



Update on Wildlife Management in the City of Grand Rapids

**Public Safety Committee
11/19/24**



Deer Management Philosophy

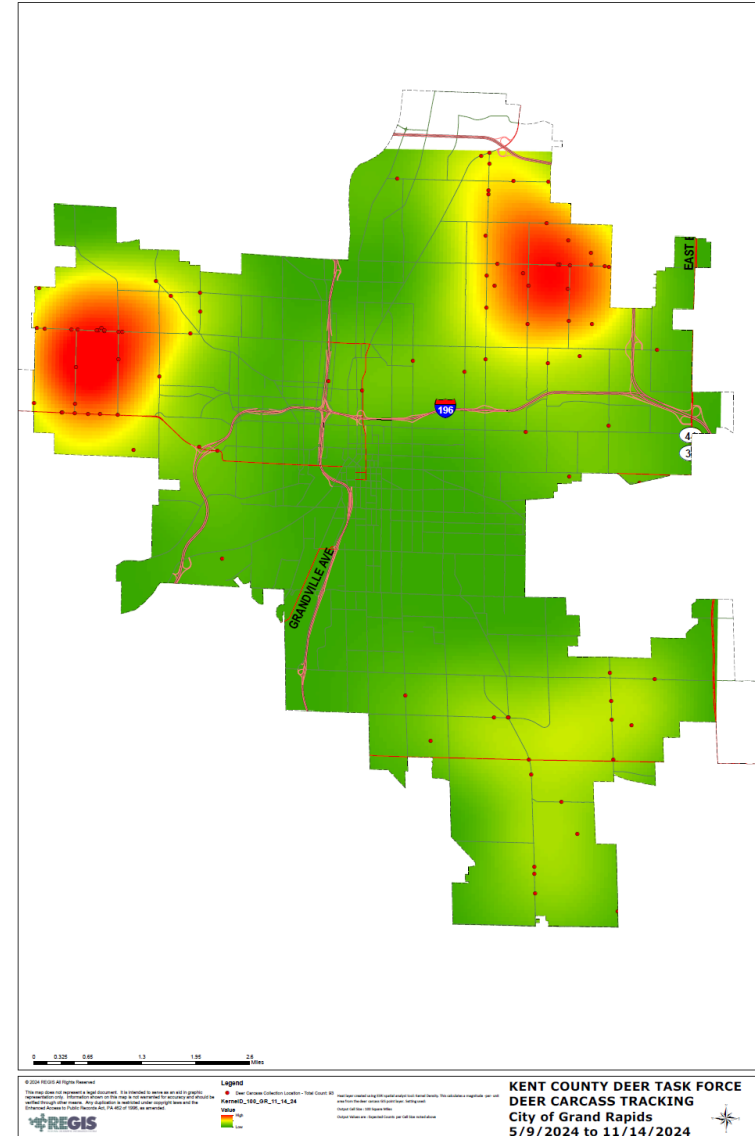
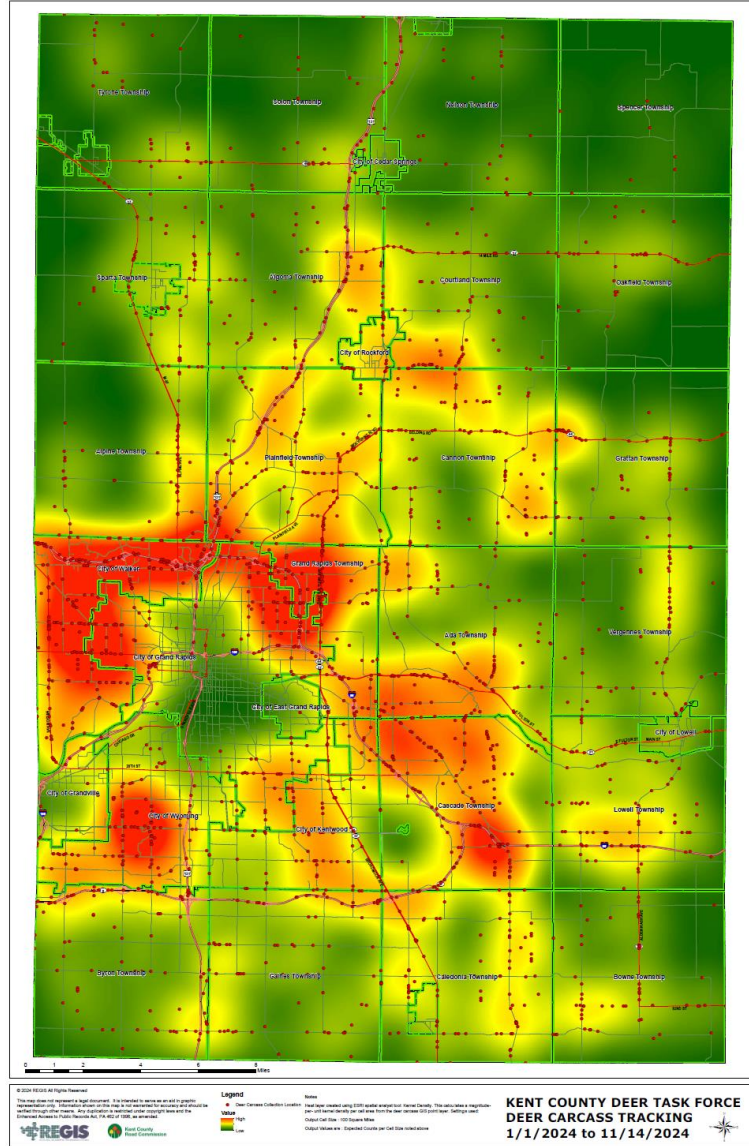
Grand Rapids values our shared ecosystem with all urban wildlife, including deer. We aim for coexistence in a way that balances safety, natural environment and the built environment. Our commitment is to a sustainable city where residents enjoy urban wildlife and can live together.



