

HIGHWAY

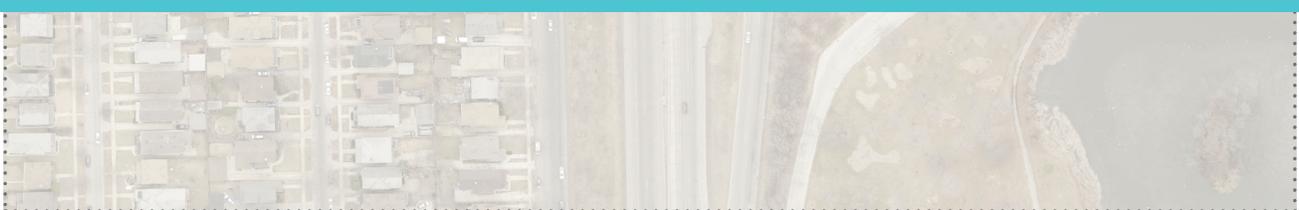
# WIS 175

VISIONING STUDY

**MILWAUKEE**  
*comprehensive* **Plan**



Department of City Development  
October 2017



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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8/18/2017  
Produced by the City of Milwaukee  
Department of City Development  
[milwaukee.gov/dcd](http://milwaukee.gov/dcd)

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# I. | PURPOSE

The purpose of this planning process is two-fold: to develop a vision for a contextually-sensitive solution to the current configuration of the Stadium Freeway terminus at Lisbon Avenue and to find an interim solution for the vacant lot between the ramps. As a visioning study, this starts the conversation about potential future improvements between the City of Milwaukee (City) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). The Stadium freeway and the portion of Lisbon Avenue west of the Stadium Freeway are part of the state highway network and designated as WIS 175.

This document will also be adopted as an amendment to the City of Milwaukee's Washington Park Area Plan. The Washington Park Plan was adopted in June of 2006 as a part of the City of Milwaukee's Comprehensive Plan. The terminus of the Stadium Freeway at Lisbon Avenue falls within the boundary of the Washington Park Area Plan, just to the east of the West Side Plan Area that includes the Uptown Crossing Business District. Both the Washington Park Plan and West Side Area plan include a number of recommendations for strengthening the North Avenue and Lisbon Avenue commercial districts, making the area friendlier for pedestrians, and better connecting the adjacent residential neighborhoods. However, the Plans do not specifically make recommendations about this intersection or the larger Stadium Freeway. The adoption of this document as an amendment to the Washington Park Plan will memorialize the overarching goals and vision of stakeholders for this critical interchange and the surrounding area.



## II. | BACKGROUND

The partial interchange where the Stadium Freeway intersects with Lisbon Avenue is a remnant of a larger freeway plan that was developed and constructed during the 1950s and 60s. As originally planned, the Stadium Freeway would have extended north into Ozaukee County. It would have also connected to the Park Freeway West, for which homes and businesses along North Avenue were demolished, including for sections of potential freeway that were never built. Ultimately, only a small segment of the freeway was ever built. The Stadium freeway runs from National Avenue on the southern end to Lisbon Avenue on the northern end and opened to traffic in 1962. While this section of freeway is just under two miles long, it has a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhoods.



The result of this unfinished network is a freeway stub that cuts through a residential neighborhood, disrupts access to Washington Park, and abruptly ends in the middle of the Uptown Crossing commercial corridor. The on- and off-ramps empty onto Lisbon Avenue, an angled street. Cars coming off the freeway have little time to transition to city streets. The freeway also serves as a physical barrier between the Washington Park and Washington Heights neighborhoods. Lisbon Avenue funnels traffic from the northwest side onto the Stadium Freeway, which then connects to the I-94 East-West Freeway. Residents and businesses want to see this important connection fit into the neighborhood in a less disruptive manner, starting at the northern end.

Homes razed along North Ave. for the Park West Freeway (never built).

The City of Milwaukee's purchase of the former bank building between the WI 175 on- and off-ramps with the assistance of the Uptown Crossing Business Improvement District (the BID) in June of 2016 allowed the City and its partners to kick-off a visioning study that considers potential future reconfigurations of this interchange. This parcel has seen many uses, including a bank and an urgent care office; however, access has always been an issue, and businesses have been short-lived due to the locational challenges. When the property between the ramps became available for sale, the City recognized this as a rare opportunity to shape the future of the area and purchased the site with contributions from the Uptown Crossing BID. The BID's financial contribution highlights the importance of this area to local businesses and the vitality of the entire neighborhood. The City bought the site to ensure that it was not occupied by an undesirable use and so that the site could be preserved to accommodate an improved intersection and gateway to the commercial district and the three adjacent neighborhoods. The proactive purchase of a property by the City in a circumstance such as this is rare and speaks to the importance of this site and the opportunity it presents.



INTERSECTION  
IN 1951

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INTERSECTION  
IN 2015

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## III.

# GOALS

At the outset of the study, the following goals were adopted based on input from the WisDOT and area stakeholders. These goals reflect challenges posed by the current configuration of the interchange and serve as criteria to measure potential design solutions.

