Questions & Answers
1. Can you tell me more about a development coming in at a specific location in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, or Wyoming. What can you tell me about those developers or what the project is?

Please refer to the Development Review websites for each individual city and feel free to reach out to each city’s representative in that department.

**Grand Rapids**
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2. How is Division United different from other plans?
Division United is a hybrid of an area specific plan and a transit-oriented development plan. It is unique because it has four stakeholders--the cities of GR, Wyoming, Kentwood, and the Rapid--and endeavors to create a consistent policy framework along the Silver Line route through these three communities, and in partnership with the transit agency. This requires a tailored approach as each city has its own zoning code, planning history, and priorities. However, all the participants are unified in a desire to improve the corridor by leveraging development adjacent to transit facilities and supports their current residents, now and in the future. This coordination makes the plan stronger.

3. What does the Silver Line have to do with development along Division Avenue?
The Silver Line is Michigan’s first bus rapid transit (BRT) project. Bus Rapid transit, like light rail, is meant to be a form of fast and efficient transit that allows people who live along or close to the BRT line (usually within a half mile of walking) to get around their community without a car. This is the long term purpose the Silver Line is meant to serve; efficient public transportation allows people to leave their cars at home, reducing congestion and improving road safety. However, in order for the Silver Line to work well, it needs a lot of riders who live close to it, and a lot of activities at each station area along the line. While Division Avenue has many great businesses and residents, more activity around stations--more jobs, more housing, more opportunities to work and play--are needed. This is where development comes in.

Development can mean a lot of things, but most typically it refers to the upgrading or replacement of buildings and property, as well as new construction of homes, offices, etc, by ‘developers’, people who vision and finance these projects and then sell, rent, or lease the property after it is improved. Development along Division Avenue in the long term should support housing density and job density (many activities and people close together) to make good use of the Silver Line Bus. Ensuring that the right kind of development occurs and that it does not negatively impact existing residents is also important.
4. **Question:** How does this plan discuss affordable housing?

In this plan, we consider both the creation of new affordable housing units and the protection of existing affordable housing.

The protection of existing affordable housing stock is encouraged in our plan through:

- Identification of tax and financing incentives to improve existing homes (weatherization programs).
  This can be especially helpful for naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) is typically older housing (rented or owned) that is already a stable housing resource for area residents, but due to its age may not be up to code.

- Development recommendations to improve the yield of existing homes (for example, supporting accessory dwelling units, so a homeowner can also rent a space on their property)

- Plan and development recommendations that protect the value of existing homes (improved area amenities, safe connections to neighborhoods)

- New affordable housing construction is encouraged through:
  - Identification of tax and financing incentives for new construction (low income tax credits)
  - Identification of potential sites for new multifamily development
  - Development code recommendations that support housing affordability (such as increased density allowances, and lower unit sizes)
  - Development code recommendations that increase opportunities for housing choice

In addition to the need for housing stock, there is also a need to consider housing for individuals that experience temporary or chronic homelessness. Additional recommendations (primarily in the place-making toolkit, economic development toolkit, and station plans) identify opportunities to better include this group. For example, the community desires a walk-in location on the corridor for individuals experiencing homelessness so they can get better connected to resources.

5. **How did you all reach out to the community to get them involved in this project?**

Throughout the project there were many opportunities to engage residents and community members:

- Mobile Meetings at 4 locations in the corridor (and on the bus)
- Community Block Walk to document walking and ped conditions
- Multiple community surveys: visual preference survey, goals and objectives survey
- Three Better Block Popup events (at Logan, 43rd, and Burton) to engage adjacent local businesses and residents in a community focused event--temporary safety solutions and some design elements now envisioned as more permanent.
- Community Connectors program (engage 6 individuals a month, create media and promotion for projects, such as the oral histories videos, and coordinate with residents and business owners, act as a resource bringing draft plans to the community for review). CC’s are an ongoing resource and point of contact and we are recommending their role continue in a formal fashion.
- Digital community survey
6. How will this project promote equity along Division Avenue?

Our approach to promoting equity along Division Avenue is multi-pronged and addresses inequity through economic, health, cultural lenses.

We focus on incremental development as a model for growth. This approach is centered on generating ownership opportunities for community members (residents, business owners, advocates) by leveraging financial resources such as small loans, grants, rebates, and micro-lending and educational resources such as the Incremental Developer Clinic.

Using these methods, local participation and expertise in business and property development will increase and help root existing local businesses and entrepreneurs as economic agents of change.

