Healthy Communities Initiative

A ULI Minnesota Technical Assistance Panel for the Minnesota Department of Transportation

I-94 and I-35W at Washington Avenue Lid Study: June 20–23, 2016
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ULI MN MnDOT TAP Findings

In preparation for reconstruction of freeway segments that are nearing the end of their useful lives, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), under the leadership of Commissioner Charlie Zelle, approached ULI Minnesota (ULI MN) with a 21st century strategy for how interstates could be rebuilt to restore connections in adjacent neighborhoods and foster new growth opportunities on MnDOT right of way. This strategy involves constructing “lids” above the roadway and preparing freeway embankments to support development. The focus on how freeways impact adjacent neighborhoods is endorsed by Secretary Anthony Foxx of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) who has made restoring communities a centerpiece of his administration in recognition of the damage freeway construction caused to communities when they were first built in the 1960s.

MnDOT invited ULI MN to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to analyze whether private sector investment would generate sufficient revenue to pay for building “lids” above the roadway and other improvements and what steps MnDOT might take to make these projects a reality. ULI MN is uniquely qualified for this task through its interdisciplinary membership of professionals working in real estate, law, architecture and finance who volunteer their time and talent to help solve complex real estate and land use issues.

The TAP was designed to consider the I-94 corridor from Saint Paul to Minneapolis and study three specific areas—I-35W/Minneapolis Central Business District, historic Rondo Avenue in Saint Paul, and Farview Park in North Minneapolis. It also included a “lightning round” for high level observations of five other sites, and a series of questions and goals developed by MnDOT and ULI MN.

**MnDOT AND ULI MN GOALS**

1. **Reconnecting communities** that were divided and harmed by freeway construction during the system’s initial buildout in the 1960s.

2. **Providing economic opportunity for all** by generating investment and cultivating new opportunities at lid locations and along MnDOT right of way.

3. **Building for future growth** by modernizing the region’s transportation network and making new land available for development.

ULI MN convened a panel of experts to engage in an active three-day TAP which included site visits, interviews with community leaders, and analysis of economic data and case studies of successful freeway lid projects to develop recommendations and guidelines for moving forward.

Early on day two, the panel identified a critical conceptual breakthrough: the corridor should be considered as a whole under a single banner, not separate lid projects, and implementation should be part of a rebranded vision called “the Healthy Communities Initiative.”

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minnesota.uli.org
Healthy Communities Initiative:  
Improve the Physical, Environmental, Economic, and Social Health of Communities

PRINCIPLES: DO THE RIGHT THING AND DO IT RIGHT

1. Connect and reconnect communities.
2. Protect and enhance our environmental health.
3. Catalyze economic and housing opportunities for all.
4. Value aesthetics.
5. Strengthen the state’s economy.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MNDOT

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEP: To maintain momentum, begin the Healthy Communities Initiative within the next three months with the establishment of a taskforce of community, public, and private sector leaders to evaluate and act on the following recommendations.

- **Form a quasi-governmental public-private partnership** led by a small team of leaders to oversee a corridor-wide strategy to restore and enhance physical, environmental, economic and social health.
- **Form a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization** and identify a fundraising champion to raise money for recreational and cultural amenities and to fund maintenance and operations through an endowment.
- **Put an experienced, professional leader in charge** of managing and delivering the Initiative as a whole and set an aggressive timeline.
- **Make freeway bridge locations development-ready** when rebuilt and do as much as possible now so that neighborhoods and the development community can seize opportunities as they arise.
- **Conduct a corridor-wide parking and transportation study** to evaluate district parking at lids and how transit at lids can provide access to jobs.
- **Develop market-based conceptual plans at Rondo and I-35W/Washington Ave and pursue land use consensus at Farview Park.** TAPs or similar analyses can prepare these areas for lid projects when the time comes. At Farview Park, the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the neighborhood need a shared vision on the future of the industrial land along the river.
- **Mandate a mechanism to ensure the inclusion of affordable housing** to deliver a full range of housing choices, including a range of affordability throughout the corridor.
- **Use the corridor as a showcase for art, architecture, design, and innovative engineering and technology best practices** by engaging artists, architects and designers who will want opportunities to showcase their work. Look to the future of transportation and study emerging best practices.
- **Practice effective community engagement and support cultural connections by** working with community leaders and valuing public art, greenspace, and great design throughout the corridor.

MnDOT and the USDOT have demonstrated foresight and leadership by beginning to rethink how freeways move through the communities they serve. The ULI MN TAP panelists developed “the Healthy Communities Initiative,” an ambitious vision with significant potential to deliver on that idea. Achieving it will require strong leadership among MnDOT, USDOT and other local committed and dedicated community, public, and private sector leaders. Let's do the right thing, do it right and start now.

**For more information, please contact Caren Dewar or David Baur with ULI MN.**
MnDOT TAP and Freeway Lid Background

Technical Assistance Panel Background

The Urban Land Institute Minnesota (ULI MN) conducts Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) at the request of a community or public agency to provide an unbiased, interdisciplinary panel of volunteer real estate professionals who address a specific project, development or policy issue. The workshop is preceded by analysis of background information provided by the sponsor, planning sessions, community interviews, and site tours. The panel’s findings and recommendations are documented in a written report. Panelists are ULI MN members and leaders from across the real estate and land use industries who volunteer their time and talent because of a commitment to making positive economic, environmental and social impacts in our communities.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) approached ULI MN to analyze the development and investment opportunities associated with building “freeway caps” or “lids” at key locations on MnDOT right of way. MnDOT wanted a deeper understanding of how attractive freeway lids and their surrounding areas would be to private developers and whether the investment they would attract would generate sufficient revenue to pay for them. MnDOT and ULI MN identified three goals for what lidding projects could achieve, identified at right.

A lid is a structure built over a freeway trench to connect areas on either side of the trench that would otherwise be divided by the freeway and/or to support other structures built above the roadbed and along freeway embankments. Though the terms “lid,” “freeway cap,” and “land bridge” are used more or less interchangeably, MnDOT has most frequently used “lid.” This report follows that convention. Should readers seek more information on this concept, the other terms yield additional results when searching online.

The panel consisted of leaders from a diverse array of professions in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul market including real estate attorneys, architects, developers, and artists. With assistance from Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), ULI Minnesota was also able to enlist two panelists, Hugh Murphy and Bill Lively, who have experience with prominent lidding projects including Millennium Park in Chicago and Klyde Warren Park in Dallas.

The Panel

Pat Mascia, Briggs & Morgan TAP Co-Chair
Ann Marie Woessner-Collins, JLL TAP Co-Chair
Sarah Harris, University of Minnesota Foundation Real Estate Advisors
Seitu Jones, Artist
Bill Lively, Retired, National Geographic Society
Hugh Murphy, JLL–Chicago
Robert Pfefferle, Hines
George Sherman, Sherman Associates
Rich Varda, Target Corporation

Consultants

Mic Johnson, Metropolitan Design Center
Gregg Fuerstenberg, JLL

ULI Minnesota Staff

Caren Dewar, Executive Director
Cathy Bennett, Housing Initiative
Gordon Hughes, Advisory Services
David Baur, Director
Aubrey Austin, Director

MnDOT and ULI MN Goals

1. Reconnecting communities
   That were divided and harmed by freeway construction during the system’s initial buildout in the 1960s.

2. Providing economic opportunity for all
   By generating investment and cultivating new opportunities at lid locations and along MnDOT right of way.

3. Building for future growth
   By modernizing the region’s transportation network and making new land available for development.
MnDOT’s “Rethinking I-94” Project

According to MnDOT, there are 145 bridges between the east side of Saint Paul and the north side of Minneapolis. Roughly half of these need work within the next fifteen years and a shorter window applies in the area around the Capitol to as far west as MN-280. In anticipation of the significant effort to rebuild so much infrastructure, MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle requested that ULI MN convene a TAP as part of the larger “Rethinking I-94” project.

“Rethinking I-94” is a two-year initiative to work with neighborhoods, community groups, local governments and others with an interest in the future of I-94 between Minneapolis and Saint Paul to better understand how the interstate is used, how it impacts adjacent communities, and how it can better serve the needs of both users and neighbors of the corridor. MnDOT’s own research has determined that the corridor serves a more local purpose than what might be assumed, which the panel found interesting and surprising. Most travelers do not pass through the entire corridor, meaning that trips are likely to originate and/or terminate within the area. There are also relatively few people moving between the central business districts (CBDs) of Minneapolis and Saint Paul on a daily basis with around 5,000 such trips total for both directions on a corridor that sees 150,000 trips per day.

The TAP contributed to Rethinking I-94 and also at I-35W by examining the development and investment opportunities that building lids might generate at key locations. The briefing book provided to panelists contained case studies on lid locations across the country, detailed research into the economic opportunities of freeway lids at the study areas conducted by Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) and the Metropolitan Design Center, and other background information pertinent to the communities where lids are being considered. MnDOT and ULI MN identified three specific sites to evaluate in more detail, one near the Minneapolis central business district and two in residential neighborhoods along the corridor. The neighborhood sites were in Saint Paul’s Rondo neighborhood and near Farview Park in the Hawthorne neighborhood of Minneapolis. Time was also set aside for a “lightning round” to provide high level guidance and observations for five additional potential lid sites.

TAP Co-Chair Ann Marie Woessner-Collins explaining how embankments can be used for development
TAP Timeline

Kickoff Dinner

As a precursor to the TAP, MnDOT and ULI MN held a kickoff dinner to bring together stakeholders from across the region, provide background into freeway lidding with a presentation from consultant Mic Johnson, and explain how the TAP process would work. Marvin Anderson and Floyd Smaller from the Rondo neighborhood gave the attendees a brief history of what the freeway did to their community, and MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle explained how he came to see lid projects as an important way to begin repairing that damage. These discussions set the stage for positive engagement throughout the TAP.

Day One

The first day was dedicated to gathering first-hand information about the three primary study areas by connecting the panelists with neighborhood representatives, private sector leaders (e.g. Minneapolis Downtown Council), and staff members from public agencies (e.g. city planners) with responsibility in the areas under evaluation. Panelists took site visits to see firsthand the conditions on the ground at each location, and then held interview sessions with the site representatives to ask deeper, more detailed questions about the locations and their surrounding communities. Panelists also engaged in a “lightning round” discussion to provide observations on five additional lid opportunities.

