



GRAVOIS ROAD

strategic planning report

August 2016



“To design a street according to its intended use is a reasonable but uncommon practice.”

Harland Bartholomew



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Overview of The Great Streets Initiative

Streets are public space.

Therefore, in 2006, East-West Gateway Council of Governments launched the St. Louis Great Streets Initiative to expand the way communities think of their streets. Rather than viewing a roadway solely as a means to move cars and trucks efficiently, the goal of the St. Louis Great Streets Initiative is to work with communities to define a more comprehensive vision for significant streets. Often, our roadways do not easily accommodate their range of functions or the mix of people using them. By changing the planning approach, however, they can become more functional, vibrant, attractive, and representative of their communities.

A strong process is as important as the end product. Working with the community to define the vision, a diverse team of consultants brings technical data and experience to the community's local knowledge. Through the course of this discussion, a mix of development, transportation, environmental, and governance strategies is developed to help the community achieve its stated goals.

The process for the Gravois Road Great Streets project was tailored around a four day long, on-site workshop. This is an efficient way to repeatedly gather community input as options are considered and refined into final recommendations.

The end product provides the community and the St. Louis County Planning Department with specific guidance to achieve its goals for Gravois Road.

Great Streets:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are great places | Streets are public space. They should be engaging. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate land use and transportation planning | Start with the desired vision for the place, then develop a transportation network to support it. The two are entirely linked. When addressing either, consider the other. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate all users & all modes | A range of people use a given roadway. Balance transit, pedestrian, cyclist, & driver priority to fit the need. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are economically vibrant | A healthy local economy attracts investment and lasting stewardship. It also supports adjacent neighborhoods. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are environmentally responsible | An attractive refreshing environment working in concert with natural systems is lasting and reflects local identity. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on current thinking | Great Streets review others' efforts and lessons learned, adapting, where appropriate, successful ideas. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop collaboratively | Bring a range of technical abilities to the table and efficiently combine it with local knowledge from the community. |

Great Streets Projects

Pictured below are a few of the Great Streets projects that have been completed. These streets are multimodal, support healthy local economies, address a range of environmental issues, and are pleasant, attractive places to be. For more information about the Great Streets Initiative or any of the projects that have been completed, go to www.ewgateway.org and look for the Great Streets logo.

In addition to showing past projects, this link also provides access to the Great Streets Digital Design Guide. This guide illustrates how Great Streets Principles apply to a variety of street types. It also allows users to examine various elements that can make a street a stronger asset to the businesses and neighborhoods along it. Communities throughout the region are encouraged to incorporate these elements into their projects.

To learn more about the characteristics found in great streets, as well as the design and process issues involved, the Digital Design Guide can be accessed directly at www.greatstreets-stl.org/.



South Grand Avenue, St. Louis, MO



Page Avenue, Pagedale, MO



Natural Bridge Road, North St. Louis County, MO



Grand Center, St. Louis, MO

Introduction

This report was the result of a highly collaborative process that involved numerous community constituents, regional planning partners and agencies, and a very capable team of consultants. The endeavor was distinguished by a spirit of common cause, respect, and professionalism. Relevant history and data were balanced with real aspirations and goals in a very productive conversation. Appendix C, containing presentations and polling results compiled during community workshops, presents a partial record of this conversation. Necessary adjustments to this plan over time should respect and maintain this high level of collaboration and diverse technical and professional input. The people of Affton will expect it, and even small adjustments that fail to consider the range of related issues can create problems down the road.

This document borrows significantly from white papers (see Appendix D) written by the consultants on the project team. While these white papers contain a great deal of analysis and detail, this report itself only includes the barest core content from them. Reading each of the four white papers will provide significant additional information that is essential to fully understanding this document and its recommendations. The authors of the white papers reviewed and provided edits to this report to ensure that the message and content is consistent with their individual work. Though drafted by East West Gateway staff, authorship should be considered shared by the project team.



Utility of this Document

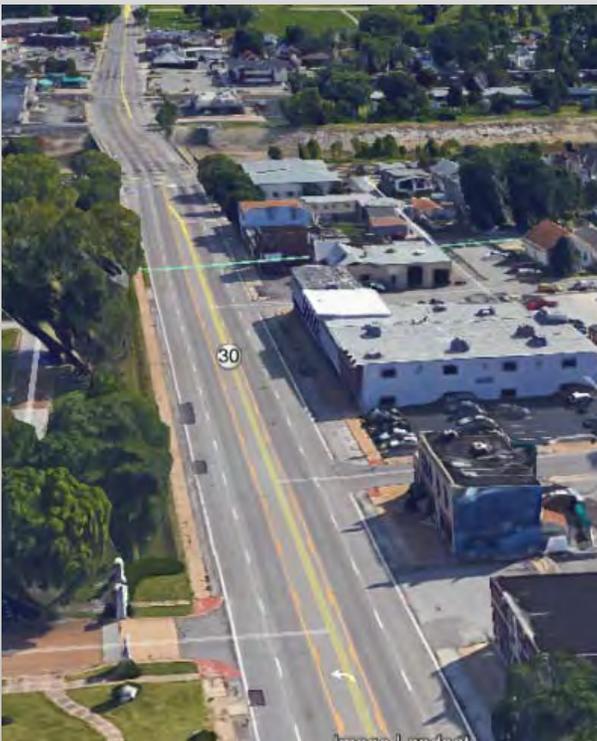


The intent is for this document to be a concise practical tool for making Gravois Road a great street. To that end, it defines the community goals that were identified through the engagement process, it records why various decisions were made, and clearly states the project team's recommended strategies and next steps in order to achieve the goals.

The general vision and goals **FOR** the community came directly **FROM** the community and are considered core to all subsequent decisions and strategies in this document. Typically, adjustments to the specific plan and strategies become necessary over time, though they should always consider the vision and goals. When making any such adjustments, considering all related issues will minimize developing solutions that create other problems.



All such documents have limitations. The local economy and market are dynamic, and typically after four or five years the market analysis needs to be revisited. While the land use goals drive most of the plan recommendations, property development generally falls within the private sector, limiting local control and often the timing of implementing the plan. Also, it is impossible to predict all opportunities to coordinate specific implementation with related public and private projects. Opportunistically leveraging public resources this way can help advance the plan, but may lead to some seemingly odd conditions where completed and pending work converge.

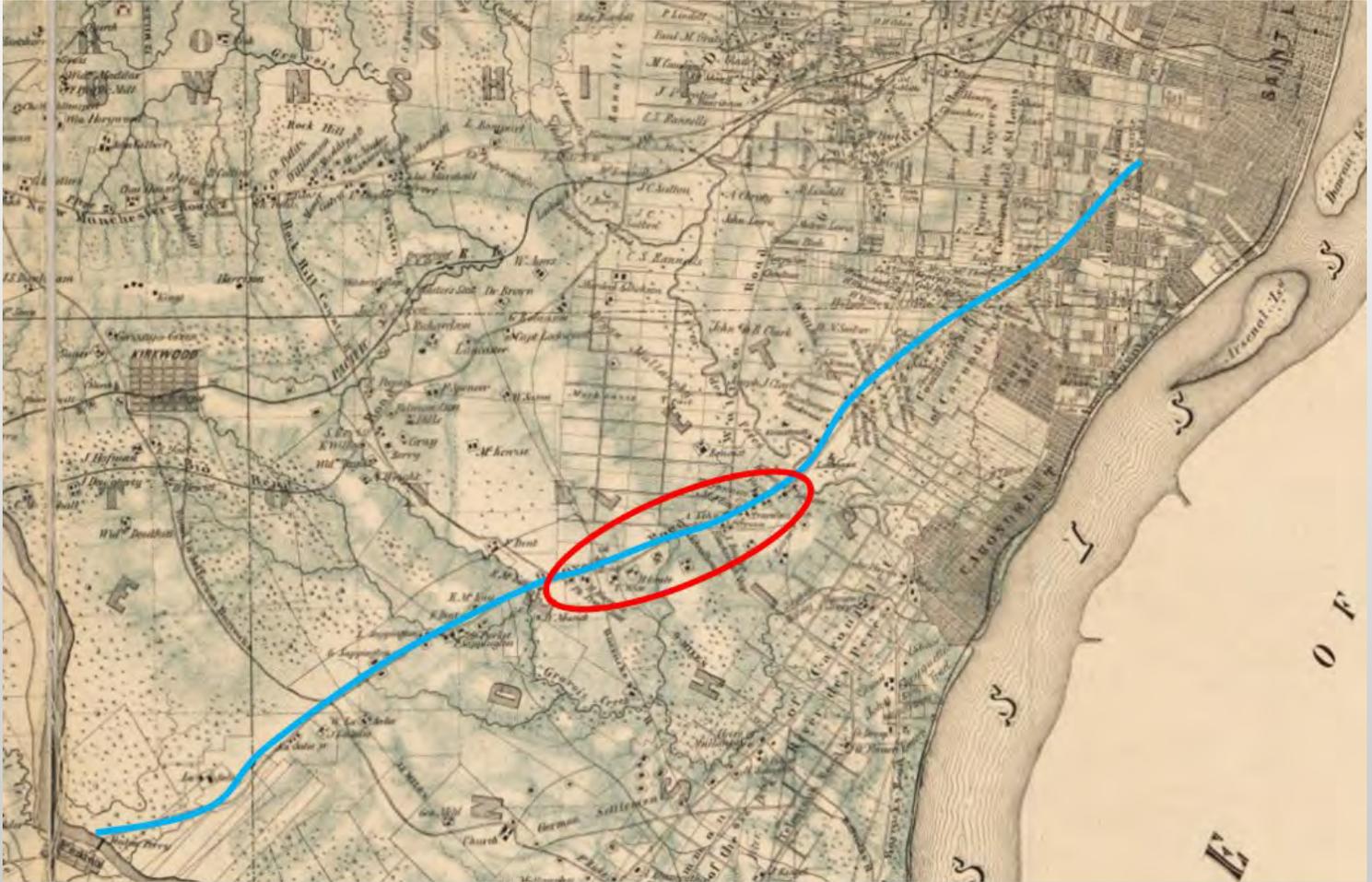


Various recommendations and tasks are identified, stating scope, schedule, budget, and responsible parties where possible.

Context in Brief

There is a long history associated with Gravois Road and the Affton community. The earliest recorded information on Gravois Road was in 1804 when it was referred to as the road to Salt Springs of Clamorgan where a ferry crossed the Meramec, near Fenton. In 1832, Gravois was declared a “Public Road” by St. Louis County and in 1839 Gravois became a State road. By 1845 the road was paved with a macadam surfacing (first in the state) and the road started to be called Gravois Road. The name came from the creek that runs nearby.

Johann Aff had a general store and truck garden along Gravois at the 10-mile house (just west of project site at Tesson Ferry Road). He was also the postmaster and the area started to be known as Aff’s town, and eventually Affton. The very rich soil of the area was ideal for gardens and farms growing vegetables and Gravois Road was the link to the city where farmers sold their products to the city’s growing population.



Wagner's St. Louis County Map, 1859

By 1915 Salem Lutheran Church, St. George's Catholic Church, and Eden Evangelical Church were established in Affton. All three remain today, with Salem and St. George located on Gravois Road within the project area. The channelization construction on the River des Peres that started in the 1920's not only decreased flooding it created a strong demarcation between an urbanizing City and the more rural County. In the 1920's and 30's residential and commercial development started replacing the agricultural land uses, and most of the area was generally built out by the 1960's. Affton incorporated in 1930, but due to financial problems of that time (including the great depression), the city dis-incorporated in 1935. The area remains an un-incorporated area within St. Louis County.

By the mid 20th century, most of Affton was built out with commercial retail land uses along Gravois and residential behind. Significant employment centers at the time were downtown St. Louis, as well as south St. Louis City along the Mississippi River where the manufacturing industries conglomerated. Gravois Road grew into a major arterial with significant traffic volumes leading to the widening of Gravois to 4 and 5 lane sections. This expansion consumed space in front of property along the roadway, rendering parcel lots of relatively shallow depth. Around this same time, the interstate highway system was developed including I-55 and I-44 near Gravois. By the end of the 20th century the shift of employment centers and the development of these interstates significantly reduced the traffic volume along Gravois Road, which is now considered to be an overbuilt roadway.

The neighborhoods and institutions along Gravois have aged well. However, the commercial and office properties suffer, to a significant extent, from long-term market shifts and difficulties posed by the physical and functional nature of Gravois Road itself.



First St. George Church at Gravois & Seibert



Current St. George Church at Heege (built 1928)



Readiness for the Study

St. Louis County Planning Department staff had identified the Gravois Road corridor in Affton as a roadway that could benefit significantly from a multi-disciplined planning effort. The neighborhoods that surround it were stable, affordable, well maintained, and the proximity and access to numerous high quality jobs make this a seemingly underrated community within the region. Convenient access to Downtown St. Louis, adjacent walkable neighborhoods, and proximity to regional bikeways create great regional access for residents and visitors. This community has been notably consistent throughout the years. Stable as it has been, aging building stock and infrastructure set the stage for an active conversation and planning effort to consider the future.

The County's preliminary analysis showed that, with some strategic planning and investments, the Gravois Road corridor could develop a more vibrant local economy, better serve the residents of Affton, and attract more families and people of all ages.

Additionally, recent efforts have focused on the corridor. A streetscape project along the corridor was implemented in the mid-1990s. The enhancements included street trees and planters along the corridor, though a lack of long-term and continuous maintenance, especially the planters, lead to rapid deterioration.

Other planning efforts for the community include:

- *Affton Community Plan—Survey, Analysis, and Strategies* (St. Louis County Planning Department, June 2002);
- *Phase 1 Plan, Affton-Gravois Business Corridor* (St. Louis County Planning Department, October 1998);
- *Design Guidelines, Affton-Gravois Business Corridor* (Harland Bartholomew and Associates, February 1998).

When approached by the St. Louis County Planning Department and East-West Gateway staffs, the local Chamber of Commerce and grassroots community associations were enthusiastic about the Great Streets Initiative process, technical input, and end product.



Project Study Area

The Gravois Road project area extends along Gravois Road, originating at River Des Peres Boulevard at the east end and terminating at Mackenzie Road to the west. With minor exceptions, the north and south edges fall along the back of the property parcels along Gravois Road.

Gravois Road is a key corridor for South County. The road and urban form as we see it today originated in the 1930s, with the majority of the corridor taking shape in the period from post WWII to the early 1960s. As such, the corridor is characterized by small, shallow commercial lots fronting onto Gravois Road, interspersed with a few larger commercial properties and residential homes. Many of the homes on Gravois Road have been converted to commercial use over the years. The neighborhoods surrounding Gravois Road are mainly comprised of one story two-bed, one bath and three-bed, one-bath homes.

Existing Conditions Assessment



Land Use

To aid in the description of the land use analysis along this long corridor, the project team considered it as a series of sub areas, delineated based on common characteristics, which are described below, starting on the east and moving west.

