



nd Free Range Food Co-op Occupancy in Old Central 09

Submitted to the Grand Rapids Economic Development
Authority, July 2025

Background

Free Range Food Co-op (FRFC) is in the final stages of schematic design, heading towards detailed design for a cooperatively owned grocery store to be built in downtown Grand Rapids. As we work to bring this vital community-owned business to life, we have greatly appreciated the opportunity to utilize Room 209 at Old Central School as our campaign headquarters over the past three months. This space has allowed us to coordinate the Community Investment Campaign, host meetings, engage with member-owners and interact with the general public.

Request

We respectfully propose extending our occupancy of Room 209 at Old Central School under a formal lease agreement at a reduced monthly rate of **\$300**, recognizing the City of Grand Rapids' past practice of offering reduced rent to start-up or mission-aligned organizations during their formative phases. We see this as a meaningful in-kind contribution and non-monetary show of support from the City of Grand Rapids for a project that will bring long-term economic and community benefits.

Purpose and Use of the Space

FRFC is transitioning Room 209 from a campaign headquarters to a long-term administrative office until the store opens. The space will serve as:

- A central, accessible location for board and team meetings
- A workspace for staff, including the General Manager, to be hired 6–9 months prior to the store opening
- A welcoming point of contact for our member-owners and the public
- A hub for community engagement during events like First Friday.

Terms

We propose a lease agreement with the following conditions:

- Monthly rent: \$300
- FRFC will maintain and make active use of the space until the store opens
- **If another business or organization expresses interest in leasing Room 209 at the full listed rate (\$851.40/month), FRFC agrees to vacate the space with a two weeks' notice.**

Rationale

Room 209 in Old Central School has remained vacant for five years. FRFC's active presence not only brings energy and visibility to the Old Central School building it aligns with the City's goals of promoting downtown vibrancy, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening the Grand Rapids economy.

We appreciate GREDA's consideration of this request and welcome the opportunity to continue working in partnership to bring the Free Range Food Co-op to life.

Submitted by:

Free Range Food Co-op Board of Directors

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