

**GRANT ROAD
HERITAGE
LANDSCAPE
CORRIDOR**

**REPURPOSE REMNANTS
REALLOCATE RESOURCES**

**GRANT ROAD / CENTRAL SEGMENTS
FIRST AVENUE TO TUCSON BOULEVARD
GRANT ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
PHASES 2 AND 5**

Proposal prepared, presented and advocated by
GRANT ROAD COALITION / CENTRAL SEGMENTS
Jefferson Park Neighborhood / Samos Neighborhood
Catalina Vista Neighborhood / Campbell Grant Neighborhood

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The Project.

The widening of Grant Road through inner city neighborhoods, from First Avenue to Tucson Boulevard¹, includes the only portion of the Grant Road Improvement Project (GRIP) bordered primarily by neighborhoods and residential zoning. Referred to as the “central segments”, the work on this portion is divided into two phases, Phase 2 and Phase 5.

The residential zoning has been preserved by the Mayor and Council in the Central Segments GRIP vision statement: “Following the widening of Grant Road, pursue land uses and /or buffers that 1) are in-keeping with existing zoning, neighborhood /area plans, and existing uses 2) are compatible with and enhance surrounding properties. Examples of uses / buffers

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The Grant Road Improvement Project (GRIP) is jointly managed by the City of Tucson and the Regional Transportation Authority and involves the widening of Grant Road to six lanes from Oracle Road to Swan Road. The aspect of the project which is the topic of this proposal is the “central segments”, Phases 2 and 5, from First Avenue to Tucson Boulevard. Phase 2 between First Avenue and Santa Rita Avenue is scheduled to be completed in 2017; Phase 5 between Santa Rita Avenue and Tucson Boulevard is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

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could include multi-modal paths for pedestrians and bicycles, open spaces with linear parks, architectural elements and buffering walls and development similar to what exists today.”²

The Neighborhoods and the Coalition.

Composed of residents and representatives of central Tucson neighborhoods including Jefferson Park, Samos, Catalina Vista and Campbell Grant, the Grant Road Coalition / Central Segments is a collaboration established to promote creative, neighborhood-centric enhancements to Tucson’s urban core, including a solution to the disposition of the remnant lots created by the demolition of homes along Grant Road.

The Challenge: Demolition and Remnants.

The central segments aspect of the project involves the demolition of more than 50 homes in Phase 2 along

²

“Central Portion Segments: 1st Avenue to Campbell Avenue and Campbell Avenue to Tucson Boulevard, p. 41, Grant Road Community Character and Vitality Corridor Vision: Oracle to Swan Road”, Tucson Mayor and Council Resolution 22455, September 15, 2015. See attached as Exhibit A.

Grant Road. Many of these residences are historic, 26 are “contributing properties” to the national historic district status of Jefferson Park Neighborhood.³ The full residential lots to be acquired for the project exceed the land required for the roadway, thus leaving inferior R-1 zoned remnant parcels. Current plans call for the reorganization and sale of these inferior remnant parcels. The Coalition opposes this action.

The undersized remnants are of various sizes and shapes, none individually are the minimum size required to build single-family residences. Though the precise proposed lot sizes have not been disclosed, these undersized remnant parcels are potentially to be combined into awkward parcels which would not be candidates for positive residential development

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The City of Tucson has agreed to fund an amendment to the Jefferson Park Historic Neighborhood boundary caused by the demolition: “Funding in the amount of \$10,000 for the consultant costs will be set aside from the GRIP budget into a special account set up for the purpose of the boundary amendment . . . initiation of a single boundary amendment will occur after all phases of project demolition impacting the neighborhood, currently scheduled to be completed by approximately 2021.” Correspondence August 28, 2015, Daryl W. Cole, Director TDOT.

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consistent with the neighborhood plans and required by the GRIP vision. Appropriate access from Grant Road to the parcels is in question, with no plans for necessary visual and sound mitigation. Finally, the cost of work needed to create development viability for the remnant lots has not been disclosed.

The Grant Road Central Segments Coalition requests that the plan to sell the remnant parcels be abandoned and the project funds allocated to such efforts reallocated to establish the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor.

The Coalition Proposal:

Establish Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor.

The neighborhoods along Grant Road between First Avenue and Tucson Boulevard are rich in history,⁴ with early settlement in the 1800's, and are now a vibrant part of Tucson's urban core north of the University.

