

# Amplifying the Influence of Community Planners



American Planning Association  
**Michigan Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

- Suzanne Schulz, AICP  
Planning Director, City of Grand Rapids
- Jon Lynch, AICP  
City Manager, City of Midland

# Planner Super Powers

# 10. Carry the Talking Stick

- Communicator
- Facilitator
- Translator
- Problem Solver
- Convener
- Developer of Shared Ownership

“Listen and decipher the language of your streets and the stories they tell, respond to collective will instead of special interest, and leverage partnerships to reinforce shared ownership. If your community has not done the hard work of self-examination, building consensus, defining goals, and demonstrating commitment through meaningful actions, it just doesn’t matter.” *(paraphrased from Defining the City: On Being and Becoming, Terrain.org, October 18, 2011)*

# 9. Hand out Kashi and Prunes

- “Crunchy” and “sweet”
- Do it regularly : )

...but measured

## **Schulz, Suzanne**

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**From:** Schulz, Suzanne  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 08, 2011 7:31 PM  
**To:** City Commission  
**Cc:** Sundstrom, Greg; DeLong, Eric; Heartwell, George; Bartley, Landon; Mish, Catherine  
**Subject:** Love Lounge  
**Attachments:** PC MINUTES OF 8-11-11 1520 WEALTHY.pdf

Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

This email is an update to you on the Love Lounge request at 1520 Wealthy St SE by Mr. Jash'd Belcher. First, I would like to address the history of the property to provide some perspective. This location is the former location of the Intersection. After the Intersection closed, the Planning Commission heard a request to use the space as a “dart” bar (with dartboards) in 2005. Testimony was heard from neighbors that they did not want another bar at this location and they were highly sensitive to their past experiences with the Intersection. In June 2008, the Planning Commission reviewed an application for Chez Bayou; a New Orleans-themed restaurant which desired alcohol service for a restaurant (which is a Special Land Use). The neighborhood supported the request, however, it was made very clear that support was provided for a restaurant and not a bar. “With respect to minimizing detrimental effect the fact that

# 8. Constituents...er...Community

- Community influence
- Shared vision and ownership

“ A comment that attempted to contain all the good things about Suzanne would have scrollbars. She has such a heart for this city. She’s ridiculously knowledgeable in her field. The fact that she’s a City employee who lives in the City – so rare – is for me the real game changer....the Planning Department has been an invaluable resource to Wealthy Theatre in terms of guidance and assistance...”

~ *Erin Wilson*

# 7. Media and Me

- Build relationships
- Learn how to provide the right information
- Be careful

... *Development News*

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*City's green transformation well underway even as Green Grand Rapids seeks final approvals*

Thursday, March 17, 2011

**Related Images**



**GREEN GRAND RAPIDS**

Enlarge

**Related Tags**

The ink hadn't even been placed on the page, let alone had time to dry, before Grand Rapids organizations and individual residents started the "green" transformation of different aspects of the city. And now, four years after planning began, [Green Grand Rapids](#), an environmental and sustainable update to the city's 2002 Master Plan, has been approved by the [Grand Rapids Planning Commission](#) and moved to the [City Commission](#) for review at its March 22 meeting.

Green Grand Rapids wrapped up by mid-2009, says Planning Director Suzanne Schulz, but there was a lag getting it compiled into a comprehensive document because "we were busy implementing the plan. We wanted to continue the momentum that was underway."

Schulz cites several projects that are part of that momentum:

- Expansion of Joe Taylor Park spearheaded by [Friends of Grand Rapids Parks](#).



