

ARTS & CULTURE COMMISSION

Regular Meeting, Tuesday, December 2, 2014

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that a regular meeting of the Arts & Culture Commission will be held in the Conference Room 2B at City Hall, 420 N Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744 on Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at 3:15 p.m.

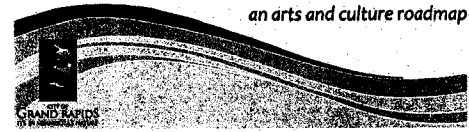
Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Public input
3. Correspondence
4. Approve the following Minutes: **Regular Meeting November 5**
5. Old Business **Arts and Culture Discussion**
6. New Business
7. Set agenda for next regular meeting: **Tuesday, January 6, 2015**
8. Adjourn

December 1, 2014

GRMN Creates

an arts and culture roadmap



Kathy -

As part of our development process for the Draft Plan for the Arts and Culture Commission we are currently in the process of reviewing ideas and data that have emerged through the numerous stakeholder interviews, focus groups, community meetings, strategic planning sessions, and community survey.

To help in our own research and writing process we've created a number of interim documents will later serve as appendices to the plan. We're sending them along to you so that you can see how ideas, needs, and visions for arts in Grand Rapids have emerged throughout the stakeholder engagement process.

Please keep in mind that these documents are themselves drafts, but we hope that they can help to inform the Commissioners about the ideas and patterns that have emerged within the plan development process. We would very much welcome any ideas/suggestions/corrections from any of the commissioners.

As part of the document package you will find the following:

- **Cultural Asset Maps**
 - These maps identify the physical location of cultural assets and also highlight specific spots where community members identified desired ideas. Also included is a map of locations where people identified personal spots of creative expression. Although the information about areas of personal expression does not necessarily bear direct impact on City of Grand Rapids policy-making efforts, it is good to acknowledge that people identify a wide array of locations beyond the central downtown area.
- **Online Survey Summary**
 - This initial survey summary highlights the results received from the survey that was available to the public from September 16 to October 30, 2014. It reveals insights into how Grand Rapids community members engage in the arts, and ideas for the most effective things the City of Grand Rapids could do to foster arts and culture, and how arts and cultural activities could advance other community priorities.
- **Community Meeting Summaries**
 - These 2 summary documents synthesize the ideas that emerged through the different community meetings and frames them in terms of potential plan ideas. The categories we use are not indicative of final plan categories, but rather are grouped in such a way as to present the most widely supported ideas in the simplest manner possible.

- **Stakeholder Interview Summary**
 - This summary outlines the numerous individuals that were interviewed to help the consultant team gain a larger understanding about the arts and cultural needs and opportunities present in Grand Rapids. The categorization is again, an interim organization scheme.

On December 15th, we will send you a copy of the draft plan. The goal is to present the draft plan to the City Council on Monday, March 9th. Before that happens we'd like to propose the following review schedule to allow for ample times for review and any needed revisions.

GRMN Creates – A Draft Arts and Culture Plan Review Schedule

- **Monday, December 15th: Draft Plan to Commission**
- **Wednesday, January 7th: Commission Returns Comments / Edits / Ideas**
- **Monday, January 12: Revised Draft Plan Sent to City of GR Department Heads**
- **Friday, January 16th: Department Heads Return Comments / Edits / Ideas**
- **Monday, January 19st: Revised Draft Plan Posted Online for Public Review**
- **Friday, February 6th: Public Comment Period Closes**
- **Monday, February 16th: Final Draft Plan Due to Commission**
- **Monday, February 23rd: Commission Members Present Final Draft Plan to Council Work Session**
- **Friday, March 6th – 9th: Consultant Visit for Presentation to Council**

Best,

Lynn and Anne

**CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION
CONFERENCE ROOM 2B- GRAND RAPIDS CITY HALL
REGULAR MEETING, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2014 – 3:15 PM**

CALL TO ORDER: Pursuant to due notice and call thereof the regular meeting of the Grand Rapids Arts and Culture Commission was held in Conference Room 2B of the Grand Rapids City Hall, 420 N Pokegama Avenue, Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on Wednesday, November 5, 2014, at 3:15 pm

CALL OF ROLL: On a Call of Roll, the following members were present: Kathy Dodge, Sonja Merrild, David Marty, Todd Driscoll, Lois Bendix, and Karen Walker

Commissioners absent: Carissa Grosland and Michael Davis

Staff Present: Rob Mattei and Michele Palkki

Visitor: Nathan Bergstedt

Added Under Old Business: Artist in Residence Discussion

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting, October 7, 2014
Special Meeting, October 27, 2014
Community Meeting, October 27, 2014**

Motion by Commissioner Marty, second by Commissioner Merrild to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting, October 7, Special Meeting, October 27 and the Community Meeting October 27. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Arts and Culture Discussion

Commissioner Dodge handed out the compiled priority list of 13 initial action items for the Commission to complete.

Artist in Residence

Grand Rapids Arts has recommended the acceptance of the application that was submitted by Nathan Bergstedt, John and Stephanie Schroeder, known as the Uncommon Loons, for the time period of November 15, 2014 until February 15, 2015. Nathan along with John and Stephanie will be developing life size puppets, doing pre-development planning and visual arts for the Summer Event to take place in July (in place of Showboat). They will also have some pre-rehearsals going on at that time as well. People will be able to see how and what things are done, behind the scenes, to develop a play/show and etc.

Motion by Commissioner Driscoll, second by Commissioner Merrild to accept the application from Nathan Bergstedt, John and Stephanie Schroeder as the Artist in Residence for the time period of November 2014 until February, 2015. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Presentation by Rob Mattei

Community Development Director, Rob Mattei gave a power point presentation regarding the downtown comprehensive plan for the City of Grand Rapids. Mr. Mattei reported that the comprehensive plan is used to formulate decisions, and desired future developments. Goals and objectives were reviewed along with noting which buildings and properties which are currently unoccupied at this time.

The Economic Development Authority (EDA) is currently doing a feasibility study with North Rock Development to look into the grounds and building at Central School to determine how to make the building more efficient and the potential of more businesses at this location.

Mr. Mattei reported that once the Arts and Culture Plan is adopted by the Commission and then approved by the City Council they will recommend that the plan be included with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Commission thanked Mr. Mattei for coming to the meeting and explaining the City's Comprehensive Plan and the downtown development and City Comprehensive Plan.

Survey Winner

It was announced that Mary Jo Jess was the winner of the basket of donations.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm

Respectfully submitted by Michele Palkki

Reminder, the next regular meeting of the Grand Rapids Arts Commission will be held on Tuesday, December 2, 2014 beginning at 3:15 pm at the Grand Rapids City Hall, Conference Room 2B

