Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway (MANGo)

Santa Monica, CA

Project Identity and Location: The Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway (MANGo) Concept Plan describes the community's vision for a Neighborhood Greenway through the Pico Neighborhood in Santa Monica, from Bergamot to the Beach, based on a year of innovative public engagement, including a pop-up installation/ community workshop. MANGo will run along Michigan Avenue with a beach connection on its west end and two prongs on the east. One route will connect over the 10 freeway to Bergamot Station, while another continues through the Pico Neighborhood to the south of the freeway.

Purpose of Project: The Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway (MANGo) is envisioned as a system of livable streets with enhanced facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. The project is intended to create an inviting streetscape to provide a safe and comfortable place for neighbors of all ages to walk, bike, relax and interact with one another. It will serve to connect residents and visitors on foot and by bicycle with schools, job centers, and future Metro Expo Line stations and will improve the quality of the environment and enhance the livability of the Pico Neighborhood. The Concept Plan proposes design criteria and implementation guidelines for the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway (MANGo) route. Planners and designer may use this document to guide implementation and phasing of prioritized MANGo projects while community members may use this document as a tool for empowerment and City accountability. This document may also be used as a foundational tool to apply for future funding and grant applications. Because the Concept Plan was funded by a Caltrans Environmental Justice Grant, the MANGo Concept Plan prioritized a robust community outreach strategy that included a number of hands-on neighborhood workshops in addition to its centerpiece "PopUp MANGo".

Role of Landscape Architect: A landscape architecture/urban design firm led the project, as a consultant to the City of Santa Monica. The design firm conceived the public outreach process, including the PopUp MANGo event, and was assisted in producing that event by an event production firm with a great deal of experience in Santa Monica. Traffic/civil engineering services provided the technical foundation for the various roadway changes that have been proposed as part of the greenway design, including traffic circles, chicanes, traffic diverters, curb extensions, and mini-parks. The seed of the idea for a Greenway along Michigan Avenue was generated several years ago by members of the Pico Neighborhood, who wanted to help develop a safe, calm, and attractive Michigan Avenue corridor. Over time, the idea of a network of Neighborhood Greenways across the City gained traction as a way to enhance active transportation options rooted in the community.

Significance: As a community oriented plan, the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway project was envisioned to be for the people and by the people. Connecting with local stakeholders early on in the process ensured a collaborative relationship throughout the year-long concept design phase. Over 25 small ground stakeholder meetings were held and a station was set up at the farmers market, to connect with hard-to-reach populations. Local churches and businesses were contacted to get them involved and solicit feedback. Digital invitations, bilingual door hangers for residents in around the project area, social media announcements, direct outreach through phone calls and emails, press releases, and outreach at neighborhood destinations also helped to spread the word about the project and the public events. Following numerous stakeholder meetings and a large public workshop and walk audit, the design team delivered a pilot, pop-up and tactical urbanism effort in the planning process, with a festival/workshop/installation called PopUp MANGo. The design team utilized temporary signage along the proposed route and online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and created a project website to advertise the event. All event material used consistent branding and the tagline, "Go MANGo" to increase public awareness. PopUp MANGo, the centerpiece initiative of this project was a temporary neighborhood installation of the proposed greenway improvements for Michigan Avenue in the Pico Neighborhood of Santa Monica. The PopUp MANGo event was fun and community-oriented with local musicians, food trucks with MANGo themed treats, booths for local organizations, arts activities for children, bilingual translators circulating throughout the event, a bike tour led by a local community group, and a 'passport' program that guided people through the installations and gauged feedback. With over 400 people in attendance, the feedback gathered directly influenced and led to the creation of a locally-rooted and locally-vetted design greenway.

Special Factors: PopUp MANGo was the first event of its kind in the region, bringing the public planning process to the streets, generating feedback from the surrounding neighborhood, and using direct public comment to craft the final plan. PopUp MANGo gave citizens an opportunity to see and evaluate public realm improvements during the planning process, hands-on. The event showcased temporary installations of possible improvements for the new greenway corridor such as: traffic circles, chicanes, curb extensions, diverters, enhanced landscaping, mini-parks, and places for neighbors to gather. Using donated items, such as straw wattle and trees (provided by Valleycrest) to fill installations, giant flower stencils painted with colorful spray chalk, and traffic signage for safety, the design team was able to replicate functioning traffic calming devices and a neighborhood mini-park for a temporary experiment. Water-wise and native plants, donated by Monrovia nursery, were also added to each installation along the corridor. A video of the project can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-ry8YB20GQ&feature=c4-overview&list=UUrlsaKRGJhbvnJbvRpQWykA&safe=active.