
- The space is not walkable for tourists. We have very little compared to other tourist friendly destinations like park rapids, Walker, Hutchinson, new ulm
- Some parking and access could be confusing to visitors.
- There are no large outdoor public playgrounds like a lot of other towns have and it's basically an attraction for families
- Need More in Central School..lower rent maybe?
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

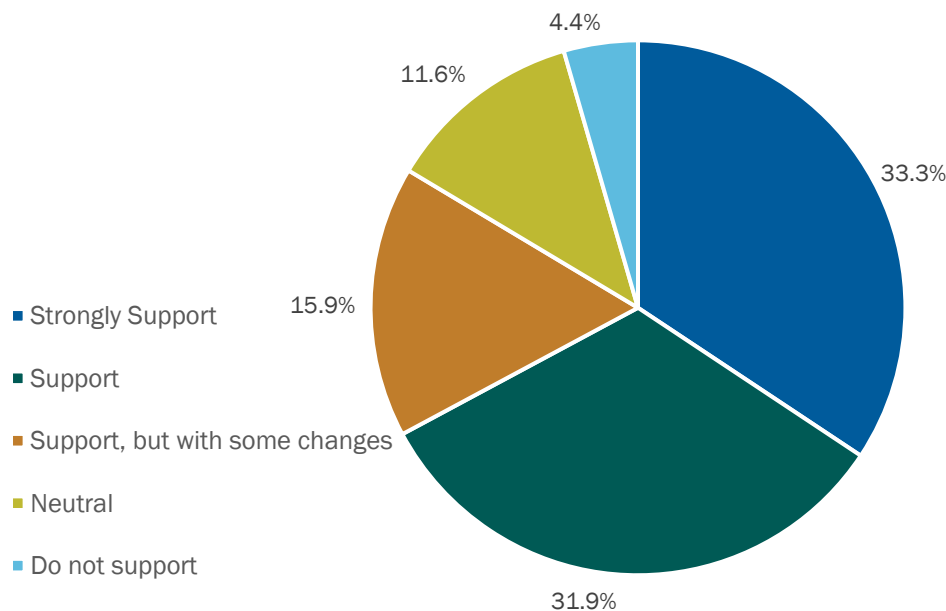
Question 5: Downtown Grand Rapids is a destination in northern Minnesota, identified by the thriving business environment and inviting atmosphere.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- The statement sounds good, but are the businesses really thriving?
- When I visit with tourist they ask "Where is the shopping?"
- Downtown Grand Rapids is not the destination. The lakes are. Downtown gets traffic as a destination from other activities. Maybe "Downtown Grand Rapids serves as a destination to visitors drawn to the area and supports their visit by offering a variety of shopping venues in an inviting atmosphere. "
- As a local resident, I go downtown only to shop a specific store.
- We need to encourage existing businesses to update and say viable
- We need to invest in Central School to balance out the looks of the new hail and the empty couple of blocks in the dead center of town.
- I guess there is a lot of variety and if you are in need of specific things, you may be able to find it downtown, but destination? That's stretching it a bit.
- Need more small shops to attract more tourists. Think like Walker, ely, etc.
- Too late now..with the courthouse/jail right there..
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