River Des Peres to Lacey Avenue

This five lane segment starts at River des Peres Blvd. and extends west up the hill, to Lacey Avenue. The River des Peres and the Greenway crossing create a physical transition exiting St. Louis City west into Affton. The New St. Marcus Cemetery spans most of the north side of the road, mirrored on the south side by an aging strip of commercial structures, with the lone exception being Essex Industries and the considerable investment they've made on their property. West of the cemetery is a strip of larger more suburban style commercial.

Gravois Road east of Tieman Avenue is the only section of the study area with no overhead utilities along roadway (located in the alley behind south side parcels). Sections of tree lawn have been paved, and most areas lack vertical curbs, which reduces actual and perceived sense of protection from street traffic.



River Des Peres Greenway Crossing

Many of the buildings on the south side of Gravois Road, mostly 1930's era traditional style storefronts set on relatively shallow depth lots (typ. 120') have insufficient parking. Much of the street parking conflicts with sidewalks and the pedestrian pathway. It is either parallel to the travel lane or nose-in, perpendicular up to the storefronts. Public comments noted that it is quite dangerous to back out at these locations [Appendix C]. Sidewalk conditions here do not comply with current ADA requirements. Interspersed with the storefront structures are various empty parcels converted to surface parking.

The open space setting of New St. Marcus Cemetery, along the north side of the roadway, is a dominant visual element in this segment. The continuous sidewalk along this edge is old and needs some repair and ADA upgrades. There is no on street parking along this side of the street.

West of the cemetery extending to Lacey Avenue, is a church among a series of mostly larger commercial structures on deeper parcels, with significant surface parking lots. This portion of the study area has demonstrated viable marketability for commercial investment on the corridor. The newer development on either side of Siebert Avenue has also incorporated sidewalks separated from the roadway with green strips with some landscaping.

New St. Marcus Cemetery and New Mt. Sinai Cemetery are two large swaths of open space along Gravois Road. They are approximately 100 acres and 50 acres in size respectively. Combined, the two cemeteries have close to 2,500 linear feet of street frontage, approximately 15 percent of all Gravois street frontage within the project limits.

One-way streets in this section, (Heege, Aronia, and Seibert) create a unique loop circulation system. The pedestrian signals and crossing recently installed at Seibert are relatively new. The pedestrian crossing and signals at Heege, however, are outdated. Residents noted concerns about the buildings at the intersection restricting visibility for motorists.

Historic St. George Church dominates the main intersection in this area. The church recently resurfaced its 130 space parking lot at Heege and Aronia. On-site visits from the planning team noted it's limited use during the weekdays.



Example of direct pull-in parking. Residents and business owners expressed concerns about safety and walkability in these locations



New Mt. Sinai Cemetery

Lacey to Weber

This segment is characterized by shallow parcels and service oriented small businesses with relatively low parking requirements. Much of the original development along this segment included single-family homes, many of which have been converted to commercial use.

The area has considerable newer curbing, sidewalks and grassed tree lawns (some with street trees). The tree lawn areas define the sidewalks and on-street parallel parking spots. Other areas have pull in parking off Gravois Road that blocks the sidewalk for pedestrian use. There is some off-street parking behind the buildings.

In several places, however, parking and pedestrian conflicts similar to those along the south side at the east segment of the study area also exist here. The west half of this segment has considerable pull in parking off Gravois Road that blocks the sidewalk for pedestrian use. Backing out into moving lanes of Gravois Road creates a dangerous situation. The east half has more off-street parking on the sides and behind buildings.

Overhead utilities are a dominant visual element along this segment of the corridor.

Weber to MacKenzie

The suburban style Affton Plaza along the north side of Gravois Road is the dominant development in this segment, contrasted by traditional storefronts along the south side. This segment of the study area appears to have more vacant commercial space than other areas.

Affton Plaza (approximately 12-acres) is a strip shopping center property comprised of multiple parcels developed independently. Consequently, layout and circulation is haphazard and confusing, limiting its ability to function as one center. Significant portions of Affton Plaza are currently undergoing renovation under new ownership using a recently enacted TIF district. A former grocery store on the site is largely empty and lease restricted for years to come. Seven residential properties in the midst of Affton Plaza are planned to be redeveloped into the plaza as part of a future second phase of work. Redevelopment plans for the plaza include installing sidewalks with curb and a planted separation from the roadway. Existing continuous vehicular access will be limited to defined curb cuts.



Aerial view of the MacKenzie intersection and Affton Plaza, looking east along Gravois

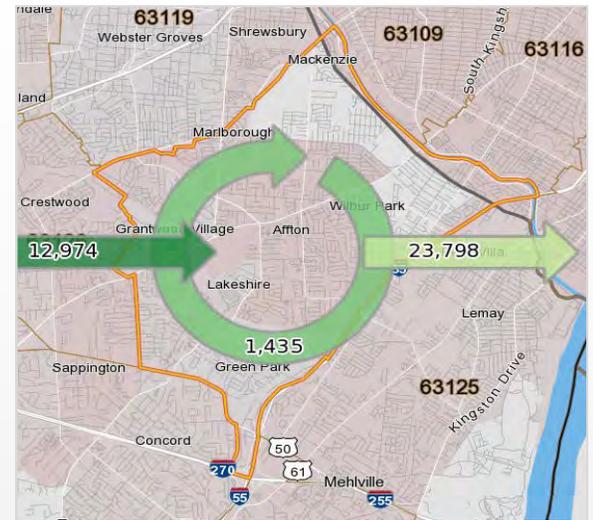
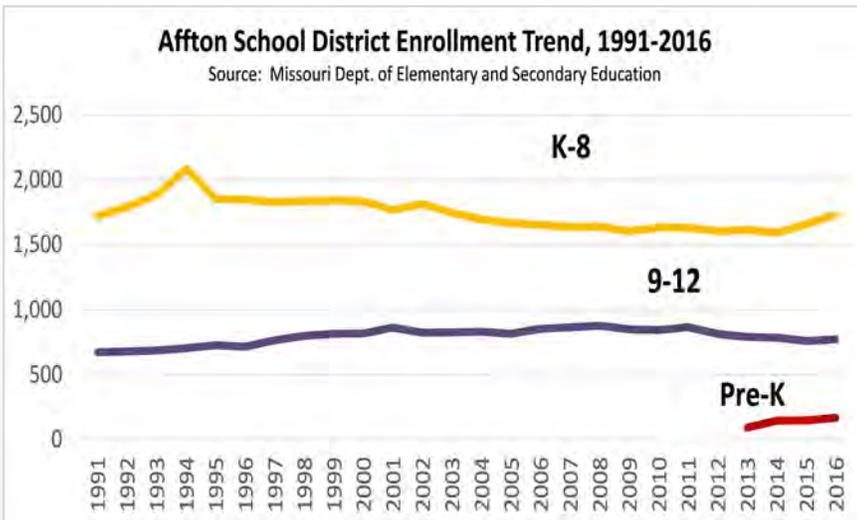


Figure 13.1—Affton School District Enrollment, 1991-2016
Source: Affton School District

Figure 13.2— 2014 Average Daily Job Commuters to Into, Within, and Out of Affton Zip Code 63123
Source: U.S. Census Bureau “On the Map.”

Market Trends

Population

The population of Affton, at just over 20,300, has been fairly constant over the past fifteen years, registering only a slight loss over that time. This seems consistent with the slightly older than average age of its residents. There are fewer young people in Affton than the County average, and adults are a bit older. Statistically, 63123 is the oldest zip code in Missouri. Long term residents have stayed after their children have moved on. In the coming years, much of the housing in the area is likely to sell from older owners to younger buyers. There are early indications that younger families with children are already starting to make a comeback in the area. Affton School District enrollment trends show a leveling-off of high schoolers [Figure 13.1], though down slightly from 2011, coupled with notable increases in the number of children in kindergarten through eighth grade. While a relatively new statistic, the number of pre-kindergarten children is also showing net growth in the school district.

Housing

As the number of seniors in the population increases, the Millennial Generation (ages 16-34) are largely well into its child bearing years. This generation, the largest current home buying market, is having smaller families. There does appear to be a mismatch between the existing housing supply and the anticipated need. By the mid 20th century, most all of Affton was built out. Nearly all of the homes in the area are one story single family houses, relatively small by current standards. Much of the housing appears well built and well maintained, and is generally affordable by regional standards. Larger “move up” homes for growing families needing more space essentially do not exist in the study area. There are no options for ‘low or no maintenance’, senior friendly rental, and there are very little quality entry level apartments available for young professionals. It is also important to note that there is little to no land left to build on. Providing new housing will largely need to be a process of redeveloping existing properties.

Labor market and workforce

The stability of Affton is clearly reflected in its job base statistics. Bucking the greater County trend, Affton has both retained and added jobs during the past decade. Local commuter flow is indicated in Figure 13.2. Along the corridor is a mix of retail, office, and service jobs. The average per capita income is \$28,800, about \$7000 less than the County average. About 14,000 people are employed in the 63123 zip code, nearly 13,000 of them commute in, averaging slightly higher incomes than residents. Despite the relatively low average income level, the area enjoys a relatively high “income density”, a measure of income per square acre. There is above average buying power in Affton.

Commercial / Retail

Nearby stores provide residents with many of the goods they need, creating a good deal of buying power “leakage” from the study area. Alcohol sales appears to be the only retail category with net gain in the study area [Figure 14.1]. Recent retail growth near Heege Rd. and new investment in Affton Plaza is evidence that the retail industry has noticed the uncaptured buying power in the area.

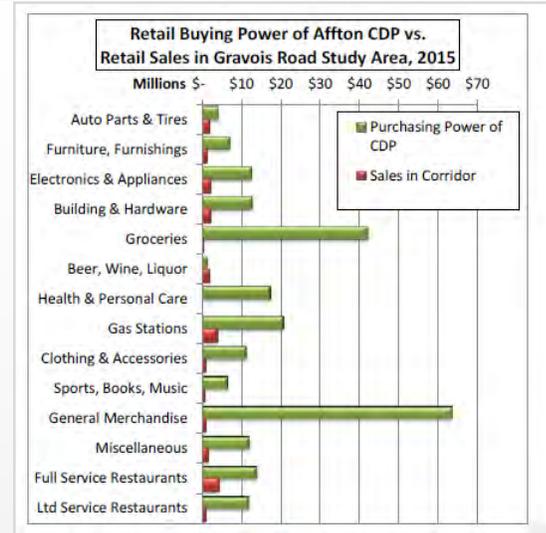


Figure 14.1—Retail Buying Power of Affton CDP vs. Retail Sales in Study Area

Source: Esri’s Retail Market Place Profile, 2015

Transportation

Affton’s location within the region, adjacent greenway network, its nearby transit hub, and the roadway network that serves it make it easily accessible to Downtown St. Louis, as well as several other dense job centers and regional destinations.

Vehicular Traffic

Within the study area, Gravois Road has a five lane section (with central turning lane) from River Des Peres to Lacey Avenue and a four lane section extending west to MacKenzie Road. Curbs exist in some sections (mostly at the cemeteries and deeper commercial parcels), though extensive areas have no clear delineation between the outside of the travel lane and adjacent parking, sidewalks, or other property frontage. Property access along the extensive contiguous runs of shallow lots, is largely undefined. Vehicular traffic counts along Gravois Road range between 18,000 and 20,000 average daily trips (ADT). The posted travel speed along Gravois Road is 35 M.P.H. Crash rates are slightly below state averages for similar roadways. [Figure 14.2]

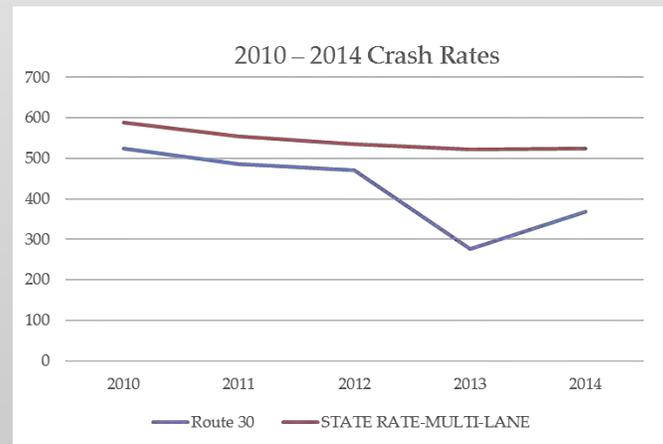


Figure 14.2—MoDOT Crash Rate Data

Pedestrian Infrastructure

On Gravois Road, even crossings at traffic signals can present challenges to pedestrians. At some intersections, pedestrian facilities are absent in one or more directions with no connecting sidewalks, and deteriorating crosswalks. Despite poor conditions, these major intersections still draw pedestrians. Because of the multi-lane cross section, crossings along Gravois Road pose the risk of “multiple-threat” crashes where a vehicle in one lane stops to allow a pedestrian to cross the street while a vehicle in an adjacent lane, travelling in the same direction, strikes the pedestrian [Figure 14.3]. These crashes often result in more severe injuries, as vehicles are often travelling at high speeds in these locations, as they are mid-block and the driver is not anticipating a conflict.

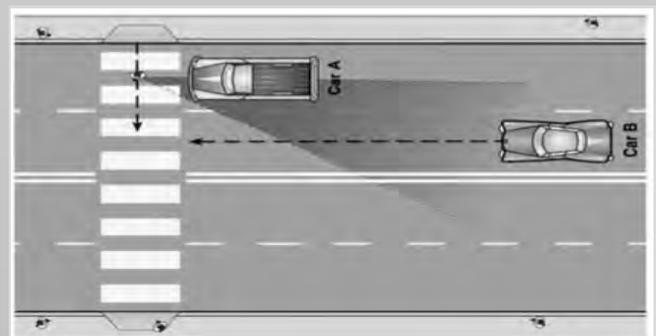


Figure 14.3—Example of a Multiple Threat Crash

There is no quick fix for sidewalk improvements along Gravois Road, but the need is evident. Many sidewalks along the street are outside of the MoDOT right-of-way on private property. This means that most of the sidewalk segments are actually the responsibility of landowners to build and maintain.

Bike Facilities

The Gravois Road project location at the boarder of St. Louis City and County, is well positioned to take advantage of the bicycle networks of both areas. While Gravois Road does present some challenges to the bicycle user, it has the potential to serve as a direct link for cyclists travelling between Grant's Trail and the River Des Peres Greenway. Although regional trails are nearby or touch the study area, direct access to the corridor's neighborhoods is limited. For families looking to use these trails, there must exist safe passage to and from neighborhood centers and the regional trails. Safe connections for cyclists and pedestrians from these regional amenities to local businesses have the potential to capture some additional spending. With such close proximity to off-street trails, and local family-friendly destinations like the St. George athletic fields, Mr. Wizards, and Dairy Queen, Gravois Road is poised to capture interest of young families who desire safe and efficient transportation options, at any given time.

Parking

Based on observations and the parking utilization study, the parking supply is adequate or exceeds the demand for parking along the corridor. Parking issues on Gravois Road stem from a lack of organization and definition. The confusion of haphazard parking access drive locations, perpendicular pull-in parking, and lack of distinguishable curbs makes parking along the corridor a challenge for drivers. More importantly, the confusing parking environment on Gravois Road creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians.



