

7 NEXT STEPS



NEXT STEPS

Now that the Grand Center Master Plan has been thoroughly developed, the logistical steps outlining how this plan can be realized need to be explored. This chapter will describe the context of what is going on now in Grand Center; discuss the factors that will drive the implementation process and identify the next steps that Grand Center will need to advance this project.

Moving Forward

The stakeholder community has an organization and a drive to continue the advancement of the Grand Center Great Streets Master Plan. Much has been achieved in the last five years and indications look promising that the progress will continue to accelerate. At the completion of this report, the following initiatives were under way:

- The VA Medical Center will unveil its Redevelopment Master Plan at the end of June, 2013 which will document expansion of the hospital, site expansion, parking structure development and concurrent street improvements.
- The Art Walk is being planned as a new “connector” attraction, linking the west side cluster of visual arts institutions. This project will build on the work of the Great Streets project.
- A study of the Midtown Loop Trail sponsored by Great Rivers Greenway District is looking at creating an off-street bike and pedestrian facility on the west side of Spring. It will integrate the Great Streets and Art Walk improvements in that corridor.
- Grand Center Arts Academy is adding a grade every year and will continue to expand its facilities with the renovation of the Sun Theater
- The Missouri Theater Building will be renovated into apartments and ground floor retail.
- Community radio station, 88.1 KDHX and the Larry J. Weir Center for Independent Media is under construction and will feature a 125-seat music venue and café on Washington Avenue.
- The Fox is working on concept for a parking garage along Washington Avenue for Fox patrons and other users.

To the fullest extent possible the Great Streets Master Plan has anticipated these developments and provided a streetscape design representing the collective aspiration of the community and stakeholders.



Implementation Drivers

It is more likely that other factors will determine how each of the incremental project scopes will be defined. Currently, the phasing and prioritization of the street improvements remains unknown and will ultimately be driven by the factors of concurrent land use development, funding availability and perceived value.

1) Long Term Value

This driver suggests that funding will have greater benefit with some aspects of the project than others, and that it should drive the acceleration of certain priority improvements. While this might appear to favor the current primary pedestrian zones, including Grand and its more immediate edges, the greater liabilities are identified as the mid-block undeveloped areas and the Theresa corridor. These offer the greatest advantage to attracting development.

2) Short Term Value

Short term value focuses on improvements that will bring immediate impact over the next twelve months, if the resources can be found. This is also linked to the desire to have immediate visual and experiential impact on the district. High value, low cost improvements should be identified that will begin to alter traffic patterns, address concerns identified in the survey and begin to transform the visual appearance of the district. Initiatives should exclude elements that would require replacement in the realization of the long term plan. Quick win projects might include the following:

- Improved signage, way-finding and pavement conditions to encourage use of Vandeventer and Compton as alternative parallel routes
- Decorative hanging planting to streetscape
- Tensile light canopy to Strauss Park
- Restoration of architectural lighting to landmark structures
- Connection of Theresa at Lindell
- Multiple pay credit card meters
- Special events and mock up streetscape elements to test the design concepts and keep Grand Center on people minds

3) Infrastructure

Whereas the Master Plan is divided into 12 implementation zones, the planning of infrastructure improvements can be driven by utility networks such as street lighting infrastructure. The proposed LED street lighting will need be supported by new electrical distribution



and possibly new transformers. Planning for logical storm water management will drive the geographic scope of a project to maximize the benefit for porous paving, bio-filters and bioretention within the context of grant funding. To the extent underground utilities require relocation, this will affect project scope definition. With the significant curb re-alignments that are proposed, projects scopes will need to encompass an area that allows a safe and logical transition to existing conditions. To fully understanding a project scope, topographic/utility surveys need to be completed. The cost estimate has addressed these unknowns through conservative contingencies.

4) Land Use – Current and Future

Land use development will be driven by a desire to consolidate parking into parking structures and significantly diversify land use with the construction of housing, retail, commercial developments. Building the public realm improvements associated with these projects will be critical to the marketability of these developments. However, the incremental phasing of streetscape improvements that involve significant curb re-alignment creates phasing challenges and can drive the scope of the project. Other initiatives unrelated to changing land use will also have an influence on public realm priorities, including the Art Walk, the VA Medical Center improvements and the potential Great Rivers Greenway Midtown Loop Trail on Spring. Building the public realm improvements with other development remains a strong strategy to realize a new Grand Center.

5) Funding Availability

While a broad range of funding will be sought for the streetscape implementation, each source will have its own schedule and priorities. These will have a significant, and often irrational, effect on project implementation and the scope of the project



Action Agenda

Below is an outline of the activities that initiate implementation for the Great Streets projects.

Action: Establish Priorities

The Plan Implementation Committee is now charged with developing a logical phasing plan for the project. Although this exercise is not independent from other actions in the agenda, the committee can assemble a list or matrix of the drivers, aspirations and practical factors that will help reveal logical priorities for the plan. When combined with funding, the phasing plan can be formalized.

