The U.S. Department of Transportation selected the Twin Cities—one of four communities across the country—as winners of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. Each winning community received a two-day workshop in July 2016 aimed at identifying innovative community design solutions that bridge the infrastructure divide and reconnect people to opportunity.

The workshop focused on two Twin Cities neighborhoods negatively affected by the construction of Interstate 94 in the 1960s—Rondo in St. Paul and Prospect Park in Minneapolis. The event featured design sessions with on-site technical and strategical assistance from subject matter experts.

Executive Summary: USDOT Ladders of Opportunity
Every Place Counts Design Challenge (December 2016)

Design challenge goals

Focusing solely on the Rondo and Prospect Park neighborhoods, the design challenge sought to raise awareness, spark innovation, and encourage ideas for inclusive design solutions. Specifically, the workshop aimed to:

- Encourage both communities to reimagine existing transportation projects via innovative and restorative infrastructure design that corrects past mistakes; reconnects people and neighborhoods to opportunity; and reinvigorates opportunity within communities.

- Empower both communities and decision-makers to work together to develop context-sensitive design solutions that reflect and incorporate the input of the people and communities they touch.
Workshop discussion

A team of technical experts led an extensive public engagement process with key stakeholders and encouraged them to think broadly and boldly while identifying the barriers and opportunities to implementing new ideas for community connectivity and highway mitigation.

This led to the creation of a draft vision statement:

"Use active community engagement to reimagine and reconnect communities over, on, and around I-94 investments to create equitable outcomes, multimodal systems, vibrant, and livable places that support prosperity and cultural inclusion."

Strategies and design options discussed during the workshop included complete streets principles, freeway caps at key locations across I-94, and a multimodal trail.

Design and policy recommendations

- **Community Engagement** – Establish a working group of agencies and organizations to continue interactive conversations, and generate a community/public engagement plan to include all stakeholders and perspectives.

- **Placemaking** – Study and coordinate existing land uses, businesses, parks and schools to identify neighborhood nodes and actively engage communities with pilot programs/exercises such as tactical urbanism.

- **Multi-Modal Systems** – Establish multimodal priority in specific locations and investigate best practices for mode metrics like performance indicators.

- **Cultural Inclusion** – Incorporate public art into all public projects for each jurisdiction and pursue funding opportunities for cultural inclusion as a percentage of infrastructure costs.

- **Equitable Investments** – Conduct a health impact assessment in the targeted areas and use equity scorecard as a starting point for solving disparities.

Suggested next steps

The team recommended several near-term (6-12 months) next steps, which include collaborating with partners to continue refining connectivity strategies for I-94, and organizing follow-up community meetings to engage a larger network of stakeholders. In addition, the team recommended several longer-term (1-3 years) next steps, which include formalizing streetscape elements (tree-planting and lighting), bike lanes and on-street parking and updating local zoning codes to require street-oriented buildings by use of a Form Based Code or changes to the land development and zoning regulations.

- A full report detailing design challenge goals, findings and next steps for each community that received a workshop is available on the USDOT’s website.

For more information

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