Figure 15.1—Regional Bikeways (Great Rivers Greenway)—The red line shows the study area.

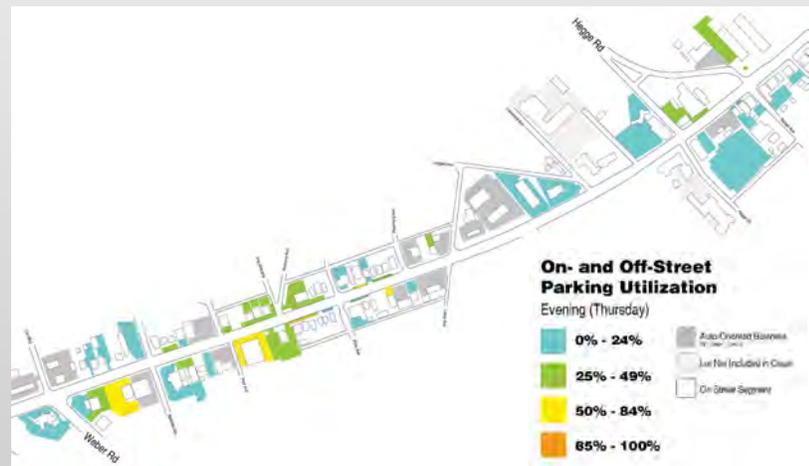


Figure 15.2—Observed underutilization of parking facilities—PM

Gravois' front parking (perpendicular pull-in spaces and private lots) between the sidewalk and the building often span a series of individual lots with individual entrances and exits. This design increases the number of driveway crossings and forces pedestrians to encounter automobiles repeatedly. Intersections of driveways and sidewalks are the most common locations of severe cross-slopes for sidewalk users. To improve access for all pedestrians, including pedestrians with mobility disabilities, individual parking lots should be combined to reduce the number of entrances and exits.

Transit

Metro bus service along the western half of the corridor is not currently active. The existing, aging population in the area suggests there could be demand for improved access and accessible stations. The Gravois-Hampton Transit Center, however, is close by and its location suggests an opportunity to bring more people to the corridor. MetroLink is also an option for Affton residents. The Shrewsbury Station offers a park-and-ride option, and Affton residents can also bike or walk to the station directly via the River Des Peres Greenway.

Environment

The lack of environmental infrastructure within the Gravois Road right-of-way, especially the lack of street trees, is readily apparent on a sunny day. The main reason for the lack of street trees is the constraint of available right-of-way and building frontage for tree lawns and tree plantings. There are approximately 43 street trees within the Gravois Road right-of-way, within the project limits. Approximately 1/4 mile of similar roadway with good tree canopy would have the same number of trees.

Stormwater

Existing stormwater is captured along Gravois Road through grate inlets and side curb inlets. For the most part, stormwater flows east towards the River Des Peres. Based on visual observations, there are no existing treatments for water quality such as rain gardens or infiltration basins prior to stormwater entering inlets. Adjacent parcel stormwater appears to be conveyed in a variety of methods. Some water flows into 'on-site' storm drains and inlets, while in other areas the stormwater flows out from the parcel into the right-of-way. In conversations with stakeholders, the age and maintenance of the existing stormwater system were mentioned as concerns. Existing stormwater problems include clogged drains and broken pipes.



Existing Inlet Along the Gravois Corridor

Based on visual observations, some minor ponding appears to be an issue in traffic lanes. In conversation with stakeholders, problems such as flooding of parcels or structures along Gravois Road did not seem to be a significant problem.

Human Health and Well-Being

Measuring human health and well-being is not an exact science. In the context of a roadway and street corridor, health and well-being are influenced by a number of factors including the level of noise, connections to nature, social interaction, emissions, and physical activity.

Public gathering spaces are key to supporting a sense of community, providing a shared place for socializing. The only spaces currently serving this need are the Dairy Queen and Mr. Wizards, both of which would function much better with better amenities and separation from the adjacent street traffic, noise, and the elements. Gathering areas can range in size and type from pocket parks and plazas to seating walls and benches. Syberg's restaurant provides patio dining, though access is restricted for non patrons.

The current sidewalks are often not well separated from traffic, well shaded, or equipped with seating or vegetation. They may provide a means of walking, but lack the level of amenities to provide socialization, place making, or well-being benefits.

Lighting

Energy use within the Gravois Road right-of-way is mostly a factor of electricity for street lighting. Existing fixtures are cobra-head style street lights mounted on either existing utility poles or stand-alone poles. Stand-alone poles tend to be on the eastern end of the corridor. Lighting mounted on existing utility poles tend to be on the western end of the corridor. The type of lighting needs to be confirmed with the utility company or MoDOT, but it appears to be high-pressure sodium, a relatively inefficient type of lamp compared to contemporary LED fixtures. No pedestrian scale lighting exists along the corridor.



Figure 16.1— Access to Parks, Open Space, and Community Assets

Summary of the Gravois Road planning process

In order to best organize, process, and address such a wide range of related issues, the process for this project centered on a four day long “charrette”. This French term refers to an open cart historically sent around by the Academie’ des Beaux Arts in Paris to collect design students and their final projects. The students piled in and intensely, collaboratively put the finishing touches on their work to be presented upon their arrival at the academy. The term now refers to the last minute flurry of activity developing public presentations based on a full day’s collaborative work.

During the Gravois Road charrette, a project team comprised of four distinct yet related professions considered the corridor through a series of specific focus groups, interviews, and public meeting / feedback sessions. The project team worked in an Affton Plaza storefront, immersed in a collaborative working environment. As the team addressed Gravois Road, every conversation included market, environmental, land use, policy, and transportation perspectives. The recommendations advanced by the team represent collective thinking.

	02-May	03-May	04-May	05-May
8am	Team sets up studio			
8:30	Team Walking Tour	Coffee / team discussion	Coffee / team discussion	Coffee / team discussion
9am		Transportation Focus Group	Design team working session	Final design team working session
10am		Utilities Focus Group (10:45)		
11am		Team Debrief / lunch	Group discussion / Lunch	Group discussion / Lunch
NOON				
1pm	Business Focus Group	Design team working session	Design team working session / follow up interviews	Preparation / formatting for final presentation
2pm	Community Group Focus Group (2:45)	Team presentation preparation / Dinner		
3pm				
4pm	Design team discussion / Dinner	Community presentation - Early approach and options workshop		Studio clean up
5pm				Team discussion / Dinner
6pm	Community kick-off / existing conditions / issues workshop			Community presentation and next steps / implementation discussion
7pm		Vacate School Board Mtg.		
8pm				
9pm				

Significantly, the charrette process includes extensive and repeated conversation with people who know Affton. The team of professionals have extensive training and experience in their fields. However, the only way for them to understand Gravois Road is to talk with a wide range of people from Affton. Community input came in the form of various focus group discussions, interviews, and three public meetings. The four day charrette efficiently integrates the technical expertise of the project team with the local knowledge of the people of Affton. Public input continued throughout the event, and repeated community feedback about specific issues and strategies allowed the project team to abandon or refine ideas quickly.

St. Louis County Planning Department staff coordinated and facilitated all community outreach, including hosting the charrette workshop. The various consultants and East-West Gateway staff collected and reviewed area data, conducted preliminary interviews prior to the charrette, and participated fully in the four day event. After the charrette, the consultants each produced a white paper focused on their respective disciplines within the project study area. Once complete, East-West Gateway staff drafted this strategic planning report for the St. Louis County Planning Department. All white papers and the strategic planning report were reviewed for comment by County staff, East-West Gateway staff, and each of the four consultants to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Engagement

During the course of the Gravois Road Great Streets Project, the project team reached out to key community members and the general public to gather information about the study area and feedback on the process and its outcomes.

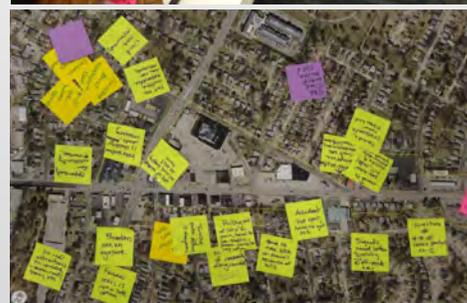
The project team spent two months gathering data in all discipline areas, which gave a good technical representation of the corridor. To complement this, the week prior to the charrette, the project team held several preliminary interviews to gauge how well their understanding of the corridor meshed with perception and reality. These interviews included –

- Marty Carr and Patricia Cowan – Affton Chamber of Commerce
- Kevin O’Leary – St. Louis County Councilman
- Pat Dolan – St. Louis County Councilman
- Karen Yeomans, Fred Lagos, Stephen Lockett —MoDOT
- Glenn Powers – Director of Planning, St. Louis County Planning Department
- Dr. Steve Brotherton — Superintendent of Affton School District
- Larry Chapman — Developer of Affton Plaza

During the charrette a number of focus groups were conducted to further gather information in key areas regarding the Gravois Road Corridor. These Focus Groups included –

- Community Groups
- Business Community
- Public Safety
- Transportation

The project team also met with representatives from Ameren and Metropolitan Sewer District to coordinate any current or future plans with the utilities in the area.



Throughout the four day charrette, the project team held three open houses. These were opportunities for the public to provide input and direction for the project team. The team opened each evening with a presentation and ended with keypad polling and discussion. Each meeting served a distinct purpose in the development of the recommendations for Gravois Road.

The project website included an on-line interactive mapping tool to collect additional community input about the corridor. This component of the overall conversation included specific observations and recommendations from the community to the project team.

St. Louis County Planning

County staff help define the project area and scope, provide match funding, and facilitate all community outreach, including providing the space for the charrette workshop.

EAST WEST GATEWAY

East West Gateway staff helps define the project area and scope, provides funding, manages the project consultants, and drafts the final report.

St. Louis County and East West Gateway staff worked together defining the project and selecting the consultant team.

MARKET

A Market Analyst/Planner assesses the existing market trends and context of the area and provides specific strategies for developing and maintaining a vibrant local economy suited to the neighborhood

LAND USE

An Urban Planner / Designer assesses the development history and patterns of the area, as well as the governance and ordinance context, then highlights specific recommendations to achieve land use and place making goals.

TRANSPORTATION

A Transportation Planner considers the existing facilities along a roadway and balances it against the needs of the expected mix of travelers (walk, bike, bus, car, truck, etc.). Then, recommendations are made to best accommodate them and support the desired community goals.

ENVIRONMENT

An Environmental Planner (often a landscape architect) studies local environmental and utility conditions and makes recommendations to work with the local ecology and enhance the public, outdoor environment for people.

The consultant team spent several weeks preparing for the charrette workshop, collecting data and reviewing recent and current planning efforts within the community. They worked collaboratively on site for the four day charrette workshop, participating in all interviews, focus group meetings, and public meetings. Then, each consultant developed a white paper on their respective discipline about the Gravois Road corridor and provided input and edits for the final plan document.

INTERVIEWS

Prior to the charrette workshop, the project team spoke with key community members, including County staff, business leaders, and residents.

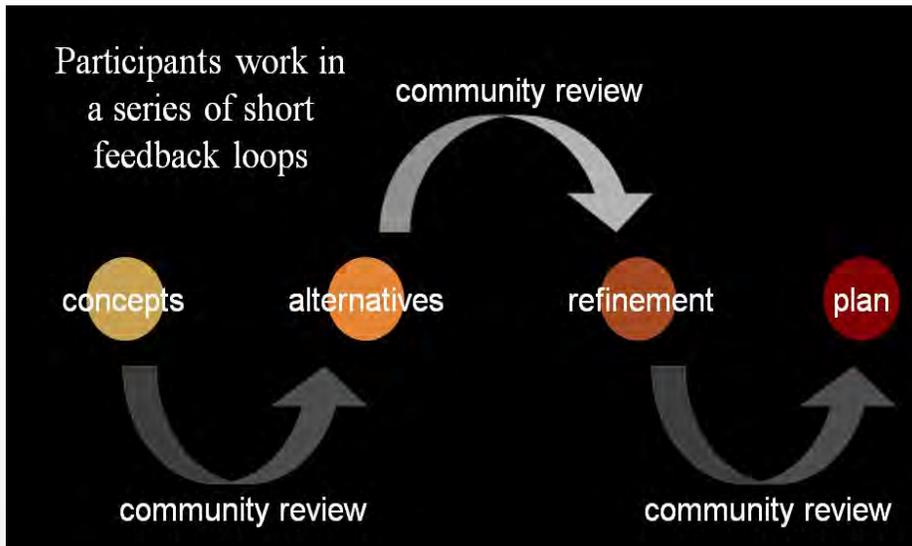
FOCUS GROUPS

During the charrette workshop, the design team met with specific groups such as local business people, property owners, first responders, neighborhood representatives, city / county transportation staff, etc.

PUBLIC

Three public meetings were held during the charrette workshop to ensure that the project team focused on the community priorities and worked to refine desired strategies for the corridor.

Community engagement was organized to help get the project team familiar with the study area prior to the charrette workshop in order to make the community interaction and planning process appropriate and efficient. The interviews and focus groups were meant to provide the team with both general and specific input. The public meetings were largely meant to identify priorities and gauge preference or tolerance for various strategies.



Meeting #1 was an opportunity for the project team to present the existing conditions based on all the data that had been gathered, discuss initial thoughts regarding a vision for the corridor and gather feedback to ensure the project was on the right track. Ninety-six people attended and participated in keypad polling. A copy of the presentation and the keypad polling results can be found in the Appendix C.

Meeting #2 gave the project team a chance to present some ideas for addressing the major issues and concerns that had been defined in the Gravois Road corridor. These ideas were presented and feedback was gathered to determine if the team was on track and to measure public support. More than 60 people attended this meeting, providing a range of input. The presentations can be found in Appendix C, however, keypad polling results were not used due and Open House style of format.

Meeting #2 Findings –

- Most attendees were open to the idea about a road diet
- Broad support for bike/ped connection to River Des Peres Greenway
- Separated bike lanes were the most preferred option. Striped bike lanes were the next best option.
- There is strong support for slowing traffic and improvements for pedestrian paths
- Parking is dysfunctional / dangerous at storefronts
- Mackenzie crosswalks need improvement
- People want more open / gathering / green space
- Strong support for street trees / landscaping

Meeting #1 Findings –

- People feel pretty safe driving Gravois Road
- Most do NOT feel safe biking on Gravois Road
- More residents would walk more along Gravois Road if it were pleasant/safer
- Gravois Road has plenty of parking, but getting in and out of places is difficult
- Top priorities are walkable mixed use development, more community space, better bike/ped access, and improved aesthetics

Meeting #3 focused on the recommendations the project team determined best to move forward as part of the Gravois Road Great Streets Strategic Plan. The project team presented recommendations to a group of sixty-five people and gathered feedback on the recommendations through keypad polling. Overall, the recommendations were well-received. A copy of the Meeting #3 presentation and keypad polling results can be found in Appendix C.

