





DOVER, KOHL & PARTNERS town planning







CNU 24 LEGACY CHARRETTE 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Detroit is focused on improving the quality of life for residents, businesses, and stakeholders with a new energy and enthusiasm. In June of 2016 the Congress for the New Urbanism, CNU24, will take place in Detroit and add the voice of planners from across the country to the city-wide conversation about the future.

As part of the Congress, CNU has organized and led Legacy Charrettes that matched national experts with municipalities, community organizations, and non-profit organizations in four Detroit-area communities. National firms collaborated with local Michigan-based firms to provide pro-bono guidance on placemaking and design issues. The 2016 CNU Legacy Charrette communities included the City of Hazel Park, the City of Pontiac, and two communities within the City of Detroit (Grandmont Rosedale and Vernor Crossing).

Dover, Kohl & Partners teamed with Hall Planning and Engineering, DesignTeam+, Urban Advantage, and the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation (GRDC) to redesign Grand River Avenue to better match the variety and vibrancy of the corridor to surrounding neighborhoods.

The team worked onsite in Detroit from April 14-17, 2016 holding a three-day design workshop hosted by the GRDC. The design team became familiar with the study area, and worked to understand the needs of the host community. A Hands-on Design Workshop followed, in which members of the community were invited to provide their input. The team spent the rest of the weekend working in an open design studio, preparing plans, renderings and visualizations that were based on what they heard. At the end of the event, the team presented the preliminary results. Those results have been presented with more elaboration in this report.

BACKGROUND

GRANDMONT ROSEDALE

Grandmont Rosedale, a community located in the City of Detroit, consists of five distinct neighborhoods: Grandmont, Grandmont #1, Minock Park, North Rosedale Park, and Rosedale Park. Grandmont Rosedale is a stable and relatively affluent community. Despite years of gradual decline in the City, Grandmont Rosedale has maintained its status as a desirable location to live.

The team heard from the community stakeholders that Grand River Avenue is not living up to its full potential as a "Main Street". Grand River Avenue is one of Detroit's major thoroughfares, and it is Grandmont Rosedale's primary commercial corridor. GRDC and local businesses have made great strides in recent decades. How can this plan help? This plan is designed to build on their momentum and suggest ways to overcome barriers to making Grand River more walkable and bikeable. The plan also offers transferable lessons to towns and cities throughout the State of Michigan and beyond who struggle with balancing transportation infrastructure and urbanism.

THINGS WE HEARD

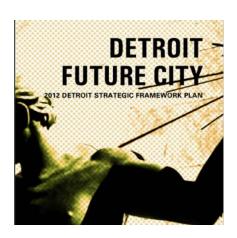
Over the course of the workshop, the team heard many ideas, but certain concepts rose to the top as most important, including:

- · Reduce traffic speeds
- Make Grand River Avenue more pedestrian-friendly
- Support local entrepreneurs and artists
- Beautify store frontages and landscaping along Grand River Avenue
- Attract a range of uses along the corridor to create a more resilient economy.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these ideas, the Dover-Kohl team formulated the following five ideas to address the concerns presented by residents:

- 1. Focus Efforts, Create a Center
- 2. Restore a "Great Street"
- 3. Add Destinations
- 4. Prepare for More Transit
- 5. A Main Street As Proud as the Neighborhoods

