



Appendix 2– Survey and Focus Group Results

Community Survey

As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, the City of Grand Rapids completed a community survey to assess the priorities and opinions on a number of issues being addressed in the Plan update. A similar survey was completed for the 2003 Plan.

The 2010 survey was conducted in late Summer/early Fall of 2010, after the initial public meeting, several news stories, and completion of the Steering Committee’s updates to the Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles.

The survey asked questions concerning the draft Vision, Values and Principles, and also laid some groundwork for creating the Future Land Use Map and the Plan’s new goals and objectives. The Community Survey was developed with direct oversight by the Steering Committee.

The survey was sent to each property address in the City of Grand Rapids. In addition the survey was distributed in several rental buildings and a notice was placed on the City website. Approximately 3,700 surveys were distributed, and approximately 1,100 were returned, for a return rate of almost 30 percent.

Each question that solicited a quantitative response is reported below. Question 4 was a qualitative (open ended) question and is briefly summarized.

Section 1: Information on survey respondents

Which best describes your residency:

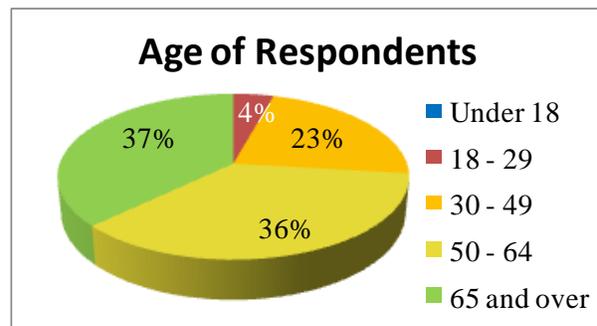
- 1. Year-round resident 94%
- 2. Seasonal resident 2%
- 3. Nearby non-resident (live outside City) 3%
- 4. Distant non-resident (live outside region) 2%
- 5. Visitor 2%

Do you own property or a business in Grand Rapids?

- 1. Business owner 4%
- 2. Property owner 85%
- 3. Neither 12%

Which best describes your household:

- 1. Home-owner 92%
- 2. Renter 6%
- 3. Student 0%
- 4. Other 2%



Which describes your age:

- 1. Under 18 0%
- 2. 18 – 29 4%
- 3. 30 - 49 23%
- 4. 50-64 36%
- 5. 65 and Over 37%



Summary: A large majority of respondents (94%) are year-round residents; 92% are homeowners, and a large majority (85%) are property owners. Business owners make up only 4% of respondents, and renters only 6%. Another striking feature is the predominance of respondents over 50 years of age, and the very small percentage (4%) of young adult respondents. As the surveys were mailed to each property address, rather than each person, the predominance of older adults in the survey results is not surprising. Young people and young adults tend not to be property owners. As a consequence, however, these results should be viewed primarily as a survey of households and property owners rather than a survey of residents or the entire population.

Section 2: Vision/Values/Principles

Question 1 - *The Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan will guide City decisions to achieve multiple goals, including economic development, community enhancement, sustaining natural resources, and protecting neighborhoods. These goals are expressed in the City’s Vision Statement, Community Values, and Guiding Principles.*

How would you prioritize among the general goals in the Vision/Values/Principles? Please review the following statements and identify how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly Agree - 5 Strongly Disagree -1

1. The City should make investments to compete for new industries to locate in Grand Rapids.	Avg – 4.00	SD – 1.14
2. The City’s economic development investments should prioritize business retention and assisting entrepreneurs	Avg – 3.99	SD – 1.00
3. The City should keep taxes down first, even if public services might be cut	Avg – 3.35	SD – 1.31
4. The City should protect natural resources and restore water quality, natural spaces, and habitat	Avg – 4.03	SD – 1.10
5. The City should work to improve housing options and neighborhood stability	Avg – 3.75	SD – 1.10
6. The City should improve opportunities for recreational activities and healthy living choices	Avg – 3.58	SD – 1.13
7. The City should invest in long-term maintenance of existing public infrastructure	Avg – 4.07	SD – 0.89
8. No changes are necessary - Grand Rapids is a fine community just the way it is	Avg – 3.60	SD – 1.30
9. Grand Rapids needs to grow in order to stay relevant	Avg – 2.51	SD – 1.23