Meeting #3 Findings –

- Strong support for the recommendations near the east end of the corridor.
- Reconfiguring Heege as 2 way should be done or studied
- Support for increased access and community space at Mt. Sinai
- Strong support for parking reconfiguration as shown
- People want both sides of Gravois at Affton Plaza to be “urban main street”
- People want the bike connectivity to the regional trails
- Strong support for restriping the road diet with MoDOT work
- Form business and community development districts

Community Goals

Through the course of investigation and discussion with the people of Affton, specific goals for the corridor became evident. The recommended strategies described on following pages are rooted in these goals.

- **Support the small business character along Gravois.** Work to retain the smaller, traditional, walkable nature of the “Main Street” building stock and business community along the corridor. The residents of Affton expressed a clear interest in maintaining and supporting the small business community that has proven a consistent mainstay of the area.
- **Keep Gravois convenient and safe to drive.** While addressing existing problems for pedestrians, cyclists, runners, and public transit riders, maintain good operations for vehicles using the roadway.
- **Make Gravois walkable.** Allow residents and visitors to Affton to walk safely and comfortably along Gravois. Current conditions
- **Fix the parking along the street.** Provide a consistent, clear, safe and convenient strategy for parking along the street, particularly in areas where commercial properties are built up to the sidewalk.
- **Connect to Greenways.** Provide the neighborhoods along the corridor excellent direct access to the existing and expanding regional bikeway network. Such amenity will improve recreational and practical transportation choices for existing residents and help attract potential home buyers who increasingly seek these options.
- **Provide more open gathering space.** Residents flanking the study area expressed need and desire for more open gathering space. While the corridor is nearly fully built-out, find ways to facilitate outdoor community activities and improve access to the open spaces that exist.
- **Beautify the roadway.** The roadway is public space. Current conditions discourage enjoyable walking, socializing, or gathering along the roadway. Storefront businesses suffer, and pedestrians must endure numerous safety, practical, and aesthetic challenges. The poor quality of this public realm constrains residents and the business community alike, while also presenting a poor image of the community to visitors and through travelers. Make the public space attractive and commit to maintaining it.
- **Fortify local investment into and management of the corridor.** An established entity, such as a formal district, should focus on and invest in supporting the business community, promoting the area, addressing maintenance and operational needs, organizing events, and re-setting the regional identity of Affton.

Corridor Plan—Overall Study Area

At the completion of the intense 4-day planning workshop, the project team had developed a number of recommendations with significant input and support from workshop participants. The project team's recommendations follow and are organized, first by issues that effect the entire corridor area, then by discrete segments extending from east to west.

Overall Strategies

- **O1** - The limited nature of this effort requires further analysis in the form of a **traffic study** (extending from Laclede Station Road to Loughborough) to verify the project team's assessment and model traffic flow, intersection performance, and access management along Gravois Road in order to develop the concept into a detailed plan. The traffic study will need to include the function and facilities for all modes of travel (pedestrians and cyclists) as well as the proposed parking configuration. Completing the traffic study by January of 2017 could allow MoDOT to incorporate changes to the pavement overlay project. MODOT has expressed willingness to consider revising the striping plan, if the required traffic study and revised plans are generated with sufficient time to revise work plans and the community is in support of the project. MoDOT has been a partner throughout the Great Streets Gravois Road project process in helping to outline the scope of study necessary to explore a *Road Diet* for the Gravois Corridor.
- **O2** - Formalize a **Business District** (Community Improvement District). While there are site-specific challenges and site-specific opportunities throughout the Gravois Road corridor, the first major step toward improvements is to "get organized." A funded and staffed district can be a significant advocate and implementation engine for Affton and the study area. A district would invest its revenue back into itself, branding, marketing, organizing, and advertising. Districts seek grant funding, match public funding, organize and host events, and can develop properties for the benefit of the district. See the Market and Economic Development White Paper for specifics. Community Improvement Districts (CID's) are an effective tool to advance many of the recommendations in this report. Therefore, it is a high priority task.
- **O3** - **Determine the Right of Way** (ROW). Pursue information from MODOT to clarify private ownership along the corridor or conduct R.O.W survey. Frankly, little can be done to change the roadway, address parallel parking, effect access management, slow traffic to comply with posted speeds, improve sidewalks and crosswalks, or implement sidewalk plantings or a street tree program without identifying exactly where the ROW is. It is likely that MODOT has this on record from a previous project, though they did not locate the information during the course of this project. If MODOT is unable to locate this documentation, a survey may need to be done.
- **O4** - Develop a **strong bicycle connection** along the corridor between the River Des Peres Greenway and the Grant's Trail [Figure 23.1]. Linking these regional assets would provide great access for residents to the regional bikeway infrastructure and bring recreational riders from throughout the region past Affton businesses.

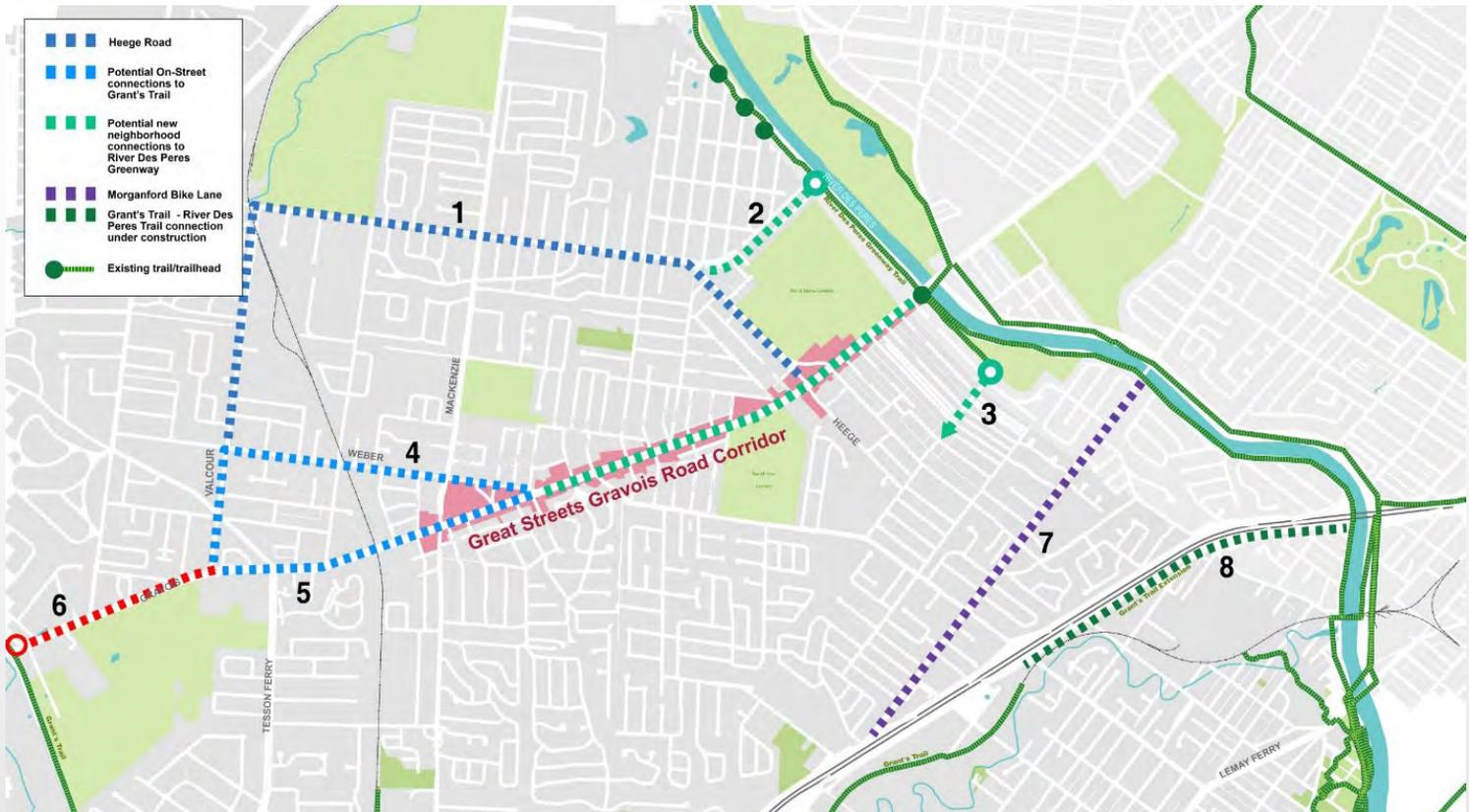


Figure 23.1 - Connections to Greenways

Bicycle facilities identified by the Charrette and public input:

- 1) Heege Road – identified by Bike St. Louis as local on-street bike connection.
- 2) Potential off-street connection to River Des Peres Greenway
- 3) Potential off-street connection to Grant's Trail
- 4) Weber Road to Valcour provides one alternative on-street connection from Gravois Road to Grant's trail, avoiding the Gravois Road viaduct west of Mackenzie Road.
- 5) The 4-lane section and viaduct west of Mackenzie Road present a design challenge for continuation of an on-street facility west of Gravois Road.
- 6) Potential on-street connection west of viaduct to Grant's Trail.
- 7) Proposed bike facility on Morganford Road would provide the only on-street bike facility within ½ mile of Gravois Road. At minimum, on-street bike networks should provide bike facilities on roads every ½ mile through an area.
- 8) Planned extension of Grant's Trail to River Des Peres Greenway Trail.

- **O5 - Incorporate Environmental Infrastructure** (reduced stormwater / utility systems demand), lighting, pedestrian facilities and shading, reductions in heat island contributors, etc.). Improving the overall functionality of the roadway requires addressing the space outside the curb line with a focus on reduced operational costs, enhanced facilities for travelers not in cars, and a practical approach towards working with natural systems rather than trying to overcome them. The resulting practical attractive streetscapes provide a unifying visual element along corridors and help create a sense of identity. Increased shading and planted area reduces sidewalk and building temperatures, diverts stormwater from piped utility structures, provides electrical cost savings, enhances property values, establishes a safer walk space, and beautifies the community. Sidewalks become not only functional and practical, but amenable, social, and desirable places to be. Increasingly, retail developers value the importance of placemaking because they know well its impact on occupancy, sales, and rents. Also, given the aging population and the trending desire of younger adult age groups for more walkable neighborhoods, improving the sidewalks according to this plan addresses a high priority of those already living in Affton (based on polling results—see Appendix C) and improves the attractiveness of those considering moving into the area.

- O6 / O7 - Road Diet**—The existing five lane section has the capacity to handle (conservatively) more than 30,000 vehicles per day. Actual traffic includes 18,000 to 20,000, well within the capacity of a three lane section. The existing configuration of Gravois Road was put in place before Interstates 55 and 44 were built and the local populations decreased. Meanwhile, the space used for the five lanes creates problems for parking the numerous small businesses, pedestrian paths, aesthetics, and speed compliance. In short, the roadway is currently built for traffic patterns that no longer exist, and the concessions made to accommodate non-existent traffic volumes are now real problems. Changing Gravois Road to a three lane section can fit it to current vehicular flow, better match the design to the posted speed, and allow space for pedestrians, cyclists, parallel parking along the south, and landscaped “main street” sidewalks. A Road Diet design has the potential to reduce pedestrian exposure to conflicts by improving visibility of pedestrians at crossings and reinforcing a buffer between pedestrians on sidewalks and moving vehicles. By implementing a Road Diet with additional uses along the outer edge of the roadway, the space between speeding vehicles and people walking will increase. Everything from a grassy strip, benches or parking stops, to curbs (vertical separation), tree pits, parked cars, or bike lanes serve to reinforce the physical and perceived separation between pedestrians and vehicles. Road Diet designs which include on-street parking present the opportunity for curb extensions at intersections. Implement a striped road diet (**O6**) within the existing pavement width coordinated with MoDOT’s planned resurfacing of the roadway in 2017. Implement a roadway reconstruction road diet (**O7**) to fully implement related parking, infrastructure, streetscaping, and other recommendations.

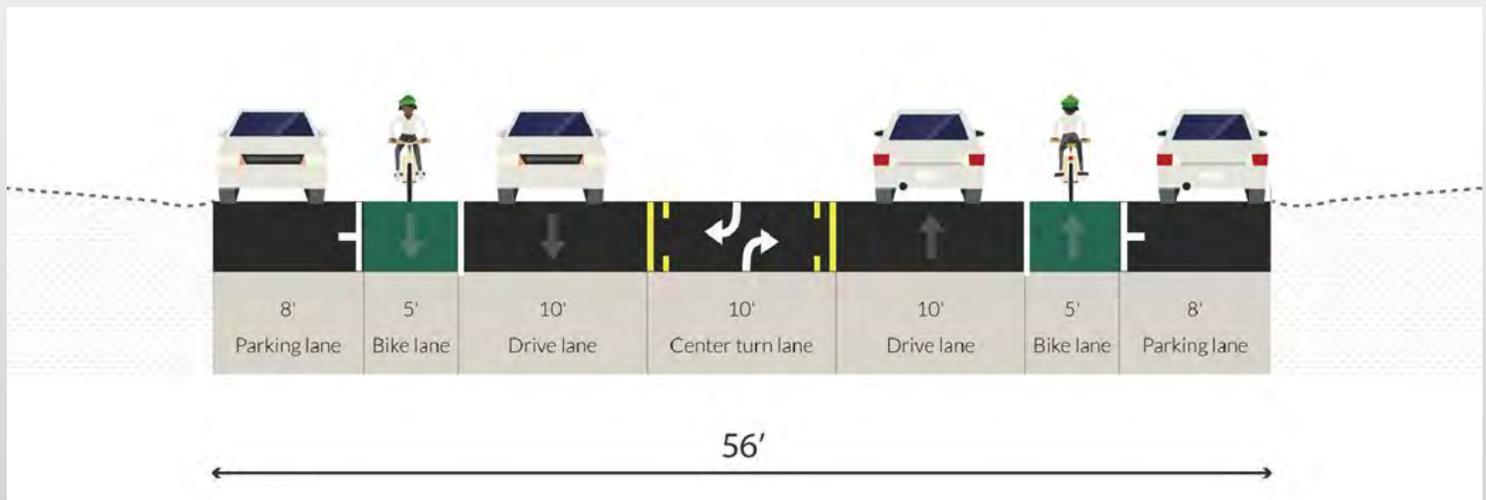
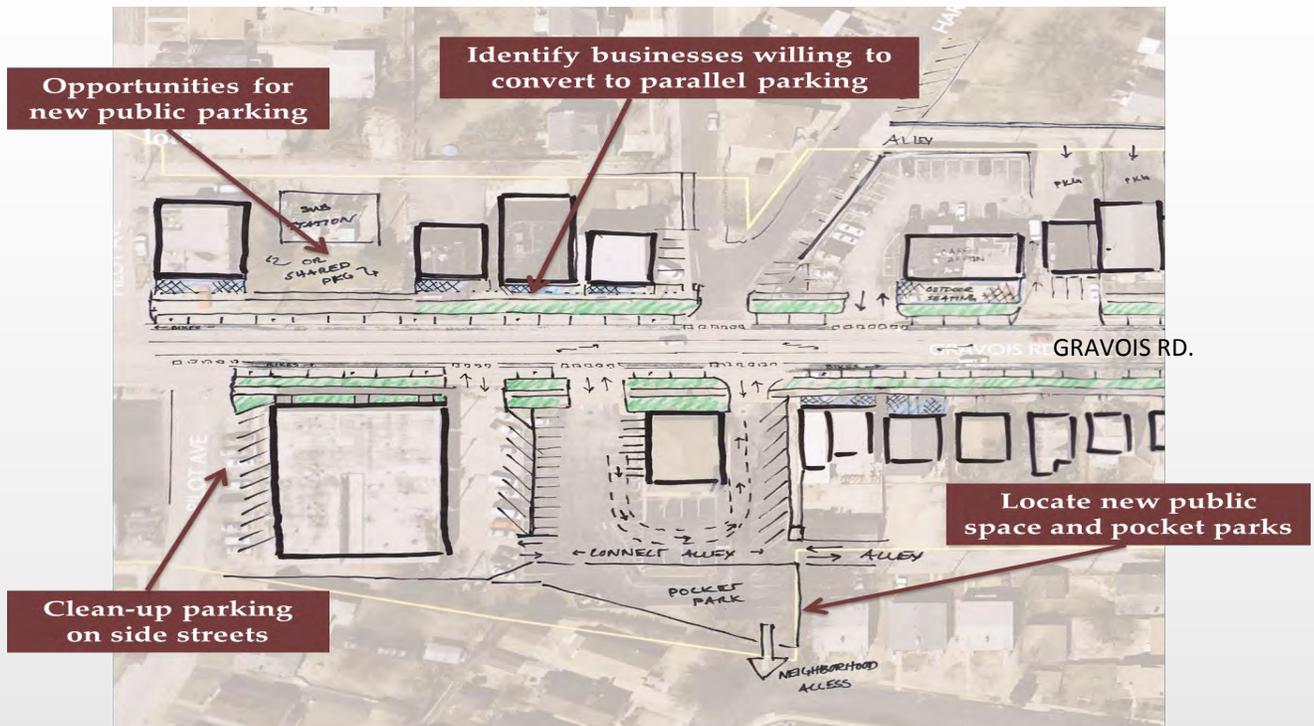