Grand Rapids Arts and Culture Commission Priority List of Initial Action Items

GRMN Creates

an arts and culture roadmap

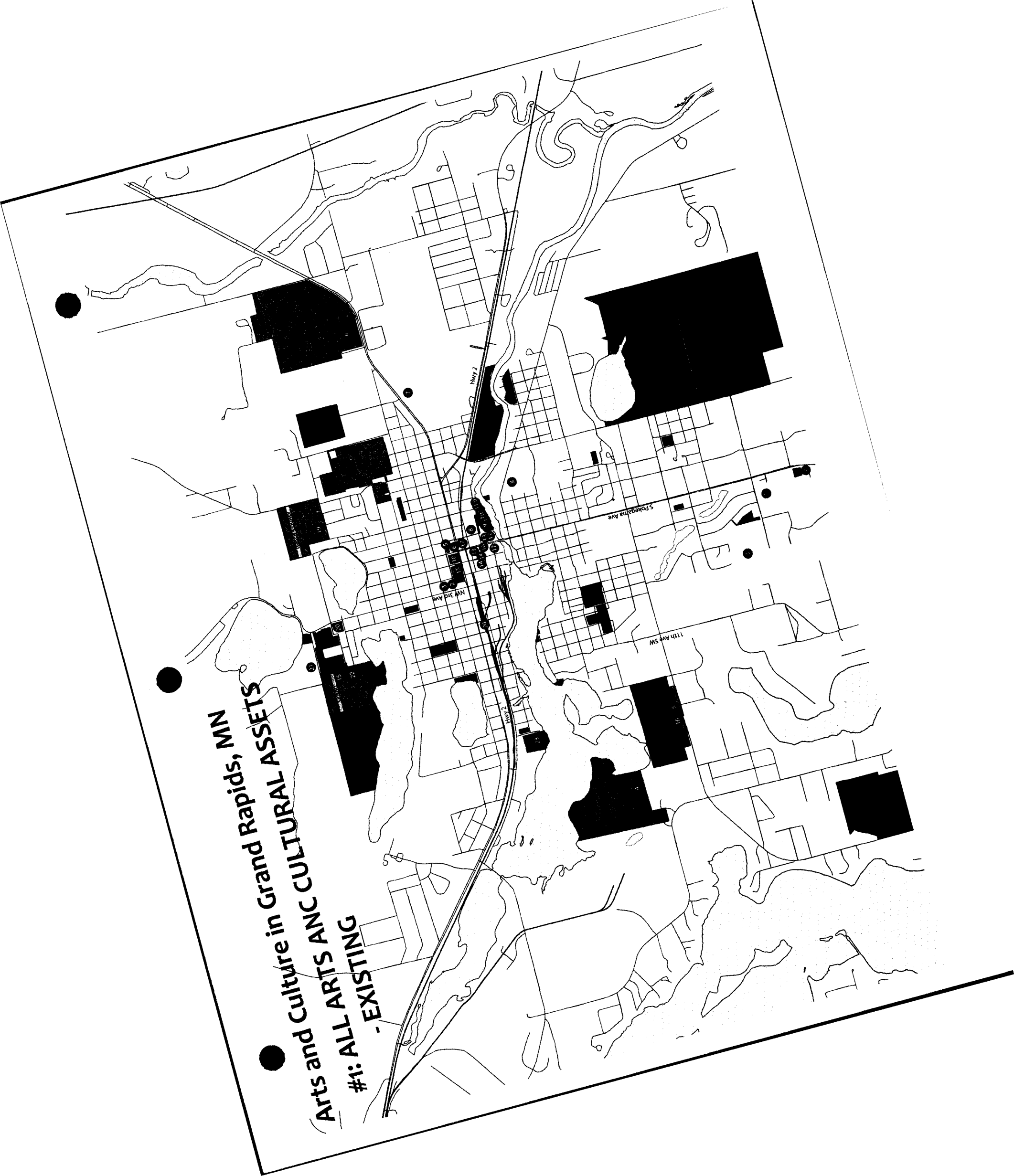
11/5/2014



1. Clarify city rules/bureaucracy related to various arts and culture initiatives—i.e. fact sheets on how to get approval to have a performance in a park, get permission to paint a mural, have wine at a reception, etc. (18)
2. Develop small-scale public art opportunities within existing capital improvement projects as a first step towards creating a broader art in public places ordinance.. (17)
3. Foster the development of artist spaces such as arts incubators or cooperative galleries. (16) tie with #4
4. Investigate ways to address downtown connectivity / walkability through the production of small-scale interventions such as imaginative crosswalks, or graffiti arts installation near the RR tracks or Horn Bridge. (16) tie with #3
5. Create a program to use unoccupied buildings downtown as “pop-up” shops that can support entrepreneurs (artistic and otherwise). (15) tie with #6
6. Help to support arts education initiatives to ensure access to arts and culture by a broad range of children and adults. (15) tie with #5
7. Collaborate with Get Fit Itasca to embed arts and culture into broader community health and connectivity goals. (14.5)
8. Advocate for the redevelopment/reprogramming of Central School exterior and interior spaces to support more community wide cultural events and attractions. (14)
9. Create a central ice rink in the downtown area and foster the creation of a winter cultural festival. (12.5) tie with #10 and 11
10. Create a workgroup to look at the potential for supporting more regional level sharing of cultural programming. (12.5) tie with #9 and 11
11. Develop a workgroup to investigate potential ways to support an inclusive and welcoming Grand Rapids that fosters connections between people of difference races, ethnicities, and income levels and promotes equitable arts access. (12.5) tie with #10 and 11
12. Increase opportunities for networking, marketing, and resource sharing within the creative community. (11.5) tie with #13
13. Increase opportunities for business training/support for arts entrepreneurship. (11.5) tie with #12

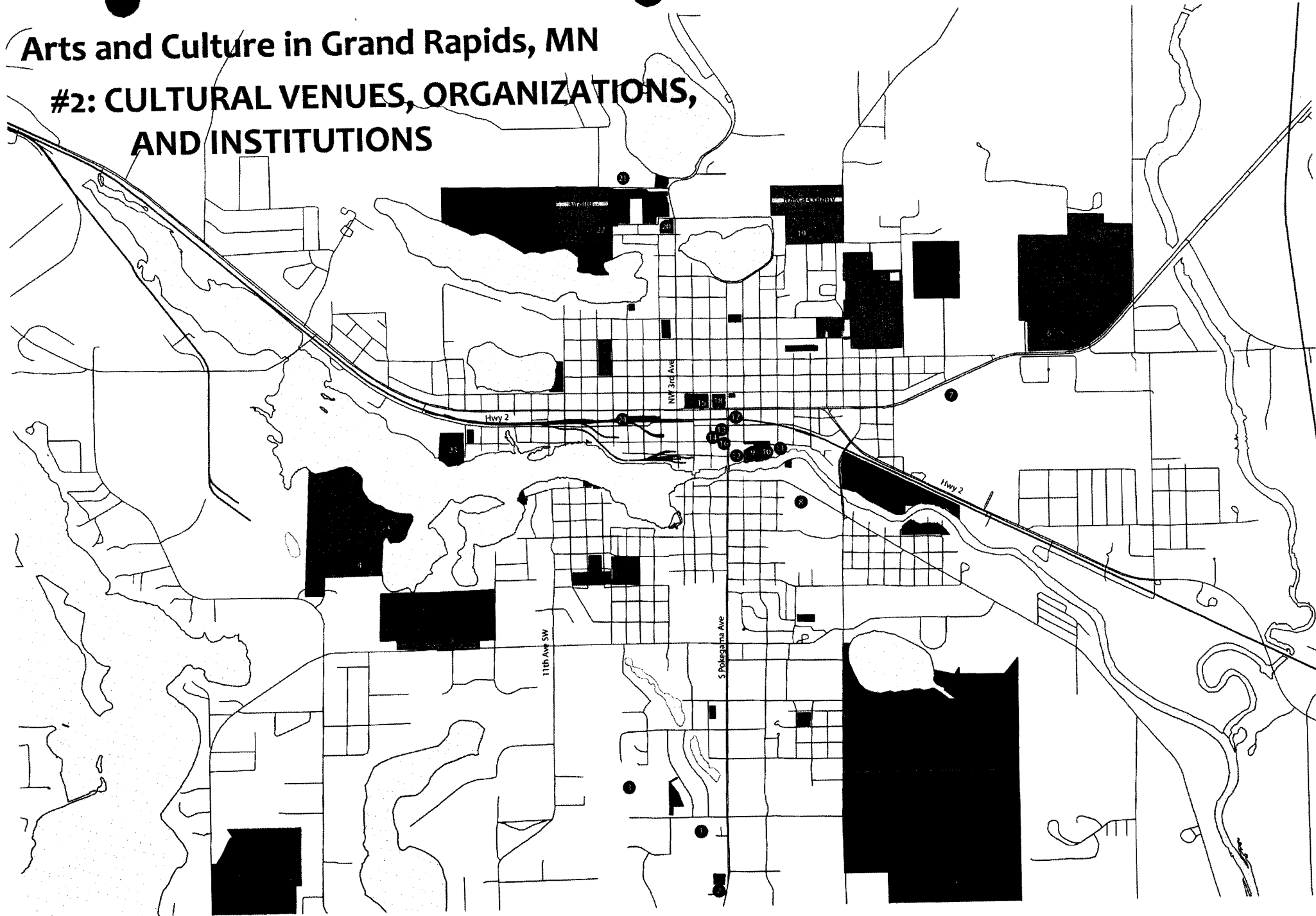
Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#1: ALL ARTS ANC CULTURAL ASSETS
- EXISTING