THE AREA'S PREMIER DINING LISTINGS

TWO PLATE: THE GRILLE AT WATERMARK

THANK YOU BETTY FORD

SPECIAL: REDESIGNING HOME

CELEBRATING CITY LIFE

**GRAND RAPIDS**

Nature

Adding layers of green » PG 42

Stormwater dangers » PG 38

GR's eco-pioneer » PG 14

# 6. Eat Lunch and Drink Coffee

- Find Thought Leaders
- Build relationships
- Learn: Listen and ask questions

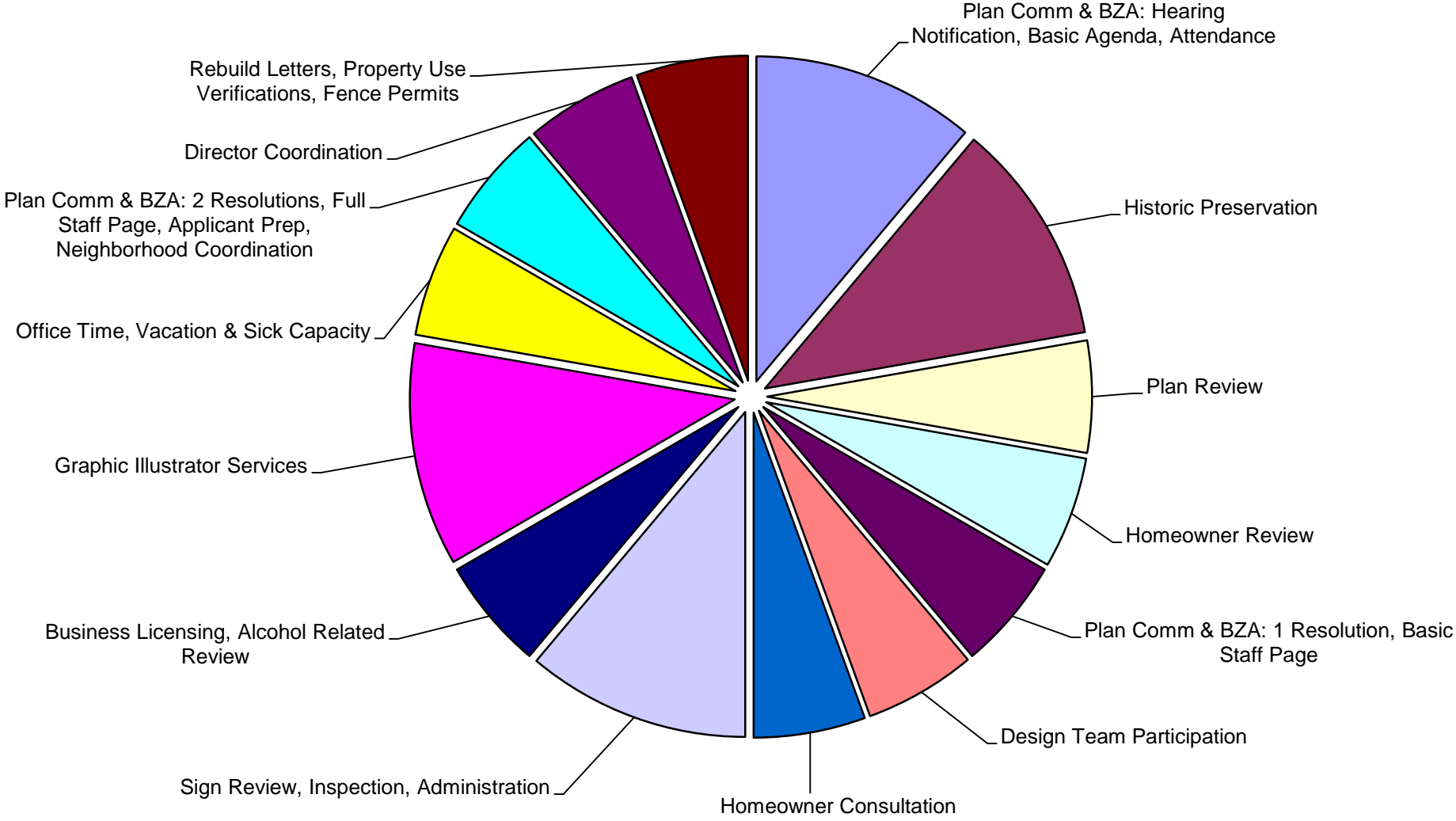


# 5. Gettin' Cozy Counts

- What do you do?
- How do you measure it?
- How do you talk about it?



