



MEDIA RELEASE

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Millennials develop YGR mobile app and strategy to retain college graduates



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – A partnership between the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Valley State University (GVSU) commenced last year to attract and retain college graduates to the greater Grand Rapids area. It began with a class initiated by Mayor Heartwell to present recommendations for how the City could better attract and retain college graduates to serve as future city representatives. The students presented the City Commission with 10 recommendations and also detailed two initiated recommendations: the creation of the Mayor's Millennial Advisory Board and development of a new smartphone application.

Members of the Mayor's Millennial Advisory Board, a group of young professionals and students assembled by Mayor George Heartwell to make informed recommendations regarding possible initiatives to attract college student talent to Grand Rapids and retain them after graduation, addressed the City Commission this morning, December 15. While the group detailed the progress made over the course of this past year, including development of the Millennial Board's framework and goals, it also announced completion of a major initiative, launching a new "Why Grand Rapids" (YGR) mobile app.

A team of tech-savvy Grand Valley Seniors titled, "Advanced Solutions" developed this unique app to attract and retain college graduate Millennials here in Grand Rapids. Under the direction of GVSU Professor David Lange, School of Computing and Information Systems, the Advanced Solutions team consists of Ryan Banaszak, Brent Bouwkamp, Chris DeNeef, Trent Keusch and Cameron Lewis.

The free YGR app, available in the Android Play Store and coming soon to the Apple Store, features

a host of Grand Rapids-based companies, stores, restaurants, transportation and entertainment options that collectively showcase the community. YGR provides the user with a wide range of reasons why he or she should affirmatively consider Grand Rapids as a permanent place to begin or build a career. Community assets are featured within six subsets of the app which include: Entertainment, Community, Jobs, Living in GR, Networking, and Government.



According to project lead Banaszak, the YGR app came about because of a recommendation proposed by the GVSU class last fall to reverse Michigan's brain drain trend.

"YGR allows users to easily find what they need around our growing city," Banaszak said. "With a sleek, modern and fun design, our team believes users will be jumping to come back to the app! The GVSU students that have had a chance to preview this app are excited about its purpose and feel it will go a long way in promoting the region as a choice place for our generation to develop future careers."

Mayor Heartwell expressed his pleasure with the work accomplished by the Mayor's Millennial Advisory Board in its first year.

"As one of my final accomplishments as I prepare to leave office at the end of December, I am thrilled that this partnership with the youth of this community originated such a dynamic piece of technology that is sure to make an impact in our community," Heartwell said. "The students, led by Professor Lang, are to be commended for not only brainstorming and initiating this idea, but seeing it through from concept to fruition of its official launch."

"I am delighted that Mayor-Elect Rosalynn Bliss has also indicated her enthusiastic support of this work and her willingness to continuing fostering this partnership. I believe that this app is an entertaining and resourceful tool that will encourage members of Generation Y to seriously look at the City of Grand Rapids, its employment options and exceptional quality of life."

According to Grand Rapids Assistant to the City Manager Tom Almonte, the GVSU/City of Grand Rapids partnership will continue and progress with work on continued improvements and updates to YGR and later upgrade to YGR 2.0. The Mayor's Millennial Advisory Board will also progress in working to implement some of the other eight recommendations made by the group.