

Grant Road Investment District Open House Overview

The City of Tucson conducted two open houses, one in person and one virtually, to seek public input on planning for the future for the 3.5 stretch of the Grant Road corridor from Campbell to Swan. This project will include updates to an overlay district to guide future development along the [Grant Road Investment District \(GRID\)](#). The in-person open house was held on October 24, 2023, while the virtual was held on the 26th.

The in-person open house was held at the Frank and Edith Morton Boys & Girls Clubhouse and was attended by roughly 50 community members. Most attendees were long-term residents of the corridor who have been involved in previous community planning efforts for the area. The format of the meeting allowed attendees to stroll through the meeting topics, interact directly with facilitators, and leave their comments on topics relevant to them.

Below is a summary highlighting the meeting topics, and subsequent community feedback statements received at both the in-person and virtual open houses.

MEETING TOPICS

Information stations/breakout group topics for the open houses were divided into six areas:

1. Project Overview & Purpose, including a review of previous planning efforts
2. Zoning & Urban Overlay Districts general information, including a map of the area showing the Centers & Segments concept from the Council-adopted 2015 Grant Road Corridor Community Vitality & Vision
3. Community Vision Summary and comments board
4. Today's Community Asset mapping board
5. Tomorrow's Community Assets – Opportunities mapping board
6. Area map with Department of Transportation & Mobility representative available to answer questions about the next phases of the Grant Road Improvement Project (GRIP)

HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The following is a synopsis of meeting feedback provided at both the in-person and virtual meetings:

In Person Open House Feedback

- » Walkability is a high priority. This means safe and comfortable walking routes, protected from speeding traffic, and connecting neighborhood destinations with shaded areas. Connections to the Tucson Botanical Garden, bus stops and existing recreational paths such as the Seneca Park walking path are desired.
- » Affordable housing is important. Residents want to see improvements to deteriorating mobile home parks and new affordable housing in the community that provides safe, decent housing.
- » Preserving and attracting new independent retail is important. Some residents appreciate the new retail and restaurant development like the Grant Lumber development.
- » Prevalence of vacant property and its impact on the surrounding community is a concern.

- » Aesthetics of new development are important.
- » Residents are concerned about speeding and increased traffic volume on neighborhood streets during construction of the Grant Road Improvement Project.
- » Residents are concerned about stormwater flooding in specific areas and look forward to mitigation of stormwater flooding with new retention basins planned with the Grant Road Improvement Project.

Virtual Open House Feedback

- » Residents are concerned about finding a balance between public and private interests, particularly related to the impacts of increased commercial development.
- » Concerns were expressed about the inclusivity of community engagement, and addressing power dynamics in decision making processes, along with the importance of broadening representation.
- » Issues related to the homeless population, crime, and perceptions of danger were brought up.
- » Participants noted that the corridor is considered car-centric, making it difficult for cyclists and pedestrians to navigate and access businesses. Physically separated bike lands and bike friendly lanes are needed.
- » Bus overcrowding issues were identified as an additional transportation challenge.
- » Challenges involving the expansion of the Tucson Botanical Garden, encouraging mixed use development, and enhanced landscaping were all expressed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following public comments, which are organized thematically, were received at both the in-person and virtual open houses. The virtual comments are differentiated by being placed in quotation marks.

Zoning & Urban Overlay District

- » Enough with maximizing density – like the UOD and Sunshine Mile, the City is exacerbating heat islands and making Tucson unlivable. How many of you can afford to become an environmental refugee?
- » I'd love to see more mixed use – shops on the ground floor and apartments above, with sidewalk access in front.
- » I have concerns regarding the increased noise and vehicular speeds that may/probably will accompany the widened roadway. I am concerned that these conditions will be exacerbated by undeveloped vacant lots and underdeveloped lots that are mostly AC pavement. I support higher density development as a means to partially address my concerns. I also support zero setbacks and significantly reduced parking requirements.
- » Diversify uses – Don't need 3 mattress stores or drug stores at an intersection.
- » Adopt "form based code" overlay (without a bunch of strings attached).
- » "Until the road development is completed, no redevelopment will happen. I won't even resurface my parking lot until I know when the widening is happening."

