

DRAFT Minutes
Neighborhood Advisory Commission
September 6, 2023



Draft minutes of the Neighborhood Advisory Commission (NAC) held on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, hybrid meeting with in-person attendance option and a virtual component using Microsoft Teams platform

(MEMBERS) Present: Brandon Abrahams, Hannah Moulton Belec, Lane Carraway, Martha Carter, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall, Duane Washkowiak

(MEMBERS) Absent: Annette Fields, Nicholas Weller

City Staff: Elizabeth Thomas, Neighborhood Services Specialist; Shauna Warner Neighborhood Services Manager; Erin Kirkpatrick, Community Services Manager; Aaron Urquidez, Neighborhood Services Specialist; Eric Iwersen, Sustainability and Resilience Director; Shelly Seyler, Deputy Engineer Transportation Director; Mayen Akpan, Neighborhood Services Specialist

Guests: None.

Agenda Item 1 - Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Chair Stern

Agenda Item 2 - Public Comment

None.

Agenda Item 3 - Review and approval of meeting minutes: August 2, 2023 NAC Meeting

Motion: Commissioner Granillo made a motion to approve the August 2, 2023 minutes as presented.

Second: Commissioner Carraway seconded the motion

Result: Minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of those present, 8 - 0

Commission Member Ayes: Hannah Moulton Belec, Lane Carraway, Jana Lynn Granillo, Gabe Hagen, John Kozel, Nancy Puffer, Joel Stern, Suri Wall

Arrived following minutes vote: Brandon Abrahams, Martha Carter, Kriste Melcher, Stacy Novis, Duane Washkowiak

Absent: Annette Fields, Nicholas Weller

Agenda Item 4 - Parks Equity Study Recommendations

Community Services Manager, Erin Kirkpatrick, and Neighborhood Services Specialist, Aaron Urquidez, provided an overview of the equity study conducted by Tempe Parks and Recreation. Open from April 24 through May 25, 2023, the study built upon the six guiding principles of the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan (adopted in July 2021) and was designed to analyze, assess, recommend and act on equity within our parks and recreation spaces and programs.

The guiding principles:

1. Spaces and programs for ALL
2. Customized Experiences

3. Expanded Parks & Recreation Access
4. Vibrant, Active and Diverse Parks and Recreation
5. Safe Environments
6. Equitable Prioritization Process

The study was preceded by focus groups and varied touch points over the past year including youth engagement opportunities and connecting with bus and light rail riders and pop-up events. This provided a robust engagement process and culminated in a comprehensive matrix which identifies and prioritizes gaps ensuring that future investment occurs in the areas where residents have fewer resources. The goal being to create accessible, inclusive, barrier free and diverse programming attracting a broad and diverse group of community members.

The equity data included answers to questions like -

Who feels welcome?

Who feels less welcome?

How are spaces being used?

What's missing?

What is the condition of everything?

Where and how do people recreate?

Which areas are more susceptible to the impacts of heat?

Are there areas where populations have disproportionately poorer health conditions?

Data was compiled online in Storymap format. The three sections can be viewed online or printed out as a pdf.

Learn-overview, executive summary

Evaluate - analysis (mapping is located here)

Act - Guiding Principles, Goals, and Strategies (action items)

Member comments and questions included:

Anything big that stood out?

Yes, there were a lot of assumptions of those doing this type of work. Outreach revealed nuances. More open space was far and above the most popular comment. Residents are feeling the amount of change happening in City of Tempe and there is a desire for preservation and protection.

Re: public input, any outreach to unhoused?

Intercept interviews

Was that separately tracked?

We can see it, not sure that we looked at it separately. Feeds recommendations of creating spaces welcoming to all regardless of where they are at in their life.

Will this impact Kiwanis improvements?

Kiwanis has their own management plans that guides operations and maintenance as well as improvements. A fully inclusive playground is being developed there. This data will help to refine the next phases of Kiwanis and could inform other improvements, perhaps a reinterpretation of Sister Cities area.

Are there donor opportunities to help with accessible playgrounds like non-profits or other?