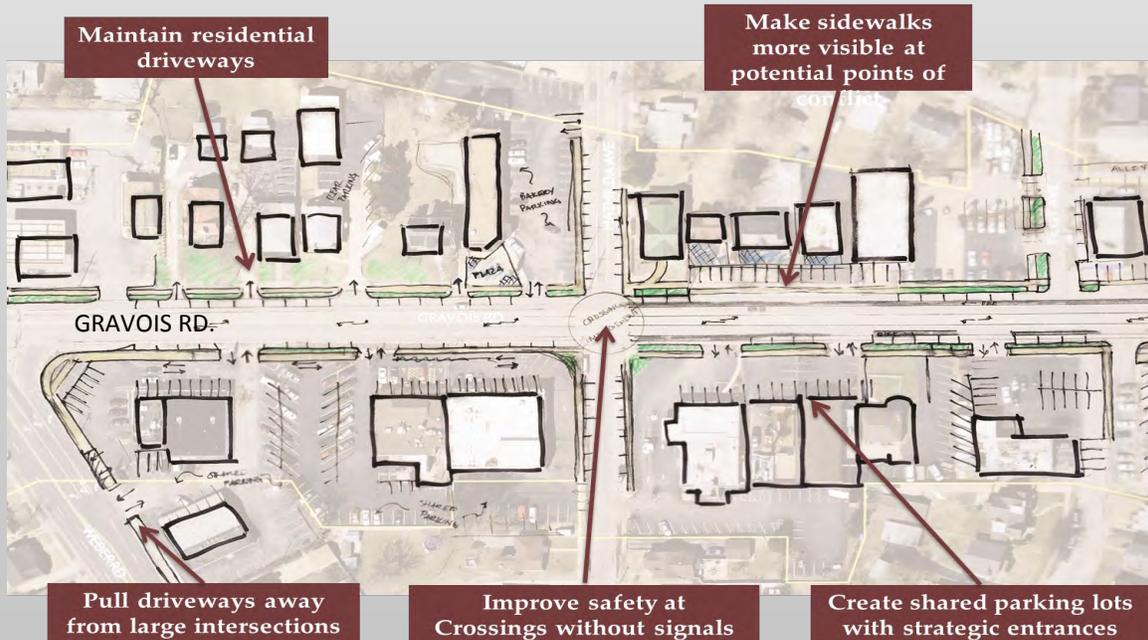
Figure 24.1 - Three lane concept

- O8** - Initiate a **public awareness program** to inform residents, property owners, and proprietors about several of the behavior related recommendations such as parking, environmental infrastructure, etc. See the Transportation white paper (Appendix C) for more detail.
- O9** - Develop and implement a **tenanting strategy**. A CID and/or Chamber would be key participants in getting this done. Specific market analysis would allow marketing and recruiting efforts focused on business types fitted to local market gaps, demand, and existing (or potential) building stock.
- O10** - Identify locations for **more public open / gathering space**. The lack of sufficient open park or public space was raised repeatedly during the engagement process. The corridor is largely built out. Finding and developing open space may not be simple. It can, however begin simply by temporarily using existing surface parking for programmed events or open markets.

Shared/Common Parking Scenarios - Gravois Road

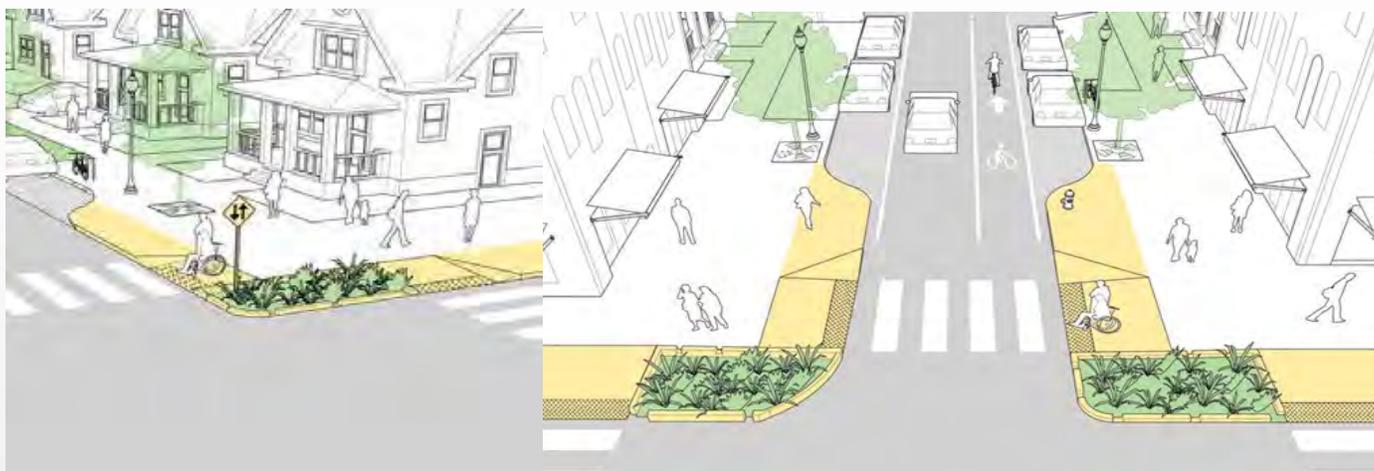


It is through coordination between all local business owners that the most benefit will be gained from a coordinated parking strategy. With consistent treatment, there would be minimal loss of parking spaces in a conversion to on-street parking. Converting the existing perpendicular pull-in parking to on-street parallel parking would result in few lost spaces along the corridor and would be the best way to streamline the parking supply.



Cursory analysis showed that on some blocks with several contiguous businesses with perpendicular pull-in parking conversion to parallel spaces can maintains the existing number of spaces on the block face. An even greater advantage would be gained by the combination of on-street parallel parking with intersection improvement making spaces on adjacent block viable options for business patrons. Refer to the Appendix for a visualization of a stage conversion from perpendicular pull-in parking to on-street.

Intersection Improvement Toolbox- Gravois Road



High-Visibility Crosswalk (above): The basic tools for visibility are high-visibility crosswalk markings, using 2-foot wide white bars at 4 feet on center, and crosswalk warning signs. This type of crosswalk should be used consistently along the GSGR corridor, and side-street crossings near schools or churches which anticipate higher pedestrian activity.

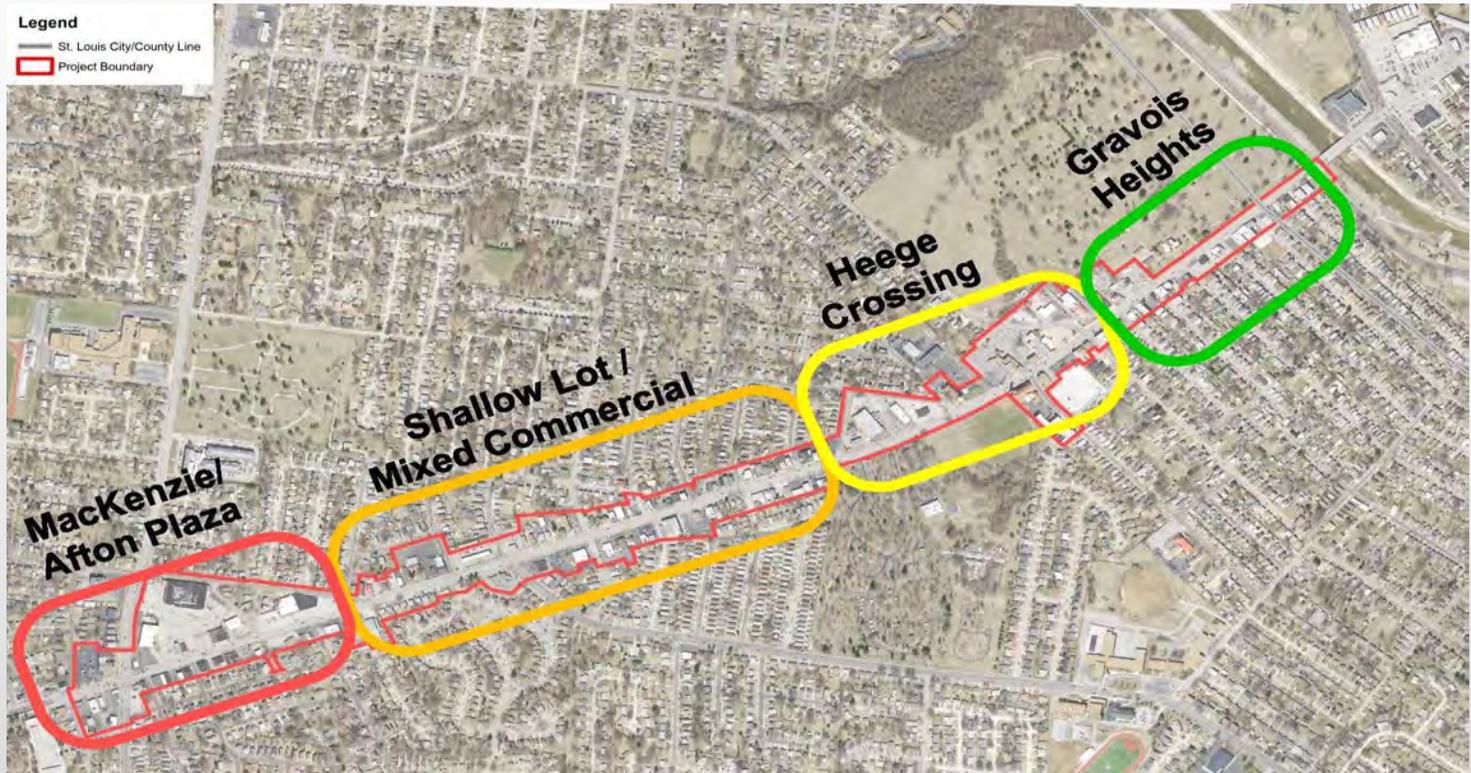
Curb Extensions (above): Curb extensions bump out into the roadway, reducing the crossing distance for pedestrians and bicyclists. Curb extensions are only appropriate where on-street parking is permitted. The curb should not extend beyond the parking lane and should never encroach on a bicycle facility. Curb extensions can be used at corners or at mid-block locations and can be appropriate anywhere on-street parking is permitted. Used as a gateway feature, the curb extensions slow turning vehicles and indicate a transition to a residential neighborhood. With Gravois Road’s existing 5-lane configuration, curb bump-outs crossing Gravois would not be possible. However, as part of a road diet with on-street parking or on side streets, they could be incorporated into most, if not all, crossings. Priority should be given to locations with the most pedestrians anticipated crossing.

Pedestrian Refuge Island/Median (below): A pedestrian refuge island is a curb-protected space for a pedestrian to stand mid-crossing. The island is placed between opposing traffic lanes. It should be at least 6 feet in width to accommodate two 2-foot detectable warning tiles with 2 feet of space between them; however, it can be wider to provide extra space for landscaping or to reduce lane widths. If a road diet is undertaken along Gravois Road, a pedestrian refuge island can be installed at any crossing that does not have a dedicated left turn lane. Pedestrian crossings can be strategically placed on one side of an intersection to take advantage of this tool.



Corridor Plan—by Segment

As the project team assessed the area and discussed it with the community, the corridor naturally delineated into four segments. The “Gravois Heights” area on the north end extends from River Des Peres Boulevard to Tieman Avenue. The “Heege Crossing” area extends west to Lacey Avenue and includes the parcels on the west side of the intersection and New Mt. Siani Cemetery. From there, the “Mixed Commercial” segment extends west to Weber Road. At the far west end, the “Mackenzie/Affton Plaza” segment extends to Mackenzie Road.



Gravois Heights (River Des Peres Boulevard to Tieman Avenue)

The “main street” character of the south side of the street answered by the cemetery frontage along the north side create a unique feel and function for this segment of the roadway. Polling indicated strong support for reinforcing the small business nature, while improving walkability, parking, and aesthetics. Providing a strong connection to the River Des Peres Greenway is a key element in improving access to the regional bikeway network.

Heege Crossing (Tieman Avenue to Lacey Avenue)

With it’s unique blend of both land uses (Sharpshooters Pitt and Grill) and architectural styles (St. George Catholic Church), the opportunities for enhancements to this segment include a more robust landscaping effort, as well as the creation of outdoor public spaces and possible land use reconfigurations that would improve redevelopment potential for properties in an area where recent investments indicate real market interest.

Shallow Lot / Mixed Commercial (Lacey Avenue to Weber Road)

Improving some of the parking challenges with a more defined approach and enhancing the pedestrian realm, to include improved safety measures at street crossings and making pedestrians more visible at points of conflict, will make this segment work for multiple modes of transportation (automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists).

Mackenzie/Affton Plaza (Weber Road to 1/2 block west of Mackenzie Road)

The Affton Plaza segment provides convenience service and retail, with the possibilities of a more mixed-use type of development over the course of the new five to ten years. Improvements to the Mackenzie Road intersection, parking, pedestrian facilities, and placemaking will support commercial activity and walkability on both sides of Gravois Road.