- » "I'm interested in learning what this overlay district is all about, and what kind of options that would give me and the other property owners."
- » "What I'd really like is to be able to develop my property any way I want."
- » "Tucson is a UNESCO City of Gastronomy. It would be great if some of the new properties on Grant showcase that." "In the streets leading into neighborhoods, allow for a mixed-use, high-density transitional buffer zone a couple blocks in from Grant road."
- » "More density and commercial development, mixed-use development."
- » "I'm a little leery about the high-density references."
- » "Existing parking and vacant lots are ripe for development!"
- » "Diversity of land use is restricted on the west end of the corridor."
- » "There is too much parking at the businesses along Grant! Let the property owners build on the parking lots."
- » "Redevelopment of Grant and Alvernon."

Walkability & Traffic Safety

- » Walkable
- » Pedestrian crossings and lots of reflectors needed.
- » Pedestrian crossings and lighting
- » Very concerned about how the Grant Rd. construction will push through-traffic onto side streets – Treat, Seneca, Forgeus – all between Tucson and Country Club
- » Residents are concerned about the safety of youth from the middle school who jaywalk across Grant Road.
- » Make sure the Grant/Treat intersection has improved safety for bicycles and pedestrians to cross Grant. The HAWK at Treat and Speedway is too short.
- » Bike lanes only if separated by traffic barricades.
- » Connections to Seneca bike path
- » I'd like to see linear parks along streets. Pleasant places to walk and bike.
- » "I concur with the vision. Wouldn't it be great if it was pedestrian and mass-transit friendly? Bikes will default to Glenn and Pima because they will always be safer."
- » "I'm concerned about the speed of vehicles and if there will be physical barriers between vehicles and cyclists."
- » "Currently the bike path leading to the loop stops at Grant. I'd like to see it go through."
- » "Thoughts include bike infrastructure that is separated grade from the street by dedicated transit lanes."
- » "I would love to have restaurants I can walk to. Movies I can walk to. Little local shops."
- » "Distances between safe/legal places to cross Grant are too far apart."
- » "Help the school kids walk to and from school safely."
- » "Tucson is the 10th deadliest city in the US for pedestrians and cyclists. Arterials like Grant Rd are the major culprit in this issue. Please do not design a slightly more modern arterial."

Stormwater Management & Urban Landscape

- » Alvernon + Columbus, north street floods so make the area water catchment zone with trails/pathway.

- » Trees, Trees, Trees.
- » Trees, trees, trees, trees
- » Pocket parks on Grant to break up commotion.
- » Rain basins in medians to support native shade trees. We have to plant those million trees somewhere!
- » All the watersheds south of Grant between Swan and Alvernon, flows down Midwash and Garden District streets (Belvedere and Catalina). It exits the neighborhood at North Street and Grant. Would be great to harness and use that with vegetated basins.
- » East of Grant and Alvernon have water catchments and swales, with walking paths. North Street tends to flood, so this would be a perfect solution.
- » "Green Stormwater Infrastructure used to separate bike/walking paths from cars."
- » "Trees, landscaping. Sidewalks. Places you actually want to go to or linger in."
- » "It is a really ugly street - it needs more trees."

Activity Centers

- » Bring new life into the empty Grant and Country Club shopping center (keep the good Chinese restaurant).
- » Transitions between corridor/density and neighborhoods (single family). Two story buffer helps with sound.
- » Senior center/recreation enter near Grant and Alvernon. Lot of seniors in the area.
- » NW corner of Grant and Country Club, needs real retail businesses, coffee shops, etc. More parking to accommodate customers.
- » Minimize F50 Schlock (Reduce Fortune 50 companies displacing local retail)
- » Redevelop shopping center at Grant and Country Club to serve the neighborhood so we can walk to these amenities. Parking in the center business out front.
- » Encourage and support small and local businesses. Less parking and parking lots. Protected bike lanes.
- » "Nodes to promote a mix of mobility options, supporting transit, bicycling, micromobility, walking and connectivity between neighborhoods."
- » "On the transit nodes create activity neighborhood centers with higher density and amenities that people want to go to."

