

Introduction

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan serves as a guiding document for Grand Rapids residents, stakeholders, staff, and elected and appointed officials. The policies, recommendations, and strategies outlined throughout this plan were established to support a vision for 2040, created by community input. This chapter provides the 2040 vision, community values, and guiding principles that are carried through the entire Comprehensive Plan. These items should be referenced throughout the decision making process or as updates are needed to the document.

Vision Statement

A vision statement identifies the desired condition of a community. The statement is intended to set the stage for the future actions and direction of a community and should be referred to on a regular basis. The guiding principles, goals, objectives, and implementation strategies outlined throughout the 2040 Comprehensive Plan were established to support this long range vision and brings action to the statement. The vision statement describes the community drive vision for Grand Rapids in 2040.



Grand Rapids provides opportunities for all through a blend of small town hospitality and character with big city amenities. The City provides residents and visitors with housing, employment, mobility, recreation and economic options that provide access to a high quality of life for everyone. Grand Rapids neighborhoods and gathering spaces are safe, friendly, and diverse and integrate with the natural environment. Grand Rapids continues to serve as a regional hub, offering outstanding educational opportunities, excellent medical care, exceptional cultural, natural, and recreational amenities, and an unequalled community spirit to the region. The community embraces its natural surrounding and history while continuing to look ahead. Grand Rapids provides an opportunity for residents, stakeholders, businesses and the natural environment to grow into 2040.

Community Values

A discussion of community values helps to understand the qualities and amenities of Grand Rapids that are embraced by the community. These values help to identify the characteristics that should be carried into the vision based on community input, while also highlighting the components of the community that should be preserved and enhanced for the future. Community values describe the enduring beliefs about what is right, good and desirable and provide a foundation for making Grand Rapids a positive place to live. Each of the following values is recognized to support the other values, and this list should be viewed as a comprehensive system of values, rather than individual components.



Small Town Living – Support friendly, vital, welcoming and inclusive neighborhoods that provide a sense of community, support reinvestment in the area, and provides space for everyone to feel at home.

Quality of Life – Provide access to a high quality of life for all residents, with a range of services and amenities, including health care and childcare, quality schools, and affordable housing options.

Housing Variety – Value a range of housing types that offer something for everyone. The housing stock should provide a range of affordability, aesthetics, amenities, and access to services.

Cultural and Recreational Opportunities – Highlight and promote existing resources by maintaining access and resource quality.

Fiscal Responsibility – Remain accountable for municipal spending to support the needs and desires of Grand Rapids and its residents.

Safe Neighborhoods and Streets – Maintain a safe environment throughout Grand Rapids for all residents, within all locations, and during all activities.

Healthy Living and Accessible Movement – Expand opportunities for residents to incorporate healthy living into their lifestyle. Promote access for all types of movement within Grand Rapids.

Sustainable Built Infrastructure --Develop and maintain quality infrastructure that responds to community needs while withstanding change.

Sustainable Natural Infrastructure – Preserve quality natural resources within Grand Rapids, striving to maintain quality resources and access/interaction with the resources.

Education – Support continued learning and development for all in Grand Rapids. Coordinate with local schools to provide access to continued education.

Economic Opportunities – Value and maintain the healthy economic base within the community and support and pursue opportunities for growth.

Regional Center – Embrace the city’s place as a regional center, serving the needs of both local and regional residents, while-balancing the resources needed to support both the local and regional economies.

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are the first elements that put action to the community vision and values, setting standards that can guide the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The principles demonstrate how the community values overlap and warrant a broader review of systems through the decision making process. These ten guiding principles were used to inform the goals, objectives and implementation strategies described throughout the plan. Additionally, the principles should be considered comprehensively as the City pursues long-range actions.



1. Direct growth and development to locations that serve and support the community’s 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. Align change with the existing community, neighborhoods, and natural resources fabric.

Change is inevitable; however, the community’s resiliency to adapt and react can help to manage, protect and sustain the community, neighborhood and natural resources infrastructure.

3. Promote local economic vitality.

Support activities and investments that create and sustain careers and wages; provide a diversity of services and goods; and promote long-term business investment and market expansion.

