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## Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

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11/28/2021

# Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

Honors Senior Project



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## Abstract

The purpose of this report is to analyze the current state of the Grand Rapids, MI economy, as well as provide a ten-year forecast of the city's economic condition. Economic forecasting is the process of predicting the future condition of an economy using the combination of several indicators. The indicators being used for this report will include population growth, economic production, wages, industry specific production trends, unemployment rates, home values, occupancy rates, rent forecasts, education, and tourism. From intensive research and data analysis, a snapshot of the economic condition of Grand Rapids in ten years will be displayed. Additionally, several regions from around the state and country will be introduced to provide a comparison to the Grand Rapids area.



## Introduction

Centrally located between Chicago and Detroit, West Michigan is a growing region of more than 1.6 million people. At its core is the city of Grand Rapids, home to nearly 200,000 residents and the economic hub of Kent County. More specifically, the Grand Rapids region being analyzed is the Grand Rapids-Wyoming Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which together includes the neighboring counties of Kent, Ottawa, Montcalm, and Barry, as seen in Figure 1.

Economic forecasts are used by government officials and business professionals to determine fiscal and monetary policies and plan future operating activities. The intention of this economic condition and forecast report is to provide applicable data and models for policymakers to help guide their decisions. With these decisions come policy changes that take time to reach

their full effect, therefore must be implemented years in advance. This report will lay out valuable insight on the economic conditions of the Grand Rapids – Wyoming MSA, as well as deliver a ten-year forecast of the region with the use of lagging and leading indicators. When analyzing the city of Grand Rapids against other large metro cities in the United States, it seems like a daunting task, in fact, close to impractical. In baseball terms, there's the major league powerhouse cities of New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, Phoenix to name a few. With economic outputs shattering records and the populations of these cities booming, mid-sized metro areas such as Grand Rapids, don't stand a chance in comparison. However down in Triple-A, to continue using baseball terms, Grand Rapids is a very successful player



showing countless promising attributes and growth opportunities to argue itself as a premier “minor league team.”

## 2021 Economic Snapshot of Grand Rapids – Wyoming MSA

### Demographics and Income

In 2020, data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that the Grand Rapids-Wyoming MSA leads the state of Michigan in population growth, showing a 9.5% increase over the course of the last ten years. The overall population for the area sits at 1,083,211, and when broken down

by county, Kent accounts for 61% of the population (Figure 2). Grand Rapids as a city reported a 5.8% increase to remain the second most populated city in the state and closing the substantial gap between Detroit. Ottawa county, which includes two of the state’s most popular beach destinations of Grand Haven and Holland,

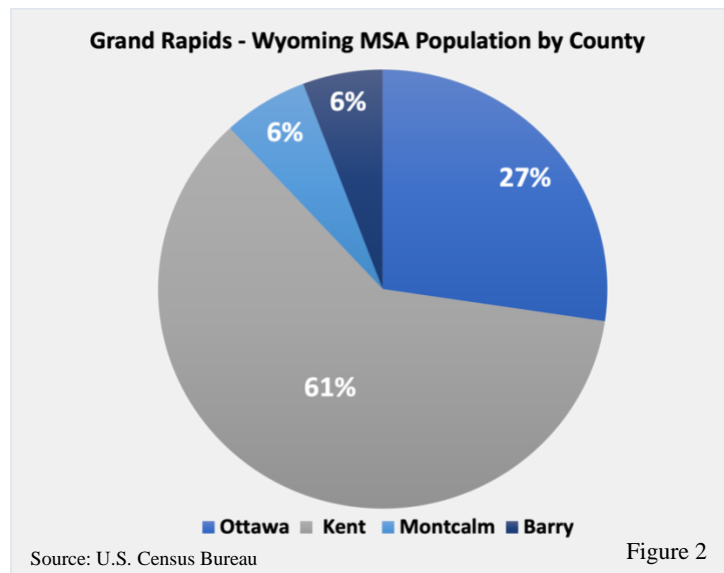


Figure 2

saw the highest county population change in the state at a staggering 12.3%.

Ottawa even surpassed Ingham County, which contains the state’s capital, Lansing, as the state’s 7<sup>th</sup> most populated county. The

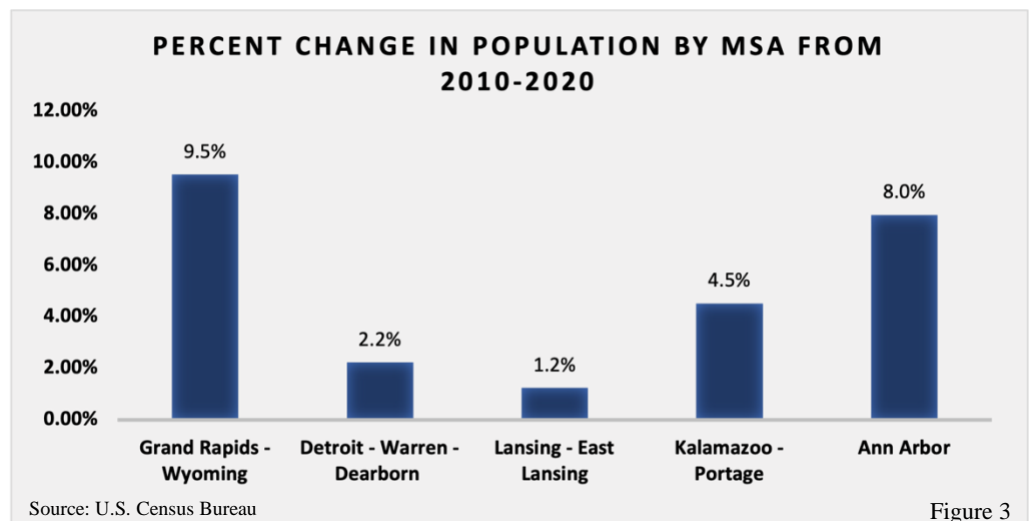


Figure 3

## Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

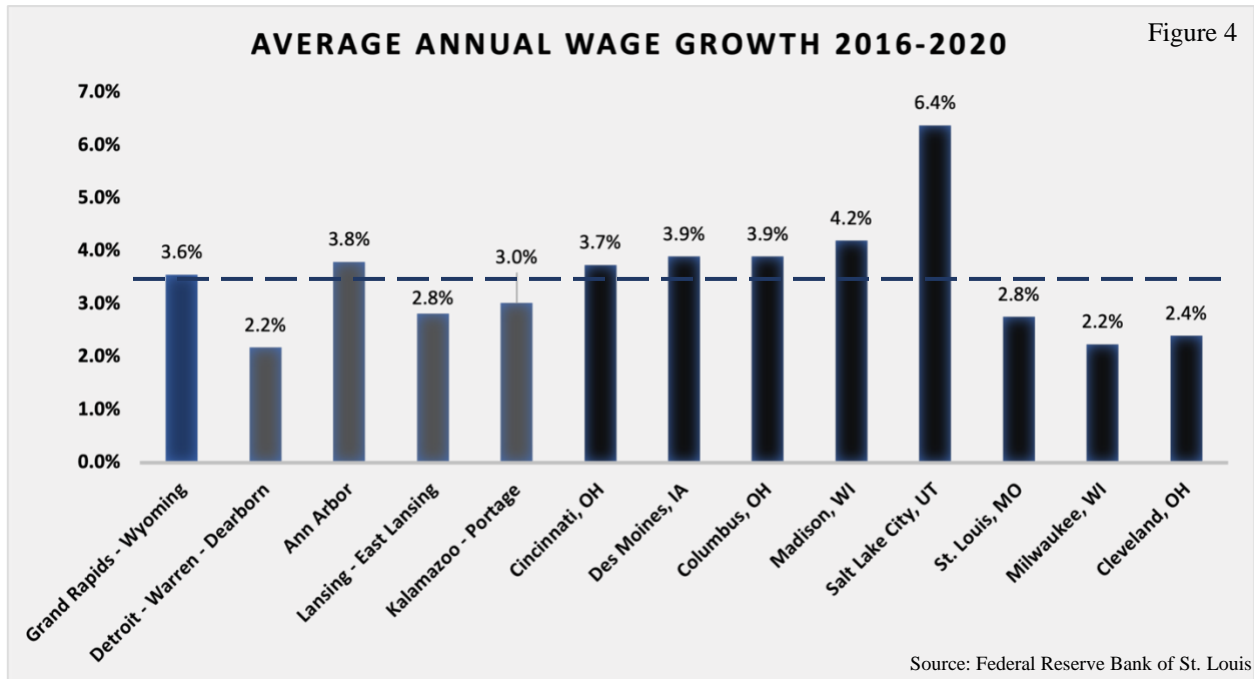
data also confirms a recent trend of the state's population shifting to the west side from the east. This is evidenced by the west side leading the state in population growth combined with prominent cities on the east side, Detroit, and Flint, decreasing in population by 11% and 20% respectively.