High-Capacity Transit

- » Not exactly "high-capacity" but making it better for all modes of transit, electric bikes, scooters, and the like.
- » Streetcar on Speedway
- » Add covered bus stations!
- » "Connection to The Loop from the Arcadia Bike Boulevard."
- » "BRT corridor on Grant."
- » "Create an east-west alternative for bike routes on a more protected route. Large plazas or developed areas currently interfere."
- » "If you're going to add a vehicle lane, it should be bus-only."

New & Affordable Housing

- » Columbus to Alvernon there are narrow parcels. Perfect for tiny home clusters with green spaces and businesses to support families (grocery, laundromat, preschool).
- » More mixed-use residential/commercial.
- » Unstable trailer parks – begin negotiations with owners for retro fitting for better housing.
- » We need more affordable housing and more density.
- » Tiny home communities – pods of 1 to 2 bedroom homes less than 1000 square feet. Green space around the community w commercial to support (grocery, preschool, laundromat).
- » "Facilitator note: They like the affordability - many shared they were able to move here because it was an affordable option."
- » "More housing."

Community Character

- » Vegetated medians and park-like rights-of-way with sidewalks protected from traffic. Huge lack of green space.
- » Water harvesting. Wildlife protection (don't want to see bats, predatory birds, etc. disappear)
- » Attractive buildings with similar character, instead of cement boxes and strip malls.
- » Create a program for small businesses to get grant funding for exterior improvements.
- » Owner occupied or long term rentals instead of Air B&Bs.
- » "Make it less ugly."
- » "Visually incoherent."
- » "Preservation of local businesses."
- » "Include services (like grocery stores) that tenants need on the first floor of developments."
- » "How are you defining community and prioritize consistency between vision and who is coming."

Parks & Green Space

- » Neighborhoods north of Grant have ZERO parks. Garden District can only use Wright School playground during non-school hours. We need parks and green space.
- » "I would like to see the development of intentional pockets of green space, parks, places for play, resting, and connecting with neighbors."
- » "Some parks or at least pocket parks along Grant."
- » "A lot for homeless that includes a community garden, trees, showers, community meeting building with games and kitchen."
- » "Community gardens."
- » "Expand the footprint of Tucson Botanical Garden."
- » "More parks."
- » "Yes, parks!"

Diversity of People & Businesses

- » Small businesses we can walk to. Remember the old corner stores? Other business that are locally owned to serve the hoods!

- » Between Alvernon and Swan, north of Grant, there is a VERY high immigrant and refugee population. Local school has kids from 23 countries, services to support them.
- » Preserve and keep existing unique local businesses.
- » Business places (like New Hampshire) where people can walk to work.
- » Expand Botanical Garden to Grant.
- » Connect better to Botanical Garden. Pedestrian connections.
- » No matter what you do, you fail to consider what rising property values do to the surrounding businesses/residents. Revitalization = displacement, so what measures are you going to take to prevent this?
- » SAVVI at Rita and Grant [Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired]. Whole new audience.
- » "I like the art on Grant to the west of this area. Let's add more in this corridor."
- » "Expand the Botanical Garden theme to Grant with street art. Maybe a restaurant with a botanical theme. Gardening store, art galleries, Audubon shop, Native Seed Search."

Quality of Life

- » Retain mountain visibility from neighborhoods.
- » Very concerned about height of buildings, mountain views must be maintained.
- » Parks and trees needed.
- » Keep streets like Water St., from becoming alternate routes for traffic.
- » More beauty and art please! Local art and safe places to walk.
- » Keep the character of the Old Pueblo.
- » Quality of life starts with trees/landscaping – not expanded building footprints that only benefit a developer's bottom line.
- » Embrace and protect the hood. Access to business by foot/bike limit vehicle access to neighborhood.
- » "Image of people to go to not drive thru."
- » "Support of local business and less parking."
- » "It does for the most part."
- » "Hard knowing, as it's kind of vague."
- » "Landscaping."
- » "Stormwater management (due to volume)."
- » "Facade restoration program."
- » "Small businesses!"

