

# Robert Street Reconstruction Project

**Phase 2 Engagement Summary: Preliminary Designs** 

March — April 2023



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## Introduction

In 2025 and 2026 the City of Saint Paul plans to reconstruct eight blocks of Robert Street in downtown Saint Paul, from I-94 to Kellogg Boulevard. Reconstruction is needed to repair and replace sidewalks, pavement, and utilities.

This project presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve the City's vision of what a modern downtown corridor can be: safe, livable, inviting, active, a center of regional economic activity – and equitable for all. The following goals will guide this project:

- Create a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone.
- Improve mobility for all modes of travel.
- Support efficient and reliable transit service through downtown
- Create an accessible and safe environment for people who walk and roll.
- Enhance street-level commerce.
- Facilitate a community engagement process that addresses the needs of all stakeholders.
- Improve and replace aging roads, sidewalks, and utilities in 2025 and 2026.

The City of Saint Paul's priorities for Robert Street include supporting two new transitways to get people to, from, and through downtown. Designing and building a positive space for people who walk and roll is another key priority. The City has



Figure 1: Project corridor map.

also set a goal of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, businesses, community organizations, property owners, and visitors. Lastly, the City is prioritizing the transit and pedestrian experience to support the City's goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled (*City of Saint Paul Climate Action and Resilience Plan*).

Community engagement launched in September 2022. Construction will begin in 2025 and continue into 2026.



Figure 2: Project engagement and communications timeline.

Phase two of engagement, "Preliminary Designs," occurred from March to April 2023. During this phase, we collected public input on three preliminary designs for Robert Street. We also asked the public to rank their top priorities and share parking preferences. The goals for phase two were to understand to what degree each design meets peoples' needs, and what design elements were most important to the public.

Design Option A has four lanes in total: two traffic lanes and two lanes for transit and right turns. The draft concept illustrates potential locations for pull out bays for parking and loading zones. The draft concept includes left-turn lanes at 7th St and Kolled

concept includes left-turn lanes at 7th St and Kellogg Blvd.

## **Initial Impact**

- 566 survey responses
- 480 email list subscribers
- 167 interactions at events
- 100+ transit riders engaged
- 20+ stakeholder meetings and events
- 11 online map comments

Design Option B has three lanes in total: two traffic lanes and one center lane for left turns. The draft concept illustrates potential locations for pull out bays for bus stops, parking, and loading zones. The draft concept includes right-turn lanes at 11th St, 7th St, and Kellogg Blvd.

Design Option C has four lanes in total: two traffic lanes, one center lane for left turns, and one lane for northbound transit and right turns. The draft concept illustrates potential locations for pull out bays for bus stops, parking, and loading zones.

This input will help the project develop a recommended concept design in June 2023 with construction planned in 2025 and 2026.

Design	Vehicle travel time	Transit travel time	Parking & loading	Pedestrian walkway & amenity space (sidewalk, trees, etc.)		
Current Design	3.5 min northbound (NB) 4.5 min southbound (SB)	5.5-6 min northbound (NB) 6.5-7 min southbound (SB)	93 spaces	~13 feet wide		
Design A	Slightly longer NB	Charter traveltina	20 farrage	Lass Space		
Design A	Slightly shorter SB than C*	Shorter travel time	~30 fewer	Less Space		
Design B	Climbalanana	Slightly longer NB	20 f	Maria Carana		
Design B	Slightly longer	Similar SB	~20 fewer	More Space		
Design C	Slightly shorter NB than A, B*	Similar NB	20 farmer	Lana Canana		
Design C	Slightly longer SB	Slightly longer SB	~30 fewer	Less Space		

<sup>\*</sup>Comparisons are to the current design, except where noted.

Table 1: Design option comparison table.

## **Key findings from all activities**

The following public engagement data was collected through in-person events, an online survey, and an interactive comment map. See figure two below for a breakdown of the amount of data gathered from each source.

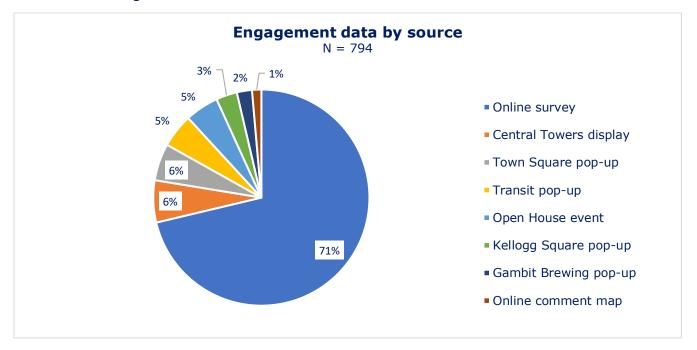


Figure 3: Engagement data by source.

#### What we heard: design feedback

Participants were also asked to give each design option a score from zero to 10. Zero represented the sentiment 'this option does not meet my needs at all,' and 10 represented the sentiment 'this option is perfect.' Option B received the highest score of 5.45 out of 10. Option A received 4.38 out of 10, and Option C received 4.06 out of 10.

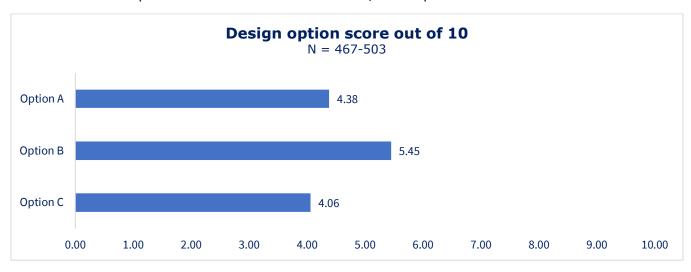


Figure 4: Design option scores.

Note: The N value was different for each design rating question and is therefore presented as a range.

The most common comment survey respondents had about Option B was that they liked the amount of pedestrian and green space. The most common comment participants had about Options A and C was that they disliked the lack of pedestrian and green space.

#### What we heard: priorities and parking

When asked to rank the top four priorities from phase one engagement feedback, participants ranked pedestrian and green space first, followed by vehicle travel time and traffic flow, parking and drop-off space, and lastly, transit travel time and reliability.

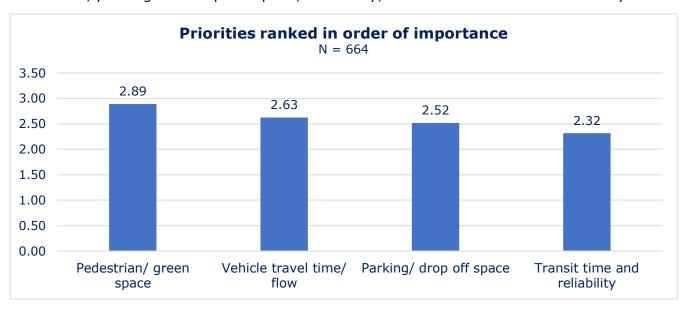


Figure 5: Priorities ranked in order of importance.

When asked whether they would still visit businesses on Robert Street if they had to park off-street instead of on-street at a parking meter, 45% of participants said yes and 34% said no. Other participants said it would depend on factors like cost, distance, and convenience.

