

Summary

BESST TRENDSS Conversations-in-a-Bag, October 26, 2007

Question 1: What do we already know about Grant Road?

- It doesn't have much character.
- It's ugly in a lot of places such as near 1st Ave. going west.
- There's a long stretch by Doolen Middle School without crosswalks on both sides.
- Lights are timed badly.
- Grant Rd. is preferred over Speedway Blvd. because it is actually faster (but not going east at night).
- Buildings are too close to the road (particularly between Tucson Blvd. and Columbus Blvd. on the south side.)
- It's a nightmare when you have a bus in front of you.
- A number of apartment complexes housing a number of refugees are located in the area; it's a "refugee transportation corridor."
- There are important community gathering places such as Bookman's, Crossroads Shopping Center, Boys and Girls Club, the Fry's at Alvernon Way.
- It connects East and West.
- The node at Grant Rd. and Alvernon Way, 1st Ave. and Grant Rd. – are where all modes [of traffic] come together and are easily accessible for refugees and others.
- A large number of refugees shop at the Fry's at Alvernon Way and Grant Rd. Even if they move away from the area, they come back to this location – it has a pharmacy that honors a wide range of medical insurance.
- This five mile section of Grant Rd. has a diverse population: students, refugees, West End with industrial use and businesses, Central part with neighborhoods; and then Alvernon Way going east is mixed use.
- A "lot of life is lived on Grant Rd." – Pedestrians, buses, gathering spots (in part, because it's currently not as wide as Speedway Blvd.)
- There's easy access to stores, restaurants.
- The strip mall at Grant Rd. and Country Club Rd. has "the kiss of death" to businesses; the landlord is in Phoenix and is difficult to work with.

Question 2: What characteristics along Grant Road should be preserved?

- Bookman's, Walgreens, Fry's, Crossroads (it has a discount theatre), Dunkin' Donuts.
- A lot of life.
- Surrounding neighborhoods.

- To continue to be a gathering place for refugees – it's a way for refugees to be seen, walking, shopping, and using the buses.
- Bus lines and proximity to Tucson Medical Center (TMC).
- Antiques.
- Affordability of shops and homes.
- Overall "mom and pop" businesses; small and locally-owned.
- Density in the center of the city.

Questions 3 and 4: What do you think will change in the future? How will these changes affect the area?

- Business properties and homes will be taken and the character of the area will change.
- There will be new buildings for housing and commercial spaces so the area could become prettier and nicer OR more generic and bland.
- There could be different volume and speed.
- Is there a possibility of more housing and how?
- There could be vehicles fueled by different resources, which would result in different kinds of fueling methods/stations and other kinds of mass transit such as light rail.
- The center of the city may shift east.
- It would become a major roadway by neighborhoods, which could result in lower or higher property values; if higher, then the properties wouldn't be accessible [affordable] to the current population.
- There would be more traffic for businesses OR the traffic could be pulled farther East and/or West.

Question 5: What characteristics along Grant Road should be changed?

- Design that allows walking and living outside when it's hot; plant shade trees.
- Less auto centric.
- More walkability and mixed uses.
- The mobile home parks could be revitalized with manufactured housing alternatives, example: Flowing Wells area.
- Use a social justice model that preserves low-income housing that is safer and prettier.
- Streets need to be lit for more safety.
- Commercial-based revitalization that is not gentrification; it should be a model that works throughout Tucson.
- Enforce dog poop pickup – have poop pickup amenities.
- More entertainment – restaurants, street artist booths (like in San Francisco) that have temporary business licenses for rotating spaces.
- More public art.
- No Big Boxes.
- Student houses instead of mini-dorms.
- Refugee housing and social gathering places.
- Little public music spaces for, as in example, the Grant Rd.-Campbell Ave. pocket park.

Question 6: What do we fear and hope for along Grant Road?

FEARS –

- Why does it need to be widened?
- What's the possibility of additional housing?
- In the Jefferson Park area we have a major road.
- More cars, traffic and the effects.
- Gentrification.
- Displace mobile home residents.
- Fear that even after this public process the city won't deliver and might not follow through.
- Commercial interests (national chains) will outweigh all others.
- The funky life will be squeezed out of Grant Rd.

HOPES –

- The City gets it right and changes the transportation paradigm, uses different modes, applies equity to other projects.
- It will look more European with two bike lanes, dedicated bus lanes, pedestrian amenities, improved bus stops.
- Light rail, interesting pedestrian bridges or tunnels (Ensure walking or biking in tunnels are safe for all.).
- Urban gardens.
- Utilities are moved (and not to the middle of the road).
- Work and living spaces, mixed use.
- Retain fun and funkiness on Grant Rd.

Question 7: What shared ideas "sum up" your conversation?

- It should demonstrate community-based and socially-just revitalization.
- Designs should be "refugee" friendly.
- Mixed use and multifunctional (such as Fry's with groceries and pharmacy).
- More transportation choices.
- Keep community gathering places and increase cultural, art, and music factor.
- We see opportunities but are aware of the possible downsides.