*Avg – Average level of agreement Highest - **█** Lowest - **█***

SD – Standard Deviation (how much disagreement there was, higher means more disagreement among respondents)

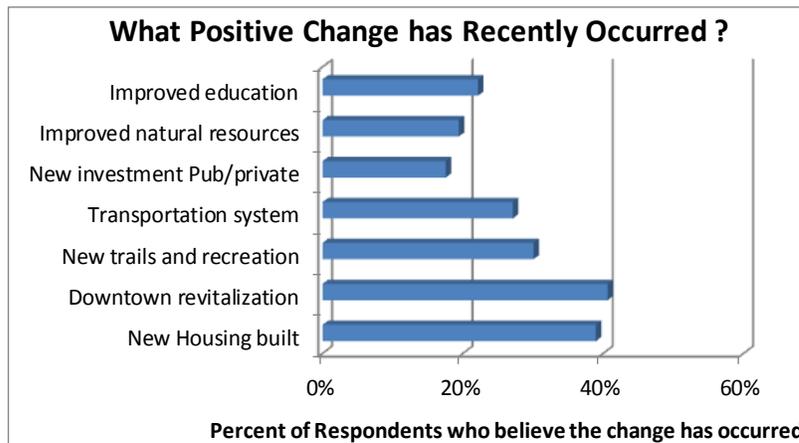
Summary: Respondents showed a high level of agreement with most the statements with the exception of statement 9 (Grand Rapids needs to grow in order to stay relevant). Statement 9 had by far the lowest average score. This statement and statement 8. (No changes are necessary) are largely opposing concepts, and both had a high level of disagreement among responses (standard deviation greater than



1.2) The second lowest average was Statement 3 (keep taxes down even if public services must be cut), which also was the most controversial (essentially tied with Statement 8).

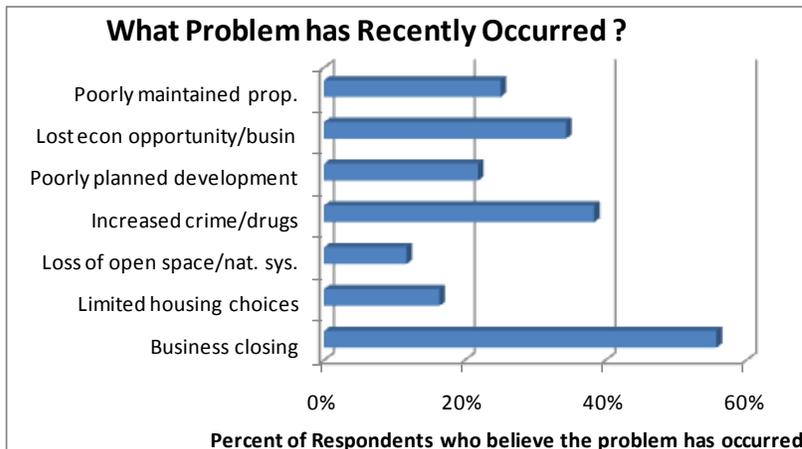
Several statements ranked at the top level of support: 1. Make investments to compete for new industries, 2. Business retention; 4. Natural resources protection; and, 7. Long-term maintenance of existing public infrastructure.

Question 2 - Over the past five years, what has happened in Grand Rapids that you liked or found to be a positive step forward for the community? Circle no more than three, add items if you believe something is missing.



Comment: The two highest-scoring choices were (1) new housing and (2) downtown revitalization, both with about 40%. This indicates that the City’s efforts in these areas (both important elements of the 2003 Plan) are viewed as successful. Also notable is that trails and recreation and transportation system improvements were selected by about 30% of respondents as positive changes.

Question 3 - What has happened in the last five years that you would characterize as a problem, or something to be changed? Circle no more than three, add items if you believe something is missing





Summary: By far the most common response (55.8%) was (1) Businesses closing. Issue 3 (lost economic opportunities) also drew significant attention (34% of respondents) The concern with economic stability is reflected in focus group and public comment results. Increased crime or drug use was also cited by a high percentage of respondents, consistent with other survey questions.