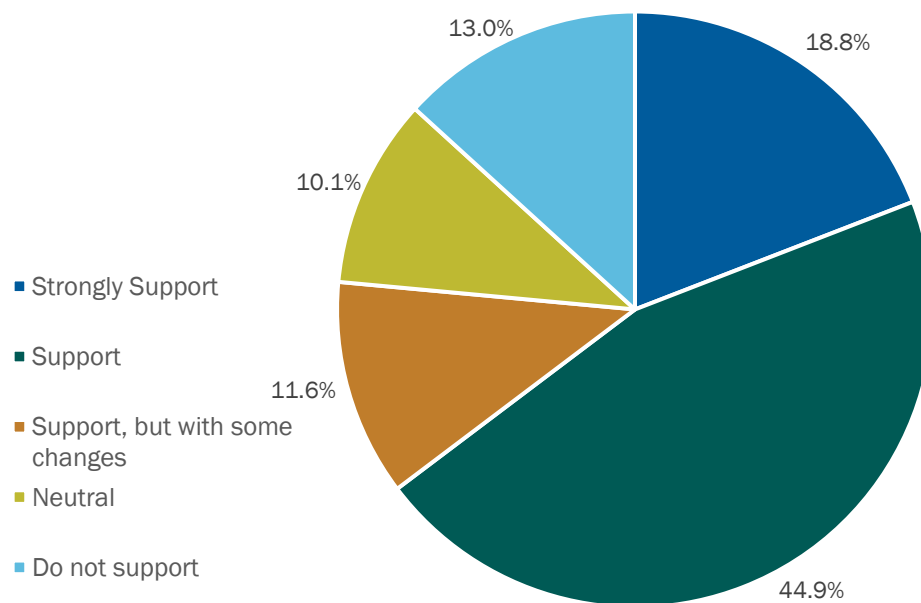
Question 6: Downtown Grand Rapids provides connections to the Mississippi River and other natural amenities, providing opportunities to interact and learn.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- With safe access along public sidewalks and bike paths to the river corridor.
- It would be nice for the "green space" around Blandin to be kept up better and for something to be done more aesthetically with the Kremer's parking lot (not a sitting area surrounded by decorated fence on hot pavement). Even if the lot was re-paved; something. It's an eye sore.
- Support but downtown is probably not the best location for this- some elements are nice
- More learning opportunities like art installations or expanding on the river walk/historic walk signs.
- The river divides the north and south areas of GR
- Clarify connections.
- You need to already know where to go for these connections. They are not necessarily obvious. Often things are put in, but not kept up. There used to be that area on the south side of the river with kind-of a semi circle of upright logs that ended up not kept up and deteriorated.
- It is nearly impossible to walk to the riverfront from downtown. It would require a driving trip. That's not connected in my opinion
- Why just the Mississippi? There is so much more nature.
- It's easy to access the shore but unless you know the area, canoeing and kayaking maybe difficult to figure out.
- A park with playground downtown would be amazing!!!!
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

## Question 7: Downtown Grand Rapids has adequate parking opportunities that are safe and convenient.

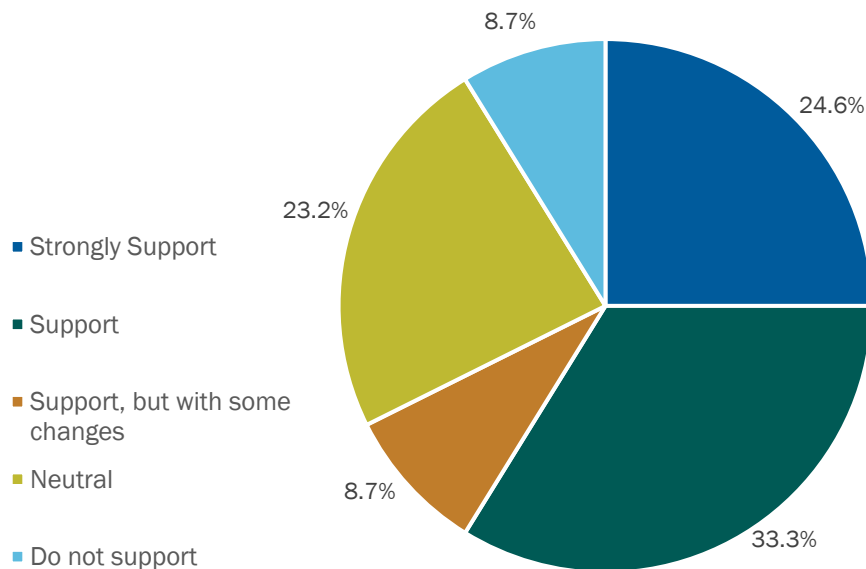


### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Downtown Grand Rapids has adequate parking opportunities that ARE safe and convenient.
- Depends on the event and where it is located. But, also, as stated above, parking lots are not pretty, yet needed.
- There's a typo
- That *\*are\** safe and convenient
- Let parking be secondary to the destinations themselves. While accessibility is important to many, for those of us who are able-- it's okay to make us walk! A little inconvenience and a little bit of a walk for some of us is worth the tradeoff for a more attractive downtown.
- Parking is horrible
- I'd eliminate this one as it seems an excuse to add another parking lot.
- Employees parking in customer areas is an issue
- I prefer the word "ample" v.s. adequate
- We have too many empty lots in the middle of downtown.
- Can be clustered during events
- We could use alternative parking options . There is so much traffic it is a danger .
- Feels like the phrase is missing a word after that there needs an are added
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.



