

# GRAND AVENUE VISIONING REPORT

July 2008

## OVERVIEW

At two community meetings in June, members of the Grand Avenue Merchants Association and other community activists, residents, and interested developers met for facilitated discussions of the future vision for Grand Avenue. A summary of their views is included below for purposes of informing City zoning and planning discussion. (Complete notes are included in the appendix.) For purposes of these sessions, the geographic boundaries of McDowell and Van Buren were used to frame the discussion, with a “frontage” concept applied to buildings directly on the Avenue or set back a very limited distance.

The resultant zoning/planning challenge will be to aid in the revitalization of an older neighborhood, adding fresh and exciting artistic and retail elements, while preserving the “gritty” urban feel of an alternative lifestyle. Crime and safety are top-of-mind issues, but so is the desire to avoid over-gentrification and “chain” or big box stores. The balance of adaptive re-use and modernization with the charm and eclectic nature of a “real” community will be critical to success.

## The Vision

*Grand Avenue can be a diverse, sustainable urban boulevard and a funky cultural community and destination, without gentrification. It can be a vital place for economic and cultural diversity with chaotic character filled with small businesses providing self sufficiency for a neighborhood. In addition, it will provide a diffusion of people from the main avenue into the neighborhood to experience exciting niches like parks, Laundromats, restaurants, public art, and the like.*

## Guiding Principles

- Authenticity
- Community
- Opportunity
- “Real City” Chaos

## “COHESIVE, CREATIVE, ECLECTIC CONNECTIONS”

This is a place rooted in history and eclectic modernism, all at the same time. With a reliance on its sense of shared community and potential for anyone to succeed, this neighborhood mixes gritty “real city” chaos with an artistic spirit and patina of renaissance. The Grand Avenue of the future will be pedestrian-friendly, with businesses

that draw walkers along its environs. The area will have shade and nearby parking structures and other solutions (such as 24-hour on-street parking) that cater to these walking residents, business patrons, art lovers, and visitors. Public art is an important component, as is the artistic temperament. Multiple transit solutions will be available to get to Grand Avenue. Once they arrive, pedestrians will feel and be safe from crime, and their menu of choices will include a multitude of original stores and amenities – not chain retail stores or restaurants. Also absent from this Grand Avenue of the future will be gated communities, over-regulation, vacant lots, and empty buildings. Gone will be the abandoned cars and the most dangerous figures. Heavy industry and seas of open parking will not be found here.

**The Priority List of “Must Haves”**

- Pedestrian-friendly businesses
- Shade
- People – shoppers, residents, art lovers, visitors
- A sense of place, a sense of arrival, a focal point
- Safety and security
- Parking solutions

**The Priority List of “Things to Avoid”**

- Chain stores and restaurants
- Big box stores and stores with big footprints
- A sea of parking lots
- Gated communities
- Crime and signs of decay

## APPENDIX

### **Vision Statements**

*Grand Avenue can be a diverse, sustainable urban boulevard and a funky cultural community and destination, without gentrification.*

*Grand Avenue can be a vital place/destination for economic and cultural diversity with chaotic character filled with small businesses providing self sufficiency for a neighborhood; plus, a diffusion of people from the main avenue into the neighborhood to experience exciting niches - parks, Laundromats, restaurants, etc. (NOTE: The term "public art" was added to this list after first draft was reviewed.)*

### **"Why I am living/working/playing on Grand Avenue?":**

Authenticity

Community, character, diversity

"Real City" feel

Opportunity & potential

Can do something here - get my hands dirty

"It" felt right

Authentic

Different

Place where you can be surprised

I Like having skyscrapers for neighbors

Also safe

Close to work

Diverse, interesting

Has potential

Walkable/sustainable

All the space we needed

Live and work

Grew up here, it's home

Has character and is full of "characters"

Best place to buy a new home, raise a family and still be part of the art and all that's going on

Feels like a city, a little bit of a mess

A unique environment within Phoenix

Affordable with potential for existing development

Caring, loving, unique - compared to the myths of gangs, dangerous, etc.