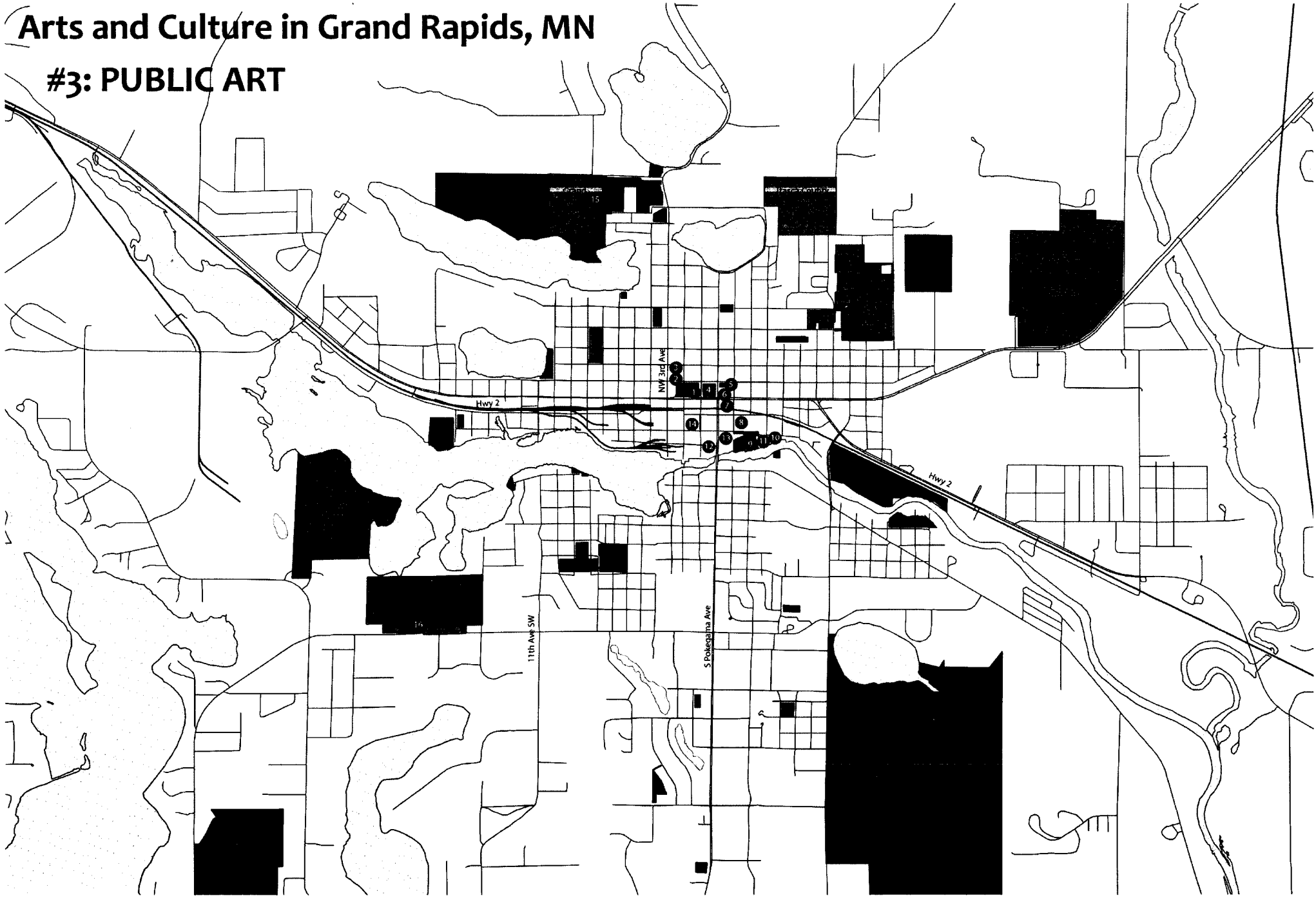
Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#2: CULTURAL VENUES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS



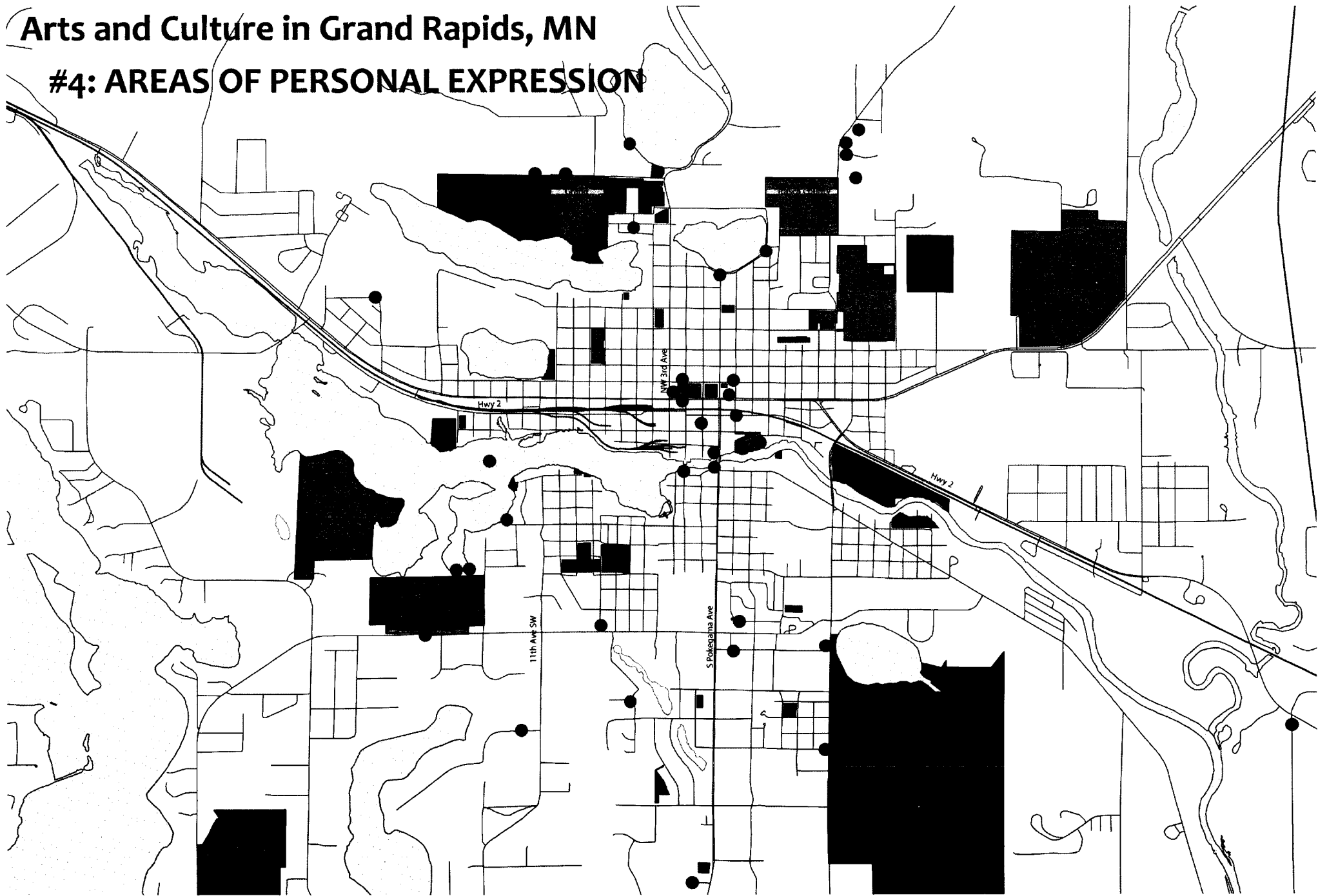
Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#3: PUBLIC ART