⁴ Discussion of history and architecture of neighborhoods, attached at Exhibits B and C.

The widened road will deepen the divide between these central neighborhoods. The planning and implementation of a neighborhood-centric solution to the challenge of managing the Grant Road remnant parcels is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the neighborhoods and creating a community asset.

The Coalition proposes that the remnants remaining after the construction of Grant Road be enlivened from First Avenue to Tucson Boulevard with the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor. While serving to strengthen the central segment neighborhoods, the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor will be an asset for the entire community showcasing the native plants of the region with educational components, interpretive context and pedestrian/bicycle trails. As Tucson grew in spurts and starts, often with leap-frogging developments, preservation of “open space” was reserved for dedicated parks and schools, both of which destroyed the native landscapes of the Sonoran desert and riparian areas.

The Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor will begin at the corner of Hampton and Grant Road, just east of First Avenue; the City has planned this block between Hampton and Park as an “open space” detention basin for flood water management. The Corridor will then continue east from Park Avenue to Tucson Boulevard, aligning the remnant parcels into a cohesive heritage landscape. Consultants with specific historic and botanical expertise will provide planning and design services. The Corridor will have a semi-rural character with pedestrian / bicycle trails and a unique sense of historical place and time. It will include heirloom plant species, native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers of the region, and will feature rainwater retention management based on historic practices. ⁵

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For a thorough presentation of historic native plants and landscape of the Northern Tucson Basin, see:

Spicer, B. 2012. (Botanical Illustrations: Pope, M.) Native Plants and Landscape Practices of the Fort Lowell Historic District and Northern Tucson Basin. Fort Lowell Historic District Board. Tucson, AZ, 52 pp.

Spicer, B. 2004. (Botanical Illustrations: Pope, M.) Common Native Plants and Wildlife of the Old Fort Lowell Neighborhood and Immediate Vicinity. Fort Lowell Historic District Board. Tucson, AZ, 26 pp.

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Additionally, the Corridor will be supported with interpretive signs, accompanying written materials and volunteers to lead tours for school classes and other groups.⁶ The Corridor both complements and contrasts the re-created walled Mission Garden developed at the base of Sentinel Peak.⁷

The Coalition proposes and plans a full review and analysis of the GRIP budget to discover opportunities where project funds can be reallocated. For example, though the 2010 GRIP Art Master Plan requires public art and designates three themes consistent with the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor (History and Memory, Environment and Ecology, and Culture and

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The specifications for the Corridor are subject to expert planning and design, and will include a wall for visual and sound mitigation. The Corridor will be developed with bicycle safety elements throughout, and as a key priority at intersections of bike paths with Grant Road including resolution of current bicycle safety issues at the intersection of Mountain Avenue and Grant Road.

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The Mission Garden is a re-creation of the Spanish Colonial walled garden that was part of Tucson's historic San Augustin Mission, rebuilt on its original site with plans to feature heirloom plants and living and Timeline Gardens interpreting 4,000 years of Tucson agriculture. It is the first project of the Friends of Tucson's Birthplace within the Tucson's Origins Park. www.tucsonsbirthplace.org

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Identity),⁸ the Coalition is unaware at this time of an allotment for public art in Phase 5. These funds should be reallocated to public art signage for the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor. The planning and budgeting process will include a full examination and discussion of Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor costs as well as exploration of traditional and innovative funding options.

Neighborhood Plans, Protection and Infrastructure.

The City of Tucson has provided leadership in stabilizing and enhancing historic neighborhoods north of the University of Arizona.

The City’s Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan sets forth clear goals, policies and strategies. The goals include “neighborhood preservation; enhancing the beauty and quality of life for neighborhood residents by increasing amenities, revitalizing pedestrian and community life,

⁸ GRIP Public Art Master Plan information, attached as Exhibit D.

and creating a safe and enjoyable living environment; creating a ‘sense of community’ engaging all residents in a shared and respectful community life, increasing neighborhood safety, stewardship and stability.”⁹ Referring specifically to the GRIP, the Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan requires that the neighborhood be visually buffered from impacts of Grant Road traffic and that the changes to Grant Road include pedestrian and bicycle amenities.¹⁰

The City’s Blenman Vista Neighborhood Plan¹¹, addresses both the Blenman Elm and the Catalina Vista neighborhoods. The plan includes goals to create a safe and enjoyable living environment, maintain historical sites and homes, ensure building design in harmony

⁹ The Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan adopted by City of Tucson December 16, 2008, Resolution No. 21173. https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/pdsd/plans/jefferson_park_pdf.