Gravois Heights Strategies

To best support the small business identity of this district, the overall recommendations are all essential for this segment. Additionally, the team recommends the following specific tasks:

- **GH1 - Unclutter the pedestrian zone.** This section of Gravois Road is not well organized. Without a clear delineation of where cars should and shouldn't park, where delivery trucks service the businesses, and where sidewalks are protected from vehicles, parking is intrusive and unsafe, the pedestrian path is unclear and regularly interrupted, and landscaping or sidewalk furniture cannot be maintained. Clearly designating a wide, safe pedestrian path, clear parking spaces, and space for trees, plantings, and street furniture will make this a safer place for all who use it and create an amenable urban sidewalk space that better supports small business in the area. Furthermore, doing so will make a strong walkable connection to the River Des Peres Greenway.
- **GH2 - Look for ways to provide shared parking.** Several of the existing commercial properties along this segment lack adequate parking. A CID or cooperative property owners can develop common shared parking behind commercial parcels, in between existing buildings, or, if one business has excess existing parking, sharing it with adjacent businesses in exchange for shared maintenance or liability costs.
- **GH3 - Plant street trees along the cemetery frontage.** Engage with the New St. Marcus Cemetery ownership to plant a continuous row of trees (see the Environmental White Paper in Appendix D for detail). If the owner is willing, the relative simplicity of dealing with a single owner of an already green parcel and planting outside of the right of way make this an easy task to accomplish in the near future. The shading, environmental, and aesthetic benefits of the trees would make this sidewalk a more walkable and stronger connection to the River Des Peres Greenway, the convenience retail just across the river, and the Metro Bus transit hub.
- **GH4 - Locate a new pedestrian crossing near Heidelberg Ave. / Oldenburg Ave.** Consistent with the overall goal to improve pedestrian access along the corridor, this is a recommended location for a high visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon (see the Transportation White Paper in Appendix D).

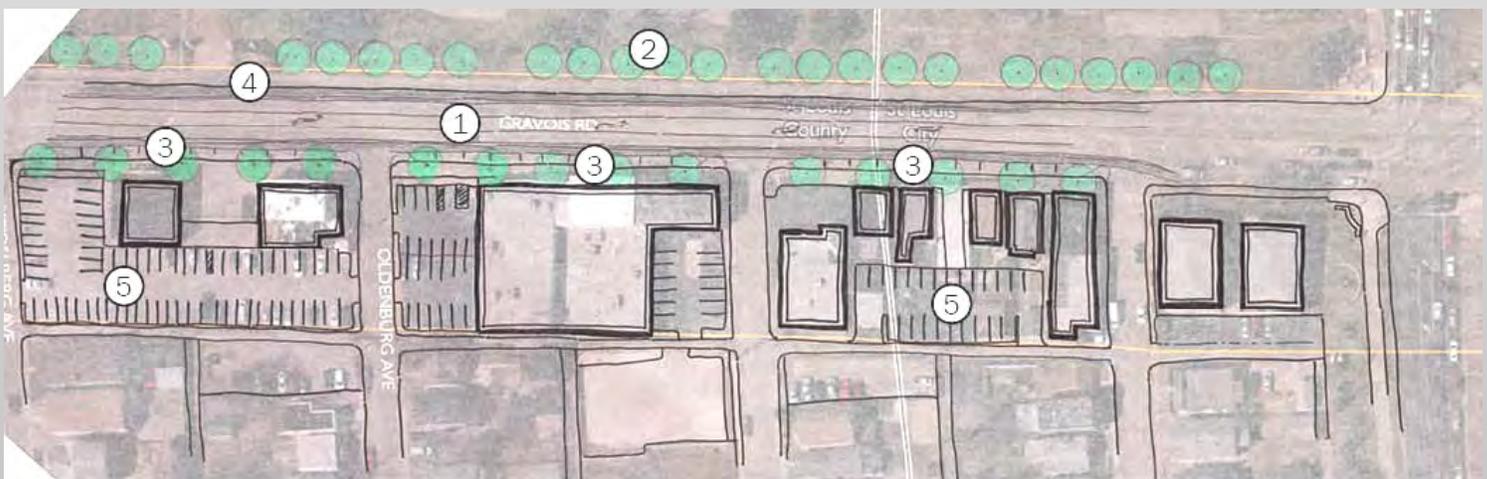


Figure 28.1—Gravois Heights Concept Plan (from the River des Peres Greenway to Heidelberg Avenue).

Legend

1. Gravois Road Lane Diet
2. Street trees in cemetery
3. On-Street Parallel Parking
4. Sidewalks & Streetscape Treatment
5. Shared Off-Street Parking

Heege Crossing Strategies

- HC1 - Reconfigure the Heege intersection.** The one way loop (Heege and Siebert combined) that spans Gravois Road creates confusion for unfamiliar motorists, complicates access to some of the properties in the area, and requires roadway which limits property redevelopment potential north of Gravois Road. Recent suburban model development in this segment demonstrates market viability for the larger parcels that both already exist and can be created by vacating unnecessary roadway. The traffic study mentioned earlier should include investigating the function of a reconfigured Heege Road, for all modes of travel. Making Heege Road a two-way road across Gravois can simplify traffic patterns and improve viability to redevelop the parcels north of Gravois consistent with the plan goals.

Legend
1. New US Bank
2. Repurposed Bank Building
3. Multi-Family Residential
4. Heege Road – 1-Way Section
5. Seibert Avenue Realignment
6. Townhome development
7. Parking for Streetfront Businesses
8. Mid America Arms
9. JG. Statt Tuck-pointing
10. STL Sharp Shooters
11. Seibert – 1-way North
12. New Streetfront Commercial
13. New Streetfront Commercial
14. Exist. St. George Parking Lot
15. Aronia Avenue – 1-way east
16. Relocated Staat Masonry Storage



Option A

Option A: This concept adjusts Siebert north of Gravois, making a perpendicular intersection at Heege. It enlarges the parcel along its north edge for redevelopment. The existing bank building at Gravois and Heege is kept in place.

Legend
1. New US Bank
2. Multi-Family Residential
3. Heege Road – 2-Way Continuous
4. Seibert Avenue Closed N of Gravois
5. New Commercial Development
6. Townhome development
7. Parking for Streetfront Businesses
8. Mid America Arms
9. STL Sharp Shooters
10. New Commercial Development
11. Community Space / Farmers Market
12. Exist. St. George Parking Lot
13. Aronia Avenue – 1-way east



Option B

Option B: This concept abandons Siebert north of Gravois, giving greater flexibility for site redevelopment. The existing bank is shown removed, which may help with the visibility, geometry, and function of the intersection.

- HC2 - Develop shared parking.** Several of the properties here have ample parking, while others have essentially none. Either by agreement or development, balance the parking need with the supply. Parallel parking on the street will help, but in this segment shared lots are more critical to the overall solution Essex Industries is one example of proper shared parking use. Essex Industries allows for free public parking after business hours.

- HC3** - Explore **expanding public use in the New Mt. Sinai Cemetery** to include an amphitheater. Responding to public desire for outdoor public space and the lack of available land, the design team considered examples in other cemeteries and developed the recommendation to locate an outdoor amphitheater on New Mt. Sinai property, west of the ball fields. A few examples of these types of uses can be found below, as well as in the Environmental White Paper in Appendix D. Of course, the property owner will need to be engaged, and any arrangement would require the space be used for cemetery needs if or when Mt. Sinai requires the space. Event parking would not be on cemetery property. Instead, St. George to the east or any of the numerous large surface lot owners on the north side of Gravois Road would supplement parallel parking along Gravois and nearby cross streets. Installing a pedestrian entry along the stone wall of the cemetery would be needed for public access.



Example of built outdoor amphitheater



Example of informal outdoor amphitheater

- HC4** - Plant street **trees along the New Mt. Sinai cemetery** frontage. Engage with the cemetery ownership to plant street trees (see the Environmental White Paper in Appendix D). If the owner is willing the relative simplicity of dealing with a single owner of an already green parcel and planting outside of the right of way make this an easy task to accomplish in the near future. The shading, environmental, and aesthetic benefits of the trees would make this sidewalk significantly more walkable.
- HC5** - Locate a new **pedestrian crossing at Lakewood Ave**. Consistent with the overall goal to improve pedestrian access along the corridor, this is a recommended location for a high visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon. This would be done in conjunction with development of community space in New Mt. Sinai Cemetery and a new pedestrian entrance in the cemetery's stone wall. See the Transportation White Paper in Appendix D.



Figure 30.1 - Concept sketch, facing north, of an informal amphitheater within New Mt. Sinai Cemetery and a new pedestrian entrance from Gravois Road.

Mixed Commercial Strategies

- **MC1 - Develop shared parking and access management.** The prevalence of shallow commercial parcels in this area emphasizes the need to organize parking and control points where (and how) vehicles enter and leave Gravois Road. The diagrams at the bottom of this page demonstrate a sample approach on the north side of Gravois between Pilot Ave. and Mathilda Ave. As residences have converted to commercial use, front lawns have become nose in parking, which is dangerous to back out of and creates continuous conflict points and accessibility issues for pedestrians.
- **MC2 - Add a pedestrian crossing at Harmony Ave.** Consistent with the overall goal to improve pedestrian access along the corridor, this is a recommended location for a high visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon.
- **MC3 - Add a pedestrian crossing at Mathilda Ave.** Consistent with the overall goal to improve pedestrian access along the corridor, this is a recommended location for a high visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon.

Many strategies exist to simplify the parking environment, making it more predictable for drivers, and safer for pedestrians. Through coordination effort by a local organization or Chamber of Commerce, many of these strategies could begin to be implemented immediately.



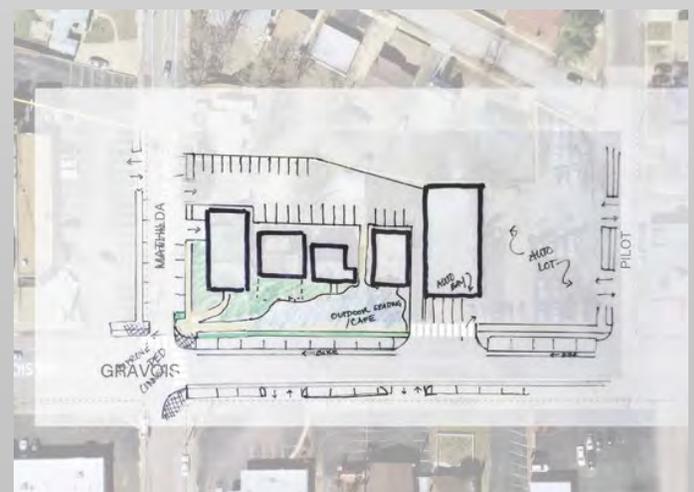
1. Existing Condition



2. Existing Condition



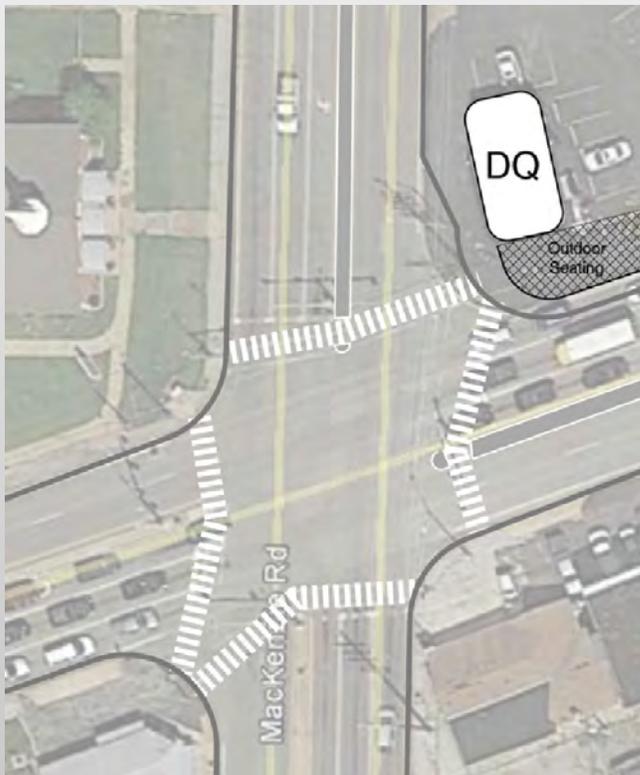
3. Partial transition to on-street parallel



4. Full conversion to on-street parallel with shared rear yard parking (access from side street and existing alley)

Mackenzie/Affton Plaza Area Strategies

- AP1 - Adjust the Weber Road intersection.** At the firehouse, Weber Road intersects Gravois at an acute angle with wide drive lanes. This presents a very long distance for pedestrians crossing Weber and encourages west bound traffic on Gravois to make the turn onto Weber at high speed. Adjusting the angle of the intersection to meet Gravois at (or close to) a perpendicular angle will better control turning movements, allow for a practical crosswalk, and still allow emergency vehicles pulling out of the firehouse direct cross access onto Weber. The existing signal could be improved to include a pedestrian crossing across Gravois.
- AP2 - Improve the Mackenzie Road intersection.** The existing facility functions fairly well for vehicles. Traffic clears within one or two signal cycles during the heaviest peak traffic. Large truck turning movements from west bound Gravois onto north bound Mackenzie have difficulty with the geometry, occasionally rolling the curb or clipping signage. For pedestrians, it is an entirely different story. Crossing distances are quite long, with no pedestrian refuge areas or clearly defined safe zones at the corners. The access across the intersection creates problems for people going to Dairy Queen. The lack of defined space limits seating and space for customers to socialize. There is likely not enough room to create an ideal solution, and further study is required to fully explore viable options. However, as Affton Plaza and other properties at the corner redevelop, and pedestrianism is improved elsewhere along the corridor, making this intersection more walkable is a priority.



Figures 32.1 - MacKenzie intersection Concept improving pedestrian crossings and sidewalks, defining a gathering space at the Dairy Queen, and improving the opportunity for landscaping.

The strategy relies on high visibility crosswalks with curb protected pedestrian refuge areas at the Mackenzie Road intersection.



- **AP3 - Use excess pavement** in Affton Plaza for public space. Organizing open markets or fairs at the Affton Plaza parking lot would attract residents from around the region and activate vacant, generally surplus surface parking. Also, as phase two of the Affton Plaza redevelopment proceeds, incorporate useable open space to complement new dining / commercial space.