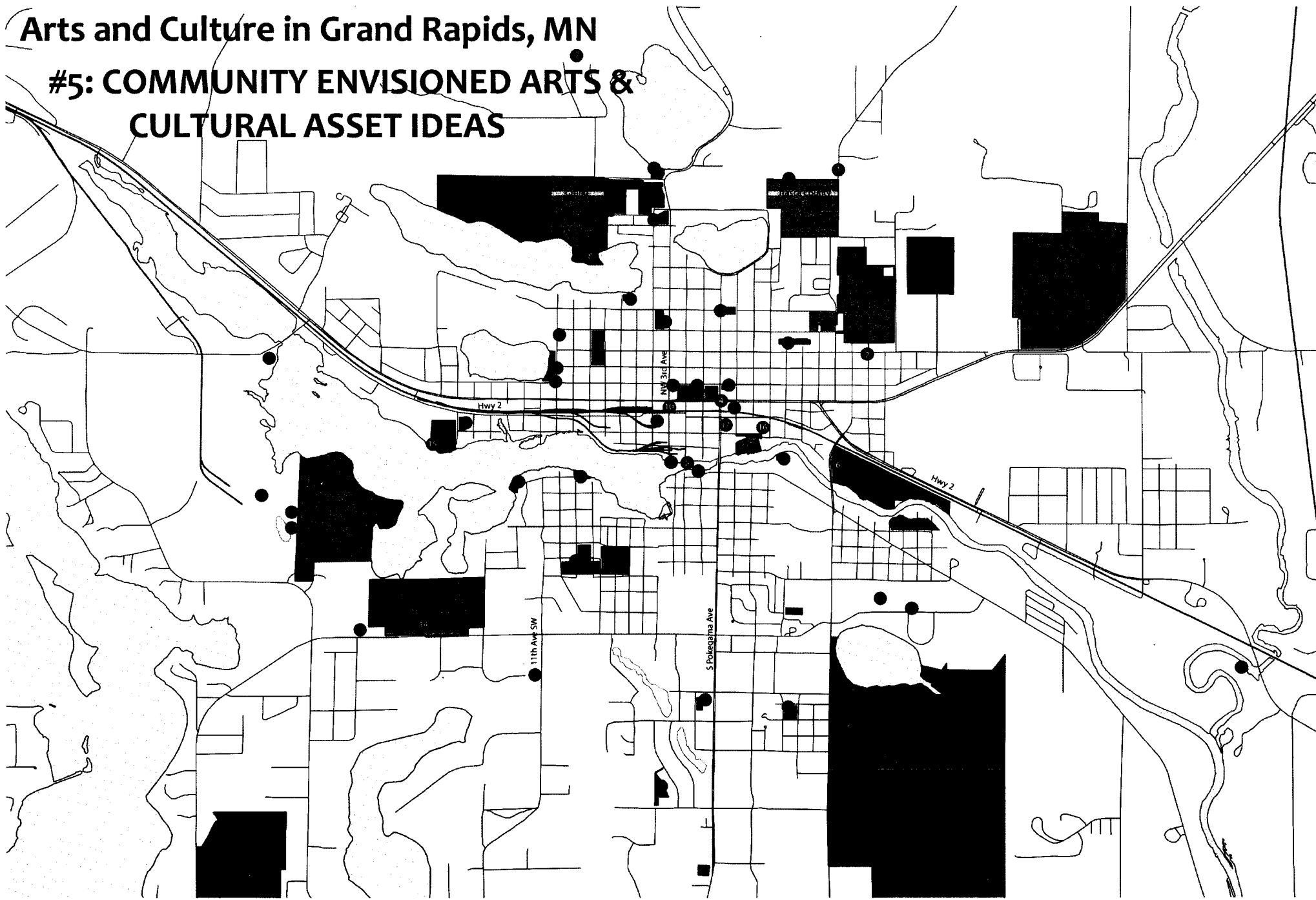
Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#4: AREAS OF PERSONAL EXPRESSION



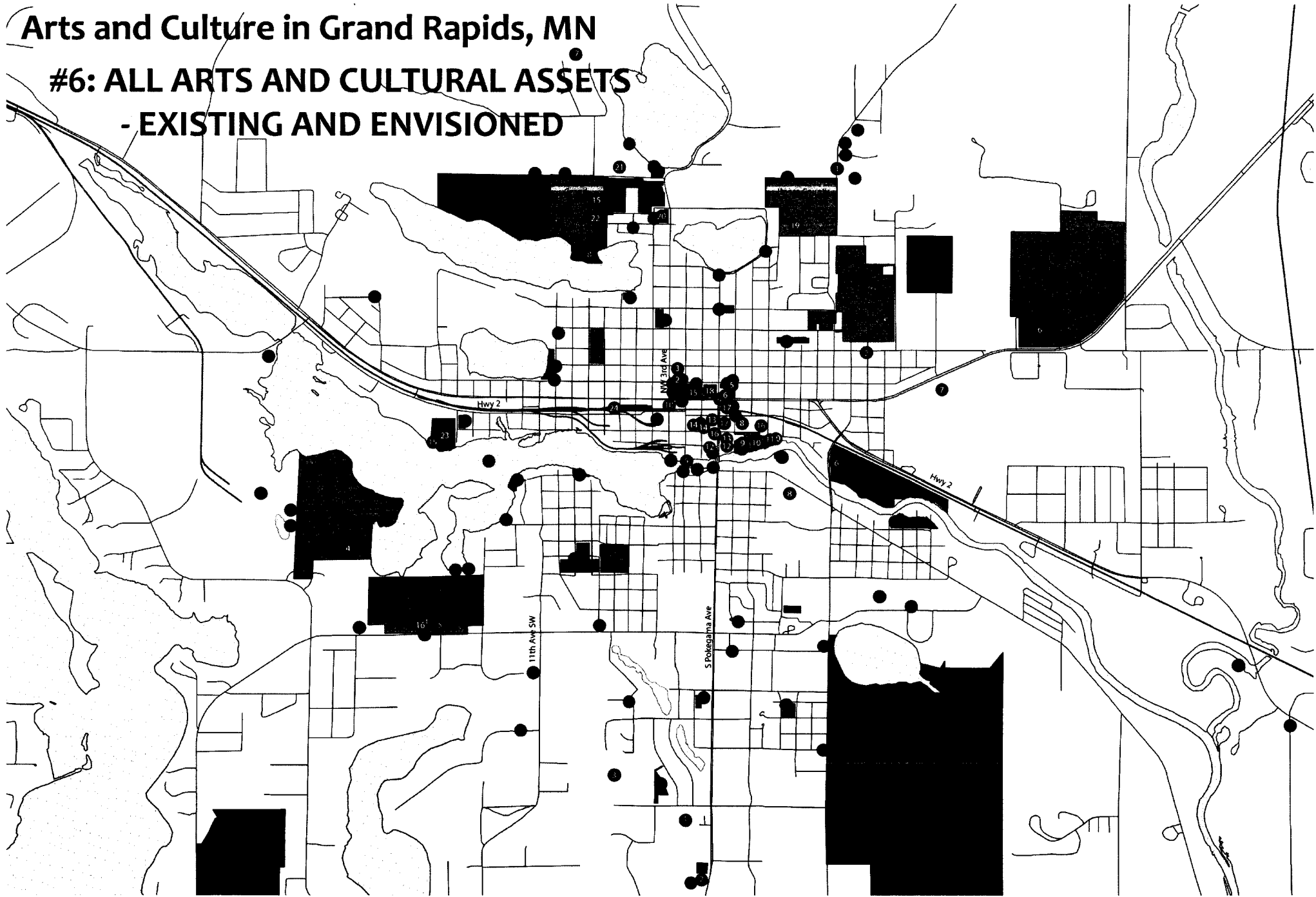
Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#5: COMMUNITY ENVISIONED ARTS & CULTURAL ASSET IDEAS



Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN

#6: ALL ARTS AND CULTURAL ASSETS - EXISTING AND ENVISIONED





Survey Highlights

DRAFT 11/19/14

Introduction

The GRMN Creates consultant team administered a community survey to gain insights into how Grand Rapids community members engage in the arts, ideas for the most effective things the City of Grand Rapids could do to foster arts and culture, and how arts and cultural activities could advance other community priorities.

332 people took the survey, or about 3% of the town's population.¹ The survey was delivered online via SurveyMonkey, for a 6-week period (September 16-October 30, 2014). City staff and arts and culture commissioners disseminated the survey link through the city website, the GRMN Creates Facebook page, flyers at area businesses, announcements at GRMN Creates community meetings, word of mouth, and a utility bill insert mailed to every Grand Rapids' household. To encourage participation, respondents were offered an opportunity to enter a raffle for gift certificates to local businesses and performances.

Key Findings

94% of respondents thought arts and cultural activities play an extremely or moderately important role in improving the *quality of life* of Grand Rapids area residents (Q41).

94% of respondents thought arts and culture should play an extremely or moderately important role in Grand Rapids' *regional identity* (Q38).

Respondents linked arts and culture to Grand Rapids' economic vitality.

- Over 80% of survey respondents rated arts and culture as extremely or moderately important for helping Grand Rapids attract and keep businesses (83%), workers (82%) and retirees (88%) (Q37).
- Strong majorities of respondents rated *artists'* contributions to Grand Rapids' economy as extremely or moderately important: 80% for their role as entrepreneurs, and 76% for their role as workers (Q37).

¹ As a sample of convenience subject to selection bias, survey findings may not be representative of the entire population of Grand Rapids residents. Respondents may be those with more passionate views (pro or con) about Grand Rapids' arts and culture

- Majorities of respondents thought arts and cultural *enterprises* were extremely or moderately important generators of income (67%) and jobs (65%) (Q36).

