Insecurity, Identity, and Indifference: Uncovering the Challenges of the East Grand Business Corridor

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Abstract
In the effort to update the neighborhood plan for the Capitol East neighborhood in Des Moines, Iowa, the task of including the opinion of all stakeholders has been a key part of the process. The plan priority areas of housing, infrastructure, youth engagement and community building, not only have an affect on local residents but also on local businesses, visitors, institutions, and organizations among others involved in the neighborhood. The inclusion in the process of the perspectives of the stakeholders is vital for the ultimate success of the plan. Because of the critical role that the East Grand commercial corridor plays in the economic and cultural life of the Capitol East neighborhood, we wanted to obtain the perspective of the current occupants about both the current conditions in the neighborhood as well as the opportunities for neighborhood improvement.

Disciplines
Urban, Community and Regional Planning

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MEMORANDUM

Insecurity, Identity, and Indifference:
Uncovering the Challenges of the East Grand Business Corridor

Prepared for the Neighborhood Development Division
Office of Community Development
City of Des Moines

May 2014

By Johnny Alcivar

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THE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT
Department of Community and Regional Planning
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This memo was produced through the Neighborhood Project (TNP), a partnership between the City of Des Moines, Office of Community Development and the Department of Community and Regional Planning (CRP) at Iowa State University. TNP integrates place-based research, educational outreach, and community engagement to improve the development and design of urban neighborhoods, creating communities that are more sustainable, more equitable, and more robust. The heart of this effort is the CRP Community Planning Studio where students work with a designated neighborhood and neighborhood association to create an updated neighborhood revitalization plan.

Special thanks to Marie Louise Ryan who provided editorial assistance for the final version of this document.
INTRODUCTION

In the effort to update the neighborhood plan for the Capitol East neighborhood in Des Moines, Iowa, the task of including the opinion of all stakeholders has been a key part of the process. The plan priority areas of housing, infrastructure, youth engagement and community building, not only have an affect on local residents but also on local businesses, visitors, institutions, and organizations among others involved in the neighborhood. The inclusion in the process of the perspectives of the stakeholders is vital for the ultimate success of the plan. Because of the critical role that the East Grand commercial corridor plays in the economic and cultural life of the Capitol East neighborhood, we wanted to obtain the perspective of the current occupants about both the current conditions in the neighborhood as well as the opportunities for neighborhood improvement.

The businesses on the East Grand corridor represent a unique catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, and neighborhood residents recognize it as an asset for their community. Most of the business owners chose to locate in Capitol East because of the presence of their targeted clientele and the Latino concentration in the area. Yet, our outreach efforts revealed that these businesses also have struggles in the neighborhood. There was a clear consensus among business owners on topics such as crime, safety concerns, and lighting problems. Parking was another concern for most of the businesses.

Plans for further development are currently under exploration by private actors but persistent crime and safety concerns can make the area developers hesitate. In order to strengthen and expand the existing commercial development along East Grand, the existing businesses need physical and social improvements. This report recommends actions to address following three areas of concern: perceptions of insecurity, neighborhood identity problems, and city indifference. The recommendations here are based on data collected from existing businesses. The analysis of that data identified strategies to improve the business corridor in order to successfully overcome existing problems, lure future development, and increase economic growth and social capital in the neighborhood.
CONTEXT

The area of focus for this report overs a single block of East Grand Avenue. It begins at East 15th Street, where a QuikTrip gas station sits in front of a vacant lot, and then extends up to the four corners of East 16th Street along East Grand (see the back square on Figure 1). This area will be referred to as “the corridor.” Over the last decade, the corridor has developed from a single business to a commercial strip. Much of this expansion is the result of a Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) development project at this location. NDC is a local non-profit developer that focuses on enhancing neighborhoods and fighting deterioration through the development of projects that create housing, small businesses, and jobs.

Figure 1. Location of the East Grand Business Corridor

NDC approaches revitalization through bricks-and-mortar projects that improve existing structures and build new ones. The development in Capitol East falls short of extending from corner-to-corner on the northern side of East Grand Avenue, leaving the southern side of the
avenue untouched, creating potential for further development. The expected development on the southern side of the avenue has not yet taken place. A handful of empty lots remain undeveloped, which could be due to the recent economic downturn, yet the potential still remains.

