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Grand Rapids location is a recruiting tool for businesses

By [Bjorn Green](#)

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It is not a surprise that Grand Rapids has experienced impressive growth over the past five years.

This resurgence has been so visible that professionals from across the country are choosing to move to Grand Rapids to work, live, and play — and we are taking full advantage of this movement at TowerPinkster.

TowerPinkster is a multidisciplinary architecture, engineering and interior design firm that focuses on the K-12, higher education, commercial, health care and government sectors. The firm opened its office in Grand Rapids in the early 1990s. In 2013, we renovated the former Junior Achievement building at Fulton Street and Division Avenue and brought the business to the heart of downtown Grand Rapids.

This historic renovation project helped to accommodate our growing Grand Rapids team, which at the time included 23 employees. Last month, we welcomed our 41st employee to the Grand Rapids office — the 13th new employee in that office in the past year. A number of the team members have come from the local marketplace, but many have arrived from all over the country.

The reasons for this are varied, but to a person they describe Grand Rapids as a place they want to live.

Laura Franceschi, a project manager for TowerPinkster, joined the team in January from a firm in Boston. Franceschi, who grew up in Grand Rapids and studied at Michigan State University, said she knew Grand Rapids would be a great place to raise kids, especially as there are so many tangible opportunities to engage and participate in the growth of the city.

“Grand Rapids offers a great combination of a lively urban experience mixed with easy access to all of the beautiful nature Michigan has to offer,” said Franceschi, whose family is avid about exploring the outdoors.

Franceschi also notes that her husband, a native of Oregon and an architect, found the possibility of adding to Grand Rapids’ quickly expanding skyline appealing.

Another Boston transplant, Ana Lapinski, felt similarly about moving her family to Grand Rapids. Lapinski, a project coordinator and native of Monterrey, Mexico, appreciated the progressive and welcoming community and the opportunities that were available to her children in the city.

Lapinski, who started with TowerPinkster in August 2015, said she was happy to move closer to her husband’s family in Grand Rapids. She was also impressed with the great potential for growth, high level of diversity, and exposure to a wide variety of cultures that the city offered.

“It is exciting to work in the center of downtown and be so immersed in a variety of cultures,” said Lapinski. “I also appreciate that my kids are having similar experiences at their school, only five minutes away.”

John Den Boer, a Canadian native, was not originally sold on living in Grand Rapids.

“We had visited my wife’s family a few times in the ’90s, and friends had taken us out downtown, and I quickly said that I would never move to Grand Rapids,” Den Boer said. “Over the past couple years, we had returned to visit family and my opinion completely changed given the transformation of the downtown and the community. The quality of life that people seemed to be experiencing in Grand Rapids was so attractive.”

Den Boer, who also started with the firm in August 2015, said the growing business climate in Grand Rapids along with the affordable housing market and relaxed feeling of the city made it an easy choice to move his family from Norfolk, Virginia.

Personally and professionally, I am excited with the growth of the city that has resulted in nation-wide recruitment as well as myriad new, local projects. When we opened in Grand Rapids in the ’90s, it was a volatile time for the city. We had high hopes that the positive growth we initially saw would continue — and it has not only continued but the city is exponentially thriving, and downtown is experiencing a wonderful renaissance and rebirth.

We are so proud to have participated and continue to participate in the evolution of the city, especially as this growth has been a catalyst for attracting exceptional employees from across the nation.

For a number of reasons, downtown Grand Rapids clearly is an attractive recruitment tool for its businesses.

Bjorn Green is president and CEO of TowerPinkster Architects and Engineers.

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