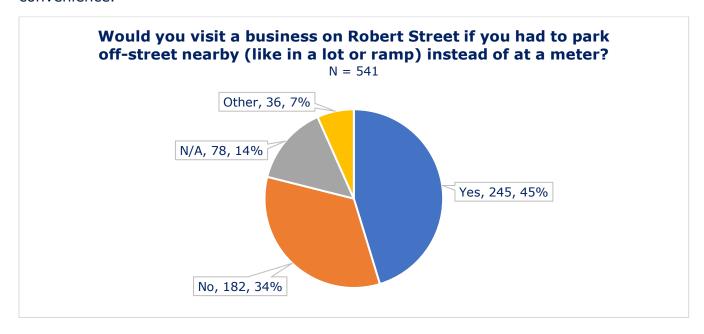


Figure 6: Business parking preference question.

## **Demographics**

Seventy percent of participants identified as white or European American, 6% identified as Black or African American, and 4% identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. Two percent each identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, and Mexican. Other respondents identified as Hmong, Jewish, and more than one race. Fifteen percent of respondents preferred not to answer.

Forty-five percent of participants used she/her pronouns, and 40% used he/him pronouns. Two percent used they/them pronouns, and 13% chose 'other' or preferred not to answer.

Thirty-eight percent of participants were between 36 and 50 years of age. About one-quarter each of participants were between 21 and 35, and between 51 and 64. Twelve percent were 65 years or older, and 2% were 20 years old or younger.

Eighty percent of participants said they do not have a disability, and 13% said they have a disability. Seven percent preferred not to answer.

Detailed data for each engagement and demographic question can be found in Appendix A.

## Communication

The following communication methods were used to promote the online comment map and survey, invite the public to outreach events, and direct the public to learn more on the project website.

## Website and email updates

The one-stop shop to stay informed about the Robert Street Reconstruction project is stpaul.gov/RobertStreet. This website has the most current project information and a sign-up form for email updates.

As of April 18, 2023, there were 480 people who signed up to receive email updates. On March 20 and 27, an email about the open house, video, survey, and comment map was sent out to the GovDelivery distribution list. On April 4, a reminder about the survey and comment map was sent out. The email updates usually had an open rate of 15%.

#### **Social media**

Notices about the design options, website, open house, survey, and comment map were posted on various social media platforms throughout phase two of engagement. Between Next Door, Twitter, and Facebook, these posts had total of 533 interactions. See Appendix B for a list of when and on which platforms the notices were posted, and the amount of reach and engagement for each.

## **Corridor signage**

On March 10, 2023, over 20 physical signs were installed along the Robert Street corridor. The signs directed people to the project website to view and give feedback on the design options. The signs were removed after the survey closed on April 10.



Photo 1: Corridor signage on Robert Street.

# **Engagement findings by activity**

#### Online survey and comment map

An online survey and interactive comment map were available on the website between March 7, 2023, and April 10, 2023 for community members to provide feedback on the three design options, their parking preferences, and their priorities for Robert Street. The survey also asked how people currently use Robert Street and their demographic information.

The comment map used drag-and-drop icons to capture people's concerns, positive feedback, and questions. Users were also able to comment on cross-section images of specific intersections.

The survey and comment map were promoted at engagement events including the open house and through multiple email updates. They were also promoted via social media, including three Twitter posts, two Facebook posts, and one Next Door post. A business located on the corridor also shared the website with customers via QR code and encouraged people to take the survey. A notice was also sent by Metro Transit to Robert Street transit users via a rider alert on March 23.

Detailed data can be found in Appendix A.

#### Survey results

566 people completed the online survey. About one-half of survey respondents said they travel on Robert Street as a customer, and about one-third said they commute using Robert Street. Respondents were most likely to drive on Robert Street. The second most common mode of transportation was walking/rolling.

When asked to rank the top four priorities from phase one engagement feedback, respondents ranked pedestrian and green space first, followed by vehicle travel time and flow, parking and drop-off space, and transit travel time and reliability.

When asked whether they would still visit businesses on Robert Street if they had to park off-street, 44% of respondents said yes and 36% said no. Five percent said it depends on factors like distance, cost, and convenience of the off-street parking option.

Respondents were also asked to give each design option a score from zero to 10. Zero represented the sentiment 'this option does not meet my needs at all,' and 10 represented the sentiment 'this option is perfect.' Option B received the highest score of 4.89 out of 10. Option A received 4.05 out of 10, and Option C received 3.75 out of 10. The most common comment survey respondents had about Option B was that they liked the pedestrian and green space.

Most survey respondents were between 36-50 years of age. Slightly more women than men answered the survey. Thirteen percent of respondents said they had a disability. Seventy percent of respondents were white or European American, 4% were Black or African American, and 4% were Hispanic or Latino/a. Two percent identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 2% identified as Mexican. Other respondents identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, Hmong, Central American (excludes Mexican), Jewish, and more than one race. Eighteen percent of respondents preferred not to answer.

#### Interactive comment map results

The comment map had 11 comments total: four about Option A, two each about Options B and C, and three general comments. Option A comments focused on the desire for a loading area in front of the Pioneer Endicott building. Option B comments included a desire for a loading area by the Pioneer Endicott as well, and a preference against the bus lane. Comments for Option C included a preference against the bus lane, and that Option C was a "workable" solution. The general comments included the desire for a bike lane, more skyway access, and more parking.

Additionally, detailed comments on the Options were received by Metro Transit and by City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Department.

#### **Business and property owner outreach**

Business and property owner outreach was conducted in two ways: recurring virtual Business and Property Manager Committee meetings on the third Thursday of every month and individual, mostly on-site meetings with representatives from each building. Key takeaways from each effort are described below.

#### Property and Business Manager Committee meetings

The project team hosted a series of virtual monthly meetings specifically for businesses and property managers in the project area. The meetings took place in 2023 on January 19, February 16, March 16, and April 20. Topics included but were not limited to project updates, design concepts, assessments, areaways, and parking. The meetings also included time for group discussion and questions from attendees.

Over the course of the four meetings, business and property managers most often brought up topics relating to:

- The need for on-street parking and loading/unloading zones.
- A desire for ample sidewalk/pedestrian space.

- The need for space to take care of routine building maintenance including window washing.
- A concern around the City's ability to maintain trees and green space.
- The importance of business visibility and access during construction.
- The need for utility construction coordination and communication.

#### BP Gas Station (542 Robert St. N)

Members of the project team met with the BP Gas Station manager on March 31, 2023. The manager noted that:

- Drivers cut through the site to avoid the red light on eastbound 11th Street when headed from Robert St to I-94 and I-35E. The manager liked the project staff's suggestion to close the south driveway and eliminate this issue.
- Fuel trucks use the north driveway on Robert Street to access tanks. The manager noted a preference to keep that driveway open.
- Right-angle ("T-Bone") crashes occur on eastbound 11th Street and northbound Robert Street approximately twice per month.
- There is an opportunity to better separate the sidewalk from the gas station property.

#### Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (530 Robert St. N)

Project staff met with the directors of the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL) and a representative from Cresa on March 20, 2023. They noted that:

- They are against locating a transit stop outside of their property and would prefer it to be in front of the BP Gas Station.
- They are concerned about wheelchair user safety and accessibility if the curb were to be lowered and/or whether transit station infrastructure would make wheelchair access to their building more complicated.
- They would consider moving out of their building if the final design choice does not meet their needs.
- MCIL is planning for growth in services which could require an expansion of their building footprint or a relocation in the coming years.