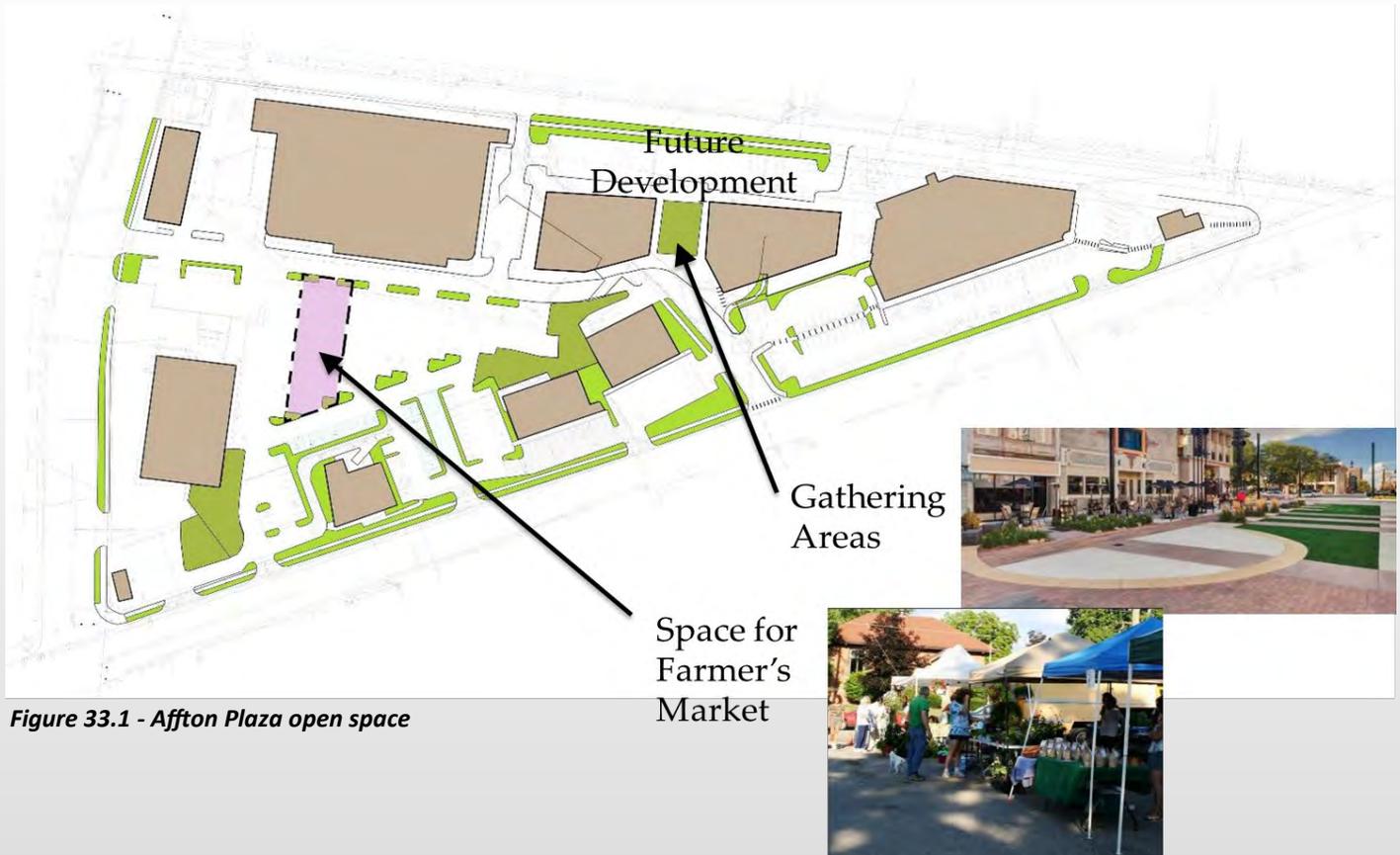


Figure 33.1 - Affton Plaza open space

- **AP4 - Add a pedestrian crossing at Tobey Avenue.** Consistent with the overall goal to improve pedestrian access along the corridor, this is a recommended location for a high visibility crosswalk with a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon. This location is also being defined as a main entrance to Affton Plaza as part of the current redevelopment project.
- **AP5 - Provide a formal bicycle connection to Grant's Trail,** completing the link along the corridor between it and the River Des Peres Greenway. In this segment, locating the bike facility on Weber, behind Affton Plaza, will keep it away from the busy Mackenzie intersection. Further study will be required, in conjunction with Great Rivers Greenway, to determine the best route continuing further west to tie in with Grant's Trail.

Priority Efforts

To evaluate and prioritize the various recommendations across the entire study area, the crude ranking system below can help illustrate some priorities, though it cannot take into account all relevant variables. When possible, opportunistically coordinating with other related investments that may pop up can leverage efficiency and cost savings. Private or related developments along the corridor should comply with or (at a minimum) not preclude implementation of the plan over time.

The tasks are labeled by location (overall project area or segment area) and are loosely scored based on the breadth of their impact, community desire, and ease of implementation.

The last column estimates a target timeline for implementation: short term (1-3 years), mid term (3-7 years), long term (7-15 years). Some tasks may best be combined with private or related developments along the corridor and have an “opportunistic” designation. Some of the short term tasks are foundational and would be helpful, or possibly essential, to completing subsequent tasks. Formalizing a district or management structure falls into this category.

Gravois Great Streets Recommendations Ranking										Scale of 1 through 5 (least to best)
Task	Economic Benefit	Transportation Benefit	Place Identity Benefit	Environmental Benefit	Community Desire	Ease of Implementation	Rating	Term (Short, Mid, Long, Opportune)		
Tier 1 O1	Initiate a Traffic Study	3	5	4.5	4	4.5	5	26	IMMEDIATE	
GH3	Planting Along Cemetery Edges	4	3.5	4	5	5	4	25.5	S	
HC4	Planting Along Cemetery Edges	4	3.5	4	5	5	4	25.5	S	
O2	Formalize a Business District (CID)	5	3	4	3	5	4	24	S	
O4	to Regional Trails and Greenways	4	4	4	4	5	2	23	M	
O6	Striped Road Diet	3	4	3	3.5	4	5	22.5	S/O	
HC3	Explore Cemetery Amphitheater	4	3	4	3	5	3.5	22.5	S	
O7	Built Road Diet	4	5	4	3.5	4.5	1	22	M/L	
O3	Determine the Right-of-Way	3	5	3	3	3	5	22	S	
O10	Locate/Identify Opportunities for Public Space and Pocket Parks	4	3	4	4	5	2	22	S/O	
GH1	Unclutter Pedestrian Zone	3	4	4	3	5	3	22	M/O	
AP3	Utilize excess surface pavement	3.5	3	3.5	3	4	5	22	S	
AP5	Bike/Ped connection to Grants Trail	3	4	3.5	3.5	4	4	22	S/M	
O9	Implement Tenanting Strategy	4.5	3	3	3	3	5	21.5	S/M	
O8	Initiate Multiple Public Education & Awareness Campaigns	3	4	3	3	3	5	21	S	
HC1	Reconfigure Heege Intersection	4.5	4	4	3	4	1.5	21	L	
AP2	Improve Mackenzie Intersection	3.5	4	3.5	3	4.5	2	20.5	L/O	
O5	Incorporate Environmental Infrastructure	2	3	4	5	4	2	20	M/O	
MC1	Shared Parking / Access Mgmt.	3	4	3	3	4	2.5	19.5	M	
HC5	New Ped Crossings @ Lakewood Ave	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	M	
GH4	New Ped crossing @ Heidelberg Ave / Oldenburg Ave.	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	M	
MC2	New Ped Crossing @ Harmony Ave	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	M	
MC3	New Ped Crossing @ Mathilda Ave	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	M	
AP4	New Ped Crossing @ Toby Ave	3	4	3	3	4	2	19	M	
GH2	Shared Parking Opportunities	3	4	3	3	3	2.5	18.5	M	
HC2	Shared Parking Opportunities	3	4	3	3	3	2.5	18.5	M	
AP1	Adjust Weber Rd. Intersection	3	3.5	3	3	3.5	2	18	L/O	

O = Overall project area

GH =Gravois Heights area

HC = Heege Crossing

MC = Mixed Commercial area

AP = Affton Plaza area

Short term = 1-3 years

Mid term = 3-7 years

Long term = 7-15 years

Opportune - Combine with related investments

w/ environmental BMP's

w/ district or committee

Tier One

- **O1 - Initiate a Traffic Study [Overall]** — *Coordinate with MoDOT to complete a road diet as part of MoDOT's asphalt overlay program for the roadway in 2017. A Decision-Tree outlining the potential manifestations of a Road Diet on Gravois Road has also been included in the Transportation White Paper (APPENDIX D) with additional descriptions of design opportunities and challenges. The traffic study needs to account for other related recommendations in this report such as parallel / shared parking, additional / enhanced crosswalks, access management, etc. Detailed breakdown of the elements of a traffic study can be found in the Transportation White Paper (Appendix D). [expected cost—\$35,000-\$40,000; duration—3-6 months; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **GH3 - Planting Along Cemetery Edges [Gravois Heights]** — *Increase the number of street trees is to plant along the edge of St. Marcus Cemetery. Together, the two cemeteries along the corridor make up almost 15% of the entire street frontage. Planting trees at 30' o.c. along the 1,300 linear feet of St. Marcus frontage will result in approximately 43 trees. Just planting along the two cemeteries will almost double the number of existing street trees within the corridor. [expected cost—\$20,500 based on 43 trees at \$475/tree for a 2.5"-3" caliper tree. If donated Missouri ReLeaf trees are used and planted by volunteers along St. Marcus Cemetery, cost would be close to zero or very minimal; duration—6-12 months; responsible party—Missouri ReLeaf or other non-profit environmental organization].*
- **HC4 - Planting Along Cemetery Edges [Heege Crossing]** — *Increase the number of street trees is to plant along the edge of St. Marcus Cemetery. Planting trees at 30' o.c. along the 1,200 linear feet of New Mt. Sinai frontage will result in approximately 40 trees. [expected cost—\$19,000 based on 40 trees at \$475/tree for a 2.5"-3" caliper tree. If donated Missouri ReLeaf trees are used and planted by volunteers along St. Marcus Cemetery, cost would be close to zero or very minimal; duration—6-12 months; responsible party—Missouri ReLeaf or other non-profit environmental organization].*
- **O2 - Formalize a Business District [Overall]** — *Establish or expand the existing district. Define its role and required resources, then structure revenue sources to match. See the Market and Economic Development white paper (Appendix D) for detail. [expected cost—roughly \$200,000 as an annual budget to support a staff person, office operations, and a minimal level of joint marketing and event planning.; duration—6-12 months; responsible party—SLEDP /County staff/ Affton Plaza CID].*
- **O4 - Neighborhoods Bike/Ped Connections to Regional Trails and Greenways [Overall]** — *Initiate discussion with the Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG) to promote connector trails from the Affton community to the River des Peres Greenway and Grant's Trail. While mainline trails are the focus of GRG's, they understand the importance and have supported this type linkage and will be a partner in defining scope / cost.. [expected cost—varies, duration—ongoing, responsible party—St. Louis County Planning Department].*
- **O6 - Striped Road Diet [Overall]** — *Depending on the results of initiating the traffic study above, a striped road diet would be implemented alongside MoDOT's upcoming resurfacing project for Gravois Road. Further discussion of the benefits and challenges if a Road Diet on Gravois are discussed in the Transportation White Paper (Appendix D). [expected cost— >\$10,000, duration—3-6 months, responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **HC3 - Master Plan for New Mt. Sinai Cemetery Amphitheatre & Enhancements [Heege Crossing]** — *New Mt. Sinai Cemetery is a beautiful open space with mature trees and open grass fields. The cemetery is already being used for active recreation by St. George Church for soccer and baseball/softball. The topography at the northwest corner of New Mt. Sinai Cemetery is well suited as a natural amphitheater. Even without additional enhancements the location is well suited as an amphitheater space. This would not be a permanent facility, and coordination with Cemetery staff is key. [expected cost—\$15 - \$25k for master plan; duration—3-6 months; responsible party—St. Louis County Planning, St. Louis County Parks, and/or a formal district or business association].*

Tier Two

- O7—Built Road Diet [Overall]** — *Includes all elements highlighted in the long-term plan for the transportation network for Gravois Road: Buffered bike lanes, expanded sidewalks, on-street parking, improved pedestrian crossings. A consultant will need to be engaged to develop this concept into a buildable plan. Further detail is in the Transportation White Paper (Appendix D).* [expected cost—TBD, duration—10-15 years, responsible party—MoDOT].
- O3 - Determine the Right-of-Way of Gravois Road [Overall]** — *Throughout the planning process, the consultant team was not able to determine the exact width of the road. MoDOT was unable to validate many of the cross-section lengths. County staff or a consultant will need to be engaged to survey the ROW if existing documentation cannot be located.* [expected cost—varies, duration— 1-3 months, responsible party—MoDOT/transportation consultant].
- O10 - Locate/Identify Opportunities for Public Space and Pocket Parks [Overall]** — *Initiate efforts to prioritize public community gathering spaces along the corridor. With over 80% of the project area impervious surface, there is a tremendous opportunity to identify additional recreation opportunities and event space for the Affton community. Affton residents and the St. Louis County Parks Department should start the conversation about possible opportunities and connections to ongoing planning efforts. Grant funding should be investigated and ongoing maintenance and management costs will need to be defined.* [expected cost—varies; duration—1-3 years; responsible party—St. Louis County Planning, St. Louis County Parks, or a formal district or business association].
- GH1 - Unclutter Pedestrian Zone [Gravois Heights]** — *In conjunction with road diet implementation, restrict parking on sidewalks and clarify pedestrian space for motorists as well as pedestrians.* [expected cost—varies , duration—1-3 years , responsible party— MoDOT].
- AP3 - Utilize Excess Surface Pavement [Affton Plaza]** — *In conjunction with strategy O10. Consider programming community events and activities into the development. Examples might include a farmers market, Affton Days events, and other activities designed to attract families with children to the corridor.* [expected cost— none applicable, duration—1-3 years, responsible party—County staff, formal district, or business association].
- AP5 - Bike/Ped connection to Grant’s Trail [Affton Plaza]** — *Pursue installation of on or off-street bike facility along Gravois Road as part of Road Diet design. If not possible, create a safe on-street or off-street bike facility along Gravois extending along one of the proposed route alternatives connecting to Grant's Trail west of the Gravois corridor. Initiate discussion with the Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG) to promote a connector trail along the Gravois corridor linking the Affton community to the River des Peres Greenway.* [expected cost—\$600,000, duration—3-7 years, responsible party—Collaborative effort between St. Louis County Planning, MoDOT, St. Louis County Transportation, and GRG].
- O9 - Implement Tenanting Strategy [Overall]** — *Identify tenant types that are both desirable for the area and have a good chance at succeeding in this market. Then, market / recruit accordingly. A localized district (such as a CID) would be the most appropriate agent to engage a consultant for the necessary limited market research. A public reinvestment strategy is needed to purchase certain properties in order to stem further market-based deterioration. For more information on these strategies and which properties may have the most development potential, refer to the Economic White Paper (Appendix D).* [expected cost—cost of implementation should be built into the staff salary(ies) for the corridor organization.; duration—6-12 months; responsible party—SLEDP, or a formal district or business association].

