

9. The Grand Lake commercial district includes: Grand Avenue from 580 up to the Piedmont line + a bit of Santa Clara Lakeshore Avenue from 580 up to Mandana Lake Park from Lakeshore to Grand What do you like about each? What, if anything, do you dislike about each?



**METHODOLOGY:** Since the 392 responses to Question 9 covered far too complicated a set of parameters, we sorted comments with a specific reference to Lakeshore, Grand or Lake Park Avenues into three separate files. The fourth “District” file consists of the remaining comments that apply to the Grand Lake commercial district as a whole. After the summary for each, you’ll find a link to the comments specific to each. If you choose to view the raw data as well, it’s available on [THIS LINK](#). (Q9RawData.pdf)

### **Lakeshore Summary:**

On most measures, Lakeshore Avenue leads the pack. Twenty respondents specifically rated it as better than Grand or Lake Park. Eighteen noted that the street felt narrower and more walkable and six further attributed the intimacy to the mature street trees.

*Lakeshore feels the best, I think it's the trees and scale of the street.*

By comparison, on Grand, nineteen survey participants complained about the lack of trees and other greenery which accounted, in part, for a walkability score of a minus six. That intimacy does, however, come at a price as evidenced by six complaints about sidewalks on Lakeshore being broken or uneven as a result of damage from tree roots versus zero for Grand and Lake Park.

*Would like to see better code enforcement of sidewalk repairs on the north side of Lakeshore. Tree roots and other repairs are needed.*

Lakeshore also came up on the short end when measuring chain stores versus the overwhelming preference for locally owned, independent businesses. Twenty reacted negatively to the increasing number of chains on Lakeshore - what one respondent termed "mallification". The comparable figures for Grand was zero and Lake Park, four.

*Lakeshore--mostly approve but starting to feel like a strip mall.*

Despite the overall opposition to chain stores and restaurants, Trader Joe's (with 20 mentions) is the second-most heavily patronized business in the survey - second only to Arizmendi with 21 mentions. Peet's came in third with 13 mentions; Urban Indigo with 10; Walgreens with 7 followed by Lin Jia with 6 and the GAP with 5.

Further underscoring some ambivalence to chains, there were fifteen responses applauding the wide variety of businesses on Lakeshore. Several of those respondents credit TJ's, the banks and the drug stores as the reason they can do all their weekly shopping without leaving the neighborhood.

*Like the feel of them all, a bit of both mom and pop type stores and big chains on Lakeshore - glad to have both.*

Similar blessings were not, however, extended to the cellular phone stores on Lakeshore which were singled out with 13 negative mentions and only 1 positive.

*Why, why, why are there 5 wireless cell phone businesses on Lakeshore alone??*

The GAP had the next highest negatives (6 mentions) but those were almost entirely offset by 5 positives. Chipotle received 5 negatives (a net -2). most likely in response to the demise of the Burrito shop whose absence was mourned by 4 respondents. Other net negatives were posted by the European Wax Center (-4), T-Mobile (-3), Foot Locker (-2) and Good Vibrations (which one respondent mistakenly called, "Great Expectations" (-2).

Although it wasn't reflected in their overall ratings, Noah's and Starbucks were "trashed" for their overflowing garbage cans - as was, to a lesser extent, Arizmendi.

*Why can't Starbucks/Noah's control their garbage? Sometimes it feels like there's an NYC garbage strike happening. The huge number of cans in front of Arizmendi also is off-putting. Who wants to sit and eat within 5' of garbage?*

Parking, on the other hand was a mixed bag with only 13 negative mentions and 7 positive as an acknowledgement that free off-site parking is available.

*Parking can be a challenge but there is always the top of the Trader Joe's parking lot.*

Somewhat ironically, while Lakeshore received kudos for a street that seems more welcoming because it's narrower than Grand, twelve respondents complained that the sidewalk is too narrow and congested. This complaint is due, at least in part, to the prevalence of outdoor sidewalk seating on the west side of the street creating something of a bottle-neck. One survey participant proposed parklets as a partial solution - a request that was endorsed by six other participants.

*Can we expand the sidewalks for parklets for eating? It is so lovely to have outside dining and I would never want that to go, but it's tight, especially Saturdays.*

Lakeshore received relatively few complaints about traffic (10 mentions) compared to Grand and Lake Park - likely due to the fact that those are both major thoroughways. On the other hand, Lakeshore received far more complaints about traffic violations than the other two combined. Eight individuals complained specifically about illegal u-turns into parking spaces on the opposite side of the street and two recommended medians or barriers.