#### Alano Society of Saint Paul (520 Robert St. N)

Project staff met with Alano Society management on January 20, 2023. They discussed:

- Assessments, programming, and general operations of the space, including when events happen and how members typically get to or from the events at Alano.
- They would like to see an enhanced transit station with heat and lighting nearby because many members of Alano use the bus to get to meetings.
- Walkable access to nearby restaurants, Lunds & Byerlys, and other social services is why they like their current location downtown.

#### Lunds & Byerlys (101 10th St. E)

Project staff met with the Lunds & Byerlys general manager on March 24, 2023. The general manager noted that:

- They did not prefer one design option over another.
- Their key concern is their business's visibility and access during construction.

- The pedestrian environment is important; approximately 60% of customers walk or roll to the store while 40% drive.
- For deliveries, trucks turn from southbound Robert Street onto westbound 10th Street to access Minnesota Street.
- They would prefer that a transit station be located outside of Pedro Park to preserve customers' sight line and the flow of foot traffic. However, it would also be suitable next to Lunds & Byerlys as long as customers could see into the building.
- The traffic signal at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Robert Street is difficult to see, which may be leading to the high frequency of observed car crashes.
- The center turn lane is not wide enough between 11th Street and 10th Street.

#### Rossmor Building (500 Robert St. N)

Project staff met with the Rossmor Commercial Board on January 18, 2023 and February 15, 2023. The business owners expressed:

- Strong support for designs that included on-street parking and a commercial loading zone on Robert Street.
- Challenges with the existing two loading zones behind the Rossmor, crime and personal safety concerns, lack of employees downtown patronizing businesses, fear that loss of parking would force businesses to close, and general dislike of transit and bicycle infrastructure.
- Retaining space for a sidewalk café is important, but perhaps slightly less than onstreet parking capacity.
- Most business owners in the group expressed dislike for bus lanes and transit infrastructure throughout the multiple conversations.

Project staff met with the Rossmor Residential Board on January 30, 2023. Residents expressed:

- Support for sidewalk cafes and the needs of businesses in the Rossmor, as the presence of these businesses is crucial to the vitality of the area.
- They like greenspace and interesting streetscapes, as well as parking for visitors and quests to the building.

#### Pedro Park (114 10th St. E)

Owned by City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation. See summary in Public Agency Partner outreach section of this report.

#### Interstate Parking Lot (109 9th St. E)

Project staff met with operations managers for the Interstate Parking Lot on January 4, 2023. They noted that:

- They own the lot behind the Rossmor building and the lot on the west side of Union Gospel Mission. They have an easement with Union Gospel Mission, who uses their parking lot.
- Drivers use the Robert Street driveway but there are other ways to access their parking lots.

#### Accessory City LLC (484 Robert St. N)

The owner of the retail shop at the southeast corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Robert Street attended the open house on March 30, 2023. The owner didn't state a preference between

design options but was interested in financial support from the City for new and emerging BIPOC owned businesses downtown, as they had just recently opened their shop and are looking to expand in the coming years.

#### Renodis (747 Robert St. N)

Members of the project team met on April 19, 2023, with two Renodis staff members. The staff members noted that the 9<sup>th</sup> Street driveway could be used for parking access during construction. However, it is steep and difficult to use in the wintertime. The staff members noted a very slight preference for Option B due to the expanded sidewalk space.

#### R7 Lofts (133 Seventh St. E)

Project staff met with R7 Loft staff members on January 17, 2023, and R7 Loft staff attended the Property and Business Manager Committee Meetings. They stated the following priorities:

- Street parking is important and critical for vendors, deliveries, and guest parking, as well as, for future residents.
- Renters value the ability for guests to park daily or overnight and the underground parking garage does not accommodate all units.
- They must retain driveway access to Robert Street.
- Residents in some units have had problems with vibrations from general street traffic.

#### Robert Street Municipal Parking Ramp (95 Seventh St. E)

Project staff met with the parking operator from Keefe Co. Parking. They stated that they do not have a preferred option and will generally defer to the preferences of property owners nearby, such as the Golden Rule building and R7 Lofts.

#### Metro Square (130 Seventh St. E)

Project staff met with building managers of Metro Square and the Ramsey County property manager on March 22, 2023. They noted that:

- They prefer Option B for parking and increased sidewalk space.
- An areaway located along the curb line was filled in during the 1970s and may be encountered during construction.
- They are developing plans for waterproofing, which the project team will need to show in construction plans.
- Flooding occurs along 7th Place.
- They are reconfiguring the main floor to utilize the southwestern entrance as the main public entrance to Metro Square. They would like disruptions from construction to be minimized.
- They would like to have short-term parking available along Robert Street for public service clients and could convert 7th Place stalls to short-term parking.
- A significant number of Ramsey County employees will relocate to Metro Square over the next couple of years.

## Golden Rule Building (95 Seventh Pl. E)

Members of the project team met on April 13, 2023 with the Golden Rule Building property manager, assistant property manager, and engineering department. They noted that:

- Option B is their first choice, contingent upon widening of the street and having turn lanes at 7<sup>th</sup> Street, to allow space for lane closures and other regular building maintenance while maintaining traffic flow.
- Option C is their second choice, and A is the third.
- The team discussed that the width of sidewalk and selected materials/finishes/furnishings in the sidewalk zone needs to be thoughtfully planned with adjacent property owners to ensure a long-term and sustainable maintenance plan is in place. The perspective was shared that wider sidewalks downtown create an undue burden on property owners who are required to clear snow and maintain the walkways.
- Vehicle operations and convenient access to buildings during and after construction
  was the stated priority for Robert Street design concepts. The property owner
  requested efficient building access and protection of the building façade during
  construction.
- Design concept needs to keep in mind how temporary but regular closures of travel lanes for utility work, façade maintenance, etc. would impact traffic downtown and access to the buildings. Any option that doesn't allow for lane closures is unworkable.

#### Securian Financial and Cushman & Wakefield (400 and 401 Robert St. N)

Project staff met with employees of Securian Financial and Cushman & Wakefield, representing the Securian Financial buildings, on March 24, 2023. They noted that:

- They prefer Option C.
- They prefer the street to be as wide as possible for traffic flow. They also noted that
  because buses and emergency vehicles use Robert Street, a center turn lane to be
  used for passing, as well as parking, loading, and/or bus stops outside of the travel
  lanes, are essential. They also noted that if lanes are reduced or narrowed,
  necessary traffic flow, loading, and parking needs would not be met in the case of a
  future street closure due to construction.
- They are opposed to relocating a bus stop outside of the west building, since daycare drop-offs occur there. They also noted that the recurring starts/stops of the buses would also be disruptive to the daycare operations.
- They need to retain the west building's loading zone for police parking and skyway level retailer customers.
- They do not want to maintain furnishings for Public Works in the right of way.
- They prefer neither sidewalk is narrowed. However, if a sidewalk must be narrowed, it should be outside the east building since there is more space.

