



# EAST GRAND RAPIDS

## MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT 2026



---

To Our Community:

On behalf of the City Commission and Planning Commission, we're pleased to present this amendment to the 2018 East Grand Rapids Master Plan. Much has been accomplished in the past seven years. Our Planning Commission and staff have been diligent in pursuing the many recommendations contained in that Plan.

During that period, however, we've also witnessed unforeseen change, as well as new opportunities. The purpose of this 2026 amendment to the Master Plan is to focus on specific areas of the City and provide guidance to address those new challenges and opportunities.

Throughout the process of preparing this Plan, the community has been actively engaged. The more than 600 responses to our City-wide opinion survey provided insight into the likes, dislikes, and desires of residents and business owners throughout the City. Personal interviews, neighborhood meetings, and comments specific to the planning subareas offered more targeted thoughts and opinion.

Adoption of this Master Plan amendment supplements the 2018 Plan and offers direction relevant to that Plan's goals to ensure the continued sustainability and vitality of East Grand Rapids as "A Better Place to Live". Thank you to all who have participated in this process.

Sincerely,

Katie Favale  
Mayor

---

---

# Acknowledgements

Preparation of this Master Plan amendment was made possible by the active participation of the citizens of East Grand Rapids and, in particular, the residents and business owners within the planning subareas. Special thanks to the members of the Planning Commission for their thoughtful guidance, the City Commission for their valuable input, and City staff for their hands-on assistance throughout the process.

## City Commission

---

Katie Favale, Mayor  
Ryan Burdick  
Abbie Groff-Blaszak  
Bradley Hunter  
Laura Schwartz  
Kate Skaggs  
Chris Wessely

## Planning Commission

---

Mary Mapes, Chair  
Brian Miller, Vice Chair  
Matt Feyen, Secretary  
Steve Achram  
Greg Metz  
Peter Michell  
Christopher Rosmarin  
Laura Schwartz  
Thomas Tilma

## City Staff

---

Shea Charles, City Manager  
Doug LaFave, Deputy City Manager  
Jay Gianotti, AICP, Zoning Administrator

---

---

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Perspective .....	3
Assets and Challenges .....	8
Vision and Goals .....	12
Subareas .....	13
Recommendations .....	27
Zoning Plan .....	28

Draft

---

# Introduction

## Purpose

East Grand Rapids has a long history of proactive planning to guide the development and continued sustainability of the community. In addition to City-wide master plans, more focused plans have been regularly prepared and updated for parks and recreation, transportation, mobility, and utilities.

The most recent City-wide Master Plan was adopted in 2018. During the intervening years since then, the City Commission, Planning Commission, and staff have diligently pursued implementation of the Plan's goals and recommendations. While much has been accomplished in a few years, more needs to be done to address remaining issues, new challenges, and emerging opportunities.

As an essentially built-out City, East Grand Rapids is a stable community comprised primarily of attractive residential neighborhoods. Pride in these areas is evident by the many renovation, remodeling, and new construction projects routinely occurring throughout the City. Yet some challenges do exist and warrant focused consideration. This Master Plan amendment, therefore, doesn't reexamine the entire City, but builds upon the foundation created by the 2018 Master Plan as a supplement to that Plan. It focuses on specific neighborhoods that due to age, changes in conditions, or unanticipated opportunities merit more detailed attention. More recent demographic data are also incorporated to highlight changes in the City that reveal important trends and distinguish East Grand Rapids from communities locally and across the nation.

## Summary of Process

Consistent with the City's tradition of transparency and community involvement, the process of preparing this supplement relied heavily on input from the community-at-large and the stakeholders most directly affected within the subareas. Individual interviews were conducted; an interactive project website was created; a public opinion survey was posted which received over 600 responses from throughout the City; comments were sought regarding each of the individual subareas; and neighborhood meetings were held to further elicit input as planning concepts were formulated.

Results of the public engagement efforts were shared with the Planning Commission and City Commission. During several work sessions, the Planning Commission set new planning goals and reviewed, discussed, and refined potential land use options.

Subsequently, a draft document was presented at a public hearing; further refinements were made; and the Plan was adopted by both the Planning Commission and City Commission.

## Relationship with Other Plans

While this Plan amendment is primarily focused on specific subareas, other critical elements of the City's development, character, and services were not ignored. East Grand Rapids continually plans for the development, expansion, and maintenance of its infrastructure. For example, every five years a new *Parks & Recreation Plan* is prepared to examine the adequacy and availability of such facilities throughout the City. A *Mobility-Bike Action Plan* was adopted in 2021 identifying a

---

list of improvements and new routes along with priorities for action. The City is also actively engaged in an on-going *Sustainability Program* toward achieving carbon neutrality for City facilities with the adoption of a *Climate Action Plan*. Information and recommendations from those plans have been relied on to provide guidance for this Master Plan amendment. Other plans, such as The Rapid's *Transit Master Plan*, were also consulted.



# Perspective

## Community Profile

Despite being a mature, built-out community, East Grand Rapids remains vibrant. Recent population estimates from the US Census Bureau indicate that the City has experienced nearly seven percent growth since its 2010 low, rising from 10,694 to 11,394. Increases like this are unusual for mature, inner ring cities which typically remain stable, at best, or experience population declines.

Other demographic data offer clues to this population uptick. Since 2010, the median age has steadily declined and the average household size has increased, trends that also run contrary to what has occurred in most mature cities across the nation. Younger families are moving into the community, offsetting the growth of the 65 and older population which, also contrary to national trends, is relatively low at 11 percent of the total population compared to the national percentage of 17.7 percent.

East Grand Rapids Trends 2010 - 2023				
Factors	Population and Housing Changes			
	2010	2020	2023*	% Change 2010-2023
Population	10,694	11,371	11,394	+ 6.5
Median Age	38.1	37.7	37.0	- 2.9
Persons ≥ 65 Yrs.	8.9 %	10.6 %	11.0 %	+ 23.6
Median HH Income	99,489	145,000	168,487	+ 69.4
Median Hsg. Value	249,100	409,200	502,000	+ 100.01
Median Rent	1,043	1,636	1,845	+ 77.0
Avg. HH Size	2.85	2.90	2.98	+ 4.5

\* Census estimates

A comparison with other nearby, economically comparable metro area communities and Kent County also adds perspective to how East Grand Rapids fares.

2023 US Census Estimate - Comparisons					
	East Grand Rapids	Ada Twp.	Cascade Twp.	Grand Rapids Twp.	Kent County
Population	11,394	14,413	19,701	18,934	661,354
Median Age	37.0	42.8	43.2	41.4	36.5
Persons ≥ 65 Yrs.	11.0 %	16.5 %	17.8 %	19.1 %	15.4 %
Median HH Income	\$168,487	\$171,047	\$133,401	\$121,328	\$79,756
Median Housing Value	\$502,000	\$532,800	\$469,600	\$420,500	\$309,900
Median Monthly Rent	\$1,845	\$2,245	\$1,739	\$1,584	\$1,270
Owner Occupancy	94.3 %	94.3 %	90.2 %	85.4 %	70.5 %
Persons/HH	2.98	2.83	2.72	2.58	2.56

These data show that East Grand Rapids has a:

- younger population than the other communities and comparable to Kent County
- greater household size than the other communities
- much lower proportion of 65+ residents than all, including Kent County
- very high proportion of owner-occupied dwellings, tied with Ada
- median income second to Ada and substantially higher than all others
- median housing value and monthly rent higher than all, except Ada

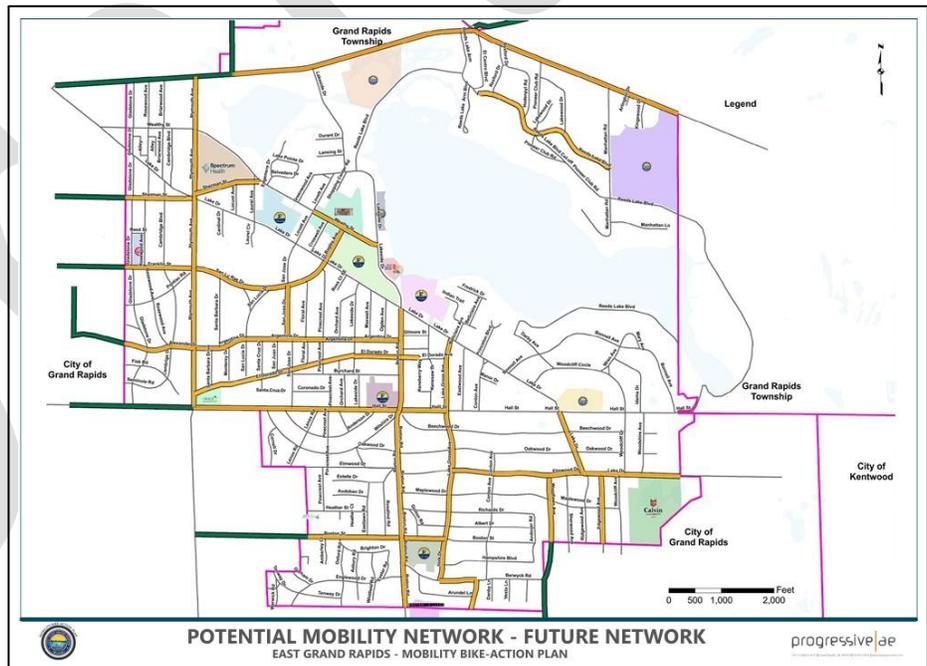
These data run counter to a common perception that East Grand Rapids is an aging community unable to attract and keep young families. It is also worth noting that the three comparison communities are townships with substantial land area available for new development, with large areas devoted to commercial and employment offerings, and served by highly regarded school systems – factors that would typically attract young families. The reputation of the East Grand Rapids school system and the “walkability” of the City are likely reasons for EGR’s continued attractiveness to younger families.