*Really dislike the lack of traffic enforcement on Lakeshore Ave from 580 to Mandana. Cars constantly blocking traffic to make illegal left turns/U-turns across the double yellow line. Pedestrians jay-walking. It is a dangerous situation.*

Five individuals complained that Lakeshore seems "crowded" which is likely a corollary to the complaint that sidewalks are too narrow. Although we haven't attempted to quantify this particular parameter, a majority of respondents would more likely describe this in positive terms.

*Love the vibrant pedestrian life and Lakeshore has lots more foot traffic.*

Four respondents cited a need for bicycle lanes on Lakeshore along with two requests for additional bike and scooter parking.

Four complained about dirty sidewalks - which is an even more pressing issue on Lake Park and Grand.

*Sidewalks need to be steam cleaned.*

Posted below are a few more comments and suggestions regarding Lakeshore:

- I like the density of good shops on Lakeshore, and the way Peets & Arizmendi create a nice area to just hang out with a cup of coffee or a slice & watch the world go by. We need a pocket park in front of one of them.
- *The BID needs to do more in the way of maintenance, publicity and events*
- *I like that the street is narrower and has more trees--makes it feel more like a neighborhood and busier. There's a little bit of everything in a compact space and there are a lot of places for people to gather and hang out--mostly the outdoor seating at Peets, Lakeshore cafe and Arizmendi. There could be more of that. I like that that there are local shops/restaurants (but also like that there are basic, low cost options such as the GAP and Foot Locker--but it would be even better if there were locally owned businesses that sold these things at low prices).*
- *Would like two 15 min parking spaces on Lakeshore similar to ones on grand for doing quick business or picking up take out.*

A complete list of all the comments regarding Lakeshore culled from Question 9 is available on [THIS LINK](#). (Q9LakeshoreComments.pdf)

## **GRAND SUMMARY**

Twenty respondents volunteered that Grand Avenue has been improving markedly since the GLRAG survey was completed in 2008 and a host of new businesses should get the lion's share of the credit.

*Grand seems to be the hipper option these days (Sole Space, Penrose, Slick & Dapper).*

*Grand Avenue has improved significantly since we moved to the neighborhood 14 years ago. I think the placement of several high quality restaurants has brought the street up as a whole.*

In support of the latter point of view, the generic phrase, "Grand restaurants" received twenty-seven positive mentions and "Grand Avenue Improved" was close behind with twenty.

Grand also scores highly on the "Chain Store Index" with zero complaints versus 20 for Lakeshore and 4 for Lake Park and Grand boasted 15 positive responses in support of small, locally-owned businesses with only 3 mentions for Lakeshore. On the other hand (pun intended), the ubiquitous nail salons on Grand were panned with 15 negative mentions versus five in support.

The specific businesses that received significant positive mention included Walden Pond Books (20 mentions), Ace Hardware (13 mentions), Grand Lake Theatre (12 mentions), Grand Fare and Boot and Shoe (8 mentions each), Ace Nursery (7 mentions), Alchemy Bottle Shop, Ordinaire, Neeha Thai and Oak Common (4 each).

A couple of notes regarding the above figures are in order:

- The Grand Lake Theatre received an additional 14 mentions from respondents who mistakenly listed it as being on Lake Park.
- Safeway only received 3 positive mentions as compared to Trader Joe's, which received 20. This pretty much duplicates the results of the 2008 survey but, in terms of actual patronage, doesn't correspond, for whatever reason, to reality.

Now for the bad news. Grand scores poorly on a host of issues beginning with a dearth of trees, greenery and flowers (19 negative mentions) - an asset that led many respondents to describe Lakeshore as more pedestrian-friendly, attractive and intimate.

*Grand still feels more gritty and could benefit from more trees and greenery.*

In addition, respondents complained that the street is too wide (10 mentions); isn't pedestrian-friendly (9 mentions) and the overall ambiance is viewed as unattractive - (14 mentions).

Nine respondents suggested more places to "hang out" as a partial solution to the walkability deficit:

*There could be more outdoor seating, more places to gather that don't require spending half your paycheck.*

Thirteen survey participants noted that shops are too often neglected or dated.

*I don't like the older shops on Grand that frankly look quite sad and old. I feel bad saying that, but this neighborhood is on the cusp and could be really great and interesting if we attract retailers who have a strong design sense and offer interesting things to buy or eat.*

For a number of individuals, parking is viewed as the most highly problematic issue with 17 negative mentions and only two positives.

*Can be very tough to park on Grand. Sometimes we avoid going there for dinner because it's too challenging to find parking and it doesn't feel safe to park under the freeway.*

To further complicate matters, the commercial district is heavily disjointed as was delineated in the 2008 Connely report on Oakland's retail hubs.