The exceptional quality of life, successful companies, and highly diversified economy of the Greater Grand Rapids region attracts people from not only other areas of the state, but also from throughout the country. People want to live and advance their career in this Midwestern hub for economic growth. Nationally, Grand Rapids is being noticed as a great place to be.

With a median age of just 37.2 years old, millennials view Grand Rapids as a comfortable and vibrant region to settle down in. Grand Rapids was named the 7<sup>th</sup> Best Metro for Millennials in 2020 by Commercial Café. Also included in the list were the areas of Denver, Austin, Seattle, and Nashville. Grand Rapids' ranking is anchored by their top three rankings in commuting time, regional price parity (cost of living compared to the national average), and number of millennials with employer-based health insurance. In a similar study conducted by the same institute, Grand Rapids ranked as the top performing Rust Belt city in the United States, with strong performances in its increase in percentage of millennial residents and its poverty reduction. Grand Rapids beat out the cities of Chicago, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Detroit, and many more. It's no wonder Grand Rapids was named the 21<sup>st</sup> Best Place to Live in 2020 by Livability.

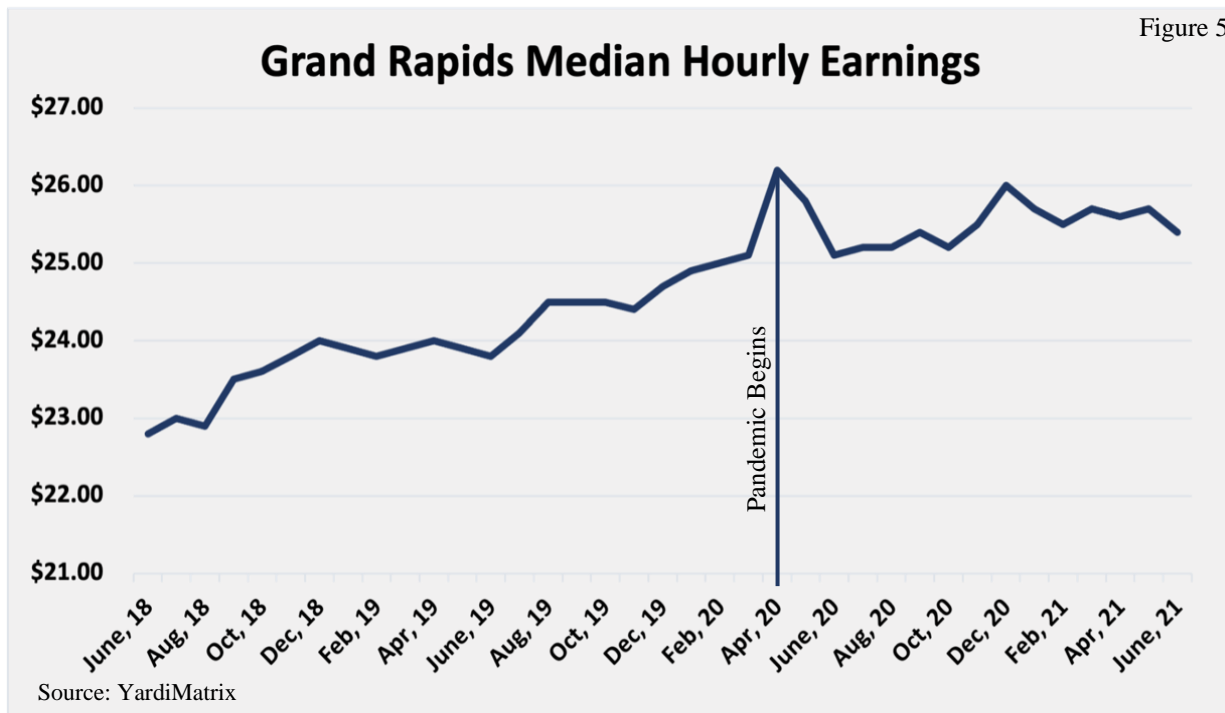


The median income for a Grand Rapids resident sits at \$64,901. This is with an average annual wage increase of 3.6% over the last ten years. To compare this average growth across comparable regions, Figure 4 shows that Grand Rapids’ wages are increasing at a rate second only to Ann Arbor in the state. Nationally, when compared to other cities, outside of Salt Lake

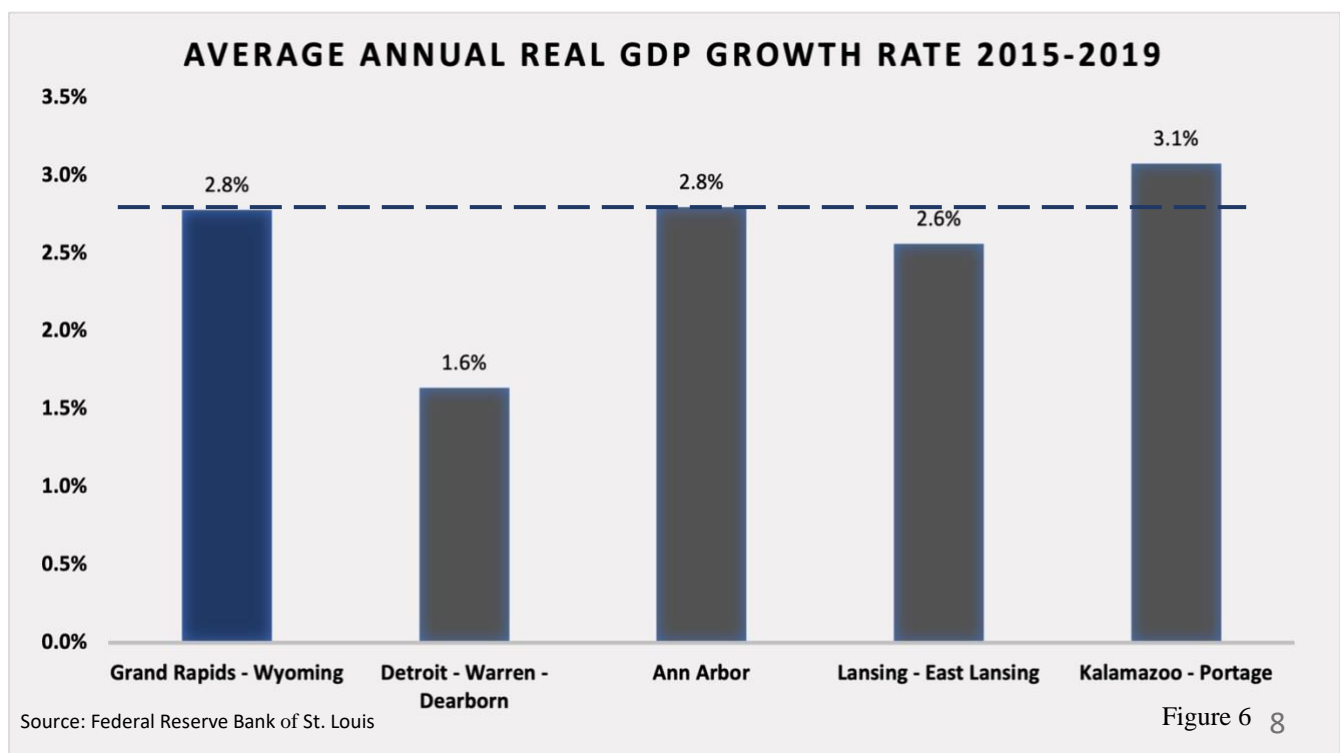


City, Grand Rapids is at nearly the same rate or above its comparable cities. Grand Rapids’ wages have been increasing more than St. Louis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, and very similar to Cincinnati, Des Moines, Columbus, and Madison. Important to note from these average numbers, is that each area’s 2020 wage growth is very much an outlier as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Detroit’s average wage growth without 2020 is 3.4%, however with 2020 included, it’s only 2.2%. So, this data does consider the effects of the pandemic across all regions. As far as a recovery for Grand Rapids’ wages, they have been on a gradual incline in response to its pandemic low. As seen in Figure 5, once the pandemic hit, wages saw an immediate steep decline in June 2020. Since that time, the region has slowly regained its balance to return to its pre-pandemic trend in the coming months.





