

3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The context sensitive solutions approach used to develop the Grant Road Improvement Plan combines the multi-modal transportation context with the contexts of the natural and built environment and community values obtained through a public involvement process. As a result, public involvement and education are integral elements of the Grant Road Improvement Plan that helped gain broad-based public support for the project.

3.1 Early Community Conversations

In keeping with the City of Tucson commitment to involving the community early and often, interaction with the public began soon after the RTA Plan was passed by voters in 2006 and before the start of the Grant Road Improvement Plan in the spring of 2007. The City of Tucson sponsored a series of community conversations focused on developing a “sense of place” for Grant Road and encouraging the public to share their stories and experiences of Grant Road. A local historian set the stage for each conversation with a pictorial review of Grant Road’s past and participants were encouraged to bring their own photos, share stories and recall memories that could be added to Grant Road’s story. City Council Members from Wards 3 and 6 introduced each conversation and closed each by sharing “what we have heard” from the conversations.

Attendees worked in small groups with a map of Grant Road so they could identify areas along the roadway that were important to them and their experiences. Each conversation had pre-scripted questions for facilitators to assist the conversations taking place at each table; recorders noted the participant’s comments. An executive summary of the comments was prepared by TDOT, mailed to the conversation participants, and posted on the project website. Comments were used to inform the City’s Request for Proposals for the Grant Road Improvement Plan.

3.2 Citizen Task Force Decisions

An important factor in Task Force decisions was the consensus decision-making format the Task Force developed in their early meetings to help ensure the project moved forward and that no one’s voice went unheard. The Task Force developed five levels of consensus ranging from “I can give an unqualified ‘yes’ to the decision at hand” to “I will support the decision at hand because I trust the wisdom of the group, but I do not fully agree with the decision and need to register my view about it.” This approach to consensus was not designed to achieve 100 percent agreement, rather create an outcome that represents the best course of action, given the circumstances.

3.3 Neighborhood, Business, and Community Conversations

Phase 1 public involvement reached out to thirteen Neighborhood Associations along Grant Road, interested businesses, and non-profit organizations in addition to regional commuters and special interest groups.

As a first step, the more than 100 applicants who were not selected for the Task Force were invited to a training session where they could provide input and also receive training to become project conversation facilitators. About 40 attended. These trainees became facilitators for Conversations-in-a-Bag, designed for

small group conversations held in neighborhoods, schools, and at the workplace. The Conversations-in-a-Bag were suggested by participants at the early community conversations as an informal way to connect with groups in the community that are unable to easily attend a public meeting or workshop or for individuals who wanted to engage their neighbors, co-workers, and colleagues in the planning process. Each volunteer facilitator received their conversation bag equipped with a script, conversation pocket guide, a map of Grant Road for participants to draw and write on, markers, and a summary sheet to record the ideas shared during the conversation. Summaries of all conversations were prepared and posted to the project website.

3.4 Questions Asked to Create the Vision

The Design Team visited Neighborhood Association meetings, businesses, and other special interest groups where they made a presentation about the Grant Road Improvement Plan and asked the following questions: What do we already know about Grant Road? What characteristics of Grant Road should be preserved? What do you think will change in the future? How will these changes affect the area? What characteristics along Grant Road should be changed? What do we fear and hope for Grant Road?

In addition, community members were invited to attend community conversations about the project at their respective Ward office. A short presentation was made by members of the Design Team, and participants then worked in small groups with facilitators to provide their input in the form of written comments and drawings on maps of Grant Road.

During this visioning process there were 40 neighborhood and community conversations with more than 1,000 participants from neighborhoods, businesses, and special interest groups. The team received more than 5,000 written comments. An additional 1,200 responses were received from the project website, telephone, and other survey instruments.

Using this public input plus technical information provided by the Design Team, and their own thoughts, the Task Force created their Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for the project. The draft document was made available for public review and comment, and the final document was endorsed by the Task Force in February 2008. The Vision Statement and Guiding Principles are the foundation of the Task Force decision-making process and were incorporated into several public workshop activities. The document is posted on the project website and hard copies were available at every Task Force meeting, public workshop, and open house.

