

# Olive Boulevard Design Guidelines

University City, MO



## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX - C



The use of citizen participation is an essential component in reaching a public consensus or “common philosophy” within the community. Planners, regardless of their personal talents and capabilities, working in isolation and apart from the client, will not be able to craft design guidelines that will be accepted to the community. Engaging the community in conversation can strengthen the preparation of guidelines for Olive Boulevard by utilizing local knowledge of the various stakeholders. A collaborative process that includes various methods of public engagement provides a more open, inclusive, and interactive way of involving citizens in the total planning process.

The public engagement process in developing the Olive Boulevard Design Guidelines included business owners along the corridor, public agencies providing infrastructure and utility information, the public at large, and City officials. This was accomplished using three (3) methods:

1. Electronic Community Survey – Available to All
2. Discussion with MoDOT
3. Focus Group Session

### **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

An interactive survey containing questions based on a variety of topics was posted on University City’s homepage and made available to the general public. This survey allowed citizens to respond to specific questions from the comfort of their homes. Refer to Appendix-D to read the survey questions.

The expected time for completing the survey was 10-15 minutes and it contained carefully selected questions prepared by the consultants and reviewed by the City officials. The intent of the survey was to use technology to reach a large number of citizens and to receive input related to a unified vision for the Olive Boulevard study area. Those that lacked access to computers were encouraged to fill out a paper survey and return it to the City. Business owners and residents along Olive Boulevard were also mailed surveys for their use. A total of 152 responses were received by the end of the survey period (October 15<sup>th</sup> to November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007).

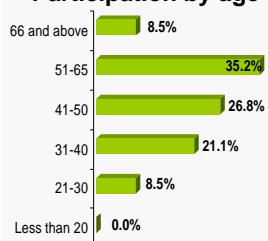
The participants of the public survey belonged to various age groups as shown below:

- 35% of the participants were ages ranging from 51 to 65 years
- 48% of the participants ages ranging from 31 to 50 years
- 0% of the participants were under 20 years

Respondents were asked to identify if they lived, worked or owned a business along Olive Blvd:

- 73% of the respondents live in the City
- 13% work on Olive Boulevard
- 11% own a business or commercial establishment on Olive Boulevard.

**Graph B.1:  
Participation by age**

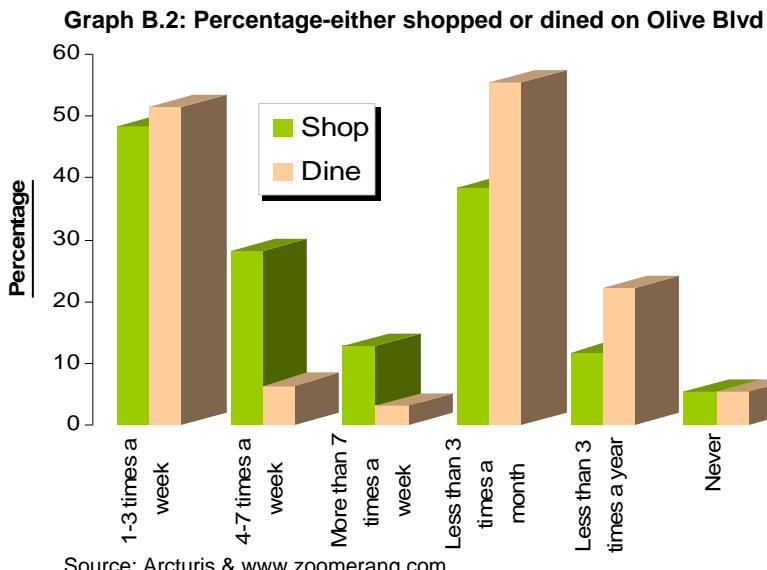


Source: Arcturus &  
[www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com)

Participants were asked how often they shop or dine on Olive Boulevard:

- 35% participants shop or dine 1 to 3 times a week
- 35% participants shop or dine less than three times a month

Graph B.2 shows the percentage of participants that shopped or dined in the study area. Results showed that among the people who participated in the survey, more people dine on Olive compared to those who shop



*Survey showed that among the people who participated in the survey, more people dine on Olive compared to those who shop...*

The survey participants were asked to list three (3) things that they like and disliked about Olive Boulevard. Table B.1 summarizes the responses below:

