



Spirit Valley Core Investment Area Plan

... to foster a vibrant and thriving neighborhood center

Spirit Valley Stroll Summary

Event Description:

On October 2 and 3, 2024, Planning staff conducted mobile meetings (Spirit Valley Strolls) of the Central Avenue and Grand Avenue business districts where 30 residents and businesses shared their impressions of the physical conditions of the districts in 173 comments. Strolls were held at Noon and 5 p.m. and the non-traditional meeting format was chosen to appeal to a broader community than attends traditional planning input meetings.

Shared sentiments include safety for pedestrians, bikers and children, rejuvenation of storefronts and houses, and redevelopment of the K-mart into new stores or housing. Observers noted that the area has much potential to become a vibrant place in the future.

Central Avenue Comments:

Fronting Central Avenue are several important business anchors for the district. Pedestrian safety and traffic calming were top concerns among commenters for Central Avenue. Vehicles move too fast and there were questions about why so many trucks use Central Avenue. Some sidewalks have uneven pavement and people often have long wait times to cross the street. Several people suggested that a marked mid-block crossing would link two important destinations in the West Theater and Wussow's Cafe/Zenith Bookstore. Pedestrian access to Super One was also a large concern including safety concerns at the vehicle driveway on Central Avenue as well as crossing the large parking lot. The I-35/Central Avenue intersection is large and very unfriendly for bikes and pedestrians to cross to access the Cross City Trail.

Grand Avenue Comments:

There are more challenges facing Grand Avenue due to vacant and decaying storefronts and homes leaving attendees sad over lost businesses that filled basic shopping needs. Commenters are eager for homes and businesses to fill the Kmart site and become a destination. Businesses open after 5 p.m. are especially needed on Grand Ave. to complement existing traditional businesses.

Snow removal on sidewalks, especially adjacent parking lots and at bus stops, are a safety concern and several commented about the need to remove snowbanks at the curb more frequently. Other safety concerns include the lack of bike infrastructure, uneven sidewalk surfaces, vehicle speeds and the angle of intersecting streets making for long pedestrian crossings.

The overall experience of Grand Avenue is not pleasant with high noise levels of traffic passing by, vacant storefronts and K-mart, trash and weeds and lack of sidewalk amenities. There is a need to examine how to balance vehicle needs with pedestrian/bike needs and create a more vibrant place for people to gather and do business.

Conclusions:

Overall, observers are looking for improved pedestrian infrastructure for a safer environment for people experiencing the area outside of their cars. The noise, uneven sidewalks, wide intersections, and lack of snow removal are all elements that make the user feel unsafe while navigating the core commercial area in Spirit Valley. Users are proud of the neighborhood feel and history of the area but realize there is room for improvement. This stroll allowed business owners and residents to look at the core business district through a critical lens and record their thoughts and reactions with City staff.