



Summit Hill

ASSOCIATION

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Dear Mayor Carter and Council Member Noecker:

For the last five years, the Summit Hill Association (SHA) has worked in collaboration with your offices, Grand Avenue Business Association (GABA), neighboring district councils, and residents to explore ideas for the future of Grand Avenue. Dating back to 2020, SHA participated in The Future is Grand Task Force, as requested by Council Member Noecker and submitted draft recommendations on how the City of Saint Paul could support the once-vital commercial corridor of Grand Avenue.

In the last year, our neighborhood has experienced some shining success – from the completion of Kenton Place to a safe, vibrant Grand Old Day celebration. However, we also have experienced the exodus of businesses, with a majority of closures being in the Summit Hill neighborhood. This trend is not new, but it is reaching a breaking point and our community is seeking your immediate partnership to ensure that Grand Avenue is part of the City’s vision to meet today’s needs and contribute to a sustainable economic future.

The Future is Grand Task Force recommended six actions for the City’s consideration. There has been minimal progress on just one of these recommendations:

Improve pedestrian experience of an historic and vital corridor through art, signage, retail beautification and transit.

Update: Minimal progress. In collaboration with volunteers and the City of Saint Paul, SHA and GABA installed flower baskets, stood up an Adopt-a-Tree program to water newly-planted trees.

Focus on priority maintenance that improves accessibility, parking and appeal of public spaces.

Update: Minimal progress. In connection with Grand Old Day, crosswalks were repainted.

Protect livelihoods of our small business base and commercial corridors by slowing the rate of growth of taxes, fees and other costs of doing business.

Update: No progress. Property taxes have continued to increase and a newly-passed sales tax, while perhaps needed, will increase the cost of doing business in the city.

Foster collaboration of Grand Avenue stakeholders on funds for Grand Avenue commercial corridor to engage the community and plan for future density, open space, residential and commercial areas.

Update: No progress.

Convene local thought leaders and innovators to examine creative and experimental approaches to generate new sources of city revenue to enable investment in infrastructure, multi-modal accessibility, and enhanced quality of life.

Update: Very minimal progress. The City has participated in working groups convened by district councils but these groups do not have resources to do the examination proposed in this recommendation.

Develop innovative solutions to filling vacant storefronts through short-term tax relief, flexible incentives and grants, pilot programs and active engagement with property owners.

Update: No progress targeted at Grand Avenue.

We acknowledge that a lot has happened since the task force recommendations – namely, a global pandemic. That is why we are hopeful that we can now reignite conversations about the future of Grand Avenue. We have heard loud and clear from voices throughout the neighborhood that saving and revitalizing Grand Avenue is a top priority. But we cannot do this work alone.

We respectfully request a meeting with Mayor Carter, Council Member Noecker, staff from City of Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development, representatives of Grand Avenue Business Association and Summit Hill Association board members to directly discuss the current state of Grand Avenue, the City's vision for the future, the neighborhood's expectations, and a plan forward. We feel the time has come to move beyond admiration of the problems and move to action.

Your office can work through SHA Executive Director, Monica Haas, to schedule a time in the coming month. In advance, thank you for prioritizing this conversation and demonstrating a commitment to the vitality of all commercial corridors in the city.

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Haas, Summit Hill Association (District 16), Executive Director
Simon Taghioff, Summit Hill Association (District 16), President
Chris Jensen, Grand Avenue Business Association, Board Chair

cc: Nicolle Goodman, City of Saint Paul, Director of Planning and Economic Development