**Table B.1: Likes and Dislikes about Olive Blvd**

Like about Olive Blvd	Dislike about Olive Blvd
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to 1-170 &amp; close to Metro Link stations</li> <li>▪ Asian stores &amp; restaurants</li> <li>▪ Central location</li> <li>▪ Convenience</li> <li>▪ Diversity of peoples, cultures, businesses, restaurants, products &amp; services</li> <li>▪ Eclectic flavor and ethnic feel</li> <li>▪ Convenient parking</li> <li>▪ Heman Park facility and centennial commons</li> <li>▪ Historic character</li> <li>▪ The remaining street front buildings</li> <li>▪ Olive Boulevard's Farmers' Market</li> <li>▪ Proximity to home &amp; work</li> <li>▪ Schnucks, Aldi's and Walgreens</li> <li>▪ The old style lights up and down the street</li> <li>▪ The center turn lane</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4-way stop before Skinker (need to add full light &amp; sensor)</li> <li>▪ New and old streetscapes especially sidewalk treatment</li> <li>▪ Abandoned and unkempt properties</li> <li>▪ Poor signage and advertising</li> <li>▪ Businesses spaced too far apart</li> <li>▪ Disjointed and unrecognizable theme with inconsistent building designs</li> <li>▪ Unsafe for pedestrians &amp; bikes</li> <li>▪ Characterless strip malls</li> <li>▪ No landscaping &amp; cluttered look</li> <li>▪ Criminal events</li> <li>▪ East Olive Boulevard is too industrial</li> <li>▪ Lack of a large anchor stores</li> <li>▪ Shops not visible due to trees</li> <li>▪ Lack of police visibility</li> <li>▪ Accessibility in and out of parking lots and hard to make turns</li> <li>▪ Parking and asphalt surfaces</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic moves smoothly and at a good pace</li> <li>▪ University City banners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor business configuration</li> <li>▪ Circulation and parking around shops</li> <li>▪ Boulevard not lighted at night</li> </ul>
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Source: Arcturus & [www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com)

In order to understand the demand of goods and services in the area, the survey participants were asked to list three (3) new stores or other businesses that would interest them to visit the corridor more often. The businesses range from restaurants to various boutique retail stores to larger anchor stores. Some of the most repetitive and interesting responses are listed below:

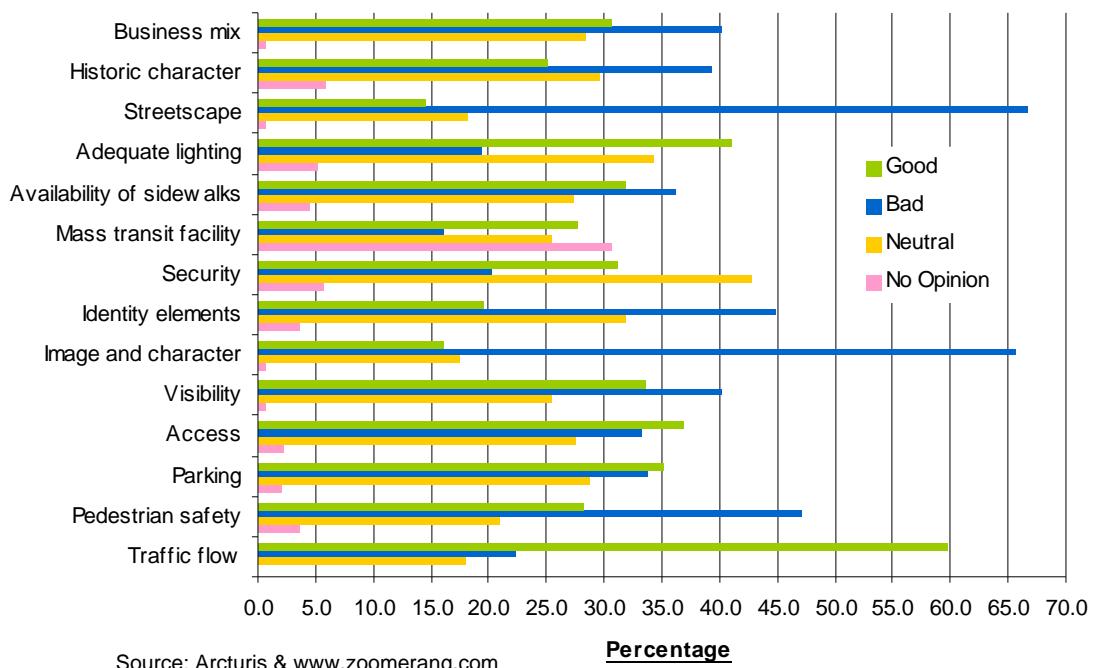
- Local or chain hardware or home improvement stores like Home Depot or Lowes
- Health and whole food stores like Trader Joes
- Furniture stores similar to IKEA or Good Works
- Antiques, resale store
- Multi-culture medical and gifts shops
- Art supply hobby stores and classes
- Local artists' paintings
- Ethnic grocery store
- Restaurants like Applebee's/ Bread Company/ Olive Garden/ Red Lobster
- Bakery/ café/ coffee shops/ bars/ donut shops/ ice-cream parlor
- Local or chain bookstores like Borders
- Big box stores similar to Sams, Costco, Wal-mart, Target, K-mart, Kohl's
- Clothing and shoe stores for men, women and children
- Grocery store and department stores
- Florist, gardening stores and nursery
- Electronics store
- Saloons, gyms/ yoga classes
- Movie theatre and video stores
- Pet store

