

Chapter 3 – Community Vision, Values, and Guiding Principles

This Chapter presents the vision for Grand Rapids in 2030, supporting community values, and principles to guide implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

A. Vision Statement

A community vision is an expression of possibility, an ideal future that the community hopes to attain. The vision sets the stage for where the community, as a whole, desires to go. By creating the foundation for underlying goals, objectives, implementation strategies, and policies, the vision statement directs future action and helps bring that desired future into reality. The vision statement presented below describes what community members would like Grand Rapids to be in 2030.

Grand Rapids is a unique blend of small town hospitality and character with big city conveniences and opportunities. Grand Rapids offers an excellent quality of life to residents of the region with outstanding educational opportunities, excellent medical care, exceptional cultural, natural, and recreational amenities, and an unequaled sense of community spirit. Grand Rapids provides all residents safe, friendly, affordable housing and inclusive neighborhoods that retain and enhance nature in the City. Residents and visitors can move around the City with equal ease by car, bicycle, walking, or other mode of transportation. Grand Rapids welcomes and supports a diverse mix of thriving businesses and industry that provide quality jobs, promising careers, and economic vitality. Grand Rapids is a welcoming gateway to Minnesota's Northwoods tourism.





B. Community Values

Community values are the fundamental principles and beliefs that guide a community-driven process toward the realization of the community’s vision statement. Community values describe the enduring beliefs about what is right, good and desirable and provide the foundation for making Grand Rapids a positive place to live. Each of the following values is recognized to shape the other values, and therefore the values should be considered comprehensively rather than individually.

Small Town Feeling

The notion of ‘small town feeling’ means living in a friendly vital neighborhood where people know and care about each other, have an unequalled sense of community, a sense of investment in the neighborhood and the city, and convenient access to shops, businesses, and the rest of the City. The small town feeling must be nurtured as the community grows and must welcome an increasing cultural diversity as our population changes. This small town feeling is dependent on the relationship between the City and its surrounding rural areas. Growth of the urban area should not diminish the quality of the surrounding rural areas.

Housing Diversity

We value a variety of housing types in our community to meet the needs of all residents, no matter their stage in life. Quality, affordable housing is a basic need. Housing diversity is enabled when neighborhoods are connected to cultural, recreational, economic, natural, education, and transportation systems.

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities

We value the availability and quality of artistic, 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.

Fiscal Responsibility

Being accountable to our community means managing our financial resources wisely. This core value is expressed in many ways, including encouraging sustainable growth and development, efficient provision of services and programs, and fully accounting for costs associated with public decisions.

Safety – Neighborhoods and Streets

Safety is a priority for us, especially in our homes, our neighborhoods, and on our streets. Safety means that our children have safe environments in which to grow and residents and visitors can walk, bicycle, and drive in safe, regulated traffic environments.

Healthy Living

Providing opportunities for healthy living is a core value. 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).

Accessible Movement

We understand and support the need for residents and visitors to move around our City with equal ease by car, bicycle, or on foot. Streets design should accommodate all modes of transportation and public transportation provides mobility to those without cars.

Sustainable Built Infrastructure

The provision and maintenance of high-quality grey infrastructure is necessary to foster investment in a sustainable economy and maintain a high quality of life. Grey infrastructure includes: drinking water and wastewater utilities; energy systems; technology infrastructure; and surface and air transportation systems.

Sustainable Natural Infrastructure

Our natural environment and natural resources are a defining and valued characteristic of our community. People, economy, and natural systems are connected in all aspects of daily life. Development should enhance natural systems, and sustainable natural systems should promote a sustainable economic base.

Education

We value and promote equal access to quality, lifelong, educational opportunities for all residents. 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.

Economic Opportunities

A strong diversified economy is a prerequisite to the full realization of all other values. We value a healthy, growing economy that provides opportunities for large and small businesses, rewards entrepreneurship, and provides meaningful careers to residents.





C. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles reflect the community vision and values by setting standards that can guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan. The principles demonstrate how distinct values frequently overlap and create complex decisions from seemingly straightforward values. Additionally, the guiding principles can be carried beyond the plan to provide guidance to decision-makers in implementing the plan.

1. ***Direct growth and development to locations that serve community vision and values.***

Recognize that development and redevelopment activities should be guided to appropriate locations in order to realize the community's vision. Choices about where and how growth occurs will define community character for decades, affect the cost and quality of public services, and shape future development markets.

2. ***Harmonize change with the existing community fabric and natural systems.***

Change is inevitable but opportunities and risks can be managed to protect and sustain community and natural infrastructure. Change can be structured to enhance rather than detract: creating synergies between new and existing businesses, transforming buildings to be more sustainable, designing new housing or commercial buildings to match existing scale.

3. ***Promote local economic vitality.***

Support activities and investments that promote the creation of and sustaining of careers and wages, provision of a diversity of services and goods, and long-term business investment and market expansion.

4. ***Sustain Grand Rapids' neighborhoods.***

The City's neighborhoods and the social networks that connect neighborhood residents require conscious attention and support. Integrate housing with other land uses, design appropriate transportation infrastructure, protect community character in public and private development decisions, enhance natural systems and create connected green spaces.

5. ***Enhance healthy lifestyles, families, and community.***

Direct public and private investment to create opportunities for healthy choices. Physical systems such as designing complete streets and programmatic development such as social services and educational programs can be designed to make healthy choices easier.

6. ***Enhance Grand Rapids' regional role.***

The City is the commercial and service center for the surrounding region, serving surrounding communities and rural areas, and in turn is supported by them. Investment in regional infrastructure such as information technologies and both commercial and recreational regional transportation are critical, as is intergovernmental coordination, to sustain the City's regional benefits.

7. *Practice community participation.*

Community participation is a necessary part of sustainable growth and development. Regular and routine communication with residents, businesses, and visitors should direct and help create support for City investments, regulatory actions, and management choices.

8. *The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for City actions.*

The Plan should be followed, updated every five years, and progress is reported to the public.