Day Two

Early in day two of the TAP, the panelists had a breakthrough in deciding that lid projects should be part of a single, unified corridor initiative rather than individual projects. The site visits and interviews from the first day helped the panel translate the background information from the briefing book into a vision of what might be possible at each study area and set the stage for the corridor-wide vision of the “Healthy Communities Initiative” recommendation outlined in the next section of this report. They engaged in deep discussion about the study areas, reviewed different types of lid concepts (see Lid Typologies below), and began identifying the concepts for what would become the Healthy Communities Initiative.

Day Three

Day three consisted of finalizing the panel’s evaluations of the study areas and lightning round sites, answering the set of questions posed by MnDOT ahead of the TAP, and creating principles and clear recommendations for the Healthy Communities Initiative. The three-day session ended with a preliminary readout of the panel’s findings and recommendations to MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle and other MnDOT staff as well as a small audience of invited community members, private sector leaders and public sector representatives.
Lid Case Studies

Lids can reconnect neighborhoods and street grids that were separated by limited access freeways and provide opportunities to add green space and housing and foster other development opportunities. The concept of using the air space above and along a freeway is not new. Early examples include Seattle’s Freeway Park in 1976 and Lytle Park in Cincinnati which was the first to be located directly above an interstate when the Lytle Tunnel opened on I-71 in 1970. More locally, the A, B, and C parking ramps in Minneapolis are built above I-394 as it terminates downtown, and Leif Erikson Park is situated above I-35 in Duluth.

Freeway lids are receiving renewed attention as interstate segments nationwide approach the point at which they must undergo comprehensive reconstruction and departments of transportation consider solutions that aim beyond traditional measures like vehicle throughput and access. While the interstate system provided valuable economic and social connections, it also caused significant undesirable impacts such as air pollution associated with health problems including higher rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and childhood leukemia. Freeways also disrupted adjacent neighborhoods by breaking apart street grids and key areas of commerce, interrupting the community wealth generation provided by small local businesses and limiting access to gathering places such as parks, schools and places of faith.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, who grew up in a neighborhood that was devastated by freeway expansion, has made restoring communities a focal point of his administration through the Ladders of Opportunity program with freeway lids as one mechanism for this work. In fact, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently provided a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for a project in Pittsburgh to reconnect the historic African American neighborhood called the Hill District to downtown through construction of a freeway lid.

The panelists considered freeway lid examples from across the country as reference points for what might be possible with particular focus on projects from Chicago, Dallas and Columbus. These three are described briefly below, and lessons learned from Chicago and Dallas are outlined at greater length under the Lid Overview Questions section. Additional information on lid case studies and other examples from across the country can be found in Appendix C.
Millennium Park – Chicago, IL

COST TO BUILD

$475 million on 24.5 acres for $445/square foot

FUNDING SOURCES

Parking garage: $105.6 millions in public money
Metra superstructure: $60.6 million in public money
Endowment: $25 million
Private donations: Over $100 million for amenities

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Owned by the City of Chicago and maintained by Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

Once the location of an unsightly tangle of railroads, former Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley conceived of Millennium Park as a way to cover that blighted visual and provide new public space for the city. The park includes nearly 25 acres of open green space, public art, gardens, a performance pavilion, dining, and more. It took eight years to move from the first meetings in 1996 to opening in 2004. Along the way, a public-private partnership and massive fundraising efforts became an integral part of completing the project. Naming rights were a major attraction for donors both private and corporate, and much of the art and architecture were opportunities for big name talent to leave a mark on a unique project.

Klyde Warren Park – Dallas, TX

COST TO BUILD

$106.7 million on 5.2 acres for a $471/square foot.

FUNDING SOURCES

City of Dallas (bonds): $20 million
TxDOT (via state/feds): $20 million
Private Donations: $50 million
Stimulus funds: $16.7 million

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Construction of the park was funded through a public, private partnership. It is jointly owned by the City of Dallas, Texas DOT, and the Klyde Warren Foundation. Maintained and operated by the Woodall Rogers Park Foundation.

Sitting above the Woodall Rodgers Freeway, Klyde Warren Park creates a connection between the Dallas Arts District and the Uptown neighborhood. It is also connected to the M-Line, a free, non-profit streetcar that connects to Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). The 5.2-acre park was the product of a public-private partnership where philanthropy supplemented the publicly-funded basic structure with art and architecture enhancements to provide additional amenities and design features.
I-670 at Union Station – Columbus, OH

**COST TO BUILD**

$7.8 million on 1.12 acres for $160/square foot.

**FUNDING SOURCES**

ODOT: $1 million Transportation Enhancement funds
ODOT: $1.3 million each for 3 bridge structures
City of Columbus: $325,000 for utilities
Continental Real Estate Companies: ~$2.2 million for development of commercial structures

**LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE**

The commercial buildings and the roadway sit on three separate bridge structures each built by ODOT. The site is owned and maintained by Continental Real Estate Companies, who also built the commercial buildings.

The lid atop I-670 in Columbus heals a divide at an important neighborhood connection point. It restores a seamless streetscape between the trendy residential and commercial area called the Short North with downtown Columbus using two one-story commercial buildings on either side of High Street above I-670.

The lid is three separate bridges, one for High Street and one each to support the two retail buildings; however, this is indiscernible at street level. The three bridges for the Columbus project were funded entirely from public money via both ODOT and the city while private investors paid for the commercial structures.
Lid Typologies

The Metropolitan Design Center (MDC) at the University of Minnesota analyzed a wide range of freeway lid structures and identified seven basic lid typologies. These typologies provide broad thematic guidance for thinking about what features best serve a location and are not intended to show a straightforward accumulation of features where Typology D includes everything from Typologies A–C, for example. Rather, there is overlap between them and a given location might use multiple concepts in its design. Also, as the areas around a lid change over time and demand for development increases, they may evolve to incorporate more complex uses and include characteristics of different typologies compared with where they began.

Typical Freeway Section

The image at right is a cross section of a simple freeway segment and represents minimal complexity. It shows the basic components of freeways and identifies where there are opportunities to add new features through both lid construction and by making better use of the embankments and adjoining land. Locations with features like on/off ramps, flyovers, and other complicating factors will necessarily require more complex design solutions.

Typology A: Energy Collection and Ecological Resilience on Embankments

Slopes of the underutilized embankments could be used to enhance or restore natural amenities and to generate sustainable energy.

- Provide energy with solar panels or wind harvesting.

- Filter pollutants from storm water runoff with native grasses and trees.

- Assist migrations by providing vegetated structure and pollinating plants.
Typology B: Commuter High Speed Rail on Embankments

The right of way alongside highways could be repurposed to provide additional transportation choices to catalyze growth in adjacent neighborhoods.

- Introduce commuter rail or bus rapid transit (BRT) to emphasize the movement of people—not just cars—along freeways.
- Plug commuter rail or BRT into bridges at key locations.
- Bridges catalyze future lid opportunities as multi-modal stations.

Typology C: Simple Freeway Lid

This is the simplest concept for adding a lid structure. It provides green and recreational spaces to reconnect places divided by freeways. The Chicago and Dallas parks are large-scale versions of this model that have been significantly enhanced with additional amenities.

- Provide places for recreation, gathering, and celebration.
- Lid mitigates freeway noise pollution.
- Added vegetation sequesters carbon and scrubs particulates.
Typology D: Bridge with One Story Buildings

On commercial corridors, lining a lid with one story buildings can create or restore continuous commercial activity and add walkability to neighborhoods bisected by freeways. The Columbus, OH project is an example of this typology.

- Introduce simple bridge structures that support one story commercial buildings.

- Bridges catalyze investment and provide greater access to community needs.

Typology E: Developed Freeway Lid

In high demand areas, more complex lids become opportunities for significant economic development.

- Embankments provide developable parcels for new housing, office, and/or commercial users.

- Parking beneath lid provides revenue stream.

- New retail and office space adds jobs and economic vitality.
Typology F: Developed Freeway Lid with Wide Median

In sufficiently wide freeway segments, more and larger structures can be built on top of a median in the roadbed to create dense districts on top of lids.

- Embankments and medians provide developable parcels for new housing, office, and/or commercial users.
- Parking in lid provides revenue stream.
- New retail and office space adds jobs and economic vitality.

Typology G: Organize Transit and Link Communities

This is the most comprehensive type of lid, combining economic development, enhanced transit, district parking and recreational space.

- Coupling mass transit with freeway lid maximizes transit capacity and access to jobs.
- Parking in lid provides revenue stream.
- Lid investment provides job creation, community development, and regional connectivity.
Healthy Communities Initiative

One Corridor, One Vision

On day two of the TAP, after visiting each of the study areas and meeting with neighborhood representatives to understand the goals in each location, the panelists had a breakthrough in how freeway lids should be viewed in the context of the “Rethinking I-94” project. Rather than individual and isolated efforts, the reconstruction of I-94 and I-35W near Washington Avenue in Minneapolis should be part of a broad, and comprehensive effort to improve how freeways function in our urban centers, build new wealth and opportunity, and repair damage done to adjoining communities by reconnecting people and commerce.

Looking at each location as an isolated, one-off project disconnected from the others, will make it much harder to build the political will to get any of them done and misses the opportunity to connect them as part of an economic and social imperative for the state’s long-term prosperity. While each freeway lid location will have its own goals, possibilities and solutions, the panel believes unifying them under a single banner will provide a stronger focus, mission and catalyst for success.

Moreover, the opportunity is not limited solely to lids. MnDOT owns extensive land throughout the I-94 corridor in the form of the embankments alongside the roadbed, interchanges, and more. Much of this right of way could be utilized better or differently if considered as part of a holistic view of the corridor. A corridor-wide vision for freeway lids and right of way improvements under the name “Healthy Communities Initiative” creates a simple, memorable statement for what MnDOT and the communities along interstate corridors will achieve and allows for all of MnDOT’s assets to be part of the effort.