## Infrastructure

East Grand Rapids has an established infrastructure of facilities and services supporting its resident population and business center. The availability of such facilities and services is important to the vitality, sustainability, and desirability of the community and has been cited among the main reasons for living here.

### Mobility.

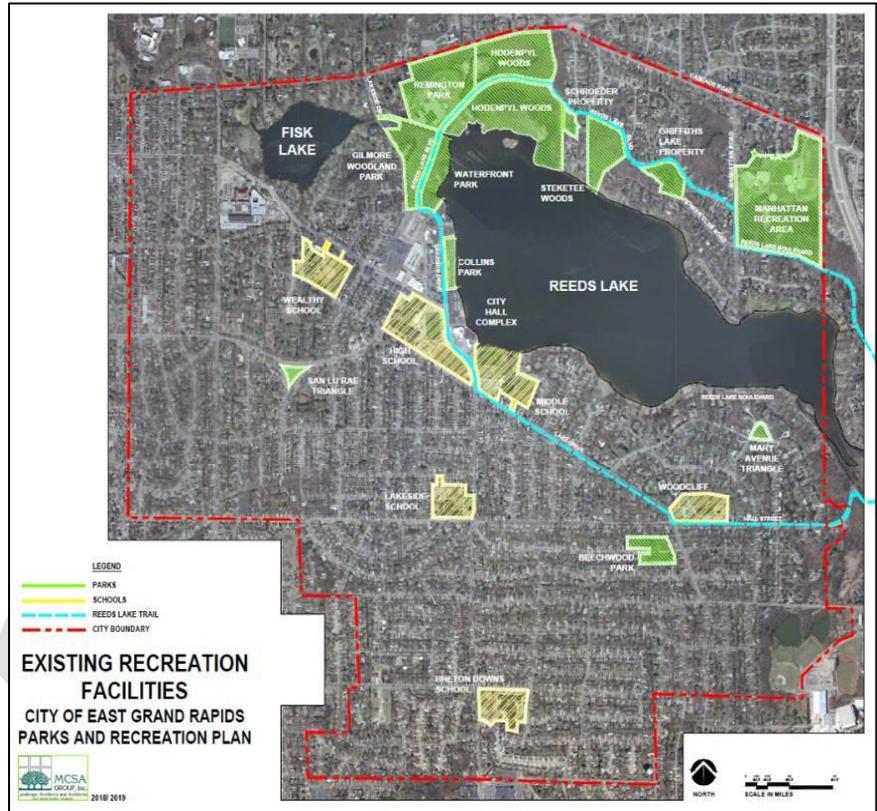
Widely known for its walkability and active lifestyle, the City boasts a network of sidewalks throughout most of its neighborhoods and is actively expanding its accommodation for bicyclists and other non-motorized enthusiasts via designated bike lanes and expanded pathways.



However, while those seeking an active lifestyle have many options from which to choose, opportunities for those with physical disabilities or age-related disorders may not be as widespread. It is essential that barriers to navigating the pedestrian environment, including obstacles, uneven surfaces, street crossings, slopes and ramps, continue to be addressed to increase safety and expand mobility opportunities for all.

Transit service offers another mobility option to commuters, shoppers, and students. The Rapid serves the City with two bus routes, one of which follows Breton and Wealthy Streets through the Easttown neighborhood and Gaslight Village. The other route serves the southwest quadrant of the City along Breton, Boston, Plymouth, and Hall Streets.

**Recreation.** Parks, playgrounds, ball fields, open spaces, and natural areas abound, offering a full range of leisure pursuits. Some facilities are in conjunction with the City's schools, while most others surround Reeds Lake, which is in itself a valued recreational and scenic amenity. While there is a relative abundance of these facilities, they tend to be concentrated in the City's northeast quadrant. Except for the playgrounds, courts, and ball fields available at the various schools, no city parks are found in the western third of the City and only one is located in the City's southern half.



**Schools.** The East Grand Rapids school system ranks among the top 25 school districts in the State of Michigan and is a major draw for many residents. Campuses for both the high school and middle school are located in the heart of the City close to the Gaslight Village business district and Reeds Lake. Three elementary schools are dispersed throughout the community.

According to the community opinion survey conducted for this Plan, “quality schools” ranked as the number one reason why people chose East Grand Rapids as their place of residence.

## Community Engagement

Over 600 people from throughout the City, responded to the opinion survey on the Master Plan website. Additional opportunity was available to offer comments specific to each of the four individual subareas identified in the planning effort. Potential redevelopment options for two of those areas were also posted to elicit further comments and ideas. That input is discussed in the Subarea Chapter.

**Community Opinion Survey**

1. How long have you lived in East Grand Rapids?

Less than 2 years  
 2 - 5 years  
 6 - 10 years  
 11 - 20 years  
 More than 20 years

Not a resident [describe your interest in the City]



2. Please mark the letter below corresponding to the area on the map in which you live.

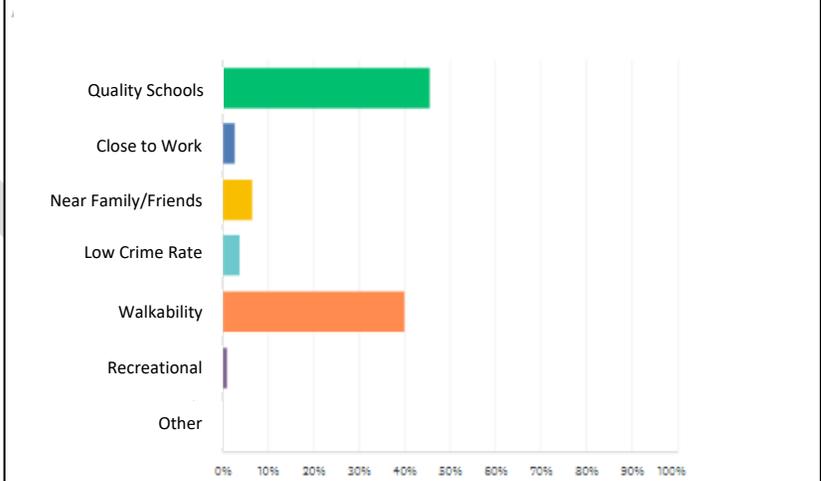
A. Northwest  
 B. Blodgett/Fisk  
 C. North Lake  
 D. Central  
 E. Central Core  
 F. South Lake  
 G. Southwest

In the community survey, when asked why residents chose to live in East Grand Rapids, the most frequent responses, not surprisingly, were “schools” and “walkability”. Similarly, the most prized qualities were “community”, “schools”, “walkability”, and “safety”.

However, when asked what residents liked least about the City, in one form or another “taxes”, “housing cost”, “traffic”, and “lack of diversity” were cited most frequently. The most serious issues, in order of ranking, were: “cost of housing”, “enforcement of traffic laws”, “lack of nearby shopping and services”, “property maintenance”, and “lack of housing options”.

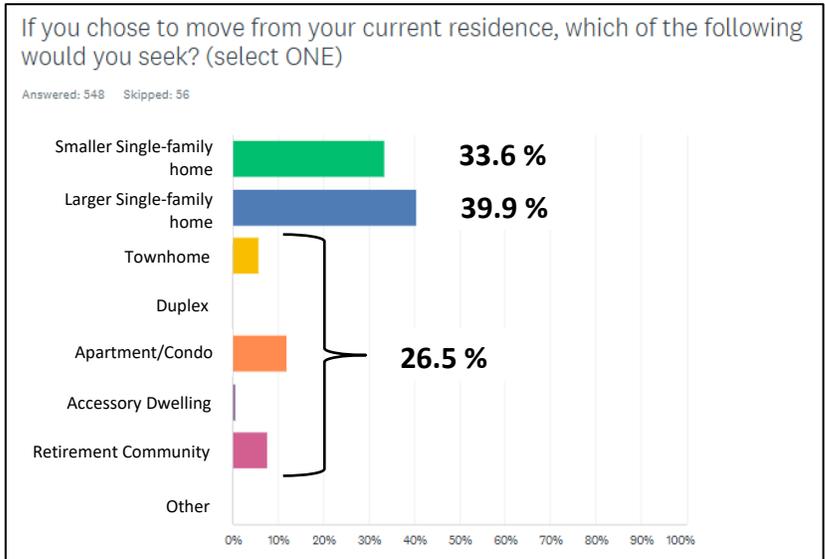
Despite the level of activity in Gaslight Village, respondents described the district as “tired” and

Please mark the ONE reason below that best describes why you live in or moved to East Grand Rapids:



“lacking shopping opportunities”. They also identified businesses that are desired. The top five were: “high-quality sit down restaurant”, “coffee shop”, “pharmacy”, “hardware store”, and “clothing store”.