#### 135 5<sup>th</sup> Street (375 Jackson St. E)

Project staff reached out several times to Madison Equities to schedule a conversation and did not receive a response.

#### US Bank Center (101 Fifth St. E)

US Bank Center/Madison Equities employees attended the Property and Business Manager Committee Meetings and stated the following priorities:

- Property owners should not be assessed for the federal funding portion of the project. Requested information about assessments and how those are calculated and warranted.
- Parking is a necessity and has a strong preference for concepts that include onstreet parking and loading zones. A loss of any parking downtown is not preferred.
- Would like to see underground utility design in advance of final plans so they can have input.
- Suggested that the construction timeline be more conservative so that it is more likely to end early than past the deadline communicated.
- It would be nice if the Contractor would meet with the property owners directly during construction.

#### Empire Building (360 Robert St. N)

Project staff reached out several times to Madison Equities to schedule a conversation and did not receive a response.

#### Pioneer Endicott (141 Fourth St. E)

Project staff met with employees of PAK Properties, representing the Pioneer Endicott building on March 15, 2023 (virtual) and March 29, 2023 (on site). They noted that:

- The Pioneer Endicott needs a loading zone on Robert Street. The previous loading area on 4th street was taken away when the light rail line was installed, so the space on Robert Street is critical for building operations.
- Curb cuts are needed at three different locations on the block (outside the main Pioneer entrance on Robert, outside the Museum entrance on Robert, and at the north end of the block outside the Empire building for the bus stop). These locations were identified in order to accommodate residents who use wheelchairs and/or Metro Mobility to get around and to facilitate commercial deliveries and residential movers with heavy loads at those entrances to our property.
- Please make sure the curb cuts/ loading zone is correctly coded. This will ensure
  the city uses signage holding violators responsible for parking in a loading zone or
  blocking handicap accessibility. It also requires the city to keep curb cut and loading
  zone areas clear of snow.
- Expanded sidewalk space is a priority; enhanced finishes that create a sense of welcoming and interest to the museum is appealing.
- Option B is the most preferred option due to the expanded sidewalk space.

#### 1st National Bank (332 Minnesota St.)

Project staff met on-site with employees of Madison Equities, representing the 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank building on March 28, 2023. They noted that:

- They prefer Option A and do not think additional space for a sidewalk is necessary.
- It is critical to keep loading/unloading space on Robert Street. They do not need parking or loading space north of their driveway.
- They have a 460-stall parking ramp with an entrance/exit not on Robert Street. Large trucks use the Robert Street entrance/exit.
- Buses use the right turn lane on 5<sup>th</sup> Street to align with the stop east of Robert Street and would like to utilize striped gore space to create a right turn lane.

- They completed a project in 2022 that replaced the sidewalk and driveway with pavers and waterproofing.
- Large Xcel vaults near 5<sup>th</sup> Street will need to be protected.

#### Federal Building (316 Robert St. N)

Members of the project team met with the Federal Building property manager on April 14, 2023. The property manager noted that:

- For all design options, no matter where the station platform is placed on the block, visibility through the transit station will be important to the Federal Building security personnel.
- Desirable curbside uses, roughly in order of priority, are a bus rapid transit
  platform, an ADA accessible on-street parking stall, space for Metro Mobility, a
  general loading zone for fast drop-offs, and standard on-street parking meters.
- Options that provide more space for parking are preferred.
- Options that keep the bus out of the travel lane (Options A and C) are preferred over the bus stopping in traffic (Option B).
- The Federal Building is hoping to renovate their plaza in 2025 or possibly beyond. More coordination is needed as the curb lines become more solidified.
- They liked the idea of the steps on the south side of the site being replaced by an ADA accessible ramp.

## Kellogg Square (111 Kellogg Blvd. E)

Project staff met with building management on December 14, 2022 They noted that:

- Loading space on Robert Street is critical for moving in and out, school bus operations, and frequent deliveries.
- They maintain a public parking ramp that is accessible from Kellogg Boulevard.
- The National Park Service is their only commercial tenant.

Bigos Management employees attended the Property and Business Manager Committee Meetings but did not share direct feedback on design options. Project staff also communicated with the property manager to share the design options, set up a pop-up event at Kellogg Square on March 27, 2023, and invited them to the March 30, 2023 open house event.

#### **Residential outreach**

In mid-March, project staff contacted nine residential buildings in the project area. Project staff asked the building contacts to promote the project website, open house, and pop-up events to their residents. Project staff connected with Central Towers Presbyterian Homes, City Walk Condominiums, Kellogg Square, the Pioneer Endicott Apartment Buildings, and Rossmor Building Lofts, as described below. Galtier Towers, Heritage House Apartments, Mears Park Place, Penfield Apartments, and R7 Lofts were also contacted, but did not respond.

#### 333 On the Park (333 Sibley St. N)

Project staff spoke with management from 333 On the Park and sent them information about the project and the open house.

#### Central Towers Presbyterian Homes (20 Exchange St. E)

Project staff displayed four boards for two weeks at Central Towers Presbyterian Homes so residents could vote for their favorite design option. There were 50 votes total. Option B received the most votes, and Option A was a close second.

#### City Walk Condominiums (66 Ninth St. E)

Project staff spoke with management from City Walk Condominiums and sent them information about the project and the open house.



Photo 2: Pop-up event at Kellogg Square.

#### Pioneer Endicott Apartment Building (141 Fourth St. E)

The Pioneer Endicott Apartment Building distributed information about the project and the open house to their residents.

#### Rossmor Building Lofts (500 Robert St. N)

Staff at the Rossmor Building Lofts sent information about the project and the open house to their homeowners association, as well as their commercial tenants.

#### Public agency and key stakeholder outreach

#### CapitolRiver Council

Project staff presented to the CapitolRiver Council (the downtown district council that advises the Planning Commission and City Council) and nearby residents on April 6. That group of approximately a dozen downtown residents noted that:

- They want more infrastructure to encourage people to walk or roll to visit downtown businesses.
- Unenforced, readily available, low-cost, on-street parking prevents residents from choosing to walk or bike downtown.
- They are concerned about losing parking and view the cost of parking in ramps as a potential barrier to visiting downtown.
- They are interested in more greenspace and making sure it will be maintained.
- They prefer an option that has the best transit outcomes.

#### City of Saint Paul Parks

At the April 11, 2023, Technical Advisory Group meeting, City of Saint Paul Parks expressed a preference for Option B, as its wider boulevard provides more room for trees to grow and thrive. Option C was the second preferred option.

#### City of Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development

City of Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development sent a letter to project staff on April 11, 2023. They noted that:

- Their preference is Option B, but Option C is still highly regarded as well.
- Pedestrians are their top modal priority from a city plan perspective.
- Given there are only slight variations in travel times for vehicles and transit among alternatives the alternative that better accommodates pedestrians is preferred.

#### City of Saint Paul Regional Water Services

At the April 11, 2023, Technical Advisory Group meeting, a representative from City of Saint Paul Regional Water Services noted that they have no preference on design option, as long at the final design stays within the right-of-way.

#### City of Saint Paul Street Design

At the April 11, 2023, Technical Advisory Group meeting, City of Saint Paul Street Design noted that they were coordinating with utility groups and anticipate future conversations on watershed and street design.

