

Second Street

Rochester, Minnesota

Creating Place with Infrastructure and Streetscape Improvements



Redevelopment Strategies

- » Lane reduction to improve pedestrian and bike access and safety
- » Creative financing, using a mix of sources to fund the project

Results and Lessons Learned

- » A comprehensive place-making plan, including infrastructure and streetscape improvements, made the corridor safer for all types of users.
- » Branding the neighborhood as the "Uptown District" helped contribute to economic growth and development along the corridor.
- » After improvements were made, vehicle speeds along Second Street dropped from between 45 and 50 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour.

The nearly three-mile-long Second Street corridor, which extends from the center of downtown Rochester to West Circle Drive, is the economic hub of the city, with nearly half of all the city's jobs within walking distance, including the prestigious Mayo Health Clinic. Before the completion of a redevelopment project along Second Street in 2015, the economic energy stopped at the U.S. Highway 52 bridge. West of the bridge, Second Street consisted of seven lanes (including two parking lanes and a center turn lane), and 22,000 high-speed vehicles per day traveled it in peak locations. The way the corridor was designed limited pedestrian and bicycle mobility and contributed to underutilized on-street parking (because of the risks associated with parking adjacent to high-speed vehicles).

To reduce the area's automobile-centric nature and to improve its economic trajectory, the city



and area stakeholders completed an inclusive redevelopment project in 2015. That project revitalized about 1.5 miles of Second Street between U.S. Highway 52 and West Circle Drive. Later rebranded as the Uptown District, the area has since assumed a new identity as a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood that is primed for economic growth.

The \$7 million project was initiated by area stakeholders in 2009 with the hope of improving the adjacent neighborhoods. It was completed in 2015 by the city in collaboration with private



contractors, Olmsted County, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Stakeholders used multiple funding sources, including federal transportation dollars, state funding for local transportation improvements, assessments on neighboring properties, and revenue from a local option sales tax. The project's goals were to improve safety, increase accessibility and mobility for pedestrians and cyclists, and extend the economic growth from downtown across the bridge.

During the planning process, the city consulted with local stakeholders to create a framework for the project. Area businesses communicated their need for sufficient vehicular access, and residents expressed a desire for pedestrian-oriented spaces. To meet the needs of the area and achieve the project's goals, Rochester formulated a placemaking plan that included upgrading transportation and pedestrian infrastructure, improving the neighborhood's streetscape, and transferring the ownership of the road from the county to the city.

Construction began in 2013 and took two years. In the western section of the corridor, four lanes were reduced to three to address left-turn collisions and to calm speeds. Significant improvements were made along the eastern section by adding bike lanes, landscaped medians, new left-turn lanes within one block of every business, and painted, on-street parking spaces.

To improve the pedestrian environment, each pedestrian crossing in the eastern section was designed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Moreover, crosswalks were painted; sidewalks were widened; two new, lighted intersections and a pedestrian-activated crossing signal were added; pedestrian landings on at least one side of each intersection were installed; and new bus shelters consisting of locally designed artwork were built.

To further enhance the character of the area, new trees, plantings, and benches were incorpo-



rated along the corridor; the neighborhood was renamed "Uptown"; custom art was added to planting protectors; and two light pillars consisting of steel bases, custom tiles, and light-emitting diode lighting were installed at the opposite ends of the district.

Because of these improvements, Uptown is no longer automobile-centric and has become an enticing neighborhood for investment and all forms of transportation. The area's traffic speeds have been reduced from between 45 and 50 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour, which has led to increased pedestrian activity.

Assessed property values in the area grew by 30 percent within the project's first year of completion. Furthermore, blighted properties have gained increased attention from investors. Since the project's completion, Rochester has largely achieved its goals for the corridor: Second Street's safety, economic development, and neighborhood identity have greatly improved.

OPPOSITE: In its previous state (inset), with speeding traffic, limited green space, and few pedestrian amenities, Second Street functioned more as a highway than as a neighborhood street. (*Andrew Masterpole*) Now (top), added medians, bike lanes, ADA-compliant crosswalks, and traffic signals have improved safety. (*Andrew Masterpole*)

TOP: Thanks to the addition of custom-designed bus stops, wayfinding markers, and unique plantings, Uptown is now a distinct neighborhood. (*Andrew Masterpole*)

ABOVE: Custom art, including LED light pillars, helps anchor and enhance the character of the new Uptown District. (*Andrew Masterpole*)