



## FINAL REPORT ON PUBLIC INPUT – VISIONING PHASE FEBRUARY 2008

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Throughout the fall of 2007 and early 2008, there have been a variety of opportunities for residents and business owners to provide input regarding the improvement and widening of Grant Road. This report summarizes the results of public input received as part of the visioning phase of the planning process, and was an instrumental component in the development of the Vision and Guiding Principles document developed by the Grant Road citizen task force.

The results presented here reflect public input received through the following methods:

- Facilitated discussions at community meetings
- Responses to web, phone, and paper surveys

A total of 35 community meetings were held between September 2007 and January 2008 close to 1,000 participants. A web survey with 245 responses, an intercept (paper) survey with 363 respondents, and a telephone survey of surrounding residents (328 responses) and businesses (77 responses) were conducted. More than 4,000 total comments were received and reviewed. A descriptive summary of the common themes that emerged begins on page 2.

The following is a list of the community meetings held:

1. September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Community Strategic Conversation Workshop – 20 attendees
2. September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Vista del Monte NA – 40 attendees
3. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Community Housing Devp Organization Meeting – 25 attendees
4. September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Cabrini NA – 21 attendees
5. September 26<sup>th</sup> – Doolen/Fruitvale NA – 30 attendees
6. October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Northwest NA – 7 attendees
7. October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Ward 2 Council Conversation- 20 attendees
8. October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Midtown NA – 40 attendees
9. October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007– El Cortez NA – 8 attendees
10. October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Mountain and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave NA – 20 attendees
11. October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007– La Madera NA – 20 attendees
12. October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007– Campbell/Grant NA – 20 attendees
13. October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007– Dodge Flower & Oak Flower – 42 attendees
14. October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Jefferson Park NA – 35 attendees
15. October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Besst Trendss CIAB – 6 attendees
16. October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – Business Assistance Open House – 19 attendees
17. November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007- Business Assistance Open House – 21 attendees
18. November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – Ward 3 Council Conversation – 40 attendees

19. November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Blenman Elm NA – 30 attendees
20. November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Hedrick NA – 2 attendees
21. November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Catalina Vista NA – 100 attendees
22. November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting – 25 attendees
23. November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007–TMM Family Services CIAB – 12 attendees
24. November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Palo Verde NA – 20 attendees
25. November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Miracle Manor NA – 10 attendees
26. November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Samos NA – 15 attendees
27. November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007– Ward 6 Council Conversation- 17 attendees
28. December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 - TMM Family Services Inc. CIAB – 10 attendees
29. December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007 - Feldman NA – 15 attendees
30. December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 - Barrio Blue Moon NA - 5 attendees
31. January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Glenn Heights NA – 17 attendees
32. January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Character Segment Workshop (Western) – 36 attendees
33. January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Character Segment Workshop (Central) – 88 attendees
34. January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Character Segment Workshop (Eastern) – 78 attendees
35. January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Doolen Middle School Student Council CIAB – 26 attendees

The following guiding questions were used in the meetings and in the surveys to gather input:

- *What do we already know about Grant Road?*
- *What about Grant Road should be preserved?*
- *What are your concerns and fears about the Grant Road project?*
- *What changes do you hope for along Grant Road?*

## **RESULTS**

### ***Theme: Mobility and Access***

#### **1. Traffic/Congestion/Safety**

- The most frequent issue mentioned by people in the survey and at public meetings is the traffic and congestion along Grant Road.
- Contributing to the problem are a lack of bus pullouts, lack of right turn lanes, too many access points (e.g. curb cuts), truck traffic and the fact that Grant Road is a major east/west crosstown road that connects to I-10 with major north/south streets that feed into it.
- Effects of the congestion include traffic bottlenecks, frustration, accidents, cut through traffic into the adjacent neighborhoods, and dangerous conflict points between bicyclists, pedestrians and cars, particularly at intersections.
- While people want the traffic issues addressed, there is a concern that the improvement and widening of Grant Road will bring more traffic to the roadway, that people will use Grant as a crosstown freeway, and that there will be additional traffic in adjacent neighborhoods. There is also a concern that by the time the improvements are made, the roadway will be operating over capacity again.

- In order to improve traffic flow and safety along Grant Road, people would like to see bus pullouts, right turn lanes, lagging left turn arrows at half-mile intersections, consolidated parking and access points, better signal timing, improved intersections, narrower lanes to slow traffic, improvements to discourage cut-through traffic, and a landscaped median.
- There are certain design elements along Grant Road that people would like preserved including a crossing at Dodge for Catalina High students, the curvature of the road west of Campbell, center lane left-turn access, and left-turn arrows.
- Intersection safety and efficiency need to be improved. Looking at creative options to improve intersections without making them so wide, such as the “Michigan left turn” was mentioned.