#### Metro Transit

Metro Transit sent a letter to project staff on March 28, 2023. A summary is below.

- Option A is Metro Transit's design option preference.
- Metro Transit does not support a layout that includes bus pullouts at BRT stations.
- The starting point for arterial BRT platform widths should be at least the standard 11 feet six inches.
- If bus lanes in both directions cannot be included due to other priorities, Option C may also be acceptable. Metro Transit prefers a southbound Business Access Transit (BAT) lane.
- The proposal to not have local service use the existing mid-block 5th Street/6th Street bus stop is not acceptable. This is an example of a split stop, which are generally not preferred.
- Metro Transit will review platform lengths and evaluate based on the planned level of service in the corridor. The bus stop zone length will vary based on location and assumed service.

#### Metropolitan Council

On April 20, 2023, a representative from the Metropolitan Council Facility Services emailed project staff. They noted the Metropolitan Council's desire for a pick-up/drop-off area for Metro Mobility, as people with limited mobility need access to the building. They also noted that this may not be a need if the design with two lanes (Option B) is chosen.

Project staff also discussed the concepts with the building manager of the Metropolitan Council at the first Open House in November 2022, and several building operators and employees were engaged in the committee meetings in the subsequent months. The primary pieces of feedback from these conversations were:

- Need to maintain a Metro Mobility drop-off zone on Robert Street. In the options with multiple travel lanes, a pull-out zone is not necessarily needed but, in the option where the bus stops in a single travel lane, a pull-out zone is important as drop-offs can take a while and happen frequently.
- Need to integrate a transit station on the block in both directions; reducing misblock crossings and enhancing access to the skyway is important.
- No preference between design options stated by Metropolitan Council staff.
   However, Metro Transit staff feedback is considered and documented separately in the "public agency partner feedback" section.

#### Ramsey County

On March 23, 2023, Ramsey County Public Works emailed project staff to voice support for Option A with BAT lanes. They noted that bus pullout options do not prioritize transit and are inconsistent with Ramsey County's All-Abilities Transportation Network.

#### Saint Paul Downtown Alliance

The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance staff was engaged in many conversations with project staff in the formal committee meetings and in organic conversations throughout the concept layout process. The key themes of feedback from them included:

- Prioritizing the pedestrian space and realm; 8-foot sidewalks are not conducive to healthy downtown streetscapes and active public realms.
- Narrow lane widths and crossing distances such that we humanize our streets and prioritize vitality and activity on commercial corridors.
- Be open to new ideas and innovation in the right-of-way, including via "Streeteries"
   (i.e., conversation of on-street parking spaces to expanded café or park spaces)
   and above standard streetscape, such as trees, planters, pavers, art, and other
   unique materials that make spaces interesting.
- Designing the street to reduce cut-through downtown traffic; a design that
  prioritizes people staying and spending time downtown, instead of using it as a
  thoroughfare to the freeway, is much preferred.

#### Saint Paul Transportation Committee

Members of the project team presented project information to the Saint Paul Transportation Committee on May 1. During the meeting, members of the committee noted that:

- Pedestrians should be the priority; everyone is a pedestrian. The pedestrian environment should be the focus, even if that unfortunately means slightly slower transit times.
- The committee questioned the need for parking and overall parking demand.
- Parking should be removed and bus lanes should be kept. It was noted that car
  infrastructure should be removed so that there is not a need to compromise
  between pedestrians or transit.
- The committee desires bike racks with a maximum pole diameter of 1.5" but recognizes that bike infrastructure is planned for parallel routes such as Minnesota Street and Jackson Street, so may not be necessary on Robert Street.

## **Engagement events**

In March, project staff hosted four in-person engagement events and an open house. These events reached approximately 167 people who live, work, play, and travel on Robert Street. The events were promoted on the project website and through residential outreach (see <u>Residential Outreach</u> section). See below for a summary of the public input that was gathered at each event.

For detailed data on the feedback gathered at each event, see Appendix A. Note that data for every engagement question was not able to be gathered at every event.

#### Town Square skyway pop-up event

On March 21, project staff held a pop-up event in the Town Square skyway. Approximately 44 stakeholders offered feedback. Of the three design options, Option A received the most positive feedback, with an average score of 7.63 out of 10. Of the participants who would potentially park on Robert Street, most would still visit a business if they had to park off-street. Traffic flow as a priority was discussed most frequently.

#### Transit stop pop-up event

On March 22, project staff held a pop-up event at transit stops at 6th Street and Robert Street. Specifically, these stops were at the southeast corner of the intersection, outside of the Metropolitan Council, and near the heated shelter on 6th Street outside of the Securian building. Approximately 40 stakeholders offered feedback. Of the three design options, Option A received the most positive feedback by far. Of the participants who would potentially park on Robert Street, most would still visit a business if they had to park offstreet. Bus lanes were discussed most frequently as a priority.



Photo 3: Metro Transit stop on Robert Street.



Photo 4: Pop-up event at Gambit Brewing.

#### Gambit Brewing pop-up event

On March 24, project staff held a pop-up event at Gambit Brewing. Approximately 18 stakeholders offered feedback. Of the three design options, Option C received the most positive feedback, with an average score of 7.35 out of 10. Of the participants who would potentially park on Robert Street, most would still visit a business if they had to park offstreet. Parking was the most frequently discussed topic among participants. The loading bay outside of the Pioneer-Endicott building was important to participants, many of whom live in the building.

#### Kellogg Square pop-up event

On March 27, project staff held a pop-up event at Kellogg Square with the help of the property manager. The project team shared the design options and invited guests to the March 30 open house event. Approximately 25 stakeholders offered feedback. Of the three design options, Option B received the most positive feedback, with an average score of 6.61 out of 10. Of the participants who would potentially park on Robert Street, most would still visit a business if they had to park off-street. Prioritizing the cab stand outside of Kellogg Square was discussed most frequently.

#### Open house

On March 30, project staff hosted an open house at the Metropolitan Council chambers. Approximately 40 stakeholders offered feedback. Of the three design options, Option B received the most positive feedback, with an average score of 6.96 out of 10. Of the participants who would potentially park on Robert Street, most would still visit a business if they had to park off-street. Participants made a wide variety of comments about each design option.



Photo 5: Open house event at Metropolitan Council.

The open house was promoted on the project website, via an email to the Gov Delivery distribution list, posts on Facebook and Twitter, flyers hand-delivered to businesses, and residential outreach. Steering Committee resident representative Scott Miller also promoted the open house to their network and led a group of fellow stakeholders to the event. The Minnesota Department of Transportation also included a note about the open house in their March 29 "What's new with Robert Street?" Gov Delivery email.

## **Steering Committee**

The Robert Street Reconstruction Steering Committee is a non-voting advisory group that meets quarterly. Committee members serve as ambassadors between the project team and the community. They share their perspectives, provide connections, and relay project information and rationale.

The steering committee is comprised of people from government and civic organizations as well as two residents from the corridor. See the full list of steering committee members in Appendix C.

## **Conclusion**

Over 800 stakeholders were reached in two months through a variety of in-person and online engagement strategies. Outreach included a wide range of stakeholders, such as residents, employees, businesses, customers, property owners and managers, and agency partners. Staff collected and analyzed public feedback about the three preliminary designs for Robert Street, as well as peoples' top priorities and parking preferences.

