

**Grand River Voices
Stakeholder Advisory Board (SAB) Meeting
August 18, 2022
Zoom (5-7pm)
Meeting Minutes**

Attendees (video): Angelica Velasquez, Attah Obande, Elaine Isely, Emily Aleman-McAlpine, Eric Haslinger, Julieta Tablante-Blanco, Julio Cano, Lynee Wells, Stacy Stout, Synia Gant-Jordon, Tiawanna Ezell, plus support staffing by Daniel Tellalian and Imani Johnson (Angel City Advisors), Cynthia Guzman, Leah Hubbard and Charlotte Will (Estolano Advisors), Andy Guy (DGRI)

Not Attending: Jason Quigno, Jessica Ledesma, Keli Christopher, Teresa Branson, plus support staff Adnoris Torres (GRI), Candy Isabel (Khamai Strategies), Ciarra Adkins (City of GR OEE)

Meeting Discussion & Actions

1. The meeting was called to order.
2. Administrative matters were attended to relating to agenda, SAB roles, and future meetings.
3. It was suggested that the SAB join in a live River Tour as well as consider participating in the Mayor's River Cleanup held in September.
4. A short discussion was had about Washington DC's 11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan, and the recent NYT article talking about the balance of improving infrastructure while avoiding displacement and gentrification. A note was made about publicly-controlled land and the need to acquire and hold land early in the process.
5. Three Advisory Board members made reports or suggestions about additional or supplementary outreach that can be conducted to engage additional segments of Grand Rapids more extensively. Specifically:
 - a. Dr. Julie Tablante spoke about an informal partnership with the West Michigan Asian American Association to translate street posters into multiple Asian languages, and to conduct a series of 1:1 or small format focus groups in language to Asian communities. Angel City is providing interview questions that can be commonly asked across multiple formats.
 - b. Eric Haslinger suggested the creation of a "focus group in a box" set of protocols that can be used by SAB or other community stakeholders to solicit input where people are instead of holding community meetings. He noted there needed to be infrastructure to collect, aggregate, and analyze that response data to make it effective.
 - c. Synia Gant-Jordan asked to project manage a live community listening session specifically planned by and hosted for the Black community. Advisory Board members Tia Ezell, Teresa Branson, and Ciarra Atkins agreed to support the planning alongside

Black community organizations. Angel City and DGRI agreed to look into resources for such an event.

- d. Daniel from Angel City noted that this advising and promotion of engagement is appropriate and welcome from advisory board members, and that their assistance is desired. He also noted the realities of broad outreach vs deep outreach, finite financial and project timeline constraints, and that the strategy of stakeholder outreach and a feedback loop around river equity is ongoing and should last beyond the publication of an equity framework document.
6. Daniel facilitated a centering exercise where all participants visualized the river 10-20 years from now and what it looked like, who was there, and what activities were happening.
 7. Daniel briefed the Board on the primary thematic buckets of input around river equity and provided examples of both past input and current input by stakeholders.
 8. A poll was taken that asked Board members to prioritize themes they found most important to focus energy and the document on. They were, in order:
 - a. Equitable Economic Development (wealth creation, job and business opportunities, removing traditional barriers to firms, businesspeople, and workers of color);
 - b. Environmental Health & Resilience (protecting our natural resources and building a climate resilient project), nearly tied with
 - c. Equitable Access to the River (physical, cultural, economic access points as a River for All), followed by;
 - d. A Thriving River Corridor (equitable river planning and placemaking).
 9. Board explored each of these themes in detail, with each attending board member reporting out the specific strategies, interests/needs for the river based on their backgrounds and communities, as well as their vision for an equitable river. Suggestions included:
 - a. Visual representation of POC in marketing pieces, staffing and leadership around the river.
 - b. Focus on land acquisition and ownership for public/social policy, rather than relying on the market and investors to activate and plan river uses. Public access required on both sides of the riverfront. Maintain outdoors spaces along the river that gradually step up to larger buildings.
 - c. Utilize assessment districts to support marginalized cultural initiatives and small business development. Culture is an economic driver, invest in it.
 - d. Integrate the equity framework into the Master Plan – you can zone to be inclusive to small businesses and non-institutional voices.
 - e. Alongside spaces, provide appropriate capital to allow small businesses to launch along the riverfront.
 - f. Provide spaces and empathy for the unhoused.

- g. Seeking on-site educational opportunities like outdoor classrooms, signage, and hands-on opportunities at the Museum and beyond. Engage STEM Greenhouse and other science and youth programs
- h. Put the history of the river on the walls adjacent to the river. Engage community ambassadors to help tell the story as living history.
- i. POC leading kayaking tours and fishing teams, breaking down cultural access barriers about what is welcomed.
- j. Safety – requiring multilingual signage and education on how to safely engage the river. The river should be a curated showing of multilingualism.
- k. Spaces for free use of the river space – picnics and bbqs and gatherings, not just pay-to-play space. Informal use like the skate park is today.
- l. Cultivate the pipeline of businesses that need to be ready to serve the river. A pink zone that allows for easier regulatory burdens for microenterprise. Certifications, operations, capital, etc. An incubator or popup space for rotating microbusinesses. There are specific barriers that need to be broken down in contracting and hiring.
- m. Need quiet and safe spaces for elders, those in wheelchairs, and less athletic types. We need activities for all levels of folks. Wading pool near the river.
- n. Track homeownership and affordable rental housing near the river, it should increase not decrease.
- o. Park development should be modern green infrastructure that addresses both potential flooding risk, and natural water filtration and cleaning cycles. Multi-purpose infrastructure.
- p. Plan the river corridor in nodes of activity and passive space, like a necklace. No parking lots on the rivers edge, be it public or private.
- q. Tap the primary users – the younger generation – to help define educational activities and cultural awareness programming
- r. Allow swimming in the river, safely.
- s. Built development should include green building practices, in materials, energy usage.

A verbatim transcript of all suggestions was made and submitted into the record as documentation for the framework.

The meeting was adjourned with a next meeting set for September 22nd.