## **2. Pedestrians/Bicyclists/Transit**

- Currently Grant Road is used heavily by transit riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists, yet it is not very pedestrian, bicycle, or transit-friendly. Current services and facilities are poor or lacking. There are few sidewalks and very little shade. Bicycle lanes are too narrow, disappear at intersections, and generally don’t feel safe to use. They also don’t connect to the east and west sections of the Grant Road study area. There are very few safe pedestrian crossings between intersections. Transit service is insufficient and bus shelters either don’t exist or are uninviting.
- There is a concern that Grant Road being widened to six lanes will make it more difficult for pedestrians, particularly those with special needs, to cross Grant.
- It is very important to people that as part of the Grant Road improvements, the road be designed not only to be friendly and safe to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and those with special needs, but to encourage alternate mode use. Suggestions include adding mid-block HAWK crossings, buffering pedestrians from cars, creating an inviting environment with amenities like shade, drinking fountains, seating, wide sidewalks, wide bike lanes, public art, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. Suggestions mentioned to encourage transit use include improving bus shelters, improving bus service, adding park and ride lots, dedicating a lane to transit, and planning for future street car or light rail service on Grant Road.
- Special attention needs to be given to improvements for elderly and disabled populations in the area and to school children who walk on and cross Grant Road on a daily basis.

## **3. Accessibility**

- Currently, access into and out of property fronting Grant Road is not clear, well designed, safe, or convenient. Many hazards exist along the roadway related to people trying to access businesses or residences. There is a concern that the road widening will eliminate some business parking which could make access even more difficult.
- In addition to use by people from across the region, Grant Road and the businesses along it are used by many diverse groups who live along the roadway. Examples include the refugee population near Grant and Alvernon, and those with visual impairment who use the facilities at Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI). It is very important that accessibility be maintained and safety improved for the diverse population along Grant Road.

- It is important that access between businesses and neighborhoods be preserved and enhanced. People want to be able to walk from their residences to services along Grant Road and have this be a pleasant and safe experience.
- Enhanced visibility of businesses, clearly marked access points, better signage, and shared parking were mentioned as important ways to improve access to businesses along Grant Road.
- Important connections along Grant Road, to the University, to other schools, to downtown, and to public gathering places and parks need to be recognized and enhanced. Examples include Stone Ave., Mountain Ave, Park Ave., 6<sup>th</sup> Ave/Mansfield Park, the Treat Ave. bikeway, Doolen MS and the Boys and Girls Club, and the Botanical Gardens area near Alvernon.

## ***Theme: Character and Vitality***

### **1. Mixed Use Area**

- People frequently mentioned that the area along and around Grant Road contains an incredible diversity of different types of businesses and residences. This contributes to it being an eclectic and unique area with diverse populations throughout the corridor. People want this eclectic nature preserved and enhanced.
- People see the improvement of Grant Road as an opportunity to revitalize the area without changing its underlying character. Added public gathering places, a walkable environment, clustered businesses, more businesses and entertainment, work and live spaces, shared parking, and “park once and walk” opportunities, were mentioned as strategies to enhance the mixed use nature of Grant Road. Pedestrian amenities such as drinking fountains, trash/recycling cans, shade and benches would enhance the walkability of the area.

### **2. Neighborhood-Oriented Businesses**

- There are many small, independently owned businesses as well as neighborhood-friendly services on Grant Road. These businesses are frequently used and highly valued by residents in the area. Many specific restaurants, bookstores, home furnishing/improvement stores, grocery stores, drug stores, and other services were identified as positively contributing to the area.
- However, it was noted that not all businesses are well maintained and there are underutilized properties throughout the corridor that provide an opportunity for revitalization.
- There are unique districts along Grant Road that help create eclectic nodes along the roadway. Opportunities to expand and enhance these clusters should be explored.
- Grant Road is an affordable area for local businesses and there is a concern that the improvements to the area will change this. There is a concern that chain stores may replace local businesses as property becomes more valuable and is redeveloped. Steps should be taken to prevent the loss of local businesses and instead encourage investment in and revitalization of existing businesses.
- People would like to see more neighborhood-serving businesses such as a health clinic, neighborhood center, banking, and dry cleaning along Grant Road.

- It is important to ensure adequate parking remains for businesses and that access to businesses is convenient and safe.

### **3. Historic Areas**

- Grant Road has many historic homes, buildings, signage, and neighborhoods along it and these areas should be preserved and enhanced as part of the road project.
- Opportunities should be explored to tell the history and unique story of Grant Road through public art and other improvements that are made.

### **4. Community Spaces**

- Places like the Tucson Botanical Gardens, Doolen Middle School, the Boys and Girls Club, the pocket park at Campbell/Grant and Mansfield Park, the Ward 3 council office, and the fire station were mentioned by people as important community assets that should be preserved and enhanced.
- People would like to use areas where buildings must be taken to create pocket parks, dog parks, clustered business areas, outdoor cafes, coffee shops, open air markets, and shared parking for grouped retail.