Methods to help facilitate this growth include incorporating Tax Increment Financing (TIF), establishing new zoning practices that support missing middle building types and small scale development, and using zoning overlays to focus development efforts and standardize redevelopment along the corridor.

We also focus on generating more jobs and supporting the creation of living wages for low-income residents and vulnerable populations in the study area. This plan intends to do this by:

- Prioritizing the development of underdeveloped and vacant sites to support job generating uses
- Expanding job training and development programs that support emerging industries (Link employers to high schools, for example)
- Support zoning updates that increase the potential by right to add job generating uses
- Create more transparency and engagement with local residents and business owners about economic development programs

7. How will local business owners be protected throughout the development process?

This plan identifies a number of recommendations that consider impacts to and participation of local businesses:

- This plan supports incremental development through suggested code updates (like the permissibility of Accessory Commercial Units) and through educational workshops, such as the incremental development series. The focus of incremental development is empowering existing community members to be the change-creators and beneficiaries of new development in the corridor. This also means showing people who are already business owners what their opportunities are for expansion and funding and coordinating with the existing CID to prioritize local business needs over external desires.

- This plan supports the protection of existing businesses through community and cultural resource protection recommendations. The identification of local community landmarks (which can be long-standing businesses) and the inclusion of area businesses in local cultural and recreational programming (such as bike tours and arts festivals) is recommended in this plan as a way of generating supporting activity around and attention for local businesses

- This plan promotes greater transparency around the development process in general. This means giving the community more access to information about proposed developments earlier in the process.
8. How does this project address homeownership?

As previously mentioned in the affordable housing question, this plan addresses homeownership by providing recommendations to support existing homeowners as well as new or potential homeowners.

For existing homeowners:

- Identifying existing programs (grants, tax incentives) that homeowners can take advantage of to improve their property.
- Recommending the expansion of or creation of new programs or ownership models in the GR region that have been utilized elsewhere to protect homeowners from displacement.

For new homeowners:

- Recommend development code supporting a greater range of owner-occupied housing in a range of styles and prices. (For example, promoting the development of small townhomes)
- The identification of opportunities for the siting and development of new owner-occupied types (see station plans)

9. What opportunities will this project provide for families, children, and students?

In toolkits that focus on quality of life elements, there are many recommendations that can positively impact children, students, and families. For example:

Many site-specific project recommendations specifically target facilities for children and their parents. For example, the development of a youth tech center and the creation of more family friendly retail (eg, cafes or shops that accommodate parents with children) are identified in the Station Area Plans.

A significant number of infrastructure improvements related to safety (such as ped beacons and improved crosswalks) were targeted for school locations. For example, the replacement of the pedestrian bridge at 36th street with a pedestrian refuge island is targeted at improving safety for Godwin Heights students.

10. How will this project promote connectivity for transit dependent residents?

This project plans to implement a number of strategies that prioritize transit connectivity as well as pedestrian mobility and access. Some recommendations include:

- Support on-time, frequent, and reliable bus service. It is essential that transit-dependent people can rely on the bus to get to work, school, and home.

- Recommendations for specific infrastructure improvements that improve pedestrian/biking/multi-modal experience (see Station plans for specific location of improved bike lanes, crosswalks, lighting, and landscaping). Many of these improvements, especially in Grand Rapids, occur in areas with a large share of zero-car households; Moreover, these improvements can be especially impactful for transit-dependent people that spend a lot of time outside in the corridor.
Question #10 answer continued from previous page...

- Recommendations for overall, long-term design and engineering changes (re-allocation road space, reduction of travel lane width, closure of excess driveways) that shift the focus of the corridor from car-centered to people centered.
- Recommendations for code and zoning elements that promote a more walkable street, as well as creating more opportunities for public spaces (facade and public realm expectations, enhanced bus station amenities).
- Encourage the expansion of CACs related to transit ridership and education, as well as the creation of a transit riders union.
- Expand subsidized service for low-income individuals, including students, and ensuring a fair fare system.

These improvements will all increase the efficiency of bus service while also promoting vehicle and pedestrian safety.

11. How will this project help Division Avenue become more walkable?

This project plans on incorporating a number of specific road safety and pedestrian enhancements (as mentioned previously). Included are:

- Crosswalk upgrades that are more visible and accessible
- Extended curb cuts at intersections
- Raised crosswalks and speed tables
- Pedestrian islands and medians
- Reduced curb radii
- Installing leading pedestrian interval signals
- Add midblock crossings in key locations
- Adding lighting and landscaping

These strategies will target each station in the study area to enhance the effectiveness of TOD implementation.