In terms of Gross Regional Product (GRP), in 2018, Headlight Data ranked Grand Rapids as the 7<sup>th</sup> fastest growing economy in the U.S. over the previous five years. In the same study, Grand Rapids was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Las Vegas in most improved growth rate over that same period. Additionally in 2018, according to migration research released by U-Haul, Grand Rapids was the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest growing city in the United States. Compared to other areas in the state, Grand



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Rapids has performed strongly as well. From 2015-2019, Grand Rapids' average annual growth rate in Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) outpaced both Detroit and Lansing, matched Ann Arbor, and is slightly behind Kalamazoo (Figure 6).

Greater Grand Rapids is home to more than 15 colleges and universities that produce some of the most qualified graduates in the region. Universities and colleges in the area serve tens of thousands of students from around the world across a variety of college experiences. Most prominently are Grand Valley State University (GVSU), Hope College, Davenport University, Aquinas College, Grand Rapids Community College, and satellite campuses for Michigan State University and Western Michigan University. With GVSU's Allendale and Grand Rapids campuses, it has recently become the third most attended university in the state, passing both Central Michigan and Western Michigan. The universities and colleges in the area offer campuses both downtown as well as in suburban areas, allowing students to experience all the region has to offer. The students contribute greatly to the active and vibrant population of the region. Grand Rapids is a college town that sees their universities rapidly growing and continuing to produce career ready graduates.



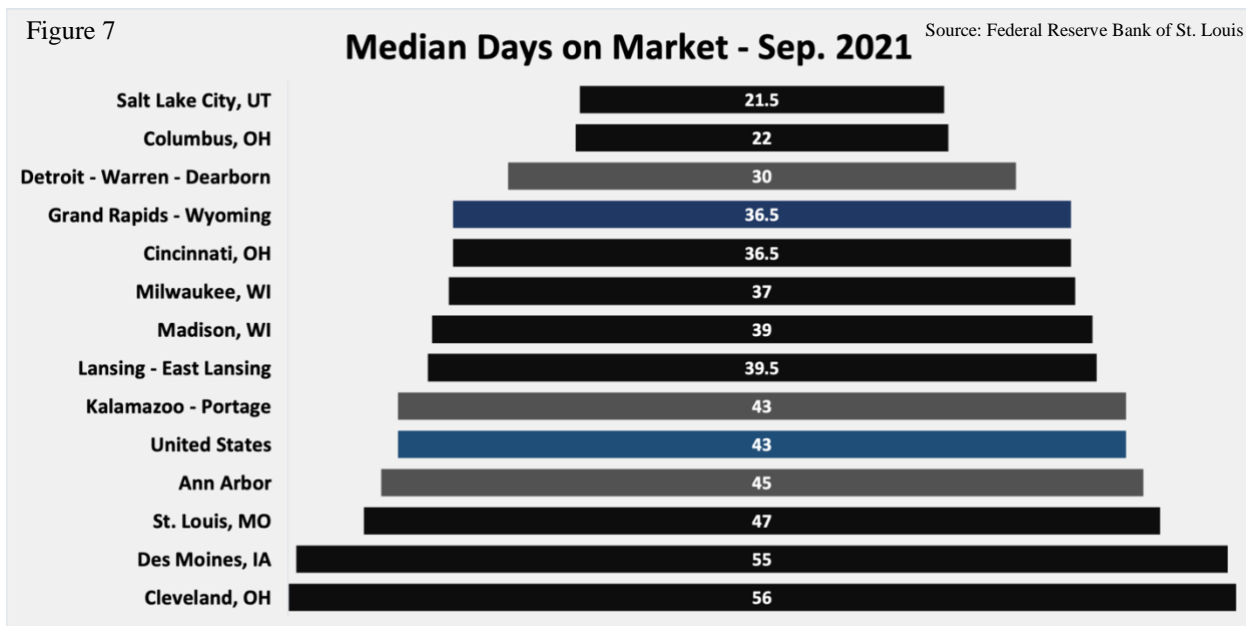
### Housing and Rental Statistics

As stated earlier, Grand Rapids is among the fastest growing cities in the Midwest, a contributing factor as to why is its booming housing market. A survey from Construction Coverage shows the housing prices have risen 90% in the past decade (2010-2020). This number ranks 21<sup>st</sup> across all midsize cities in the country and is twice the pace of the national average. For 2021, Realtor.com has Grand Rapids ranked as the 38<sup>th</sup> best housing market in the United States. Comparable cities also ranked are Columbus (11<sup>th</sup>), Salt Lake City (36<sup>th</sup>), and Milwaukee (40<sup>th</sup>). Just recently, in 2019, Grand Rapids' 49505 zip code was ranked Realtor.com's #1 hottest zip code in the country, citing its affordability, healthy downtown development, and public schools as reasons behind its heightened demand.

Once considered Michigan's best kept secret, Grand Rapids, with its slew of amenities including the Grand River, nationally recognized art museums, top end public school systems, and extensive mix of brewpubs, restaurants, and coffee shops, has become a target destination for homeowners across the country. Evidenced as being named the #1 city in the U.S. for first-time homebuyers by SmartAsset in 2020. The city's recent growth is only expected to climb as the area becomes more noticeable to millennials and first-time homeowners. Grand Rapids currently holds the second most millennial homeowners in the country, with nearly 20% of all homes being occupied by those under the age of 35 (ImproveNet, 2021).



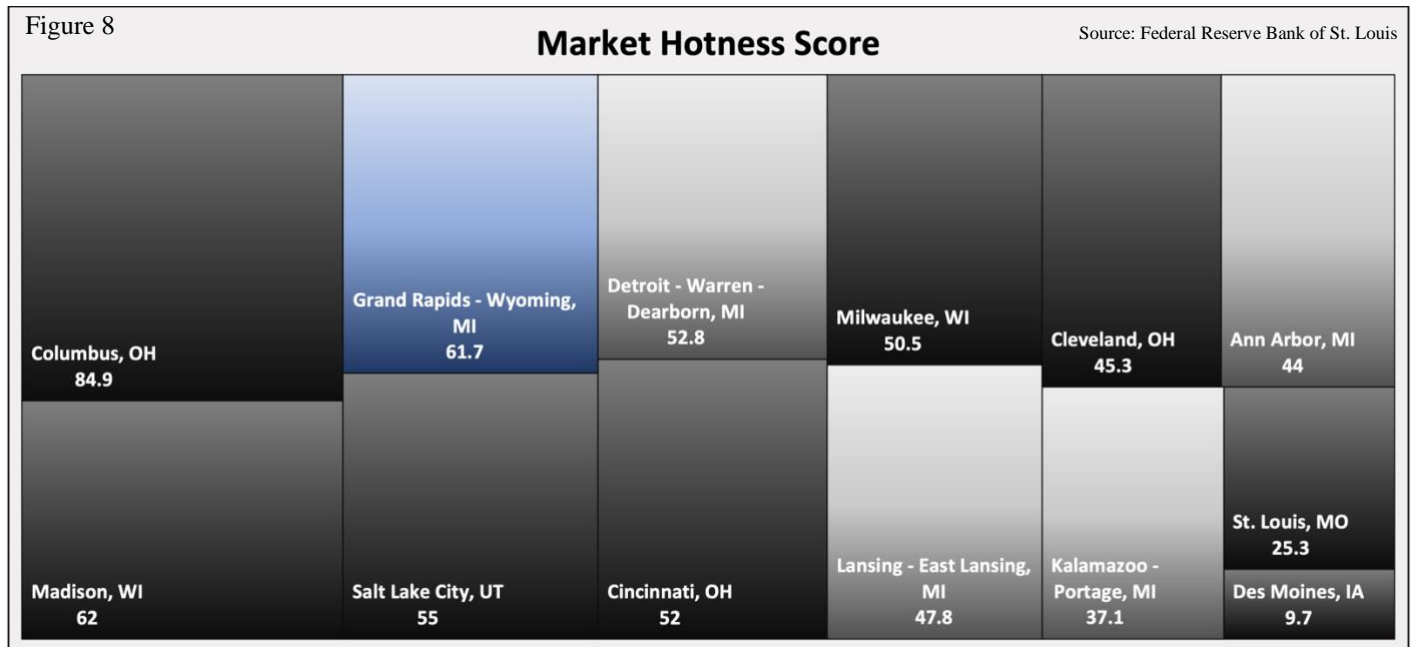
The increase in demand for the housing market for the region is further reflected in the median days houses are on the market. In the Grand Rapids area, houses enter and are swiped up in a matter of 36.5 days (Figure 7). This signals heavy demand in the housing market, especially in comparison to similar regions across the country. Homes are being sold at a faster rate than cities such as Cleveland, Des Moines, St. Louis, Madison, and Milwaukee. Even compared to in state regions, only Detroit homes get purchased quicker. On an overall average for the country, homes are on the market for 43 days, 6.5 days longer than Grand Rapids.