Action: Management and Structural Enhancements

Grand Center Inc. is currently working on the establishment of a Community Improvement District (CID). Its immediate function is to provide for safety and cleanliness in the community.

Over time, the roll of this entity could be expanded to include the full range of CID functions including: finance of public-use facilities; establishment of management policies and public services relative to the needs of the district. Within the context of the Great Streets project, a CID with this expanded role can finance new public facilities or improvements to existing facilities such as streetscapes, plazas, public art, parking garages and other public improvements. A CID can also provide public services such as parking facility operation, shuttle bus services, public realm maintenance and outdoor café leases.

As redevelopment and investment in Grand Center expands, funding of the improvements may be accomplished by a district-wide special assessment. Grand Center Inc. would continue to play the role of coordinator, advocate, and catalyst for redevelopment of Grand Center as an arts and entertainment district. Operations and maintenance of the proposed community-wide improvements will require a funding source and a management entity that will be responsible for Grand Center-specific activities that the City of St. Louis will not be able to perform.

Action: Technical and Engineering Investigation

In order to take the Master Plan to the next level of detail with respect to understanding the technical and engineering challenges that may drive scope, priorities and funding needs, comprehensive topographic and utility surveys need to be prepared. The Master Plan can be overlaid with the survey in order for infrastructure challenges and conflicts to be identified. It is recommended that pre-design services be engaged

to investigate the identified conflicts prior to the start of construction drawing phase services. These include:

Pre-design Activities

- Topographic and utility survey
- Pot-holing to determine actual utility locations
- Existing lighting infrastructure routing and limitations
- Agreements from Streets Department and Lighting Division on lighting strategy and material specifications

Action: Funding Identification

Funding is available for public realm improvements through several yearly grants opportunities as well as on-going TIF revenue. Grant funding has vigorous competition within the St. Louis area. Financing the Great Streets project will involve multiple funding sources including private donations. Incorporating donor recognition opportunities in the design of the project is a great way recognize these contributions in a lasting way.

Known sources of funding include:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Ward funding
- St. Louis Sewer District Stormwater Grant Program (MSD)
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG) funding
- Community Improvement District (CID)
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)
- Corporate and private donations

Action: Transportation Improvements

Throughout the planning and design process for this project, it became clear that there were some relatively easy solutions to some of the mental and physical barriers to the use of Vandeventer and Compton as alternative routes to Grand. Being recognized for some “quick wins” in the community and among the Grand Center’s patrons will help keep the momentum for improvement alive. A list of transportation improvement by short to long term have been outlined:

Short-term Improvements

* Coordinate with Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) to add freeway wayfinding signage to Grand Center and use of alternative routes

- Wayfinding on I-64 at Vandeventer and Market exits
- Wayfinding on I-44 at Vandeventer exit
- Interstate “shield” signage within district for exiting using alternative routes

*Coordinate with the City of St. Louis Division of Traffic to improve vehicular and pedestrian signal timing:

- Implement special event signal timing plans for Olive, Washington, and Grand (at minimum) during venue peaks
- Improve signal timing for Vandeventer and its cross-streets between Page Boulevard and the I-64 ramps
- Coordinate with the City of St. Louis Division of Traffic to repair pavement on Vandeventer and improve striping for nighttime conditions
- Coordinate with the City of St. Louis Division of Traffic to repair pavement on Compton and improve striping and lighting for nighttime conditions
- Coordinate with Metro to reposition new bus stops along Grand to provide access on the south and north ends of the community and interface better with the Delmar route

*Investigate redesign of Compton Avenue between Olive and Market to obtain two consistent travel lanes in each direction

*Begin discussions with the City of St. Louis Treasurer’s Office to remove parking meters and/or restrict parking at key locations in Grand Center

- On Grand Boulevard between Olive and Delmar (with the goal of converting the two parking lanes to sidewalk)
- On Compton Avenue between Delmar and Olive (with a goal of creating four consistent vehicular travel lanes)
- On one side of Compton Avenue between Lindell and Market (with a goal of creating four consistent vehicular travel lanes)

*Implement Grand Center wayfinding signage within the district and on approach/departure routes

*Promote public transit and bicycle use within and to/from Grand Center, capitalize on newness of future articulated buses

*Create and employ venue exit traffic management plans

*Stagger visitor access and exiting with enticing activities before and after the performance

*Investigate and implement a WeCar, car-sharing facility

Mid-term Improvements:

*Implement a public and patron education campaign to promote alternative and parallel route usage through and to/from Grand Center

*Seek ways to manipulate GPS/navigation device/cell phone driving directions and position of final destination in Grand Center

*Reconnect Theresa Avenue to Lindell Boulevard

*Improve lighting on Olive Street west of Spring to encourage use

*Coordinate with City of St. Louis Treasurer’s office to remove parking meters at key locations and test multiple-pay credit card meters