Yes, the musical instrument themed playground pieces in Clark Park playground area were funded this way in partnership with Team Asa. Definitely open to grants and donations and collaborations.

Differences between high performing and low performing parks?

Low score could be because the park has not gone thru CIP improvements yet or because park has more needs. Scoring can help to prioritize investments, providing a framework to help make those decisions.

Any type of public transit overlay? Anything that shows access to other parks like Kiwanis, particularly if you live in a neighborhood without a neighborhood park? There is a bit of mapping with light rail and pathway access overlays. Parks and Rec Division has to be able to manage and influence areas being looked at...trying to ensure all residents have a park within a 1/2 mile of their home understanding that additional factors need to be considered like barriers such as a canal, freeway, etc.

What about the prior prioritization we already worked on, is it being used? Yes, many CIP projects have been completed and others are planned to address what is already existing in parks.

Potential to go after public health and other grants? This screams public health, there is money out there for physical activity, disease prevention, mental health needs and more.

Yes, we will be using study to address and frame our asks. Social determinants of health are woven in throughout.

Any conscious language crafted to address safety in storytelling?

Understanding that language is evolutionary, we have been refining our language throughout this study and using terminology informed by NRPA's Equity Language Guide <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/equity/equity-language-guide/> and are making every effort to use appropriate terms. We consult with experts like Dr. Hume as well who has been instrumental in framing some of the issues around justice and inclusion.

What is the ask of the commission?

Please provide input. Use provided link in meeting packet to share your feedback.

Next steps:

Currently visiting many boards and commissions, presenting the draft to Council at the end of September. From October 16 thru 31, the survey will be open to public and will be shared. Gathering commission input now.

Agenda Item 5 - Downtown Mill Avenue Streetscape Project Update

Interim Transportation Director, Shelly Seyler, shared that the Downtown Streetscape Improvement Project is a conceptual design and placemaking effort for Mill Avenue corridor between University Drive and Rio Salado Parkway. Aging irrigation and electrical infrastructure in this area was failing and needing to be addressed. The city determined to take a more comprehensive approach to improvements.

The scope of the entire project includes evaluation and conceptualization of pedestrian amenities, shade systems, signage and monumentation, street trees and enhanced planting system, lighting, hardscapes and aesthetics, drip irrigation and more. This project seeks to integrate Tempe's culture and arts and history in these improvements as well. Concepts were then refined working with J2 Design.

Commissioners asked:

What lens do you want us to look through? Are you seeking feedback or a statement of support?

The public survey closed on August 31. However, if any themes as a commission, we would love to hear that. We are doing our outreach to Boards and Commissions now regarding hardscape/sidewalk concepts and street tree concepts and going back to Council September 28 for consideration of design approval.

There are 3 Streetscape Concepts for consideration.

Streetscape Concept 1 incorporates -

- Lithomosaic Artwork Paving
- Concrete Unit Pavers

- Lithocrete Accent Paving
- Salvaged Brick Paving

This use of different paving treatments creates a “wave effect”

Streetscape Concept 2 pays tribute to what we have out there today using salvaged bricks to extent possible and including concrete unit pavers and lithomosaic artwork and paving. Concrete bands and base will help hold pavers together.

Streetscape Concept 3 mixing in old salvaged brick with new and concrete unit pavers

Member comments and questions included:

Do pavers retain heat?

The question has been asked, our consultant is looking at heat retention of all materials being considered. We are also looking at options that will include sustainability concepts.

What about a visually impaired person who must rely on textural cues?

We will be looking into that as well and are going to the Commission on Disability Concerns. An 8’ cleared path of travel as in our requirements will definitely be a part of this design.

This one/concept 3 is more boring.

Concept 1 features more mosaic and patterns.

Can we buy a brick with our name or neighborhood? ASU, Disneyland and Phoenix Zoo offer that.

Don’t know if that would be included. Can bring this comment forward.

Of the 3 provided concepts, which one is most realistic and most long lasting in terms of new utilities, new businesses and the need for tear up and replacement?