A correlated statistic to median days on the market, is Realtor.com’s “Market Hotness Score”. The score is an equally weighted composite metric of a geography’s supply score and demand score. The supply and demand scores are indexes comparing metros across the country

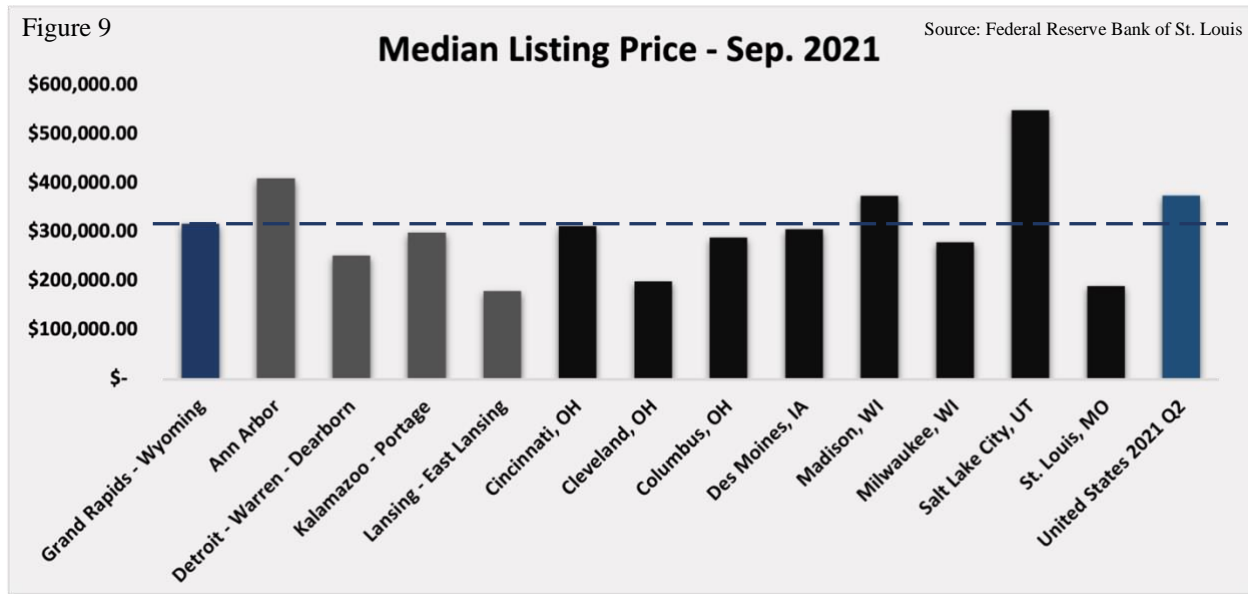
on median days on the market (supply score) and listing page views per property (demand score).

Its significance lies in the ability to capture real time market temperatures and identify high

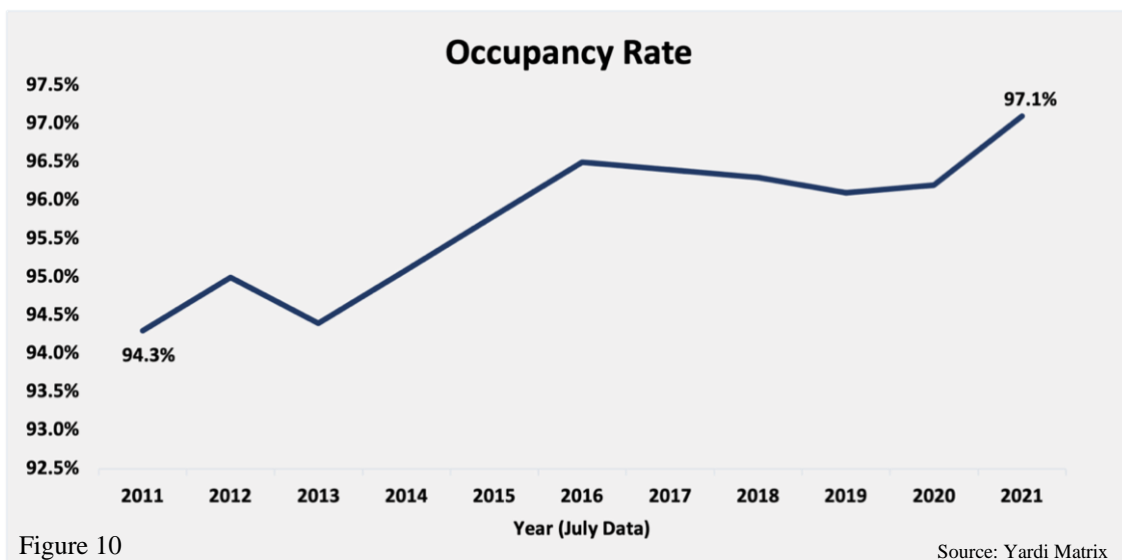


demand regions. Shown in Figure 8, Grand Rapids outscores every other in-state region and succumbs only to Madison and Columbus for the top score among its comparative cities. These numbers reflect the values from September 2021 and provide an insightful snapshot on the ever-changing housing markets across the country. Seeing Grand Rapids report a comparatively strong number only further supports the current flourishing market and is a leading factor in what is potentially to come for the future.

As of 2021, the greater Grand Rapids area has over 400,000 households, which has grown by 9.9% since 2010. The region’s median listing price is 18% cheaper than the national average of \$374,900, sitting at a median price of \$317,450 (Figure 9).

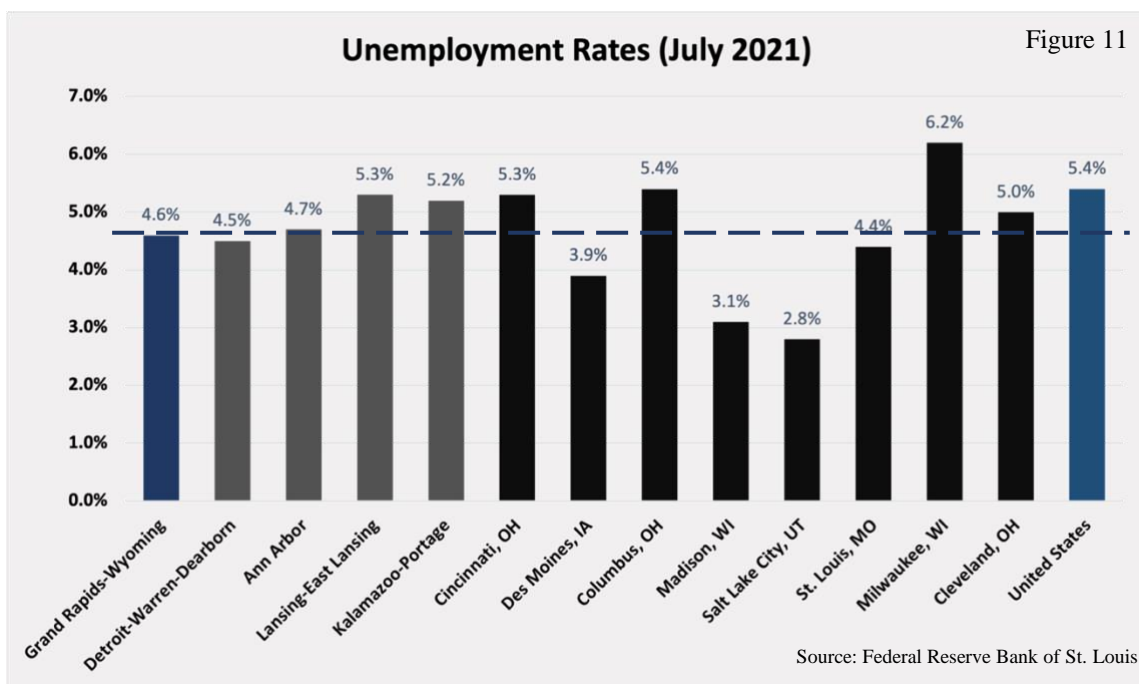


As of July 2021, the rental occupancy rate sits at just over 97%, having seen a steady increase over the last decade from 94.3% (Figure 10). The average rental rate for 2021 Q3 is \$1,079, showing a 5.3% increase from 2020 Q3. Five quarters ago in 2020 Q2, the average rental rate was \$1,009. Rents have increased a staggering 7% in just over one year (Yardi Matrix, 2021). Expect the trend to continue its ascent for the near future.