4. Sustain Grand Rapids' neighborhoods.

The City's neighborhoods and the social networks that connect the community require conscious attention and support. Effort to assist with the maintenance of neighborhoods include the integration of housing with other land uses, design of context sensitive transportation infrastructure, protection of community character in public and private development, enhancement of natural systems, and creation of connected open spaces.

5. Enhance healthy lifestyles, families, and community.

Direct public and private investment to create opportunities for healthy choices. Physical systems can be designed to promote healthy living through efforts such as complete streets. The development and support of various community programs, such as social services and education programs can also make healthy choices easier.

6. Sustain and enhance the city's status as a regional center and its role in the greater region.

Grand Rapids 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 commercial and recreational transportation are critical, as is intergovernmental coordination, to sustain the City's regional benefits.

7. Promote community participation and civic engagement to inform the public decision-making process.

Community participation is a necessary part of smart and 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. Support access to arts and culture and explore opportunities to incorporate into municipal action.

The support of arts and culture throughout community actions will help to foster the sense of community and identity of Grand Rapids. As municipal actions and investments are analyzed, consideration for the inclusion of arts and culture will be made.

9. Support and collaborate with community service providers and organizations to ensure that residents' needs are met.

Access to quality and affordable community services is a key component of the quality of life for Grand Rapids residents. Efforts will be made to monitor existing and needed community services and collaborate with providers to meet the community's needs.

10. The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for City actions.

The Comprehensive Plan will be referred to on a regular basis and used as a guide for decision making. A review of the Plan and an assessment of needed updates will occur every five years.

Goals, Objectives and Implementation Strategies

The 2040 vision, community values and guiding principles defined within the chapter are put into action through the establishment of goals, objectives, and implementation strategies in each of the Comprehensive Plan elements. The goals and objectives are intended to serve as a decision making tool, specific to the various components of the city. These elements were used to inform the recommendations and considerations defined throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The implementation strategies put the plan into action by defining specific measures, projects and outcomes that the City should work towards over the next 20 years – guiding it towards the 2040 vision.

Goal – Statement of a desired vision (i.e., what is the future of the various elements within).

Objective – Statement of a defined action or policy that provides guidance in achieving the established goal.

Implementation Strategy – Defined action or measure that the city will work towards to achieve the goals and vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

The goals, objectives and implementation strategies are provided in Chapters 4 through 9 of the Comprehensive Plan, connecting to each plan element. For example, the goals specific to transportation and mobility throughout Grand Rapids are provided in Chapter 8 – Transportation. The structure and format for each is carried through each chapter.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives for each chapter are specific to the plan element at hand; however, the goals of other elements should be reviewed to ensure that all systems are being considered. Each of the goals is accompanied by a number of objectives that provide guidance and direction toward the goal. These are key components that can be used to influence decision making. An example of an Economic Development goal and objective is provided below:



Goal 1: Create jobs and income. The City’s economic infrastructure sustains the City’s households and the households of many people in surrounding communities. Building the City’s economic base is not an end in itself, but rather is a primary component for achieving many of the community’s goals. Creating economic opportunity for current and future residents is a primary Comprehensive Plan goal.

- a. **Ensure that job creation efforts include high-wage/high-quality jobs.** In order to support and sustain their households, residents need to have economic opportunities that pay a good wage and provide benefits that households need. While not all jobs need to be high-wage, the City should emphasize the creation of high-wage, high quality jobs through its programs and policies.



Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategies defined within each chapter provide a list of actions that can be taken in support of the community’s vision for 2040. The strategies are organized into a tabular format that provides the overall intent, specific actions, a timeline, and responsible parties for each strategy. The table format is provided below, providing a definition for each element.

Implementation Strategy	On-Going Action	Short Term Action	Long Term Action	Responsible Parties
Overall intent or direction that the strategy is working towards and supports.	Identifies actions that the City is currently working towards and should be continued.	Identifies actions that should be worked on over the next ten years (2020-2030) in support of the strategy.	Identifies actions that should be pursued in the long-term (beyond 2030). Many of these actions required additional resources or the completion of other actions prior to implementation.	Identifies City departments and stakeholders that are suited to guide the strategy. Primary parties may lead implementation, with the support of secondary parties.