The NDC development, utilizing smart growth and new urbanism ideas, was built with zero-setback from the street. The pedestrian friendly location has helped to promote the corridor, creating a commercial center that attracts small business owners from diverse backgrounds and for diverse uses. At the moment, the northern side of East Grand Avenue is home to 16 businesses within a one-block stretch, which includes two outside the NDC development and excludes two vacant spaces. The quantity rises to 24 businesses when including both sides of the avenue from East 15th to East 16th streets. Once the corridor crosses East 16th Street the number of businesses increases to more than 30. The increase is due to the commercial activity on the northeastern and southeastern corners of the intersection of East 16th and East Grand Avenue. The social fabric of the neighborhood has especially driven Latino businesses to the corridor. Nevertheless, the lower rent rates have also attracted Asian, African, and African-American owned businesses to the area. The existing diversity in the corridor, reflected in the population of the neighborhood, is considered an asset that could be further “exploited” as a pull factor to promote economic, social, and cultural development.

METHODS

The challenge of engaging business owners along the corridor turned out to be the same as any other public meeting: getting people to attend and participate. To maximize participation, a multi-pronged approach for engaging Latino businesses on the East Grand corridor was put into place. The first step was one-on-one interviews with structured and unstructured questions. These conversations provided a snapshot of the concerns of these businesses. The second prong, was a focus group intended to engage business owners in conversation with one another as they discussed opportunities for revitalization along the corridor.

In order to invite business owners to the focus groups, face-to-face invitations would be required. Letters and phone calls do not work when reaching out to populations that deal with trust concerns. Yet, gaining trust is a process that takes much more time to build. Hence, more effort is necessary in order to be considered a trustworthy individual in such a short period of time in any place, setting, or community. I reached out to community leaders with the intention of gaining access to business owners and building trust with them. Community and local leaders are a resource that needs to be tapped into and used to facilitate processes. Two of the Latino

1 Some potential commercial spaces on the southeastern corner of East 16th street and East Grand Avenue are being used currently as storage or residential space.
community leaders in the Des Moines area, one former NDC employee, Max Cardenas, and one ISED Ventures employee, Fernando Aveiga, served as the intermediaries with the businesses in the corridor. Max Cardenas, through his previous work with NDC, provided assistance with the businesses in the NDC development on East Grand. Cardenas introduced me to the owners of various businesses located on the commercial corridor and provided me with a list of names and phone numbers for those that we were not able to meet. Because of the relationships that he gained over his time at NDC, the owners that I met saw me as a trustworthy individual. As a result, the business owners were willing to confide in me with their opinions.

Aveiga, through his current work with ISED Ventures, helped with businesses outside the NDC development, especially those on the corners of East 16th street. ISED Ventures is a local organization focused on helping low and moderate income Iowans achieve financial stability. Fernando introduced me to female business owners of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds whom he had worked with in recent months. Thanks to the help, of these two intermediaries, business owners opened up to an unfamiliar face and provided information that would have not been shared otherwise. The one-on-one invitations through the trustworthy intermediary led to the initial conversations that would guarantee data production in case of their absence at the planned focus group. The conversations were the first step for engaging business owners. Through these conversations, I hoped to generate buy-in from the local business owners to support the ultimate plan and strategies, also to initiate data collection and to build up interest for the focus group (see Appendix A).

The second prong of the data collection was the focus group itself. The meeting would help identify key problems, additional concerns, and potential solutions that can influence the final recommendations. Moreover, to make the focus group more appealing to business owners, an invitation was extended to an ISU Extension Community and Economic Development Specialist. In addition to gathering more feedback from business owners about neighborhood improvement, the intent of the focus group was to improve communication between the actors involved. Another goal of the engagement was to demonstrate how meeting to discuss opinions, challenges, and opportunities can be beneficial for all parties involved.²

The focus group took place on Thursday, October 24th at 7pm on a vacant commercial space within the NDC development. The site was selected in order to make it more feasible for local business owners to attend, due to proximity and familiarity. Two local business owners attended the meeting after a failed attempt to conduct a focus group on the previous day.³ The conversation centered on their personal experiences and opinions of the neighborhood.