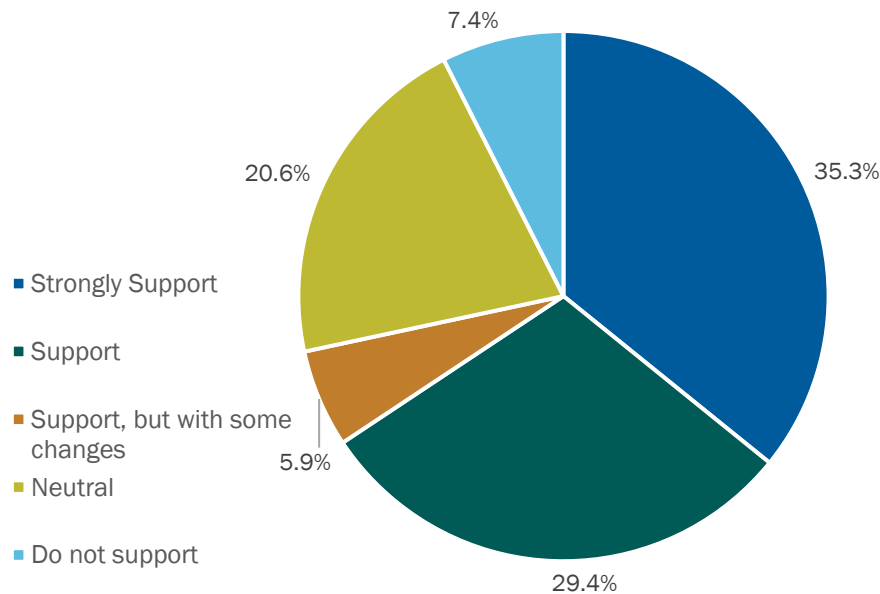
Question 8: Downtown Grand Rapids addresses the challenges of physical barriers and will use design solutions and active collaboration to create a cohesive environment.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Not truly sure if this is repeating accessibility or about design standards. Trying to jam too much into this statement makes it too vague.
- Sidewalk's appear to be in good shape and crosswalk signals are good.
- A lot of progress has been made. The RJEMS handicap zones need to be reconsidered as they are often blocked.
- seems like an empty statement full of buzz words
- We need to connect better north and south of hwy 2
- Do we need more collaboration in this area? I don't believe so.
- I'm not sure what you are trying to say. Maybe simpler language would help.
- Not sure what this statement means
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