Question 4 - What one thing do you think should be done in the next five years to make Grand Rapids a better place?

Summary: This open-ended question had a response rate of 74%, generating almost 800 responses that covered a wide variety of topics. The responses varied from general statements about issues to comments about specific locations, businesses, or regulations. The Steering Committee took on the initial analysis of these responses, so as to be able to see the actual content rather than a summary of the responses. The responses were presented separate from the other questions, and each Committee member reviewed approximately 60 responses. The responses were grouped into categories, and then each Committee member discussed the category of responses that they had reviewed. The categories were then compiled and condensed into a manageable number of groups. The major themes are discussed below.

Economic opportunity. The single largest category of responses were simple two to five word statements that said “Create more jobs.” The focus on job creation and developing more economic opportunity for residents is consistent with other survey and focus group results. Several variations on this theme included recommendations to promote or attract industry, assist small businesses, expand elements of Grand Rapids’ tourism industry, and improve the viability of downtown businesses.

Economic choice. Another broad set of response categories related to economic quality of life – the kinds of goods and services that respondents thought would make the City a better place to live. Respondents made a number of suggestions for certain categories of retail stores that they believed the City was lacking. The suggestions varied from specific stores, to restaurants, to service industries. These responses expressed that part of the City’s economic development mission is to enable residents and visitors to have a wider choice of goods and services.

Fiscal responsibility. Another theme that included several categories of responses was ensuring fiscal responsibility in managing City government, property tax rates, efficiently run programs, and infrastructure investments. Many comments focused on keeping property taxes down, but there was also a category that emphasized ensuring sufficient investment in important infrastructure or programs was being made. This dichotomy is reflected in other survey question results, such as the property tax issues in Question 3 (which had the highest level of disagreement of any question).

Transportation issues. The final major theme was related to transportation issues. Transportation is clearly perceived as an important function of City government, and categories of responses included improving road surfaces, improving traffic flow, improving access to particular destinations or parts of the City, enabling better and safer pedestrian and bicycle movement, and offering better transit options.



Question 5 - The draft Community Values section of the Comprehensive Plan include the following 11 values that are important to Grand Rapids. Please identify how important each of these values are to you. Importance Very Important -5 Not Important- 1

1. Small Town Feeling: The small town feeling must be nurtured as the community changes and welcomes an increasingly diverse population. Growth of the urban area should not diminish the quality of the surrounding rural areas.	Avg – 4.04	SD - 1.06
2. Housing Diversity: Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems.	Avg – 3.78	SD - 1.17
3. Cultural and Recreational Opportunities: Cultural and recreational opportunities contribute to our quality of life, define Grand Rapids as a regional creative destination, and enhance our City’s role as a center of state tourism.	Avg – 3.83	SD - 1.09
4. Fiscal Responsibility: Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely by encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.	Avg – 4.55	SD – .72
5. Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets: Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow, neighborhoods are crime-free, and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments.	Avg – 4.68	SD - .65
6. Healthy Living: Creating healthy living opportunities requires careful management of our built environment (housing, roads, other infrastructure) our natural systems (recreation, natural resources), and other local amenities (economic systems, education, local food systems, health care).	Avg – 4.24	SD - .93
7. Accessible Movement: Street design should accommodate travel with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot, and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars.	Avg – 4.10	SD - 1.03
8. Sustainable Built Infrastructure: The provision and maintenance of high-quality drinking water and wastewater utilities; efficient energy systems; technology infrastructure; and transportation systems is necessary to sustain the economy and maintain a high quality of life.	Avg – 4.47	SD – 2.02
9. Sustainable Natural Infrastructure. Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems promote a sustainable economic base.	Avg – 4.00	SD - 1.03
10. Education: Education includes workforce development, continuing education, and information access, in addition to traditional schools. The more that education is integrated into the community, the better all other aspects of the community will function.	Avg – 4.30	SD - .93
11. Economic Opportunities. A healthy, growing economy provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides well-paid and meaningful careers to residents.	Avg – 4.43	SD - .85

Avg – Average level of agreement Highest - Lowest -
 SD – Standard Deviation (how much disagreement there was, higher means more disagreement among respondents)



Summary: There is a consistently high level of support for each of the community value statements – something that makes sense if the values are truly expressive of the community. The only value statement with a score of less than 4 out of 5 is (3) Cultural and Recreational Opportunities. Also noteworthy is the high degree of consistency in many responses, with standard deviations of 1.0 or less. The significant exception is (8) Sustainable Built Infrastructure, with a remarkable SD of 2.02.