When asked what type of housing the respondent would choose if they moved from their current residence, nearly two-thirds (60.1 percent) chose “smaller single-family home”, “townhome”, “apartment or condominium”, “accessory dwelling”, or “retirement community”. More than one-quarter (26.5 percent) of all



respondents would seek options other than a single-family home. However, approximately 44 percent of all respondents stated they would move out of East Grand Rapids if they left their current residence, citing “taxes” and “children no longer in school” as the two principal reasons.

---

# Assets and Challenges

East Grand Rapids enjoys an enviable reputation as a vibrant residential community whose many assets create a healthy, safe, small town environment.

The opinion survey conducted in conjunction with this planning effort confirmed the importance of some of the City's strengths and identified others. Among its most notable assets are its schools, ranked in the top 25 school systems in Michigan. In the opinion survey, "quality schools" was cited most often as the reason for living in EGR.

"Walkability" came in a close second as the reason for living in the City. This is easy to understand when considering the network of sidewalks available throughout the City and the pathways and trails within City's parks and open spaces. On any given day people can be seen in all parts of the community walking dogs, strolling with friends, accompanying children to school, and running.

While the sidewalks and pathways provide the infrastructure for walking, the neighborhoods themselves create an inviting environment. The City's neighborhoods are generally characterized by mature, well-maintained homes (some dating from the early 1900s), tall trees lining the streets, and manicured lawns.

Other attributes that enhance the quality of life and make East Grand Rapids distinctive include its two lakes that occupy much of the northern part of the City. Reeds Lake, in particular, is a unique feature in the heart of the community, offering recreational opportunities, remarkable views, space for public events, and a tranquil place to relax. Located nearly adjacent to Reeds Lake, the Gaslight Village business district offers a variety of shops, restaurants, and services in an inviting and walkable setting. The proximity of Gaslight Village to Reeds Lake and its adjacent Collins Park also creates a reciprocal relationship that encourages mutually supportive interaction between the two destinations.

Though the City possesses many attractions, like other communities it is not without its challenges. Frequent concerns expressed by the public and from analysis of available data include:

## Housing Cost

---

Understandably, the cost of housing in the City is a significant concern as it is throughout the country. According to the most recent estimates released by the US Census Bureau, the median housing value in East Grand Rapids in 2023 was \$500,200, a 100 percent increase from the 2010 value of \$249,100. In contrast, Kent County's median value in 2023 was less than two-thirds that of the City's (\$309,900 vs. \$500,200) and only increased by 28 percent from 2010.

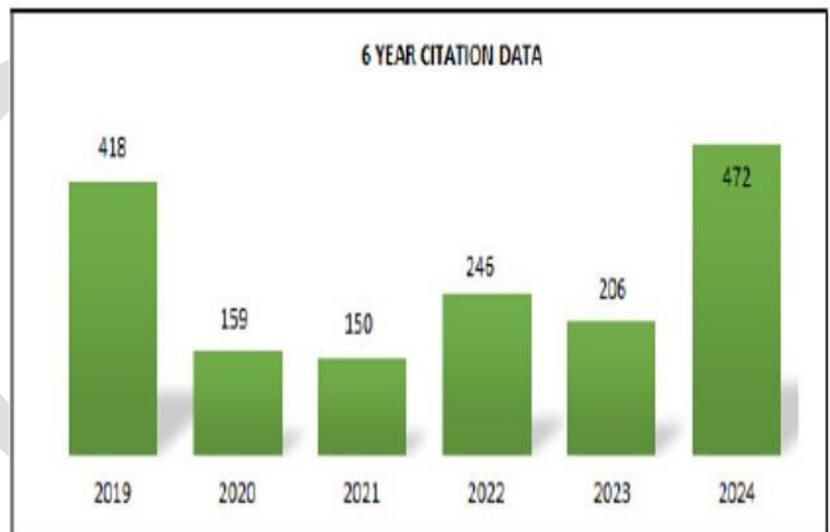
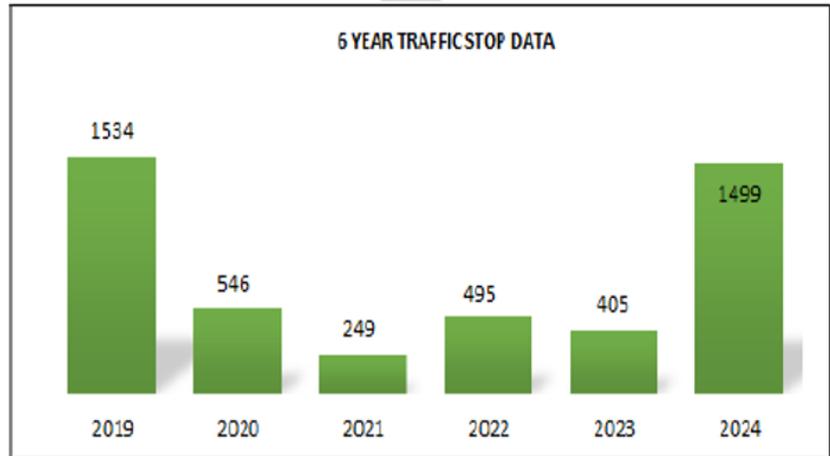
In addition, many respondents to the Plan's opinion survey noted that moving to another home within East Grand Rapids was not an option due to the escalated property taxes that would result when a home is sold and reassessed.

---

## Traffic Safety

As a predominantly residential community, the creation of any major thoroughfares through East Grand Rapids has been avoided. Speed limits are set at 25 mph, and streets are confined to two lanes with a few exceptions at major intersections. However, frustration was repeatedly expressed by survey respondents with the perceived lack of enforcement of speed limits and the conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists.

Traffic stops and citations have increased substantially in the past year following a four-year decline. A major reason for this is related to the COVID pandemic. During the pandemic traffic stops and citations dropped off substantially because of personal contact guidance and efforts by Kent County to minimize the jail population. Arrests for minor issues related to traffic stops were discouraged. The accompanying charts illustrate the dramatic change in traffic stops and citations between 2019 and 2024. The City also intends to work with a consultant in the near future with respect to a review of the Department of Public Safety which will also include traffic enforcement.



An ambitious program of expanding bike lanes and pathways is also being instituted throughout the City to improve mobility and increase safety. Recommendations from the Mobility-Bike Action Plan are being implemented to expand the network of enhanced facilities for all road users. To accomplish this, a shift from low utilization/convenient on-street parking will need to give way to a focus on dedicated facilities for bikes. The city has already implemented several bike network changes including dedicated bike lanes, advisory bike lanes, and a shadow network. Efforts to build out the remaining network that was called for by the community is underway.

---

Other measures designed to accommodate non-motorized traffic and reduce conflicts are being explored. One example is in the Gaslight Village business district where the planned mixed-use development of the former Ramona Medical Center property would separate internal bicycle routes from streets, integrate designated pedestrian and bicycle routes with existing routes in and around the business district, and provide connectivity with abutting properties.

## Commercial Opportunities

While the Gaslight Village business district appears to be thriving, many survey respondents cited the need for more options. A desire for high quality sit-down restaurants was frequently expressed. Breakfast and lunch restaurants were also noted as desirable. Additionally, pharmacy, convenience, hardware, and clothing retailers ranked high among the requested businesses. Added commercial space in the proposed planned development is expected to address such expressed needs. Even current merchants have voiced a desire to have more businesses in the district to draw additional visitors.

Another often-cited concern focused on the existing Gaslight/D&W Plaza and its relationship to the remainder of Gaslight Village. Despite the fact that D&W is a significant anchor store and the 200 plus space parking lot serves the entire business district, public sentiment favors improvement. The Plaza's suburban strip center character was frequently noted as being out of place, as is the expansive parking lot fronting Wealthy Street. Many respondents commented about the "tired" image of the plaza in general.

## Lack of Diversity

Many survey respondents perceive East Grand Rapids as lacking diversity in two ways that are, in part, interconnected...socio-economic and housing. Frequent social comments included terms such as "entitled", "homogeneous", "pretentious", "insular", and "elitist".

With respect to housing, the opinion survey showed that over one-quarter of all respondents would choose a housing type other than a single-family home. Condominiums, townhouses, senior living, or apartments were cited as their next residence. However, nearly half of the respondents said they would move out of the City, citing children no longer in school, taxes, housing affordability, and/or unavailable housing options as the reasons for such a decision.

## Age of Housing Stock

In addition to the lack of alternative housing choices, the City's housing stock is old. According to the US Census estimates, 69 percent of all housing in the City is at least 65 years old and more than a quarter of all units (27.4 percent) were built prior to 1939. Only six percent of the housing in East Grand Rapids has been constructed since 2000.

This may account for the ranking of "property maintenance" as the fourth most significant concern according to survey respondents. As an essentially built-out city, East Grand Rapids has no large expanse of open land to accommodate new development. The continued availability of quality housing will rely on individual home improvement to upgrade and repair existing homes and modification of zoning regulations to allow infill and conversion to other residential options.

