

# DOWNTOWN PHOENIX URBAN FORM PROJECT



## *Community Workshop #1 Report* *conducted October 10, 2006*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....                                 | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>1 OVERARCHING GOALS</b> .....                          | <b>1-1</b> |
| A Sense of Place .....                                    | 1-1        |
| Accessibility .....                                       | 1-1        |
| Shopping and Entertainment.....                           | 1-1        |
| Future development .....                                  | 1-2        |
| Sustainability .....                                      | 1-2        |
| <b>2 THE IDEAL DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE</b> .....              | <b>2-1</b> |
| Weekday .....   | 2-1        |
| After Work .....  | 2-1        |
| Saturday/Sunday Morning .....                             | 2-1        |
| Family .....  | 2-2        |
| Weekend Evening.....                                      | 2-2        |
| <b>3 PUBLIC SPACE</b> .....                               | <b>3-1</b> |
| Programming .....   | 3-1        |
| Design and Types of Public Spaces Desired .....           | 3-1        |
| Location and Access .....                                 | 3-2        |
| <b>4 CIRCULATION</b> .....                                | <b>4-1</b> |
| Pedestrian Experience .....                               | 4-1        |
| Bike Network .....  | 4-1        |
| Public Transit.....                                       | 4-1        |
| Parking .....   | 4-1        |
| Connections between Districts and Major Destinations..... | 4-2        |
| Specific Street Suggestions.....                          | 4-2        |
| <b>5 INDIVIDUAL DISTRICTS</b> .....                       | <b>5-1</b> |
| 5.1 Roosevelt.....  | 5-1        |
| 5.2 Evans Churchill.....                                  | 5-2        |
| 5.3 Arts District Mixed Use .....                         | 5-2        |
| 5.4 Van Buren Commercial Mixed Use .....                  | 5-3        |
| 5.5 Copper Square .....                                   | 5-3        |
| 5.6 Government .....                                      | 5-4        |
| 5.7 Warehouse District .....                              | 5-4        |
| 5.8 Grant Park and Central Park .....                     | 5-5        |

# INTRODUCTION

On October 10, 2006 the Downtown Phoenix Urban Form Project team conducted the first of three interactive community meetings designed to engage community members in the process and direction of the project. Participants worked in groups of 7-10 people, with a project team member as a facilitator. Groups offered their own visions of the future of Downtown, responded to proposed framework plans presented by the team, and prepared specific comments and recommendations for one district.

Each table was designated as one of the eight Downtown districts that were identified by the project team, and participants seated themselves at a table of their choice. About 200 community participants attended, seated at 13 tables. Roosevelt, Arts District Mixed Use, Van Buren Commercial Mixed Use all had one table each, Evans Churchill, Grant and Central Park all had two tables each, and Copper Square and Warehouse District had three tables each. No participants sat at the Government District table, but general responses included feedback about this district.

The meeting was structured around questions distributed on a handout. Questions 1 and 2 addressed the project goals and participants' visions for Downtown, and the responses are summarized in Section 1-Overarching Goals and Section 2-The Ideal Downtown Experience.

The next set of questions also addressed Downtown as a whole. People were asked to respond to the **Public Space Framework Plan**, the **Circulation Framework Plan**, the **Districts and Centers Map** and the **Building Form Plan**. Along with the District and Centers Map, we asked for reactions to the following proposed land uses:

- **Roosevelt** – Predominantly residential, with retail, restaurants and small offices
- **Evans Churchill** – Predominantly residential, with employment uses, retail, art galleries and restaurants
- **Arts District Mixed Use** – Cultural and educational facilities towards Central Avenue, and predominantly residential in Townsend Park
- **Van Buren Commercial Mixed Use** – An urban mix of office, commercial and residential
- **Copper Square** –The Downtown office core; the convention/sports/cultural facilities; the university district; and the research/education area focused on medical and biotech uses. This is predominantly an employment area, but also includes hotels, retail, restaurants and residential.
- **Government** – Predominantly county, city and federal government buildings
- **Warehouse** – A mix of residential, entertainment, retail, restaurant and office uses
- **Grant Park and Central Park** – Predominantly residential

The last set of questions addressed the participants' specific district (table).