3.5 Phase 1 Workshops and Open Houses

Two series of community workshops were held in 2008 to obtain input for Task Force consideration on a variety of roadway design topics including the roadway cross-sections, pedestrian and bicycle features, transit amenities, and intersection improvements. Land use topics were also included in the workshops including landscape, buffers, replacement of lost parking, and use of excess right-of-way. The two rounds of three workshops were attended by more than 400 community representatives and led to the development of the sustainable design concepts and innovations which were endorsed by the Citizen Task Force for inclusion in the Grant Road Improvement Plan. Workshop feedback also provided input to the development

of a proposed alignment concept for Grant Road which resulted from nearly six months of Task Force analysis of multiple alignment alternatives.

Also in 2008, two business open houses provided opportunities for the business community to review the innovative design concepts under development and provide feedback on issues relating to business access, visibility, and potential future construction issues.

3.6 Public Review of the Proposed Alignment Concept

After the Task Force endorsed a proposed alignment and associated design innovations, maps and explanations were posted to the project website. A series of public open houses were held to provide an opportunity for the public to review and provide feedback on the proposed alignment concept and design innovations before going forward to Mayor and Council for consideration. The attendees were shown detailed maps of the proposed alignment and City of Tucson Real Estate staff was available to meet one-on-one with property owners and tenants. More than 500 members of the public attended and numerous comments were received. The Task Force and Design Team then considered the public comments and made refinements to the alignment and design concepts and prepared a recommended alignment. A “Report to the Community” open house was then held to give the public a review of the recommended alignment prior to consideration by the Tucson Mayor and Council.

3.7 Property Owner Notification

Prior to the proposed alignment concept being released to the general public, potentially impacted property owners and tenants were notified by certified mail and regular mail and one-on-one meetings were held with property owners that requested more information about property impacts and right-of-way needs. One-on-one meetings with property owners continued to be held in Phase 2 as the preliminary design of the Grant Road Improvement Plan progressed.

3.8 Approval by Mayor and Council

Mayor and Council approved the recommended alignment concept following a public hearing in January 2009. Residents and businesses in the Grant Road planning area were notified with a Milestone Report newsletter and the maps were posted to the project website. After the approval of the alignment, Phase 2 of the project began to advance the recommended alignment to a preliminary roadway design and to develop land use policy refinements and design guidelines for use in implementing existing neighborhood and area plans and policies.

3.9 Phase 2 Neighborhood Conversations and Workshops

After the approval of the alignment by Mayor and Council the project team and Task Force began Phase 2 of the project. A Project Update newsletter was distributed to the planning area in March 2009 which informed stakeholders in the project area and other interested community members of the Mayor and Council approval of the new alignment and design innovations planned for Grant Road. The Project Update also included plans for Phase 2 of the project and provided information on upcoming participation and input opportunities.

Similar to the beginning of the Phase 1 the project team met with Neighborhood Associations in the project area during a series of 12 neighborhood conversations, conducted in early 2009, to obtain neighborhood input on mobility, access, streetscape, and public art along Grant Road. The input received from these conversations was summarized, posted to the project website, and used in the development of access management and parking strategies for Grant Road. The strategies served as the foundation for a series of public workshops on Mobility, Access, and Public Art workshops held later in 2009.

3.10 Phase 2 Public Workshops in 2009

In June 2009 a series of public workshops were held that focused on the character and land use of the future Grant Road. Participants explored current and potential centers and districts along Grant Road and had the opportunity to begin establishing the future land use and character along Grant Road in response to the roadway and landscape improvements.

During the fall/winter of 2009 the Design Team completed the engineering of the centerline for Grant Road. During this process the alignment shifted slightly in areas along the roadway causing a number of changes in right-of-way needs for property owners. The engineering of the centerline also determined right-of-way needs, mainly limited to landscape and parking, for some properties north and south of Grant Road at major intersections where safety improvements are required. Affected property owners were notified of these changes by letter and offered one-on-one meetings with the Design Team to discuss any questions or concerns they may have.