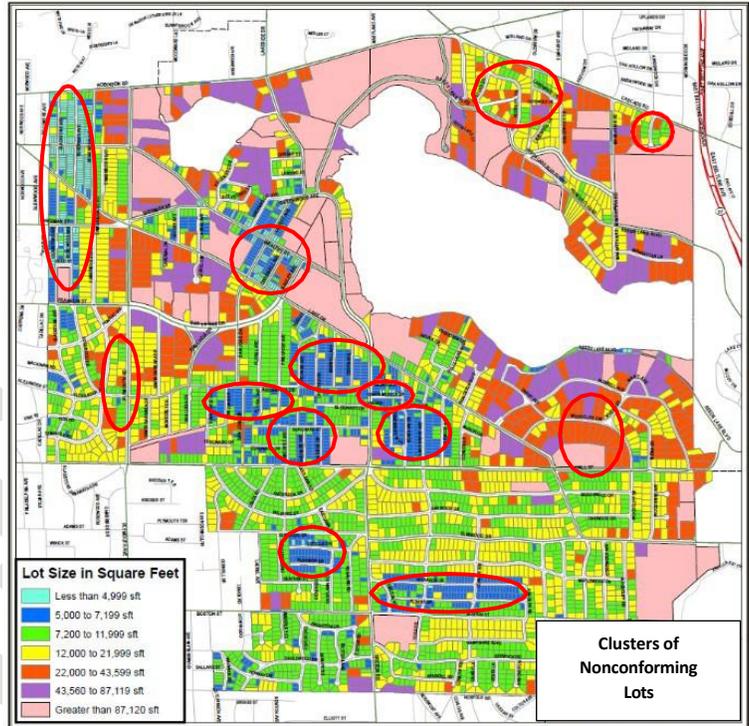
## Nonconforming Conditions

Many of the City's established neighborhoods were created long before any zoning regulation. In some areas, consistent with the trends of the times, homes were built on lots as small as or even smaller than 4,000 sq. ft.

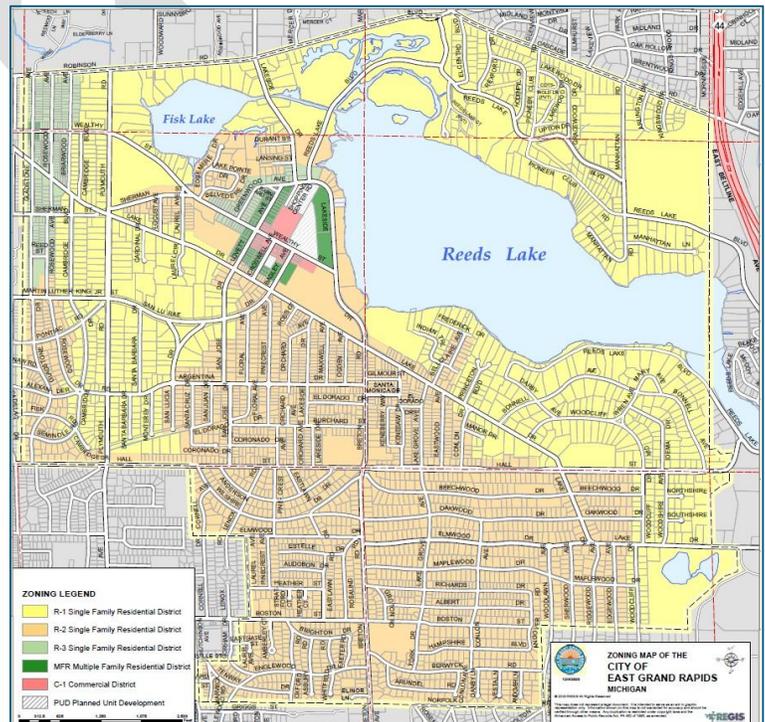
When zoning was eventually introduced, even the smallest required minimum lot size (5,000 sq. ft.) was larger than many of those pre-existing lots, making them nonconforming. Nearly all lots in some neighborhoods still remain nonconforming.

The accompanying maps illustrate current zoning and the significant concentrations of lots that do not meet zoning requirements for lot area and/or width throughout the City.

While nonconforming lots are occupied by homes, they are subject to limitations not applicable to conforming lots. For example, the maximum allowed height of buildings is less than the height permitted on conforming lots. Limits on the maximum coverage for buildings and pavement also make it difficult, if not impossible, for such nonconforming lots to have a garage, accessory building, or patio.



For example, the maximum allowed height of buildings is less



---

# Vision and Goals

## Vision

East Grand Rapids will continue to be a highly desirable residential community. Its long-term sustainability will be maintained through an excellent school system, ongoing investment and enhancements in the Gaslight Village business district, a variety of housing options for current and future residents, ample preserved open spaces and parks, a comprehensive network of trails and pathways for all users, and superior public services.

## Goals

The findings and recommendations of this Plan amendment are consistent with and intended to support the goals of the 2018 Master Plan. The overarching theme for these goals is to support the Plan's vision and retain the viability of the City's distinct neighborhoods. Many of the goals listed below and in the 2018 Master Plan are aligned with goals more fully addressed in other City plans such as the Mobility/Bike Plan, Parks & Recreation Plan, and Climate Action Plan for City operations.

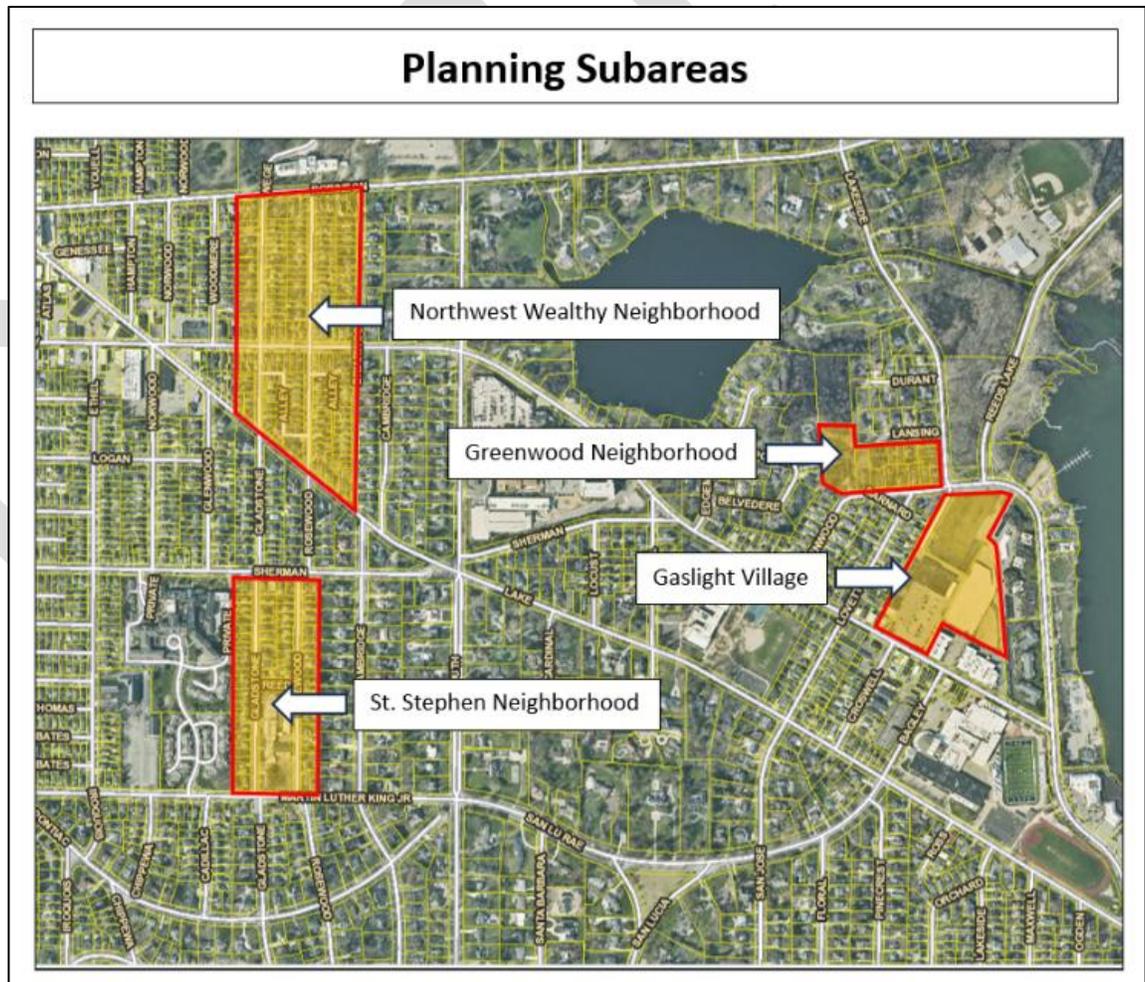
- Increase the variety of housing options available to accommodate aging-in-place, new families, and young professionals at an attainable cost.
- Expand the network of trails, pathways, and designated lanes for biking, walking, and running to create a “complete streets” mobility system.
- Achieve universal accessibility throughout the City for those persons with mobility challenges.
- Provide open spaces in Gaslight Village for social interaction and community events.
- Enhance the image and vitality of Gaslight Village by promoting additional events, screening parking lots, encouraging more businesses, and promoting a walkable environment.
- Preserve the City's attractive, desirable neighborhoods through enforcement of property maintenance regulations; prompt repair of streets, sidewalks, and other infrastructure; and routine patrols by public safety officers.
- Strive to achieve carbon neutrality for City operations by 2040.