² Himar Hernandez was the ISU specialist invited, unfortunately he could not make it due to illness
³ First attempt was scheduled after lunch on Wednesday October 23rd – timing and notice may have affected the lack of participation and it was rescheduled to the next day
Categories included, but were not limited to, neighborhood location, crime, appearance, relationships with the police, and the potential interest in a neighborhood association (See Appendix B). An additional question regarding police relations was included as part of the focus group since crime and safety concerns frequently came up during face-to-face conversations with participants.

In order to include the perspectives of developers, both private and non-profit, we conducted two in-depth interviews. One with a local business owner interested in future development in the corridor and one with the executive director of NDC. The first interviewee was Juan Rodriguez, owner of Diversity Insurance and La Reina radio station located in the corridor. He extended a general invitation to inform the community of a possible zoning change for a potential development. The second interviewee was Abbey Gilroy, executive director of Neighborhood Development Corporation. These perspectives complemented the bottom-up approach of one-on-one conversation with local business owners.

**FINDINGS**

We collected data from 12 small-business owners in the corridor. A total of 13 businesses participated in this engagement process, which included both one-on-one conversations as well as a small focus group. We also attended an informational meeting regarding a new development on the corridor and spoke at length to the partners involved in that project and conducted an in-depth interview with the executive director of NDC. The raw data from these conversations can be found in Appendix A.

**One-on-One Conversations**

**Infrastructure**
We asked 10 of the 12 business owners who participated in this study an open-ended question regarding the infrastructure of the area. Half of the respondents (50%) identified “lighting” as an issue. Another three business owners (30%) had “no comment,” and one said the infrastructure in the immediate surroundings is “fine” (10%). The remaining business owner answered that the alley behind the East Grand development is a problem and should be paved to relieve parking and traffic within the development (10%).

**Location of Business**
We asked participants why their businesses were located on East Grand to gain an understanding of the perceived advantages of the location. Nine business owners answered the

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4 The process was conducted on different days, the first three businesses did not received structured questions as did the rest hence the variation in sample number across categories
question. Out of the respondents, a majority (78%) answered that the reason why they chose the location was due to the clientele and/or Latino concentration in the neighborhood. The Latino concentration category referred to both density of businesses and density of people in the neighborhood. One business (11%) has been at the same location for more than two decades. One business owner did not provide a comment.5

Problems with the Neighborhood
Participants were given the opportunity to provide their perspectives of the problems that affect the neighborhood. Seven business owners (59%) identified “crime and safety” as the main problem in the neighborhood.6 Two out of the previous seven, in addition to another business owner (25%), further commented that along with crime and safety, the homeless and drunks roaming and hanging out in and around the area were a problem. One participant (8%) identified car and pedestrian traffic on East Grand avenue as a problem and detailed how cars speed and pedestrians have trouble crossing the street. Another business owner (8%) expressed that there were no problems.

Other Problems or Issues
In this category, the answers had to be further dissected. The eight businesses in the NDC development largely agreed that parking was a big problem; 75% responded “parking.” One (12.5%) had no further problems and another (12.5%) talked about relocation. Once the parking category was separated as its own question, answers to the question ranged from cockroaches to complaints about informal uses within businesses to being victim of fraud to missing a “La Plaza” sign. Yet, none of the responses showed significant repetition except for “cockroaches” twice (22.5%).7

Business Association
Lastly, before conversations came to an end, participants were presented the question of whether or not they would be interested in a business association. The only question from the survey that requested a yes or no answer resulted in 78% of respondents saying they would be interested in participating in a business association compared to 22% answering no. Participants emphasized that more information would be needed. They also voiced a possible preference of bimonthly meetings instead of monthly.

5 The business owner that did not answer was reluctant to participate even though he had suffered a robbery over the summer.
6 Here “neighborhood” refers to the immediate surroundings of their businesses - the corridor
7 Businesses that mentioned cockroaches are physically located underneath residential premises
Focus Group

Five categories of questions guided the conversation during the focus group (see Appendix B). Four out of the five categories resembled the questions presented in initial round of one-on-one conversations. The fifth category regarding police relations was added due to the responses during those conversations. Two business owners took part in the focus group, one from a business established more than two decades ago and one from a business that was only a few weeks old. The results outline the following:

- Location, for the new business, was chosen due to Latino concentration. It is a center of attraction for clientele.
- Crime and safety was recognized as a problem for businesses and residents. Dark alleys used as escape routes for thieves.
- Neighborhood appearance, as well as crime and safety, is affected by lack of lighting and the presence of homeless/drunks.
- Both are interested in a business association. Recommended possibility of meetings to take place bimonthly.
- The two used to know the previous DMPD Latino Liaison for the area, Joe Gonzalez, but not the new one, Yanira Scarlett.