Respondents wanted to see closer links between arts and culture and other community domains

- Education (89%), healing (75%), and civic engagement (71%) had particularly robust showings, but majorities of respondents wanted to see closer links for *all* categories except for sporting activities (Table 1)

TABLE 1: ARTS AND LINKS TO OTHER DOMAINS

I'd like to see closer links between Grand Rapids' arts and cultural offerings and:

	%
education	89
healing in general	75
civic engagement	71
environmental activities	69
poverty alleviation	68
recreational activities	67
reduction in addiction	65
agriculture and forestry	57
sporting activities	42

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q29.

Strong majorities of respondents wanted to see the City of Grand Rapids use art to improve the physical environment, with particular support for parks, city buildings, and natural areas (Table 2).

TABLE 2: PRIORITY AREAS FOR ART IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In the future, I would like to see the City of Grand Rapids use art (visual and/or performing) to improve:

	%
parks	88
city buildings	79
natural areas (such as trails and their signage)	77
city infrastructure (such as bridges and railways)	71
streets	68

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q32.

People value arts and cultural activities for a variety of reasons, especially exposure to other cultures and artists/art forms, being emotionally transported, and socializing (Table 3):

TABLE 3: WHY PEOPLE VALUE PARTICIPATING IN ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

I value arts and cultural activities because they help me:

	%
find insights into other cultures or circumstances	86
discover new artists and arts forms	84
feel emotions through art	82
make new friends and expand social networks	82
develop my creativity	81
support a spiritual life through arts and culture (including listening to music, singing in church, reading)	71
develop a greater understanding of local history	70
help in healing processes	61

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q12.

Survey findings point to strengths and weaknesses in terms of social inclusion.

- Arts and cultural offerings appear to be most inclusive of people of different ages, less so for people of different income and education levels, and the least for minorities (Table 4).

TABLE 4: ARTS AND INCLUSIVITY

Grand Rapids' current arts and cultural offerings are inclusive of:

	%
people of different ages	72
people of different income and education levels	51
minorities, such as Native Americans	41

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q25.

Survey findings indicate opportunities to strengthen Native American arts and cultural offerings:

- Only 41% of respondents rated Grand Rapids' current arts and cultural offerings as inclusive of minorities, such as Native Americans (see Q25)
- 58% of respondents have participated in Native American arts and culture. Even more (65%) expressed interest in future opportunities (see Q14-15).
- Only 45% of arts/cultural organization respondents reported that they had engaged Native Artists or performers in their arts and cultural offerings (see Q19)

Survey findings suggest opportunity for improvement for youth arts access.

- Only 37% of respondents rated arts access at the public elementary school level as adequate, 41% for the high school level, and 40% for area colleges (Table 5).
- 89% of respondents wanted to see closer links between Grand Rapids' arts and cultural offerings *and education*, more than any other option (see Q29).

TABLE 5: YOUTH ARTS ACCESS

Grand Rapids' youth have adequate access to arts and culture through:

	%
public elementary schools	37
public high schools	41
area colleges	40
non-school providers (non-profits, churches, private lessons, etc.)	51

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q23.

Grand Rapids residents participate in a diverse range of cultural activities (See Q1).

- Music (79%) and art festivals (66%) are the most popular forms, followed by theatre (57%) and visual arts (55%).

58% of survey respondents participate in arts and cultural activities monthly or more frequently (see Q3).

Over half of respondents (53%) self-identify as some sort of artist (See Q4).

- They engage in a diverse range of artistic disciplines/creative practice. Over 10% of respondents work in music, craft, visual arts, and/or photography (Table 6).

TABLE 6: ARTIST RESPONDENTS' RANGE OF DISCIPLINES/PRACTICES

	%
Music	15
Craft	11
Visual Art	11
Photography	10
Writing & Literature	8
Theatre	8
Fiber Arts	5
Dance	4
Culinary Arts	4
Arts Education	3
Cultural Management & Administration	3
Community Arts	3
Graphic Design	3
Performance Art	3
Media Arts	2
Film & Video	2
Other	2
Fashion	2
Specialized Technical	1

**Calculated from Q5: What is your primary artistic practice/discipline (N=154) and Q6: What are your secondary artistic practices/disciplines (N=140).*

- A majority (50%) of artists consider themselves at the amateur/hobby stage, followed by emerging (22%), established (17%), and mid-career (10%) (see Q7).

Respondents can easily access information about arts and culture through a variety of modes. Tourism literature and local broadcast news (TV and radio) show some opportunities for improvement (Table 7).

TABLE 7: ACCESSING INFORMATION ON CULTURAL OFFERINGS

I can easily access information about Grand Rapids area arts and cultural offerings:

	%
in local print media	79
through internet/social media	79
through local broadcast news (TV and radio)	56
in tourism literature	44

Percentage of respondents selecting strongly agree to agree. Based on a 5-point scale. Source: Q9.

CONTINUED COMMUNITY INPUT: OCTOBER 2015

On October 27 and 28 a series of additional meetings were held to collect further input on the development of the Arts and Culture Plan for Grand Rapids. The following lists build on the previous summaries by adding new ideas or recording the areas of strong consensus. Additional meetings included a community meeting on the evening of the 28th and an Arts and Economic Development Strategic Visioning Session of the 27th.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nurture the Arts and Culture to Foster, Attract, and Keep Talent

- No added ideas

Support Arts Entrepreneurs and Artist Workforce Development

- Increase opportunities for networking, marketing, and resource sharing within the creative community.
- Increase opportunities for business training/support for arts entrepreneurship.

Develop Comprehensive Artist Support Facilities

- Foster the development of the Rialto theater as a place for arts education / sale.
- Support the development of gallery space for display and sale of art.
- Use Central School as an arts collaborative / incubator.
- Advocate for the redevelopment/ reprogramming of Central School exterior and interior spaces to support more community wide cultural events and attractions.
- Foster the development of artist spaces such as arts incubators or cooperative galleries.

Network and Promote GR Arts and Culture Offerings Regionally

- Create a workgroup to look at the potential for supporting more regional level sharing of arts and cultural programming and opportunities.

Additional Ideas

- For the A&C Commission**
- Start all commission initiatives with a proof of concept (i.e. a demonstration project) in order to help build networks and momentum.
 - Have arts and culture commissioners serve on other boards such as IEDC board, Chamber of Commerce Board, Visit Grand Rapids.
 - Have the commission act as a convener that can help leverage area initiatives into a more unified whole.
 - Clarify city rules/bureaucracy related to various arts and culture initiatives—i.e. fact sheets on how to get approval to have a performance in a park, get permission to paint a mural, have wine at a reception, etc.
 - Investigate the potential for an "Entertainment Tax" which could be used to support local arts.
- Near-Term Opportunities**
- Take advantage of the remodeling of Reif Center to engage audiences in different places around the city.



CONTINUED COMMUNITY INPUT: OCTOBER 2015

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Create Bridges for Groups of Different Incomes and Cultures

- Ensure inclusion within the arts from non-traditional communities, like disabled community.
- Create downtown signage in English and Ojibwa to reflect cultural heritage.
- Develop a workgroup to investigate potential ways to support an inclusive and welcoming Grand Rapids that fosters connections between people of different races, ethnicities, and income levels and promotes equitable arts access.

Foster Community-wide Events that Animate Public Spaces

- Create a "Fun Wagon" program to bring around to area parks.

Expand Arts Educational Offerings Outside of School

- Use Forest History Center for arts workshops / purposes.

Support Arts Integration within Area Schools

- Help to support arts education initiatives to ensure access to arts and culture by a broad range of children and adults.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Use Public Art to Help Unify and Animate Downtown

- Support the creation of an arts-and-biking tour.
- Create a way-finding system to bring people down to the Mississippi River.
- Support the development of arts-based outdoor gathering (seating) places.
- Investigate the possibility of having a public art sharing program with regional partners.
- Investigate ways to address downtown connectivity / walkability through the production of small-scale interventions such as imaginative crosswalks, or graffiti arts installation near the RR tracks or Horn Bridge.

Begin a Phased Approach to Developing a Public Art Policy

- Establish a "2 season" mentality to the creation of public artworks so that they have year round appeal.
- Develop small-scale public art opportunities within existing capital improvement projects as a first step towards creating a broader art in public places ordinance.

Take Advantage of the Small and the Underutilized

- Create a program to use unoccupied buildings downtown as "pop-up" shops that can support entrepreneurs (artistic and otherwise).