# Subareas

The City's 2018 Master Plan addressed some localized issues but is mainly a plan for the community as a whole. Many of the recommendations found in that Plan have been implemented or are currently being worked on, while others remain on the "to-do" list. Therefore, this Plan is a supplement to the 2018 Plan and is more narrowly focused on a few specific areas of the City. Four subareas were selected for a closer look based on their existing character, age, proximity to other uses, susceptibility to external influences, and/or current mix of uses.

Except for the Gaslight Village subarea, these are primarily mature residential neighborhoods, each with its own character and attributes. Each subarea is described on the following pages.

Two of the subareas, Gaslight Village and St. Stephen neighborhood, include conceptual development plans. No individual concept is being singled out and recommended. They are presented as illustrations of what could be done consistent with the goals of this Plan and addressing comments offered by those who participated in the opinion survey and attended neighborhood meetings. Any future development in either area is subject to the desires of the property owner, the feasibility of the use, and zoning approval by the City.



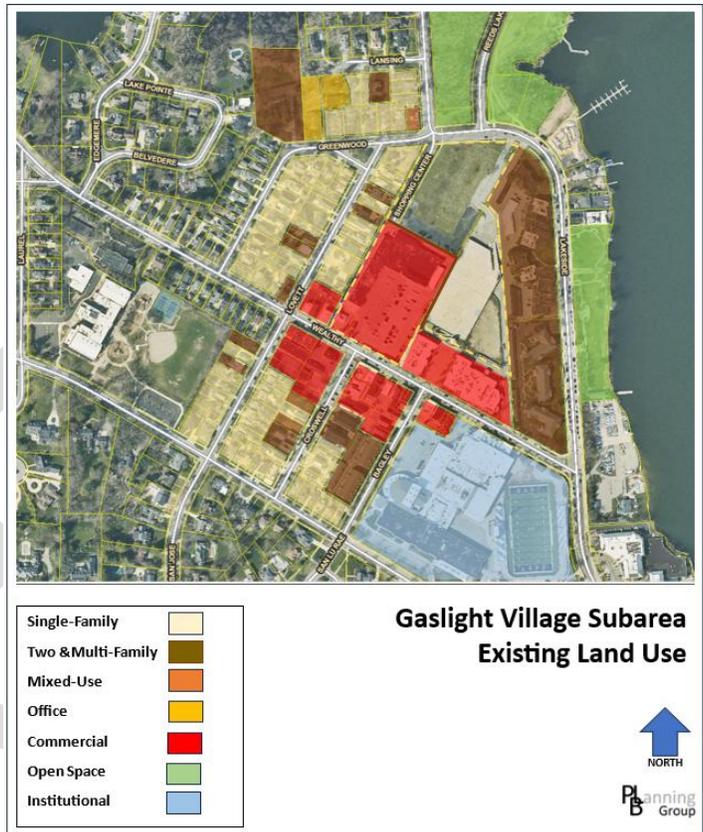
## Gaslight Village

**Existing Conditions.** The center of activity in the City is a vibrant mix of retail, restaurants, offices, lakefront park, pathways, municipal services, schools, and residential options clustered around the Wealthy Street/Lakeside Drive intersection. Activity abounds throughout the “village” as residents and visitors shop at the many unique stores, enjoy a variety of dining options, relax in Collins Park, cast a lure on Reeds Lake, and walk their dogs or ride their bikes along the Reeds Lake Trail.

A mix of homes, condominiums, and apartments surrounds the commercial core and the last remaining undeveloped parcel of significant size in East Grand Rapids. Once occupied by an amusement park and later by a medical clinic, parking deck, and department store, the roughly eight and a half acre vacant site has been the subject of various redevelopment proposals since 2004. Two commercial buildings, approximately 77,000 square feet, were developed along the Wealthy Street frontage as the first phase of an approved 2004 plan. However, the remainder of the property awaits development. This site also wraps around the north and east sides of an existing retail shopping center, Gaslight Plaza.

The shopping center, developed in 1958 on about 3 acres, followed the prevalent development model of that period for shopping centers, setting the “L-shaped” building back from the street and creating a large parking lot in the foreground. While the center is successful and contains the City’s only grocery store, its suburban design is out of character with the pedestrian-oriented business district surrounding it.

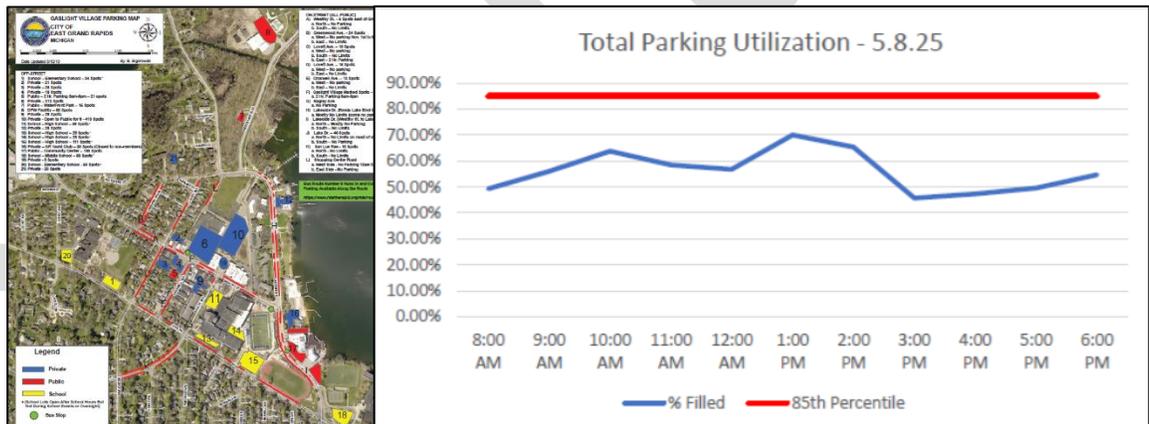
Business owners generally give high marks to Gaslight Village for its variety, charm, and level of activity. However, like “downtown” merchants elsewhere, they have expressed concern about parking. While this is often a matter of perception, to the business owners it can be very real. The 2018 Master Plan



included a parking study which concluded that parking was sufficient. However, the loss of a two-story parking structure coupled with the recently proposed development of the remaining vacant acreage will warrant another look.

An updated study of all parking (public, private, and school) in Gaslight Village was conducted in May 2025, confirming the findings of the previous parking study, as illustrated in the accompanying chart and graph.

Parking Description	Time Collected	Number of Vehicles	Max Spots	Percent Filled	Avail Spots	Percent Avail
<b>(School, Public/City, &amp; Private/Open to Public)</b>						
Total Parking	8:00 AM	646	1310	49.31%	664	50.69%
Total Parking	9:00 AM	734	1310	56.03%	576	43.97%
Total Parking	10:00 AM	835	1310	63.74%	475	36.26%
Total Parking	11:00 AM	766	1310	58.47%	544	41.53%
Total Parking	12:00 AM	744	1310	56.79%	566	43.21%
Total Parking	1:00 PM	917	1310	70.00%	393	30.00%
Total Parking	2:00 PM	857	1310	65.42%	453	34.58%
Total Parking	3:00 PM	598	1310	45.65%	712	54.35%
Total Parking	4:00 PM	620	1310	47.33%	690	52.67%
Total Parking	5:00 PM	650	1310	49.62%	660	50.38%
Total Parking	6:00 PM	716	1310	54.66%	594	45.34%



“The parking industry considers the ideal target parking occupancy rate to be 85 percent. This minimizes congestion and maximizes parking utilization. Areas that exceed 85 percent occupancy can appear full to the parking public and contribute to congestion as motorists circle looking for an available space. Likewise, areas that are below 85 percent are considered underutilized.” [Donald Shoup, *The High Price for Free Parking*, Planners Press, 2011]

“This cushion reduces frustration, provides for standard fluctuations such as mis-parked cars, snow cover/removal, and provides space for extra peaks in demand.” [Urban Land Institute, *Shared Parking*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2020]

---

The availability of a large parcel within Gaslight Village, as well as the presence of the Gaslight Plaza, anchored by the City’s only grocery store, represent opportunities and challenges for the community.

Approximately 20 years ago, the currently vacant property was acquired when the former Jacobsen’s Department Store closed. A mixed-use development proposal consisting of residential, office, and commercial uses was approved by the City and subsequently by the voters. However, only the first phase, consisting of two buildings along Wealthy Street, was constructed prior to an economic downturn that halted continuation of the project. In subsequent years, revised plans were presented, though each time unanticipated events (COVID, high interest rates, recession, construction costs, market conditions, etc.) impeded moving forward. A new mixed-use concept plan was submitted for the site in 2024 and after several revisions was approved in 2025. Submittal of detailed final plans is expected in 2026.

The other major component of this subarea, Gaslight Plaza, essentially a shopping center within the broader business district, has been part of the community for decades. Several small businesses are located here, as well as a large grocery store. The expansive parking lot in the foreground accommodates customers for the shopping center and other businesses.



Regardless of its success in drawing customer traffic to the entire business district, the Plaza is basically a suburban strip center in the midst of a downtown. While most other businesses in the Village line the adjacent sidewalk and parking is either on the streets or concealed behind buildings, the Plaza parking lot dominates the frontage.

Despite its prominence in the community, the business district lacks a sense of arrival at the Wealthy and Lovett Street intersection. Less than a block west of the Plaza, the business district abruptly ends and Wealthy Street becomes a residential street lined with stately homes. A distinct symbol at this portal would enhance the business district’s identity and create a formal entry.



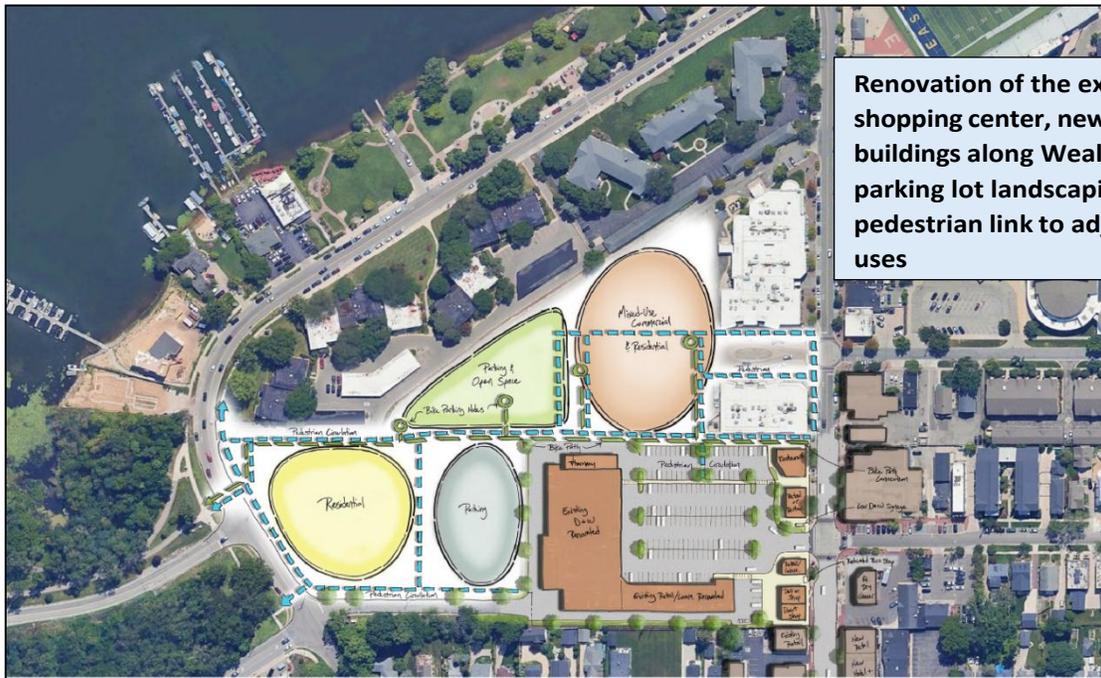
---

**Neighborhood Input.** In 2024 a revised concept plan was presented to the City for development of the remaining eight-plus acre vacant site north and east of the Gaslight Plaza. Similar to the original mixed-use development approved 20 years earlier, the new plan proposed more dwelling units as well as more residential options along with increased commercial space and revisions to the interior access and circulation system. The proposal generated almost immediate response from the community – both in support and in opposition.

Much of the comment was in the context of the broader business district. While many people expressed support for the development and the resulting availability of more commercial space and additional housing opportunities, others were opposed to the scale of some buildings and the impact on traffic and parking.

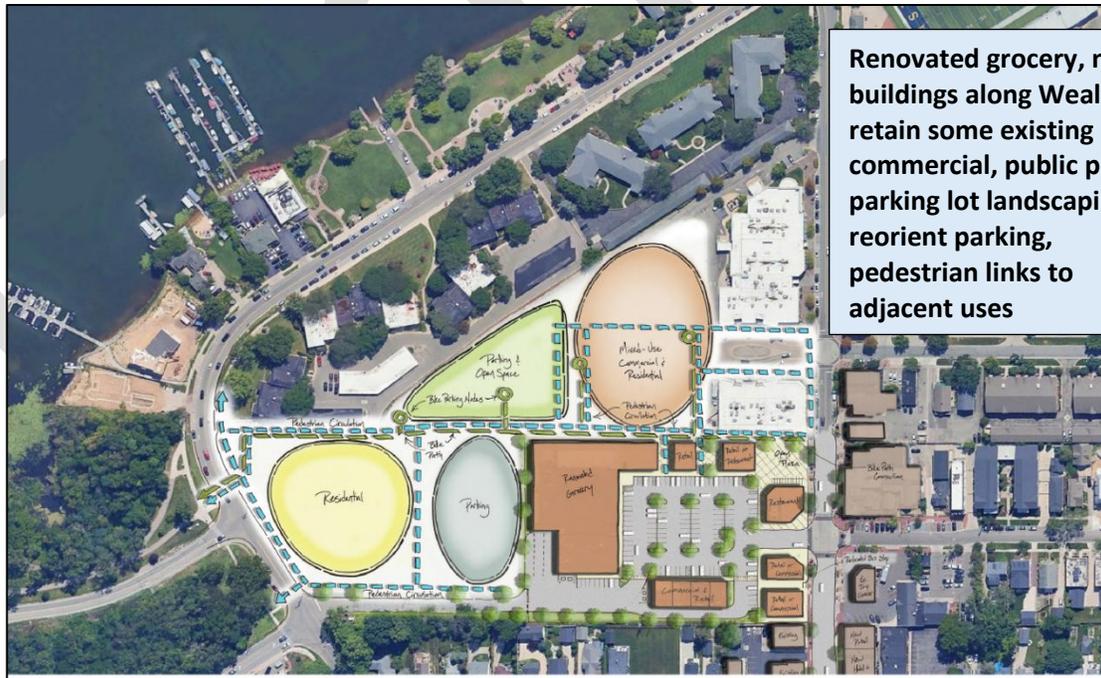
Relative to the overall business district, traffic congestion was identified as a significant issue. Linked to traffic was concern about conflicts between vehicles and cyclists or pedestrians. This prompted many suggestions to separate vehicular and non-motorized traffic to reduce congestion and improve safety. Other comments proposed more public spaces within the business district for events, relaxation, and visual appeal. The image of the Gaslight Plaza was also the subject of several comments noting the need for physical improvements to the building and screening for the parking lot.

**Potential Changes.** Future plans for the vacant site adjacent to Gaslight Plaza have been presented to the City and a concept plan was approved. Therefore, only a schematic layout is shown here to illustrate the desired integration of the new development with potential changes to the Gaslight Plaza. The attached concept sketches illustrate several possible and desirable scenarios based on input from the community and the goals of the Master Plan. Key elements to all are the retention of the grocery store, addition and/or replacement of commercial space, creation of prominent open space, retention of parking, connectivity with the future adjacent development, visual enhancement of the Wealthy Street frontage, and gateway identity. No one concept is being advocated over another. All are dependent on the owners of the Plaza and the individual businesses within the shopping center.



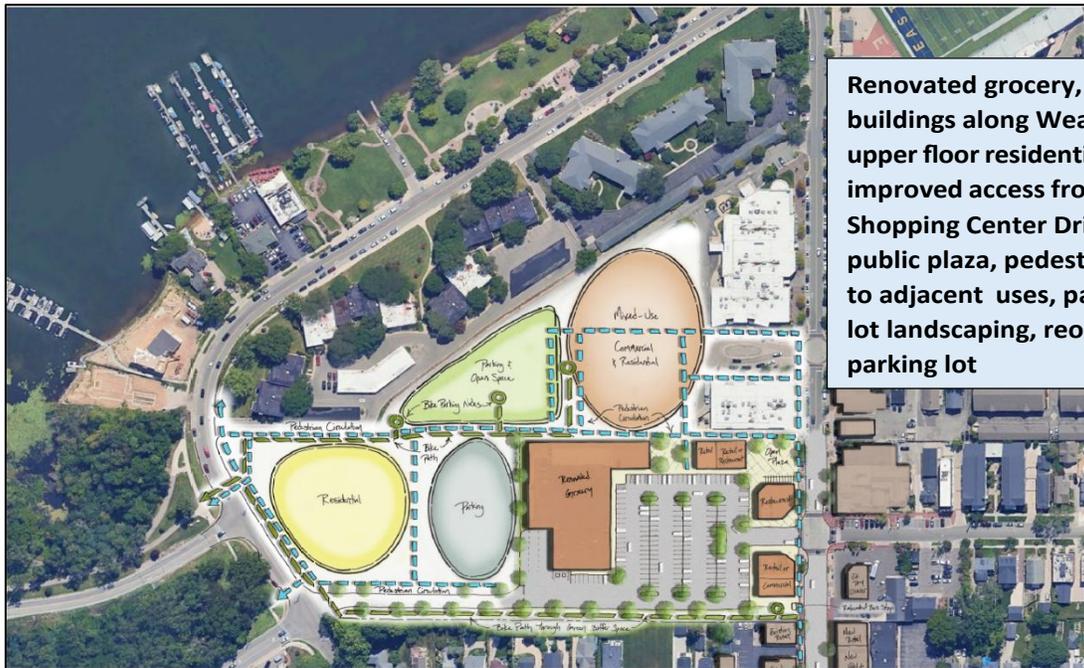
**Renovation of the existing shopping center, new buildings along Wealthy, parking lot landscaping, pedestrian link to adjacent uses**