For this report, the feedback to the Public Space and Circulation Framework Plans is summarized in Sections 3 and 4 respectively, and the district-specific section is summarized in Section 5. The questions are included in each section of this report.

# 1 OVERARCHING GOALS

**Question:** *What should be the overarching goals for downtown that guide this project? Below are listed the major goals for downtown Phoenix that were expressed in interviews with over a hundred stakeholders at the beginning of this project. Do you disagree with any items on the list? Are there major items that have been omitted?*

1. *More people living downtown*
2. *More jobs downtown*
3. *Create places that are memorable and dramatic*
4. *Nice places to walk*
5. *Interesting places to go and things to do*
6. *Small unique stores and restaurants*
7. *Plazas, parks and walkways with shade*
8. *A feeling of safety in downtown*
9. *Sustainable environment*
10. *A sense of the uniqueness of Phoenix – history, art, culture, climate*

Responses from the group touched on all those listed above and introduced some new ideas as well. After hearing the group's ideas, we were able to group the overarching goals into five main categories:

## A SENSE OF PLACE

- Places that are memorable and architecturally dramatic
- Places that speak to the uniqueness of Phoenix – its history, art, culture and climate
- Well-designed and comfortable places to walk
- Plazas, parks and walkways with shade and vegetation

## ACCESSIBILITY

- Walkable and bikeable destinations along well-connected routes
- A feeling of safety
- Adequate parking, well-hidden from pedestrian view

## SHOPPING AND ENTERTAINMENT

- Retail anchors
- Small, unique stores and restaurants
- A grocery store and pharmacy
- Destinations: interesting places to go and things to do at all hours

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

- More jobs
- More people living Downtown
- Affordable housing
- Community facilities

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

- Sustainable environmental design
- Cultural and ethnic diversity
- Family- and pet-friendly amenities

## 2 THE IDEAL DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE

**Question:** Describe your picture of a good time in downtown in 2-3 sentences. Assume it's 10 years from now, and there are many more people living downtown, and great progress has been made in creating new and exciting activities in downtown. Pick a time of day, such as evening, Saturday, lunchtime, Friday night, etc.

- What would you like to do in downtown? Describe one or a series of activities.
- What kind of places would you like to go to?
- Who would accompany you – e.g. co-workers, spouse, family, friends, children?
- How would you get around?

### WEEKDAY

“Be able to walk from my house to the office; feel safe and comfortable. Be able to see many people, families, young adults and dogs. Experience a good mix of people, places and things.”

“Spend the day Downtown, into the evening. Enjoy a visit to museums, galleries, shops, and the theater. Walk through neighborhoods and districts with unique personalities.”

“If I'm from out of town, stay in a nice hotel, walk to an event, and dine in an attractive outdoor café. See attractions, like a museum, art walk, aquarium, or fountain monument. Give me no reason to leave Downtown.”

### AFTER WORK

“Meeting ended at 5 pm – spend an hour walking around, pick up fresh food, a magazine, catch the light rail home at 6 pm Run into a friend and agree to go back down on the rail at 8 pm to catch outdoor entertainment.”

“Go Downtown for special events like First Fridays. Stop by special shop with lots of variety. Get around primarily by walking.”

“Go for run along a shaded gravel path with a friend. Admire beautiful buildings and run through a fountain to cool off.”

“Take DASH from office at the state capitol to meet my husband after work; walk to a reasonably-priced dinner outside. Walk to a free outdoor concert that starts and ends early.”

### SATURDAY/SUNDAY MORNING

“Leave my townhouse for morning stroll with the dog. Pick up coffee and munchies on my way past some great architecture, walking by fascinating shops and street vendors.”