The participants were also asked to rate various elements that make up a streetscape as obtained from conversations with various participants regarding Olive Boulevard redevelopment. The rating ranged from very good to very bad. Graph B.3 below gives a summary of the participants rating of these elements

Some of the negative elements rated by participants included overall streetscape, pedestrian safety, image and character of buildings and identity of the corridor (gateways, light poles, banners, public art) along Olive Boulevard. Respondents rated traffic flow and adequate lighting positively. Of the fourteen (14) elements listed on Graph B.3, six (6) received positive rating and 8 receive negative rating. Table B.2 below lists the same:



**Graph B.3: Rating of various elements along Olive Blvd**



Source: Arcturis & www.zoomerang.com

Percentage

**Table B.2: Elements with positive & negative rating**

More positive than negative	More negative than positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic flow</li> <li>▪ Availability of parking</li> <li>▪ Access (in and out of the driveways)</li> <li>▪ Security (personal and store safety)</li> <li>▪ Mass transit facility (location and spacing of bus stops)</li> <li>▪ Adequate lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pedestrian safety</li> <li>▪ Adequate visibility (visibility of retail stores and signage)</li> <li>▪ Image and character of the boulevard</li> <li>▪ Identity elements (gateways, light poles, banners, portals, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Availability of sidewalks</li> <li>▪ Streetscape (aesthetic appeal of the street)</li> <li>▪ Historic character</li> <li>▪ Business mix</li> </ul>

Source: Arcturis & www.zoomerang.com

Participants were also asked to identify redevelopment areas in the study area. The majority of the respondents answered that the entire Olive Boulevard corridor is in need of redevelopment. Every intersection was listed by one person or the other several times as being in need of upgrade. Major intersections, such as those formed by Skinker, Ferguson, Kingsland, Midland, Pennsylvania and McKnight were repeatedly referred by citizens. The now vacant "Value City" lot, strip malls, parcels across from Heman Park, and several parcels east of I-170 were also suggested as redevelopment areas.

Participants were asked to list activities they would like to see within these redevelopment areas. The responses had many suggestions ranging from



commercial to entertainment to residential. Most of the suggestions included businesses and stores similar to those identified on previous pages. Other suggestions included:

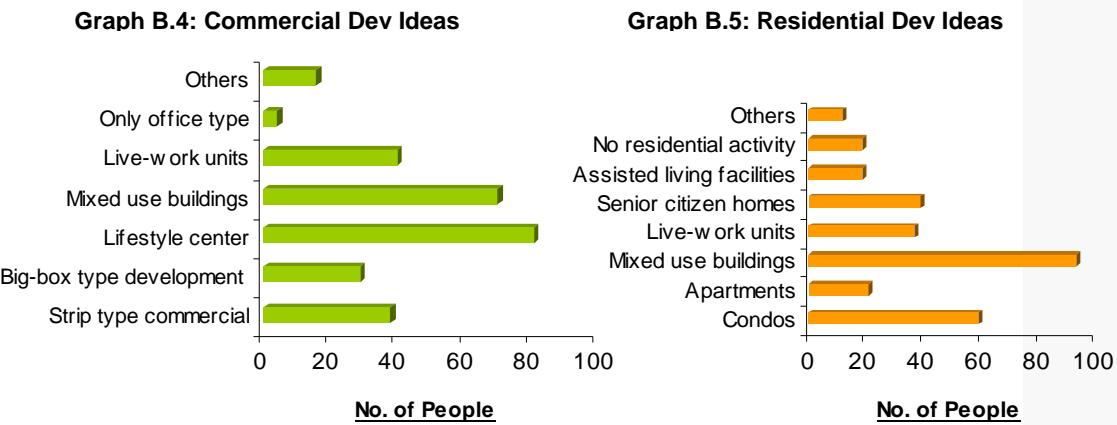
- Parking lot with shuttles
- Metrolink train station at Olive and I-170
- Street maintenance and wider sidewalks
- Clean up vacancy between Skinker and Pennsylvania
- Mixed Use, live work units, condos, a lifestyle center
- Outdoor farmers' market
- Outside pedestrian mall for shopping and dining
- Businesses with regular hours
- Community gardens, small parks and green space
- More community engagement programs
- Music festivals at Heman Park
- Annual ethnic festivity and culture events
- "Taste of ...." Festivals (taste of the "world", taste of "University City")
- Yearly business festivals for business promotions
- Support your Neighborhood Day or "Neighborhood Night Out" celebrations
- Street fair and live music
- Officially pronounce or designated as a "China Town"
- Artists selling their work on the street (Like Soho in New York)