Future Master Plan - Concept A  
Gaslight Village Neighborhood- East Grand Rapids, Michigan



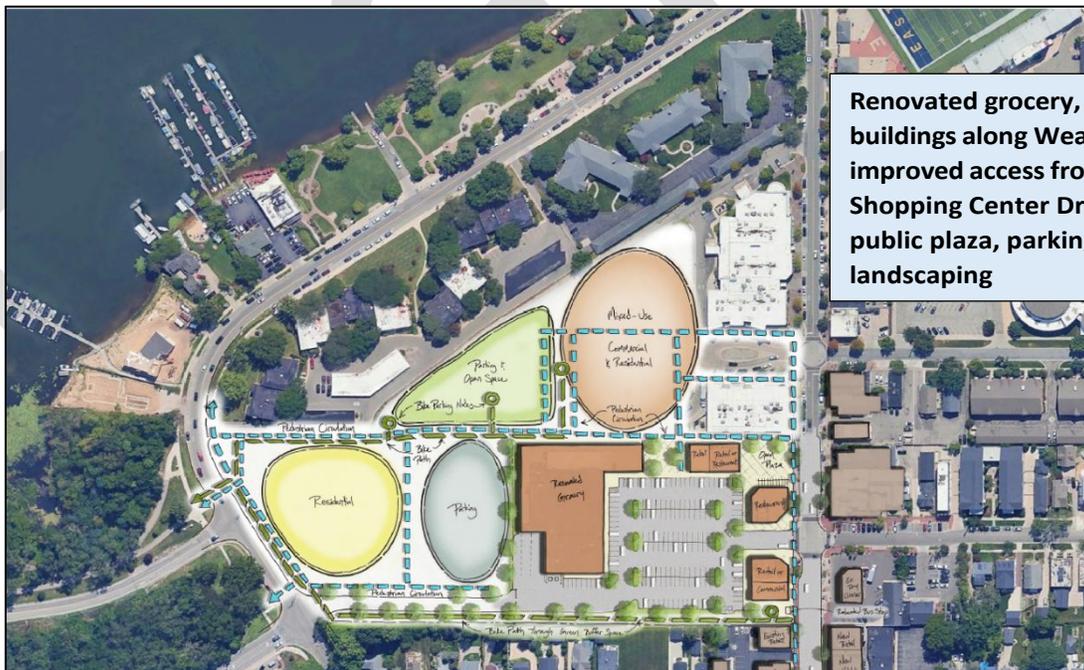
**Renovated grocery, new buildings along Wealthy, retain some existing commercial, public plaza, parking lot landscaping, reorient parking, pedestrian links to adjacent uses**

Future Master Plan - Concept B  
Gaslight Village Neighborhood- East Grand Rapids, Michigan



**Renovated grocery, new buildings along Wealthy, upper floor residential, improved access from Shopping Center Drive, public plaza, pedestrian link to adjacent uses, parking lot landscaping, reorient parking lot**

**Future Master Plan - Concept C-1**  
Gaslight Village Neighborhood- East Grand Rapids, Michigan



**Renovated grocery, new buildings along Wealthy, improved access from Shopping Center Drive, public plaza, parking lot landscaping**

**Future Master Plan - Concept C-2**  
Gaslight Village Neighborhood- East Grand Rapids, Michigan

---

## Greenwood Neighborhood

---

**Existing Conditions.** Located just northwest of the Gaslight Village subarea, this small, well maintained neighborhood dates back to the early 1900s. Many of those initial homes remain, others have since been replaced. Stately trees dot the neighborhood adding to its character. For decades, however, the neighborhood has contained a mix of other uses, including professional offices, retail, and multiple-family residential. The largest of these is a cluster of townhomes at the west end of the subarea. Three office buildings occupy the property immediately east of the townhomes. A mixed-use office/residence sits at the northwest corner of Lakeside Drive and Greenwood Avenue and a two-family dwelling is located on Lansing Street in the center of the otherwise single-family neighborhood.

A range of uses also surrounds the neighborhood – mostly single-family homes to the north and west (plus a tract of vacant city-owned property), single- and two-family residences to the immediate south, and expansive city-owned open space to the east. Just to the southeast lies a portion of the vacant property proposed for mixed-use development as part of the City’s Gaslight Village commercial core.

Typical of development patterns in the early to mid-1900s, the mix of uses within the neighborhood has existed for decades. One current office building even predates several neighborhood homes. Overall, there is a nearly 50/50 balance between single-family homes and other uses.

**Neighborhood Input.** Despite the neighborhood’s current and long-standing variety of residential and nonresidential uses, most residents object to any further intrusion by non single-family homes. A few even suggest phasing out the existing offices, condos, and rental units to replace them with traditional homes. While some others suggest that a mix of uses, especially residential variety, is desirable, the predominant sentiment is opposed.

Other expressed concerns relate to traffic and the safety of pedestrians (especially children) and cyclists. Enforcement of traffic laws, adding sidewalks in certain locations, and reconfiguring perceived dangerous intersections are among other frequent suggestions.

---



**Potential Changes.** On the face of it, this is clearly a mixed-use neighborhood. Its proximity to Gaslight Village and the mixed-residential uses along Lovett, coupled with the existing office and multi-family uses within the neighborhood, make it well-suited as a transition area between the current and anticipated development to the south and the larger neighborhoods to the north. Based on the proposed plans for the Gaslight Village expansion southeast of the neighborhood, the future use along Lakeside Drive would be residential in the form of a row of townhomes, complementing the already established land use pattern.

At the present time, considering the anticipated Gaslight mixed-use development, any change to the Greenwood neighborhood seems premature. There is no immediate challenge that necessitates a change to its current character, though future development to the south or further changing conditions may warrant consideration of other uses.

## St. Stephen Neighborhood

**Existing Conditions.** Located at the western edge of the City, this predominantly single-family area surrounds St. Stephen Catholic church and school built in 1924. At the time of this construction, the neighborhood was new and growing. Today the streets are lined with attractive, well-maintained single-family homes. However, declining enrollments and shortage of teachers prompted the recent closing of the elementary school. Likewise, reductions in the number of parishioners and a shortage of priests has threatened the closing of the church and its consolidation with another nearby parish.

Currently, only about 20 percent of the school building is occupied by non-profit organizations who use the space intermittently two or three days each week. Fuller use of the space and the property is desired. The church may continue to be used for other purposes until long-term plans are finalized by the diocese.



While the St. Stephen property is surrounded on all sides by homes, the homes along the west side of Gladstone Street about the boundary line between East Grand Rapids and the City of Grand

---

Rapids. Property in Grand Rapids adjacent to those homes is occupied by the Clark Retirement Community and Clark Condominiums, a large complex of aging-in-place facilities for senior residents.

**Neighborhood Input.** The loss of the school and church disappointed many of the neighbors and concerns were expressed about the fate of the buildings and their surrounding property. One nearly universal comment voiced by the surrounding neighbors is the importance of the school's play area and open space which for decades have served as a gathering place for area residents.

Opinions are split about whether the school building, in particular, should be retained and occupied by some other use or should be razed and replaced with new housing or a neighborhood park. Specifically, acquisition by the East Grand Rapids Public School District has been advocated, though unlikely. Other ideas for the building included community day care, senior center, recreation center, or community green space/neighborhood park.



Regardless of the property's ultimate fate, there is widespread concern about on-street parking which currently is in short supply and would only worsen unless additional off-street parking accompanies whatever new uses replace the school and ultimately the church. Concerns about density were also voiced if some form of residential use is to be developed.



**Potential Changes.** A complicating and potentially costly consideration affecting the future use of the school building is its physical connection to the church. In addition to sharing a wall, the two buildings share a mechanical system. Nevertheless, operating and maintaining the existing buildings is no doubt a costly proposition without a fuller use of the facilities.

In addition to the suggestions proposed by neighbors, the school building or the property on which the building currently sits affords other possibilities consistent with the character of the surrounding area and the goals of the Master Plan. Several development concepts are shown on the following pages for the school property only (pending a final determination regarding the church's disposition). These are illustrative examples only. Implementation of any repurposing of the existing building or redevelopment of the site is dependent upon economic feasibility, as well as the willingness of the Diocese to allow such use(s) and the City's approval of any necessary zoning change. Note that, even where new development is illustrated, each concept includes retaining play areas and gathering space as critical elements.