“Saturday morning: event such as race, walk, etc., then shop at the public market, late lunch at a great boutique-style restaurant, more shopping and galleries, unique shops, then drinks somewhere fun. Next, another event (theater, concert, etc.), then someplace for coffee and dessert, or an after-hours venue. Clean, shady, well-lighted streets.”

“With family, have breakfast at local restaurant, then to festival (like Chicago jazz festival) in the park. Go to Downtown museum (an extension of main museum). Shop at boutiques. Return home exhausted from a full day in the city.”

“Saturday afternoon: more sports and a number of anchor stores (Crate & Barrel, Z Gallerie, etc). Shopping is supported by variety of eateries in addition to variety of small local shops and galleries.”

## **FAMILY**

“Saturday afternoon: walk with my family around Downtown to visit small stores and restaurants. Eat lunch and go to a ball game. Have a choice of bars/restaurants with live music and culture. Enjoy great parks!”

“Saturday afternoon: everything’s within walking distance. Take my daughter to a small arts and crafts place. See South Roosevelt focus on live/work and be re-zoned for hang-out areas (coffee/wine bars, antique stores).”

“Come Downtown on the light rail to see the Nutcracker with my granddaughter and then go out for ice cream.”

“Sunday afternoon: take my family on the light rail to a one-of-a-kind restaurant, the farmer’s market, an outdoor concert, or window shopping. Family-friendly activities: I want Downtown to feel safe and full of all-hours activity.”

“Visit museum, aquarium, then have nice place to go for lunch or dinner. More destinations than just sports.”

## **WEEKEND EVENING**

“Saturday night: walk around, window shop before dinner and maybe buy something unique. Have dinner at one-of-a-kind restaurant. Go to a play, then walk along streets and listen to jazz; eat dessert outside. Walk to underground garage, or take light rail to the park-n-ride.”

“Evenings: nice outdoor cafes, live music performances, night life, bike lanes.”

“Park in Biltmore area, take a train Downtown for dinner at a new restaurant before walking past great shops on way to theater. After the play, have a drink and dessert at late-night restaurant before catching a train back home.”

“Weekend evening: take the light rail to ball game with my family. Go to a local restaurant, then watch an outside movie or stroll down an art walk. Area would be safe for children.”

## 3 PUBLIC SPACE

**Question:** *Review the Public Space Framework Plan, and the photographs of the different types of urban parks. Do you agree with the overall concept of the connected oasis and the framework plan? If not, state how and why. Write comments if you disagree with the types of urban parks proposed in the different areas of downtown. What types of urban parks do you think should be created instead?*

Responses to the Public Space Framework tended to focus on matters of design and programming: participants want to see pedestrian-oriented design as well as organized community activities. When participants considered specific parks or neighborhoods, accessibility and location became central to the discussion. Overall, comments converged on a need for more small parks, programming for parks of all sizes, a strong interest in linear parks, and concerns about safety.

### PROGRAMMING

Many participants began with Hance Park, commending its centrality and integration with cultural programming. Almost universally, however, participants asked for more programmed activity in Hance as well as in all Downtown parks. Themed public spaces, recreational parks with soccer fields or baseball diamonds, public stages for performing arts, and museums and other cultural attractions were suggested for parks of all sizes. Dog parks, skateboarding parks and water parks were equally as popular. At a larger scale, many people saw a need for flea markets and farmers' markets. Programming was suggested as a way of activating under-utilized space that may be perceived as unsafe, as well as a means of community-building.

### DESIGN AND TYPES OF PUBLIC SPACES DESIRED

The most important aspect of Downtown park design is its scale: participants repeatedly requested that parks function at the pedestrian scale. Thus, linear parks, pocket parks, and planted medians throughout the city were suggested far more than multi-block parks.