The additional question regarding relationship with the police Latino liaison was included to identify the level of familiarity and trust with police. The question led to further conversation and as a result the following were identified or noticed:

- Lack of police activity and attention around the corridor.
- Reactive to crime waves instead of proactive.
- Mistrust toward police still exists among business owners.

The meeting results supported the ideas behind the selected method; it produced data and proved that communication between owners is beneficial. The participants exchanged personal information to form a partnership and fill service gaps identified through the conversation.

Additional Engagement

Project in the works – Juan Rodriguez, Diversity Insurance

During the process, the owner of Diversity Insurance and La Reina radio station, Juan Rodriguez, invited stakeholders to a rezoning meeting. A member of our community

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8 This category was not included in questions used in the first prong.
9 Observed through body language during conversations.
10 These business are located in the corridor.
engagement team for the planning process participated in the meeting as an outside stakeholder and as a liaison to the neighborhood association. The meeting outlined a project in the works to develop the lot adjacent to the Diversity Insurance structure, also owned by the same owner. The project seeks to develop 4,000 to 5,000 square feet of retail and office space. The preliminary plans have already been presented to the City of Des Moines and they have agreed to facilitate the project as long as a zoning change is requested to allow for continuity of zero-setback design in the corridor. The City seeks to extend the existing design guidelines and standards that began with the NDC development across the street. The plan also consists of attracting new businesses to the neighborhood in order to avoid creating competition with existing services.

The meeting was for informational purposes. Despite the fact that an invitation was extended to over 20 stakeholders including other landowners, only a handful of individuals attended. Meeting participants included the partners involved in the project, the designers and architects, one adjacent landowner, and the neighborhood planning team member. The design of the projected structure was shown through a brief presentation.

At the meeting, stakeholders discussed the rezoning and the city’s stipulations for the project. Based on his experience with the design of the NDC development parking lots and the problems it has created for business owners, the adjacent landowner did not agree with placing parking in the back of commercial buildings. The owner also did not agree with the rezoning, but as long as the City would not force him to rezone the rest of his property in the future, he had no objection. When asked by a project partner if he would be willing to sell his land, the individual concurred. Once potential leasers have committed to the plan, the next step for the proposed project is to seek financing.

Meeting with Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC)
Due to the impact the NDC development has had in the corridor, their perspective and opinions were important to include in the process. Despite being new to the position, Abbey Gilroy, the executive director of NDC, has actively participated in the neighborhood revitalization planning process for Capitol East. She was invited and participated in the Steering Committee meetings, which sought partners to champion neighborhood revitalization strategies. On Thursday, October 31, 2013, we met and discussed the results from our survey of the corridor business owners.

Some of the information shared was already well-known by the executive director. She acknowledged knowing about the negativity towards the parking design from business owners, yet she emphasized that NDC has done all they can about that subject and nothing more is expected anytime soon. Cockroaches were a new issue; however, she was not surprised due to
recent experience with tenant residing above those businesses. Nevertheless, the residential premises are being remodeled which should potentially take care of that concern. Gilroy also recognized the broken relationship between commercial tenants and the police, sharing her belief that they do not report incidents. She believes the miscommunication exists because of trust issues toward police and also because of potential retaliation by criminals.

In addition to promising to look into solvable concerns, she also considered some of the other recommendations proposed by the business owners. One of the recommendations was paving the alley, which led to a conversation about a possible business moving into the neighborhood. Changes to the alley would have to consider a project under consideration: Scooter’s Coffeehouse, a regional franchise, which provides coffee among many other products. Scooter’s has looked into the possibility of opening up a branch in the Capitol East neighborhood. NDC owns the land that could be potentially leased to the corporation, which lies on the intersection of East 15th and East Grand Avenue. Contact has already been made with the City and design work is underway to determine feasibility of a potential structure with a drive-thru.