Pedestrian and green space was the highest-ranked priority, with vehicle travel time and traffic flow as the second-highest priority. Option B was the most preferred of the three options, most notably for its pedestrian and green space. The majority of participants said they would still visit Robert Street businesses if they had to park off-street.

This input will help the project team develop a proposed concept design in June 2023 with detailed engineering to follow and construction planned in 2025 and 2026.

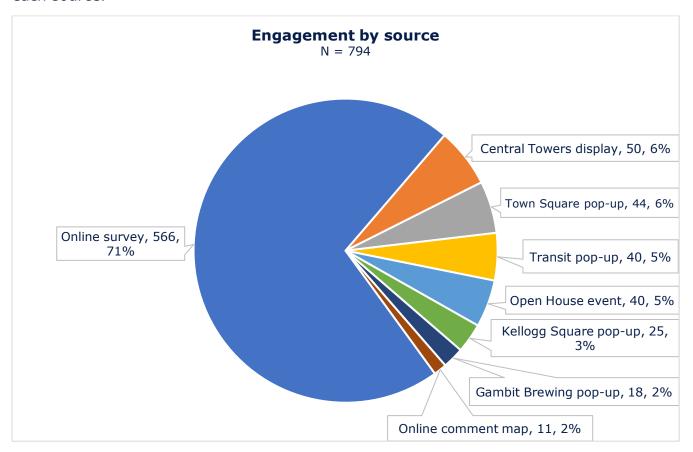


Photo 6: Pop-up event at Town Square skyway.

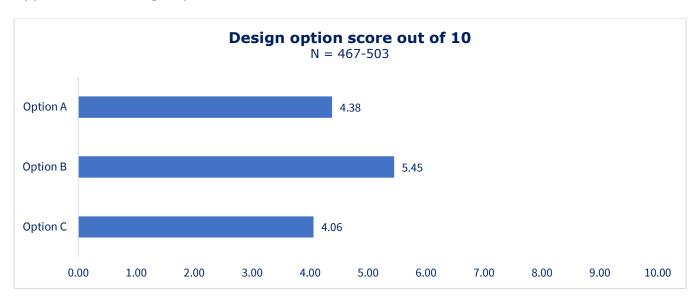
# **Appendix**

## Appendix A: Detailed engagement data

The following public engagement data was collected through in-person events, an online survey, and an interactive comment map. Specific sources of data are noted where applicable. See figure two below for a breakdown of the amount of data gathered from each source.



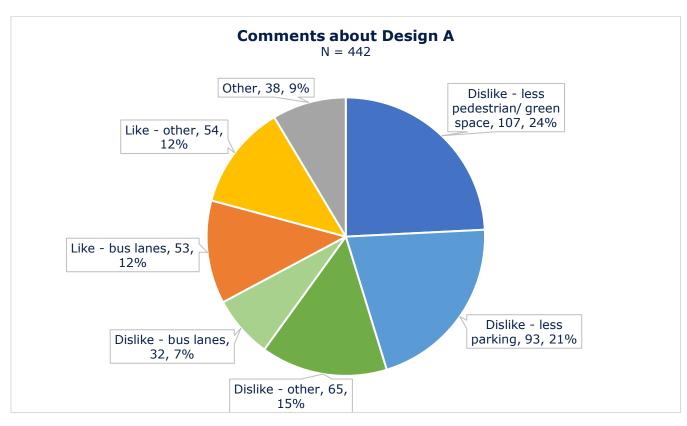
Appendix A1: Design option scores out of 10



	Town Transit Square pop- pop-up up**		Gambit Brewing pop-up	Kellogg Square pop-up	Central Towers display**	Open House	Online survey	Total weighted average	
Option	N = 19- 20*	N = 23	N = 17	N = 12- 13*	N = 50	N = 28	N = 389- 427*	N = 467- 503*	
A	7.63	7.00	4.56	3.13	4.20	3.48	4.05	4.38	
В	7.24	1.70	7.06	6.61	4.60	6.96	4.89	5.45	
С	6.50	1.30	7.35	4.62	1.20	3.13	3.75	4.06	

<sup>\*</sup>The N value was different for each design rating question and is therefore presented as a range.

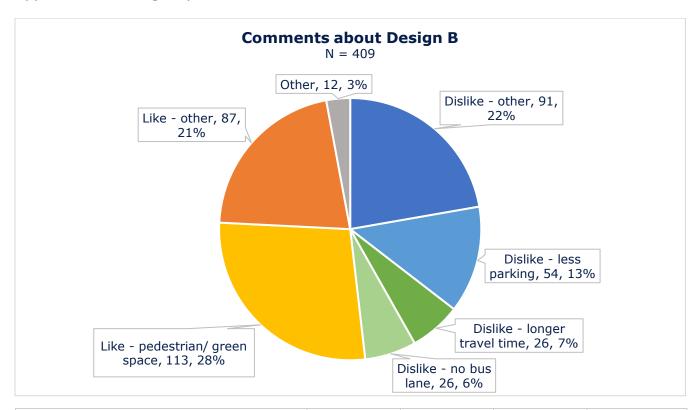
Appendix A2: Design Option A comments



Comment	Survey	Events and map	Total	Percent
Dislike - less pedestrian/ green space	104	3	107	24%
Dislike - less parking	93	0	93	21%
Dislike - other	63	2	65	15%
Like - bus lanes	36	17	53	12%
Like - other	45	9	54	12%
Dislike - bus lanes	31	1	32	7%
Other	33	5	38	9%
Total	405	37	442	

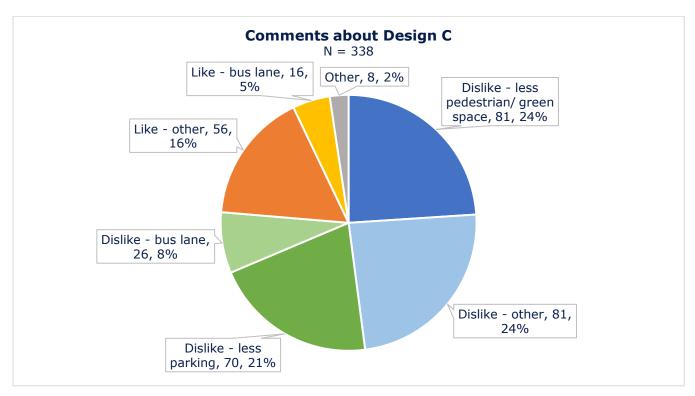
<sup>\*\*</sup>The engagement question for the Transit pop-up and the Central Towers display was phrased as "Which is your favorite design?" due to the nature of the engagement. In order to compare this data with the 0-10 scale data from the other sources, we took the percentage of people who said a certain design was their favorite and turned that into a score out of 10. Ex. if 70% of Transit Pop-up participants said their favorite design was A, the score out of 10 became 7.