# Planning Staff Time Allocation



# 4. Three Little Pigs...or Bears...

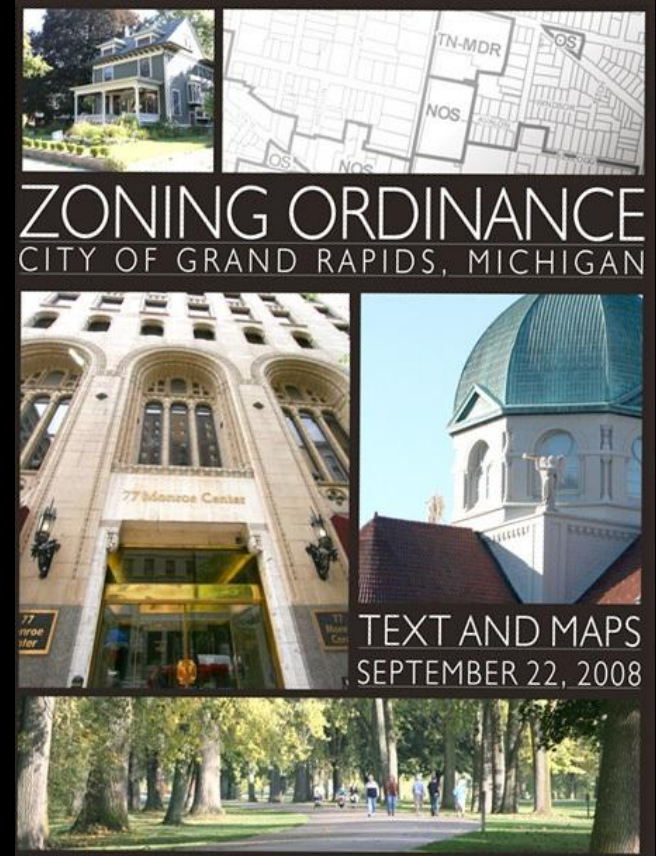
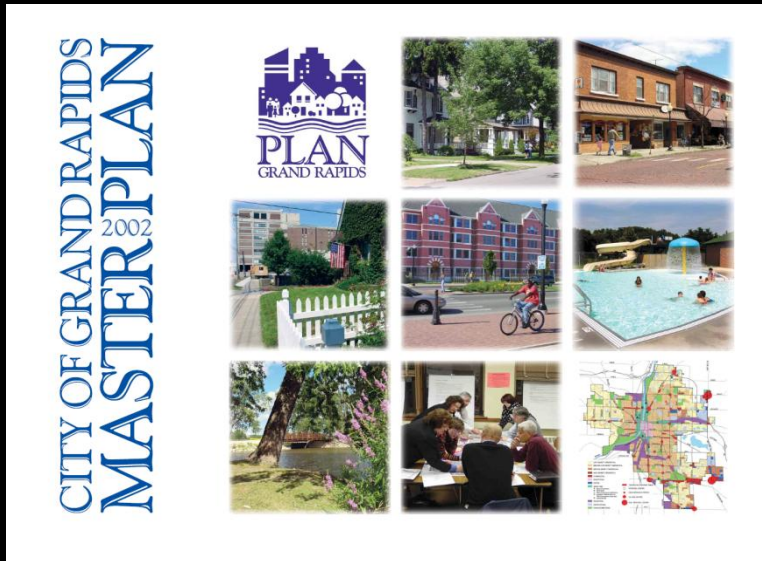
- Beginning, middle, end
- 3 purposes/functions
- 3 memorable examples
- Repeat, repeat, repeat





# 3. Go Big or Go Home

- Inspire
- Be Bold
- You are the R & D
- You are paid for a reason!



## 2. Entrepreneurial Warrior

- Tenacious, Passionate, Persistent, Advocate

### Michigan Street Corridor funders:

1. City of Grand Rapids
2. Dyer-Ives Foundation
3. Frey Foundation
4. GR Community College
5. GR Community Foundation
6. GR Smart Zone Authority
7. Grand Valley Metro Council
8. Grand Valley State University
9. Michigan State University
10. Michigan Street Corridor Association
11. Spectrum Health
12. The Rapid
13. Downtown Development Authority
14. Parking Commission
15. Community Development

# 1. Plan to Implement

- Make things happen
- Realize the community's vision

**Green Grand Rapids wrapping up 'green plan,' but lack of funding means it will be a grass roots effort**

Wednesday, October 28, 2009 at 10:09am

Above is the title of this weekend's GR Press article on the launch of Green Grand Rapids. I've been mulling over this article the past couple days. I'm thoroughly impressed with the quality people and groups that have joined this 'cause'. And I think that's the fascinating part, it is turning into a "cause". And it's not just a cause to make a more sustainable Grand Rapids, but a cause to re-conceive the role of local government. I think Green Grand Rapids is going to be defining the way that government will function for coming decades in our town. Battle lines are being drawn around all of these issues as we challenge the community to think differently about trees, parks, rivers, and food. You name the issue, and there is some group that is challenging perceptions and practices. So whether its Emerald Ash Borer, Chickens in your back yard, Kayaks in the river, Mountain Bikes in parks; there is someone pushing us to think differently about how we are setting priorities and managing resources. These are threshold issues that will redefine our community. *(Steve Faber)*

# The Value Proposition

# Recent Headlines

- Townships, road commission struggle for answers to crumbling roads – *Muskegon Chronicle, October 9th*
- Taylor shuts down two of three fire stations – *Detroit Free Press, October 4<sup>th</sup>*
- Genesee County commissioners approve new budget, prepare for fallout of cuts – *Flint News, September 28<sup>th</sup>*

# How do key leaders in your community make decisions?

- Who are they?
- What do they value?
- What process challenges must they overcome?