Draw on Arts and Culture to Promote Heritage and Health

- Create a central ice rink in the downtown area and foster the creation of a winter cultural festival.
- Foster the creation of a Festival of Lights - Winter Festival.
- Create historic and /or nature based tours to help promote the area.
- Collaborate with Get Fit Itasca to embed arts and culture into broader community health and connectivity goals.

● Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups Summary Analysis

DRAFT 11/17/14

Over 43 people contributed to the GRMN Creates planning process as interviewees and/or focus group participants. These residents and workers included artists, arts organization leaders, elected officials, city staff, members of the business community, educators and school administrators, social service providers, philanthropic funders, and people who work in local media. For a full list of names and affiliations, see the end of this section.

A number of key themes and policy ideas surfaced repeatedly through these one-on-one and small group discussions. Interviewees and focus group participants emphasized a number of important current and desired roles that arts, culture, and creative expression play for the overall Grand Rapids community. These observations suggest opportunities for policy recommendations.

● Arts and culture to attract and keep residents, workers, and businesses

- Stakeholders saw arts and culture as an essential amenity that worked in tandem with Grand Rapids' outdoor recreational opportunities, and hard and soft infrastructure (schools and libraries to roads) to attract and keep residents, workers, and businesses.
- Many people specifically spoke to a need to attract highly skilled workers (doctors, teachers, and high tech workers), young families, and businesses.

"The arts and culture piece is one of the things that draws people to our area that creates the opportunities for economic development...We know that if we work really, really hard at building that culture of our community as it is today and keep adding to it, that we will attract the people we need that we need here to fill the positions that will be available for them, especially the technology field, those types of things. Arts and culture, businesses, they go hand in hand." (Budd Stone, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce)

"I see a lot of crisis in workforce development coming down the pike. Baby boomers will be leaving the job market in droves—we can't hire teachers, substitute teachers; the community college can't hire teachers. Where arts and culture lands...as a community, we need to become a very strong attractor—a great, strong cultural environment into which young people would like to move and start productive lives." (Sonja Merrild, Blandin Foundation)

Expand arts educational opportunities

- Numerous interviewees perceived current arts educational opportunities within the K-12 public schools as inadequate.

"Kids might be yearning for it, but orchestra is \$60/month. Elementary schools do a good job with music through 4th grade, but they don't offer good, consistent access to tactile [visual] arts. It depends on the school, and depends on the year... It's up to individual teachers to try to integrate. It's not a core curriculum or anything. From 6th grade to 8th grade, band enrollment drops by two-thirds." (Beth George, ICTV)

- Some interviewees also saw opportunities for more arts-emphasis at Itasca Community College and in afterschool program offerings.
- A few interviewees specifically linked arts-education to workforce development goals—i.e. the importance of fostering creative thinking for developing a highly skilled workforce and entrepreneurs.

Promote equitable arts access, a welcoming culture, and bring diverse people together

- Interviewees expressed a desire that low-income populations, particularly youth, have the opportunity to actively participate in arts and cultural offerings. They identified arts education through the K-12 public schools and art in the public realm (murals, sculptures, and outdoor cultural events) as particularly effective strategies.
- Both Native and Anglo-American interviewees saw an opportunity and need to better celebrate and support Ojibwe artists and arts and cultural practices in Grand Rapids. They acknowledged entrenched racism, cultural differences, and other barriers to overcome.

"There's a huge opportunity to work with the Native community... We just don't seem to be able to bring those folks in. It's an opportunity and a weakness. Those connections are tough to make." (John Zasada, artist)

- People valued arts and culture's ability to bring people together from all walks of life and promote a diversity of thought, particularly through participatory and outdoor cultural events. In addition to connecting people of varied income levels, and the Anglo and Native populations, we also heard interest in opportunities to connect people of different ages.

"Without the arts, Grand Rapids would be a less interesting and even less tolerant community. Arts and culture...get diverse groups and individuals together...That's critical to me. We're so non-diverse in this part of the world...the arts helps us become more tolerant of diversity. It brings generations together. On July 5th, four different musical groups played at the Bank's anniversary. I was noticing the diversity of people there – the oldest guy we know about, the old president of the Bank, Claire Wilcock, was 93 years old. There were also three year olds. And, that happens at the Reif and at MacRostie." (Steve Downing, KAXE)

Leverage arts and culture to meet objectives for the physical environment

- Interviewees saw an opportunity for murals, sculptures, interactive cultural amenities (splash pads, skating rinks), improved design standards, and historic preservation to animate and beautify Grand Rapids, especially downtown.
- Central School (the grounds and interior) was repeatedly called out as a priority area.

"People don't like to go to work where they are bored and unfulfilled. They want to be in a community where interesting things happening. And interesting things do happen: First Friday Art Walk, the Downtown Art Fair last Saturday. I'd like to see more stuff like that and more permanent stuff, too—a larger amount of public art, sculptures and stuff." (Nathan Bergstedt, Grand Rapids Herald Review & Uncommon Loons)

- Interviewees valued pedestrian and bike-friendly amenities, and saw opportunities for public art and design to promote walking and biking.
- Numerous interviewees characterized Grand Rapids' downtown as fragmented, particularly Highway 2, the railroad tracks, the Mississippi River. Some envisioned artistic-wayfinding routes and public art installations to reduce these issues.
- Interviewees saw an opportunity to animate vacant/underutilized commercial spaces through temporary arts use (pop-up shops, studio spaces, window "galleries").

Foster support for artists and arts and cultural organizations

- A number of interviewees noted the relatively high cost of housing in Grand Rapids, and that artist affordable housing would be an important way to attract and retain artists.
- Shared artists spaces (cooperative galleries, membership-based "makers' spaces" with shared equipment, arts incubators, etc.) were seen as a way to way to support emerging/fragile cultural entrepreneurs.

"It would be great to have a makers space, but at a different scale; this isn't Brooklyn... It's basically you pay a fee to be a part of the group. You share resources: a 3D printer, industrial design stuff, art stuff. You could have a space where Itasca Community College students could have access. A lot of start-up companies were able to develop their companies because they were able to develop their ideas and have access to equipment." (Aaron Squadroni, artist and architect)

- Some interviewees wanted to see nonprofit arts organizations cooperate or consolidate to increase efficiencies.
- In particular, co-promotion with similar arts and cultural organizations in other areas of the region was proposed as a potentially effective strategy.

- A number of interviewees longed for more robust private-sector support for artists. They pointed to recent “good” examples—Grand Itasca Hospital strategically commissioned artwork from regional artists for its new facility. Grand Rapids State Bank featured many local musicians for its recent 100th anniversary celebration.
- Local musicians and smaller theater groups expressed a desire for more performance venues (such as a brew pub or a true outdoor amphitheater). Current venues such as the Reif and Showboat are not perceived as accessible presentation venues for these group.
- Some interviewees voiced opinions that the full wealth of arts and cultural offerings should be made more visible, in particular individual artists and smaller/grassroots groups.

“There’s creativity and culture here but people don’t always see that. They might see a sculpture here or there or hear music or a band performance. They may see things at the VFW club or see some Native American artwork, but folks don’t see the larger tapestry of all of that.”
(Ed Zabinski, Grand Rapids City Council)

- Interviewees suggested that the arts and culture commission work to make existing city policies related to arts and culture clear, consistent, and streamlined. (For instance: FAQ sheets on how to get a temporary liquor license, a street closure for a performance, or permission to produce a performance in a park).

Explore opportunities to market a regional arts-identity

- Interviewees acknowledged that Grand Rapids currently serves as a regional hub (county seat, as a retail center), and wanted to solidify its reputation as a regional arts and cultural hub.
- Interviewees, however, also counseled that Grand Rapids suffers from some parochial-driven stigma.
- Duluth, Bemidji, Brainerd, and Grand Marias also have arts and cultural strengths in the region. Some saw opportunities to co-market the region.
- Given these different factors, it may be most sensitive and strategic to look for opportunities to promote the region’s overall arts identity vs. singling out Grand Rapids.

Promote healing and empowerment through arts participation

- Grand Rapids’ social service providers and nonprofit arts organizations have demonstrated success with using visual arts and creative writing participation to help vulnerable populations (such as homeless individuals, people with mental illness, and those recovering from addiction) build confidence, cope with stress, and gain an increased sense of agency in other aspects of their lives. They saw an opportunity to deepen and expand such efforts.