Beautification was a major consideration for residents and visitors to Downtown. They'd like to see coordination of pavers and plants, tree-lighting, attractive furniture, flowing fountains, and above all, art within public parks and open spaces. Selection of landscaping is equally important: shade trees, lawns, and low water-use species were encouraged while gravel and palm trees were vehemently discouraged. In terms of safety, adequate lighting and the elimination of dead zones are critical; people advised that blank walls need to be addressed in order for public spaces to feel safe.

Participants were particularly interested in integrating parks and open spaces with new development: elevated parks in the form of green roofs were suggested as part of new construction. Many envisioned the ground floors of new high-rises as green spaces, and developers paying the cost of pedestrian amenities such as planters, drinking fountains, public rest rooms and newsstands.

## LOCATION AND ACCESS

The major issues identified were a general lack of parks, and poor access to and from existing parks. Participants stressed that all community park edges should be activated with mixed use in an effort to make them more enticing, and they should be well-integrated with public transit routes. Specifically, participants want to see inviting streets that provide access to Hance Park from all directions. Parks should always be kept open to the public, should be sited centrally to the neighborhoods served, and should foster community identity and pride.

In addition to community parks, participants want to see creatively designed smaller public spaces. As public spaces on a more intimate scale can provide opportunity for shade and meaningful spontaneous uses, many people requested that these spaces be wedged between buildings, in paved and well-lit alleys, and in heavily-trafficked pedestrian corridors.

## 4 CIRCULATION

**Question:** *Review the Circulation Framework Plan. Do you agree with the basic concepts of the circulation framework plan? If not, state where and why. Also, if you believe other streets should be changed in downtown, state where, how, and why?*

The Circulation Framework Plan prompted feedback about pedestrian and bike access, parking, public transit, and issues of general connectivity to, from, and within Downtown. Though comments varied widely, there was a general consensus on a need for more exclusively pedestrian corridors, lighting for both existing and proposed pedestrian and bike routes, expanded public transit of all types, and conversions of one-way streets to two-way streets. Many comments were specific to streets or segments of streets, as listed at the end of this section.

### PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

General feedback about the pedestrian experience of Downtown focused on creating a comfortable and flowing network of paths. Many participants wrote about gaps in the walkability of Downtown and an uneasy integration with vehicular traffic. At the street level, many wanted to see the unbroken restoration of lawns, richly planted with trees or other vegetation between the curb and sidewalk; several also mentioned turf and other alternative walking surfaces for comfort and sustainability. Narrowed streets and widened sidewalks were suggested for most Downtown streets, as well as pedestrian-only breezeways between buildings. For particularly large intersections, pedestrian bridges were proposed. Alternately, participants called for angling off large corners in an effort to sculpt and streamline walking routes. Most importantly, participants stressed the need for multiple pedestrian entrances to all Downtown destinations.

### BIKE NETWORK

Existing bike routes were seen as insufficient, without enough routes, lights, or places to park. Many saw ASU as the future hub of a bike network that permeates equally all districts of Downtown. Specifically, participants thought the proposed bike network lacked enough east-west bike connections, and that the neighborhoods at the south end of Downtown particularly required attention in terms of bike connectivity.

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

Participants encouraged the expansion of all forms of public transit, and especially inter-modal means of support: shuttles to the light rail, expansion of the DASH, and pedestrian routes to bus stations. Ease of movement from one form of transit to another was most important, second to the employment of alternative sources of energy in city vehicles.

### PARKING

Insufficient parking was cited frequently in the feedback; at the same time, the desire for pedestrian-only corridors and public spaces implies a need to minimize and hide parking. Participants specifically called for a stop to eye-level parking garages and suggested underground garages or

structures that cover the parking area with livelier uses. In addition, several people explained that each district's main parking garage needs to be easy to find and well-integrated with connecting modes of transit.

## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DISTRICTS AND MAJOR DESTINATIONS

Discussions about the proposed Circulation Framework were largely focused on refining the selection of streets slated for improvement, in an effort to best integrate Downtown districts and destinations. Generally, participants were concerned with connections to and from Parks – specifically Hance Park and Patriot's Square – as well as Rio Salado and nearby regional parks. An equivalent number of participants expressed a need to provide landscaped links between different districts of Downtown, in order to better connect major daytime destinations, specifically between North Central and Copper Square.

Most central to the feedback, however, was the connection between neighborhoods of different character within Downtown. For example, participants saw inadequate connections between the proposed Evans Churchill and Arts Districts; between the neighborhoods south of Lincoln and the rest of Downtown (particularly landscaped ones); and the neighborhoods surrounding the Government district. There was a general consensus among participants that 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is underutilized in its capacity to serve as an effective connector for various destinations Downtown. Similarly, many comments pointed to public art as a great opportunity to begin to carve out new connections.

## SPECIFIC STREET SUGGESTIONS

Almost every street – most avenues and a handful of east-west streets – received at least one vote as candidates for narrowing, improvements and/or greening. The most popular choices were:

- **2nd Street, particularly from Van Buren to Hance Park.** Participants felt that 2nd Street is far enough away from heavy vehicular traffic and that its location is well-suited as an entry to Hance Park. Additionally, some participants were hesitant to discard the city's prior plans for improvements to 2nd Street.
- **5th Street.** Many people envisioned 5th Street as paired with 2nd Street in a new, improved pedestrian and bike network. 5th Street was chosen because it is far from the heavy vehicular traffic routes, it provides nice views to the south, and it has potential to support new pocket parks and widened sidewalks.
- **3rd Avenue.** Virtually all those who singled out this street suggested that it become more pedestrian-friendly. Suggestions included converting it to 2-way traffic, adding more green landscaping, converting vacant lots into elements of a pedestrian path, and exploiting its features as a view corridor.
- **Roosevelt.** Roosevelt was identified as a major opportunity for improved pedestrian experience via slowed traffic, widened sidewalks, or a linear park. Many stressed a need for more street parking on Roosevelt and streetscape improvements that would draw attention to its ground-level retail.
- **Jackson.** Community members saw improving Jackson as a natural way to bridge the Government, Warehouse and Copper Square districts.

- **Van Buren, particularly from the Central Avenue heading west.** Suggestions for Van Buren were varied, but all agreed that it ought to be slowed down. Participants looked for ways to give it a particular character, through a street tree scheme, special attention to public gathering spaces (particularly at Central), or the rehabilitation of the 1-story warehouses. Many community members saw Van Buren as an opportunity to create a visually appealing entry into Downtown.

**1st Street, 3rd Street, Central Avenue, 5th Avenue, Washington, Jefferson and McDowell** were identified for the following reasons: views, proximity to parks, potential as a neighborhood focus or district connector, and/or existing pedestrian discomfort.

# 5 INDIVIDUAL DISTRICTS

**Question:** Write down which district you are discussing. Review the sheet describing the district with notes and photos. Consider the district within the context of downtown as a whole. Discuss the following questions in your group:

*What should be the predominant land use in the area? What other types of land uses should be permitted or encouraged?*

*What should be the predominant building height? Should buildings above that height be allowed? Consider the existing height limits in the district and the existing structures.*

*Should additional public spaces be created within the district? What kinds, and where?*

*Should any streets within the district be changed in major ways, for example, widening sidewalks by narrowing lanes, or reducing lanes? If yes, which ones, and how should they be changed?*

## 5.1 ROOSEVELT

Themes central to the discussion of the Roosevelt District were:

- Parks and open space
- Residential and retail mixed land use
- Connectivity

With regard to land use, participants cited the need for destinations within the district, with the need to draw more events and attractions to the district. Participants also expressed an interest in increasing the amount of retail and commercial activities suggesting “more coffee shops, restaurants, and bed and breakfasts” while preserving “historic buildings and flavor” throughout the district.