Question 6 - Promoting all eleven values will sometimes put two or more values into conflict. Review the eleven Community Values and identify two of these values that you believe are likely create conflict.

Community Value # _____ Community Value # _____

Question 7 - Which two of the eleven values do you believe are most complementary?

Community Value # _____ Community Value # _____

Summary: Response rates to these questions were very low for Question 6 (39%), and also low for Question 7 (57%). The general conclusion to be drawn from these response rates are that respondents did not see many conflicts between the Community Values (hence the 39% response rate). Many more respondents found values that were complementary, although a significant number also left the question blank.

Analysis of the responses (which values were in conflict or were complementary) yielded widely diverging opinions and only a few patterns from which to draw conclusions. Furthermore, most of the differences between values were small and thus care should be taken in interpreting results.

The number of times that each Community Value was identified as being in conflict or being complementary was totaled for each question. Comparing the number of occurrences in Question 6 and 7 revealed some differences, as shown below:

Analysis of Questions 6 and 7

Value #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Question 6 - Conflicts	144	30	18	82	18	4	14	20	46	3	21
	12	19	14	31	24	15	18	45	48	7	164
	Total occurrences										
	Percent Occurance										
Question 7 - Complements	134	37	54	76	90	55	13	33	15	61	17
	9	14	19	19	97	77	42	43	67	51	143
	Total occurrences										
	Percent Occurance										
% Difference between Questions											
	7.3%	1.8%	-2.2%	6.0%	-10.8%	-8.9%	-0.7%	1.6%	4.8%	-8.4%	9.5%

Values in conflict

- **Value #11 (Economic Opportunities)** – most likely to conflict with other values (23% of respondents), followed closely by **Value #1 (Small Town Feeling)** with 20% of respondents seeing conflicts.
- **Value #10 (Education)** – least likely to conflict with other values (1% of respondents), followed by **Value #6 (Healthy Living)** with only 2% of respondents seeing conflicts.



Values that are complementary

- **Value #5 (Safety-Neighborhood and Streets)** – most likely to complement other values (16% of respondents)
- **Value #2 (Housing Diversity)** – least likely to complement other values (4% of respondents), followed closely by **Value #7 (Accessible Movement)** with 5% of respondents seeing it complement other values.

Comparing the results of Questions 6 and 7, two values were perceived as having stronger complementary characteristics or stronger potential for conflict than the rest of the Community Values.

- **Value #5 (Safety-Neighborhood and Streets)** is the Community Value most likely to be complementary to other values and also not in conflict with other values.
- **Value #11 (Economic Opportunities)** is the Community Value most likely to be in conflict with other values and also not to complement other values.

Section 3: Future Land Use and Infrastructure

The Comprehensive Plan will identify where future development should occur in the City and what parts of the City are prioritized for redevelopment.

Question 8 - Please circle which of the following land uses you believe should, if supported by the market, expand into undeveloped areas of the City over the next 20 years. Circle no more than three land uses.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Residential neighborhoods | 29% |
| 2. Industrial development | 36% |
| 3. New commercial development areas along highways | 31% |
| 4. Mixed use areas that include residential integrated with commercial or industrial | 23% |
| 5. Public facilities (schools, sport arenas) | 12% |
| 6. Health care facilities | 10% |
| 7. Parks, recreation, and protected green space | 35% |
| 8. The City should not emphasize new development in undeveloped or areas | 23% |

Summary: Respondents expressed a strong preference for expansion of some of the City’s most common existing land uses: industrial development and parks and green space being the most favored, and new highway commercial development and new residential neighborhoods closely behind. Support for new mixed use areas is somewhat lower, and support for health care and public facilities is the lowest, at 10-12 percent. About significant percentage (23%) of respondents do not support new development in undeveloped areas, which corroborates with other results of this survey, focus group results, and public comments.