Foster links between art and the natural environment

- Interviewees saw Grand Rapids' forests and lakes as key to its identity. Many regional artists find raw materials and draw inspiration from the natural environment. Interviewees expressed excitement about recent efforts to highlight the links between art, culture, and the natural environment (i.e. the Forest History Center's Forest Jam concert). Other stakeholders wanted public art to educate youth and the public about the area's natural resources (for instance an interactive splash pad that mapped local lakes).

Interviewee and Focus Group Participants:

- Beth George, Executive Director, Itasca Community Television
- Barb Sanderson, Grand Rapids City Council, Grand Itasca Hospital (board), Grand Rapids Human Rights Commission, County HRA (housing), Greater MN state finance board, Grace House (homeless shelter)
- Budd Stone, President, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
- Chris Fulton, Director, Grand Rapids Area Community Foundation
- Ed Zabinski, Grand Rapids City Council, Grand Rapids State Bank
- Matt Lehtinen, President and COO, Magnetation
- Steve Downing, KAXE
- Rick Harding, Rennix Corporation
- Nathan Bergstedt, Grand Rapids Herald-Review, Uncommon Loons
- Tom Pagel, Grand Rapids City Administrator
- Sonja Merrild, Director of Grants, Blandin Foundation
- David Marty, President, The Reif Center
- Todd Driscoll, Blandin (retired), MacRostie Art Center (board)
- Karen Walker, Community Education, Independent School District 318
- Isaac Meyer, Kootasca Community Action, Community Engagement Manager
- Mark Zimmerman, President and CEO, Itasca Economic Development Corporation
- Audrey Moen, Housing Manager, Northland Counseling Center
- Lorna Mix, CSP Director, Northland Counseling Center
- Amanda Okech, Co-Director, Kiesler House, Northland Counseling Center
- Steve Loney, Co-Director, Kiesler House, Northland Counseling Center
- Robert Foster, Housing Coordinator Northland Counseling Center
- Ann Campbell, Activities Director, Independent School District (#318)
- Becky LaPlant, Program Associate, Public Policy/Engagement, Blandin Foundation
- Trish Kline, Itasca County Administrator
- Tom Saxhaug, State Senator
- Rochelle VanDenHeuvel, Assistant Superintendent, Independent District 318
- Dale Adams, Mayor, City of Grand Rapids
- Marcia Anderson, Director of Library Services, Grand Rapids Area Library
- Amy Dettmer, Assistant Library Director, Grand Rapids Area Library
- Julie Kennedy, Director of Grand Rapids Engineering
- Jeff Davies, Director of Grand Rapids Public Works

- Dale Anderson, Grand Rapids Director of Parks and Recreation
- Tony Ward, Director of Grand Rapids Public Utilities
- Megan Christianson, Executive Director, Visit Grand Rapids
- Meghan Bown, Community Health Director, Get Fit Itasca
- Kirsta Matison, graphic artist
- Mary Schideler – photographer
- Sam Miltich – musician
- Rebecca Gramdorf – independent artist, school art teacher
- Aaron Squadroni – architect and artist
- John Zasada – retired forester, artist
- Jim Zasoski – Studio Manager, MacRostie Art Center
- Two anonymous interviews.

Arts and Economic Development

GRMN Creates | An Arts and Culture Roadmap

From the Community

From other Communities

QUOTES:

"In the grander scheme, if you create a community that people want to come to, you bring people with skills."

"People don't like to go to work where they are bored and unfulfilled. They want to be in a community where interesting things are happening."

"We're a unique community in that we are small enough to change quickly and large enough to fund that change, if we prioritize it"

"In the end it's about economic development - growth and about differentiating ourselves in the regional market place."

KEY OBSERVATIONS:

1. One of the primary goals for fostering arts and culture within the community is to help attract and retain Millennials, entrepreneurs, and a skilled workforce.

2. There is a recognition that artists need more business training, and businesses need more access to creative professionals.

3. Grand Rapids has the potential to build on its standing as a regional hub, by working with other regional partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nurture the Arts and Culture to Foster, Attract, and Keep Talent

- Create opportunities for more summer residency programs by performing arts groups.
- Create a programmatic plan to develop Central School as a more active cultural asset.

Ideas From the Community Meeting

- Create a Xmas market on Block 21
- Start a Native American Market
- Convert Bijou Theater in a dinner theater
- Resurrect the Rialto Theatre
- Create an ice rink downtown
- Create artist residences/lofts

- Encourage resource sharing (empty buildings and school auditoriums, affordable "arts incubator" space. (Arlington County, VA)

- Create incentives to encourage audiences to explore new cultural venues and experiences. (Chicago)

Support Arts Entrepreneurs and Artist Workforce Development

- Support arts education to help current and next generation workers gain skills and creativity needed for entrepreneurship.
- Create a registry of local creative entrepreneurs that could provide services for local businesses.

- Increase opportunities for networking, marketing, and resource sharing within the creative community.

- Create a multi-year mentor relationships among arts organizations

- Provide entrepreneurial training tailored to artists and designers (Fort Collins)

Develop Comprehensive Artist Support Facilities

- Develop artist housing

Ideas From the Community Meeting

- Culinary Institute
- Machine/Woodshop Coop
- Senior Art Space
- Folk School

- Develop affordable artist live/work space using low income housing and/or historic tax credits (Artspace: MN and nationwide).

- Encourage convening and equipment-sharing artists' centers.

Network and Promote GR Arts and Culture Offerings Regionally

- Promote existing cultural facilities to potential visitors/ tourist and create a stronger promotional campaign about the multidimensional nature of rural communities.

- Help augment efforts to promote existing cultural facilities for regional day trips.

- Create a workgroup to look at the potential for cultural programs on a regional level.

- Create and maintain a centralized event website.

- Create a brochure/map to market area arts and culture.

- Create information kiosks in the downtown area.

A Key Recommendation We Suggest

- Create a "Shark Tank" program that helps match private sector investors with creative entrepreneurs.

Arts and Community Development

From the Community

From other Communities

QUOTES:

"The arts have always been part of Grand Rapids' community fabric."

"For low-income populations, art doesn't always play a role in people's lives. The typical parent I talk with doesn't even really have time to read to their kids."

"We need more of an arts and cultural focus in our educational system. The first chance that kids have to be exposed to art is 8th grade!"

"We have an equity issue to address first. Arts access is about more than just transportation."

KEY OBSERVATIONS:

1. A number of factors may deter lower income peoples' participation in the arts. It's not solely a matter of cost.

2. Stakeholders cited income inequality as a top issue facing Grand Rapids.

3. Grand Rapids has a strong community oriented culture that can be fostered through community gatherings - large and small.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Create Bridges for Groups of Different Incomes and Cultures

- Support specific programs that help address the barriers to access and encourage participation by lower-income people.
- Develop a workgroup to promote inclusive and welcoming arts and cultural offerings, particularly with regard to Native American art, artists, and people.

Ideas From the Community Meeting

- Promote the creation of cross generational biographies
- Provide low cost opportunities for kids and adults
- Include Native American arts and culture

- Create parent outreach program for household wide cultural appreciation and participation. (Chicago)

- Develop city-wide school arts exhibitions and performances. (Chicago)

Foster Community-wide Events that Animate Public Spaces

- Create a staff position for coordinating downtown programming and events that can serve as a liaison with other organizations such as Visit Grand Rapids.
- Work with Parks and Recreation Department to create more cultural events within parks.

- Foster the development of street festivals and other broad based cultural events that can be inclusive of the entire community.

Ideas From the Community Meeting

- Free music by the river
- Winter wonderland skating all over lakes/rivers

- Provide leadership to develop projects and initiatives that are competitive for large-scale grants from state and national funders for high-impact projects. (San Francisco)

- Create an city staff position to promote cultural events within parks (Austin)

Expand Arts Educational Offerings Outside of School

- Create task-force to explore options for after school arts education programs, with particular focus on low-income populations.
- Work with ISD continuing education, the YMCA, and nonprofit arts organizations to identify gaps in arts programming for children and adults.

Ideas From the Community Meeting

- Create an after school center for crafts
- Create and "Arts and Culture" day for schools (like the Youth Water Summit) to help introduce students to available community resources.

- Provide working artist and historians paid opportunities to teach classes in a variety of arts and cultural areas. (Mankato)

- Develop online resource where individuals who wish to teach could be connected with organizations looking for instructors. (Mankato)

Support Arts Integration within Area Schools

- Create small grants program to help put art back into local school curricula.
- Create a high-level workgroup (City, School District, Community) to investigate opportunities to prioritize arts K-12 training and enrichment.

