

## Recommendation

Optimize the number and length of constructed landscape islands down the center of Stone Avenue.

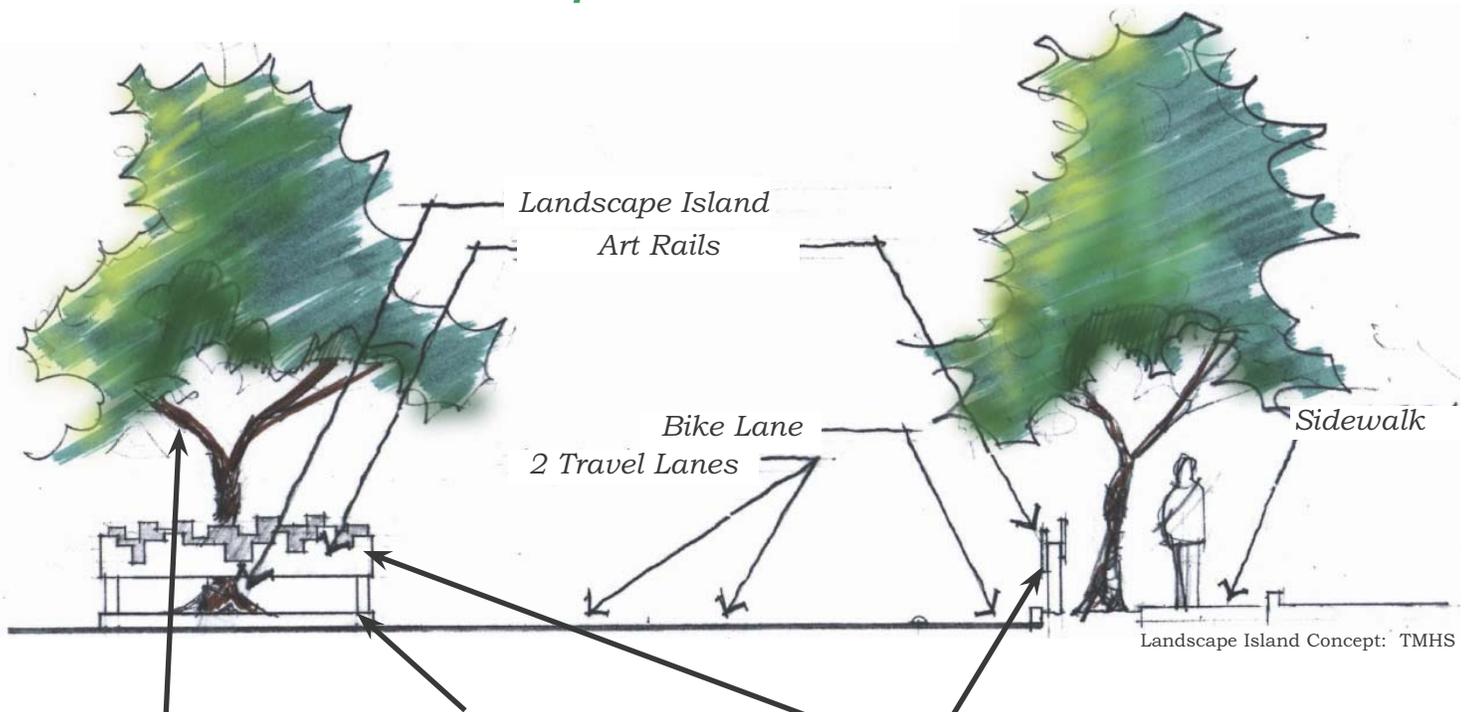
## What Are Landscape Islands?

Landscape islands are “mini-medians” consisting of cutouts in the asphalt within the limits of the center lane. These cutouts will vary in length and can be at grade for water harvesting or raised with curbing.

Landscape islands, which are intended to be primarily spaces for landscape, serve the following important functions:

- Provide visual relief from large expanses of paving.
- Contribute to the “greening” of the corridor.
- Create a ribbon of continuity along the corridor.
- Help calm traffic by creating the appearance of a narrowing in the roadway.
- Contribute to the overall vibrancy, safety, and desirability of the area.

## What Is in a Landscape Island?



Landscape Island Concept: TMHS

### Street Trees

Street trees are closely spaced within the island to emphasize the sense of green and shade. (See Study Card titled *Street Trees*.)

### Concrete Header or Curb

A concrete header at grade or a raised curb protects the edge of the asphalt.

### Art Rails

Customized guardrails are used to protect the cars from the trees and the trees from the cars. These rails can be treated as public art and designed to complement both their immediate location and the overall aesthetics of the corridor.

### Lighting

Accent lighting incorporated into the landscape islands can spotlight the street trees and art rails and provide nighttime interest.

# Landscape Islands

## What Are Key Guidelines for Designing Landscape Islands?

A team consisting of a landscape architect, an artist, an engineer, and representatives of adjacent neighborhoods and appropriate city departments should undertake the design, location, and installation of landscape islands. Together this team



will be able to address the range of relevant issues from location to beautification to engineering safety standards. Guidelines for planning the landscape islands follow.

**1** Landscape islands should be a minimum of 50 feet long and may be longer (up to 250 feet) if traffic circulation and access needs are met.

**2** A minimum of three trees, with a minimum 36-inch box size, should be planted within each island. Five or more trees would be preferable. The trees should have strong, naturally upright canopies and be species approved by the city. Care should be taken to assure that trees meet city requirements for roadway visibility.

**3** Two-foot-deep root guards should be used around each tree to protect paving.

**4** “Art rails,” which are customized traffic protection devices, should be utilized to protect trees from cars and cars from trees. These rails provide the opportunity to plant trees in areas that would be off limits to trees without such protection. An artist, in close consultation with fellow team members, should design the art rails to reflect an overall corridor theme or an individual neighborhood theme, while meeting all the applicable standards for guardrails. Artistic opportunities in designing art rails include color, material, and form.

**5** The use of groundcovers and shrubs in landscape islands should be minimized for three reasons. First, these plants will compete visually with the art rail. Second, they will be difficult to maintain within these relatively narrow, center road islands. Third, shrubs used in streetscapes generally have a limited life and low survival rate.

**6** Ground plane treatment should be one-quarter-inch-minus decomposed granite. Larger materials could create a hazard if they get into the travel lanes.

**7** Uplighting can be utilized in a landscape island. Uplighting that spotlights the trees would enhance the nighttime traffic calming function of the islands and would make the area feel more enlivened and safe during the evening hours.

## How Can the Islands Be Installed and Maintained?

Because the landscape islands will be located in the center lane of Stone Avenue, they will be the responsibility of the City of Tucson to install and maintain. Planning the placement of the islands to allow appropriate business access, to provide a sense of continuity throughout the corridor, and to calm traffic will take time. Funding should be sought for the design of the islands in the near future.



Landscape Island Example

Once the design plan is completed, the islands could be installed throughout the project in one phase or in multiple phases depending on available funds.

The design guidelines for landscape islands should be used in the final design of the City of Tucson’s Stone/Speedway Gateway Improvement Project.

**Have questions about the study results?  
Contact the City of Tucson  
Comprehensive Planning Task Force  
at 791-4505.**