



CITY OF
EAST GRAND RAPIDS

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(616) 940-4817

www.eastgr.org

April 23, 2020

Dear East Grand Rapids Resident(s):

The City sent a notice/informational document dated March 18, 2020 to residents on Argentina between Breton and Plymouth and direct cross-street sections of San Lucia and Pinecrest regarding a potential design feature optional change for two neighborhood mini traffic circles. Notifications for this type of project are sent to residents that reside on the street directly impacted or if an intersection is involved within 500 feet of all directions. In this instance because both applied, the mailer went to all residents who reside on Argentina and within 500 feet of the intersections in question, San Lucia and Pinecrest. The purpose of the notice/informational document was to provide information that would have otherwise been discussed or shared at an informational open house. Due to the COVID-19 situation the City was and currently is not able to have traditional meetings and public engagement/interaction per Executive Orders 2020-21 (former) and 2020-42 (current) from the State of Michigan. The notice/informational document afforded a similar path forward but in a modified way as essential operations adapt. Information was provided as noted above via mail service as well as opportunities to engage City staff to ask questions and provide feedback. All questions from residents have been answered or information has been provided to date. Further, it was noted that as part of the process (normal procedure), consideration by the City Commission would take place at a public meeting with public comment. This matter is scheduled for consideration by the City Commission at the May 4, 2020 City Commission meeting. Submitted correspondence and all materials are always made available via the City website the week before a City Commission meeting. The target date for materials to be available would be April 29, 2020. The link to public meeting information is: <https://www.eastgr.org/111/Agendas-Minutes>

In advance of the May 4 City Commission meeting the City will be hosting a virtual Zoom meeting to further provide opportunity for any additional questions etc. with City staff as well as traffic and civil engineering consultants. The virtual Zoom meeting is scheduled for April 28 at 10:00am. The meeting invitation will be posted to story content on the City homepage. The link will be posted at approximately 9:45am but the meeting will not commence until 10:00am. The City recommends logging in 10-15 minutes prior to the meeting to allow time to install applications (if necessary), join the meeting, adjust volume settings, etc. You may need to update your computer browser or your app to make everything work correctly. Please allow enough time. Please make sure you are in a quiet area with minimal background noise (children, dogs, TV). A set of headphones with microphone may help but are not necessary.

Street construction is essential critical infrastructure per Executive Order 2020-42 and the City of East Grand Rapids is abiding by the Executive Order and following with construction as the State of Michigan and others municipalities are. Most street construction projects did not warrant additional review and concept consideration. Argentina and a stretch of Elmwood did warrant providing an alternative design concept due to a history of complaints. It is not the intent of the City to proceed with an alternative design if it is not desired by residents who reside on or adjacent to the streets

impacted. It is important to note that reaching out to residents for feedback does not mean that the alternative design changes will be approved, but that feedback from residents is desired. Generally feedback from residents is key in determining whether any alternative design change consideration may approved by the City Commission or not.

Street maintenance and construction activities have been deemed critical infrastructure essential activities by the State and therefore these planned activities will continue as the City complies with relevant Executive Orders.

After receipt of questions, comments and concerns by the deadline, City staff has categorized what has been submitted and this follow up communication is being provided to residents so questions, comments and concerns along with answers and additional information is made available to residents. Most of the questions and comments received were from “no” responses. Most of the “yes” responses did not have questions, but did have a few comments which are listed at the at the end of this communication. Included with this follow up communication is the original notice so that background can be referenced.

Argentina-neighborhood mini-traffic circles

Resident Feedback-Theme 1: Children and Pedestrians

- Unsafe for all pedestrians.
- Difficult for children navigate because they don't know when drivers will stop.
- Children will get hurt.
- Will cause risks for those on bikes, scooters and for school children and dogs.
- Unsafe for blind pedestrians.
- Difficult and dangerous for bike riders.
- More people will drive their children to school because traffic circles are unsafe.
- Who has the right-of-way – bikers or cars?