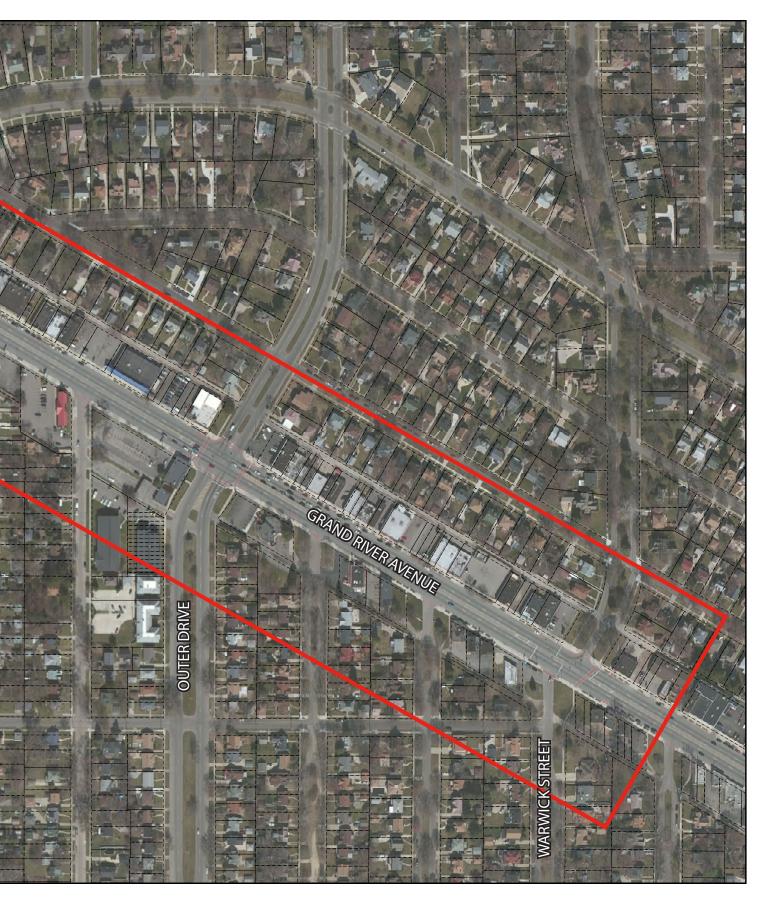


GRANDMONT ROSEDALE TODAY

The team strategically selected a small and central segment of the Grand River Avenue corridor, from Evergreen Road to Warwick Street, approximately 1/2 mile. Located in close proximity to a number of residential communities, this stretch is an ideal location for a true neighborhood center.

The entirety of Grand River Avenue is 210 miles long, a stretch that crosses the entire state and connects Detroit to Grand Rapids. As a result, it is one of the area's major thoroughfares. Despite this, traffic counts from Michigan Department Of Transportation show that the section of Grand River Avenue within Grandmont Rosedale sees between 25,000 and 30,000 trips a day. During peak traffic, there are at most 1,500 cars an hour, numbers that are well below the capacity of a two-lane street. With a width of 105', Grand River Avenue in its current configuration is unnecessarily wide, prioritizing vehicles over pedestrians and cyclists. Residents often have no choice but to get into a car for their every day needs.





EXISTING CONDITIONS

Homes in Grandmont Rosedale are typically historic structures that have been well maintained over the years. The streets are safe for residents and create an ideal atmosphere for families. Along the Grand River Avenue corridor initiatives by the GRDC have helped attract new local businesses which have helped to promote the idea of Grand River Avenue as the center of the neighborhood. However, commercial vacancy rates remain high; many properties are deserted; and storefronts are boarded up. The street design is also inhospitable for pedestrians, offering little shade, insufficient sidewalks, and high speed traffic.





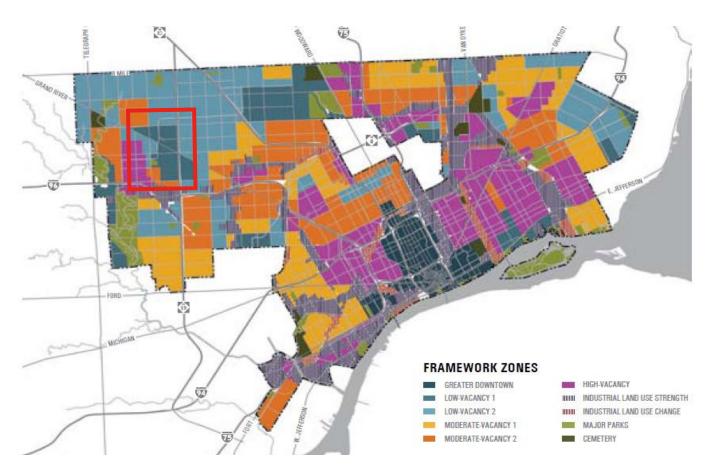








On the positive side, the neighborhoods within Grandmont Rosedale have some of the lowest vacancy rates in all of Wayne County. The community has managed to maintain stability. In addition to current residents, new residents are also moving in, attracted by the community's safety, attractiveness, and affordable prices. New businesses have begun to appear, including creative incubators. The GRDC has purchased properties along the corridor, and is working to support tenants who share the goal of growing the corridor to its full potential.



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DESIGN WORKSHOP

The team met with over 100 individuals over the course of a weekend. On Friday, April 15th, over 80 residents attended a Hands-On Design workshop at the Bushnell Congregational Church. After a brief presentation by the Dover-Kohl team, participants gathered in small groups around tables to draw their ideas. Toward the end of the evening, representatives from each table presented their groups' big ideas to the entire assembly, highlighting the commonalities between tables.

The team then spent the weekend working in an open design studio in which members of the public were invited to stop in and shape the ideas that were being developed and work that was being done. Stakeholders were also invited to a series of technical meetings. The team met with the following stakeholder groups:

- Local business owners
- · Property owners
- Residents
- Department of Transportation (City and State)
- · Transit operators
- · Elected & appointed representatives
- Environmentalists
- Local developers
- Cycling advocates







PUBLIC INPUT

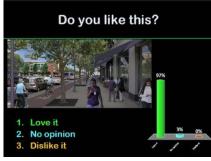
The Dover-Kohl team gathered input through a variety of methods. Residents were asked to provide one word that describes Grand River Avenue both today and tomorrow. The results were aggregated and visualized in word clouds, seen below. Keypad polling was used during presentations, with questions asking residents how they would like to see their community improved and what they envision their neighborhood looking like in the future.













CHALLENGES

WALKABILITY

Every street needs to be multi-modal for a City to reach its fullest mobility potential. Streets need to be safe, comfortable and interesting to the pedestrian. Over the last 50 years the singular goal of street designers has been to move cars. Broadening that mission can be a challenge.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND TRAFFIC CONTROL

Grand River Avenue is currently too fast and too wide for pedestrians to feel safe walking. Despite the fact that the study area is along one of the largest thoroughfares in the area, it can still feel disconnected from the rest of Detroit. The character of Grand River Avenue also does not reflect the quality of the surrounding neighborhoods.

MISSING USES

Residents must rely on personal vehicles to access daily needs. Once in their cars, and with limited amenities in proximity, residents are forced to spend much of their money outside the community. Grand River Avenue should evolve from a way to pass-through only, to a destination itself.

CRIME

Crime rates in Grandmont Rosedale are generally lower than average, and overall, crime in the city of Detroit is dropping. Despite the positive changes, the perception of crime remains a factor in attracting new families and additional investment along the Grand River corridor.

HOUSING FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

Many long-term residents expressed the concern that they may not being able to stay in their home if it becomes too difficult to maneuver around their multi-story, historic house. The team heard suggestions for locating senior-friendly housing on the corridor.



FIVE BIG IDEAS

After listening to many ideas over the course of the workshop and carefully evaluating the opportunities and challenges within the study area, the team presented the following five Big Ideas for guiding new development and initiatives along Grand River Avenue.

1. FOCUS EFFORTS, CREATE A CENTER

Grandmont Rosedale is already a shining spot on the corridor. Efforts should be concentrated to build along the street, in an urban way, thus filling gaps and creating an area for walkability.

RESTORE A "GREAT STREET"

"Great streets" are safe, comfortable and interesting, with features such as street furniture, sufficient tree coverage and visual details such as public art. Great streets meet the needs of all different types of users and are distinctive enough to be memorable.

3. ADD DESTINATIONS

Attracting diverse street level uses such as restaurants, grocery stores, boutiques, and gyms, will encourage residents to stay and spend in their neighborhood, while also inviting members of other communities to visit. Additionally, galleries, public art, and community gathering places turn neighborhoods into full destinations.

4. PREPARE FOR MORE TRANSIT

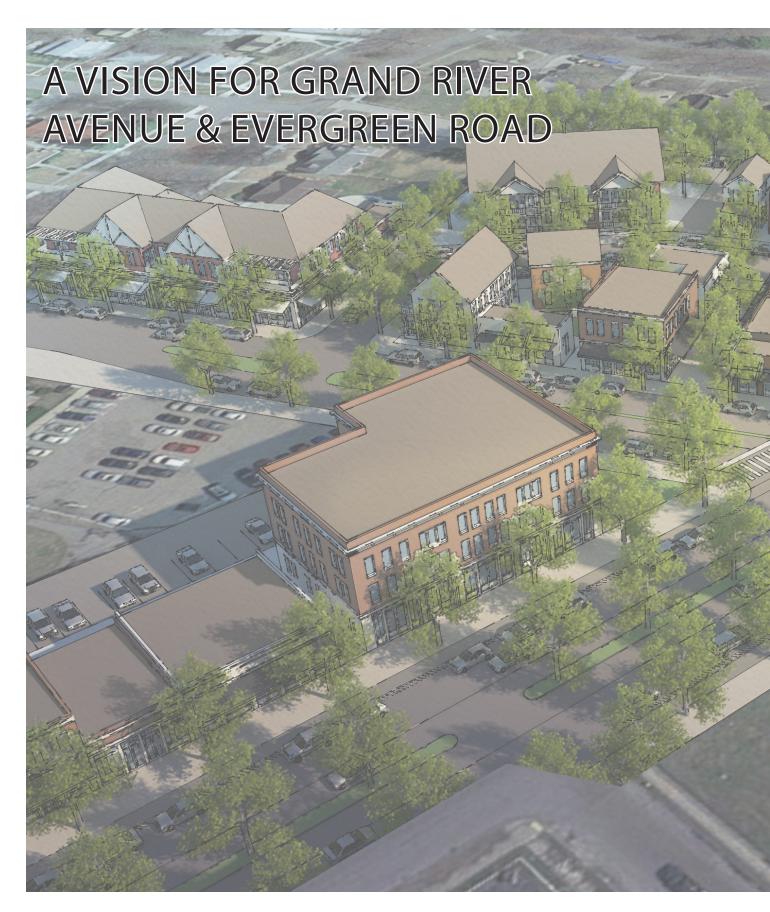
Grand River Avenue is already serviced by buses. All street improvements and future designs should encourage transit options, by creating a destination that will compete better for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT, streetcars, and other alternate transit modes). The design of Grand River Avenue should include bus shelters, shaded sidewalks, and protected bike lanes.