Although the creation of more parks and public open space was called for by many participants, comments diverged on whether these spaces should utilize lush landscaping or desert xeriscape. Some participants felt that “lawns and water attract mosquitoes” and called for the use of “desert themes” while others called for “grass, water features, and shade trees.” Participants also recognized the need to expand bike paths and the suggestion to “incorporate bike and pedestrian paths together.”

When asked to comment on specific streets within the Roosevelt District, participants focused on McDowell Road, asking that it act as “a gateway to downtown inclusive of the urban form” rather than as “an exclusionary boundary.” Some participants called for the narrowing of McDowell as well as an increase in sidewalks for a “better pedestrian friendly environment.” Similarly, concerns were raised regarding pedestrian safety and participants requested a “balance of circulation with pedestrian friendliness” and “coordination of traffic with pedestrians.”

Height recommendations tended to focus on low heights, with a maximum of 4 stories along Roosevelt. Almost everyone suggested that any tall buildings be limited to the corridor along Central. Concern was expressed about how heights might step up to the west of Central. Higher heights to the west were universally discouraged.

## 5.2 EVANS CHURCHILL

Themes central to the discussion of the Evans Churchill District were:

- Small business destinations
- Affordable housing
- Programmed parks

Community members at the Evans Churchill discussion tables envisioned the district as a highly walkable, vibrant mixed use area with ample affordable housing, particularly along Roosevelt and Garfield. Many wanted to see more small businesses and live-work spaces, as well as historic preservation and adaptive reuse of historic properties. Participants expressed concern about a lack of parks in the district, however, particularly in the south end toward the biomedical campus. Many responses called for public space that is highly programmed and actively integrated with pedestrian connections, Hance Park and Townsend Park. Additionally, participants recognized a problem in insufficient parking.

Height recommendations for Evans Churchill varied from 2-3 stories to 6-8 stories, so it is impossible to determine a consensus. This diversity goes hand-in-hand with the many comments questioning the definition of the district: some participants saw the district as indistinguishable from the Arts Mixed Use, while others identified it more closely with the biomedical area.

## 5.3 ARTS DISTRICT MIXED USE (DISTRICT NAME TO BE CHANGED BASED ON COMMUNITY INPUT)

Themes central to the discussion of the Arts District Mixed Use were:

- Definition/boundary of the district
- Transportation/connectivity to destinations
- Architectural innovation

The Arts Mixed Use district was the most contentious district in terms of boundaries and name. Many suggested that its borders be expanded north to the Heard Museum and south to Roosevelt, and that replacing “arts” with “cultural” would be more appropriate given all the artists currently working in the Roosevelt area.

Many community members would like to see the cultural aspect of the district expanded, with more and larger museums that are architecturally distinctive, in an effort to make the district more visitor-friendly and family-friendly. Also mentioned were better-connected pedestrian, bike and public transit routes to, from and among the district’s attractions; more parks, more affordable housing; and a particular need for improvements on McDowell.

## 5.4 VAN BUREN COMMERCIAL MIXED USE

Themes central to the discussion of the Van Buren Commercial Mixed Use District were:

- Vehicular connectivity
- Walkability

Participants tended to focus on this district's need for stronger east-west pedestrian routes, traffic-calming measures and streetscape improvements. Monroe and Adams were seen as major opportunities to create a pedestrian-oriented small business area. Many people thought that Van Buren should be re-engineered to be narrower and slower. Additionally, participants thought that large-scale business would be appropriate for the area, as long as the neighborhood's existing scale were maintained. In terms of vehicular traffic, participants focussed on Grand: several people wanted to see a left turn into Downtown and a more engaging gateway at 7<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Program-oriented comments supported mixed use development for this district, and cited affordability and preservation of its historic character as goals.