Appendix A2: Design Option B comments



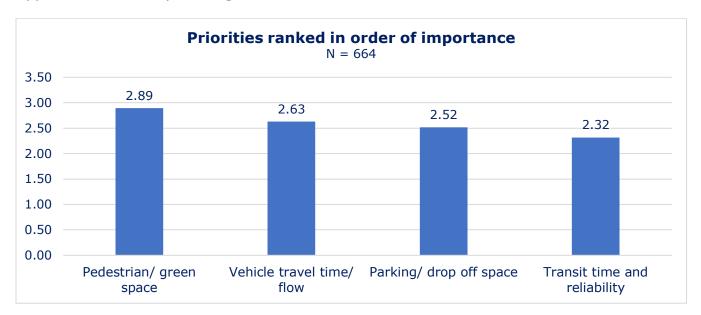
Comment	Survey	Events and map	Total	Percent
Like - pedestrian/ green space	103	10	113	28%
Dislike - other	89	2	91	22%
Like - other	72	15	87	21%
Dislike - less parking	54	0	54	13%
Dislike - longer travel time	26	0	26	6%
Dislike - no bus lane	26	0	26	6%
Other	11	1	12	3%
Total	381	28	409	

Appendix A3: Design Option C comments



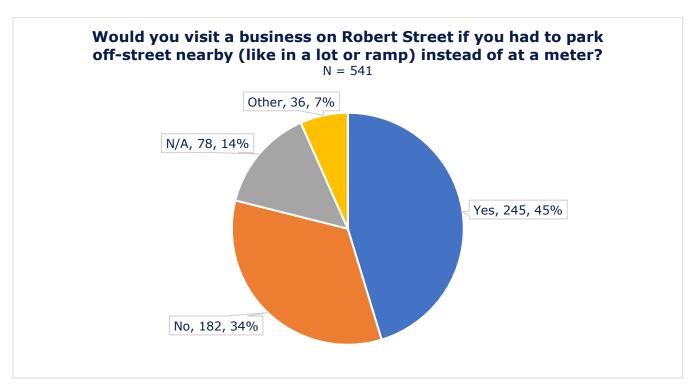
Code	Survey	Events and map	Total	Percent
Dislike - less pedestrian/ green space	80	1	81	24%
Dislike - other	81	0	81	24%
Dislike - less parking	70	0	70	21%
Like - other	41	15	56	17%
Dislike - bus lane	25	1	26	8%
Like - bus lane	16	0	16	5%
Other	4	4	8	2%
Total	317	21	338	

Appendix A4: Priority rankings



	Town Square pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up	Kellogg Square pop-up	Open House	Online survey	Total weighted average
	N = 11	N = 25	N = 15	N = 14	N = 34	N = 565	Total N = 664
Pedestrian/ green space	3.13	3.50	<u>3.92</u>	3.09	<u>3.65</u>	<u>2.81</u>	<u>2.89</u>
Vehicle travel time/ flow	3.22	2.20	3.11	2.33	2.35	2.63	2.63
Parking/ drop off space	2.33	1.60	2.60	<u>3.55</u>	3.00	2.49	2.52
Transit time and reliability	2.67	<u>3.76</u>	2.40	2.30	2.29	2.26	2.32

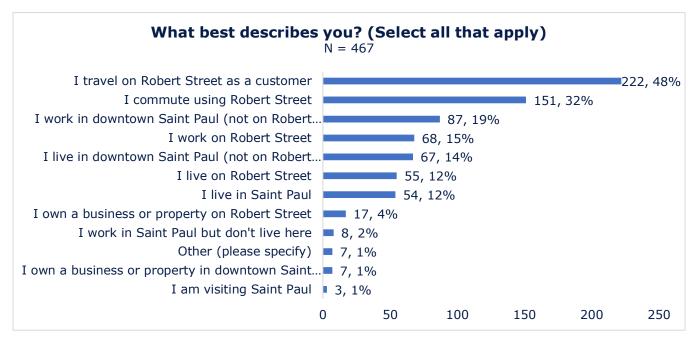
Appendix A5: Parking



	Squ	wn uare o-up	Transit pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up		Squ	logg uare o-up		en use		line vey	Total	
	N = 13		N = 11		N = 11		N = 9		N = 19		N = 478		N = 541	
Yes	10	77%	5	45%	8	73%	6	67%	8	42%	208	44%	245	45%
No	2	15%	1	9%	2	18%	2	22%	3	16%	172	36%	182	34%
N/A	1	8%	5	45%	1	9%	0	0%	6	32%	65	14%	78	14%
Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	11%	2	11%	33	7%	36	7%

## Appendix A6: Demographics

#### Relation to Robert Street

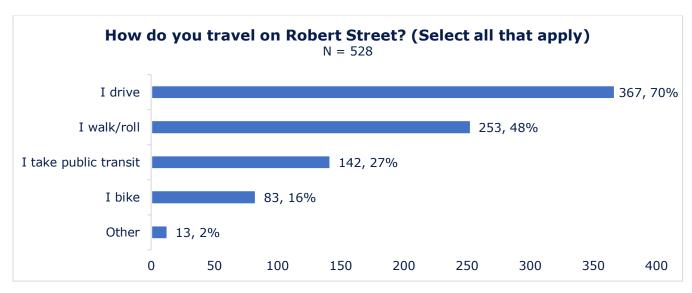


	Town Square pop-up		Transit pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up		Kellogg Square pop-up			pen ouse	Online survey		Total		
	N	N = 4		N = 12		N = 13		N = 14		N = 23		N = 401		N = 467	
Answer	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
I travel on Robert Street as a customer	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	222	55%	222	48%	
I commute using Robert Street	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	151	38%	151	32%	
I work in downtown Saint Paul (not on Robert Street)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	87	22%	87	19%	
I work on Robert Street	3	75%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	65	16%	68	15%	
I live in downtown Saint Paul (not on Robert Street)**	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	67	17%	67	14%	
I live on Robert Street	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	55	14%	55	12%	
I live in Saint Paul	1	25%	9	75%	10	77%	14	100%	18	78%	2	0%	54	12%	

I own a business or property on Robert Street	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	17	4%	17	4%
I work in Saint Paul but don't live here	0	0%	0	0%	3	23%	0	0%	5	22%	0	0%	8	2%
I own a business or property in downtown Saint Paul (not on Robert Street)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	2%	7	1%
Other (please specify)**	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	2%	7	1%
I am visiting Saint Paul*	0	0%	3	25%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%

<sup>\*</sup>This was only an answer option at the Transit pop-up

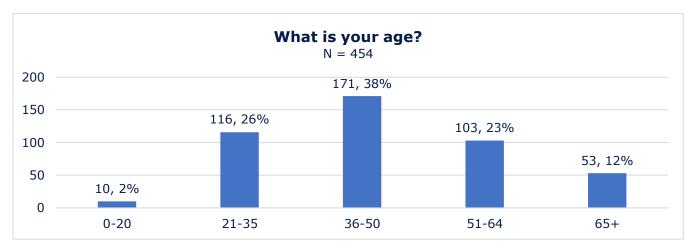
#### Travel method on Robert Street



	S	Town Square pop-up		Square Transit		Bre	Brewing S		Kellogg Square pop-up		pen ouse		line rvey	Тс	tal
	1	N = 6	N	= 32	N	= 28	N	= 21	N = 40		N = 401		N = 528		
Answer	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
I drive	5	83%	0	0%	5	18%	9	43%	14	35%	334	83%	367	70%	
I walk/roll	1	17%	4	13%	11	39%	10	48%	19	48%	208	52%	253	48%	
I take public transit	0	0%	25	78%	2	7%	1	5%	7	18%	107	27%	142	27%	
I bike	0	0%	2	6%	1	4%	1	5%	2	5%	77	19%	83	16%	
Other	0	0%	1	3%	9	32%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	13	2%	