5. A MAIN STREET AS PROUD AS THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The historic Grandmont Rosedale neighborhoods have been loved through the years. Yards are maintained, public spaces are landscaped, and signage is consistent.

The commercial corridor should take the same approach. Details such as light poles, uniform landscaping, branding and signage, can all play a large role in the visual quality of the neighborhood. A voluntary Business Improvement District or Neighborhood Association can also play a role in supporting development of local businesses.







GRAND RIVER AVENUE & EVERGREEN ROAD

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The intersection of Grand River Avenue and Evergreen Road is one of the major crossings along the corridor, but it is still underutlized and underdeveloped. The corners of the intersection contain either parking or vacant lots.

PHASE ONE

Initial street improvements set the stage for future developments by creating a visually hospitable environment, attracting more pedestrian foot traffic:

- · Widening of sidewalks
- · Planting street trees
- Installing a center median
- · Improving crosswalk visibility

PHASE TWO

As commercial demand increases, small-scale development can begin, starting with the southwest corner of the intersection. Storefronts along Evergreen and Grand River will help complete the corridor.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



PHASE ONE



PHASE TWO

PHASE THREE

The northwest corner of the intersection features an urban block structure that allows for more street-facing frontage space. The community can begin to integrate a range of housing types here, building townhouses and multi-family homes to increase the options available for renters and homebuyers.

PHASE FOUR

As demand increases, slightly higher-scale development may proceed. Surface parking lots along Grand River Avenue are overly large and rarely full, not to mention unsightly but they provide a convenient placeholder for new development. Grandmont Rosedale is an attractive location for families and first time homebuyers, and should be able to meet the needs of a range of incomes.

PHASE FIVE

A higher density mixed-use structure on the Southeast corner can play a role in completing the intersection. In order to accommodate the parking of new uses and reduction of surface lots, parking should be located mid-block and behind buildings. Coordinated, district-wide management strategies can ensure that there is sufficient parking for future growth.