Using health—physical, environmental, economic and social—as a unifying theme creates a clear, overarching goal for the corridor. The Healthy Communities Initiative is an opportunity to set big, ambitious goals for what is possible throughout Minnesota’s interstate corridors and on MnDOT’s right of way throughout the state. By undertaking this work, MnDOT can position itself as a national leader for how our interstates are rebuilt and set an example for future projects across the country.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our cities to grab their health back."

George Sherman
Sherman Associates

The Healthy Communities Initiative should seek bold, creative ideas for what freeway lids and other enhancements to MnDOT assets can be. How they are programmed and activated is every bit as important as their construction specifications. This is a vision that should become embedded within MnDOT as a whole so that it cannot be easily scuttled by a change in political leadership. It will require the work of passionate, motivated champions from MnDOT, the business community, and the neighborhoods where lids will be built – a dynamic coalition who believe in the Initiative and their ability to achieve its promise.
Principles for the Healthy Communities Initiative

Doing the right thing and doing it right.

The principles below are about declaring, boldly and publicly, what the Healthy Communities Initiative is about. It is much more than a lidding concept. It is about changing the course of communities along freeways, restoring neighborhood connections and quality of life that was lost to construction decades ago. It should be done because it is the right thing to do, and doing it right will pay incredible social, economic, and health dividends across the state.

To achieve this ambitious agenda, the Initiative must be well-managed, executed effectively, and subject to rigorous oversight. The recommendations below draw on the insights and experiences of the panel as real estate and land use professionals in the region as well as lessons learned by the panelists associated with Klyde Warren Park in Dallas and Millennium Park in Chicago.

The Healthy Communities Initiative must be anchored to simple, clear and powerful statements that articulate a practical and believable vision for this work. The principles below are tightly interconnected where actions taken for one will complement goals in another. This interconnectedness is by design, reflecting the importance of thinking about the Healthy Communities Initiative in a holistic and integrated fashion.

1. CONNECT AND RECONNECT COMMUNITIES
2. PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
3. CATALYZE ECONOMIC AND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL
4. VALUE AESTHETICS
5. STRENGTHEN THE STATE’S ECONOMY

Recommendations

The Immediate Next Step: Establish a taskforce to identify the leadership and resources necessary to carry out an implementation strategy based on the recommendations below.

The Healthy Communities Initiative is a comprehensive and ambitious undertaking. It is important to maintain momentum and begin making progress toward long-term goals now. The immediate next step is to form a taskforce of public and private sector leaders and key representatives from the communities where freeway lids and right of way enhancements are under consideration. The taskforce should evaluate the following recommendations and be empowered to make decisions about how to move forward.

“Process is more important than project. The projects are the beneficiaries of the process.”

Bill Lively
Retired, National Geographic
Form a quasi-governmental public-private partnership to oversee and manage all aspects of the Healthy Communities Initiative.

Forming an entity that is separate from, but affiliated with MnDOT, enables the Healthy Communities Initiative to be nimble while granting enough authority to get things done. It should be able to make decisions with a reasonable degree of independence from MnDOT’s broader, statewide focus while still being subject to oversight appropriate for a project with a significant public funding component and built on land MnDOT owns.

The MnDOT Commissioner has some existing statutory authority to establish public-private partnerships and to facilitate development. The panel recommends evaluating whether these powers are adequate to get the Healthy Communities Initiative underway or whether they need modification or expansion.

This entity should be a public-private partnership to draw on the strengths of both sectors. The public should be represented by community leaders and stakeholders from both Minneapolis and Saint Paul, both Hennepin and Ramsey counties, and from MnDOT. Leaders with expertise in areas like real estate development, arts and design, health, fundraising and the environment should be included. The goal is to assemble a team with diverse and well-rounded skills who will work together passionately to achieve the initiative’s mission.

The entity should have the power to leverage funding and land use tools available to government and potentially create new ones.

Some entities with functions analogous to the Healthy Communities Initiative include port authorities, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and the Minnesota Sports Facilities Authority. The tools available to these entities such as the ability to own land, collect fees, levy taxes or establish Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, and issue bonds would allow the Healthy Communities Initiative to be creative and flexible in how it executes projects and attracts development.

The entity should also have the ability to develop new tools for fundraising. Lid areas and MnDOT right of way are currently off the tax rolls, so there are opportunities to be creative. New value capture mechanisms could provide funding flexibility beyond existing statutory abilities while setting aside enough money to ensure cities and counties can fund day-to-day obligations like policing and fire protection.

For example, individual lid locations or even the corridor as a whole could be set up as “special taxation districts” so that revenues generated through development can be reinvested strategically while providing an ongoing funding source. They could contribute to maintenance and operations costs or be used to fund other goals such as buying down the cost of housing to improve affordability, providing small business startup loans to entrepreneurs from adjacent communities, or delivering new education and training opportunities.

Keep the number of people overseeing the entity as small as reasonably possible.

The size of the board or commission that manages the quasi-governmental entity should be determined by the taskforce identified in the “Immediate Next Step” recommendation above; however, the panel felt seven to ten is ideal to remain efficient, nimble and effective.
Establish a 501(c)(3) for charitable giving and find a champion to lead fundraising. Establish an endowment for long-term funding right away.

Empower a fundraising leader and 501(c)(3) board to mobilize volunteers and enlist private philanthropy—both individual and institutional—to contribute to the Initiative. Sell it to them as the most powerful opportunity of their lifetimes to effect meaningful change in our region.

The fundraising champion should be a known local leader who is passionate about the community.

The panel considered seeking a prominent, national name as a fundraiser, but concluded that this role would be better filled by a well-known and respected local leader. It should be someone with great leadership skills and passion who has access to influence and resources and can credibly make the request for significant donations.

Solicit local and regional celebrities and respected leaders as additional spokespeople and champions of the Initiative to help with fundraising.

What constitutes a “celebrity” can mean many things. They can be anything from pop culture stars and professional athletes to well-known business, humanitarian, philanthropic, or public leaders. The idea is to find people who have credibility with the public and with other leaders to lend public support to what the Healthy Communities Initiative aims to achieve and to aid in the effort to raise funds for amenities and programming of freeway lid areas.

Be creative and expansive in pursuing as many funding sources as possible.

A strong relationship with federal partners is an important starting point in assembling the funding for preparing the freeways for lid development. Beyond that, identify all possible sources of public, private and nonprofit funding, and pursue as many of them as possible. Look for outside-the-box partners like the Department of Health and philanthropic foundations. The focus on health may open doors to a much wider funding pool than would typically be associated with freeway projects. The 501(c)(3) should look anywhere it might find funding, however unlikely it may seem.

As lid areas and other improvements to MnDOT assets are planned, the fundraising efforts should offer a “menu” approach to soliciting donations and targeting funders that allows them choice over the amenities to which they contribute. For example, if a lid area envisions building both a water feature and a playground, a private donor will value having the ability to decide where their money goes—including paying for the naming rights of the amenity—rather than giving to one all-inclusive fund.

Require a portion of philanthropic donations to be set aside for maintenance, operations, and programming in an endowment.

Identify some percentage of every donation that will be set aside for ensuring the long-term viability of lid locations, and do it right away. Maintenance, operations and programming are critical to the long-term success of the Healthy Communities Initiative and waiting until after everything is built to pursue funding for operations and maintenance is too late. Rather than ask for direct contributions to an operations and maintenance endowment, establish upfront that some percentage of every donation will be set aside for that purpose.
Put an experienced, professional leader in charge of managing and delivering the Initiative as a whole and set an aggressive timeline.

The scope of the Healthy Communities Initiative requires strong leadership to ensure that things keep moving. It needs a manager at the top of the organization delivering the projects who inspires confidence as a leader and is empowered to make decisions.

Setting an ambitious timeline is important for maintaining a sense of urgency. The time to start is now. The entity that manages the Healthy Communities Initiative should make it an early priority to develop a schedule that is aggressive but also achievable.

Focus on making freeways lid-ready during any reconstruction activity, and start with small steps that can be taken right now.

The timing of all the work MnDOT will need to do along the freeways will not coincide perfectly with when lid areas will be ready for development. To mitigate this, MnDOT should make every effort to rebuild the corridor and bridges in a fashion that will support lid development later.

Prepare bridges and embankments for development.

Plan road capacity such that it can accommodate lid structures and prepare embankments and retaining walls for development on the sides of the freeway. Look for opportunities to reimagine how freeway assets, like on and off ramps and flyovers, are built to improve how they function for adjacent communities and facilitate healthier communities. Consider where it might make sense to shift the alignment of the roadbed to achieve more land for development on one side or the other. This could result in MnDOT incurring upfront costs to prepare these areas for later development and could also have opportunities to recoup costs through selling or leasing air rights and by selling excess right of way as development occurs. The funding model for this approach will require federal support, and Minnesota’s federal leadership should be brought in early to develop a replicable model.

Do as much as possible now.

Typology A in the section above is a vision for lining freeway corridors with mechanisms for energy collection and generation as well restoring and improving the ecology of corridors. This is the kind of work that can be done in the course of normal freeway reconstruction efforts in advance of actual freeway lid projects. It can also have the added benefit of mitigating pollution issues caused by freeways by enhancing the ability of the underutilized embankments to sequester carbon and scrub the air through the planting of additional vegetation.

Conduct a corridor-wide parking and transportation study to evaluate district parking at lids and how transit at lids can provide access to jobs.

District parking in the corridor is an opportunity to lessen the need for parking facilities in urban areas where land could be put to a higher and better use while providing convenient access and coordinating other transportation options including public transit, car share, and cycling. The panel recommends conducting a study throughout the freeway corridor to determine where parking hubs would be most feasible and how other transportation choices can be linked. This study should focus on connectivity to employment centers throughout the region and improving access to jobs in disadvantaged neighborhoods.
Develop market-based conceptual plans at Rondo and I-35W/Washington Ave. to shape a deeper analysis of lid-ready developments. Pursue land use consensus at Farview Park.

Technical Assistance Panels at Rondo and I-35W/Washington Ave. could capitalize on the good work already done by community leaders in those neighborhoods and provide a deep analysis of development concepts that identify the infrastructure improvements necessary to support development. Through neighborhood leadership and business community engagement, both Rondo and the I-35W area are primed to be at the front of the line for the Healthy Communities Initiative. A TAP or other deep market analysis focused on solidifying priorities and goals and creating conceptual plans that are ready for a lid will position these locations for success and set examples for other neighborhoods where freeway lids might be located.