*The distance between the larger convenience anchors (Safeway and the Ace Hardware) and the retail near the Grand Lake Theater discourages cross shopping and pedestrian activity throughout the node. The greatest challenge is its length and the fact that the auto oriented anchors are too isolated to provide a customer draw to the smaller storefronts in the pedestrian oriented portion.*

Two respondents to the current survey proposed long-term solutions. The first focused on the streetscape:

*Mandana to Piedmont now needs beautification efforts to complement the calmer setting. It is the widest part of the area streets. Undressed, the roads width works against cohesion. The implementation of more Complete Streets elements utilizing the median space, etc will lend itself to a more defined Sense of Place.*

The second focused on the adjacent buildings bordering Grand above Mandana:

*I also would like to see a push by the city for Grand to rezone so that some existing structures are replaced with commercial on ground level and more residential on the top so that it is a more walkable corridor with more commercial offerings all the way up to the Piedmont line.*

Posted below are a few more comments and suggestions regarding Grand.

- *The Grand Lake Theater - It's the crown jewel of the Grandlake neighborhood and a venue everyone is so proud of.*
- *Grand is funkier but I love the new energy and locally owned businesses.*
- *A BID or equivalent, is needed so that our input and desires for the street's tenants can be proactively assembled by stakeholders into a sustainable, synergistic mix.*
- *I would like Grand Ave to have more neighborhood serving businesses (cafes, local shops, produce market, parklets), and fewer offices, nail salons and massage parlors. can a rezoning help with this issue?*
- *Grand Avenue has improved tremendously in the last few years but has tons of unfulfilled potential. GABA needs new leadership to coordinate events and improvements.*

A complete list of all the comments regarding Grand Avenue is available on [THIS LINK](#). (Q9GrandComments.pdf)

## **LAKE PARK SUMMARY**

Lake Park didn't generate a lot of survey responses, which is understandable since it's a very short block with only twelve businesses - thirteen, if you include Holy Land on Rand.

The Post Office received the most favorable mentions (15) but four of those favorable mentions were paired with complaints such as this one:

*Love having the post office so close, but damn, can't they staff that place any better? Long lines no matter what time of day you go.*

The Grand Lake Theatre received nearly as much positive feedback (14) but that doesn't really count for Lake Park since the theater is actually on Grand.

Canas received kudos from 11 survey participants.

*What I like is that its vibrant on the weekends, especially Sundays with Cana salsa going on.*

The farmers market received 9 positive mentions. The 500 Lake Park development project (8 yes and 3 no). Splash Pad Park (6 mentions) and Gelato Firenze (5).

On the opposite side of the coin, KFC received 9 negative mentions with no positives. The other fast-food purveyor, Wing Stop fared much better with 5 negative mentions and 2 positives.

As for the block as a whole, four survey participants noted that the block has improved, which is certainly the case, but there are a ton of obstacles yet to be overcome beginning with its image problem. Sixteen respondents described Lake Park in highly unflattering terms including "underutilized", "unattractive" and "the least appealing".

The number one obstacle, however, is the heavy, freeway-related traffic which generated 19 negative reviews. One described the street as "simply an extension of the 580 onramp".

The traffic also makes Lake Park far less pedestrian friendly as evidenced by 11 negative ratings plus another 4 that focus on how difficult it is to cross Lake Park.

*Crossing Lake Park is also very challenging--drivers rarely stop at the mid-block crosswalk.*

In addition, public safety fears (8 mentions) contribute to a sense that Lake Park isn't safe - especially at night and that's particularly the case around Kwik Way.

*The area surrounding Kwik Way can feel a bit sketchy at times.*

Speaking of Kwik Way, a total of eight respondents complained about the current tenant, the building and what one described as the "giant dirty parking lot". A second summarized the property's impact as follows:

*Kwik Way really makes the street very disjointed.*

As for the mixed-use development proposed for the property, eight respondents support it and three are opposed. Once constructed, the project should help resolve many of the safety and walkability concerns by eliminating what one survey participant described as "a desolate feeling in the middle" of the block. Another is hopeful that "The proposed development at Kwik Way could help complete the revival.

Only 2 individuals complained about a lack of parking for Lake Park but improved access to the lot under the freeway could also ease the parking crunch on Grand and Lakeshore and simultaneously generate additional foot traffic on Lake Park.

*The parking should be better advertised/utilized. Except for farmers' market, hardly anyone parks under the freeway.*

Better, safer access could also be provided by a lighted crosswalk between the Kwik Way property and Splash Pad - which several respondents recommended. Long term, consideration could also be given to another recommendation to eliminate the eastbound lane on Lake Park between Walker and the crosswalk. This would result in a 20-30 foot reduction in the total length of the crosswalk.