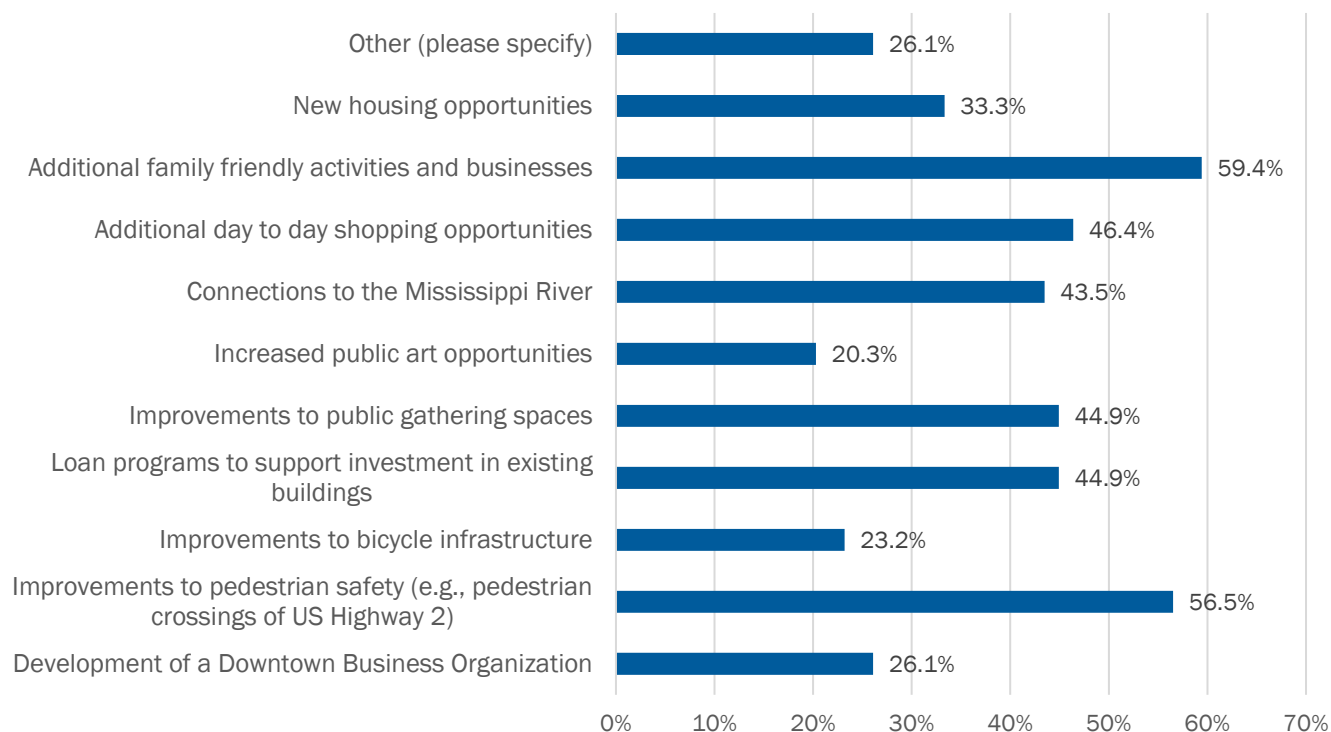
Question 9: Downtown Grand Rapids vitality is supported by the active engagement of stakeholders, including business and property owners, major employers, and the public, non-profit, and philanthropic sectors.



### How could this statement be modified to better reflect the desired future?

- Seems like special interests driving downtown
- We need to work better together to market the area
- I love seeing old buildings getting a face-lift but there are some that are still looking shabby.
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

## Question 10: Identify areas where you believe public and/or private investments should be made in Downtown Grand Rapids. (Select all that apply)



### Other (please specify)

- Public gathering places should be well-kept and clean but should not be extravagant. Take advantage of our access to nature. Less public dollars spent on nonsensical items, such as public art. Residents are taxed heavily enough already. Cut the spending and find ways to make less funding go further. The city has not been responsible or accountable for reckless spending.
- Better dining options.
- Promoting diversity in shopping and food options
- Is there any way to soften traffic noise? Diesel trucks and motorcycles make a horrendous roar that kills the vibe when sitting outside at Rapids Brewing Co.
- highway reroute
- New green energy infrastructure is a must-have investment
- There are not many places to stay for travelers looking for convenience. The closest place is Hotel Rapids and it is not a very big place.
- Incorporate the Chamber to focus on small businesses including downtown
- healthy dining options, healthy and fresh grocery options, less intrusion from city and county government imposing their will - such as the placement of the new jail...that has destroyed any sense of downtown for Grand Rapids.
- Pedestrian safety crossing 169.
- Additional restaurants and dining options that aren't fast food

- Family Restaurant downtown
- More business location and hotel opportunity. Such as Kramers parking lot hotel/parking ramp with business on ground level.
- Something needs to be done with the Kremers lot and the lot next to it. Get a great all around restaurant in there, or make it green space or something. Put the money into Central school, bring back thriving businesses in there.
- I think we have enough “art”.
- Please! Indoor activities for young children, indoor play ground in winter.
- downtown better dining/restaurants
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.

## Question 11: Provide any additional thoughts or comments to inform the vision or future actions for Downtown Grand Rapids.