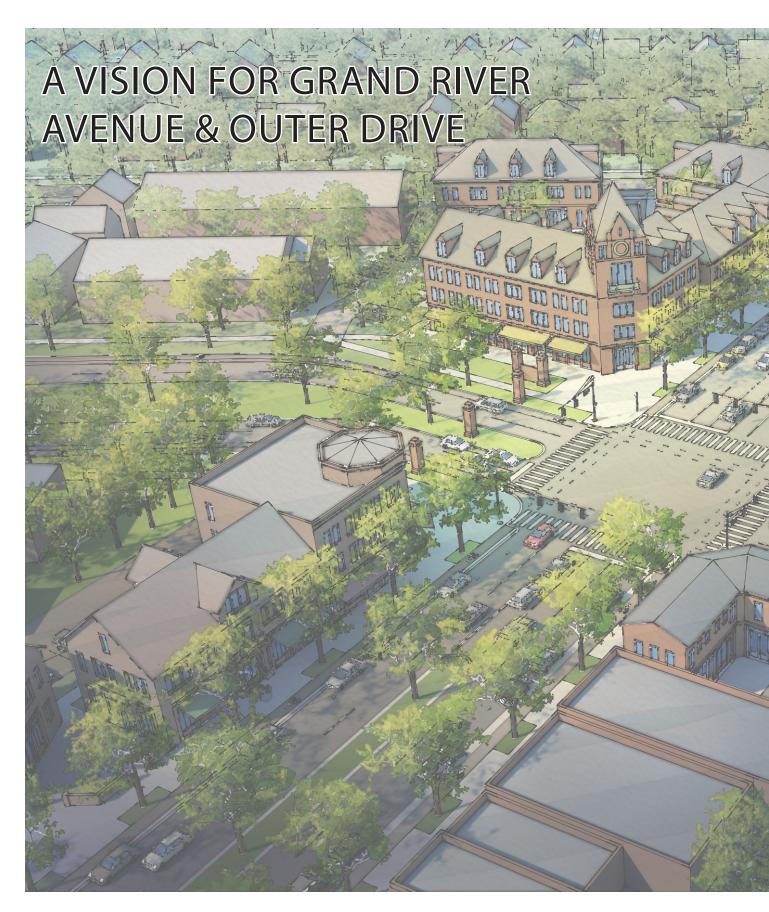
PHASE THREE



PHASE FOUR



PHASE FIVE





GRAND RIVER AVENUE & OUTER DRIVE

Grand River Avenue and Outer Drive is the intersection of the study area's two largest thoroughfares and is geographically at the heart of the community, making it an essential focus area for future development. This intersection could potentially see some of the most dense development on the corridor, acting as a true center for surrounding neighborhoods.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Both residents and transportation expert alike agree that the intersection is in need of modifications. Buildings are set back too far from the street, and there is next to no shade for pedestrians. The divided highway along Outer Drive makes the street overly wide, and the existing median is underutilized, lacking landscaping or any sort of park features. Outer Drive is a main entrance to the surrounding neighborhoods, and yet it has none of the features of other entrances, including the historic gateway structures present at other intersections throughout the study area.







PHASE ONE

Creating a center median along Grand River Avenue will add more green space, slow traffic, and improve the pedestrian experience. The medians along Outer Drive should also see similar improvements. Through the use of proper landscaping, the medians can act more like true green spaces, rather than street dividers. The gateway markers shown here mark the sense of arrival felt upon entering (or exiting) the Grandmont Rosedale neighborhoods.



PHASE TWO

Development should begin to complete the streetscape along Grand River Avenue, filling in the gaps between existing buildings. As surface parking is repurposed for development, parking needs can be met on-street parking and mid-block parking.



PHASE THREE

Outer Drive and Grand River Avenue is an ideal location for slightly higher scale development. A 4 story structure could house a combination of commercial, office, and residential uses. Senior-friendly housing may also be located here, with essential needs closely available.

PHASE FOUR

A "complete" intersection will feature development on all sides of the street. Buildings along Grand River Avenue should make use of the architectural details characteristic of the surrounding neighborhoods, such as the shown pitched-roof structures, and round cupola-inspired feature. Pulling architectural inspiration from the residential neighborhoods onto the main commercial corridor results in visual unity, creating a cohesive center. Such distinctive features also allow for complementary buildings to be immediately recognizable, marking the corridor as a destination.





PHASE FOUR - ROUNDABOUT OPTION

With the goal of creating an even more unique and possibly iconic intersection, the team visualized Grand River Avenue and Outer Drive with a two-lane roundabout. Two-lane roundabouts slow down traffic speeds and thus improve safety for pedestrians and motorists.

ROUNDABOUT FACTS (FROM NATION-WIDE STUDY)

• Decrease in crashes after installing a roudabout:

Overall: 39%Injury-producing: 76%Fatal or incapacitating: 90%

• Public acceptance of roundabouts:

- Prior to construction 68% opposed

- After construction 73% favored



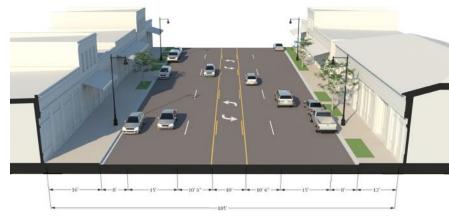


STREET IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

Many approaches to Grand River Avenue's re-design were explored.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area of Grand River Avenue sees 24,000 trips in a day, with 8,000 of those being transit users. The street is overly wide, enabling motorists to drive too quickly. There are also too few crosswalks, and insufficient shade, creating a negative environment for pedestrians.



OPTION ONE

Plant additional and taller street trees to create a full canopy. Designated bike lanes visually define safe spaces for cyclists and make more effective use of the right of way, reducing the 15' travel lane to a "right-sized" 10'.



