

MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2024
GRAND RIVER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
JON GRANT COMMUNITY CENTER
29260 GRAND RIVER AVENUE
FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48336

CALLED TO ORDER BY: SECRETARY THERESA RICH AT 10:40 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT: RICH, SMITH, NEWLIN, MANN, ALKHAFAJI

MEMBERS ABSENT: MANN, PRICE

OTHERS PRESENT: Gary Mekjian, City Manager, Cristia Brockway, Economic Development Director, John Trafelet, Planning Commission Chair, Bob Gibbs, Gibbs Planning Group, Jeff Higgins, Subconsultant with Gibbs Planning Group

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Alkhafaji, supported by Smith to approve the agenda as submitted.
Unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Alkhafaji, supported by Smith to approve the October 25, 2024, meeting minutes as submitted.
Unanimously approved.

BUSINESS:

Rich opened them meeting up for introductions with those around the room that were present to discuss their thoughts on the Grand River Corridor. Once introductions were finalized, Cristia Brockway, turned the meeting back to Bob Gibbs to begin the presentation on the initial findings within the corridor as a part of the market study.

Bob went into detail regarding how there is a market within the corridor and that there is also a significant amount of spending dollars leaking out of the corridor area. There is \$35M worth of grocery spending, \$15M worth of specialty foods and restaurants, and \$20M worth of brownbag spending through deliver food service all being leaked form the Grand River Corridor Area. The corridor is within a regional primary trade area of 500,000 people with 10% of southeastern Michigan just a ten-minute drive away. Mr. Gibbs also mentioned that, based on statistics, there is enough density to support 20 to 25 restaurants within this area. Mr. Gibbs discussed how the M-5 highway does make a negative impact on the area. He shared that Grand River Avenue was originally built before the 696 expressway when Grand River was the main route to and from Lansing. It was a thoroughfare designed for 60,000 cars whereas it carries a little more than half that amount.

Many business stakeholders that were invited to the meeting shared their thoughts on how the corridor could potentially see change through certain development types. These suggestions included mini shopping plazas, destination restaurants such as popular drive-thrus or quick serve, some others added that an event venue with a restaurant could also be feasible. Many also discussed that what hinders these kinds of developments include soft costs to the investment such as engineering, utility connections, and city consultant fees/the duration of third-party review.

It was also discussed that much of the buildings along Grand River are older and on non-conforming parcels. To galvanize change, multiple property acquisitions would have to be conducted.

Rich presented the question related to art and if the business owners would be interested, or willing, to install art as a part of their project. She also asked Bob if art would be an important component to attracting investors. Bob agreed that art would add a significant improvement, but it won't be the only thing that would help. The business owners replied that there would be a willingness to include art, or a public seating area, greenspace, or similar, to their project if the numbers worked.

Gary Mekjian and Mrs. Brockway shared that the City has financial incentives available for development and can offer a preliminary review with respective departments for new development.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 PM

Minutes drafted by: Cristia Brockway