Height recommendations tended to be low, as tall buildings were viewed as a potential threat to existing low, historic structures. Those who allowed for taller heights were still hesitant: they suggested that tall buildings be allowed on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Central only. Most participants felt that the height map was too general, and not sensitive enough to the varied circumstances of each block.

## 5.5 COPPER SQUARE

Themes central to the discussion of Copper Square were:

- Pedestrian connectivity
- Lively destinations

Copper Square elicited more pointed and consistent feedback than most other districts: community members were clear that the district needs more and livelier activity, taller buildings, more intensity, more creatively-designed public spaces, and large areas of permanent *shade*.

Some looked toward ASU as a way of activating Copper Square, by integrating ASU performing Arts with Downtown venues and offering more student-friendly amenities. Others saw streetscape and design as the way to liven up the neighborhood, by building pedestrian bridges, adding more underground parking, and designing large, shaded central open spaces. Many participants also saw a network of bike lanes and public transit as essential to the development of the district, as well as neighborhood essentials like a grocery store and pharmacy.

In terms of building heights, taller buildings were generally encouraged, as long as building design and articulation remained sensitive to the pedestrian and retail experience. A few comments mentioned preserving historic areas within the district.

## 5.6 GOVERNMENT

Themes central to the discussion of the Government District were:

- Connectivity: pedestrian, vehicular, and landscape
- Safety

Feedback for the Government district is limited, as there were no tables that focussed specifically on this district at the community meeting. General feedback, however, indicated that community members are most concerned about safety in this district at night, and the fact that the district not only feels isolated, but appears isolated on the proposed framework maps.

Participants asked to see more connectivity and green walking routes through the district. Specifically, suggestions include narrowing Washington to the west toward the State Capitol, installing a trolley that runs along Jackson to the Capitol, and allowing two-way traffic along Jefferson in order to slow vehicles and heighten walkability.

## 5.7 WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

Themes central to the discussion of the Warehouse District were:

- Incentives for attracting businesses and residents
- Historic preservation
- Streetscape improvements

Of all the Downtown districts, the Warehouse District prompted the most policy- and strategy-oriented discussion: community members are thinking ahead in terms of detailed recommendations for zoning and programs. Suggestions included programs for small businesses, tax breaks for new residents, financial incentives for families moving into the areas, and ways of luring corporate headquarters. It was also suggested that the city employ PR efforts to promote the district, and provide a directory of resources to guide developers who are new to the Warehouse District.

Community members widely stressed the importance of historic preservation for the Warehouse District, but a few were also concerned that preservation-minded zoning would prohibit infill and leave vacant lots stranded. As for new development, participants envisioned new basic community-buildings elements such as public schools, large- and small-scale retail, and neighborhood parks. Additionally, they saw the need for a concerted effort by developers and the city toward cleanup and safety (particularly along the railroad tracks), extensive streetscape and open space improvements including bike paths, and varied new entertainment programming—both family-oriented and late-night.

## 5.8 GRANT PARK AND CENTRAL PARK

Themes central to the discussion of Grant Park and Central Park were:

- Pedestrian connectivity
- Community-building

Participants emphasized a need for public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian improvements throughout the Grant Park and Central Park neighborhoods. Suggestions touched on many bike-related amenities, including bike lanes, bike shops, and bike lock-up spaces. Conversely, participants noted that traffic-calming measures are needed to enhance walkability, particularly in Grant Park.

Feedback also called for more mixed use development, small businesses, programmed parks, and community meeting spaces. Child-oriented development was a priority, as were neighborhood staples like grocery stores and pharmacies. Rather than heightening the district's intensity—most feedback indicated that building heights needn't surpass 4 stories—participants stressed community-building and livability.

### ***Summary Report***

The City of Phoenix Planning Department has prepared a Summary Report from the Community Workshop held on October 10, 2006. An electronic copy of that report is available by contacting the Planning Department at (602) 262-6882 or by going to the Planning Department website at [www.phoenix.gov](http://www.phoenix.gov).