

Sister City Opportunity: Vaughan & Grand Rapids

- Building a Strategic Cross-Border Partnership
- Louis Canfield | Chief of Staff
City of Grand Rapids
- Emily Smith | Board Secretary
Grand Rapids Sister Cities, Int'l



C1.
Communication
CW(2) – April 14, 2026
Item No. 4

Greetings from Mayor LaGrand, the City Commission, and City Manager Washington



MAYOR OF GRAND RAPIDS
Mayor David LaGrand
Current term expires December 31, 2028.
Previously served as Second Ward Commissioner from 2007-2010.



WARD 3 COMMISSIONER
Kelsey Perdue
Current term expires December 31, 2026.



WARD 2 COMMISSIONER
Milinda Ysasi
Current term expires December 31, 2028.
Previously served as Second Ward Commissioner from 2020-2024.



CITY MANAGER
Mark Washington



WARD 1 COMMISSIONER
AliciaMarie Belchak
Current term expires December 31, 2028.



WARD 3 COMMISSIONER
Marshall Kilgore
Current term expires December 31, 2028.



WARD 2 COMMISSIONER
Lisa Knight
Current term expires December 31, 2026.

Grand Rapids: A City on the Rise

- Michigan's second-largest city
- Fast-growing regional economy
- \$1B+ annual development activity
- Strong public-private partnerships



Connected & Accessible

- Expanding international airport
- Regional highway connectivity
- Bus rapid transit network
- Mobility investments





Healthcare & Innovation

- “Medical Mile” district
 - Corewell Health + Van Andel Institute
- Trinity Health, University of Michigan Health-West
- Integrated care, research, education
- Major talent and innovation driver



Riverfront Transformation

- 70-mile regional corridor vision
- Amphitheater (12,000 seats)
- Soccer stadium (8,000 seats)
- \$1.3B investment



Talent & Education

- **100,000+ graduates annually**
- Strong university network
- Aligned workforce
- Growing, diverse talent pipeline





Arts & Culture

- ArtPrize – 1M+ visitors
- Global public art event
- Year-round cultural programming
- Arts as economic driver

Vaughan: Shared Strengths

- Diverse, highly educated population
- Strong post-secondary pipeline
- Growing creative economy
- Investment in arts and tourism




Two Destination Cities



Canada's
Wonderland

The image shows the entrance to Canada's Wonderland theme park. The sign is large and colorful, with 'Canada's' in orange and 'Wonderland' in blue. Below the sign, there are several 'OPEN' signs and a 'PARK ENTRANCE' sign. The background shows a crowd of people and flags.

- **Vaughan**
 - Regional tourism hub

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- The image shows a large crowd of people gathered in front of a large portrait of Abraham Lincoln. The portrait is mounted on a wall and is the central focus of the scene. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance, and they appear to be engaged in various activities, possibly a festival or event. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the portrait and the people in the foreground.
- **Grand Rapids**
 - Events, riverfront, downtown activation

Why Vaughan + Grand Rapids

- **Vaughan**
 - Creative economy
 - Toronto-region access
- **Shared**
 - Talent
 - Tourism
 - Growth & livability
- **Grand Rapids**
 - Healthcare hub
 - Advanced manufacturing & design



International Partnerships



- Active global Sister City network
- Recent: Gangnam-gu, South Korea
- Focus on practical collaboration



Milestones & Next Steps

- **Completed**
 - Staff & community exchanges
 - Grand Rapids approval
- **Today**
 - Vaughan Council consideration
- **Next**
 - May 7 signing (pending approval)
 - Ongoing exchanges & collaboration

Thank You!

We look forward to our continued partnership.