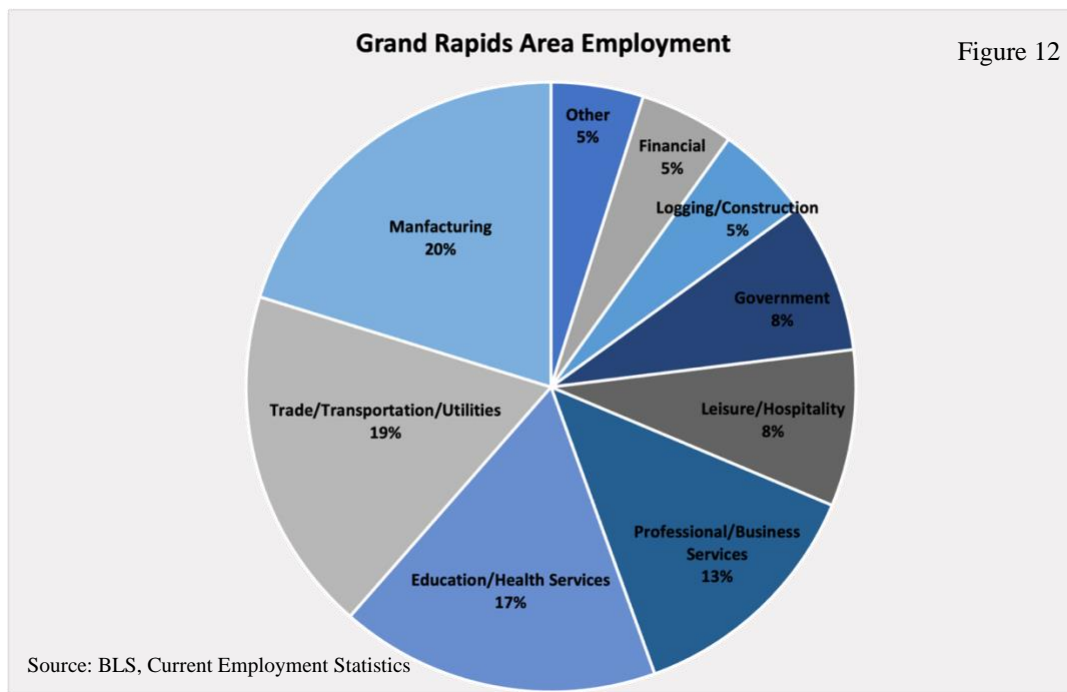
## Employment

Grand Rapids’ workforce is made up of motivated, innovative, and highly skilled professionals. With over half of the more than a million residents under the age of 40, area employers can source top candidates from a wide pool of young professionals. Companies from around the world have chosen Greater Grand Rapids not only for its proximity to major markets and affordable commercial space, but also for its highly qualified workforce. Many successful companies have trusted the region’s economy and called Grand Rapids home for decades. Most notably, these are Spectrum Health, Meijer, Gentex, Gordon Food Service, Amway, Herman Miller, and Steelcase. The presence of these organizations serves as a strong backbone for the employment of Grand Rapids’ residents. The area’s unemployment rate has settled at 4.6% for the month of July 2021, 2.7% lower than its July 2020 value. Compared to its in-state regions, it is lower than Ann Arbor, Lansing, and Kalamazoo, while only 10 basis points above Detroit. Nationally, Grand Rapids is 80 basis points below the U.S. unemployment rate as well as lower than comparable cities of Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, and Milwaukee (Figure 11).



## Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

West Michigan is a very appealing region for corporations to relocate their offices, its low cost of living and annual fresh graduate pool from local universities, are just two of its many amenities increasing its demand for downtown office space. The total non-farm employment for the Grand Rapids area is roughly 540,000 persons and is heavily dominated by the industries of manufacturing, trade/transportation/utilities, and education/health services. Those respective industries make up 56% of the non-farm employment in the region (Figure 12). This can be attributed to the dominant employers of Spectrum Health, Mercy Health, Gentex, Amway, Herman Miller, Steelcase, and Grand Valley State University.



## Tourism

The Grand Rapids region aims to provide a variety of tourism opportunities to attract people from all around the world. Art lovers enjoy the massive public art show of ArtPrize, as well as the Grand Rapids Art Museum and the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park. Those who love to get outside are treated with countless biking trails, golf courses, Grand River



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activities, the John Ball Zoo, or even a picturesque day trip to sandy Lake Michigan. Grand Rapids was named America's Best River Town by Outside Magazine and the #6 U.S. Fishing City. It's also currently in the process of a significant river restoration project that will return the namesake rapids to downtown's Grand River. Sports and concert fanatics can attend events at the nationally recognized Van Andel Arena, LMCU Ballpark, DeVos Place and Performance Hall, and GLC Live at 21 Monroe. Grand Rapids is home to three professional affiliate teams: West Michigan Whitecaps (Detroit Tigers), Grand Rapids Griffins (Detroit Red Wings) and Grand Rapids Gold (Denver Nuggets). To top everything off, food and beer lovers can relax at one of the dozens of local breweries in the city such as New Holland, Founders, Atwater, and the Grand Rapids Brewing Company. Located just minutes from all the action is the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, which transports over 3 million passengers annually.

An economic impact study released in June 2021 found that the Van Andel Arena, DeVos Place and DeVos Performance Hall generated over \$82 million in local economic impact throughout the 2018-2019 fiscal year, which acts as the most recent full fiscal year before the COVID-19 pandemic. The report was conducted by the Michigan Sport Consulting Group and was the first one done since the 2010-2011 fiscal year. The 2019 report provides a substantial growth from 2011, which calculated the impact of the venues to be an estimated \$58 million, a 41% increase. The study also included a spatial impact analysis using the property values of



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residential and commercial properties within a 0.35-mile radius. The analysis concluded that the venues have a significant positive impact on the property values downtown, contributing to the success of local businesses and enhancing the quality of life in Grand Rapids.

Started in 2009, ArtPrize is recognized as one of the world's largest public art events. The event takes place over a 3-week period and is open to all individuals wanting to submit their work. The art is exhibited through the city in public parks, museums, bars, restaurants, and the city's bridges. During the 2017 event, the organization reported more than 522,000 people had visited downtown Grand Rapids, with guests originating from all 50 U.S. states and 47 different countries. These visitors created an estimated \$33 million in new economic impact for Grand Rapids business communities.