### **5. Economic Fragility**

- There are many working-class neighborhoods and affordable housing along and near Grant Road. People are concerned that current residents could be displaced as a result of the improvement project or may no longer be able to afford rents in the area. To maintain population diversity, affordability needs to be maintained.
- There are high stress areas along Grant Road affected by such things as crime, poverty, and vacant and poorly maintained properties. It is hoped that these issues will be improved, and not get worse as part of the public investment in Grant Road.
- Grant Road is very international - home to refugee populations and people from all over the world. This should be recognized and celebrated as part of the project.

## ***Theme: Aesthetics and Environment***

### **1. Design of the Road**

- Many people feel Grant Road is currently an eyesore. Poor lighting, lack of landscaping, run-down buildings, and a “sea of asphalt” contribute to the problem.
- People identified certain design elements they would like preserved along Grant including the mature landscape that currently exists and the pocket park at Campbell and Grant. People would like to see existing curvature in the road maintained and possibly more curves added.
- Utilities were mentioned frequently and most people would prefer they be put underground if feasible. There was concern expressed that existing utilities would be moved closer to neighborhoods as a result of the project.
- People would like to see Grant Road made “prettier”. Specific suggestions include public art, trees, landscaping, pedestrian-scale lighting, modern and covered bus shelters, public spaces, parks, better signage, underground utilities, and a reduced number of billboards.

## **2. Environmental Issues and Flooding**

- Many people discussed the storm water flooding problems on Grant Road as well as in the adjacent neighborhoods and would like drainage improved as part of the project. Water harvesting was also frequently suggested.
- The air quality along Grant is seen as poor partly due to lack of landscaping and the existence of so much asphalt. There is a concern that this may only get worse with the widening of Grant, but it is hoped that added landscaping will improve the existing environment. People would like to see heat island mitigation techniques used in the road improvement including landscaping, shade, and use of permeable surfaces.

## **3. Buffering and Noise**

- Many people feel Grant is noisy now and are concerned this could get worse with the road widening. People would like to see noise mitigation techniques used in the road improvement including sound walls, landscaping, buffering, and rubberized asphalt.
- It is important to people that the transitions between the neighborhoods, commercial areas, and the road be aesthetically pleasing, safe, and pedestrian-friendly.
- A variety of buffering options in addition to walls should be considered depending on the context – buildings, landscape, public plazas, art, etc - avoid blandness in aesthetics.

## **4. Making it Green**

- It was suggested by many people that Grant Road could be a model for a “green road project,” and that innovative, environmentally-friendly approaches and green construction techniques be used. Specific suggestions include water harvesting, green building techniques, solar lighting, open spaces, permeable surfaces, urban gardens, green nodes, preserving dark skies, encouraging alternate fuel vehicles, and light-colored pavement treatments.

## ***Theme: Vision and Implementation***

### **1. Impacts of Construction**

- Concerns about congestion and delays for travelers and commuters during the construction process were expressed by many people.
- The noise, dirt, and mess during the process are a concern.
- Negative impacts businesses will experience during construction and how they will fare during the process are a concern. It is important that access to businesses be maintained during construction. People would like to see measures taken to mitigate and avoid blight and vacant properties from now through project completion.
- People are concerned about cut-through traffic into the neighborhoods during construction as well as overflow onto other nearby east/west streets, and would like measures to be taken to prevent this.
- It is important that transit service, pedestrian accessibility, and bicycle lanes be maintained during construction.
- It was suggested that construction be done in phases to limit impacts to specific areas and be coordinated with other construction projects that may be occurring in the area.

- People would like to be kept well informed throughout the construction process.

## **2. Property Acquisition**

- There is a concern about which side of the road will need to be acquired to widen Grant and which properties will be affected. Currently there is a lot of uncertainty for property owners prior to the alignment determination.
- There is a concern that property owners will not be fairly compensated for acquired property or that partial takings will render remaining property unusable.
- Maintaining vacant properties prior to and during construction as well as using surplus property for a public good were mentioned as a priority.

## **3. Plan for the Future/Consider Other Approaches**

- Many people mentioned that is important to be forward-thinking and prepare for future transit options as part of this project. Options mentioned include light rail, modern streetcar, monorail, using the median for rapid transit, and electric car charging stations.
- Some people feel that widening Grant Road is not the right approach. With the higher cost of fuel and global warming, some wonder why we are encouraging auto use with additional travel lanes. Some suggested the funding should go to light-rail or other alternatives to the car.
- Some feel that this project is encouraging growth and sprawl and fear that Tucson will end up like Phoenix or L.A. On the other hand, others feel that Tucson needs a crosstown freeway.

## **4. Getting it Done Right and On Time**

- Many people are disappointed in the length of time it will take until the project will be completed – they want it done now.
- There is a concern that lack of funds will mean the project does not get completed as planned or that “amenities” will have to be cut.
- There is a concern that public input will not be used and that the effort to gather public input will be a waste. Some believe that political changes could affect the project direction, or political leaders may choose not to use public input. There were concerns expressed both that regional voices will override local voices and local voices will override regional voices in the design that is chosen.
- It is hoped that the project will get done right and on time and that the design will be sensitive and logical. It was suggested that additional funding be sought now to make sure the full project can be built.