Bricks and pavers can be pulled up. Lithocrete would need to be saw cut and matching it is possible but would be more challenging. Brick salvage would be most cost effective but new brick would still need to be purchased.

What are the upfront costs?

Project budget spans over three years which includes a gap year. Not together yet. Shelly agreed to provide that information to staff.

Timing?

1st phase – estimated to be complete Dec 2024 – not sure what elements that will contain.

If project starts Feb. 24, seems it would be disruptive during a busy time of year?

This project is on an aggressive schedule. There will be impacts no matter when we do it but we work with Downtown Tempe Authority and businesses to mitigate those impacts best possible.

Concepts 2 and 3 are similar materials. Will any of these concepts feature art?

Yes, the art elements will be included in any concept. New bus shelters will also add art history into panels of bus shelters

Love art in sidewalk, kids get engaged that way!

Which option gives most historic preservation or land acknowledgement? Any of these three concepts will allow for that.

Chair Stern asked if NAC wanted to provide a statement of support or shared agreement regarding any specific concept? Members preferred more time to review and think about options. Some commented that it all looks pretty good.

Two concepts are being considered for street trees with each identifying primary street trees as well as median/accent street trees. Concept One features 50% ficus and 50% tipu for the primary street trees while Concept Two features 70% ficus and 30% tipu.

City Arborist Richard Adkins is recommending use of Silva Cell Systems for all new tree planting. Benefits include:

- Additional storm water management
- Larger, healthier trees with a longer life span and faster growth rate
- Long term ecological value and economic benefit
- Powerful form of green infrastructure

This system cannot be implemented on the ficus trees that are retained. It was noted that heat and fungus have impacted some of these trees.

Are you adding trees?

Where missing. We do not want them too close together. City Arborist is helping to guide tree placements. In addition to trees, shade elements will be added.

Is this going to make shade on Mill better or worst?
Better.

Median Accent Street Trees for consideration include:
Ghost Gum - noted that this species allows signage to be seen
Fruitless Olive
Mastic Tree

Smaller trees added to some areas of Tempe are too short. Bigger height of trees are planned, some of the smaller ones were not well enough established before the extreme heat this summer and did not fare well. Mill Avenue is currently 100% ficus, we need diversity, drought tolerant, resilient, climate appropriate trees.

Agenda Item 6 - Neighborhood Celebration 2024 Save the Date

The date for the Neighborhood Celebration is Saturday, April 6, 2024. Members were reminded to save the date on their calendars and closer to the event will be encouraged to sign up for set up, welcome table and take down duties.

Agenda Item 7 - Fall Neighborhood Workshop Date and Location Confirmation and Planning

November 8 has been identified as the date for the Fall community building workshop NAC is helping to host. The location will be the Tempe History Museum Community Room. Members agreed set up will be at 5 pm but still need to determine if start time will be 5:30 or 6 p.m.

Agenda Item 8 - NAC Working Groups Next Steps (Neighborhood Celebration and Future Workshops and Collaborative Opportunities)

After some brief discussion, members decided to have an October agenda item to discuss the awards categories. This will include discussion regarding whether to keep the same categories as last year or make changes to them or consideration of modeling the arts process with one universal application and members then needing to determine the awards name and type (if any) following submissions.

The NAC Workshop Working Group is not expected to meet until early next year looking at ideas for next Fall. Vice Chair Hagen will lead that Working Group and welcomes input anytime. A Neighborhood Celebration Working Group meeting will likely be held in November. Commissioner Granillo expressed interest in serving on that one. Staff reminded members that they cannot have a quorum at either working group so both are limited to seven members or less.

Agenda Item 9 - Proposed Future Agenda Items

Habitat for Humanity – staff will check availability for Nov.
Historic Preservation Ordinance – October
Working Groups Updates – As available
Neighborhood Awards categories – October
January meeting decision – Include on October or November agenda
Accessory Dwelling Unit (in single family neighborhoods) – December or January

Agenda Item 10 - Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Thomas
Reviewed by: Shauna Warner