When Grand Rapids is mentioned as Beer City, USA, it isn't just for show. In 2019, Experience Grand Rapids, the area's destination marketing organization, released an economic impact study of Beer Tourism in Kent County. The several breweries in Grand Rapids and Kent County are trendy tourist attractions, attracting nearly 100,000 tourists in 2019. These beer tourists spent \$24 million on craft beer, food, transportation, and other spending. This spending generated an impact of \$39 million in Kent County. 25.3% of the tourists came from outside of Michigan and 40% of them stayed in a hotel/motel in the Grand Rapids area. Perhaps the most notable aspect from the report, the economic impact of beer tourism more than tripled from

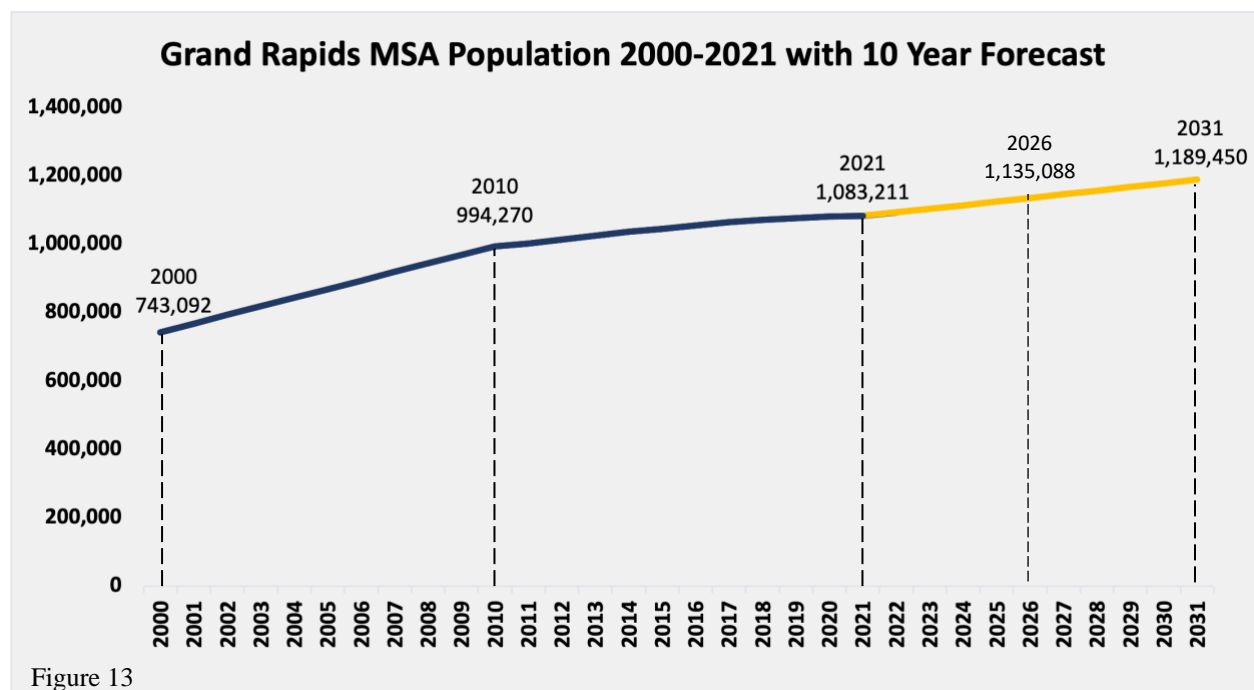


\$12.2 million in 2015 to \$38.5 million in 2019, cementing the city’s Beer City reputation and position as an economic anchor for Grand Rapids.

## 10 Year Forecast Data

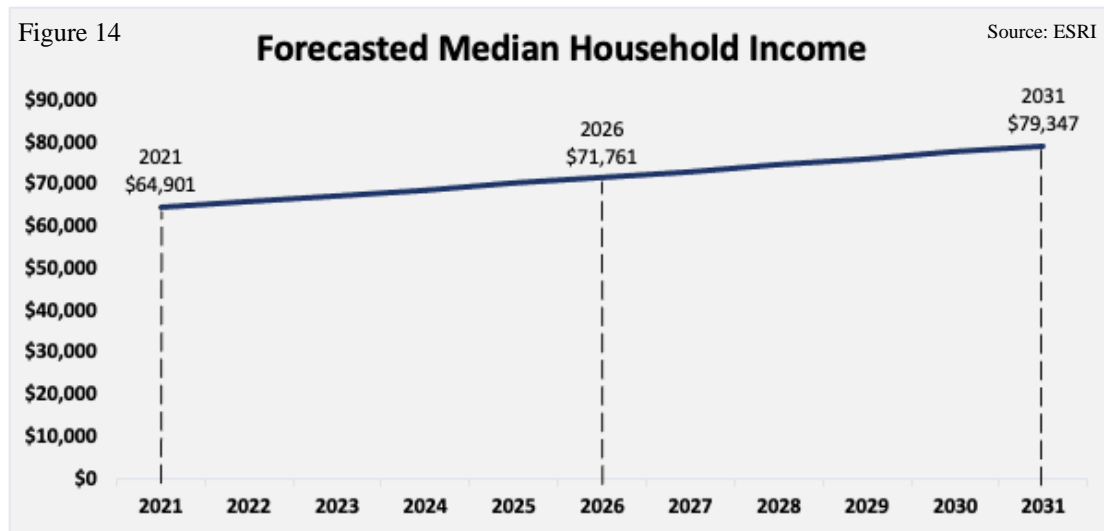
### Demographics and Income

In 2000, the U.S Census Bureau recorded the population of the Grand Rapids – Wyoming MSA region as 743,092. Fast forward just over two decades and that total has risen 45.52% to 1,083,211. More specifically, it includes an 8.95% increase over the last decade and 2.66% growth the previous 5 years. Annually, the growth over the last 21 years is 1.82%, 0.78% for the past 11 years, and 0.53% in the previous five. When forecasting for the long term, average annual rates from the past act as a strong baseline for future performance. This leads to a weighted average forecasted growth rate of 0.94% over the next 10 years. The weighted rate emphasizes the more recent annual growth rates (2016-2021) over older rates dating back to 2000. At this 0.94% annual rate, the population of Grand Rapids-Wyoming region will be an



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estimated 1,135,088 and 1,189,450 in 2026 and 2031 respectively. This shows a 4.79% growth in the next five years and 9.81% by 2031 (Figure 13).

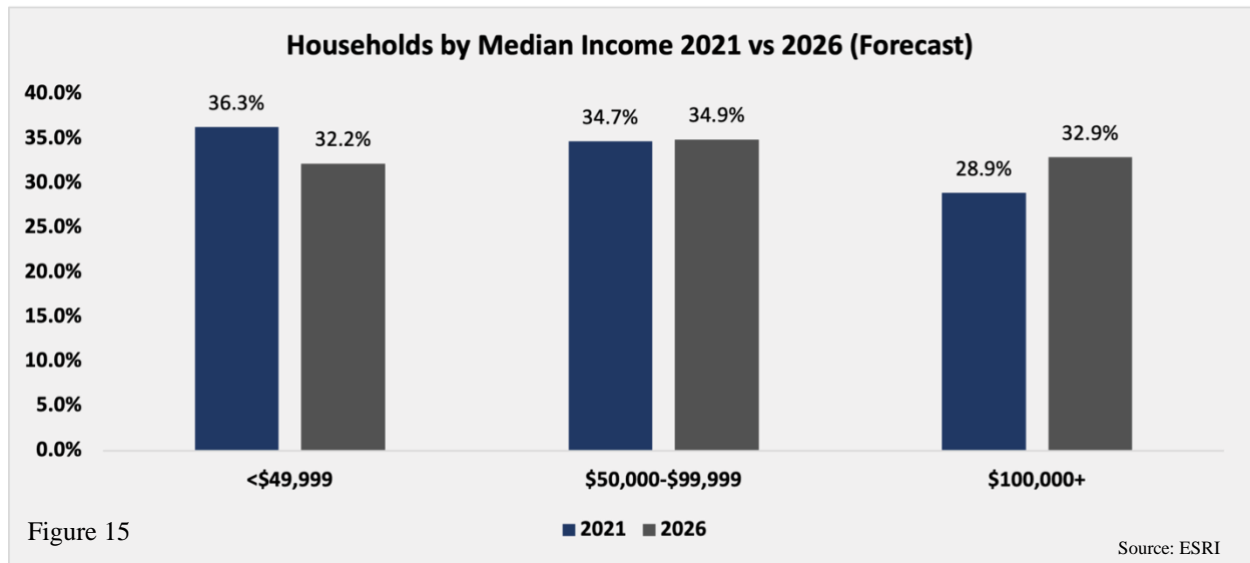


The current median household income for the area is \$64,901. It is projected to grow 10.57% by 2026 to a value of \$71,761. Factoring into these projections from ESRI, a geographic information software company, are annual wage growth rates, regional economic growth, and inflation. Extending the forecast five more years shows a nearly \$15,000 net increase in income from 2021 to 2031 (Figure 14). This is a strong indicator that the area will retain its current residents, but also be attractive to those outside of the region who are looking for opportunities of increased income, which in turn supports continued population growth in the region.