OPTION TWO

Curb-separated bike facilities provide more protection for cyclists than bike lanes within the travel lane.



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OPTION THREE

Center medians add more greenery, slow down traffic, and may act as pedestrian refuges between crosswalks. Bus only lanes encourage the use of transit and decrease the amount of motorist trips taken daily.



OPTION FOUR

Designing Grand River Avenue with a central promenade containing parking in the middle of the street allows for creative uses. For special events, the street can be closed off and used as a festival space, with room for live music, food trucks, community markets, and more.



OPTION FIVE

Grand River Avenue can also be designed in the style of a multi-way transit boulevard, with designated spaces for cars, pedestrians, cyclists and transit. Bikes and buses can share the center lanes, to expedite commutes. Medians on both sides of the street double the area available for green space.

The team recommended the following street improvements for consideration in any redesign of Grand River Avenue.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST FACILITIES

Bike lanes can be included within the parking lane using paint striping. Striping can be implemented quickly and cheaply, providing near immediate improvement to pedestrian and cyclist safety.

IMPROVED GREEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPING

Center medians can provide green space. They should be appropriately sized. However, maximizing the pedestrian and cyclist experience means dedicating as much area as possible to the sides of the street, the "pedestrian realm."

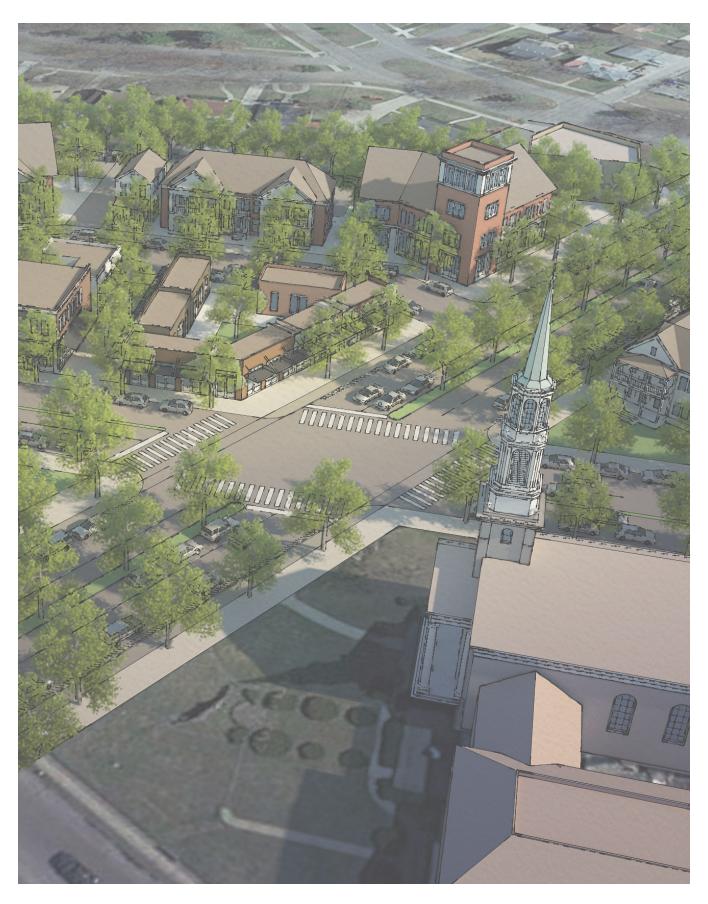
HANDLE EXISTING AND FUTURE TRAFFIC

The width of the travel lanes is reduced, but the capacity remains the same. Narrower travel lanes inherently lead to slower traffic speeds, ensuring motorists pay attention to their surroundings, rather than treating Grand River Avenue purely as a high-speed thoroughfare.

SUFFICIENT PARKING FOR UPCOMING BUSINESSES

As more residents, businesses and uses move into the neighborhood, the demand for parking will continue. All on-street parking is retained and painted to more clearly delineate where motorists may park.





LANDSCAPING

DesignTeam+, a local landscape architecture firm, sketched various street configurations, and imagined green amenities and green infrastructure along the corridor.