The panel recommends that the next step for Farview Park is to build consensus among the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the surrounding community regarding the land uses east of I-94. The differing visions for the future of the land that is currently used for industrial businesses is currently an impediment to lid development and other enhancements in the area.

Mandate a mechanism to ensure the inclusion of affordable housing that serves all people and the communities in which they reside.

Housing affordability is a key component of community health. Because the initiative is focused on publicly owned right of way and excess land, there is a unique opportunity to support housing affordability in the region. The panel recommends including a mechanism (i.e. through statute) that mandates affordable housing as a component of freeway lidding projects. The word “mandate” is important; it must be more than just a goal. Ensuring a full range of housing choices, including a range of affordability throughout the corridor, is critical and the panel encourages innovative thinking given the possibilities of freeway lids as development sites. This is a place where the powers of the entity that oversees the Initiative are important. The ability to create value capture mechanisms and other funding tools like the special taxation districts described above will be important for ensuring an affordability mandate is achieved.

Use the corridor as a showcase for art, architecture, design, and innovative engineering and technology best practices.

Engage big name artists, architects and designers who will want opportunities to showcase their work.

The Minneapolis–Saint Paul region is home to immense talent in these fields, and the corridor can be a showcase for their work. Pursue people who know the area, its climate, and its culture. The Initiative can also attract prominent national and international talent. In both Chicago and Dallas, the projects became a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that people wanted to be a part of and with which they wanted their names associated. They became venues for well-known artists to contribute something special, which in turn helped secure additional philanthropic supporters who valued the opportunity to associate themselves with these works.

Identify innovative engineering and technology best practices and study how transportation is evolving as part of planning lid implementation.

Freeway lids should incorporate state-of-the-art technology and research in terms of how they mitigate pollution, integrate transportation choices, and more. The environmental and health consequences of living near a freeway are well-documented, and much progress has been made in the tools available to fight these effects. Covering freeways with lids is an opportunity to implement ventilation and air scrubbing technology that can dramatically improve air quality in neighborhoods and improve health outcomes.
There is ongoing conversation at the national level regarding how transportation is changing, and MnDOT is part of that dialogue. What emerging technologies will change how people get around? How will changes to the vehicle fleet impact freeway usage? What cultural factors could change how freeways are used? In its planning, MnDOT should build as much flexibility as possible into how freeway corridors are rebuilt.

Practice effective community engagement and support cultural connections every step of the way.

Effective community engagement is the anchor to everything above and central to the Healthy Communities Initiative mission. Investing in and restoring a community’s physical, environmental, economic and social health will provide the deepest return, long term value and resiliency. Include public art, greenspace, great design and meaningful cultural connections. Neighborhood and business input and leadership are essential to making this successful, and as such community leaders must be active participants every step of the way.

“There’s value being created, but it’s not always dollars and cents.”

Bob Pfefferle
Hines
Panel Response to MnDOT Questions

Lid Overview Questions

What are some of the lessons learned from other lids around the country, particularly Chicago and Dallas?

Many of the lessons learned in Chicago and Dallas contributed to the overall Healthy Communities Initiative concept outlined above. What follows are additional, specific insights based on the experiences of panelists Hugh Murphy from Chicago and Bill Lively from Dallas.

DALLAS: KLYDE WARREN PARK

Create a brand for the work early on and recruit engaged stakeholders right away.

Hiring a firm to develop a marketing and branding identity for the Healthy Communities Initiative will help sell the idea to the public as well as the stakeholders who need to buy into it. It sends the message that it is a serious undertaking that will be managed professionally.

Pursue philanthropy up front.

The park was originally planned to be paid for entirely from public money, and pursuit of funding followed that assumption. It was only when it became clear that what they wanted could not be achieved through public funding alone that Dallas reached out to philanthropy to pay for all the “embellishments,” the public art and other amenities that make it a great place. Partnering with philanthropy up front would have saved time and put the park on a stronger long-term financial footing.

Require a portion of donations to be put toward an endowment but do not ask people to fund maintenance and operations directly.

It is recommended that a portion of all funds raised be set aside to fund an endowment for ongoing maintenance and operations. Soliciting direct contributions to an endowment is not recommended as most donors will want to be a part of something more visible.

How you ask people to participate and contribute is as important as what you ask them for.

Only when it has been demonstrated that you have earned the right to ask for a big donation should you actually make that request. Ask people to lead according to their unique ability to do so.

Think about the projects in layers.

Determine what you absolutely must have then identify the “embellishments,” the enhancements and amenities that will make it special, separately. Price the essential components first and then price extra amenities to give focus and prioritization to fundraising and spending.

“Position this as the biggest, most ambitious effort in Minnesota’s history to make your community a great place. Give it a lofty brand and get stakeholders to buy in upfront.

Bill Lively
Retired, National Geographic Society
Hire a cost containment expert.

These are massive projects with countless variables and moving parts. The scope of work will change a number of times before a project even begins and will change again before it is complete. Cost is always a concern with large public projects, and bringing in a dedicated expert to manage the budget is imperative.

**CHICAGO: MILLENNIUM PARK**

Be cautious with budget estimates, particularly until you know exactly what you plan to deliver.

Building freeway lids is complex, and there are likely to be unanticipated changes to the scope and scale of what you plan to do. In the eyes of the public, the first budget estimate is the one against which everything that follows will be compared, and it is important that what gets shared is as complete and thorough as possible.

“Don’t buy trees early.”

Timing for projects of this scale and ambition is complex, and mistakes can be costly. In Chicago, a decision to buy trees before the park was ready for planting resulted in needing to buy them twice. It is important to have an ambitious timeline to maintain a sense of urgency; however, it is also important to be cautious and thoughtful about how you execute against that timeline to avoid expensive mistakes.

Naming rights are an important fundraising tool.

Allowing naming rights for sponsors, both corporate and individual, adds another important dimension to fundraising. Prepare a naming rights plan up front.

There are three “must have” people.

A “get-it-done” person who knows every little thing about the work, a great lawyer, and a great technical expert.

“You get people to say 'Here's my chance.' They will see these projects as an opportunity to do the big thing they've wanted or needed to do.”

Hugh Murphy
JLL-Chicago

Does a new partnership need to be formed to implement a lid concept in our region?

Create a commission or other entity to oversee the Healthy Communities Initiative.

The panel recommends pursuing a quasi-governmental public-private partnership. It should have the authority to act with some independence from MnDOT, the ability to attract significant private sector talent, and access to the tools available to other quasi-government bodies like port authorities.

Is there a model that has been successful in other regions and what elements led to the successful partnership?

Public-private partnerships can draw on the strengths of both sectors.

Both Dallas and Chicago found success through public-private partnerships whereby public money paid for the majority of infrastructure improvements and the basic freeway lid structures and private philanthropy enabled the addition of significant amenities. This model should apply to the Healthy Communities Initiative as well.

The panel's recommendations for this partnership, which are outlined in greater detail in the [Healthy Communities Initiative](#) section, are:
Establish a taskforce of community, public, and private sector leaders to determine the structure, number of members, and responsibilities of a quasi-governmental public-private partnership to oversee the Initiative.

Using the taskforce’s recommendations, the governor should appoint a high profile state commission or other authority as a subsidiary of MnDOT to oversee, manage, and execute the Initiative.

This entity should have the authority to develop funding mechanisms (i.e. taxation, value capture, special tax districts, etc.) and strategies to organize and execute lidding projects in conjunction with MnDOT.

There is existing statutory authority granted to MnDOT, and that authority should be evaluated and amended as necessary to achieve the right structure.

Governance of the Initiative should be delegated to a small team of leaders with expertise in areas such as health, arts, transportation, environment, fundraising, real estate development, design and innovation, and economic development representing both the public and private sector.

Establish a 501(c)(3) for charitable giving to fund lid amenities and to fund an endowment for maintenance, operations and programming.

Cost Questions

What are the probable construction costs as well as long term costs of maintenance and operations?

Use examples of existing freeway lid projects as reference points for the construction of lids.

The number of variables at this stage makes it very difficult to speculate on costs with any degree of accuracy, but previous lid projects offer the best place to start. Below are the breakdowns of total construction costs, the number of acres and cost per square foot for the three primary reference projects used in the TAP. Additional examples can be found in Appendix C: Metropolitan Design Center – Lid Case Studies.

- I-670 lid in Columbus: $7.8 million on 1.12 acres for $160/square foot.
- Klyde Warren Park in Dallas: $106.7 million on 5.2 acres for a $471/square foot.
- Millennium Park in Chicago: $475 million on 24.5 acres for $445/square foot.

Ongoing maintenance and operations costs will vary greatly depending on the site uses and programming and variation in amenities. As noted above, these amenities as well as maintenance and operations should be accounted for through endowment funding. MnDOT’s responsibility should be in preparing the roadway for lids and other enhancements, building the lid structures, and making both the lids and embankments development-ready.

Will lid developments and other benefitted properties be able to absorb maintenance costs as part of their ongoing business operations?

Focus on building a sustainable endowment for maintenance, operations, and programming.

The extent to which developments and adjacent properties will be able to absorb maintenance costs is likely to vary site-by-site, depending on how active or passive the site uses are. The developments will not absorb costs at any amount greater than market rates. As always, businesses, developers, etc. will evaluate each site or development area to determine if they are financially feasible within current market conditions.
The commission or entity that oversees the Initiative must aggressively pursue mechanisms for sustainable maintenance expenses upfront by funding an endowment as a percentage of every contribution that is made. Funding mechanisms to be considered include:

- Lease payments
- Special service districts
- New value capture models
- Endowment funded by private philanthropy

Will the development community and financiers accept a lease term of not more than 50 years?

**Longer is better. If long leases are a problem, get creative and negotiate.**

In general, commercial lessors would require 50-60 years at a minimum although the Columbus project was successful using a much different model. In Columbus, the city gave the developer a 20-year lease for the platforms with up to 10, 5-year renewable terms for up to a total of 70 years. The developer pays $1 rent each year and receives 100% real estate tax abatement for 10 years. The panel is skeptical about how this model would be received locally, but it is a precedent that could be explored and considered.