In terms of specific ranges of household incomes, roughly 36% of median incomes in Grand Rapids are \$49,999 or lower, 34.7% earn \$50,000-\$99,999, and 28.9% of incomes reach \$100,000+ (Figure 15). As a result of the forecasted increase in household incomes mentioned earlier, ESRI forecasts the stated percentages above to see a correlated shift. By 2026, the number of households earning \$100,000 is expected to grow by 4%, which overtakes the percentage of households earning less than \$49,999. The range of \$50,000-\$99,999 looks to remain largely unchanged. It is a great sign for the future economy to see this significant change

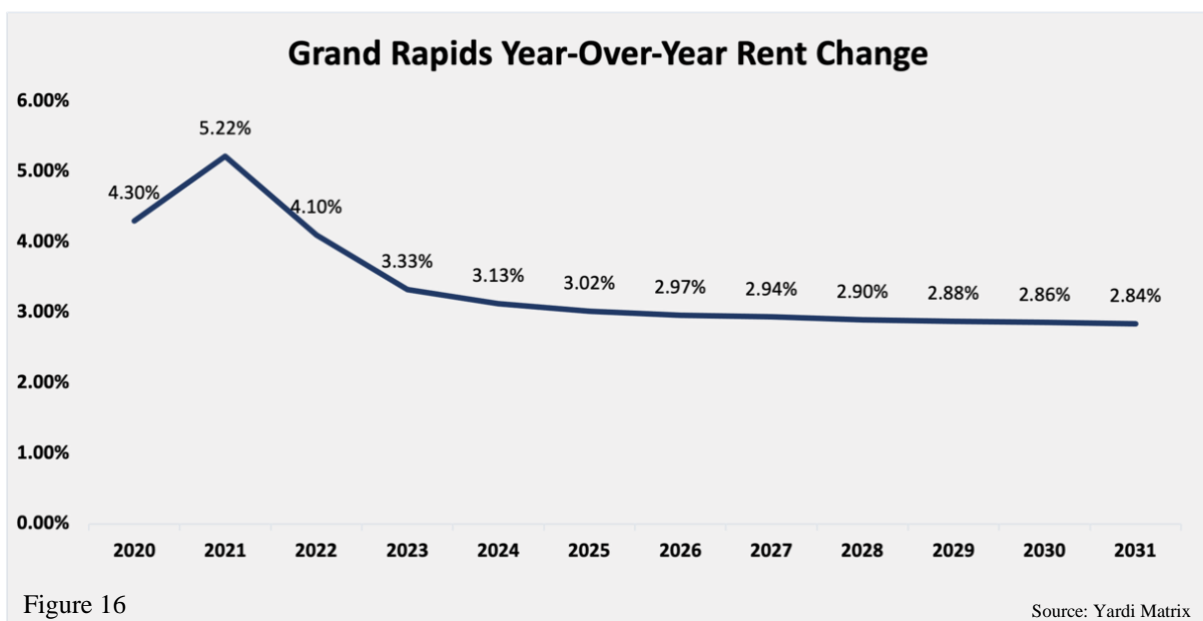
## Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

in median income for the area. Grand Rapids is gradually becoming a more affluent area as a result of its rapidly expanding economy.



## Housing and Rental Statistics

Current rents for the region have been on a hot streak, increasing 4.3% in 2020 and another 5.2% in 2021 (Figure 16). The market has by no means been taking it easy on its residents. Residents of multifamily properties are paying an average of \$1,072/month (Figure 17). However, according to Yardi Matrix, a commercial real estate data and research



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organization, rents are expected to calm and settle into an average of a 3.10% annual increase for

the next decade. Renters can

expect to pay an average of

\$1,261 and \$1,454 per

month to live in the region

come 2026 and 2031

respectively. This steady

increase in rents is healthy

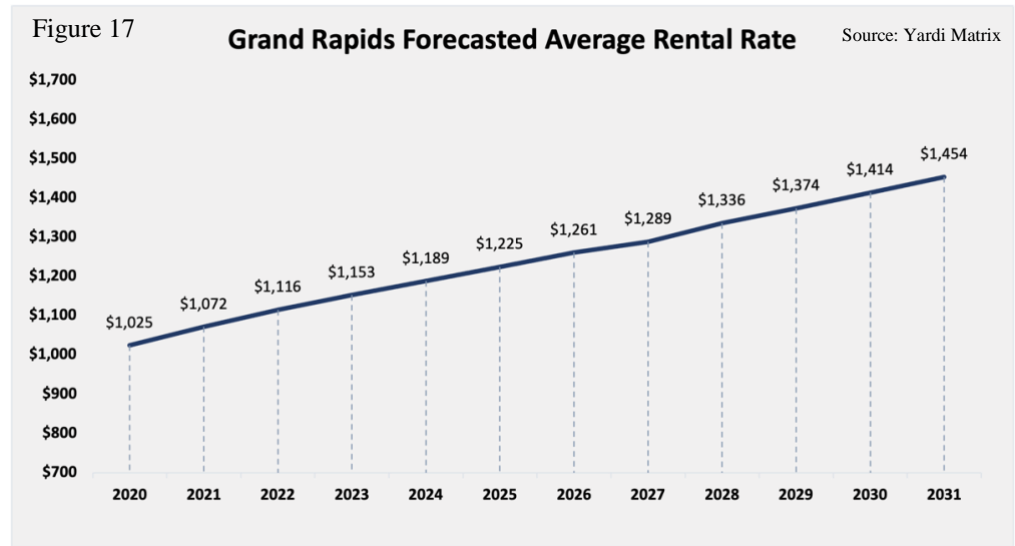
for the region's market to

support continued economic growth and points towards the current market conditions to continue

into the near future.

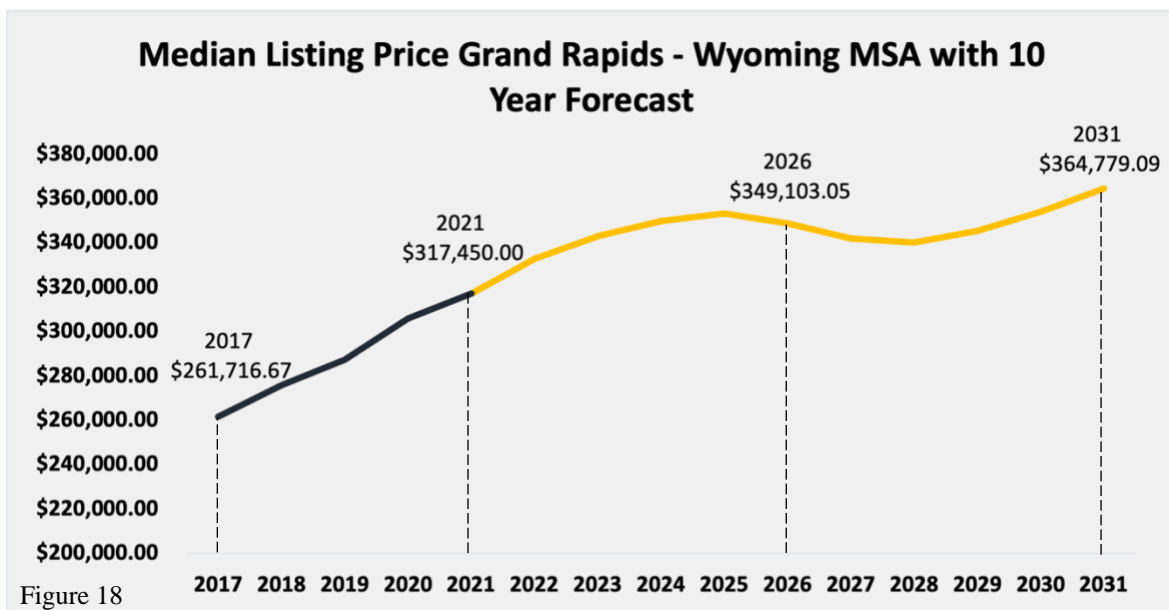
Across the multifamily properties in the region, Yardi Matrix shows a strong occupancy rate of 96.6% for 2021 Q3. It is forecasted to continue its impressive rate throughout the next decade and sit at a resilient 96% through 2031. The constant occupancy rate is an indicator that despite the expected rent growth, residents can afford the increase in payments. An un-wavering occupancy rate is a backbone for a strong real estate market.