Moreover, Gilroy described the retention rates of the corridor as one of the best throughout all NDC developments. She described their tenants as business savvy individuals. Other than having to allocate resources to temporarily increase security in the area in the past, major problems have not occurred. In the last months, a new property manager was hired, Knapp Properties, to properly distribute the division of labor that previously fell entirely upon Terrus, Inc., who is also NDC’s realtor. While NDC is trying to delegate the load of the day-to-day maintenance relations and point of contact to Knapp Properties, it still remains very involved and interested in the wellbeing of their developments and immediate surroundings.

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11 Tenant was not complying to the lease terms – residential premise was not taken care of appropriately
ANALYSIS

By engaging with business owners and business-related interests in multiple venues, we were able to ask about issues that related to the priority areas of the neighborhood plan. Through these conversations, we were able to identify certain challenges and opportunities that businesses along the corridor shared in common. Three significant themes emerged: perceptions of insecurity, neighborhood identity problems, and a sense of indifference on the part of the city to the needs and concerns of the corridor.

Perceptions of Insecurity

Business owners and developers in the corridor share a perception of insecurity. Most business owners demonstrated concern regarding crime and safety in the area. Some of them tied insufficient lighting to the vulnerability of the corridor. One owner said, “Dark alleys and streets provide easy getaway options for criminals.” Another participant described the necessity to “…look both ways when closing up and sometimes even bring a [baseball] bat along just in case” when leaving at night. A long time tenant confirmed the reality of crime on the corridor: “I see the door of my business being forced and damaged all the time after failed attempts by robbers.” All of them except one acknowledged the two-week crime wave in the corridor which took place over the summer months of 2013. The business owner who did not acknowledge the occurrence had been the victim of a robbery at gunpoint during the crime wave.

Juan Rodriguez from Diversity Insurance and Abbey Gilroy from NDC also acknowledged the problem of crime in the area. Juan recounted how during the crime wave in the summer his business suffered a robbery at gunpoint recalling how “…it could have been a bloody situation if I would have had my gun with me.” Mr. Rodriguez shared with me, while his firearm hanged from his belt, how he never goes about without his personal gun except for that day when he had to leave it behind for a meeting. He acknowledged the fear of crime in the area and the actions he has taken in response, including the purchase of security cameras.

Abbey Gilroy acknowledged that NDC had to hire additional security for their development after the crime wave. She also remarked hearing from a tenant that the crime has increased due to the “Megabus bringing people from Chicago to Des Moines.” At the same time, she acknowledged knowing who the new Latino police liaison for the neighborhood is and also communicating problems to the police to get more patrol in the area in certain occasions.
Identity Problems

Throughout the data collection processes, I often had to describe the size and boundaries of the neighborhood to participants. Local business owners are not aware of the size and boundaries of Capitol East. They were aware of their immediate surroundings, but not the larger neighborhood. This is largely because most business owners do not reside in the neighborhood. That unfamiliarity and lack of identity for the neighborhood can present a problem for marketability of these businesses.

The lack of neighborhood identity also means that businesses tend to individualize themselves instead of forming possible coalitions. It contributes to the thought of “me,” the business, instead of “us,” the businesses in the neighborhood. The theme is reinforced by the identification of businesses by the racial background of the owner instead of the business itself. For example, phrases such as the “Asian business” or the “Hispanic store” were common in the neighborhood. While different in terms of ownership or target population, the goals and difficulties faced by small businesses in the area are largely the same.

A shared identity helps to facilitate cooperation and build social capital. When the shared identity is based on the neighborhood and not race or ethnicity, it allows participants reach across these traditional boundaries. Bilingual intermediaries can help with outreach and with building communication among local businesses. When social capital is high, business owners communicate, form relationships, and share knowledge. They develop a sense of a shared future and are able to identify solutions to their shared problems.

City Indifference

Many participants in this study referenced their sense of being in an area that is unimportant to the “city.” When they referred to the “city,” respondents were referring city officials and departments but also non-profits, private organizations, and actors that are actively involved in other parts of town. One business owner said that the police do not care about the problems in the area because, “A lot of Latinos live in the area. If it was a white neighborhood, someone would be in jail.” This individual had suffered a house burglary in Capitol East that was never solved.