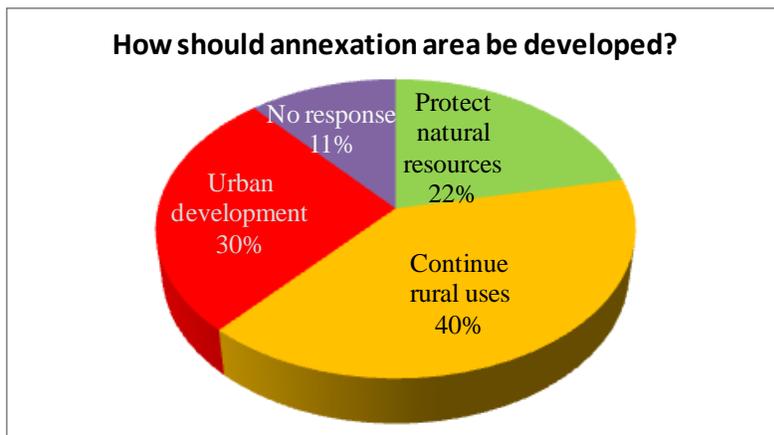
Question 9 - Which of the following areas do you believe provide redevelopment (changes to existing developed areas of the City) opportunities over the next 20 years? Circle no more than three areas.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Existing commercial areas along highways | 35% |
| 2. The downtown | 41% |
| 3. The vacant Ainsworth OSB facility and site | 53% |
| 4. Encourage conversion of some commercial or industrial areas to mixed use development (residential with small commercial) | 15% |
| 5. Existing neighborhoods need newer housing or housing rehabilitation | 18% |
| 6. Vacant lots in existing neighborhoods and large lots that could be subdivided | 12% |
| 7. The Mississippi riverfront | 22% |
| 8. The current mix and distribution of land uses is fine – no changes | 10% |

Summary: Over half the responses identified the vacant Ainsworth site (the bulk of which is the recently designated IEDC Eco-Industrial Park) as the primary redevelopment opportunity. The downtown and existing commercial areas also received strong support as redevelopment opportunities. There was relatively little interest for neighborhood infill or mixed use conversion, with some support (about 22%) for the Mississippi riverfront as a potential redevelopment area. The concept of redevelopment was strongly supported, with only 10% of respondents saying no redevelopment was needed.

Question 10 - With recent annexations, Grand Rapids includes large areas that are undeveloped or lightly developed. Select the one statement that most closely reflects your opinion about these rural areas.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Undeveloped or lightly developed areas should be protected for economic natural resource use (forestry, mining) or recreational uses - | 22% |
| 2. Allow some light or selective new development, but encourage continued rural land uses - | 40% |
| 3. Prioritize undeveloped areas for eventual development with housing, businesses, or industry - | 27% |



Summary: The greatest share of responses – about 40% – supported the idea of continued rural land use with some selective new development. Prioritizing undeveloped areas for eventual development was supported by 27%, while the smallest number of responses supported economic natural resource or recreational use of rural areas. The preference for continued rural use is consistent with other survey and focus group results. Most residents do not see

the rural annexation areas as an urban reserve or an opportunity to promote development outside the existing urban area. Residents continually express a strong preference for retaining the rural character of the recently annexed areas.

Focus Groups

An important part of the public engagement process for the Grand Rapids Comprehensive Plan was a series of focus groups conducted by the consultant team and the Steering Committee. City staff and Committee members organized fifteen focus groups over a five week period midway in the Comprehensive Plan process. Some of the focus groups included people with a similar association or point of view, others were mixed affiliation. The size of the groups varied from four to ten people each. The focus groups were:

1. Residents of Grand Rapids (two groups)
2. Non-profit organizations
3. Educational professionals
4. Students
5. Older citizens
6. Younger adults
7. Chamber of Commerce
8. Downtown Business Association
9. Land use, energy and water conservation
10. Faith community leaders
11. Riverfront Committee
12. Tourism and arts
13. Medical industry representatives
14. Leaders from surrounding communities

Focus Group Process. While the affiliations and points of view of the participants were quite varied, each group was asked to respond to a specific set of question related to the future land use and development patterns for Grand Rapids. Each group was presented with background material (primarily alternative maps of future land use and a map of existing land use) and given a short amount of time to consider the maps. The focus group facilitator introduced and explained the maps, explained the purpose of the focus group process, and then followed the same script for questions and for engaging the group.