For residential, if title ownership is not possible, a minimum of 99-year lease will be required. Certainty is important for developers and especially so for housing. The upshot of a long lease timeframe is that it provides a steady, ongoing revenue source which can be reinvested into the endowment for maintenance and upkeep of the lid structures and/or to MnDOT for the surrounding roadways.

Is there a different conveyance method that is feasible?

**Ownership is always preferred, but other routes are possible. Developers will evaluate financial feasibility regardless.**

Ownership is always best. If it is possible to sell the air rights, that will be the most desirable for developers. If outright title ownership is not feasible then long term leases can work, but as noted above, longer is better.

Though developers would prefer to purchase air rights or the land, there may be reasons for MnDOT not to sell. First, selling upfront may limit long-term revenue for either MnDOT or the maintenance and operations endowment. Second, not selling could allow MnDOT to control what is developed to achieve specific goals that may not be achieved through a direct sale.

Ensure MnDOT’s right of way turn back rules are aligned with the goals of the Initiative to create as smooth a process as possible for transferring land. Pursue fair market value waivers for MnDOT right of way to help achieve goals. Whatever the conveyance method, developers will evaluate each lid area on a comprehensive, case by case basis to determine if the project is feasible from a risk perspective.

What level of financial participation will be expected from MnDOT and others? How will these be funded?

**MnDOT should pay for building the roadways and basic lid structures. Philanthropy should fund amenities and enhancements through a 501(c)(3). An endowment should fund maintenance, operations and programming.**

The entity that oversees the Initiative should identify every conceivable source of funding and be prepared to pursue as many as possible. MnDOT should prepare lid areas for development. Ideas that were discussed
included bonding, federal contributions, value capture, and of course, any other sources MnDOT and the oversight entity can access. Chicago and Dallas again serve as useful examples. The public contributed money to build the basic lid structure and private fundraising paid for the amenities. A similar relationship is likely here, though how it works may vary for each lid location.

**MnDOT’s most important contributions will be to lead the freeway lidding effort and make bridge areas development ready.**

As MnDOT reconstructs freeways, the Department should be prepared to incur costs to make efficient front-end lid ready improvements. These can save money later and incent demand by setting the table for developers. Among other things, MnDOT should plan for the following:

- Evaluate road capacity around lid structures.
- Provide structural capacity to accommodate lid structures and long-term growth.
- Consider changing alignment of the roadbed and ramps to create larger parcels for development on either side of the freeway.
- Build pad-ready sites including utilities in coordination with local municipalities.
- Coordinate with community plans to accommodate their desires wherever possible.
- Sell or lease air rights for development.

**MnDOT should be a partner in seeking funding through the Healthy Communities Initiative entity, along with city, county, and local leadership.**

- Be a willing participant in seeking outside funding for additional amenities above and beyond MnDOT’s primary functions.
- Partner with cities and counties to fund and build normal public services (sidewalks, roads, utilities).

**The Department must investigate as early as possible what it is required to do by the state and/or federal government in terms of selling or leasing land.**

Turn back of excess right of way may be subject to fair market value provisions, and there may be other unforeseen requirements for building above the roadbed. Are there Homeland Security issues, for example? There are statutory mechanisms MnDOT can use to deal with some issues that might arise, and the Department should use them.

**How will the market value the development rights on a lid?**

**The market will value development rights around freeway lids like any other parcel.**

Developers are unlikely to pay a premium to develop on or near lids, at least right now. As development opportunities evolve, this can change if the lids become high demand destinations, as transportation innovations impact the market, and as the region continues to grow. While parcels remain today, freeway lids are not yet available and are likely years away from completion. The time to start planning for increased scarcity of developable parcels in key locations is right now, and will position the region competitively for the future.

**Development rights are primarily for land adjacent to the lid and along embankments.**

Apart from one story commercial buildings and greenspace, development activity generally occurs on the freeway embankments and excess right of way. Areas beneath the lid and above the roadbed could be utilized for transportation enhancements like district parking or mass transit integration. Large scale construction on top of a lid faces more significant engineering, safety, and compliance challenges.
How does a lid enhance development opportunities and economic growth?  
What market conditions are necessary to incent lid development?

**Building freeway lids serves an important social purpose right now and will become an economic imperative as developable parcels become scarce in dense areas.**

Even at I-35W which the panel sees as the biggest opportunity for significant economic investment, freeway lids are not optimal for development when competing against a typical parcel in the current market. These are a new concept for the region and may entail more complex processes than other opportunities. These are undeniable deterrents for most developers which will require education and negotiation to reduce the development risk and prove the marketability of lids development.

Right now, building freeway lids serves the important social purpose outlined in the principles and recommendations in the Healthy Communities Initiative. This is an instance where public funding and civic leadership will be important to improve equity in neighborhoods harmed by freeways and restore the economic, social and environmental health of these communities.

As land is absorbed, development on and around lids will become more desirable and their true economic potential will emerge. This is an opportunity to create brand new developable land in areas that will need it, like adding a greenfield to already-dense neighborhoods. Lid areas will develop incrementally over time, offering important opportunities to efficiently link transportation and land use while strengthening the state’s economy. The planning process and MnDOT’s near-term work has to begin now for when this land is needed to address market opportunities as they arise.
I-35W at Washington Avenue Study Area

Study Area Background

Running along the eastern edge of downtown Minneapolis, I-35W separates the central business district from surrounding neighborhoods and the University of Minnesota ("the university"). As the downtown core has crept east around US Bank Stadium and the nearby Mill District has experienced rapid residential growth, there is a desire to create better connections between downtown, the university, and the nearby Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, home to growing immigrant communities.

Engaged downtown Minneapolis and university business and community leaders have proactively considered the possibilities for a freeway lid. The Metropolitan Design Center at the University of Minnesota conducted an extensive analysis of the area in a project called “Bridging the Trench, Creating Connected Communities” which it displayed at the IDS Center, and the “Downtown 2025” Plan from the Minneapolis Downtown Council has specific goals focused on building green corridors connected to nearby neighborhoods and better connecting to the university that align with what a lid might achieve.

Because of the proximity to the central business district, the vision for freeway lidding I-35W not only aims to create better connections but also anticipates significant development opportunities. The rapid transformation of the east side of downtown from a sea of surface parking lots to a new headquarters for Wells Fargo, US Bank Stadium, a new park and a slew of apartments, condos and hotels shows how rapidly things can change. Both the City of Minneapolis and nearby neighborhoods recognize that it is necessary to plan now in order to maximize new possibilities in the area.

Study Area Map
Site Visit and Interviews

Stakeholders

Dan Collison, Director of East Town Business Partnership, Minneapolis Downtown Council
Steve Cramer, President and CEO, Minneapolis Downtown Council
Beth Elliot, Principal City Planner for Downtown, City of Minneapolis
Carl Runck, Ryan Companies, Chair of 2025 Plan Development Task Force, Minneapolis Downtown Council
Lacy Shelby, Principal Urban Designer, City of Minneapolis

Stakeholder Interview Themes

The Downtown 2025 plan and goals are a big driver of the vision for the area.

Downtown 2025 was developed by the Minneapolis Downtown Council, and the City is very supportive of its vision. Much of it will be used during comprehensive planning. There is a big focus on successfully competing with our peer national and global cities and continuing to improve the global image of our region.

Goals for population growth can be supported by a freeway lid.

There are ambitious goals to double the downtown population to 70K and 500K citywide. Adding new land for development through a freeway lid could help accommodate this goal.

Downtown needs a more diverse housing stock and affordability is a growing concern.

Although the downtown population has grown rapidly in recent years, there are worries that the city will not be able to retain families due to the relative scarcity of three bedroom and larger units. The availability of good schools and parks for downtown residents is another concern for the city in terms of resident retention and attraction of young families.

Affordability is a growing problem as almost all development has been aimed at higher incomes. According to Metropolitan Council projections, the city's needs for affordable housing far outweighs the number of units developed and the need will continue to grow based on projected incomes.

Broad support exists for better connecting the university and Cedar-Riverside to downtown.

A significant number of people live downtown and work at or attend the university, and there is a desire to see better ties between the business community and the university for economic competitiveness and growth. The university itself is not likely to expand its footprint toward downtown, but it supports better connections.

Connecting to Cedar-Riverside is important for increasing access to economic, social and cultural opportunities downtown for immigrant communities and other residents as well as adding affordable housing as the neighborhood continues to grow.

There is interest in reducing and reconfiguring the infrastructure along I-35W as part of pursuing a lid.

One of the barriers to better connections across I-35W is the complex network of spaghetti ramps and flyovers in the area as I-35W connects to I-94. As part of building a freeway lid, the city and neighborhood groups are interested in changing the experience of getting onto the highway to better align with typical urban grid configurations. This would mean fewer ramps and flyovers and more stoplights to meter traffic.
Panel Findings and Analysis

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<tr>
<th>Typologies Identified</th>
<th>Near Term</th>
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<td>A: ENERGY COLLECTION AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE</td>
<td>F: DEVELOPED FREEWAY LID WITH WIDE MEDIAN INCLUDING OFFICE, COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS ON FREEWAY EMBANKMENTS</td>
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<td>E: DEVELOPED FREEWAY LID WITH DISTRICT PARKING BELOW LID AND ABOVE FREEWAY</td>
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<td>G: ORGANIZE TRANSIT AND LINK COMMUNITIES WITH AN INTEGRATED TRANSIT / MULTIMODAL HUB</td>
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The panel sees the I-35W near Washington Avenue location as likely to generate significant development and economic growth opportunities. With seventeen acres of MnDOT right of way and an additional seven of publicly-owned land, there is ample space to have a significant impact in this area. This location is complex and will require a coordinated and concerted effort to fully realize its potential.

Create a forward-thinking master plan that considers how emerging technology is changing how people live, work and play in and around downtown Minneapolis

During the site visit and the interview with representatives from the area, there was clear interest in better integrating the highway with the urban street grid and in reducing the amount of freeway infrastructure (ramps, flyovers). This is also an opportunity to be forward thinking about how technology is changing transportation and affecting the way people live, work and play in modern cities. A ULI MN Technical Assistance Panel focused entirely and specifically on the I-35W opportunity could help create a conceptual plan that identifies restored grid connections and defines new developable parcels that is also mindful of emerging trends and technologies. A conceptual plan should include a vision for how the surrounding infrastructure could change to accommodate a new version of I-35W and include an absorption schedule for the land on and around the lid to help with planning and development phasing.

Focus on reconnecting Cedar-Riverside and the university to downtown to create new economic opportunities.

Proximity to the Minneapolis CBD, the university and growing neighborhoods on both sides of I-35W can drive demand for a wide variety of uses including housing, office, and commercial.

Develop a vision for this area as an integrated, multimodal transportation hub to include busing, light rail, district parking, and cycling.

This location is a clear candidate for a district parking solution to maximize developable space and serve both commuters and visitors to the area. The ambition should not stop there. With proximity to light rail, bike trails, and a number of bus routes, MnDOT and neighborhood partners should investigate how all of these transportation modes can be integrated effectively as part of a lid solution.
Recognize that the university is unlikely to expand its footprint.

Connecting to the university is important, but planning for this area should not rely on the university to be a tenant in any developments for the foreseeable future.

Timing is critical to influence surrounding development to be sensitive to the future of this area.

The rapid transformation of the East Town area around US Bank Stadium serves as an example for how quickly things can change. While there are developable parcels remaining, it is critical that planning for this area get as far out in front of development as possible in order to influence how any future projects will integrate with a potential freeway lid.

There is opportunity for something iconic with a “cool factor” to attract wide interest.

A freeway lid that connects the CBD with the university is likely the best candidate for pursuing a distinctive, unique, signature feature for the Healthy Communities Initiative such as an architecturally significant building or prominent piece of public art like Cloud Gate (a.k.a. “The Bean”) at Millennium Park in Chicago. The goal would be to generate national and international attention for both this area in particular and the Healthy Communities Initiative more generally.
Historic Rondo Avenue Study Area

Study Area Background

The Rondo neighborhood in Saint Paul is an illustrative example of Secretary Anthony Foxx’s focus on neighborhood restoration. Prior to the construction of I-94, Rondo was a tightly-knit community home to about 85 percent of Saint Paul’s African-American population, and Rondo Avenue was a key commercial corridor for businesses owned by people from the neighborhood.

Despite its importance, the neighborhood could not prevent the construction of the freeway right through the heart of Rondo. An estimated 600 homes and 300 businesses were lost as thousands of residents were uprooted. The freeway construction resulted in the demolition of Rondo Avenue itself, and the neighborhood was devastated.

Since then, residents of Rondo have worked to preserve and share the history and culture of their neighborhood through a range of community events and by moving toward construction of a commemorative plaza. In 2015, MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle and Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman gathered with community members at the future location of that plaza to apologize on behalf of their respective organizations for what happened to Rondo and to foster reconciliation. The neighborhood was also recently featured in a session with the USDOT in the “Every Place Counts Design Challenge.” Building a freeway lid across the area where the former Rondo Avenue once sat would reconnect the neighborhood across I-94 and begin to restore some of what was lost.

Study Area Map
Site Visit and Interviews

Stakeholders

Marvin Anderson, Co-Founder and Board Member, Rondo Avenue Inc.
Lars Christiansen, Director, Friendly Streets Initiative
James Garrett, Managing Partner and Architect, 4rm ula Architects
Nancy Homans, Policy Director, City of Saint Paul
Brittany Lynch, Visions Merging
Debbie Montgomery, Professor, Minneapolis Community and Technical College and Rondo Resident
Noel Nix, Principal Assistant to Commissioner Toni Carter, Ramsey County and Rondo Resident
Floyd Smaller, Co-Founder and Board Member, Rondo Avenue Inc.

Stakeholder Interview Themes

The legacy of what the freeway did to Rondo is still felt acutely today.

Residents remember Rondo as a successful, family-oriented neighborhood with good schools and locally-owned businesses. The fact that the neighborhood was designated a slum to help make way for the freeway was a terrible insult, and the community wants to right that wrong. They have worked hard to preserve as much history as possible, and the ceremonies to acknowledge what happened and the public apologies are meaningful steps.

Moving forward, it is critical that communities involved in freeway lidding have power, ownership and influence over what happens. Locally based, community developers are key. The community needs to be the one to benefit from these possibilities.

The neighborhood has identified eight community values reflective of its history and culture, one for each of the eight bridges of Rondo.

As part of the effort to preserve its past while also looking to the future, neighborhood residents distilled twenty-seven principles and core values down to eight. Each principle is something you can see and feel in the community. They comprise a “Rondo Way.” While they are reflective of Rondo’s history, the community is clear on the need and desire to welcome new neighbors from new populations who have come to the area as well. These values resonated strongly with the panelists and formed part of the inspiration for the Healthy Communities Initiative as a concept.

1. Dignity of Work - Lexington Parkway
2. The Importance of Education - Chatsworth Street
3. The Importance of Religion - Victoria Street
4. Social Integration - Grotto Street
5. Hope - Dale Street
6. Economic Independence - Mackubin Street
7. Homeownership - Western Avenue
8. Respect for Self - Marion Street
The community has done a lot of work to envision the neighborhood’s future and is working to build consensus for specific goals and a vision for freeway lids.

Through the work to develop the Rondo Commemorative Plaza and the Better Bridges for Stronger Communities project, the Rondo neighborhood has generated ideas for providing lids across the freeway and honoring their community’s history. The neighborhood’s next step is to prioritize their visions to something on which there is broad consensus. The community is kicking off an engagement campaign called “More than Just a Bridge” this fall to sustain the work they have done, formalize the community’s goals, and develop a strategic plan.

**Building a lid across I-94 is important for reconnecting the community and for giving people opportunities to connect with their cultural history.**

The lid can be a place to tell the story of Saint Paul’s rich African-American history. This is important for both attracting and retaining professionals of color who the region often loses to other areas with more opportunities to connect with the culture and people with which they identify.

**A lid must provide significant economic development opportunities to bring wealth back into the community.**

As part of losing so many local businesses and homes, the freeway had a devastating impact on wealth in the Rondo community. With much of the land west of Dale Street still owned by the African American community, there is a big opportunity to bring wealth and wealth creation back to the neighborhood.

As such, the neighborhood has a strong desire for a freeway lid to provide mechanisms for job creation as a catalyst for community health and building wealth. This can mean opportunities for young people to learn valuable skills like coding or health care work, and it also means restoring small, neighborhood businesses like florists and cafes. These kinds of development would ideally be followed by new housing options, including senior housing. The vision is for an integrated community with places for people of all ages and backgrounds.

**Panel Findings and Analysis**

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<th>Typologies Identified</th>
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The panel recognized the immense community engagement and activity by the neighborhood’s leaders that is already present in Rondo. The story of what happened in Rondo, how the neighborhood has rallied to preserve its history, and its aspirational vision for the future were sources of inspiration for the panel in developing the Healthy Communities Initiative concept. The most pressing challenge now is for the community to coalesce around priorities for freeway lidding locations.

**Prioritize locations.**

Much of the discussion during the TAP revolved around Victoria Street, and the “Better Bridges for Stronger Communities” project also identified the span from Victoria to Dale as a target for a lid. The panel views the
Victoria location in particular as an excellent candidate for a lid. The absence of on/off ramps allows lid construction while avoiding conflict with freeway functions. It also creates an opportunity for a seam of commercial activity and neighborhood connectivity beginning as far north as Frogtown Park and Farm, across the lid, and through nodes at Selby and Grand.

If the neighborhood decides to prioritize another street, it should consider factors like those listed above regarding Victoria. Are on/off ramps present? How does it integrate with nearby commercial nodes? Would it be an ideal location for housing within the community?

**A Rondo lid could support one story commercial buildings on the lid (Typology D) with additional development focused on the freeway embankments as demand grows over time.**

Possible uses for commercial structures on the lid include business incubator space for local entrepreneurs, neighborhood-oriented retail, and coffee shops and other gathering spots. The lid is also an ideal location for new green space and recreational amenities which can incorporate public art. As demand grows over time, the freeway embankments are ideal for new market rate and affordable housing as well as lifecycle housing to accommodate seniors.

**Honor “8 Bridges and Community Values of Rondo.”**

Development should be done in conjunction with existing planning processes and neighborhood organizations, and it should incorporate the values and principles the community has already identified. The “8 Bridges of Rondo” concept is a powerful statement of how the neighborhood sees itself, and it should be reflected in the Healthy Communities Initiative’s work here. There are many ways this can be accomplished, such as public art from community members and recreational spaces and amenities that reflect the values statements.

**Engage community youth throughout the process.**

In partnership with neighborhood residents, the Healthy Communities Initiative should make a concerted effort to reach out and bring young people into the process. They will have opinions and insights if given the opportunity to offer them, and they will be the true long term beneficiaries of the outcomes. Give them a sense of ownership in the future of these places.
Farview Park Study Area

Study Area Background

Beginning on the southwest edge of downtown Minneapolis, I-94 turns north for about seven and a half miles as it follows the contours of the Mississippi River. The slender stretch of land between the east side of the interstate and the river is lined predominantly with industrial uses while to the west lie the neighborhoods of north Minneapolis including Farview Park.

The 21-acre park sits in the Hawthorne neighborhood at the corner of Lyndale Avenue North and 26th Avenue North and features athletic fields and courts, a wading pool, playground and picnic facilities plus a view of the Minneapolis skyline from its hilltop. With so many recreational offerings, it’s an important community asset and one that a freeway lid could make even more valuable.

To date, lid planning has been mostly led by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Parks Foundation, and the City of Minneapolis through efforts like the Above the Falls Master Plan and the RiverFirst Initiative. The plans that exist focus on using 26th Avenue to extend Farview Park and better connect the north side to the Mississippi River for recreational purposes, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians.

Hawthorne has challenges with crime and academic achievement, and to the extent that the industrial businesses east of I-94 provide jobs, the feeling in the neighborhood is they have not benefitted north Minneapolis residents very much and contribute pollution that produces health problems. So in addition to the recreational opportunities a lid might bring, the neighborhood is also hoping for a reworking of the industrial sites nearby and for economic growth and job creation as a means to remedy some of the neighborhood’s other issues.

