

Proclamation of the Grand Rapids America 250- GR A250

Whereas the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 2026 will be celebrating the 175th anniversary of its founding at the same time the United States of America will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of its founding; and

Whereas Grand Rapidians have carried forward the Spirit of '76 through the exemplary public service to the nation of such renown politicians as William Alden Smith, Arthur Vandenberg, Gerald R. Ford, Roger Wilkins, Paul Henry, and Vern Ehlers; and

Whereas Grand Rapids has carried forward the Spirit of '76 from its earliest days by welcoming immigrants, our new American neighbors, from around the world to West Michigan; and

Whereas Grand Rapids' workers have carried forward the Spirit of '76 by demonstrating a work ethic second to none, shown by the craftsmanship of their fine furniture and the innovation of their office furniture; and

Whereas Grand Rapids has also carried forward the Spirit of '76 in technological, social, and artistic innovation, boasting America's first hydro-electric plant (1881), first female CEO (Anna Sutherland Bissell in 1889), first regularly scheduled airline service (Grand Rapids to Detroit in 1926), first fluoridated drinking water (1945), first superstore (Meijer in 1962), first megaplex movie theaters (1965), first NEA-funded art installation (La Grande Vitesse in 1969), and first community-wide festival of laughter (LaughFest in 2011); and

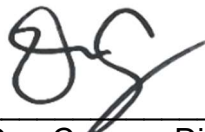
Whereas Grand Rapids today carries forward the Spirit of '76 by being nationally recognized as a community in which its residents can thrive, its entrepreneurs can realize their vision, and its children can attend excellent schools, colleges, and universities that provide the foundation for realizing the American dream; and

Whereas Grand Rapidians are proud that their native son, Gerald Ford, the 38th President of the United States, led the people of Grand Rapids and the United States in the 1976 Bicentennial celebrations; and

Whereas Grand Rapidians today are planning for and anticipating a bright future in which the next 200 years will be as welcoming, prosperous, and prodigious for their city as the past 200 years;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the people of Grand Rapids, in concert with all Michiganders and all Americans, do hereby proclaim the commencement of the America 250–Grand Rapids Semiquincentennial Celebration, to begin in the year 2026, with gratitude for the many cultures and peoples who have contributed to the making of this great city, and with renewed commitment to honor the ideals and history that bind us together as one community and one nation. May this celebration inspire Grand Rapidians of all generations to carry forward the legacy of unity, innovation, and democratic values as we look toward the future.

Signed in Grand Rapids, MI, this 2nd day of December, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DC' with a flourish extending to the right.

Don Cooper, Director of Civic Initiatives
Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation