

Economic Effects of the Potential I-35 Conversion in Downtown Duluth



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EXTENSION

Methodology

- Stakeholder engagement
- Case studies
- Literature review

Study Area



Source: Jordan van der Hagen

Survey & Stakeholder Interviews

- Level of support for redesign
- Reasons for support, reservations, or concerns
- Which groups might be positively or negatively impacted
- Economic development priorities for the area

• Impacts to stakeholders

Survey & Stakeholder Interviews

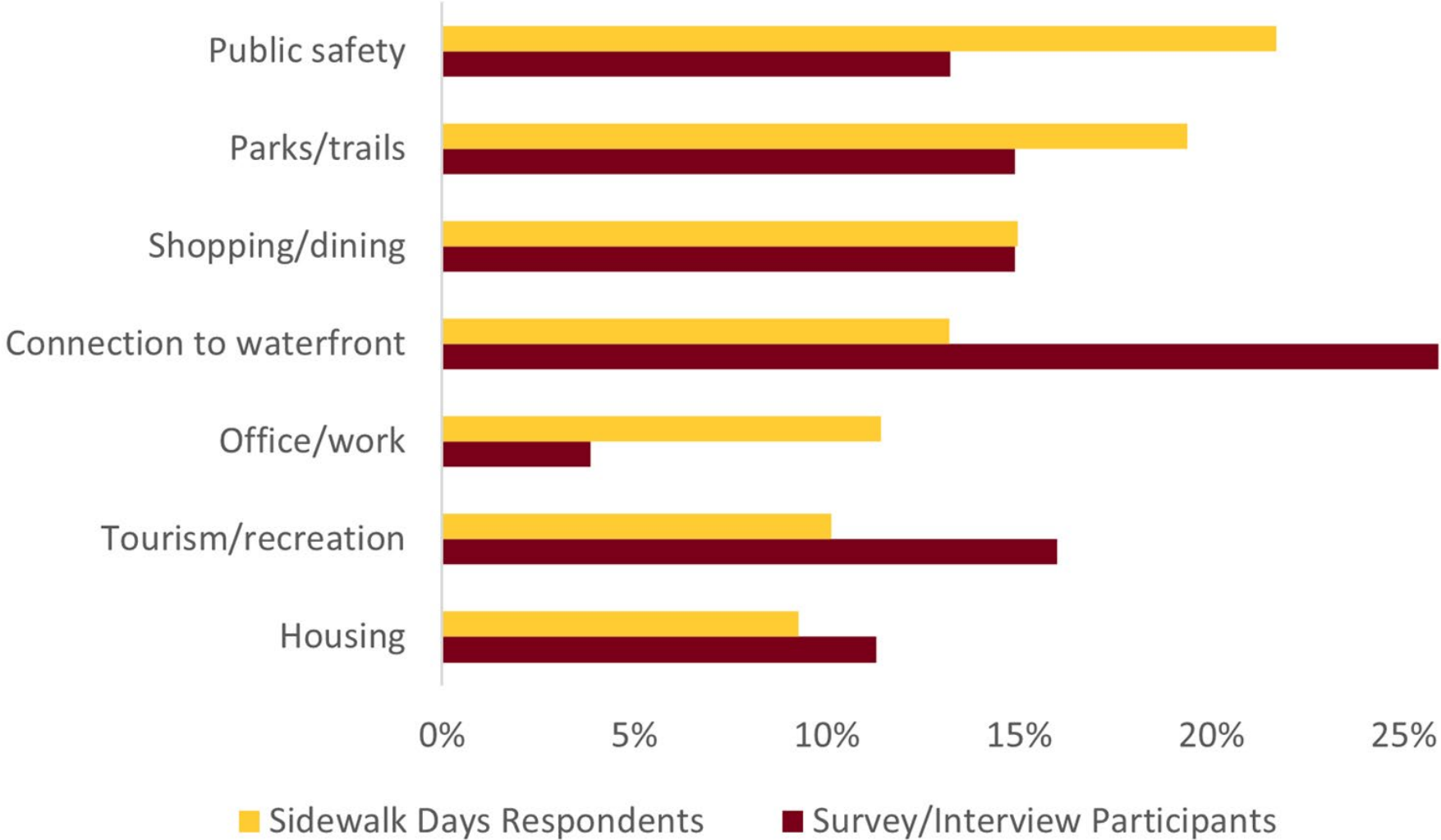
- Virtual interviews (30 responses)
- Qualtrics online questionnaire (109 responses)
- Mix of multiple choice and open-ended questions
- Sidewalk Days tabling (350+ responses)

Sidewalk Days

“In your opinion, which of the following should community leaders prioritize for the downtown waterfront area?”



Community Priorities



Peer Cities – Case Studies

1. Riverfront Parkway
(Chattanooga, Tennessee)

2. Park East Freeway
(Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

3. I-195 Expressway
(Providence, Rhode Island)

4. Inner Loop Expressway
(Rochester, New York)

5. Robert Moses Parkway
(Niagara Falls, New York)



Riverfront Parkway – Chattanooga, Tennessee (2001-2005)

Sources: FHWA, Alliance Realty



Inner Loop Expressway (East) – Rochester, New York (2014-2017)

Sources: Congress for the New Urbanism

Peer Cities Findings

- Rightsizing led to economic development investments
- Investments take many years to materialize
- Results reflect city's strategies/priorities

Literature Review

 Condition Met Locally

 Condition Partially Met Locally

 Condition Not Met Locally

 Damage and Deterioration

 Obsolescence

 Neighborhood Connectivity

 Economic Development/Revitalization

 Local Community Demand

 Power Structure Support

 Window of Opportunity

 Financial Viability

 Strong Advocate for Teardown

 Business Support

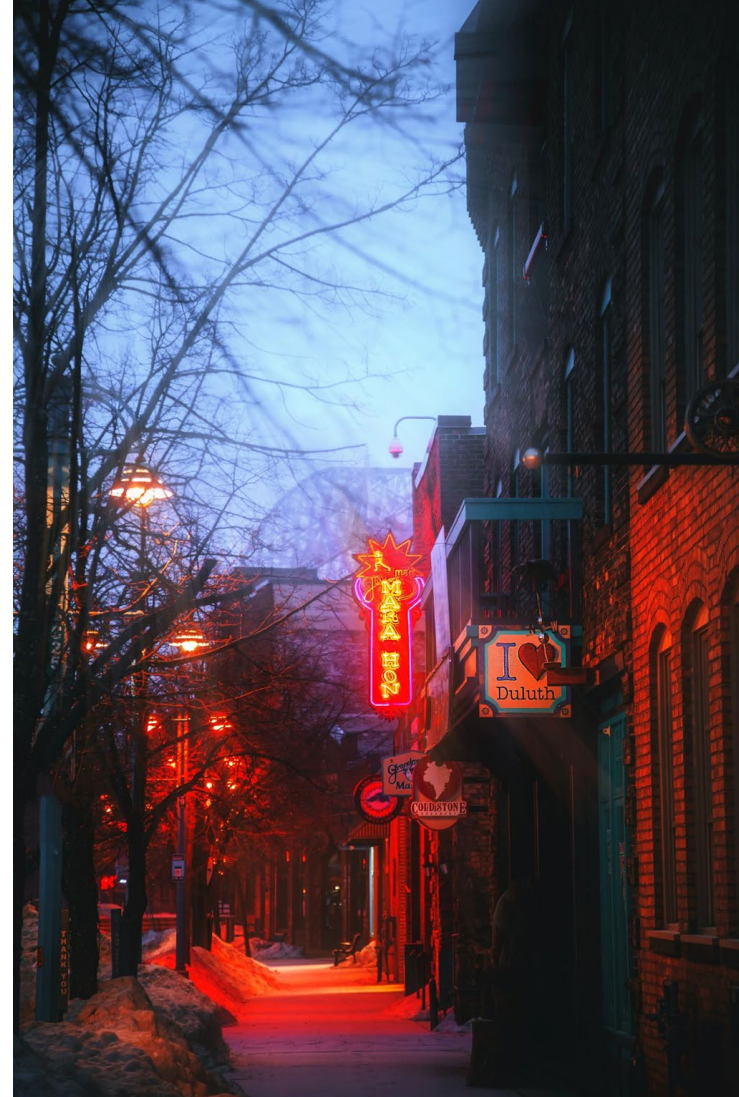
 Academic Association Support

Economic Development and Revitalization



Most common reason for supporting a redesign.

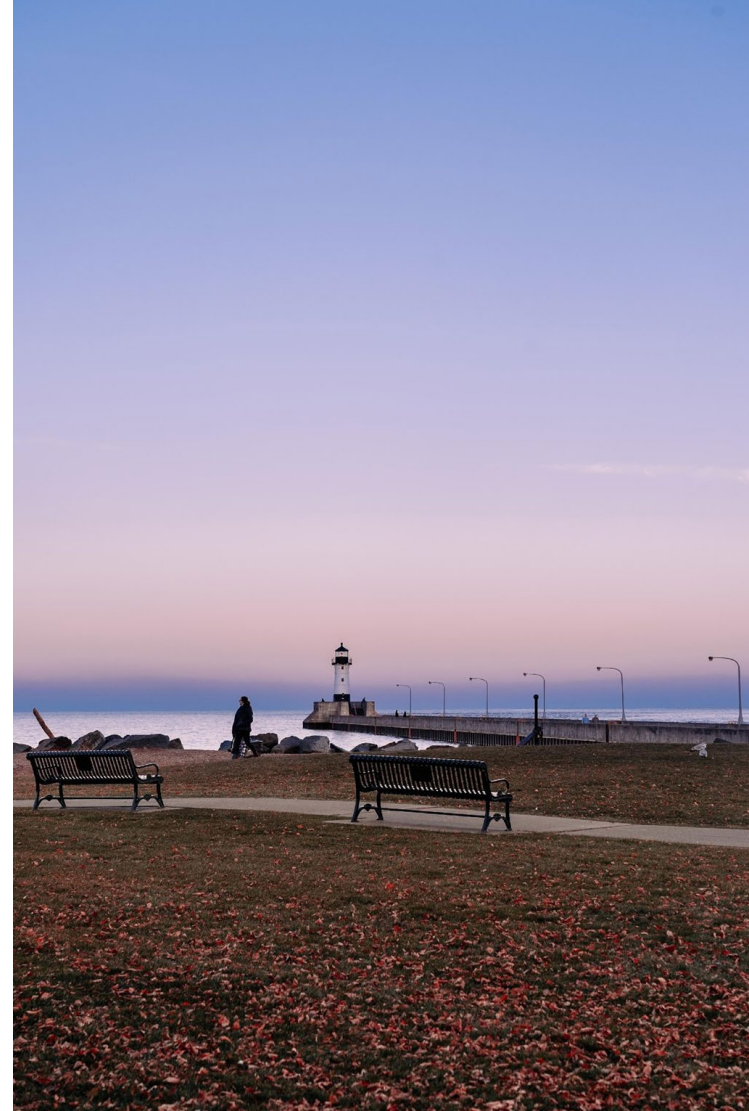
“Continue to grow the vibrancy, walkability, and connection the waterfront has with the downtown core. The waterfront is such a major tourism and activity-rich environment; it would greatly be improved with this connection for tourists and residents.”



Neighborhood Connectivity



“I-35 divides two of our most crucial business corridors. Having a freeway that divides the two economic engines allows for little cohesion and reduces business activity since there is less access for pedestrians and tourists. This redesign would be crucial for the economic development of Duluth.”



Local Community Demand



Based on what you know currently, how supportive are you of a major transportation redesign for the I-35 corridor through Duluth's downtown waterfront? (n=126)

- Very supportive 48%
- Moderately supportive 12%
- Supportive with reservations 29%
- Not supportive 11%

Strong Advocate for Teardown



- The Duluth Waterfront Collective (DWC) serves as a strong advocate for the teardown option.
- The group's membership includes planners, activists, and citizens.

**Duluth
Waterfront
Collective**

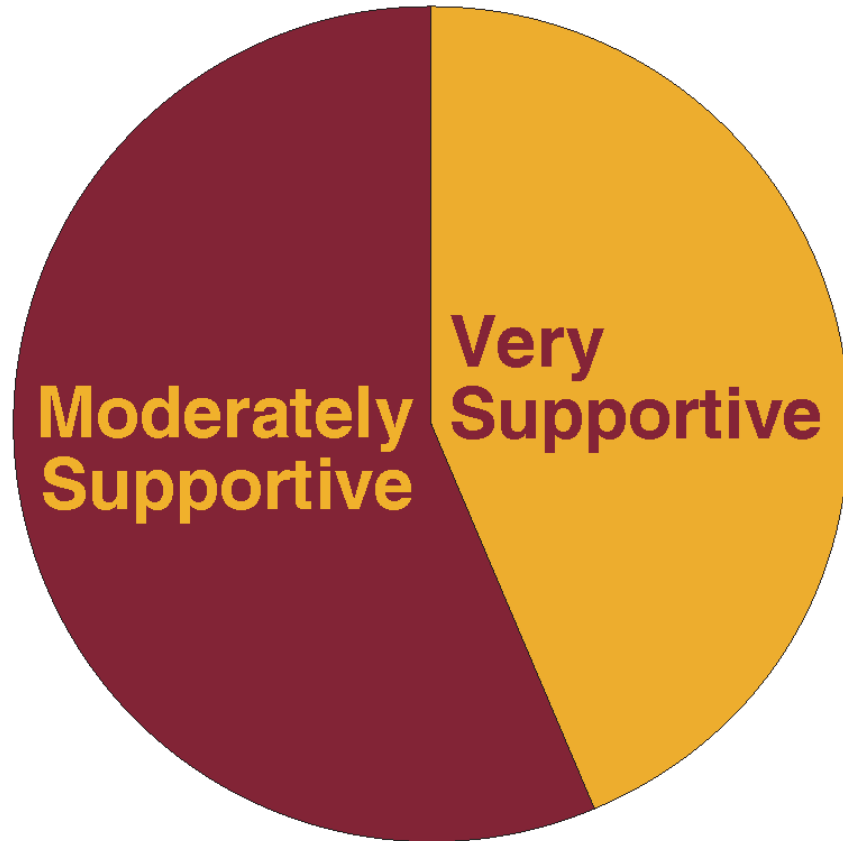
Power Structure / Academic Support



- There is not currently an entity in power that is advocating for the project.
- No academic associations have taken a stance in favor of the project.



Business Support



Local business entities have not taken a strong stance in favor or a redesign, but most business representatives surveyed were supportive or very supportive.

▲ Level of support among survey respondents who identified as members of the business community.

Damage and Deterioration



- MnDOT sees no need to replace the downtown segment.
- The Fifth Avenue West bridge needs replacing in 10-20 years.



Source: Dan Williamson / Duluth News Tribune

Obsolescence



Averaged 30,000 vehicles a day in 2021, down from peak of 49,000

Traffic congestion during high-traffic events



Window of Opportunity/ Financial Viability



The Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program could provide a funding opportunity. The program requires a minimum non-federal match of 20%.



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and [Executive Summary](#)