- Work with ICC to develop integrated arts offerings for engineering students.

- Support the growth the Spring Thaw arts and literature publication at ICC so that it becomes more of a community wide celebration.

- Identify potential corporate sponsorships campaign for arts education programs/opportunities. (Chicago)

- Develop a Community Learning Integration Plan to promote positive youth development and creative learning for all citizens. (Austin)

A Key Recommendation We Suggest

- Become part of the Get Fit Itasca stakeholder group to find ways art can address systemic community health efforts.



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GRMN Creates | An Arts and Culture Road map

Arts and the Physical Environment

From the Community

From other Communities

QUOTES:

"A vibrant downtown is very important for a strong arts community."

"There's creativity and culture here, but people don't always see that."

"People pull off and have lunch in their car. There's nowhere to go; it's mostly roads and houses and businesses. It's hard to just be somewhere."

"I'd love to see more art on a public level. Public art is so important. It's a way everyone can have access to art."

KEY OBSERVATIONS:

1. Stakeholders value a beautiful downtown animated with activity – they see a key role for arts and culture.

2. Stakeholders also support creating more public art throughout the city.

3. Vacant commercial buildings are seen as an opportunity, as much as they are a liability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Use Public Art to Help Unify and Animate Downtown

- Create more indoor and outdoor programming opportunities for Central School.
- Create arts-based downtown wayfinding system to help address issue of fragmentation.
- Develop public art amendment to Riverfront Framework Plan.
- Ideas From the Community Meeting**
 - Amphitheater downtown
 - Mississippi River park improvements
 - Aesthetic walking paths downtown
 - Pedestrian bridges
 - Create unique city design standards

- Define and develop a public art walk to connect key artistic and public areas into an integrated whole. (Mankato)

Begin a Phased Approach to Developing a Public Art Policy

- Phase in a municipal percent for art program
- Integrate a .5% public art component in all upcoming downtown street improvement projects.
- Ideas From the Community Meeting**
 - Public art in roundabouts
 - Art along the trail system
 - Organized graffiti art under K Horn bridge
 - Art covered school busses/public transit
 - Art in the parks
 - Visual art entrance into the city
 - Yarn bombing

- Create streamlined zoning, licenses and approvals for street vendors, performance artists and street art installations. (Chicago)
- Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to integrate art throughout commercial districts and retail spaces. (Chicago)

Take Advantage of the Small and the Underutilized

- Foster a program to use vacant buildings downtown as experimental galleries or entrepreneurial spaces.
- Create a mechanism for fostering small-scale design/art interventions
- Convert empty storefronts into pop-up galleries. (Mount Rainier, MD)
- Use empty buildings to secure space for artists and arts-related businesses. (New Haven)

Draw on Arts and Culture to Promote Heritage and Health

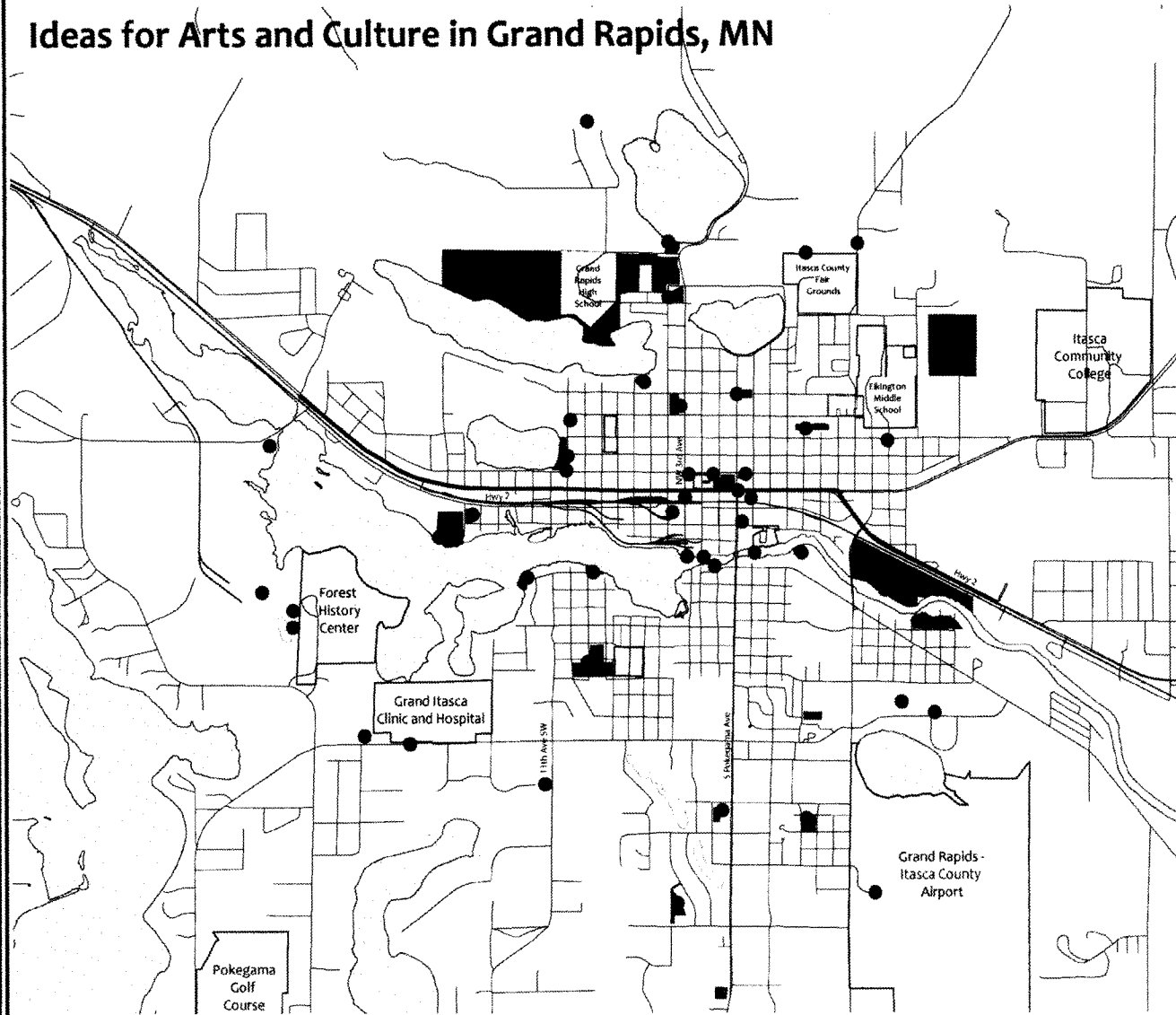
- Highlight community history through art installations in parks, a long trail, and other shared public spaces.
- Explore opportunities to use art to promote walkability and bike use.
- Identify new, prominent location for the Farmers Market to help promote regional crafts and cuisine.
- Celebrate the city's rich history, culture, and diversity through public art (San Diego)
- Create parks amenities that promote local history and health (Chattanooga)

A Key Recommendation We Suggest

- Have new incoming Arts and Culture Commissioners sit on one other city commission as well to ensure that art has the potential to be integrated into all public projects and programs that come before commission review.



Ideas for Arts and Culture in Grand Rapids, MN



GRMN Creates | An Arts and Culture Road map

Summary

On September 16th, the first Community Meeting for the Arts and Culture Master Plan was held at Timberlake Lodge. Attendees were asked to identify existing cultural facilities and to envision other Arts and Culture opportunities they would like to see developed throughout the city. Ideas include:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Public Art:

- Public art in roundabouts
- Art along the trail system
- Organized graffiti art under K Horn bridge
- Art covered school busses/public transit

Created Spaces:

- Sculpture park/garden
- Interactive artistic splash pad (fountain)
- Mississippi river park improvements

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Markets:

- Home for farmers market
- Native American market
- Xmas market on Block 21

Venues:

- Convert Bijou Theater into dinner theater
- Resurrect the Rialto Theater
- Expand showboat (dinner cruise, events)
- Tribal History Center

Downtown:

- Ice rink downtown
- Artists residences/lofts

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Free music by the river
- Summer music / outdoor music
- Performances at the fairgrounds
- Winter wonderland skating all over lakes/ivers

Arts Education

- Culinary institute
- Machine/woodshop coop
- Senior art space
- After school center for crafts
- Folk school