



REQUEST FOR GRAND RAPIDS EDA ACTION

AGENDA DATE: June 26, 2025

STATEMENT OF ISSUE: Consider accepting proposals from Pierson Henry and JKing Consulting for professional services associated with implementation of the Downtown Alliance establishment.

PREPARED BY: Rob Mattei, Executive Director

BACKGROUND:

The economic development strategies within the Downtown Plan emphasize that “to maintain a vibrant, well-activated downtown our 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.”

In 2024, an advisory committee of downtown stakeholders visited similar communities with successful downtown organizations. Through their work, with the help of Janna King, Economic Development Services, a preliminary 3-year work plan for what will be called the Downtown Alliance, was developed along with a budget, a job description for a full-time executive director and agreements with the GRACF to serve as a fiscal agent and GRACC to provide temporary office space for the executive director.

The work approach for the final implementation phase of this project will continue to utilize the services of Janna King but will also utilize Katrina Pierson and her firm Pierson Henry to develop brand identity and guidelines, develop a key messaging platform, a case statement that outlines need impact and benefits of the Downtown Alliance, design of a comprehensive communications plan, development of a plan for launching a membership program and volunteer toolkit with talking points, recruitment and coaching of volunteers for donor engagement and solicitation. Janna King’s firm JKing Consultants will assist in the implementation by drafting bylaws and articles of incorporation as a 501c3, supporting recruitment of board members, coordinate initial board meetings, finalize arrangements with the GRACF and GRACC, posting

executive director position and coordinating interviews and selection, help to establish committee chairs and orient the newly formed board to the work plan.

The Peirson Henry proposal consists of flat fees totaling \$41,500 for the first phase which involves deliverables for strategic communications and fundraising. The second phase is a monthly fee of \$4,200 for deliverables/assistance in supporting implementation of the communications plan, providing benchmarks, tools, support and coaching to the new Executive Director to carry out all aspects of the communications and outreach work.

The proposal from JKing Consulting includes an estimate of 236 hours of professional services and three trips to Grand Rapids for face-to-face work at a cost of \$41,018.

The entirety of this expense will be funded by a \$270,000 portion of the \$1.8M grant recently provided by the Blandin Foundation to GREDA

RECOMMENDATION:

REQUIRED ACTION: Pass a motion accepting proposals from Pierson Henry and JKing Consulting for professional services associated with implementation of the Downtown Alliance establishment.