Update – Regional Discussion

- Metro 6 Cities (Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Walker, and Wyoming) and Kent County working towards an integrated approach with other stakeholders, including townships, to evaluate the deer population and any potential measures to manage the herd
- Grand Valley State University under contract to perform field surveying of deer population
- Community survey distributed to 93k county residents last week
- Data review in early 2025 – stakeholder direction and public policy developed

Update – Regional – Deer Carcass Tracking



Current Deer Hunting Program Examples

- Kent County Parks Department
 - Program initiated decades ago
 - Archery Deer and Turkey Hunting Program within three Parks - not on private property
 - Three parks are predominately rural forest land or agricultural fields farmed, no active recreational activities, walking/biking trails or programmed by Kent County
 - Occurs during MDNR hunting seasons and hunters are selected through a random drawing
 - 15 permits issued per location
- Meridian Township
 - Program initiated in 2010 by Township board with first hunt in 2011
 - Archery Deer Hunting Program within public and private property – parks, land preserves, and other private property – 43 locations in total
 - 67 hunters participated in 2023, removing 141 deer. Background check, proficiency test and training required to participate
 - Township initiated a law enforcement cull in 2020 – short duration but removed 159 deer in 2023 season
 - Township Parks and Public Works Department manage the program

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

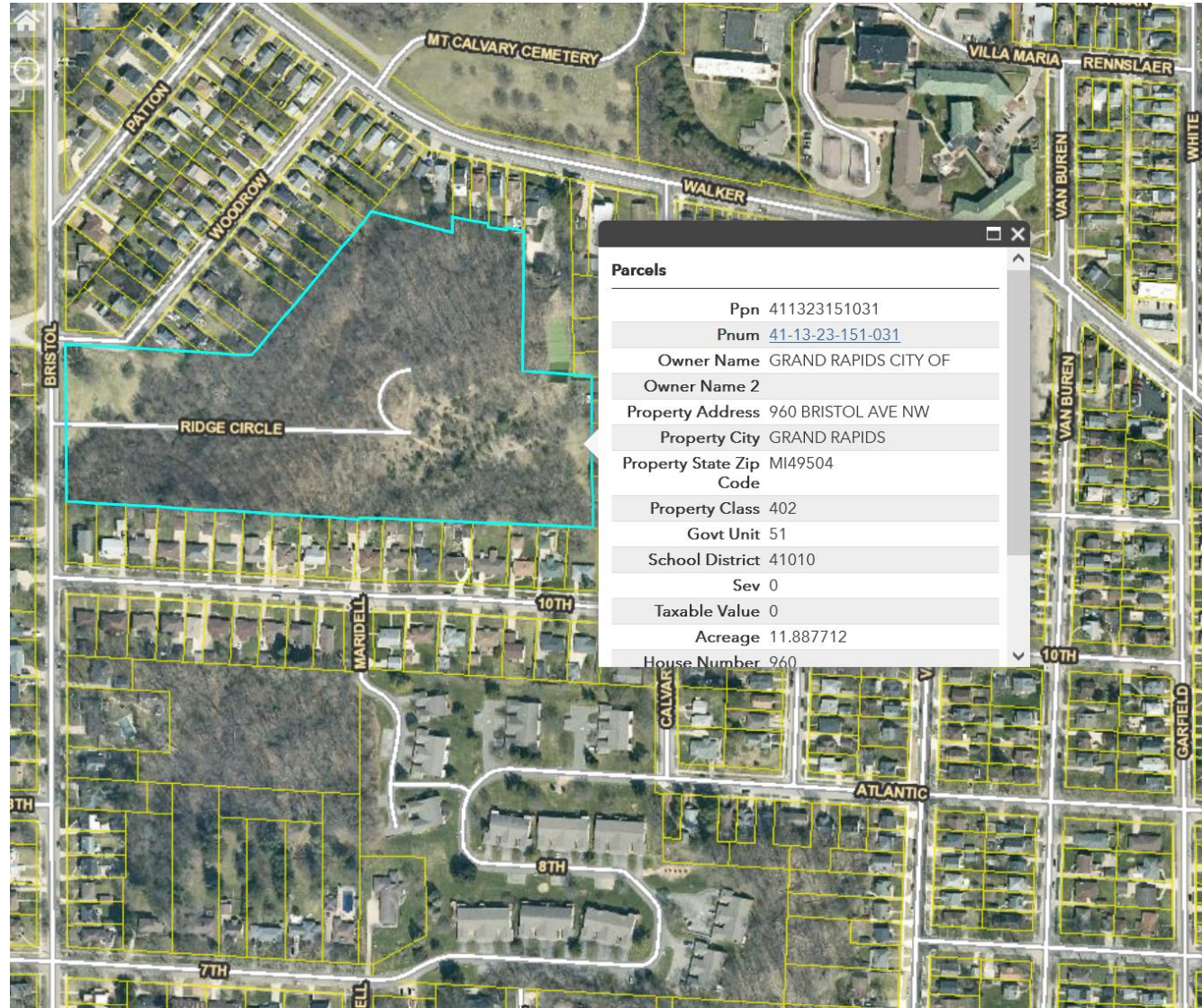
- Deer Management Assistance Permits (DMAP)
 - Issued by the local DNR Wildlife Biologist for crop damage, vehicle collisions, safety or nuisances
 - Can be distributed to hunters at the municipality's discretion
 - Applies to public and private land
 - Restricted to antlerless deer
 - Hunter not required to use their personal deer license but could be used for a blended approach to reducing deer population
 - City to purchase the permits for distribution