The public had an opportunity to provide input through a series of workshops held in November 2009 that focused on mobility, access and the streetscape of the future Grant Road. The Grant Road Mobility, Access, and Streetscape Workshops offered participants an opportunity to provide input to the Citizen Task Force and to the Design Team on design features and policies for mobility, access, and streetscape elements for the Grant Road Improvement Plan. During the mobility and access activities, participants learned about the benefits of managing access, locations of median openings, and provided their input on property access. During the streetscape activities participants provided input on the preliminary design and use of streetscape, landscape, and public art to enhance access, improve safety, and create a pedestrian-friendly environment. The input and feedback received at the Mobility, Access, and Streetscape Workshops were used to refine preliminary roadway design plans, roadway access management policies, and specific streetscape design features.

3.11 Phase 2 Public Workshops and Open Houses in 2010

In January 2010 the reconstruction phasing recommendations for Grant Road were announced to the public after the Task Force endorsed the phasing at their December 16, 2009 meeting. The first segment scheduled for reconstruction is the Grant Road and Oracle Road intersection. Scheduled for construction in mid-2011 this segment would receive improvements approximately two years ahead of schedule and allow drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and other users of Grant Road a preview of the benefits and improvements planned for the entire roadway. A Milestone Report newsletter announcing the reconstruction phasing was mailed to everyone in the planning area and emailed to the project’s email distribution list. A media briefing was held on January 14, 2010 to announce the reconstruction phasing for the project and the early intersection project at Grant and Oracle. It was important to make this information available to the public at this time in order to

allow property owners and tenants on Grant Road to better prepare for the future. This information provided property owners and business owners with more certainty about when reconstruction will likely take place. They were anxious to have this information and pleased when it was provided. Some segments of Grant Road will not see construction improvements for 10 to 15 years which will allow property owners and tenants to plan for reconstruction.

Following the announcement of the reconstruction phasing a series of public workshops related to the Community Character and Vitality Plan for the roadway were held in late January 2010. These workshops offered participants the opportunity to provide input on potential concepts for improving the community, character and vitality of Grant Road through improvements to the streetscape and the refinement of area and neighborhood plans along Grant Road. The workshops involved several small group activities for participants that were related to specific segments and properties on Grant Road. The input received was used to prepare the draft Community Character and Vitality Plan for the roadway.

In March 2010, 15 percent roadway design plans were completed and a Design Open House was held with the Citizen Task Force members staffing the information stations. The public was invited to attend and see the progress the project has made to date, how past public input has been integrated, and next steps. For this Open House a unique symbol was created to emphasize the importance of public input and where it had been used in the development of the Grant Road Improvement Plan. The symbol was used on all project displays, a looping informational presentation, and to identify resource staff. The open house featured informational stations on: Public Involvement, the Community Character and Vitality Plan, Reconstruction Phasing, Access Management, Pedestrian, Bicycle and Transit amenities, Public Art, Streetscape and Landscape, Water Harvesting and Drainage, the Indirect Left-Turn, and Real Estate and Business Assistance for affected property owners and tenants. The Open House was attended by 120 people.

3.12 Community Character and Vitality Plan Public Involvement

The community character and vitality planning phase of the project will be completed in fall of 2011. Public outreach will be documented in the Community Character and Vitality Plan and Implementation Strategies Report.

3.13 Notification and Project Updates

Public notification of public meetings and workshops and project update newsletters were mailed to residents and businesses in the project area. In addition a regular mail and email contact list of more than 3,300 people throughout the region was maintained. The news media was also utilized to provide public notifications. This aspect of communication was supplemented by several members of the Task Force who received media training and participated in interviews to both newspaper and television reporters.

3.14 Individual Property Owner Meetings

A key element of the public outreach effort was to meet with individual property owners with support of City staff to present the alignment, and understand property-specific concerns and issues. Property impact mitigation strategies for significantly impacted properties were developed. The mitigation strategies included developing parking and circulation concepts that enable the business to continue to operate following Grant Road reconstruction.