Farview Park Study Area Map
Site Visit and Interviews

Stakeholders

Michael Schroeder, Assistant Superintendent, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Lacy Shelby Principal Urban Designer, City of Minneapolis
Bill Smith, Partner, Biko Associates and neighborhood resident
Jim Voll, Principal Planner, City of Minneapolis

Stakeholder Interview Themes

It is important to be mindful of the skepticism that exists toward government in the north side neighborhoods.

There is a chasm that exists between “big ideas” like freeway lids when residents are more concerned with basic, day-to-day maintenance of park facilities. Ultimately, it’s necessary to do both. With respect to lidding, it is important to engage early and be upfront about goals to eliminate the perception of ulterior motives. There are advocates to be found in the Jordan and Hawthorne neighborhoods, and it will be important to involve them in the design and planning process.

Lid concepts thus far are focused on park and recreation connections.

The Park Board’s RiverFirst Initiative envisions activating the riverfront from Broadway to Farview Park and connecting Victory Memorial on the city’s western edge to the river and downtown. The 26th Avenue Bikeway is the connector between these places, and the lid is envisioned to run two blocks from 26th to 28th at I-94.

Neighborhoods do not always see the immediate value of these recreational connections.

Northside communities still see parks mostly as places for gathering, so work must be done to sell them on the value of connectivity across the park system for bikes and pedestrians. Because the north side has fewer natural amenities like lakes than other parts of the city, linking parks together becomes even more important, including a continuous connection from the riverfront to Farview Park and westward to Victory Memorial.

The Hawthorne and Jordan communities near Farview Park have important strengths and opportunities along with significant challenges.

Farview Park provides a valuable place of respite in the community that could be capitalized on by a lid project, and the Hawthorne and Jordan neighborhood associations are strong and active. While the area struggles with high crime rates, a lack of access to economic opportunity and educational attainment, small, at-home cottage industries have sprung up in recent years and connections to job opportunities could be strengthened by a lid.

There is a disconnect between the city’s vision for continued industrial zoning along the land east of I-94 and the neighborhood and Park Board goals for a change in land uses.

The city council has designated the area between the highway and the rail tracks as an industrial employment center and east of the tracks as "transitional industrial." The panel was told that the neighborhood’s experience has been that the businesses negatively impact quality of life and they have not generally hired from the community. One thought was that if new, modern industrial uses begin to replace the heavy industry that exists, the neighborhood might embrace it. This is particularly likely if there is an effort to help connect job opportunities to existing residents and/or local job skills training to match residents to the industries.
Panel Findings and Analysis

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The Farview Park area needs a reconciled vision between the neighborhood, the City of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for the industrial land between I-94 and the river.

The panel felt the concept for a freeway lid as outlined in the RiverFirst plan could be a good fit for the area, but the disconnect between the city’s vision for continued industrial uses and the neighborhood and Park Board’s notion of transforming that area barrier for redevelopment. Ultimately a city plan with community buy-in, that looks at potential future uses should be developed.

Consider an “industrial overlay” to facilitate gradual transition away from heavy industry toward light industry uses that may also facilitate more local hiring and local entrepreneurship opportunities.

This strategy would allow existing businesses that are nonconforming to remain initially while allowing the area to evolve over time. If the city takes the position that the area must remain industrial in some form, it should at least work to relocate the heaviest users that are causing negative health and quality of life impacts and attempt to attract newer, cleaner lighter industrial businesses. Though relocating these businesses will be challenging, developing a potential new technology center, as an example, could be a strategy for the long-term vision of a redeveloped riverfront and a healthier neighborhood. Live-work concepts and/or maker spaces, which are essentially community centers that have tools and equipment that allow people to build things, learn and connect, would also be a good fit. Look for ways to give local entrepreneurs opportunities.

Amplify the focus on the green connection between the river and Farview Park.

In addition to building improved walking and cycling infrastructure, consider siting supporting amenities on the lid via single-story commercial buildings or on the embankments. A bike center where trail users can get repairs and tune-ups would be a good fit similar to how Freewheel Bike integrates with the Midtown Greenway.

Focus on walkable residential uses along the river with a strong connection across the highway.

Building a pedestrian-friendly residential area along the river and activating the connection to the neighborhoods west of the highway via a freeway lid will have positive impacts for those adjacent neighborhoods. Create an active, artistic connection between the park and river to draw people across in both directions.
Engage community youth throughout the process.

In partnership with neighborhood residents, the Healthy Communities Initiative should make a concerted effort to reach out and bring young people into the process. They will have opinions and insights if given the opportunity to offer them, and they will be the true long term beneficiaries of the outcomes. Give them a sense of ownership in the future of these places.
Lightning Round Sites

In addition to the three primary study areas, the panel provided high level guidance on lid typologies and development opportunities for several other locations along I-94 as part of a “lightning round.” These brief observations were based on the panel’s general knowledge of the areas in question and were informed by their understanding of the various lid typologies. Panelists were not provided with the same depth of background data as the previously discussed three case studies, there were no site visits to these areas, and the panelists did not have access to existing neighborhood development concepts. These observations are therefore more limited in scope.

The corridor-wide vision for the Healthy Communities Initiative reflects the panel’s belief that lid projects are viable throughout I-94 in the region, including these sites. Each location is an excellent candidate for next step conceptual planning, and in some locations, this is underway.

Arts District / Nicollet Avenue

| Typologies Identified | A: ENERGY COLLECTION AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE | D: BRIDGE WITH ONE STORY BUILDINGS |

The Nicollet Avenue area struck the panel as similar to the lid in Columbus, Ohio. I-94 passes underneath Nicollet just south of downtown Minneapolis, creating a gap in the walkability and activity of the street. However, within a block on either side of this gap are fairly dense, neighborhood scale commercial buildings.

Lining this stretch of Nicollet with single story commercial buildings on either side would restore a continuous commercial and pedestrian experience between downtown and South Minneapolis and set the stage for redevelopment of the adjacent parcels which seem to be underdeveloped largely due to their proximity to the freeway. It would better connect the blossoming retail and dining scene along the “Eat Street” portion of Nicollet in the Whittier neighborhood which is also home to the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

A bit further west lies a tangle of flyover ramps and the Lowry tunnel where I-94 intersects with Hennepin and Lyndale Avenues. The complex nature of the infrastructure in this space seems challenging, but the panel believes any land that could be recaptured would be well-positioned for development. Sitting between downtown and thriving south Minneapolis areas like Uptown and the Wedge neighborhood, it seems clear this land would be highly valuable if not for the freeway. Even if a true lid solution proves to be infeasible, the panel believes improving the aesthetics and pedestrian experience of the area are important to facilitate better connections to downtown.
Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc. is a strong organization that has developed robust plans for the community’s future as outlined in its Centennial Commons Initiative and the Downtown East Elliot Park District (DEEP District). The goals include a focus on attracting new retail, a fuller range of housing choices, and improvements to the public realm while complementing the unique character of one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods.

The community began to realize some of its goals as development in Elliot Park began to accelerate rapidly in the last few years with new condos, apartments, medical and office developments. Some of this is spillover from the area around US Bank Stadium, and some is the result of generally robust growth across downtown leading developers to cast a wider net for opportunities.

A freeway cap on the southern edge of Elliot Park neighborhood can further extend the existing activity while integrating with the community’s goals for public realm enhancements and sustainability. It is an area that can likely support fairly dense housing development in the future; however, it may take some time for that to become viable around the lid itself. The freeway is quite wide here, particularly at 11th Avenue, and initially it may not support commercial structures on the lid. But the wide roadbed makes the area a strong candidate for greening, and a simple cap with activated greenspace and a focus on energy collection and ecology are the best choices at present with an eye toward commercial structures and housing as demand grows.
The University of Minnesota Gateway area sits where the university connects to the Prospect Park Neighborhood. It is a community with an active neighborhood association that has developed ambitious plans for its future through the Towerside concept, a vision for an innovation district within the city. The gateway area was also recently discussed in a session with the USDOT as part of the “Every Place Counts Design Challenge.”

As part of the Towerside concept and based on the significant redevelopment around the campus in recent years, both the University and the Prospect Park neighborhood see a need for a district parking solution. Moving it out of the neighborhood and off campus but keeping it nearby is a logical use of space at the Gateway area. In this way, a lid solution in the area shares some similarities with I-35W. The current ramp configurations strike the panel as dangerous, and the bus stop on an island in the middle suggests that an integrated transit solution should be investigated here as well.

Building a freeway cap here could be an opportunity to make it a true gateway to the university, a place that lets visitors know they have arrived and welcomes them. It could also be a place for office users that would benefit from proximity to the university, those working in healthcare and innovative technology. The panel also encourages investigating the abandoned railway adjacent to this area. It could be a reimagined/reorganized place that serves rail and provides opportunity for development.
The Snelling-Midway area has long been eyed for redevelopment, especially as it became a key transit intersection via the Green Line on University Avenue and the recent completion of the region’s first Arterial Bus Rapid Transit project in the A-Line along Snelling.

The likely siting of the Major League Soccer (MLS) stadium near the Midway location could be the catalyst to kick start redevelopment, and there are aspirational goals to do so with minimal structured parking.

There have been concerns that the amount of parking that will be provided will prove insufficient. A freeway lid along Snelling Avenue at I-94 could add district parking once demand is proven rather than building too much upfront. With the area’s strong transit presence, it is important to think about how a freeway lid here can further strengthen the transit network and how district parking can integrate and improve the neighborhood.

Housing demand near other stadium projects at Target Field, US Bank Stadium, and TCF Bank Stadium has been remarkably strong, and the panel thinks the same is likely here. The owners of the MLS team will want to preserve views of the stadium as much as possible, but there should be room to accommodate housing along the embankments in this area. Moving the stadium as far south and east as possible could open up additional development opportunity that may occur with a future freeway lid.
State Capitol – Saint Paul

Typologies Identified

A: ENERGY COLLECTION AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE
C: SIMPLE FREEWAY LID
E: DEVELOPED FREEWAY LID WITH DISTRICT PARKING BELOW LID AND ABOVE FREEWAY

The most important opportunity at the Capitol location is to change the pedestrian experience that exists today, and a lid could create a more walkable environment. As a prominent public location, a simple greenspace lid may be the right solution, and the panel believes the arts community will show great interest in building monuments and public art to activate it.