Public Safety Considerations

- Request made by the Public Safety Committee to explore having a deer hunting pilot this season in a City park or Blandford Nature Center. Staff reviewed and brings forward the following:
- Private Property
 - Many successful deer management plans combine private property as a component in their plan.
 - Several City of Grand Rapids residents have offered their properties as locations to be included in a hunt. City staff would encourage and educate property owners that have a minimum of 3 acres to allow archery hunting on their property. This could include a partnership with Michigan National Deer Association and their members.
- Public Property - Blandford Nature Center – hunting activity not consistent with the organization’s philosophy. When contacted about deer management, there was hesitancy from the leadership
- Public Property – Potential conflicts exist between the public participating in recreation activities in a City park and hunters selected for a deer hunting pilot. Given this conflict, a public property has been identified where recreational activity is not programmed – 960 Bristol Ave NW - 12 acres

Public Property – City Owned

- 960 Bristol Ave NW
 - 11.89 acres



Proposed Public Property Deer Hunting Pilot – Rules and Regulations

- No firearms
- Only archery deer hunting permitted – no other game may be hunted
- Hunting is only permitted in designated public property within the pilot
- No baiting
- No use of screws or nails in trees
- Ground blinds may be permitted
- Field dressing allowed but discards must be removed from property – City to provide supplies and containers at a designated area
- All hunters must comply with all Michigan DNR rules and regulations
- Hunters must maintain a 30 yard distance from any property line
- Hunters must maintain 150 yards (450 feet) from any building
- Any wounded deer that travels to adjoining property requires permission from property owners to recover deer
- Each hunter will be required to sign a waiver, indemnification, and hold harmless document prior to hunting
- Each hunter will be allowed to keep a harvested deer or donate for distribution to local food banks.
- City of Grand Rapids reserves the right to amend, suspend or revoke these rules and regulations at any time

Logistical Considerations

- Process of selecting hunters – Michigan National Deer Association has offered to assist the City with the process through their members
- Limited runway for implementation by January 1, 2025
- Community Engagement
 - Mailers to residents within 500 feet to Bristol property
 - Community meetings in December

Processing and Donation – Community Benefit

- Continuing to explore options for harvested deer, whether from private or public land, to be donated
- If a harvested deer is to be donated, hunter responsible for coordinating with processor for storage and distribution to local food bank
- Local Food Banks
 - Food Bank of Michigan
 - Sportsman Against Hunger
 - Area Shelters – Mel Trotter
 - Local Churches

Staff Recommendations to Public Safety Committee

- Option 1 – Pause a deer hunting pilot this January to allow more development time for a comprehensive plan to be implemented in the fall of 2025
- Option 2 – Inform and educate residents through community meetings in December on archery hunting on private property in the City. Partner with Michigan National Deer Association and connect hunters to residents.
- Option 3 – If Public Safety Committee desires to have a pilot hunt yet this season, staff would recommend an archery hunting pilot for antlerless deer during the period of January 1 -31, 2025 for one property.
 - Public Park Property
 - 960 Bristol Ave NW – 12 acres
 - Community Engagement needs to commence immediately to be effective with residents

Staff Recommendation to Public Safety Committee

- Evaluate success of the deer hunting pilot in February – this will be the time to review potential regional options with larger Kent County municipal group to address areas of high deer concentration.
- **Next Step:** If direction by the Public Safety Committee is to move forward with Option 3 for a pilot deer hunt recommendation this season, bring to City Commission for discussion at their December 3, 2024 meeting

Questions and Comments