OPTION 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Vacant parking lot
- Narrow sidewalk
- Parking lane
- · Travel lane

OPTION 2

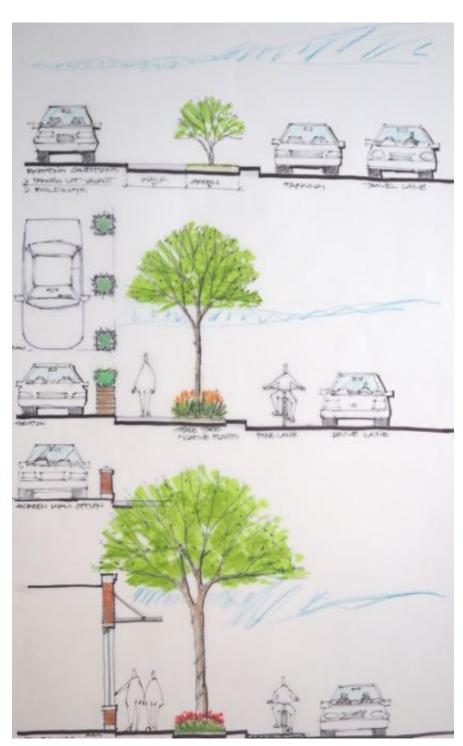
- Parking separated by planters
- Widened sidewalk
- Full-size tree planting
- · Bicycle lane
- · Travel lane

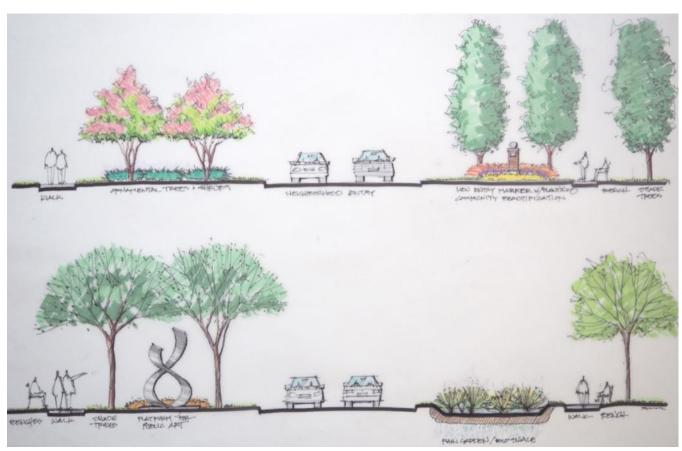
OPTION 3

- Storefronts with awnings
- Parking located mid-block/ behind buildings
- Full tree canopy
- · Protected bicycle lane
- Travel lane

BELOW: PLANTERS USED IN STORMWATER MANAGEMENT







GATEWAYS TO GRANDMONT ROSEDALE NEIGHBORHOODS: PUBLIC ART AND LANDSCAPING



DESIGN OF STREET AMENITIES: LIGHTING, BUS STOPS, OUTDOOR SEATING, AND PARK CONFIGURATIONS

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Urban Advantage produced a series of renderings to visualize Grand River Avenue could develop over time, using the concept identified by the design team and the community.

FOCUS EFFORTS, CREATE A CENTER

As a center, Grand River Avenue can accommodate the needs of a wide range of the population by creating a complete, compact, mixed use environment.

RESTORE A "GREAT STREET"

Details such as the bike racks, wrought iron light posts, and tree canopy all combine to create a street that is not only hospitable and useful, but also safe and memorable.

ADD DESTINATIONS

Additional uses like cafes, banks, and pharmacies will build on and support the existing successes of institutions like Pages Bookstore and Always Brewing.

PREPARE FOR MORE TRANSIT

Allocate space for different modes of transportation:

- · Dedicated transit lanes
- · Protected bicycle lanes
- · Car sharing options and carpool lanes
- · Benches and sufficient shade, for a comfortable walking experience

A MAIN STREET AS PROUD AS THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Grandmont Rosedale already has a strong positive reputation within the City of Detroit thanks to years of constant maintenance and continuous improvements. The facade repairs, signage requirements, and branding suggestions work to elevate Grand River Avenue to a similar level.



A NEW GRAND RIVER AVENUE





EXISTING CONDITIONS OF GRAND RIVER AVENUE

In its present condition, Grand River Avenue is a regional thoroughfare whose primary purpose is to move automobiles east and west throughout the region, rather than facilitating the needs of the local community. Instead of functioning as a utilitarian roadway that divides the community, the Avenue should be transformed into a community asset and point of pride for residents and community leaders.



STEP 1: BICYCLE LANES

Implementation of ideas can begin immediately, starting with painted dedicated bicycle lanes, for motorists and cyclists to gradually become more comfortable with the idea of a shared street.



STEP 2: PROTECTED BIKE LANES AND LANDSCAPING

The installation of protected bike lanes and a center median can slow fast traffic and create a safer street. Improved landscaping, including planters and street trees provide a dramatic improvement to street aesthetics and the experience of pedestrian and bike traffic.