Participants were asked to list any streets in the St. Louis area that can act as model streets for the consultants in formulation of design guidelines. The suggestions are listed below. Most of the streets chosen were pedestrian friendly streets with compact or dense development. Many of the streets were selected due to their historic characteristics.

- Olive Boulevard in Creve Coeur
- Olive Boulevard in Olivette
- Forsyth Boulevard in Clayton
- Maryland Avenue in St. Louis
- South Grand Boulevard in St. Louis
- Washington Ave between Tucker & 20th Street in St. Louis
- The Delmar Loop area in University City
- Manchester Road in Maplewood
- Kirkwood Road in Kirkwood
- Main Street in St. Charles
- Manchester Road in Rock Hill
- Manchester in Ballwin
- Florissant Road in Florissant
- Big Bend Boulevard in Webster Groves
- The Promenade in Brentwood
- Forest Park Parkway east of Kingshighway in St. Louis
- Park Avenue in St. Louis

Finally, participants were asked to select those residential and commercial developments that they would like to see developed in the study area. The most

popular choice in the commercial category was lifestyle centers<sup>1</sup> and mixed use buildings<sup>2</sup>. Live-work<sup>3</sup> units were also welcomed as ideas for commercial development (See Graph B.4). In response to residential needs, respondents mentioned mixed use buildings and condo units. Live-work units and senior citizen homes were also chosen as other residential structures that would be desirable along Olive Boulevard (See Graph B.5).



Source: Arcturis & www.zoomerang.com

## DISCUSSION WITH MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) has jurisdiction over the Olive Boulevard alignment from Ferguson Avenue on the east to I-170 on the west in the study area. The alignment boundaries generally extend from the property line of adjacent parcels on both sides of the boulevard. This section of Olive Boulevard is considered a major collector road and as such may not be obstructed with design details such as:

- On street parking
- Bump-outs or other similar traffic calming design elements
- Design elements that span the width of the alignment such as archways
- Any change in access from the street to parcels will need to be approved by MoDOT

Design elements that may be incorporated along the alignment include:

- Portal elements installed outside the right-of-way that add interest and identification to locations and special districts
- Medians that are landscaped and located at major intersections

P-B.1: Landscaped Medians will be permitted by MoDOT



P-B.2: Design elements spanning across the street will not be permitted by MoDOT



<sup>1</sup> **Lifestyle center:** An outdoor shopping center or mixed used commercial development that serves the traditional retail functions of a shopping mall but with leisure amenities oriented towards upscale consumers

<sup>2</sup> **Mixed use** with retail below and residential or offices above

<sup>3</sup> **Live-work units** are specifically designed to enable both residential and business use. While in “work from home”, the work use of a unit is usually secondary to the domestic use, in a “live-work” unit the amount of space devoted to the work use is designed to accommodate more workers and may be designed in a more flexible space layout to encourage business expansion needs.



- Paved or decorative crosswalks at major intersections that project visual interest and create safe passage to pedestrians
- Creative signage installed outside the right-of-way that can identify special districts and add interest to the corridor

### **FOCUS SESSION**

Typically a focus session consists of pre-screened individuals to ensure that each group member is representative of the relevant target population and an authentic subgroup of the study area. There are usually six (6) to ten (10) citizens in the focus groups, and the sessions usually last for 1-1/2 to 2 hours. A moderator leads the group through discussions based on topics that affect the subject study area.

The discussions are loosely structured, and the moderator encourages the free flow of ideas. The moderator provides a list of objectives to the participants in order to establish topics of conversation pertinent to the study area. He/she generally has only a few specific questions prepared prior to commencement of the focus group. These questions serve to initiate open-ended discussions. The discussions for Olive Boulevard were recorded in writing.