¹⁰ Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan, *ibid*, p 16.

¹¹ Blenman Vista Neighborhood Plan adopted by the City of Tucson October 27, 1986, Resolution 13826. <https://www.tucsonazgov/files/pdsd/plans/bv.pdf>.

with adjacent land uses and aesthetic qualities, reduce traffic flow in the neighborhood, and related goals. A primary policy of the plan is “well-designed transportation improvements that enhance the visual environment through the use of landscaped buffers, berms and noise walls.”

The goals and objectives of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood Plan and the Blenman Vista Neighborhood Plan apply as well to Samos and Campbell Grant neighborhoods by nature of their physical proximity and shared historical development. The City’s neighborhood plans articulate aspects and attributes required of the GRIP which are satisfied by the implementation of the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor.

The City has developed and adopted guidelines for the review of construction in several designated historic

districts and has established guidelines and a review process to ensure compliance with the Neighborhood Protection Zone in Jefferson Park Neighborhood.¹² The City reconstructed Mountain Avenue from the University of Arizona through Jefferson Park Neighborhood and beyond to the Rillito River as a primary community bike path. The City has undertaken the Park Avenue Transportation Enhancement project based on a plan initiated by and developed in collaboration with the Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association. The City provided visual and sound mitigation with the widening of Campbell Avenue along the east boundary of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood and west boundary of Catalina Vista Neighborhood.

The Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association is vigilant in protecting land use and residential zoning in city

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Jefferson Park Design Manual, adopted by the City of Tucson, June 21, 2011.
https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/pdsd/codes/Jefferson_Park_Design_Manual_final.pdf
See also: <https://www.tucson.gov/preservation/national-register-historic-districts>.

neighborhoods. In addition, the Association worked collaboratively with the City and developers of the Walgreens at First Avenue and Grant Road to ensure neighborhood goals were addressed, and has worked to promote and protect the use of TUSD's former Jefferson Park Elementary School by the International School of Tucson.

Most recently the Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association has worked closely with Banner University Medical Center to achieve agreements including those concerning flood water detention and management along the south boundary of the Jefferson Park Neighborhood. The Association and Banner/UMC are working together to develop the Jefferson Park Walk/Ride Health Loop¹³ which includes the portion of Grant Road proposed for the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor. Collaboration among the City, Banner/UMC and the

¹³ See map of Jefferson Park Walk/Ride Health Loop, attached at Exhibit E.

neighborhood has resulted in planned expansion of protected open space and bicycle paths at the Banner/UMC interface with the neighborhood.

Samos Neighborhood Association is active in establishing and continuing positive relationships with Salpointe High School and the Catalina Care Center as well as working with governmental agencies to establish a safe bikeway in the neighborhood.¹⁴

Jefferson Park, Samos, Campbell Grant and Catalina Vista neighborhoods have written and implemented grants to establish water harvesting basins and diversions, preserved and promoted historic attributes of the neighborhoods, created neighborhood watch, initiated emergency heat plans and established traffic calming circles.

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The “Tucson Bikeway” through Samos on Copper Street is part of a cross-city route from Swan Road to Fairway where it intersects with other bike paths connecting to the Santa Cruz River Bikeway. For more information, see: PAGregion.com/bikeways.

Tucson's Mayor Jonathan Rothschild has strongly advocated creative initiatives to encourage home ownership to revitalize Tucson's inner city and its neighborhoods. The City has provided a myriad of initiatives and support for the revitalization of downtown Tucson.¹⁵

■ The Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor is consistent with the goals and objectives of the GRIP vision and neighborhood plans, enforces compliance with the letter and spirit of the plans, complements the City's protection of the Grant Road neighborhoods, creates a community historic asset, and furthers the City's commitment to its urban core.

Commitment to Historic Attributes.

Though many decades of development occurred in Tucson without attention to the loss of historical

¹⁵ Rothschild, J. March, 2016. Annual State of the City Speech.

buildings and context, the City has become an advocate of its history. There is a renewed commitment to core urban neighborhoods through the implementation of the Neighborhood Preservation Zone and its inherent review process. The City of Tucson Historic Preservation Office oversees many projects and supports community history-preserving initiatives.