There were a few other ideas that need to be considered including more landscaping particularly on the north side of Lake Park; murals under the freeway; bike and scooter parking as well as bicycle lanes.

Posted below are a few more comments and suggestions regarding Lake Park:

- *Despite recent tepid improvements, lacking places to stop, adequate and consistent street trees, roadway is way over-wide for its function or for traffic needs. Needs stronger connections to Splash Pad Park. Needs bicycle and scooter parking.*
- *Lake Park between Lakeshore and Grand has too much car traffic - I'd love to see the eastbound lanes closed, and have traffic limited just to the westbound lanes. That would provide more room for the Farmer's Market, as well.*



- *Lake Park is my least favorite..all because of the freeway. It's too noisy. If we want to think "big", let's work to tunnel the freeway so we're reconnected to the lake.*

A complete list of all the comments regarding LakePark Avenue culled from Question 9 is available on [THIS LINK](#). (Q9LakeParkComments.pdf)

## **DISTRICT SUMMARY**

(Please note that in the process of sorting the comments, a small amount of the data included in this category may have been duplicated elsewhere - but certainly not enough to affect the integrity of the results. )

If you've already read the summaries for the three individual streets, you won't be surprised with the results for the district as a whole.

Forty-four survey participants lauded the mix of businesses.

*I love that I can come home on Friday and park my car, and I don't have to see it again till I go to work on Monday, because I have just about everything I need in walking distance: markets, restaurants, theater, lake, stores, post office, banks, etc.*

Forty-three complained about insufficient and/or the lack of free parking.

*I like the area, just not the crowds and lack of parking. Paying to park discourages me from supporting local businesses.*

Thirty respondents filed positive feedback for all the new restaurants - the success of which may be partially responsible for the shortage of parking noted above.

*I like the new restaurants that have come in and made the neighborhood more lively.*

Twenty-seven respondents gave the district, as a whole, a positive rating.

*I love our neighborhood all around. Great retail, great food and beverage options, excellent specialty shops. Really-this is an amazing and wonderful neighborhood!*

There were, however, four dissenters.

*Feels like the areas could be better connected with green space and there should be better planning as to which businesses should be added. In addition, more attention is needed to levels of upkeep and cleanliness.*

Eighteen respondents complimented the neighborhood's walkability versus two who felt otherwise. Seventeen complained about traffic and congestion and sixteen about dirty streets and sidewalks.

*I HATE the fact that this business district has filthy sidewalks that are black with crud and smell of urine. Can the District buy a sidewalk cleaner for the merchants to use or encourage them to bleach clean their sidewalks every morning. College and Piedmont Avenues are much cleaner and more pleasurable to stroll and shop.*

Fourteen individuals cited an excess of nail salons.

*Too many nail salons. I tried to count them and lost track.*

Nine respondents complained about neglected storefronts; eight about generic chain stores and eight more about trash in general and "oozing trash cans", in particular.

While most of the above data conforms with the three earlier street-specific summaries, for the first time, a significant number of respondents cited public safety and crime concerns (7 mentions) and asked for a greater police presence (4 mentions) along with better traffic enforcement (2 mentions).

Another issue which cropped up relates to the rapid increase in commercial rents that may over time exclude locally-owned, independent businesses.

*I like this area very much. Don't spoil it by making commercial rent too high. Stop tripling rents for Businesses that have been here for 20 years. That sucks.*

Additional suggestions not mentioned elsewhere includes:

- Residential parking permits
- Covered bus stops
- Stop lights timed better
- Better street signs
- Traffic calming on side streets
- 5-minute parking spots for pick-ups

Posted below are a few more comments and suggestions regarding the District:

- *We have lived here long enough to appreciate how empty the sidewalks were when we move in and how the neighborhood now is crowded and thriving. Our likes far outweigh our dislikes.*

- *It would be wonderful if the Lakeview school's parking were available again. It's hard to walk 1/2 mile up a hill with all my purchases, and harder and more frustrating to park in the area on Saturdays.*
- *Looking forward to Oakland police allocating resources to traffic patrolling again. The increased prevalence of crazy u- turns and swerving maneuvers scares me!*
- *Not much to dislike. Sure, we could micro-manage the whole thing, and sure, I'd prefer to see more small businesses (though there are many) and fewer big corporate tenants. But I'm glad I get to see my neighbors and walk to shopping.*

A complete list of all the Question 9 comments regarding the district as a whole is available on [THIS LINK](#). (Q9DistrictComments.pdf)