### Responses

- Cut the spending drastically and find better ways to make our tax dollars go further.
- Please do not drive all the activity toward the library. Having a somewhat serene Mississippi access down there is a benefit. Adding more junk down there will ruin the access people without boats have to quiet fishing and nature. Put time and energy into the lots up by Central School.
- Two huge opportunities exist to make GR a more inviting place. First is to stop downtown from being cut into pieces by Hwys 169 and 2. Tunnel, overpasses, something to make the downtown a whole. Second huge opportunity is to incorporate the river into downtown. Today the river is largely hidden from visitors. GR could become a river town with walking paths, greenways, shops and restaurants facing the river, etc. I realize the Blandin plant isn't moving any time soon. But east of 169 could be completely redeveloped. The Blandin Foundation doesn't need to occupy riverfront property. Start at the Pokegama Ave bridge and completely redo at least the north side of the river heading east to make it a destination for residents and visitors.
- Diversity in options downtown is important. We have enough fast food and homestyle basic foods choices. We also have enough general spendy gift/trinket shops. We need clothing, shoe, and culturally different shopping options.
- I am happy to see this survey. I am a new resident and I'm excited to see where our city goes.
- Supporting the community, gathering spaces and nature will bring more to the Grand Rapids area in terms of the long term future. Yes, business will always be here, but without places to gather and without the nature being respected and appreciated, things will be difficult moving forward. People come to the area for the water and trees. The beer etc is secondary.
- I would love to see encouragement of nostalgic design in architecture. A perfect example of 'do' and 'don't' is the beautiful, historic Old Central School next to the new jail (I'm reticent to the adjectives that come to mind on that building). Utilize local stone, log, timber, other resources. Let the design evoke thoughts of 'Minnesota's Nature.' Consider more evergreens to restore our lost pines and keep color interest year-round. Also keep light pollution considerations in mind for all lighting design-- let us keep our night sky dark and star-friendly! Is there a way to make the Pokegama Ave bridge more walker-friendly? What can we do to encourage more business downtown instead seeing the continual outward sprawl? (a la the Strong Towns movement)
- The blocks from Brewed Awakening down to the mall / 10 lakes store then back towards the river and the "old mill" section need to be connected
- "Understanding it is not currently downtown, it would be fun to get the roller rink back up and running and maybe even with law enforcement presence for a safe place for our youth to gather with friends.
- A splash pad would also be a fantastic addition. Jamestown N.D. has a pretty nice one to look into for ideas. "
- It is challenging to retrofit existing buildings as needs change and encourage reinvestment
- Locally or regionally-owned businesses/organizations are critical to a thriving rural economy yet absent from these statements.
- Work to make downtown more cohesive. Maybe consistent decorative lighting or some fun artwork throughout... forestry, wizard of oz, something to tie the separate areas together.



- I love our community and look forward to seeing these wonderful things take place, what a great vision!
- Maybe tar the m and h lot and sign it in an attractive way to welcome visitors to park. There needs to be public rest rooms available for visitors. Shop owners are lending their restrooms out and the burden is unfairly being placed on these store owners.
- Need a "department" store in the mall and upgraded specialty stores and a Reed Drug5/variety store. Kremers is still missed and that lot is an eyesore.
- We have plenty of housing. Cheap housing brings in welfare people from out of the area.
- Art is fantastic but will not be the sole support of the downtown. Creating a place where tourists can stay and walk around to different areas of the downtown without walking through snow or rain and risk crossing 169 or hwy 2 would be ideal. Putting money into the Mall, potentially making a 2nd story to part of it with a restaurant along with crosswalk over hwy 2 to a hotel would be great! A significant financial investment is what downtown needs.
- I am happy that Grand Rapids is an accessible for everyone town, but it's time to focus on getting a family type restaurant downtown. Time to come up with something for our youth to do. Breweries and Wine spots are nice, but our kids are hanging out at Target, bowling alley and the movie theater. Can't we attract something for them? We need to keep Central school as the focal point, and do something with those two eye sore lots in the middle of town. Develop them or turn them into green space.
- The old Kremer lot is a disgrace. It's too bad former city council refused to all Hardee's to redevelop it back in the 90s. The popup park that shows up periodically is a pitiful attempt to make the space look useful. Parking is not the best choice here either as ped access to the North is to dangerous.
- Please focus on pedestrian and bike safety! It currently isn't always safe to walk.
- The main drag goes right through our downtown and that in itself is frustrating to drivers and dangerous for pedestrians.
- I like where downtown is going but as a parent with a young child it's hard to find things to do. There are some things through ECFE but the classes or events fill up fast. Would be willing to pay membership for an indoor playground for my child to play at in the winter months. We do have a membership to the children's museum but that is on the south end of town and we live on the north, downtown end of grand rapids. In the summer the parks are amazing. Some could use some upkeep maintenance but otherwise they are great. I've actually met parents visiting from all over the USA at our city parks. It's so amazing to see that our city is a destination stop.
- This is a joke. It's like saying should we support kids and good health? duh... just do the right thing. Less selfishness more for everyone. Even those that do not live in Grand Rapids.
- We could really benefit from a large indoor playground , there are such limited options for families around here .
- Young families are moving to town and business are attracting worker to move to the area. We need places like: <https://minisotaplaycafe.com/cafe/> or <https://www.snapology.com/location/minneapolis> or please please please open library on the weekend or even one weekend a month....winter weekends are so long
- Central School needs to be addressed. It needs to be a hub and better utilized or torn down. Having the building there to look at without bringing value to the community is a waste of space.