Opportunity

A "free" independent community I want to be part of

Vitality like a real city

## **"What makes a great neighborhood?":**

Sense of timelessness

Events

Feelin' Groovy - comfy - welcome

Atmosphere/aura included

Sense of community

Mix of live/work/play - potential

Sense of difference

Cohesion

Diversity - in cultural and economic uses

Daytime activity = housing, people, occupants (affordable)

Accessibility (parking, walkable, jaywalking/we need to bend the rules a little)

Sustainable design

Integration/connectivity to outside physical universe

Sense of Purpose

Affordable

Re-use (adaptive)/historic

Nature - Not pre-fab (Indoor/outdoor living)

Chaotic, unfinished, sense of potential

Inclusive/complete - what you need is there

## **"What does Grand Avenue lack that we want?"**

1. Comfortable pedestrian environment
2. Image/a sense of arrival
3. Parking structures and other parking solutions
4. Businesses that encourage pedestrian activity
5. Shade
6. A focal point or magnet
7. Basic service retail
8. Local transit
9. 24-hour on-street parking
10. Density of people – walkers, shoppers, residents
10. Amenity infill
10. Guerilla gardening
10. Public art on the street
10. Dialogue
11. True mixed-use
11. Lighting (distinctive)
11. Community policing
11. Residential infill
11. Community/neighborhood events
11. "Reasonable" residential density
11. Light rail

**“What must Grand Avenue have?”**

- 1. Pedestrian-friendly businesses
  - 2. Shade
  - 2. People – shoppers, residents, art lovers, visitors
  - 2. Sense of Place (authenticity)
  - 3. Safety and Security
  - 3. Parking Solutions
  - 3. 24-hour activity
  - 3. Public art
- Overall Theme: “Cohesive creative eclectic connections”

**“What does Grand Avenue lack that we don’t want?”**

- 1. Chain stores
- 1. Stores with large footprints
- 1. Big box stores
- 2. Sea of parking lots
- 2. Gated communities
- 2. McMansions
- 3. Serious crime (murders)
- 3. Industries that pollute/heavy industry
- 3. Large areas of vacant land
- 3. Excessive density
- 3. Scottsdale vibe (not Old Town, the new)
- 3. Homogenous streetscapes

**What does Grand Avenue have now that we’d like to get rid of?”**

Riff-raff, sex offenders, drug dealers  
Abandoned vehicles  
Vacant buildings  
Taggers  
Chain link fences  
“Forbidden Zone” setbacks  
Unkempt properties  
Over-regulation  
Traffic speed

**Those in attendance on June 12th included:**

Dale Erquiaga, Facilitator  
Michael Nowakowski, Councilman District 7  
Rueben Gallegos, Council Staff  
Joe Murphy, Council Staff  
Gina Suarez, Owner Paisley Violin and resident  
Pat Clegg, Owner ACC Machinery  
Tony Zahn, Property owner and resident

Robin, Becky and Mina Vining, residents  
Bob Graham, Owner Motley Design Group  
Richard Gordon, Owner Bikini Cocktails  
Kyle Jordre, Jordre Studio Owner and resident  
Mark Richmond, Mark Richmond Development  
Roberta Graham, Owner Motley Design Group  
Tim Sprague, Habitat Metro, LLC  
Eric Guidino, ASU, Downtown Phoenix Campus Liaison  
Tim Eigo, Capitol Weed and Seed Coalition, Downtown Voices Coalition and resident  
Nathan Ward, Resident  
Effie Bouras, Architect  
Amina Uben, Owner Chez Nous  
Feliciano Vera, Habitat Metro, LLC  
Beatrice Moore, Property Owner and resident

**Those in attendance on June 25th included:**

Dale Erquiaga, Facilitator  
Aleena Meyer, Resident  
Roger Meyer, Resident  
Feliciano Vera, Habitat Metro, LLC  
Dean Brennan, City of Phoenix Planner  
Richard Doria, Doria Architecture and Property Owner  
Steve Lewis, Business and Property Owner  
Karl Obergh, Business and Property Owner  
Eric Gudino, ASU  
Greg Couturier, Co-Owner Arizona Library Binding  
Amina Uben, Owner Chez Nous  
Stephanie McDowell, Co-Owner ACC Machinery  
Susan Beauchamp, Maricopa Community College Small Business Development Center  
Ingrid Fisketjon, Property Owner  
Gabriel Salcido, Property Owner  
John Henry Smith, Maricopa Community College Small Business Development Center  
Beatrice Moore, Resident, Property and Business Owner  
Pat Clegg, Co-Owner ACC Machinery  
Joe Murphy, Councilman Nowakowski's Office  
Tony Zahn, Resident, Property and Business Owner  
Guy Bluff, Property Owner