<sup>\*\*</sup>This was only an answer option for the online survey

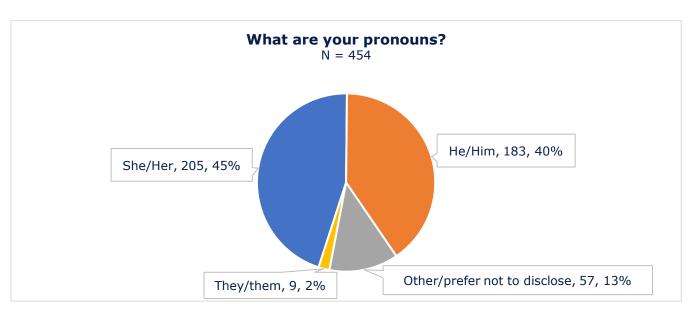
#### Age



	Town Square pop-up		Transit pop-up*		Gambit Brewing pop-up		Bre	mbit wing o-up		oen use		line vey	TOTAL	
	N	= 3	N:	= 0	N	= 9	N =	= 15	N =	= 23	N = 403		N = 454	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-20	0	0%			0	0%	0	0%	2	9%	8	2%	10	2%
21-35	2	67%			4	44%	4	27%	1	4%	105	26%	116	26%
36-50	1	33%			2	22%	0	0%	5	22%	163	40%	171	38%
51-64	0	0%			2	22%	3	20%	7	30%	91	23%	103	23%
65+	0	0%			1	11%	8	53%	8	35%	36	9%	53	12%

<sup>\*</sup>Data not collected at Transit pop-up.

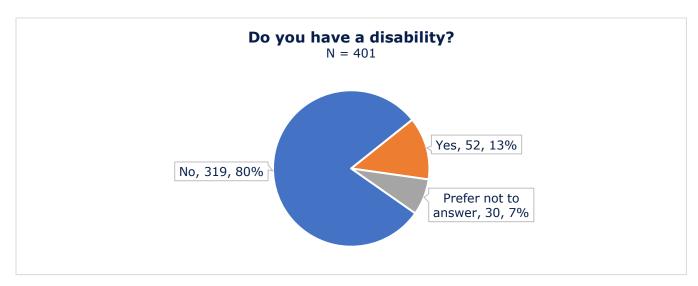
#### **Pronouns**



Town Square pop-up			Transit pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up		Open House		Online survey		TOTAL	
	N = 3	N	= 17		N	= 10	1	N = 10	N	= 22	N =	392	N =	454
N	%	N	%	N		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%

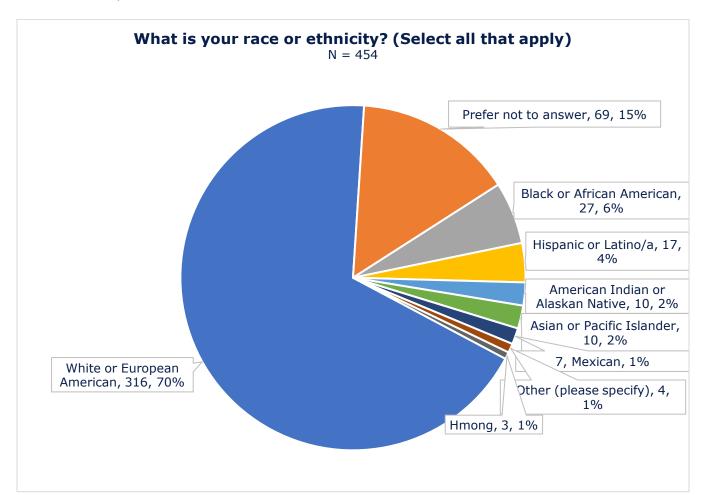
She/Her	1	33%	4	24%	2	20%	6	60%	14	64%	178	45%	205	45%
He/Him	2	67%	13	76%	8	80%	2	20%	8	36%	150	38%	183	40%
Other/pref er not to disclose	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	57	15%	57	13%
They/them	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	20%	0	0%	7	2%	9	2%

## Disability



	Sq pop	own uare o-up*	pop	Fransit Open Brewing pop-up* Gambit Brewing pop-up* House*		use*	sui	line rvey	TOTAL					
	N	= 0	N	= 0	N	= 0	N	= 0	N = 0		N = 401		N =	401
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No											319	80%	319	80%
Yes											52	13%	52	13%
Prefer not to answer											30	7%	30	7%

<sup>\*</sup>Data not collected at events.



	Town Square pop-up		Transit pop-up		Gambit Brewing pop-up		В	iambit rewing oop-up	Open House N = 24			line rvey	TOTAL N = 454	
		N = 4	N = 16		N = 10		N = 6				N =	394		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
White or European American	3	75%	3	19%	1 0	100%	4	67%	19	79%	277	70%	316	70%
Prefer not to answer	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	69	18%	69	15%
Black or African American	1	25%	8	50%	0	0%	0	0%	3	13%	15	4%	27	6%
Hispanic or Latino/a	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	16	4%	17	4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0%	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	9	2%	10	2%
Asian or Pacific Islander	0	0%	4	25%	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	5	1%	10	2%

Mexican	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	7	2%	7	2%
Other (please specify)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	33%	0	0%	2	1%	4	1%
Hmong	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	1%	3	1%
Central American (excludes Mexican)	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	2	0%
Middle Eastern	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Nigerian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Puerto Rican	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Vietnames e	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%
Asian Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Lao	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Liberian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Oromo	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Somali	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
South American	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

## **Appendix B: Social media outreach**

Date	Platform	Topic	Engagement
March 17	Next Door	Design options, website	79,966 members 38 impressions
March 20	Twitter	Open house, survey	12 likes 19 retweets
March 29	Facebook	Open house, comment map	1,207 organic reach 54 users interacted
۸ صونا ر	Twitter	Cum (a) clasing reminder	4 likes 5 retweets
April 6	Facebook	Survey closing reminder	6,425 organic reach 401 users interacted

## **Appendix C: Steering committee members**

- Rebecca Noecker (Saint Paul City Council)
- Russ Stark (Saint Paul Mayor's Office)
- Sean Kershaw (Saint Paul Public Works)
- Nicolle Goodman (Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development)
- Andy Rodriguez (Saint Paul Parks and Recreation)
- Krystle Cruz Williams (Saint Paul Business Engagement)
- Scott Pederson (Minnesota Transportation Department Program Delivery Office)
- Rafael Ortega (Ramsey County)
- Jon Fure (CapitolRiver Council)
- Joe Spencer (Saint Paul Downtown Alliance)
- Tina Gassman (Saint Paul Building Owners and Managers Association)
- Chai Lee (Metropolitan Council)

- Adam Harrington (Metro Transit)
- Nick Thompson (Metro Transit)
- Will Schroer (East Metro Strong)
- B Kyle (Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce)
- Scott Miller (corridor resident and business owner)
- Paula Stone (corridor resident)