Another owner mentioned that whenever they have an infrastructure issue, in this case a burnt out street light in the parking lot, nobody knows who is responsible for it. This person stated that light had been out for more than a year and suggested that he should “maybe put up balloons and a happy birthday sign” to see if it gets the necessary attention. He acknowledged calling the property manager and that they had told him to call the city. When he called the city the opposite response was given. He concluded that, “Nobody cares about what happens in this
part of town,’’ even though, “we are so close to the capitol.’’ Looking across East 15th Street to the Capitol Complex, one sees a drastic difference. It is a tale of two cities, yet nobody lives in one of them.

More metro-area stakeholders need to be involved and engaged in the neighborhood. Cultural differences are not an excuse for overlooking any area of any city. One of the partners from the proposed commercial development in the corridor mentioned that while the area is economically vibrant and has a lot of potential, “It does not catch the attention of the city nor of other organizations involved with local businesses.” Nevertheless, he seemed optimistic about seeing changes in the future and in the possibilities for development in the neighborhood. Another neighborhood developer, NDC has contributed greatly to the commercial revitalization of the neighborhood, but it alone cannot carry the burden. The support needed in the Capitol East neighborhood goes beyond the range of their services as developers and property owners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below provide possible solutions for addressing the challenges of insecurity, neighborhood identity, and city indifference. These recommendations are based on the data collected through the Capitol East neighborhood revitalization planning process and in particular, the data collected for this report. The following aim to decrease the problems and issues described by business owners on the corridor. Listed in order of significance, the recommendations are the following:

- Increase lighting in the corridor
- Increase police patrol and relationships in the area
- Increase communication and relations between police liaisons and business owners
- Improve signage around neighborhood gateways portraying Capitol East logo
- Improve signage within NDC development and immediate surroundings
- Pavement of alley behind NDC development
- Promote events that engage local businesses – cultural and/or social events
- Intensify City involvement in easing and facilitating development projects in the area
- Create local business development workshops
- Identify bilingual intermediaries to gain “trust” needed for interaction with business owners
- Promote the creation of East Grand Business Association through intermediary
- Promote and increase involvement and outreach of East & South Des Moines Chamber of Commerce in this area
- Increase information and availability of resources available to small-business owners
• Create a local committee focused on neighborhood businesses with Neighborhood Association involvement
• Identify resources targeting small-business for security cameras and/or security lights
• Identify local business development institutions and create business incubator for East Des Moines area

In terms of physical solutions, a drastic reduction of vacant lots in the corridor would be accomplished if both the proposed projects discussed in this report (commercial building and Scooter’s) take place. These recommendations are intended to facilitate successful completion of those projects and contribute to thriving businesses on the corridor. Including as many of these proposals as possible in the updated neighborhood will underscore their importance and the city’s commitment to supporting businesses on the corridor. Solutions for social issues take more time and effort to be effective.

In conclusion, the recommendations presented here seek to not only solve existing physical problems, but also to improve local relationships among various stakeholders and to boost additional economic growth and entrepreneurship in the area. All of the recommendations are feasible and attainable. Building on the existing assets created by the business corridor can help solve the problems that arise out of insecurity, lack of identity, and indifference. Lighting solutions and police presence can help create a sense of security, which at the moment is the main concern for the local business owners. Improving relationships and getting intermediaries involved, demonstrated through my processes, show how people can be reached out to and contribute to building trust within multicultural populations with trust concerns. Seeking out existing organizations and stakeholders that are involved in the betterment of communities is important to further enhance existing social capital. Creating alternatives so that local businesses can organize and seek solutions for themselves is a way of empowering and delegating responsibility. People are eager to create relationships that will be beneficial to their businesses, yet the presence of an organization is lacking. There needs to be a bridge to cover these disconnections which can blossom with the help of the city revitalization process, the partners for the plan implementation, and an active neighborhood association involvement.
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS WITH BUSINESSES OWNERS ON EAST GRAND CORRIDOR

The interviews were also used to extend an invitation to participate in the focus group. This helped as a motivator to engage local business owners. One-on-one conversations took place at their local businesses. Many themes emerged from conversation. Topics included: the neighborhood, business location, business appearance, landlord relations, and the possibility of starting a business association.