Organizations, including the Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation, the Southwest Foundation and others, are forces for support of preservation and history. Individuals with expertise, knowledge and commitment have developed a community of advocates for preservation.

■ In this context this proposal for the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor is presented, as an opportunity to add to the rich historic resources of our community, create and preserve open space, and

minimize degradation of urban neighborhoods imposed by the widening of Grant Road.

The Importance of Urban Open Space.

From a world view, retaining and creating urban open space is undergoing challenges and innovative solutions.¹⁶ Viewed as an important aspect of a vital inner city, urban green space development enhances the city and attracts property owners, increasing values and property tax base, bringing stability to commercial entities, contributing to safer, sustainable communities and enhancing public health. Green space is cited as fundamental to mental and physical well-being. Natural England, the United Kingdom's agency for natural environment, estimates that easy access to green space by all in the country would save the health care system £2.1 billion per year. In Birmingham, Alabama, the local health authority invested \$10 million in parks to

¹⁶ Owen, J. "What price for green space?". *Financial Times*, February 6, 2016. p 16.

address the fact that 66 percent of the city’s adults are obese or overweight.¹⁷

Recognizing the importance of physical activity for people of all ages and abilities and advocating for pedestrian activity, the United States Surgeon General has issued a Call to Action to promote walking and walkable communities.¹⁸ It calls on the nation to better support walking and walkability, emphasizes that walking is one of the most important actions people can take to improve their overall health and asserts that decisions and plans made by the transportation, land use and community design sector affect whether

¹⁷ Owen, J. Ibid.

¹⁸

United States Surgeon General, Executive Summary: “Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities”, citing, Community Preventive Services task Force, The Guide to Community Preventive Services; Increasing Physical Activity: Environmental and Policy Approaches, New York City Department of City Planning, New York Department of Design and Construction, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York Department of Transportation, Active Design: Shaping the Sidewalk Experience, New York, NY: City of New York, 2013. See illustration, “Step It Up!” Call to Action, attached at Exhibit F.

communities and streets are designed to support walking.¹⁹ According to survey data from the American Planning Association, 56 percent of millennials and 46 percent of baby boomers would prefer to live in a walkable area.²⁰

■ The Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor supports the community enhancement and public health values of urban green space and walkability in our community.

The Best Solution.

The Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor is the best solution for the intelligent and neighborhood-sensitive repurposing of the remnant parcels remaining after road construction along Grant Road Central Segments.

¹⁹ United States Surgeon General. Ibid.

²⁰

Adler, B. “Want to encourage the development of walkable neighborhoods? Fix this.” February 25, 2016. (Research conducted by Kasey Klimes, urban design specialist.)

■ Great strides have been made to stabilize and revitalize the Grant Road neighborhoods north of the University of Arizona. Repurposing the Grant Road remnants and reallocating resources to the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor implements the GRIP vision, conforms to City neighborhood plans, continues the City’s positive involvement and support of the inner city neighborhoods, provides urban open space for the entire community, and offers a unique educational living history of the heritage of the region.

■ The Grant Road Coalition / Central Segments seeks support of its proposal for the repurposing of the Grant Road remnants, swift resource reallocation and immediate implementation of plans to achieve the Grant Road Heritage Landscape Corridor.

Contact Us.

Please contact us for inquiries and information.

Grant Road Coalition / Central Segments

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Appendix

Exhibit A: Grant Road Improvement Project
Central Segments Vision

Exhibit B: Grant Road Central Segments
Neighborhood History

Exhibit C: Grant Road Central Segments
Neighborhood Architecture

Exhibit D: GRIP Public Art Master Plan Information

Exhibit E: Jefferson Park Walk/Ride Health Loop Map

Exhibit F: Step It Up! Illustration
Surgeon General Call to Action

Exhibit A
Grant Road Improvement Project
Central Segments Vision

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Exhibit B
Grant Road Central Segments
Neighborhoods History

Exhibit C
Grant Road Central Segments
Neighborhood Architecture

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Exhibit D
GRIP Public Art Master Plan Information

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Exhibit E
Jefferson Park Walk / Bike Health Loop Map

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Exhibit F
Step It Up! Illustration
Surgeon General Call to Action