Grant Road Improvement Project Questions & Concerns

- » Corridor could be a "green lung". Increase living materials. Don't pave everything.
- » No partial ROW acquisitions. Buy the whole thing so City can assemble larger parcels for redevelopment.
- » "Grant road shouldn't be widened. Widening leads to more congestion and higher VMT. That is the opposite of good for Tucson."

- » "The first phases of this project were a huge failure. Grant remains totally unsafe for me. I hate when a destination I want to go to is located on the redesigned section of Grant. I avoid it if I can."
- » "What happens to the fire station?"
- » "More commercial development is wanted, but what does that mean for the people along the corridor?"
- » "NA who are outside of the decision makers... that network of power is invaluable."
- » "Existing development seems to encourage drive-thru businesses only."
- » "Smaller parcels may be difficult to redevelop or consolidate after road widening."
- » "More commercial development is wanted, but what does that mean for the people along the corridor?"
- » "NA who are outside of the decision makers... that network of power is invaluable."
- » "Smaller parcels may be difficult to redevelop or consolidate after road widening."
- » "Grant-Alvernon intersection is a bit scary to walk through."
- » "Cyclists don't have safe ways to access the businesses along Grant Road."
- » "Hard to cross."
- » "Make Grant Road Narrower so that cars slow down and it becomes safer."
- » "The buses get full beyond capacity!"
- » "When I've taken the bus on Grant, the bus was late and overcrowded and got stuck in car traffic."
- » "Associations need more support."
- » "Homeless population, crime, perception of crime/danger."

Today's Community Assets

- » Help retain small local businesses (e.g., La Sandia, Bobo's, Benny's, etc.)
- » Don't rezone residential lots for parking – case in point, Culinary Dropout on Forgeus.
- » Concern stores – remember Ted's Country Store?
- » More beauty and local artworks along Grant.
- » Grocery store (big!)
- » "Legacy" businesses.
- » Blenman Elm, elementary school.
- » Savani, Kingfisher, Catalina Movie, Loft
- » Mechanic's Shop (car equipment and repair), Dante's Fire, Kingfisher, PSI, Harvest Dispensary, Bay Tavern.
- » Treat St. bike path doesn't feel safe when crossing Grant, even with a HAWK.
- » HAWK at Grant and Treat St.
- » Covered bus stations
- » Kingfisher, Tucson Botanical, Bobo's, Ace Hardware, Schools, Circle K
- » La Sandia, Benny's, that Turquoise jeweler west of Circle K at Tucson.
- » Decorato Square, NW corner of Country Club and Grant, underutilized corner, could be an asset, it isn't today.
- » TUSD Schools

- » We are a food desert at Grant and Alvernon now. Need a grocery store (ethnic or even chain).
Locally owned healthy restaurants.
- » La Sandia tiles. Coyote Wore Sideburns Hair Salon!

Tomorrow's Community Assets

- » I'd like to have as high a volume of rainwater catchment basins as possible. This would help alleviate flooding during high rain events, which are becoming more severe.
- » Linear park and trail/bike paths.
- » Tons of open space with trees to counter the heat island effect of all this out-of-balance density.
- » Walkability, shade, less concrete and gravel/asphalt.
- » Safer separate bike lane along Grant. Renovate/reimagine the mostly empty Grant and Country Club shopping plaza.
- » Parking – shaded. Stop pretending that people will walk in 110 degree heat.
- » Enough parking at businesses so patrons and their vehicles don't bleed over into residential streets.
- » Dense commercial development to promote pedestrian access.
- » Replace trees when they die.
- » Alternative to concrete for parking lots with impervious surfaces.
- » Barber shops, laundromats, coffee shops, bakeries – all within walking distance.
- » Landscape and irrigation maintenance.
- » Linear parks
- » Small neighborhood bars to walk to.

PHOTOS