The scripted questions are noted below:

Question 1: When you initially looked at the future land use alternatives maps, where was the first place on the map that you looked to see how it was treated or categorized? What was your reaction to what you saw?

Question 2: Take a moment to compare the two alternatives. Would you say they have significant differences, or do they look like they are basically similar? What do you think are the most significant differences?

Question 3: Do you prefer Alternative A or Alternative B? Why?

Question 4: The future land use maps are goals that the City will seek to achieve over the next 20 years.

- A. Is there one place shown on either of the alternatives for which you particularly like or don't like what is portrayed on the map?
- B. Point out where it is.
- C. Briefly explain why you like or don't like it.



Question 5: There are some locations on the maps in which the proposed land use differs considerably from the existing use. For instance, both alternatives show an expansion of residential neighborhoods and an increase in the amount of industrial and business park land compared with existing land uses. Do you consider encouraging redevelopment of existing developed areas a necessary or reasonable goal for Grand Rapids take?

Question 6: The Comprehensive Plan addresses a variety of issues including but not limited to the City's future land use pattern. Examples include transportation issues, natural resource use and protection, economic development, water/wastewater/energy infrastructure, and community character and quality of life.

A. What are the important issues that you believe the Plan should address?

B. Is your issue affected by the pattern of development shown on the future land use map?

Each focus group had an assigned facilitator and a recorder, usually a Steering Committee member. City staff or the consultant team served as facilitators or recorders for four of the groups. The instructions for facilitators did allow for the group to depart from the script when issues deemed important by the group departed from the issue of future land use patterns. Several groups did depart from the map-focused discussion, as noted below:

Focus Group Results. The results from the focus groups included many responses or opinions that were similar across all groups, and a fewer number that showed a diversity of opinions. The diversity of opinion within each group was somewhat less than between groups, although many groups did see strong differences of opinion on some specific issues or preferences for future development and land use patterns. A brief summary of the range of responses is provided below. The summary does not convey the full level of detail discussed by the Committee, but does provide an indicator of the issues raised by participants.

The Steering Committee reviewed and discussed the results of the focus groups and made a number of recommendations for map changes and language for goals and objectives based on the results. The focus group results, along with the results of the community survey, were a touchstone for the Steering Committee in all subsequent deliberations and decisions.

Question 1: When you initially looked at the future land use alternatives maps, where was the first place on the map that you looked to see how it was treated or categorized?

In nearly all groups, the participants looked first where they lived or where their business was located. The participants in focus groups with a particular geographic focus (the Central Business District Association and the Riverfront Commission) looked first to those areas. Nearly all respondents felt that these places were adequately represented in the Future Land Use map, with a few exceptions where commercial land uses were expanded into existing residential areas.

Some participants did look first to areas other than home or business. The places other than home or business that drew the most interest included:

- The new Highway 38 industrial park on Alternative B
- The City's downtown area
- The green areas throughout the City
- The changes proposed along or near Golf Course Road



- The Highway 169 commercial corridor south
- The medical campus

Question 2: What significant differences do you see between the two alternatives?

Many participants thought the two scenarios were fairly similar. However, even when they found the two scenarios similar, participants noted that the alternatives were sometimes subtly different, but that the differences were important. The most controversial or important differences between the alternatives, as noted by participants, included:

- *New industrial park on Highway 38 (Alternative B)*. The industrial area on Highway 38 in Alternative B was the most discussed difference. Those focus groups with a business or commerce affiliation tended to endorse the proposal as recognizing the need for a location for a large industrial facility should that economic opportunity arise. Most other groups did not like the proposed location, although most also added that the concept of having a place for locating a large industrial facility was a good strategy to include in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Riverfront green spaces (Alternative A)*. The resource management areas shown along the Mississippi River (most prominent in Alternative A) were an important distinction to many participants. The proposed green space was, however, almost uniformly endorsed by the groups who noted it.
- *Downtown expansion (Alternative B)*. The expansion of the existing downtown area to the east along the River was also noted as an important difference. The Riverfront and Central Business groups paid the most attention to this proposal, but it also drew significant attention from some resident groups. The concept of expanding the downtown was generally supported, but criticism was also expressed regarding whether downtown could sustain an expansion. Strong pro and con statements were also noted regarding the appropriateness of those particular areas for new commercial land uses.
- Other noted differences included:
 - *Medical Campus expansion*. Most people who commented on this thought the expansion was a positive step. Some, however, did prefer the larger Neighborhood Mixed Use designation rather than the Medical Campus expansion.
 - *Alternative A has more green space, Alternative B has more sprawl*. More “green space” (primarily the Resource Management land use category) was frequently pointed out as an important difference, and was almost universally accepted as a positive step for the Comprehensive Plan. Sprawl was viewed as a negative, although some groups also endorsed the concept of allowing expansion of the urban service area to accommodate demand for new housing.
 - *Multi-family expansion versus suburban areas expansion*. This difference was noted by some of the residential focus groups. Some concerns were expressed about the character of both Multi-Family Residential and Suburban Residential. Most discussion agreed of a likely need for more Multi-Family Residential given the ongoing demographic changes in the region. Concerns noted good design and seamless integration of Multi-Family into the adjoining neighborhoods. Suburban Residential expansion had similar character-related concerns, including concerns about ensuring connectivity with surrounding areas.



Question 3: Which alternative is preferred?

Participants' responses to this question were very mixed, both within focus groups and across groups. As noted in the discussion for Question 2, most participants liked elements of both alternatives. Alternative B was favored for reasons that included more housing growth options, emphasizing new industrial growth, better use of neighborhood mixed uses, and encouraging redevelopment and vitality along the river. Alternative A was favored for a greater medical campus expansion, no industrial park on Highway 38, more green space and less sprawl.

Of the 15 groups, a few groups found the question unfair – they wanted more time to consider the alternatives before being asked to prefer one.

Question 4: Is there one place shown on either of the alternatives for which you particularly like or don't like what is portrayed on the map?

Areas that were called out as particularly good ideas included:

- Riverfront – the new commercial development ideas (restaurants, facing the river, economic) and increased green space combination
- Green corridors/buffers for parks and trails along waterfronts
- Expanded medical campus
- Highway 169 - the commercial corridor, promotes economic expansion
- Downtown mixed use areas
- Expanded urban services for residential expansion
- Emphasis on encouraging infill and a wider mix of densities and uses.

Areas that were called out as particularly troubling included:

- Highway 38 industrial park
- Downtown was not clearly more livable and walkable.
- No changes to the Highway 169 commercial corridor to give it more diversity and character.
- Affordable housing was not identified in the downtown.
- Resource management category in the rural areas included too many conflicting land uses.

Question 5: Do you consider encouraging redevelopment of existing developed areas a necessary or reasonable goal for Grand Rapids take?

Not all the groups discussed this question. However, those that did almost exclusively endorsed the concept of infill and redevelopment as more important than opening up more land for development in the City's rural areas. The reasons for this preference were quite varied. Some were concerned that extending sewer, water, and roads would put upward pressure on taxes. Others were concerned with retaining the rural character of the City's rural areas, while still others saw redevelopment and infill as a means of enhancing the City's existing neighborhoods and commercial areas through better building design, more green space, and improved connectivity.



Question 6: What are the important issues that you believe the Plan should address?

This question offered the opportunity to discuss non-mapped issues. Many groups did not wait to be asked this question, but instead moved to it via earlier questions.

Different groups responded quite differently to this question. Some believed that the future land use map captured most of what was important. Most groups, however, discussed issues that could not be mapped but that they believed should be part of the Plan.

