



East Grand Avenue Overlay District Zoning Study

Advisory Committee

Meeting #1: November 9, 2022

Notes:

1. Committee Introductions

- Committee members introduced themselves
 - Committee members represent a range of ages, genders, affiliations, and perspectives, including nearby homeowners, renters, business owners/operators, developers, design professionals, Summit Hill Association members, and others
- Committee members described the one attribute they most appreciated about Grand Avenue; responses included the following (numbers indicate attributes that were supported by multiple members):
 - Walkability (+1)
 - Diversity
 - Convenience (+2)
 - Beauty
 - Reliability (+1)
 - Public transit access
 - Destination/uniqueness/preciousness
 - Historic character (+1)
 - Balanced place/mix of land uses
 - Intergenerational
 - Scale
 - Opportunity

2. Roles and Responsibilities: Advisory Committee, Staff and Consultant

- Michael Lamb (consultant) discussed the Advisory Committee member selection process
 - Members were selected to achieve a diversity of ages, genders, affiliations, and perspectives
 - Michael made the final decision on the 13-member committee, with support from the City's Planning and Economic Development Department and the Summit Hill Association
 - A Committee member mentioned that the Committee members are not representative of all demographics and perspectives in Saint Paul or the neighborhood, and the Committee members need to remember that as they serve on the Committee
- The Advisory Committee's primary focus is to develop guiding principles for the City to consider when making Zoning Code text amendments to the East Grand Avenue Overlay District
- The Committee is advisory
- City staff clarified their role
 - During Advisory Committee meetings, City staff will attend and be available for questions, but will defer to Michael as the meeting facilitator
 - City staff is working on other technical analyses to contribute to the Zoning Study, including analyses of zoning, market factors, development, and case studies
 - City staff would like to ensure the East Grand Avenue Overlay District aligns with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan

3. Scope of Work

- Michael provided a high-level overview of planning and zoning, including a brief discussion of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District regulations; Michael mentioned that more education will be provided at future meetings
- A Committee member asked for clarification on what an overlay district is; Michael and City staff clarified that a zoning overlay applies in addition to underlying zoning standards; overlays are applied in areas that require unique development standards; overlays supersede underlying zoning standards if they are more restrictive
- A Committee member asked why the Committee and Zoning Study is focused only on East Grand Avenue as opposed to the entire Grand Avenue corridor; Michael and City staff clarified that the Advisory Committee is part of the Zoning Study of the East Grand Avenue Overlay District, which only applies to the 11 blocks between Ayd Mill Road and Oakland Avenue

4. Schedule

- Committee members stated that November 28, 2022 will be the best date for the next meeting, with November 30, 2022 as an alternate
- City staff will verify meeting logistics before confirming the date with the Committee

5. Issues and Concerns— 'Brainstorming' Exercise

- Committee members participated in an exercise where Michael went around the room and asked members to state one issue or concern they have with Grand Avenue; Michael repeated this several times until all key issues and concerns were communicated
- Issues and concerns described by community members included the following (numbers indicate issues/concerns that were supported by multiple members):
 - Losing Ash trees
 - Lack of infrastructure maintenance (e.g., sidewalks, roads, snow shoveling, etc.)
 - Buildings that are too large/tall (+1)
 - Scale and character
 - Affordability (+3)
 - Lack of housing supply/housing crisis
 - Pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle conflicts and safety
 - Active accessibility
 - Empty storefronts/retail space
 - Excessive number of surface parking lots that front Grand Avenue and degrade pedestrian experience
 - Perception that it is difficult to park/lack of business access
 - Local business employees not being able to park nearby employers
 - Maintaining local businesses/lack of affordable commercial, restaurant space
 - High number of national chain stores
 - Property tax burdens
 - Lack of business organization
 - Legacy of Grand Old Days
 - Pockets of crime
 - Accessibility for people living with disabilities

6. Keep & Change Exercise

- Committee members filled out an index card (or followed up via email) with three things they would like to keep on Grand Ave and three things they would like to change about Grand Ave (*see Attachment 1*)

7. Continuum Statements Exercise

- Committee members filled out a handout with continuum statements, where they were asked to choose how much they agree with certain statements in one row of a table (*see Attachment 2*)
- This exercise is intended to be a high-level, ice breaking, brainstorming activity to ask participants about zoning and development priorities

Keep – name three things about Grand Ave that you would keep

Small businesses (B2) small scale

Businesses that can serve all ages and many functions: hardware, liquor, medical, restaurants, etc.

Small businesses and restaurants

Local businesses

Business community

Small local businesses

Small businesses

mom and pop shops

local owners

unique businesses

eclectic businesses

minority owned businesses

Restaurants and shops

Yummy restaurants and fun shops

Active storefronts

Affordable rental rates for retail tenants

accessibility for people with disabilities

walkability

Walkability

walkability

Accessibility

Variety of housing affordability

Housing mix

Mixed use neighborhood

mixed use

mix of commercial and residential

diversity of housing types and rental levels

current blend of retail and residential

Character and small scale (less than 3 story)

Three story brick buildings

historic character of buildings

historic character of buildings with more maintenance

Vintage occupied buildings

Current size of traditional buildings

Parking that invites customers from outside the walkable distance (re; lot behind Bread & Chocolate)

Bus service

Bus stops/access

Tree and greenery

Street trees

Change- *name three things about Grand Ave you would change*

Fix the street and sidewalk

Change the tax structure to allow start-up restaurants and businesses

Streetscape, infrastructure and trees

Lack of benches, flowers, beautification of Ave, more wayfinding

Tree canopy (we need it back asap; local businesses would gladly help to fund stump removal and replace the trees sooner than on the city's schedule)

Better walking and biking safety

More customers and pedestrian space

Pedestrian safety

More "friendly" outdoor meeting/seating

Sidewalks and storefronts that allow for more outdoor café seating

Surface parking lots with frontage on Grand Ave

Parking adjacent to the street

Eliminate permit parking on side streets

Parking requirements

Change parking to better options

Help residents who have alleys that bookend Grand Ave – they need help with excess trucks, parking, etc.

Too many cars

Traffic calming on Grand

More parking behind businesses

Surface parking lots

Need parking regulations – need to recognize that growth on one property needs to be balanced with effect on adjacent properties

Eliminate overlay

Zoning gamble

Building height limits

Less large scale buildings

Get rid of modern ugly looking buildings

Development limiting policies (like EGAOD) that concentrate property tax burden on the small businesses and affordable housing buildings that can least afford it

Affordability

Affordability

Lack of affordable housing

Lack of transit

Transit options (more buses and other options for winter)

Increase bus frequency

Add turn lane green light on Grand from Lexington

Lack of safe biking

Add pocket parks

Hire a BID _____

Recognition that Grand is not the focus; it is part of the broader community and its effect on those areas needs to be balanced with any change on Grand

Rate each statement and rank to the level you agree with: 3 = agree; 2 = mostly agree; 1= somewhat agree

Money is more important than happiness	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	Happiness is more important than money
I feel safe walking along and crossing Grand Ave	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	The Ave needs amenities to make walking safer
Grand Ave has a unique identity that should be valued and protected	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	Grand Ave needs help with updating its image and identity
The physical character and charm of the Avenue is its biggest strength	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	The mix of commercial and residential uses is its biggest strength
Walkability should be prioritized over vehicular traffic and parking	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	Traffic speed and parking are problems that need attention
Grand needs more sensitive development	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	Grand needs more development regulation
I wish there were more affordable housing Grand Ave	3L	2L	1L	1R	2R	3R	Housing choices and prices on Grand are good for the area