

GRAND RAPIDS CHAMBER 2025-2026 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES



THE GRAND RAPIDS CHAMBER is the region's largest business organization, relentlessly advocating for a thriving and prosperous West Michigan for all.

Our members range from small businesses to global corporations innovating to solve challenges, create opportunity, and drive the growth that improves lives in our community.

Business people are vital to local communities. They employ our neighbors and invest in philanthropic initiatives. West Michigan's success is built on public-private partnerships and the collaborative impact of leaders with vision and commitment. To keep West Michigan moving forward policymakers need to focus on policies that sustain growth and broad-based prosperity.

The Chamber is an extension of your company's team—prioritizing the issues that impact how you operate and allowing you the time to focus on the work that matters most – running your business.

- If a law or government department is impacting your business, we can facilitate the conversation.
- If you need support to address an issue, we can connect you to resources.
- If you just need that “dang” sign permit or liquor license, we have the relationships and influence to assist in cutting through the red tape.

IN SHORT, IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHO TO CALL, CALL US.



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ISSUE COMMITTEES & COUNCILS



Education & Workforce Development Committee



Public Policy Committee



Health Care & Human Resources Committee



Municipal Council



Infrastructure & Natural Resources Committee



Tax Policy & Regulatory Affairs Committee

THE ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST

Our member-driven advocacy is working to improve the West Michigan economy and quality of life. In 2025, our core focus will be:

A VIBRANT BUSINESS CLIMATE

Business people need to be able to do what they do best, create solutions and innovate. They should be responsive to their customers, not struggling with convoluted processes. We are focused on:

- Sensible regulation
- A competitive tax environment
- Fiscally responsible budgets
- Affordable employee benefits
- Infrastructure for a growing region

A TALENTED MICHIGAN

The essential building blocks of our economy are the ideas, ingenuity, and imagination of people. Michigan families deserve a strong education system - from birth to career – to meet future demands and challenges. We also need to attract the best and brightest from across the world. We are focused on:

- Attracting, growing and retaining talent
- Increasing student achievement
- Expanding resources for a more expansive workforce
- Immigration reform to attract New Americans

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

A great place to live is also a great place to work. Strong local leadership creates a welcoming, vibrant community with a place for everyone. We are focused on:

- A thriving downtown and business districts
- Transformational projects
- Housing solutions
- Connected and accessible communities
- Business leaders connecting with civic leaders and community

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

ATTRACTING, GROWING, AND RETAINING TALENT

21st Century jobs have evolved into highly demanding STEM careers that require advance-trained workers. These policies will attract talent to West Michigan and provide businesses with the resources to be national leaders in research, implementation, and production.



- Remove barriers to housing and community resources
- Address the cost of attaining higher education
- Support a diverse workforce through global reciprocity of accreditation/attainment in comparable careers

INCREASE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Talent is critical for West Michigan employers. Public-private partnerships between education institutions and business leaders will encourage engagement with the next generation of the workforce.

- Accountability of our educational institutions
- Streamlining educational attainment across all levels
- Support a robust adult education system

EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR A MORE EXPANSIVE WORKFORCE

To meet the demand for skilled talent throughout the region, by seeking resources and solutions for underserved populations.

- Support programs that remove barriers to employment
 - Criminal justice reform for both juvenile and adult
 - New Americans
- Going Pro Talent Fund expansion
- Improve childcare access and affordability



HEALTH CARE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE



AFFORDABLE EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Make care more attainable and cost-effective through flexibility, transparency, multiple care options, and offering a choice of insurance & provider. These policies support innovative solutions that create safe, effective and affordable benefits.

- Reduce the cost of prescription medications without mandates
- Enhance and expand virtual health and other digital health solutions
- Increase access to behavioral health care
- Promote collaborative care initiatives (e.g. value-based models, population health, quintuple aim)
- Promote education and transparency to empower healthy living and healthcare decision-making
- Support continued incentives for insurers and providers to engage around social determinants of health.
- Advocate for enhanced market competition on purchasing options.
- Oppose additional benefit mandates

SENSIBLE REGULATION

Support fair, flexible employment laws that empower businesses to manage their workforce needs and minimize unnecessary government regulations that stifle economic growth and innovation.

- Oppose government mandates that hinder economic growth (e.g. federal overtime regulation, minimum, living and prevailing wage)
- Maintain business flexibility to provide benefit packages that cater to their team
- Reinstate Michigan's Right to Work Act
- Support reforms that strengthen the unemployment system's solvency, encourage active employment and reduce fraud.

INFRASTRUCTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES PRIORITIES

CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES

Advocate for improvements to enhance community connectivity and accessibility in West Michigan:



- Support fair raising and distribution of transportation and infrastructure funding
- Advance major road and infrastructure projects
- Ensure development coordination to maximize impact and use of taxpayer dollars
- Support innovative mobility/EV implementation

SENSIBLE REGULATION

Advocate for responsible regulations that protect our natural resources and do not unnecessarily burden job creators.

- Advocate for responsible, streamlined, cost-effective and predictable practices and processes with EGLE (e.g. permitting process)
- Support common sense, science-based environmental regulations (air, water, remediation, redevelopment)

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A GROWING REGION

Advocate for projects that meet the needs of a growing and prosperous West Michigan.

- Identify and support local brownfield redevelopment and other transformative regional projects
- Support competitive energy policies (e.g. Line 5)
- Effective and market-driven climate mitigation efforts
- Support continued Great Lakes restoration
- Advocate for stormwater, drain, and sewer funding and maintenance



TAX POLICY & REGULATORY AFFAIRS PRIORITIES

SENSIBLE REGULATION

Whether navigating state departments or building and zoning ordinances, businesses face numerous barriers to success. These policies will encourage policymakers to consider the implications for business leaders when implementing regulations and oversight.



- Reform local and state ordinances that hinder businesses' ability to operate and succeed
- Support regulatory reform that promotes businesses' ability to predict and grow
- Increase government transparency
- Pursue efficiencies at all levels of government
- Support the evolution of technology and tools (such as AI) in the workplace

A COMPETITIVE TAX ENVIRONMENT

For businesses to remain competitive in Michigan, a system must be maintained that allows them to operate within our borders. This system should consider the financial implications of relocating, expanding, or maintaining a presence in West Michigan. These policies will focus on creating a tax environment that allows for the growth of all businesses.

- Support fiscally responsible tax provisions that are fair and competitive that allow for the State to attract and retain a broad base of business investment and talented employees
- Oppose the expansion of Sales and Use Tax on services
- Support the elimination of the Personal Property Tax for all payers
- Streamline the tax process and regulations

EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR A MORE EXPANSIVE WORKFORCE

The workforce and the skills necessary to participate in it are ever-evolving. Therefore, businesses must adapt to these constant challenges to be better positioned for the workforce of the future. These policies will prioritize programs and streamline regulations that best position employers to serve their employees and customers efficiently.

- Youth employment
- Support growth and opportunities for new and emerging industries



MUNICIPAL COUNCIL PRIORITIES

EXPANDING RESOURCES FOR A MORE EXPANSIVE WORKFORCE

City and county governments play just as much, if not more of a role in regulation and oversight as the state government. These policies are vital to regional competitiveness and a pro-growth business climate.

- Eliminate overly restrictive or arbitrary city and county codes and regulations
- Actively work to prevent policies that will negatively impact business growth



FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE BUDGETS

- Invest in essential services that promote vibrancy (public safety, parks, streets, etc)
- Address long-term liabilities
- Keep tax rates competitive and fees low

A THRIVING DOWNTOWN AND BUSINESS DISTRICTS

Communities that succeed are vibrant, active and are continuously working to promote a higher quality of life. Local government has a core responsibility to provide key infrastructure and essential services such as:

- Safe and clean streets and public spaces
- Attractive and accessible amenities and entertainment centers
- Public-private partnerships to deliver transformational projects that create new opportunities and support existing small businesses

HOUSING SOLUTIONS

West Michigan's high quality of life means more people want to move or stay here. Local policies are crucial to eliminate barriers and promote housing supply and affordability.

- Promote urban development using tools like Brownfield redevelopments and housing tax increment financing
- Remove unnecessary regulatory obstacles to housing at all price points
- Reimagine blighted and underused corridors and return them to active use

BUSINESS LEADERS CONNECTING WITH CIVIC LEADERS AND COMMUNITY

The business community is a leading voice for influencing local policy. Keeping the community informed and engaged is vital to maintaining common sense local policies that support growth and further our goals.

- Communicating with and educating the business community about proposed or potential policies
- Hosting roundtables and townhalls to discuss policies with local leaders and decision makers
 - Encouraging participation in public comment and opportunities for feedback