



March 26, 2024

Assistant City Manager Doug Matthews
City of Grand Rapids
300 Monroe Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Subject: U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan Letter of Support for the City of Grand Rapids,
Butterworth Solar Project

Dear Assistant City Manager Matthews,

The U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan (USGBC-WM) is committed to our longstanding partnership with the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan (City) and intends to fully support this Butterworth Solar project if awarded. The USGBC-WM, City and dozens of community partners have invested years in establishing a climate justice infrastructure. The Grand Rapids community is well positioned to quickly and equitably deploy the Butterworth Solar project.

With mayoral support in 2015, the U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan launched the Grand Rapids 2030 District (GR2030) in partnership with the City of Grand Rapids. As one of twenty four districts across North America the GR2030 District facilitates the collaboration of local government, utilities, property owners and professional stakeholders to equitably reduce carbon emissions in the built environment and transportation sectors. The GR2030 District advocates, educates and provides tools and resources to property owners citywide.

In 2021, the City of Grand Rapids, GR2030 District & Urban Core Collective formalized the Equitable, Health, Zero Carbon Buildings (E.H.Zero) intended to lead our work with equity at the forefront.

One year ago, the City adopted a community-wide science-based emissions reduction target of 62.8% per capita by 2030 (as compared to 2019) and 100% by 2050. Through the GR 2030 District, E.H. Zero, and the completion of a communitywide greenhouse gas emissions inventory, we know that we must collectively prioritize investments into Low Income and Disadvantaged Community (LIDAC) households to address centuries of systemic and institutional racism that have resulted in higher rates of substandard housing, energy burden, carbon emissions, asthma incidents, utility bill shut-offs and other compounding negative impacts for our LIDAC. These investments must focus on safety, energy efficiency, health benefits, renewable energy, adaptation, resilience and electrification.

The City, Urban Core Collective and the GR2030 District have partnered for nearly six years (previously through the national Zero Cities Project, which was transformed into E.H.Zero) to equitably reduce emissions from buildings. This partnership and work created the following outcomes:

- Creation of the idea that ultimately became the Community Collaboration on Climate Change (C4) – our leading grassroots climate justice organization
- Secured \$1,067,000 in funding for E.H.Zero including \$250,000 from the State of Michigan to implement whole home improvements that will address financial sustainability, health impacts and decarbonization for at least ten households at or below 40% AMI in Grand Rapids
- Launched a BIPOC consultation team to ensure programs, policies and plans for the building sector lead with equity
- Established a large commercial building (> 10,000 square feet) climate advisory team with a diverse group of stakeholders to identify strategies to decarbonize our large commercial buildings, including multifamily residential (> 4 units) properties
- Partnered with Elevate in a recently awarded grant that will support research for electrifying existing residential properties
- Increased participation from Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and community-based organizations in Michigan Public Service Commission activities (utility distributed generation rate cases, integrated resource plans, development of methodologies to integrate equity into modeling equations used for long-term electric resource planning, etc.)

This intentional investment of time (years) and resources has supported the establishment and growth of authentic and trusted partnerships between the City and community. With this trust and infrastructure in place, as well as the City's experience with distributed solar generation, the City and its partners are well positioned to invest funding for the Butterworth Solar project quickly, equitably and effectively.

Through the Butterworth Solar project planning period and implementation, the GR2030 District will continue to collaborate with and support the successful deployment of this project to ensure that solar, storage and enabling upgrade investments benefit LIDAC; LIDAC residents and employers receive career development and green entrepreneurship investments and support; and additional funding and financing opportunities are identified and secured.

The deployment of Butterworth Solar will have an immediate impact on greenhouse gas emissions for many commercial and industrial buildings in our downtown core. Through the interconnection to Vicinity Energy electric steam boilers, this project will immediately lower the carbon footprint of these buildings, alleviating the burden to the building owner by converting their source energy from fossil fuel generation (natural gas) to a clean and renewable source of energy.

The GR2030 District intends to be a key partner to the City when evaluating and tracking the renewable energy produced and greenhouse gas emissions reduced by the deployment of the Butterworth Solar project. The GR2030 District also intends to partner with the City to implement an equitable and accessible clean energy training program that seeks to benefit those who have been traditionally left behind.

The GR2030 District will participate in and support the Butterworth Solar project by leveraging our network, relationships and experience with communication, education, promotion; engage in career development

training; support small to medium business entrepreneurship; facilitate data collection and analysis; engage on with the team; facilitate technical assistance for energy efficiency; help support third-party ownership if needed; support identifying and leveraging additional financing and funding opportunities; and provide partnership to strategize infrastructure that supports solar deployment long-term in community on a variety of different property types.

The U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan is confident that Grand Rapids has built the foundation that will yield considerable impact and success from a solar project of this size.. To that end, we submit this letter in support of this application. Please do not hesitate to reach out with follow up questions.

Sincerely,
Cheri Holman
Executive Director
cholman@usgbcwm.org