Business #1

- Interested in neighborhood association
- Has ideas regarding the pavement of the alley behind the business corridor to allow for entry/exit given the current disregard of using the one way street as a one way street
- Frustrated that developer promised to install a name (La Plaza) on the common shared space and it never happened
- Traffic on East Grand does not slow then when approaching development.
- Issue with pedestrian access and crossings (crosswalks at light which are far from each other)
- Parking concerns – not adequate (ratio of businesses to parking spots too low)

Business #2

- Concerns regarding parking – when summed up and divided by businesses in development, it does not provide adequate distribution of parking per business
- Business permits should be checked from time to time by the city to verify permitted uses are taking place not extracurricular uses (such as hair services at nail salon).
- Potentially interested in neighborhood association but needs more information. One meeting every 2 months would be something that owners could do (once a month is probably too much).

Business #3

- Issue with safety. Everyday it gets worse
- Had a problem with homeless people harassing customers
- Had previously been robbed at a different location nearby
- Maintenance issues (cockroaches)
- Not interested in business association – “We already tried and it didn’t work. We (Hispanics) don’t attend, if we don’t talk then it doesn’t work.”

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12 The identity of individual businesses was kept confidential
Business #4

- Crime and safety a concern
- Lighting in the back of the development is a concern. Some lights are not working
- Yes, they would be interested in participating in a business association

Business #5

- Likes the community: the social fabric, Hispanic sector, businesses
- Has not had any robberies, but insecurity exists
- Has suffered fraud
- More light/lighting is needed
- No landlord issues (new landlord)
- Interested in business association (once every two months)

Business #6

- Reluctant to speak (even though I heard that this business suffered a robbery)
- Said safety and infrastructure were fine
- Not interested in business association
- Landlord relationship its ok
- No parking issues

Business #7

- Mentioned suffering robberies but 3 months ago (still short term)
- Parking issue
- Good neighbors
- Landlords are good attending to their needs

Business #8

- Hispanic concentration – people are from small towns/humble
- Safety is an issue – People deal with fear and businesses close early in prevention
- One of two businesses on the back side of development (where there is not much activity)
- Homeless people are troublesome – bother/harass customers, hang out by taco truck drinking all day
- Revitalization/renovation should take place to the east in continuum with corridor
- Roaches (under apartments) – Knapp Properties (possible move?)
- She would be interested in Business association
Business #9

- Being located in a Latino/Hispanic zone/area is good for business
- Parking is needed
- Drunks in the area are a problem
- Lack of lighting is a problem
- Good relations between business owners
- Business association would be good
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP OF BUSINESS OWNERS ON EAST GRAND

Two individuals participated in the focus group. One had been previously interviewed. The second was new to the process.

1. Why did you choose this location?
   - 22 years at the same location – Business previously owned by brother-in-law
   - 2 weeks – Has lived in the neighborhood for a long time and owns 3 businesses
   - Both agree that the location is center of attraction for Latino population, hence the center of the targeted clientele
   - NDC has created an opportunity for this “center” to flourish

2. Crime
   - One business suffered a robbery two years ago. The police responded an hour later.
   - Claims if you are Hispanic/Latino, the police don’t help you.

   Anecdote: “Suspect” from robbery went to the business owner’s home to “sell him/her back his/her license” because he knew “it was hard to get one.” The respondent played along and went to get wallet to attempt calling cops. By the time s/he got back to the door, the guy had run off. A week later his/her house was burglarized, three TV’s and two computers were taken. Fingerprints were taken but the case remains unsolved.

   - People have tried unsuccessfully to force the doors at one respondent’s business
   - Over the summer (June 2013) there were 7 robberies over a two-week span at the business corridor. Security has been hired and that has helped somewhat
   - The near-by burned church used to help homeless. Since it closed due to the fire there has been less crime

3. Official Police Liaison to the Latino Community
   - Both respondent used to know Joe Gonzalez (the previous liaison)
   - Neither knows the newly hired Yanira Scarlett

4. Neighborhood Appearance
   - It’s affected by the presence of drunks
   - Lighting is an issue overall. East Grand corridor is very dark at night making it vulnerable to crime. Alleys (between buildings as well as within blocks) are also dark and used as an escape way for thieves

13 The identity of businesses was kept confidential
• Potential solution ideas: Security lights and/or fence/gates on alleys between buildings
• Idea that paving alley would help with parking issue (Tasty tacos block as reference) and with in-and-out vehicular traffic. “Some people already use it like that anyway” and do not follow one-way restriction.

5. Business Association
• Both would be interested in either monthly or bimonthly meetings