Livability and Character

- Important issues that the Comprehensive Plan should address are: sprawl, infrastructure, quality of life, and attracting young people to live and work in Grand Rapids.
- Quality of life encompasses many facets including quality public services, reasonable taxes, economic/educational/creative opportunity, and cultural diversity.
- The map does not address character and quality issues about commercial areas that “look like a dump,” poor housing quality, and the image of Grand Rapids (In Minnesota’s Nature).
- Retaining the City’s small town feel, including both:
 - keep developed areas compact
 - not so dense feels like an inner city
- Annexed areas that are rural should be treated differently in the long run than areas reserved for expansion. That is, zoning and land use rules should acknowledge this difference.
 - Preserve natural features in newly annexed areas.
 - Rural uses such as livestock need to be accommodated.

Sustainability

- Sustainable practices in City operations and development practices will attract people to Grand Rapids (e.g. Green Step Cities Program).
- The Plan needs to address energy goals.
 - Develop and promote prototype alternative energy practices (e.g. build an affordable model energy efficient home).
 - Set energy and water rates to encourage conservation and discourage waste.
 - Use renewable energy for city buildings.
 - Install Dark Sky exterior lighting in the city.
 - Get more recycling through contract with Waste Management, Inc.
- Expand green space within the city’s urban areas.
- Ensure that development faces the riverfront and promotes other green corridors
- Protect and restore natural resources
 - Trees are an important part of Grand Rapids’ environment. Create a plan for expanding tree cover and replacing old trees as they die, e.g. old pines in parks.
 - Control deer in city limits, provide wildlife corridors in and out of the city.
 - Develop a monitoring plan for dealing with septic systems and wells in newly annexed areas.
 - Address the issue of runoff from County Fair Grounds parking area that degrades water quality.
- Address schools in the Plan.
 - Elementary schools may be needed in future; at 20 acres per site requires planning now.
 - The schools need to do a better job of incorporating sustainable practices, particularly recycling.



Neighborhoods and Housing

- Provide for central gathering spots in each neighborhood. Create neighborhood icons, cultivate the distinct feeling within neighborhoods and the sense of place and community.
- While expansion is good, ensure that development is staged to maintain a connected development pattern and efficient use of infrastructure.
- Set goals for affordable housing, especially in downtown.
- Low income housing should be considered/maintained when re-development occurs. Respectful, inclusive, affordable for improved living arrangements.

Transportation

- The Plan needs to address the transportation corridors (Hwy 169 and 2) – consider a ring road for safety and to move traffic that is just passing through
- Transportation and traffic flow issues should be given more consideration. Intersection of 4th Street and Pokegama is an issue and affects traffic flow now and in future.
- Infrastructure such as bridges should be covered in the Plan —Will we need to have more bridges if more development is located on south side of river, particularly in regard to emergency access.
- Too much land is consumed by parking lots. Consider adjusting parking stall requirements for business, thus limiting the size of parking lots.
- Better use the airport or better use the land it sits on. Review airport usage and work for more flights or if not, move it to alternative site
- Continue to improve trails and non-motorized transportation options. The City should be increasingly pedestrian/bike friendly and safe:
 - Trails, walkways, bikeways important
 - Develop a bicycle map
 - Better connect neighborhoods using trails, multi-modal streets
 - Improve problem intersections for pedestrians, such as Golf Course Road and 169, 169 and 2
- More people living in Grand Rapids will mean greater need for discouraging private vehicle traffic. This relates to having better public transportation and encouraging bicycle and foot travel.

Economic Development

- The Plan needs to prioritize industrial expansion and attracting a diversity of industry.
- Recognize the need for balance between maintaining resources and economics success.
- Diversify the economy outside mining and timber (e.g., Ely is no longer limited to timber and mining, Grand Marais had 5 musical events in one night)
- Tourism is a way to help Grand Rapids boom. Promote ecotourism and similar growing niches.
- Recognize the arts and culture as an economic asset. Promote and celebrate Grand Rapids' arts.
- Potential expansion of the mill for new markets (not just paper, but other products) could create changes and impacts not being discussed.
- Invest in downtown
- Promote downtown mixed use
 - Promote development that can accommodate homes and jobs at the same place.
 - Develop hotel or lodging in downtown area so people can actually see the city rather than the Highway commercial strips.
- Work more closely with LaPrairie on economic expansion issues
- Encourage business friendliness.
- Access to medical services is of growing importance. Consider the need for satellites from the Medical Campus and easing of transportation barriers from outlying areas.