- All of the above questions are written so there is nothing to disagree with, provide no option for input or sharing of ideas. Of course they are important. Very poorly written so as to achieve a desired end result
- More businesses..like Penney's/Kohl's/Costco/Menards/Hom/come on people Many of you shop Out of town at these stores...Like my boss use to say all the time..it does No Good To Go To The Meetings because It's Cut & Dried Before You Get There..No Truer Words Were Spoken.
- The prison has destroyed the ambiance of grand Rapids.
- PLEASE consider more things for children to do in our community. A large park like most other communities have would be a great asset. Check out Jordan MN Grossman Park or Lagoon Park. These are two great examples. A splash pad or pool would be wonderful! Please consider

# Appendix C7: Plan Recommendations

## Event Summary

The City hosted opportunities for the public to provide input and ask questions about the project's draft Implementation Plan elements. Events were held at the City Council Chambers on January 25 and January 26, 2023.

### Land Use and Development

- This isn't downtown but the roundabouts clump the bike riders and walkers into the street.
- Is there a walking tour that could be developed for Central School?
- Building code challenges – how do we help investment guidance?
- How do we activate downtown in winter months?
- Winter. Don't forget it in planning.
- First impressions matter. Building materials. Lawn maintenance.
- To feed downtown from south GR, establish a bike route on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SE. To include realignment and paving past Casper Construction.
- Need to improve streetscape/identity e.g., Christmas lights through downtown.
- Art spaces like behind library with a malt shoppe as in Duluth by Fitgers.
- Activation of Blandin open space.
- Need a visitors center.
- Where can RVs park?
- We need retail!
- Food and social activities draw people in.
- Downtown luxury (larger 1500-2000 square feet) senior apartments. Many seniors move from larger homes to apartments but do not want to downsize to 800 square feet.
- Need good dining opportunities.
- Utilize Central School. Retailers do not stay there because of lack of traffic.
- Bread shop like Panera / Breadsmith.
- Reactivate Central School.
- Consider healing garden for new open space west of Justice Center. Seems like an appropriate space.
- Enhance the experiences.
- Tax structure changes to support growth.
- Sell Central School and let a non-government entity run this (national historic) government does not do business well.
- Broadly ID "Downtown" space on signage on entry to town. Let passerby, visitors, etc. know what it is.

### Transportation

- US 2 / US 169 intersection needs improvement.
- Recommend against 2/169 intersection changes proposed. This intersection must prioritize vehicle efficiency. Need to direct bike/pedestrians to cross at a different location.

- Allow “straight way” through from 169 to North Pokegama Avenue. Dangerous and backs up traffic to be in double left turn lane.
- Don’t believe we need streetscape or Highway 2 median or “calming.” This is a major transportation route and must be efficient for vehicles.
- Strongly encourage 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- On either Hamline or Snelling Avenue in Roseville/St. Paul, they introduced mosaic concrete planters to unify space. I thought it worked well.
- The jail already raised tax load. Leave Highway 2 alone. Don’t need “calming.”
- I would like to see better access to business and service. About four years ago, I saw two bikes in town on the bike path. So much parking has been removed from city streets that I (we) don’t try even any more. I would like to see more interest in safety all over city streets and highways.