***Olive Boulevard Business Owners' Focus Session:*** A total of seven (7) business owners attended the focus session. The session began by dividing the participants in two groups. Each group was then assigned a task to identify three (3) positive and three negative aspects of Olive Boulevard. As the individual groups completed their assignment, they were brought together to discuss the issues in greater depth. The subjects discussed are listed below:

#### **Positive aspects**

- Cultural diversity
- Centrally located
- Lots of people

#### **Negative Aspects**

- Shallow parcels
- Appearance of Buildings
- Spot Zoning
- Crime
- Parking lighting

#### **Summary of Focus Group Topics and Comments**

- Diversity along Olive Boulevard was the first subject discussed as a group. All participants agreed that the area businesses are diverse resulting in a lack of "identity" for the corridor. Business owners agreed, in order to attract more business and repetitive business, an identity for the corridor needs to be determined and advertised.
- Olive Boulevard has a concentration of ethnic restaurants including Chinese and Vietnamese. The Chinese Chamber of Commerce representative told the participants that their organization has been



instrumental in providing advice to many Asian restaurant owners and has recently begun language assistance to assure their success in communicating with diners and in the operation of their businesses. However, this group of business owners does not typically concentrate on marketing their establishments. Since customers are usually not Asian, these owners need to rapidly learn English and the importance of marking their businesses.

- The Asian grocery stores primarily attract Asian populations. The concentration of food and services provided by these businesses add to the market strength of the corridor.
- When asked if the business owners' support preparing design guidelines for the corridor subject to specific "districts" based on the physical and market characteristics of the corridor, the concept was well received. Understanding the existing conditions and market strength of each district may also allow for specific incentives to be identified for future application and enhancement of the corridor.
- It was the opinion of the group that business owners need to become involved in the implementation of the design guidelines and any future planning and implementation of improvements. In the past there have been attempts to designate a section of Olive Boulevard as "China Town". However, this idea was strongly opposed by the surrounding community. It was felt that the identity and diversity of the entire community was being ignored and in order to create a "Special Ethnic District" all cultures need to be represented. The concept of an American "melting pot" of goods and services that caters to all ethnic groups is more acceptable and could facilitate festivals and other publicity events that will assist in growing businesses along the Olive Boulevard corridor.
- The lack of depth prevalent in existing parcel configurations was discussed during the session. Shallow lots tend to limit redevelopment and prohibit the development of larger retail and commercial investment without the acquisition of buildings and land adjacent to the proposed redevelopment areas. The consultants discussed off setting this condition by development of strategically placed parking decks throughout the corridor that satisfies parking requirements while allowing for more dense development of structures to occur on existing parcel sizes. By understanding land use and the strategic placement of parking decks within a commercial environment, traffic and pedestrian traffic can be predicted. Garages may be developed to include retail and commercial space within the structure to add to the overall "streetscape" within the retail and commercial areas of the corridor.

Maintenance of buildings and store fronts were discussed with the business owners. Many owners felt that new buildings, if not maintained, begin to look old and out of place. Overgrown trees and poorly designed landscaping hides signage and retards the visibility for customers. It was suggested that many of the poorly maintained structures are owned by individuals and agencies not occupying the space and the costs associated with the long term maintenance of



property is left to the tenants. The owners suggested the following recommendations:

- Enforce Codes
- Educate business owners about the codes and their purpose
- Establish recommended landscape layouts that respects retailer signage and its importance to their success
- Landscape those properties that have no investment in green space along the corridor
- Plant small decorative trees along the street and maintain the tree stock
- Design distinct landscape elements that reflect the land uses along the corridor
- Crime along Olive Boulevard was discussed by this group and it was their consensus that crime has escalated over the past few years. There is more shop-lifting in summers probably due to summer breaks. Car break-ins, vandalism, pan handlers, homeless people sitting and sleeping along the corridor, and drug sales have all increased. The business owners acknowledged that these increases have occurred in spite of a strong police presence along the corridor.

The “loop district” in University City was discussed as an important model for the Olive Boulevard corridor. The “loop district” is a special taxing district and enjoys other incentives as well. Business owners in loop district have agreed to tax themselves an additional assessment which is used for landscaping, signage and other amenities that provide stability and aesthetic treatment for the common areas. It was the consensus of this focus group that Olive Boulevard also needs to take a visionary approach to managing this corridor, including the possibility of establishing a special tax district.

A potential obstacle for change and implementation of new ideas is the River Des Peres floodplain. There are currently buildings in the floodplain area and when demolished these buildings will probably not be rebuilt. While steps can be taken to build in floodplain, the construction cost of raising land above the elevation of the floodplain is costly and long term.

Discussion related to aesthetic appeal and maintenance of the corridor resulted in a series of suggestions documented below:

- Move utilities underground
- Buildings to be developed as two and three story structures
- Keep building and parking lot lighting on during the night
- Improved landscaping
- Hold owners accountable for the upkeep of their buildings
- Address the visual condition of the Skinker Boulevard intersection with landscaping and appropriate signage