Response-Information:

According to professional traffic safety organizations and traffic engineering studies/literature traffic circles/roundabouts improve vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle safety. The excerpt from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with respect to safety for vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists is pasted in text below. The direct link to this information and more is also available at: <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/innovative/roundabouts/>

*Roundabouts can provide lasting benefits and value in many ways. They are often safer, more efficient, less costly and more aesthetically appealing than conventional intersection designs. Furthermore, roundabouts are an excellent choice to complement other transportation objectives – including Complete Streets, multimodal networks, and corridor access management – without compromising the ability to keep people and freight moving through our towns, cities and regions, and across the Nation. The FHWA Office of Safety identified roundabouts as a **Proven Safety Countermeasure** because of their ability to substantially reduce the types of crashes that result in injury or loss of life. Roundabouts are designed to improve safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicycles.*

Most significantly, roundabouts REDUCE the types of crashes where people are seriously hurt or killed by 78-82% when compared to conventional stop-controlled and signalized intersections, per the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual.

By reducing the number and severity of conflict points, and because of the lower speeds of vehicles moving through the intersection, roundabouts are a significantly safer type of intersection. The diagram below excerpted from **Roundabouts: An Informational Guide, Second Edition** (published as NCHRP Report 672) illustrates the difference in conflict points between a conventional, four-legged intersection and an equivalent single lane roundabout. There are 32 conflict points associated with a conventional intersection – 8 merging (or joining), 8 diverging (or separating) and 16 crossing. In contrast, there are only 8 total conflict points at an equivalent roundabout – 4 merging and 4 diverging. Not only are conflict points halved with the roundabout, the type of conflicts that remain are the same-direction variety, which result in substantially less severity, and as a result, less likelihood of injury. The reduction of both the total number of conflict points and their severity is also true for pedestrians, also shown in diagrams excerpted from the Guide.

Bicycle interaction with mini-traffic circles as provided for by FHWA, excerpt pasted below. The direct link to this information and more is also available at: <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/innovative/roundabouts/fhwasa10007/fhwasa10007.pdf>

Since typical on-road bicycle travel speeds are approximately 12 to 20 mph (20 to 30 km/h), the speeds of vehicles approaching and traveling through mini-roundabouts are similar to those of bicyclists. Bicyclists are encouraged to navigate through a mini-roundabout as if they were a vehicle. Where bicycle lanes are provided on the approaches to a mini-roundabout, they should be terminated to alert drivers and bicyclists of the need for bicyclists to merge into traffic

Some additional resources for information pertaining to mini-traffic circles and pedestrian/bicycle safety include but are not limited to:

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide: <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/intersections/minor-intersections/mini-roundabout/>

FHWA/Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS): This program and guide is a collaboration that includes the Federal Highway Administration, Institute of Transportation Engineers and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center amongst others: http://guide.saferoutesinfo.org/engineering/neighborhood_traffic_circles.cfm

Resident Feedback-Theme 2: Drivers-Motorists

- Drivers don't know how to drive in traffic circles.
- Drivers will speed through a traffic circle.
- Teens will not adjust speed.
- Drivers will be confused.
- Concern that drivers will go thru & over the circle at night.
- Concerned about teens doing night lap races.

Response-Information:

Traffic circle locations must have signs placed in accordance with the Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD). Signs are placed to notify motorists that they are approaching/entering a mini-traffic circle and how to navigate it with R1-2 (Yield), with an R6-5P (Traffic Circle Circulation). R4-7 (Keep Right) signs are located in the mini traffic circle for entering traffic to shift right. If/when a change occurs W23-2 (New Traffic Pattern Ahead) signs with flags are typically placed to provide a warning and/or reminder to motorists. See signs note below:



R1-2 (Yield)



R6-5P (Circulation)



R4-7 (Keep Right)



W23-2 (New Pattern)

Resident Feedback-Theme 3: All-Way Stop

- Safer.
- Would slow traffic.
- More effective for traffic calming.
- Less expensive.

Response-Information:

As was noted in the initial notice/information piece, stop signs are not to be used to slow traffic. All-way stop configurations require that traffic volumes are generally equal from both east-west and north-south approaches. The most common complaint received for incorrectly placed stop sign locations is that motorists don't come to a complete stop and disregard it. That typically follows with requests to law enforcement for directed patrols. Traffic engineering experts, literature and studies advise/show that motorists behave this way primarily on the dominant volume direction because they are conditioned and know that there is not likely to be traffic from the intersecting direction. The disregard for stop signs is not in defiance of the stop signs themselves, it's because they are being improperly utilized.

Signs are significantly less expensive than street alteration changes or modifications. The City does not place new signs at locations unless they are warranted in accordance with traffic engineering standards.

Please reference feedback theme 1 above regarding safety above regarding study data and conflict points.

