



# Economic Vitality and Pedestrian Safety: Benefits of a Two-Way Minnesota Street



## Benefit: Economic Vitality

Cars don't spend money;  
people do.

Current literature on urban street network design stresses that two-way streets create higher levels of economic activity and improve the livability of downtown areas.

“The city converted Main Street from one-way to two-way in 1994 and the result was a very big plus for retail and Main Street has been characterized as having better specialty retail shopping than elsewhere in the region.”<sup>1</sup>

— Main Street in the City of Lafayette, Ind., is less than one mile in length and characterized by mostly specialty shops and offices. There are no chain retail stores in Downtown Lafayette and it is also home to a college (Purdue University).

Converting one-way streets to two-way streets results in **calmer** residential streets; neighborhoods become **livable, more prosperous and safer**.<sup>2</sup>

— Results of a study conducted by the University of Louisville showed increases in business revenue, taxes, property values and bike and pedestrian traffic. It also showed a decrease in collisions and crime. These results were compared to one-way streets that were not converted in Louisville from 2011 to 2013.

One-way streets have a **negative impact on storefront exposure**, which is lost when one direction of travel is eliminated as well as when traffic speeds up due to one-way traffic.<sup>2</sup>

“The results were stunning. Two-way conversion improves the livability of a neighborhood by **significantly reducing crime and collisions and by increasing property values, business revenue, taxes, and bike and pedestrian traffic**. Outside consultants, with price tags of millions of dollars, never predicted this in places like Oslo, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Atlanta.”<sup>2</sup>

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*continued*



## Benefit: Pedestrian Safety

Residents want to feel safer walking downtown in New Ulm, **especially the older adults** in our community.

— One of the findings from the New Ulm downtown assessment conducted by Rethos in 2019 was the desire by residents to make the downtown more pedestrian friendly.<sup>3</sup>

Two-way streets have also been found to be **safer than one-way streets**, for several reasons.

- One-way streets are linked with decreased levels of driver attention.
- One-way streets allow for higher speeds.
- Pedestrians prefer crossing two-way streets since drivers tend to travel more slowly.
- Vehicular conflicts are more predictable.

Two-way street networks **allow drivers to take the most direct routes** to their desired destination, reducing vehicle miles traveled, fuel consumption, emissions, and exposure to accidents.<sup>4</sup>

Since residents prefer two-way street networks for a variety of reasons, converting a one-way street network to two-way operation can improve both the **efficiency** and **livability** of cities.<sup>4</sup>

Studies indicate that people who walk or bicycle to the downtown **spend more money downtown**. They do more window shopping and they tend to return to the downtown more often.

“ If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic.  
If you plan for people and places, you get people and places. ”

- Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces



Photo Credit Kyle Krenz

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### Sources

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