This is an opportunity to create a connection between downtown Saint Paul and the Capitol. If some district parking were located at a freeway lid here, it could open up nearby surface parking to redevelopment and create more continuous activity at the edges of downtown. The Capitol Area Architecture and Planning Board may have a heightened interest in protecting sight lines, and there are still good opportunities for one story commercial buildings like the Columbus model at this location.
Conclusion

When the interstate was built, it knit together cities and towns across the country in a network of roadways of staggering scale, connecting people and places in a way that was once unfathomable. It also left colossal damage in its wake, often to communities that lacked the political power to fight back and were irrevocably changed when the interstate took their homes and businesses. Both of these impacts are true and real, and both are part of the legacy of the Interstate Highway System.

What was done cannot be undone; however, our system is facing a massive need to rebuild. Many of our oldest interstate segments are reaching the end of their lives. MnDOT and USDOT have demonstrated foresight and leadership by asking how they can be rebuilt to connect and improve communities rather than divide them.

Will we do things better this time around?

ULI MN’s Technical Assistance Panel was part of the effort to answer this question, and the panelists have responded with a resounding yes. We will do things better this time, and in fact we must. The Healthy Communities Initiative outlined in this report can be the vehicle by which we restore neighborhoods and reconnect people, places, and commerce. It is an ambitious, once-in-a-generation chance to dramatically improve our regional community, one that will pay incredible dividends culturally and economically.

Freeway lidding is not new. There are successful models we can learn from across the country. The task is to scale them across a whole corridor approach and to consider how to better use all of The assets rather than look at one-off projects. It is ambitious and achievable. To succeed, it will require visionary, determined leadership and public-private collaboration. It starts with a firm commitment between MnDOT and USDOT.

Our urban areas are experiencing increased demand, a trend that is expected to continue. As this demand puts pressure on supply, prices will rise and reduce our region’s affordability. To remain competitive in a global economy, we need to begin thinking now about where future growth could go (i.e. places where we have a connected transportation network, vibrant neighborhoods, and thriving businesses). Using our infrastructure effectively and creating new, valuable land near our freeways is an important opportunity that should not be ignored.

ULI Minnesota and the member-volunteers who participated on the panel are grateful for the opportunity to advance this important work. The challenges ahead—leadership, funding, engineering, planning, doing—will be overcome when stakeholders and leaders collaborate to achieve it. The time to start is now.

“In rooms like these, we often look for the data as a justification for doing something, but sometimes we need to do them because they are the right thing to do.”

Seitu Jones
ULI Minnesota

About Us

ULI Minnesota is a District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit research and education organization supported by its members and sponsors. Founded in 1936, ULI now has more than 40,000 members worldwide representing the full spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, including developers, builders, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics and students.

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information and experience among local, national and international industry leaders and policy makers dedicated to creating better places.

Regional Council of Mayors

Supported by ULI Minnesota, the nationally recognized Regional Council of Mayors (RCM) was formed in 2004 and represents Minneapolis, Saint Paul and 52 municipalities in the developed and developing suburbs and Greater Minnesota. This collaborative partnership provides a nonpartisan platform that engages mayors in candid dialogue and peer-to-peer support with a commitment towards building awareness and action focused on housing, sustainability, transportation and job growth.

Advisory Services

ULI has a long history of providing unbiased, market-based solutions and best-practice advice on land use and building resilient and competitive communities through Advisory Services. At ULI MN, three advisory service options are offered to policy leaders. Each option, including the Technical Assistance Panel (TAP), engages ULI MN real estate professionals who volunteer their time and talent to contribute their wisdom and expertise.

For more information, visit minnesota.uli.org.

“With the assistance of a ULI MN Technical Assistance Panel (TAP), our city has moved forward on a key redevelopment project that expands rental housing options for residents. The TAP provided immeasurable assistance and was vital in guiding the strategic direction for the property.”

Mayor Sandra Martin, City of Shoreview
Panelists

PAT MASCIA, TAP CO-CHAIR

Pat is a shareholder in the Financial Institutions and Real Estate Section at Briggs and Morgan in Minneapolis, the law firm where he started his career. After spending the first six years of his career at Briggs, Pat joined Opus US Corporation as Associate General Counsel. Pat then moved from the practice of law to the business side when he became Vice President of Dispositions, Finance & Investments for Opus Properties LLC, a position he held for 5 years. In 2004, Duke Realty Corporation hired Pat to run its operations in the Twin Cities. Pat held this position for 10 years before rejoining Briggs and Morgan in March of 2014.

ANN MARIE WOESSNER-COLLINS, TAP CO-CHAIR

Ann Marie Woessner-Collins is Managing Director and founded and manages JLL’s Business and Economic Incentives team in North America. The Practice helps companies negotiate with state and local governments to reduce up front capital and expense costs along with ongoing operating expenses and taxes. She has over 25 years of real estate experience. Prior to joining the Staubach Company and then JLL, she served from 1999 to 2001 as Partner for the Southwest Business Incentives and User Energy Practice at KPMG, LLP. Ms. Woessner-Collins also worked in various capacities with Trammell Crow Company, 3M, and Dayton Hudson Corp.

SARAH HARRIS

Sarah Harris is Managing Director of the University of Minnesota Foundation Real Estate Advisors. She was invited to develop this subsidiary of the University of Minnesota Foundation to focus on strategic oversight of Foundation owned real estate assets, solicitation and analysis of real estate gifts, real estate investments and community development that stabilizes the campuses and supports the University’s mission. Her leadership of UMF Real Estate Advisors follows nearly three decades of commercial real estate advisory services that often focused on public-private partnerships and public realm leadership as well as serving on numerous local and national public, private and non-profit boards and steering committees.

SEITU JONES

Working on his own or in collaboration, Seitu has created over 30 large-scale public art works. He’s been awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship, a McKnight Visual Artist Fellowship, a Bush Artist Fellowship, a Bush Leadership Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Arts/Theater Communication Group Designer Fellowship. He was Millennium Artist-in-Residence for 651 Arts in Brooklyn, NY and was the first Artist-in-Residence for the City of Minneapolis. He integrated artwork into three stations for the METRO Green Line and was a Senior Fellow in in the College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Science Resources at the University of Minnesota.
In 2013, Bill Lively retired from the National Geographic Society where he served as senior vice president of Development. During his tenure, the Society, booked the largest volume of gift income in its 125-year history, confirmed the largest gift since its founding, and appointed its first international volunteer organization yielding $3 million in annual membership dues. He previously served as founding president and CEO of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts where he helped raise in excess of $334 million in eight years, including 129 gifts of $1 million or more, the most gifts committed at the million dollar and above threshold to build cultural facilities in America’s history.

Hugh Murphy is an Executive Vice President with JLL, Chicago, Illinois. He assists companies throughout the United States with real estate solutions and is an expert in government issues and relationships. Mr. Murphy has assisted clients in securing government incentives as well as dealing with permits and approvals. He came to JLL after a 20-year career with the City of Chicago where he was responsible for running O’Hare and Midway Airports and served as the Chief Management Officer for the City, responsible for managing overall City Government and advising the Mayor on tax policy, financial issues, capital funding and procurement.

Bob Pfefferle is a Minnesota native who grew up in Golden Valley and attended St. John’s University. He joined Hines in 1988 and has been active in the Twin Cities since 1996. He is responsible for acquisition, development, and leasing of projects located in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, including the recent North Loop developments - Dock Street Flats apartment project and the new mass timber office building – T3 (Timber, Transit, Technology). In addition to his day-to-day responsibilities, he is involved with local chapters of BOMA, ULI, NAIOP, Minnesota Commercial Area Realtors (MNCAR), Minneapolis Downtown Council as well as other non-profit organizations.

George Sherman has planned and delivered multi- and single-family housing for more than 30 years. As principal in developing more than 8,000 rental units and more than 1,500 for-sale housing units, the total value of properties he has developed exceeds $5 billion. George is recognized as an industry veteran favored by cities and development partners for his ability to commit to a vision and deliver the expected results. He is a sought-after speaker at real estate development and urban planning seminars because of the wealth of insight his experience provides, was named an Industry Titan by Twin Cities Business Magazine, and he received the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Real Estate Journal.
Rich Varda is a part-time senior advisor and the former senior vice president of store design for Target where he oversaw the design and maintenance of Target store prototypes including fixtures, store plans, interior design, architecture and engineering. Green design and sustainability are areas of focus for Mr. Varda, and he has managed projects to install green roofs and solar panels on Target stores and to change light fixtures to reduce energy use. Before Target, he was a principal at the Minneapolis architectural firms of Ellerbe Beckett and RSP Architects, where he designed an array of award-winning buildings, including the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix.

**Consultants**

**GREGG FUERSTENBERG**

Gregg Fuerstenberg is a member of the Business and Economic Incentives practice, a division of JLL Minneapolis. Gregg’s responsibilities include federal, state, and local economic development program research, coordination, negotiation, and implementation. Previously, Gregg spent over six years as general counsel and auditor for MnDOT and as an auditor for a regional public accounting firm. As general counsel, he provided legal expertise on issues involving construction, real estate, claims, contract, fraud, corporate law, procurement, terminations, labor & employment, warranty, defect, insurance, debarments, and litigation.

**MIC JOHNSON**

Mic leads his architecture practice with a rigorous focus on context, community and culture, addressing large and complex programs within urban environments globally. Mic’s collaborative approach and leadership skills generate high levels of team engagement and result in buildings that profoundly impact the communities they serve while being recognized for design excellence. In addition to full-time design practice, he has taught graduate-level architectural design over the past three decades, most recently as Professor in Practice at the University of Minnesota, where his studios have focused on addressing large-scale urban design issues within the city of Minneapolis.
Appendices

Appendix A
References in the Report
JLL - Influences and Economics of Urban Planning

Appendix B
Metropolitan Design Center - Lid Case Studies

Appendix C
Metropolitan Design Center - Health and Economic Value

Appendix D
Metropolitan Design Center - Lid Projects

Appendix E
Metropolitan Design Center - Prototypical Lid Diagrams

Appendix F
ULI Minnesota Technical Assistance Panel Webpage

Additional Information