*Continue discussions with the City of St. Louis Treasurer’s Office to remove parking meters and/or restrict parking on Compton to parking aisles for traffic lanes

*In select locations on Vandeventer allow room for vehicular turning lanes and/or improve driver comfort

*Reconstruct Compton Avenue between Olive and Market to achieve two consistent lanes in each direction

*Investigate and implement alternative payment methods for parking facilities (kiosks/credit card payments) to speed up and stagger payment process

Long-term Improvements:

*Create new mixed use parking facilities on the east and west edges of the community to park visitors quickly and shift them into pedestrians

*Extend Grand Center branding, wayfinding and lighting on Olive, Washington, Locust, Samuel Shephard and Delmar to Vandeventer and Compton

*Enhance Vandeventer streetscapes

*Add turning bays at select locations on Vandeventer to improve vehicular flow

Action: Sustained Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Engagement

Engagement with the TAG should be sustained throughout implementation. A partnership with the TAG has been formed and should be strengthened as more technical details are available. Implementation will be successful if all parties go into construction with agreements regarding material choices, installation methods and maintenance responsibilities. The TAG includes representatives from the following agencies:

- St. Louis Water Division
- Laclede Gas
- Metropolitan Sewer District
- Office on the Disabled
- St. Louis Streets
- St. Louis Streets/Lighting Division
- Metro
- City of St. Louis Planning and Urban Design
- City of St. Louis Cultural Resources

The Design Team met with the TAG three times throughout the project duration to review project goals, discuss lessons learned from other streetscapes, review the design proposal and gain feedback from a technical perspective. An important TAG meeting occurred about midway through the project at which the design concepts were previewed with the TAG prior to being revealed to the subcommittee stakeholders at a Design Review Meeting at the beginning of April. Separate meetings with the St. Louis Streets department and the Lighting Division occurred to

discuss design options, materials and lighting. Below is a brief summary of the key issues by agency:

- 1) St. Louis Water Division:
 - Concerns about finding the origin of leaks in under porous paving
 - Concerns about patching special pavements
 - Private cost for relocations and adjusting values
- 2) Laclede Gas:
 - Concerns about finding the origin of leaks in under porous paving
 - Private cost for relocations and adjusting values
- 3) Metropolitan Sewer District:
 - Green infrastructure is maintained with a private maintenance agreement
 - Funding is available for construction green infrastructure
 - Porous pavers are a preferred porous material for the parking aisles
 - Problems with porous concrete on the sidewalks
- 4) Office on the Disabled:
 - Bumpy surfaces and textures are a problem
 - Maintain a 6'-8' wide accessible route
 - Curbless areas need high contrast and detectable warnings
 - Proper lighting for low vision
 - Accessible parking and drop offs at all the venues
 - Exiting and wayfinding cues and strategies
 - Safety, Convenience and Communication
- 5) St. Louis Street Department
 - Consider concrete streets for better patching
 - Will not maintain special pavements or features
- 6) Street Department/Lighting Division
 - Mock-ups and fixture testing is required before any lighting product is approved for use
 - Maintenance plan with costs is required by the City for BPS review
 - Concerns about on-going simple maintenance/sign maintenance
 - Theft of lighting equipment, structural aluminum poles and other metals
 - Concerns about timeliness about traffic signal replacement
 - City of St. Louis 480 voltage is a limiting factor for LED light sources
 - Consider new transformers and 277 voltage as the new standard
 - Cannot pay for any lighting other than public safety lighting
 - Will not maintain special lighting

The Master Plan and TAG Recommendations

The Design Team took a deliberate approach to the material choices; strategies for installation/patching and long term durability when creating the design for Grand Center. In order to address the concerns from the TAG, the design incorporates durable materials that are typical to St. Louis such as concrete, granite and asphalt. However, custom elements, porous pavements and non-standard items are a concern for participants of the TAG due to the high cost of repair and maintenance. It is recommended that specialty elements such as granite pavement at the curbless areas of Grand and Washington at Strauss Park and the specialty lighting be investigated further in implementation phases.

Action: Maintenance Responsibilities

Funding for on-going and long-term maintenance will need to be identified. A partnership with the City of St. Louis on maintenance will not only be necessary but could become a model for the City. Pressure to reduce costs are typically in direct competition with improvement goals. However, streetscapes that contribute to cost off-sets should be recognized and rewarded. Cost offsets could include:

- LED lights that save energy and maintenance
- Green infrastructure that reduces flooding, property damage and demand on the sewage treatment plant
- Parking meter revenue from a vital and busy business district

With a partnership, these cost offsets could directly contribute to the maintenance of the special elements such as landscape maintenance, green infrastructure maintenance, trash removal and special pavement maintenance.

“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably will not themselves be realized”

Daniel Burnham