- **O8 - Initiate Multiple Public Education & Awareness Campaigns [Overall]** — *Initiate education and awareness campaigns designed to engage the public and business owners along the corridor. For more information on the types of marketing campaigns, refer to the Transportation, Environmental, Economic, and Urban Design White Paper (Appendix D). [expected cost—varies; duration—ongoing; responsible party—ACIA, Chamber of Commerce, or a formal district or business association].*
- **HC1 - Reconfigure Heege Intersection [Heege Crossing]** — *Larger lot parcels and existing uses in the area around Heege Road offers one of the few major redevelopment opportunities along the entire corridor. Rethinking the roadway network, in and around this intersection, could unlock future land uses that would complement the existing business already in place. A traffic study will be needed to determine the feasibility of eliminating the one way travel along Heege at this location. [expected cost—TBD; duration—7-12 years; responsible party— MoDOT, in collaboration with County staff and a formal district or business association].*
- **AP2 - Improve Mackenzie Intersection [Affton Plaza]** — *Improvements such as installing pedestrian refuge islands or reducing the corner curb radii at an intersection would also be beneficial, but will require an engineering study (separate from the previously called out traffic study) which analyzes multi-modal intersection operations and the turning movements of larger vehicles to ensure they are able to clear turns through the intersection. [expected cost—varies; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **O5 - Incorporate Environmental Infrastructure [Overall]** — *Encourage property owners and community organizations to develop a street tree plantings program along the corridor. Evaluate bioretention for use at intersection enhancements (bulbouts). For more specific direction and detailed costs analysis, refer to the Environmental White Paper (Appendix D). While many areas will need implementation of streetscape improvements before street trees, there are several areas along the corridor where street tree plantings could be initiated now: New St. Marcus Cemetery, New Mount Sanai Cemetery, and between Lacey Road and Philo Road. [expected cost—Should be part of intersection enhancements. Stand alone study: \$15 -25k; Perform a stormwater feasibility study to measure potential gains and benefits from shared stormwater facilities to incentivize multi-parcel redevelopment. (Cost: \$45K – 65K for feasibility study); duration—ongoing, responsible party—formal district, County staff, or business association].*

Tier Three

- **MC1 - Shared Parking / Access Management [Mixed Commercial]** — *Many strategies exist to simplify the parking environment, making it more predictable for drivers, and safer for pedestrians. Through coordination effort by a local organization or Chamber of Commerce, many of these strategies could begin to be implemented immediately. See Transportation White Paper (Appendix D) for additional illustration of concepts. [expected cost—varies; duration—3-7 years / Ongoing; responsible party—Collaborative effort between the Affton Chamber of Commerce, business district and MoDOT].*
- **HC5 - New Pedestrian Crossings at Lakewood Avenue [Gravois Heights]** — *Improve visibility of crossing with signage and striping in accordance with FHWA recommended context appropriate best practices.. Exact crossing location and operation to be studied as a part of the overall traffic study for Gravois Road, recommended as an immediate priority of this plan. [expected cost—\$40,000; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **GH4 - New Pedestrian Crossing near Heidelberg Ave. / Oldenburg Avenue [Heege Crossing]** — *Improve visibility of crossing with signage and striping in accordance with FHWA recommended context appropriate best practices. Exact crossing location and operation to be studied as a part of the overall traffic study for Gravois Road, recommended as an immediate priority of this plan. [expected cost—\$40,000; duration—6-12 months; responsible party—SLEDP /County staff].*

- **MC2 - New Pedestrian Crossing at Harmony Avenue [Mixed Commercial]** — *Improve visibility of crossing with signage and striping in accordance with FHWA recommended context appropriate best practices. Exact crossing location and operation to be studied as a part of the overall traffic study for Gravois Road, recommended as an immediate priority of this plan. [expected cost—\$40,000; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **MC3 - New Pedestrian crossing needed at Mathilda Avenue [Mixed Commercial]** — *Improve visibility of crossing with signage and striping in accordance with FHWA recommended context appropriate best practices. Exact crossing location and operation to be studied as a part of the overall traffic study for Gravois Road, recommended as an immediate priority of this plan. [expected cost—\$40,000; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **AP4 - New Pedestrian Crossing at Toby Avenue [Affton Plaza]** — *Improve visibility of crossing with signage and striping in accordance with FHWA recommended context appropriate best practices. New crossings along Gravois Road near Affton Plaza and Tobey Avenue should be designed to include pedestrian refuge islands and beacons to ensure safe conditions for pedestrians. Exact crossing location and operation to be studied as a part of the overall traffic study for Gravois Road, recommended as an immediate priority of this plan. [expected cost—\$40,000; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*
- **GH2 - Shared Parking Opportunities [Gravois Heights]** — *Develop a parking management strategy, engage local businesses to discern potential for shared parking lots in front and behind existing businesses, and create incentives for businesses sharing parking facilities in front or behind existing businesses. [expected cost—varies; duration—1-3 years; responsible party—a formal district or business association].*
- **HC2 - Shared Parking Opportunities [Heege Crossing]** — *Develop a parking management strategy, engage local businesses to discern potential for shared parking lots in front and behind existing businesses, and create incentives for businesses sharing parking facilities in front or behind existing businesses. [expected cost—varies; duration—1-3 years; responsible party—a formal district or business association].*
- **AP1 - Adjust Weber Road Intersection [Affton Plaza]** — *Pursue signalization of Weber Road at Affton Fire Department, and/or Harmony Ave (not part of Road Diet Study). [expected cost—\$300,000; duration—3-7 years; responsible party—MoDOT].*

*“You don’t have to
move to live in a better
neighborhood.”*

Richard Arrington, former Mayor of Birmingham Alabama

Potential Funding Sources

The resources to advance and implement the various strategies in this report will come from a variety of sources. There is no single pot of money to make all of these things happen.

County leaders and county staff should examine these potential tools and determine the viability of each in helping to provide additional funds for Gravois Road improvements in the future. In addition to the funding categories identified below, the County may explore a variety of funding sources at the federal or state level in order to provide resources to complete various improvements along Gravois Road over time. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) provides a variety of funding for streetscape and transportation projects through the resources of East West Gateway Council of Governments. The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) are other likely sources of funding for corridor improvements. The potential to secure funding through these resources is dependent on a variety of factors, including the pool of available money, and the funding formulas used to rank applications made by local jurisdictions.

Community Improvement District (CID)

A CID can finance a wide array of public improvements and services that can enhance the district. A CID can be established by a government entity or a non-profit and requires the approval of a petition signed by either the property owners that collectively own at least 50 percent of the assessed value in the proposed district, or a total of more than 50 per capita of all owners of real property within the proposed district. The petition must outline a five year plan that describes the purposes of the proposed district, the services it will provide, the improvements it will make and an estimate of the costs of the project. Once the petition is filed, the governing body of the particular municipality in question must hold a public hearing and approve the creation of the proposed district by ordinance.

In contrast to a Neighborhood Improvement District, a CID is a separate legal entity, and operates distinct and apart from the municipality that creates the district. The CID may finance improvements through the imposition of 1) special assessments for those improvements that specifically benefit the properties within the district, 2) property taxes, or 3) a sales tax up to a maximum of one percent. A CID may finance the costs of a project through the charging of fees, rents, and charges for district property or services, or grants, gifts, and donations. A CID may also issue bonds, notes, and other obligations in order to fund improvements.

A CID may finance the following types of improvements within its boundaries:

- Pedestrian or shopping malls and plazas
- Parks, lawns, trees, and any other landscape
- Convention centers, arenas, aquariums, aviaries and meeting facilities
- Sidewalks, streets, alleys, bridges, ramps, tunnels, overpasses and underpasses, traffic signs and signals, utilities, drainage, water, storm and sewer systems and other site improvements
- Streetscape, lighting, benches or other seating furniture, trash receptacles, marquees, awnings, canopies, walls and barriers
- Telephone and information booths, bus stop and other shelters, rest rooms and kiosks
- Music, news and child care facilities
- Lakes, dams and waterways
- Paintings, murals, display cases, sculptures and fountains
- Parking lots, garages or other facilities

Establishing CID Funding

Petitioning and creation of the CID does not yet provide for funding of CID responsibilities which, in turn, are determined by the board of directors. There are three ways to create financing resources:

- The CID may levy a retail sales tax of up to 1% if approved by a majority of registered voters in the district, or, if there are none, a majority of the owners of real property within the district. In other words, registered voters have priority but some commercial districts have no residents, in which case a majority of the property owners decide on the sales tax. Those owners may include non-retailers.
- The CID may levy a property tax (no limit) if approved by a majority of registered voters in the district, or, if there are none, the owners of real property within the district. Again, registered voters have priority, even for property taxes that would apply to the commercial property owners.
- Or the CID may impose special assessments if approved by a majority of both (a) property owners of at least 50% of the district's assessed value, and (b) at least 50% per capita of property owners within the district. This is the same requirement as noted above for the petitioning process. The special assessment method is used in the South Grand CID, earlier described, and for the Downtown St. Louis CID.

HYPOTHETICAL CID FUNDING FOR GRAVOIS ROAD

Gravois Road could greatly benefit from a more formal and reasonably funded organization. While no recommendations are yet offered during the planning process, the strongest organizational format for this stretch of Gravois Road is the community improvement district. Based on a cursory review of the land and building area presently in the study area corridor (excluding potentials for additional buildings or extensions of the study area), and using a formula similar to that applied on South Grand (St. Louis, MO) but with lesser assessments to enhance the likelihood of approving a new CID, approximately \$400,000 per year could be raised in support of CID functions based on the following assessment assumptions:

- 20¢ per square foot of lot per year (80% of South Grand's rate)
- 30¢ per square foot of first floor (75% of South Grand's rate)
- 10¢ per square foot of upper floors (about 40% of South Grand's rate).

If as much as \$400,000 per year could be raised, it would go a long way in supporting both a full-time staff member and many other services to enhance the marketing of the corridor. But Gravois is also a corridor of almost two miles in length, a condition which often prompts strong internal disagreements about where and how such funding should be spent. Those at one end of the corridor may have very different perspectives on spending priorities than those at the other end. Those with new or larger businesses can often strongly disagree with businesses and property owners in marginal locations or conditions. It is often far easier to create and support CIDs that have a "tighter" geography and more homogenous interests.

This is not to say that Gravois Road cannot be organized and funded under a single CID. If business and property interests are aligned, it may well be an excellent solution to not only getting strongly organized but also raising sufficient funds internally to be self-supporting. A close alignment with County government (if not also City government) and the Economic Development Partnership should also be maintained. There will inevitably be situations where political advocacy is important for decisions along Gravois Road.

Keep in mind, however, that the owners of Affton Plaza are creating their own CID for the Plaza itself. If Gravois Road became a CID, it could do so in addition to Affton Plaza (thus, two CIDs side-by-side) or the Affton Plaza CID can be extended to some or all of the full corridor.

Enhanced Enterprise Zones (EEZs)

The Enhanced Enterprise Zone Tax Benefit Program, sponsored by the Missouri Department of Economic Development, provides various tax credits to new or expanding businesses in a Missouri Enhanced Enterprise Zone. These zones are specific geographic areas designated by local governments that must be certified by the Department of Economic Development. The program offers state tax credits, accompanied by local real property tax abatements, to eligible businesses in the EEZ. To receive the tax credits, a business facility must provide for two new employees and \$100,000 in new investments (in the case of a new or expanded business facility), or two new employees and \$1 million in new investment (in the case of a replacement business facility). Companies receiving EEZ tax credits must provide health insurance to all full time employees in Missouri in order to qualify for the program. Eligible investment expenditures include the original cost of machinery, equipment, furniture, fixtures, land and buildings, and or eight times the annual rental rate paid for these items. Ineligible businesses for the EEZ program include gambling establishments, retail trade entities, educational services entities, religious organizations, public administration entities (governments), and food and drinking places.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

TIF allows the use of a portion of local property and sales taxes to assist in the funding of redevelopment of certain designated areas in a community. Areas identified for TIF must be deemed to be part of a “blighted,” “conservation” or an “economic development” area. TIF essentially uses the additional sales tax revenue that is generated above and beyond the current level of revenue, as a result of a redevelopment, in order to fund a variety of project costs. Eligible project cost categories include professional services, land acquisition, rehabilitation of buildings, new infrastructure, and relocation of existing businesses or residents. Consideration should be given to the net benefit within a broad area so as not to use public subsidy with no net regional gain.

Chapter 353 Tax Abatement

The State of Missouri offers a Chapter 353 Tax Abatement as an incentive that can be used by cities to encourage the redevelopment of blighted areas by providing real property tax abatements. Under this program, an “Urban Redevelopment Corporation” must be organized pursuant to the Urban Redevelopment Corporations Law in the state of Missouri and the area designated for tax abatements must be deemed a “blighted area” under state law.

Under the program, tax abatements are available for up to 25 years. During the first 10 years, the property is not subject to real property taxes except in the amount of real property taxes assessed on the land, exclusive of improvements. During the next 15 years, the real property may be assessed up to 50 percent of its true value. Payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) may be imposed on the Urban Redevelopment Corporation by contract with the city. PILOTs are paid on an annual basis to replace all or part of the real estate taxes that are abated.

In areas that are challenged by economic decline or blight, the Chapter 353 provisions provide an additional tool for local governments to provide incentives for economic redevelopment.

Sales Tax Reimbursement Agreements

The State of Missouri allows Sales Tax Reimbursement agreements as a funding mechanism to fund infrastructure associated with new developments. Under these agreements, municipalities have the ability to annually appropriate the increase in sales taxes created by new private capital investment to offset a portion of project investment costs. Under this type of agreement, a portion of City sales taxes captured from the increased sales generated by the project would be reimbursed to the developer or company for eligible expenses.

This provision, then, helps to provide an incentive for redevelopment or new development along corridors such as Gravois Road. The state has laid out a number of criteria that must be followed or satisfied in order to allow for a Sales Tax Reimbursement Agreement.

- The applicant must demonstrate that the project would prevent a significant loss in existing sales tax revenue or make a significant contribution to the overall health and wellbeing of the local economy.
- The project must show a clear demonstration of the public purpose and the economic benefit provided through the agreement and how the agreement would further the city's economic development goals.
- The application must show that the project would not occur "but for" the incentives offered. The incentive should make a difference in determining the decision of the particular business to expand or remain in the city and it must be proven that this would not have otherwise occurred without the availability of the sales tax reimbursement.
- The firm that would benefit from the sales tax reimbursement must show its financial stability and capacity to complete the project.
- The application must ensure that the city or any other taxing jurisdiction affected by the incentive is not receiving less total sales tax revenue from the property than was received prior to the granting of the sales tax reimbursement provision.
- The sales tax reimbursement is generally not allowed to extend for greater than ten years.

Additional Funding Sources for Greenways

In addition to the normal tools in Missouri such as NIDs, CIDs, TDDs, and TIFs, St. Louis County may wish to consider additional funding strategies identified to provide for greenway enhancements . These additional strategies may include but not be limited to the following:

- ***Bond Referendums for Greenways***—Communities across the nation have successfully placed on local ballots propositions to support greenway development, ranging from small towns to larger cities. For example, a few years ago residents in Casper, Wyoming passed a greenway bond referendum to provide for the first three miles of a local greenway.
- ***Greenway Trust Fund***—Many communities around the country have created trust funds for land acquisition and facility development. A trust fund may help in acquiring parcels that would otherwise be lost if not acquired by private sector initiative.
- ***Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)*** - The US Department of Housing and Urban Development provides states with annual direct grants that are then awarded to local communities in part for park and greenway projects.