

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: May 3, 2021

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Sara Lillevand, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Consideration of Traffic Calming Improvements to the Intersection of Grand Avenue and Lower Grand Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Take the following actions related to the intersection of Grand Avenue and Lower Grand Avenue.

1. Approve the design of the proposed traffic calming improvements to the intersection of Grand Avenue and Lower Grand Avenue;
2. Authorize Staff to solicit bids for the proposed improvements to the intersection of Grand Avenue and Lower Grand Avenue; and
3. If the project cost of bids received are below \$75,000 authorize the City Administrator to sign a contract with the lowest responsible bidder for installation of said improvements.

BACKGROUND

Grand Avenue is one of the major arterials within the City of Piedmont. It is a key connector to points in Oakland on both the southern and northern borders of the city. Grand Avenue has some of the highest traffic volumes within the City and carries a significant amount of “through traffic” passing through Piedmont. At the intersection of Grand and Lower Grand Avenues, the northbound traffic on Grand Avenue has to make a slight turn to the left to stay on Grand Avenue, while traffic heading Lower Grand Avenue and the surrounding streets continues straight ahead. For drivers unfamiliar with the intersection, this can be confusing. In addition, the geometry of the intersection and relatively straight entrance into the residential neighborhood can foster higher than desirable speeds. The combination of factors can cause an undue amount of traffic and speed in the neighborhood, but especially on Lower Grand Avenue as drivers attempt to get back onto Grand Avenue. Starting at its intersection with Holly Place, Lower Grand Avenue is a one-way, one-lane residential street that leads to Arroyo Avenue without any intersecting streets between these two points.

DISCUSSION

Piedmont’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (Page 91) (attached as Exhibit A) identifies this

intersection as one needing “additional traffic calming”. It goes on to say, “There is an unmet need for additional traffic calming measures along other streets and at other intersections, and also for more involved measures that serve a particular neighborhood...”

To this end, the discussion of improving the physical features of this intersection to purposefully direct the flow of northbound through traffic onto Grand Avenue has been underway for a few years, but was delayed due to the EBMUD project on Lower Grand Ave. Consistent with other similar intersections and the PBMP, Staff’s original intent was (and still is) to explore construction of a landscaped triangle in the same approximate location as the currently painted triangle, along with subtle improvements to create a traffic calming feature that included other benefits such as increased directional signage, obvious bike lanes, and green infrastructure.

However, Staff has recently been considering the less expensive but nevertheless effective traffic calming features of painted islands and triangles with reflective bollards as a way of implementing more traffic calming features sooner and for less cost. Consequently, staff and the City Engineer have adapted the original landscaped triangle concept into a solution that employs street paint, reflective bollards, signage, and a more visible bicycle lane delineation that serves to also help direct the traffic flow. The site plan and details of the proposed improvements is attached as Exhibit B.

The project will include the following elements:

- In the northbound direction, installation of a triangular-shaped painted island that is approximately in the same location as the current painted triangle. Adjustments have been proposed for lane widths and turning radii. The islands will also include flexible bollards around the perimeter of the island.
- In the southbound direction, installation of a new small painted triangular shaped bulb out adjacent to the curb in front of 1608 Lower Grand and a new sign indicating that through traffic on Grand Avenue should stay to the left. This small island will also have bollards around its perimeter. Additionally, arrows Grand Avenue will be installed to indicate the direction of traffic for through traffic proceeding north on Grand Ave.
- Installation of “ONE WAY” and “DO NOT ENTER” pavement markings for the northbound traffic on Lower Grand adjacent to the new island.
- Installation of new red curbing on the nose of the existing island at the Grand/Lower Grand intersection.
- New striping on the north side of the new island to include double yellow centerlines, “STOP” and a new limit line.
- Installation of new high visibility bicycle lane striping as the bicycle lane crosses the intersection of Grand/Lower Grand. The bike lane striping will include green high visibility pavement markings to alert drivers of the bicycle lane.
- Refreshing of all bicycle lane markings on Grand Avenue from Lower Grand Avenue to Rose Avenue on both sides of the street and including a buffer and bollards for the southbound bicycles at the curve on Grand Avenue just south of Lower Grand. This minor change incorporates comments provided by the PBAC when this concept plan was included for informational purposes at the November PBAC meeting.

It should be noted that moving forward with this interim striped island with bollards keeps this project within available funding limits, while providing an increase level of safety. Installation of the concepts shown does not preclude installation of a fully landscaped island at some point in the future. Timing and installation of a landscaped island at this location will depend on when or if funding becomes available. It should be noted that staff is regularly looking for funding opportunities for projects like landscaped islands (e.g. green infrastructure grants, clean water grants, etc.) Most funding is competitive and will be dependent on a number of factors (e.g. how much water can be collected/treated, etc.) If viable funding opportunities come up, staff will keep the Council informed.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pending approval of the Council, Staff will solicit bids from qualified companies for the installation of the proposed improvements, and if the total cost of the project falls within the purchasing limits of the City Administrator, authorize the City Administrator to sign the contract for installation. Funds for the implementation of this project will come from Measure BB, Pedestrian & Bicycle Funds.

By: Daniel Gonzales, Public Works Director
John Wanger, City Engineer

EXHIBIT A

Additional traffic calming

Some of the high-priority projects include or incorporate traffic-calming measures, including sidewalk bulb-outs as part of the high-visibility crosswalks and reduction of travel lanes as part of the road diets. There is unmet need for additional traffic calming measures along other streets and at other intersections, and also for more-involved measures that serve a particular neighborhood—similar to the landscaped street triangle at Ronada and Ramona Avenues or the triangle planned for the intersection of Linda and Kingston Avenues.

Like sidewalk bulb-outs, street triangles provide opportunities to incorporate environmentally sustainable stormwater management measures. Potential locations for new triangles include but are not limited to the following intersections:

- Moraga Avenue / Red Rock Road
- Grand Avenue / Lower Grand Avenue
- Magnolia Avenue / Nova Drive
- Highland Avenue / Sierra Avenue
- Blair Avenue / Blair Place / Calvert Court

4 | Programs

This section recommends a variety of efforts, grouped under five programs, that address the most common non-physical needs expressed by Piedmonters through the needs assessment process. The programs below essentially refine, consolidate and reorganize—based on feedback received from the public—the programmatic activities presented to the community earlier as part of the improvement options. The programs and activities within each program are listed in no particular order (they are not listed in order of importance or priority).

The programs would be led primarily by the Public Works Department (especially the spot improvement program) and the Police Department (namely activities related to enforcement, traffic safety and traffic education). Due to their nature, Safe Routes to School (SR2S) activities would be led by the Piedmont Unified School District (PUSD) or the Alameda County SR2S program, with support from the City (the City may choose to offer logistical or staff support or limited funding). Similarly, promotional and encouragement activities may be led by outside groups and organizations with support from the City.

It is intended that programmatic activities will occur throughout the duration of the PBMP's ten-year lifetime, rather than be one-time efforts. However, not all activities would necessarily be conducted at all times. The number and mix of activities offered or supported by the City will depend on the community's evolving needs and interests, on City staff resources and on available funding.

EXHIBIT B