STEP 3: STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENTS

Creating destinations along Grand River Avenue is essential to filling in gaps along the corridor. Facade improvements should be promoted and supported, as they can define how a neighborhood is perceived and experienced.



STEP 4: DESIGN AT DIFFERENT SCALES

Integrate additional mixed-use development, including retail, dining, and senior-friendly housing options.



STEP 5: A COMPLETE AND WALKABLE MAIN STREET

Dedicated transit lanes along Grand River Avenue increase mobility options for residents and may prove to be pivotal in designing a complete and walkable street.

IMPLEMENTATION

NEAR TERM

These recommendations can be implemented within six months to one year:

- Continue to advocate for Grand River Avenue as a multi-modal street working with the City of Detroit, City Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Transportation Departments, MDOT, and SEMCOG.
- Introduce Grandmont Rosedale residents to the landscaped entryway concepts and Green Infrastructure concepts in the plan through presentations to interested non-profit organizations and neighborhood organizations.
- Continue to organize follow-up community meetings to update the community on the plan and to get additional feedback.
- Consider a temporary installation of part of the Grand River Avenue redesign.
 Such an installation event could coincide with a city-wide cycling event, farmer's market, craft fair or music event. A temporary demarcation of the proposed protected-bicycle lane with striping would attract the city's cycling community and give people a sense of the value of the bicycle amenity.
- Consider testing the idea of a "road diet" for Grand River Avenue on one or two blocks, or during off-peak hours only. This will help to prove the concept and build consensus.
- A short-term, but complete, version of the plan concept for Grand River Avenue could be implemented with paint, planters, and other minimal permanent construction.
- Further explore with the appropriate transportation agencies the idea of a roundabout at Outer Drive and Grand River Avenue.
- Finalize the design of Grand River Avenue as a multi-modal street with all appropriate agencies and begin reconstruction.
- The Grandmont Rosedale Development Corporation should continue its work
 of stabilizing the commercial properties as well as residential properties in the
 neighborhoods with additional City support.





HATCH DETROIT NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE: Grandmont Rosedale was chosen as a project site for the Hatch Detroit Neighborhood Initiative, a project focused on improving storefront retail in Detroit. The organization has pledged \$150,000 towards facade improvements along Grand River Avenue. Suggested Improvements include landscaping, signage, trash receptacles, and bike racks.

TACTICAL URBANISM

Tactical Urbanism is a term used to describe a low-cost, temporary change to the built environment intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places. The best Tactical Urbanism events demonstrate a recommendation in full detail, with correct widths for sidewalks, travel lanes, and on-street parking.

On July 26, 2014 in San Marcos, Texas a quarter mile portion of South LBJ Drive-from Martin Luther King Drive to Hopkins Street-was transformed into "two-way for a day" through the use of temporary street striping. A two-way cycle track, several parklets, on-street parking, and widened sidewalks were also delineated. The Tactical Urbanism project was intended to demonstrate the street section as proposed by the City's Downtown Master Plan and Council Policy Direction for implementation in the next two to five years with the rewrite of the City's land development code.

Over 3,000 people attended the day-long event and a City fire engine even drove the 11' proposed travel lane to prove that the lane could accommodate the city's safety needs. Temporary streetlights, signage, and crosswalks were added to direct vehicular, bike, and pedestrian traffic. Transportation officials were present to guide motorists and pedestrians through the temporary installation.

Tactical Urbanism could be used in Grandmont Rosedale to great effect. An idea as simple as spray painting bike lanes can influence people's perception of the corridor, even before any large projects are undertaken.







IMPLEMENTATION CONTINUED

MID-TERM

These recommendations should be implemented within two to four years:

- Restripe Grand River Avenue from Evergreen Street to Warwick Street (and beyond if possible) to add bike lanes and on-street parking.
- Include mid-block pedestrian crossings on the Avenue.
- New tree-planting and streetscape improvements along Grand River Avenue should be permanently installed.
- Install signage on Grand River Avenue to let visitors know they have arrived to a new, "walkable" area.
- Update local zoning codes to require street-oriented buildings by use of a
 Form Based Code or changes to the land development and zoning regulations.
 Every new building and addition should contribute to a pedestrian-friendly
 environment along the multi-modal Grand River Avenue.
- Consider the idea of a Business Improvement District to create funds for the promotion and maintenance of the new Grand River Avenue.



PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS: PERGOLA CONSTRUCTED BY GRDC

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