Retain existing buildings and reuse for EGR school or repurpose for day care, community center, senior housing, or other institutional use, and expand playground/open greenspace



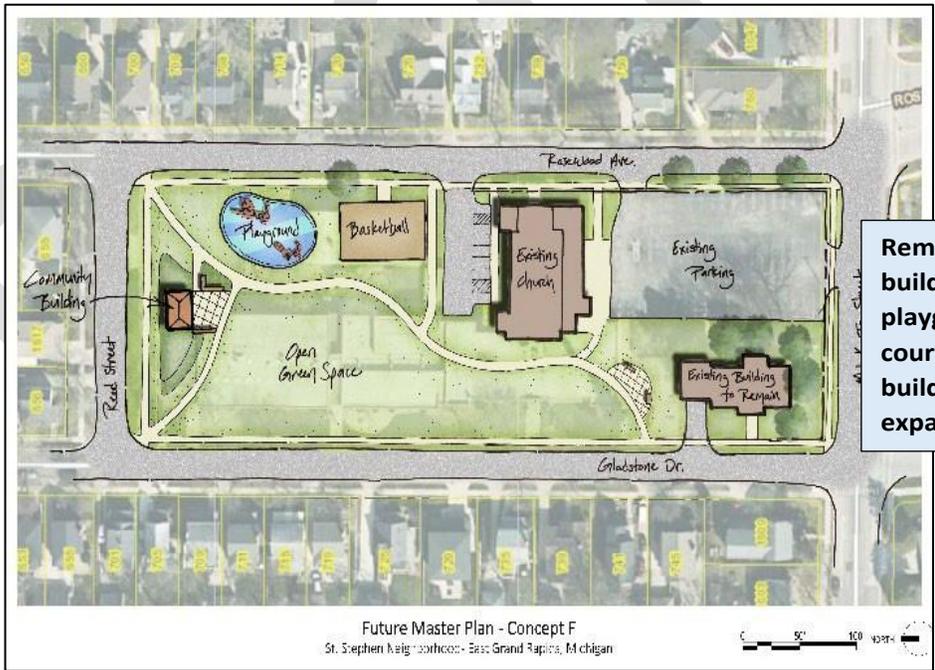
Remove existing buildings, add townhomes, on-site parking, playground, basketball court, and open greenspace



Remove existing buildings, add single-family homes, on-site parking, playground, basketball court, and open greenspace



**Remove buildings, add townhomes, on-site parking, playground, basketball court, and large greenspace**



**Remove existing buildings, add playground, basketball court, community building, and expansive greenspace**

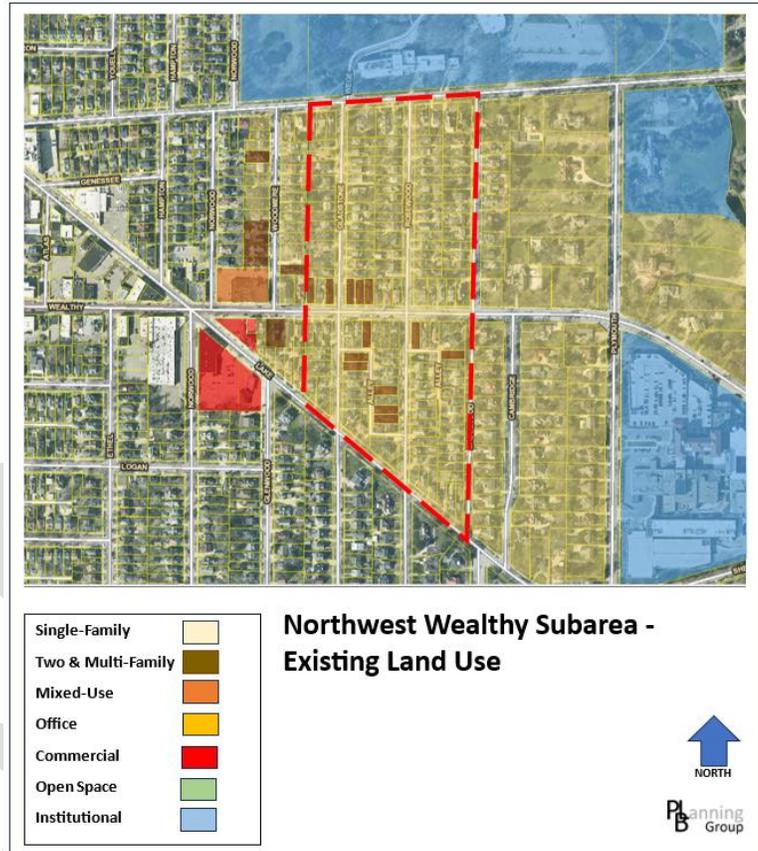
## Northwest Wealthy Neighborhood

**Existing Conditions.** Bounded on the north by Robinson Road and the south by Lake Drive, this is one of the City's early neighborhoods. These blocks about the City of Grand Rapids on the west, including its Eastown business district. Along the north edge is the sprawling Aquinas College campus and less than two blocks east of the neighborhood is another large institutional use, Corewell Health-Blodgett Hospital.

This is a stable, well-maintained neighborhood where most of the homes originate from the early 1900s and are built on narrow lots of less than 5,000 sq. ft. While the structures are predominantly single-family homes, two-family and multi-family buildings are found intermingled among the homes, especially south of Wealthy Street, a principal travel route serving the hospital and Gaslight Village, which essentially bisects the neighborhood. Most of these multi-unit structures, however, apparently predated zoning regulations and are considered nonconforming uses.

**Neighborhood Input.** Overwhelmingly, the comments from residents of this area are positive. Its proximity to shopping, parks, and open space; its character and charm; and its walkability were cited over and over. According to current residents, there are few concerns despite the neighborhood's proximity to the college and popular Eastown business district. The most frequently voiced issue related to the inconvenience created by the loss of on-street parking due to the few multi-family residences in the midst of the neighborhood and occasional events at the college. Other concerns related to enforcement of speed limits, maintenance and snow plowing of sidewalks, and lack of proactive enforcement of property maintenance codes for rental units. The need for designated crosswalks, especially along Wealthy Street, to improve safety and accommodate the many walkers in the area was also expressed.

**Potential Changes.** Due in large part to issues related to on-street parking and maintenance of existing rental units, there is concern regarding potential expansion of multi-family zoning in the neighborhood, even for those properties that are already occupied by such uses. The small lot sizes also present an obstacle which could either preclude such multi-family uses due to their inability to meet minimum zoning requirements (though two-family conversions could be



---

accommodated) or cause adjoining lots to be combined to allow construction of a new building in place of the previously existing homes.

While rezoning the existing nonconforming uses in the midst of the neighborhood south of Wealthy Street is not recommended, a less intrusive approach should be considered in support of the Master Plan goals to provide more housing options in the community. Expanding the existing MFR (multi-family) zoning district east along both sides of Wealthy Street to Rosewood and including the one nonconforming multi-family use at the southeast corner of Wealthy and Rosewood would limit these potential uses to a major corridor, create a reasonable transition from the adjoining Grand Rapids transitional zoning, remove one nonconformity, provide more opportunity for alternative housing, and not intrude into the heart of the neighborhood.



Such a change in zoning, while offering other options, would not automatically result in a sudden conversion of existing homes into two-family or multi-family units. Evidence of this is found in the existing MFR zoning district along Wealthy in which most of the properties have remained occupied by single-family homes. A similar change was previously implemented along both sides of Lovett Street west of Gaslight Village in which the R-3 single-family residential zoning was changed to MFR. The change offered owners more options but has not resulted in widespread conversions of homes into apartments.

---

## Recommendations

1. Explore potential options such as new zoning districts, amending current districts, and rezoning to alternate districts to provide greater flexibility for use of nonconforming lots.
2. Increase opportunities for housing variety and attainability.
3. Consider a zoning ordinance amendment to allow administrative departures in lieu of variances for certain nonconforming conditions.
4. Review older neighborhoods and consider coverage and setback amendments in the R-2 and R-3 Residential Districts to allow accessory buildings such as detached garages.
5. Improve communication and outreach regarding enforcement of the City's property maintenance code.
6. Create or enhance public spaces within Gaslight Village and Collins Park to accommodate more community events and highlight Reeds Lake as a prominent feature.
7. Work with owners and tenants of the Gaslight Village Plaza to promote infill development along Wealthy street.
8. Enhance the western gateway into Gaslight Village to create a sense of arrival.
9. Work with the Rapid to expand transit routes, service, and convenience to reduce personal vehicle use.
10. Incorporate inclusive design of all public facilities to ensure accessibility for those with physical disabilities or age-related impairments.
11. Continue to implement other City plans including Parks and Recreation Plan, Mobility-Bike Action Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Utilities/Infrastructure Plans.

---

# Zoning Plan

While the subarea plans are meant to offer reasonable development options for the specific areas, implementation of some of those options would necessitate zoning changes to those properties. Likewise, several Plan recommendations will require amendments to the zoning ordinance. The following table highlights the potential zoning adjustments.

<b>Recommendation or Options</b>	<b>Zoning Change</b>
Reduce nonconformities	Amend existing districts or adopt new district
Improve opportunities for expansion in mature neighborhoods	Amend existing districts or adopt new district
Increase administrative approvals	Amend ZBA provisions and site plan text
Expand housing options in Northwest Wealthy Neighborhood	Extend existing MFR zoning east along Wealthy
Provide additional housing in St. Stephen Neighborhood	Amend existing districts or adopt new district
Redevelop Gaslight Village Plaza	Review zoning ordinance to ensure potential uses and changes are permitted
Increase opportunity for housing options	Amend zoning districts to allow more choice