Additional resources related to the use of stop signs and appropriate placements are available at by visiting the following links:

<https://www.eastgr.org/DocumentCenter/View/2006/Multi-way-Stops-The-Research-Shows-the-MUTCD-is-Correct-W-Martin-Bretherton-Jr-PE>

<https://www.eastgr.org/DocumentCenter/View/2007/Stop-Sign-FAQ-GPW-Michigan>

Regarding the optional consideration, it was noted that there is no accident history in the past five years, so though neighborhood mini-traffic circles are safe and not dangerous, it is certainly also true that the existing configuration on Argentina from a report/data perspective is not noted as unsafe either.

Resident Feedback-Theme 4: Expense

- What are the anticipated costs?
- Waste of resources.
- Spend money on road resurfacing.
- Misuse of road funds.
- Fix potholes instead.

Response-Information:

The total approved allocation for mill and overlay street construction projects is \$1,505,100. The low qualified bids were favorable from February totaling \$1,233,979. Each mini traffic circle costs approximately \$30,000 or 2% of the total.

The City does routinely fill/repair potholes and this operation is has not been adjusted to in regards to capital projects.

Other items noted are important/welcomed comments that are received and are provided to elected officials.

Resident Feedback-Theme 5: Winter

- Where will snow be put by snowplows?
- It will create slippery curves in the winter.

Response-Information:

Snowplows plow snow towards the outer direction of roadways or edge of the road, the same as a straight segment of roadway.

Existing storm sewer catch basins remain in place for drainage and operational maintenance policies and treatment would remain in place.

Resident Feedback-Theme 6: Parking

- Do not want to lose parking on north side of Argentina.
- To slow traffic, restore parking on south side of Argentina.

Response-Information:

No parking changes are included with the design change consideration. Neighborhood mini traffic circles are placed into the existing intersection so there no changes other than signage and the mini traffic circle in the center.

Parking change/alterations can be requested through the parking petition request policy. Please contact DPW Administration/Engineering at 616-940-4817.

Resident Feedback: Lighting

- Does not want additional streetlight to illuminate circle.
- Concern about headlight beams coming through windows.

Response-Information:

No street lighting changes were or are proposed.

No elevation changes are proposed at the intersections noted. Only the center of the intersection would potentially change with the mini traffic circle placed in the existing intersection. Currently headlight impact can be from all directions from turning movements.

Resident Feedback: Other (with response-information provide if possible-bold)

- Not a good location. **Locations were selected based on multiple variables to address the conservative exceedance range allowance of 5mph over the regulated speed as well as to attempt to address the all-way stop that is not in accordance with traffic engineering standards.**
- No reported accidents.
- Not necessary
- Location is too narrow
- Will large vehicles (school buses, lawn service trucks with trailers, construction vehicles) be able to navigate? **The traffic circles were designed with fire trucks, box trucks, etc. in mind. The rolled curb allows for additional spacing for larger vehicles to maneuver.**
- Will be an eyesore in the neighborhood.
- Signage is distracting.
- Important thru street for emergency vehicles.
- Increase police enforcement instead. **There is documented Public Safety activity on Argentina and enforcement is a component of traffic safety. Enforcement has temporary impacts with respect to motorist behaviors while design changes alter the physical environment for 24/7 impact.**
- Ridiculous to decide during COVID 19, Can't discuss with neighbors, Not a high priority and should be deferred. **This is understood and respected. Street construction was planned for spring and is noted as essential infrastructure per Executive Order from the State of Michigan. Construction progress will continue to proceed, the difference being whether existing conditions stay the same with a new road surface or whether the alternative design options are approved in conjunction with the new road surface. Timing for any change has to be coordinated with construction. Certainly during planning for street projects the City did not know that the COVID-19 situation would occur. If City staff ignored the reported complaint history, studies and traffic control devises and did not provide an alternative option for consideration from the planning process some residents might also find that unacceptable. City staff that are required to report to serve the community are trying to do their best to serve the community. Making sure that all information is provided and resident feedback is solicited is important.**
- Who will maintain the circle space? **The City Parks and Recreations-Grounds Maintenance Division per the City ROW landscaping/maintenance policy.**
- Traffic calming welcome and needed.
- Will slow traffic.
- Supportive but landscaping is desired. **The City Parks and Recreations-Grounds Maintenance Division would plant and maintain per the City ROW landscaping/maintenance policy.**
- Great idea.
- Traffic needs to be slowed down.

- Intersection would be safer.

If there are any questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the Department of Public Works at 616-940-4817.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

East Grand Rapids Department of Public Works