In the City of Grand Rapids Housing Needs Assessment, it is estimated that 5,340 total rental housing units are needed in the next five years to keep pace with demand. Additionally, 3,548 for-sale housing units are estimated to be needed. In Yardi Matrix's five-year supply forecast for cities across the nation, 4,445 rental housing units are in the pipeline for construction to be completed in the region by 2026. While this is a strong forecast, it is still 16.8% short of the estimated demand. The pent-up demand and limited supply support the expected rent increases mentioned above and fuels a short-term continued competitive housing market in the region.



## Economic Forecast of Grand Rapids, MI

With a 2021 median listing price for homes in the MSA region at \$317,450, it has increased 3.7% from 2020. Since 2017, the price has grown 21.3% for an average annual growth rate of 4.95%. Barring significant market movements, the median listing price is expected to follow a traditional cyclical trend. The figure below projects 2022 to continue the recent trend of nearly 5% growth, however, begin to slow through 2025 with an average of 2% growth. 2026 through 2028 is expected to see a slight decline in growth by 1.25% before regaining steam to surpass the \$360,000 level in 2031. Singling out the city of Grand Rapids within the MSA, the urban region is significantly cheaper, posting a median home price of \$234,133 in 2020 (Construction Coverage 2021). This is a 6.8% jump for the city from 2019 as opposed to the national average of 4.7%. The 2020 median value shows the affordability of the region as the rest of the country yields a median price \$19,271 higher than Grand Rapids. The report also predicts the city's median price to increase 6.5% to \$249,352 in 2021 versus 7.9% nationally. The city of Grand Rapids will continue to benefit from its affordability to attract new residents and spur economic growth for years to come.



## Tourism and New Developments

Pre-pandemic, the Gerald R. Ford Airport ushered 3.5 million passengers through its gates, playing a vital role in West Michigan’s tourism industry. In early 2021, the airport announced that more than \$500,000 was invested in the most “ambitious and robust study of the airport’s real estate assets to date”. The airport looks to attract new developments and investments that will shape the area’s economy for years to come. The Ford Airport Director of Commercial Development, Stephen Clark stated, “We want to be the economic catalyst for West Michigan, and we are well positioned to do so.” Prior to the pandemic, the Ford Airport had a \$3.2 billion economic impact on West Michigan. With 900+ acres of property for development, the airport’s goal is to more than triple that to \$10 billion in the next decade.

With over 400 health sciences establishments in West Michigan, the Greater Grand Rapids is a world-class healthcare destination attracting medical professionals from around the world. The economic impact provided from the industry serves as significant pillar in the development of the city’s economy. Adding to its current impact, West Michigan has recently benefitted from more than \$2 billion of investments in the industry. A few examples of these are Spectrum Health, Perrigo Co., and Michigan State University.



Spectrum plans to develop a \$70 million Center for Transformation and Innovation (CTI) in the North Monroe business district by 2023. The new headquarters will combine 1,200+ administrative staff that are currently working in multiple different offices throughout Grand Rapids. CTI is projected to save Spectrum \$15 million in annual rent and hopes to spark further



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redevelopment within the district. Spectrum emphasized the downtown location as it will be within walking distance of Medical Mile and its Butterworth Hospital Campus.

Another headquarters settling in Grand Rapids is Perrigo Co., who aims to bring its North American headquarters to the city in 2022. The world-leading over-the-counter health and



wellness company has 11,000 employees globally, with 4,000 of them residing in West Michigan. A third health industry development is through Michigan State University, who recently finished its development of the \$85 million Doug Meijer Innovation Center, expanding its current

presence on Medical Mile. Following the completion of both the Doug Meijer Medical Innovation Building and Perrigo's headquarters, it's estimated they will support over 2,000 jobs, increase local earnings by \$142 million, and add an annual economic impact of \$339 million to Kent County.

A centerpiece to Grand Rapids is the Grand River, which for over 2 miles, runs straight through the heart of the city. In the 1800s, to facilitate the transfer of timbers and waterpower, rock islands, and natural reefs were removed, and multiple dams were built. This degraded the ecosystem and limited recreational activity that occurred in and around the river. Today, that section of the river is generally unusable as the dams create unsafe currents for most water activities. A project, proposed by Grand

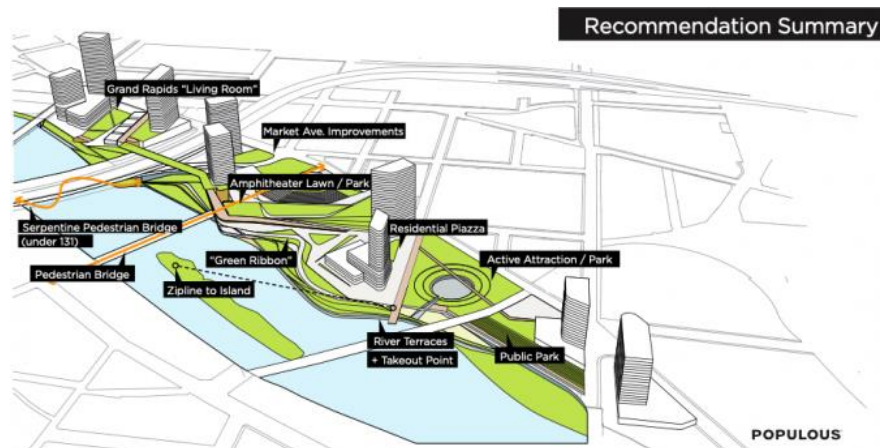


Rapids Whitewater, plans to remove four of these dams along the river. The project looks to

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physically transform the city's riverfront by revitalizing the Grand River's natural flows and habitats, while also improving recreational uses and spurring economic development. In an economic impact study done by Anderson Economic Group on the Whitewater project, the created recreational uses for residents and visitors projects to attract over 200,000 annual users, stimulating a net annual economic impact of \$22-30 million for the region.

Aiding the Whitewater project is the Grand Action Plan 2.0, which is a concept for riverfront development along a stretch of Market Ave. The project includes more than ten acres of public open space connected to the Grand River, a riverfront park connecting to the current river trail system, an adventure park, kayak pit-stop, zipline, 12,000 seat amphitheater, and 1,500 housing units for affordable housing.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The data above has highlighted the Grand Rapids MSA as a rapidly growing region and having one of Michigan's strongest economies. The consistent population growth, rise in wages, impressive regional economic growth, and diverse recreational offerings have all contributed to the vibrant region. West Michigan is in a great position to further its economic development and become a true economic powerhouse. The area is on the rise and deservedly so, it's being recognized nationally. The innovative and collaborative region with its robust economy, safe community, and affordable cost of living, provides an opportunity for a high quality of life for

all. To conclude, a list of multiple observations and recommendations were gathered from the research and analysis:

- Invest in Ottawa County to support its state leading population growth as a viable alternative to living in the urban environment of Grand Rapids. This is an option to combat the rising rents, housing prices, and extensive need for housing units.
- React to the region's rising millennial population by altering economic developments and initiatives to reinforce millennial's interests and lifestyles and spark continued population growth.
- Focus on increasing the productivity in the industries with the highest current employment levels (manufacturing, transportation, health services, professional services). The increased productivity will allow for wages to continue to rise for the majority.
- With the region's recently booming housing market, be prepared for a gradual slow within the coming years. The recent pace is simply too unreasonable to expect the same inflated growth rate for the next 10 years.
- Take advantage of the region's comparative advantage to the nation and surrounding regions of its superior manufacturing and healthcare industries to boost economic growth.
- Support enhanced business attraction to the Van Andel Arena, Devos Place and Performance Hall, ArtPrize, and the brewing industry as both tourism and economic pillars.
- Support the steady population growth by delivering the Housing Next Report's estimated 8,000 housing units needed to meet demand. Prioritize and get creative with potential redevelopment projects to provide the units.
- The gap between housing prices and wage growth is a concern. However, ease the long-term fear of additional hikes by noting the consistent wage growth and expected rise in the region's median household income. In the long run, the current wage growth outpaces the expected rise in housing prices and rents. Grand Rapids is anticipated to become more affluent.
- Aid in the fulfillment of planned new developments such as the Whitewater Project, Ford Airport development, and health care expansions, which are estimated to bring in over \$3 billion in annual economic impact.

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