# Challenges Faced by Decision Makers



# What are you selling?

- Place making
- Sustainability
- Affordable Housing
- Diversity
- Inclusiveness
- Environmental Sensitivity
- Comprehensive Planning
- Urban Design
- Efficient Transportation Systems

# What are you selling?

*Harvard Business Review* – 5 types of sales rep

1. Relationship builders
2. Hard workers
3. Lone wolves
4. Reactive problem solvers
5. Challengers

# What are you selling?

*Harvard Business Review* – 5 types of sales rep

Most successful are Challengers who:

use their deep understanding of their customers' business to push their thinking and take control of the sales conversation. They're not afraid to share even potentially controversial views and are assertive — with both their customers and bosses

# What are you selling?

*Harvard Business Review* – 5 types of sales rep

## Challengers:

- **teach their customers** – new \$ saving ideas
- **tailor the message** – tuned in to customer objectives
- **control the message** – assertive but not aggressive  
comfortable with tension, won't cave to every customer demand, able to push the message home

# What do we offer?

## FIVE KEYS

1. Competitive Advantage for Investment
2. Self-Determination
3. Transparency
4. Community Engagement
5. Litigation Avoidance

# 1 - Competitive Advantage

- Planning is one of few public sector activities that focuses on, and facilitates, top line growth.
- Businesses value predictability and planners can chart a clear path through regulatory processes.
- What other public departments have a better “catchers view” of the field and are better positioned to be responsive to investment?

## 2 - Self-Determination

- Planners don't dictate, they enable...
- Planners can help the community, and its leaders, articulate a clear vision of its future.
- Who else can distill competing views on broad public policy positions into actionable plans?

# 3 - Transparency

We serve the public interest – AICP Code of Ethics

Our primary obligation is to serve the public interest and we, therefore, owe our allegiance to a conscientiously attained concept of the public interest that is formulated through continuous and open debate. We shall achieve high standards of professional integrity, proficiency, and knowledge.

# 4 - Community Engagement

- Planners reach out to solicit opinions about the community.
- Planners address concerns of specific interests such as neighborhoods, bicyclists, urban farmers, etc.
- Planners facilitate dialogue between opposing points of view

# 5 - Litigation Avoidance

- Communities can ill afford to dedicate scarce resources to litigation
- Ongoing law suits can present a negative image of a community
- Payment of damages to private parties borne out of failure to follow the law is viewed scornfully by citizens

# FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

- If you fail to tell your story someone else will gladly do it for you.
- In addressing conflict, if you are explaining you are losing.

# Tell your story



# Tell your story

- MSNBC.com
- onlineWSJ.com
- mnn.com
- Digitaljournal.com
- hypoallergenicdogs.net
- latimesblogs.com
- Boston.com
- therealowner.com



# If you're explaining you're losing

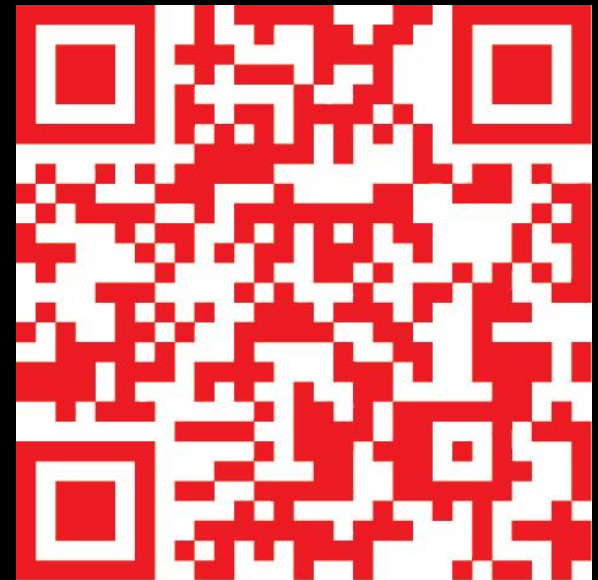
- D'Oh
- Come On Down
- Man Up
- Big Oil
- Media Firestorm
- Wall Street v Main Street

# If you're explaining you're losing

- John Greening, associate professor at Northwestern University's journalism school, : “It used to be that the most valuable thing on the planet was time, but now the most valuable thing is attention.”
- Advertisers use of 15 second commercials up 70%
- University professors are advised to break content into 10 to 15 minute chunks for best retention

# If you're explaining you're losing

- Become the QR code of your organization
- Talk less but say more



# The Midland Value Proposition

- The tax bill tale
- Flowers
- Public Involvement

# What is your Value Proposition?

- Listen and the target audience will tell you what they want and need.
- How can you improve the life of the target audience?
- What evidence or guarantee can you provide that you will deliver the promised results?
- What makes your solution a better choice than the alternative?

# What gets in our way?