1. Improve neighborhood cohesion. While roads have the ability to link communities, they can also create physical and even intangible barriers between different neighborhoods and communities. In the case of the Stadium Freeway and Lisbon Avenue intersection, the two ramps to and from Lisbon Avenue disrupt the commercial corridor along Lisbon Avenue. On a larger scale, the freeway stub separates the Washington Park neighborhood on the east from the Washington Heights neighborhood on the west. On North 46th Street, residential properties directly front the freeway ramp spur. On North 47th Street, residential properties overlook the freeway with chain link fencing and fast moving traffic right outside their front doors. This unpleasant proximity lowers property values and the quality of life of residents. Washington Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, is adjacent to the freeway from Vliet Street to Lloyd Street. While bridges across the freeway at Vliet Street, Washington Boulevard, and Lloyd Street provide access, people on foot must cross freeway ramps to get to the park.



2. Improve commercial vitality and support business attraction efforts along Lisbon and North Avenues. The Uptown Crossing BID has been active in branding the area and filling vacancies. Vacant storefronts are of particular concern at the corner of Lisbon Avenue and 47th Street. The building has difficulty attracting and retaining tenants because of the inhospitable environment caused by traffic noise, narrow sidewalks, and a lack of visible parking.



3. Improve safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. This intersection was designed with automobile traffic in mind, to funnel traffic from Lisbon Avenue onto the Stadium freeway. The most dangerous element of the existing road alignment is the pedestrian crossing across the entrance to the southbound on-ramp on the south side of Lisbon Avenue. The free flow right turn movement and large turning radius encourages motorists to enter the freeway at a high rate of speed. Furthermore, because of the large ramp radius, pedestrians are not visible to a driver until after the driver has started to accelerate onto the ramp.



4. Maintain acceptable traffic operations. The Stadium Freeway and Lisbon Avenue west of the intersection are WIS 175, part of the state highway network. Because WIS 175 is under state jurisdiction, certain standards for traffic mobility apply. The City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works (DPW) also hopes to mitigate the potential that proposed designs may create more traffic congestion. This study is a high-level exploration of potential solutions to a challenging intersection. An in-depth traffic analysis is beyond the scope of this study, but this would be an important component of the evaluation process during an engineering study.



## IV. DEVELOPING THE VISION

# THE PROCESS

As it has done throughout the development and ongoing refinement of the city's Comprehensive Plan, the City of Milwaukee worked closely with area residents, neighborhood associations, business owners, and other stakeholders to ensure that community engagement was a primary driver shaping the future vision for the study area.

### A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Staff from the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development (DCD) and Department of Public Works (DPW) worked closely with the State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to frame the scope of the project and to craft potential short and long-term solutions to address some of the challenges identified with the current configuration of the on and off-ramps at WI 175 and Lisbon Avenue. It was determined that any short or medium term recommendations should be limited to the segment of WI 175 north of Lloyd Street based on the remaining life span of existing infrastructure and the potential future availability of funding to implement the recommendations of this study.

DCD assembled a Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) for the study that included representatives from the neighborhoods and businesses adjacent to the study area. This group included representatives from Washington Park Partners, the Sherman Park Community Association, the Uptown Crossing BID, Washington Heights Neighborhood Association, Town Bank, WisDOT, and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). The Common Council members and State Representative whose districts include the study area also served on the Stakeholder Advisory Group and provided leadership throughout the process.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group met three times throughout the process of developing the final recommendations contained in this document. The first meeting served to identify the priority goals for the study and to develop initial concepts for further exploration during the process. The second meeting was to refine the final concepts being considered for recommendation. The final meeting provided the Stakeholder Advisory Group the opportunity to review and refine the final recommendations.



## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A series of neighborhood meetings and online surveys were used to solicit input on the study and the concepts (concepts) being considered to ensure that the recommendations best reflected stakeholder goals for this area. For all of the meetings, postcards were mailed, meeting information was posted via e-notify and social media, and local community organizations were given fliers to distribute.

The first public meeting was held in November of 2016 at Milwaukee French Immersion School to allow residents and business owners to review the preliminary four concepts and interim uses being considered and to provide input on the overall goals of the project. More than 50 people attended this open house and provided feedback that was critical to refining the study goals and concepts.

This public meeting was followed by an online survey that included similar content and allowed individuals who could not attend the meeting to review and comment on the information presented. The survey was completed by 124 people and was accompanied by robust discussion on neighborhood social media sites.

Based on feedback received during the first round of public engagement, DCD and DPW worked to refine the two concepts that received the most support and best met the goals identified by stakeholders for the project. This included creating 3D renderings of those concepts and adding additional details for consideration to help members of the public envision the impact of proposed changes to the area. Potential interim uses for the vacant lot at the former bank property between the two ramps were also refined based on public input.

A second public meeting was held in April of 2017 to solicit input on the refined concepts. More than 60 people attended this meeting at the Urban Ecology Center in Washington Park to help shape the final recommendations found in this document. The updated concepts for both the reconfiguration of the on and off-ramps and interim uses for the vacant lot were presented to attendees. Live input was provided via iClicker surveying as well as group discussion so all participants could provide input through a variety of methods.

Another online survey was utilized after this meeting to allow individuals who couldn't attend the meeting to provide input on their preferred concepts. This survey was completed by 272 people. The survey results are discussed in detail on page 20.

A final Open House was held in August of 2017 at the weekly summer concert series in Washington Park to present the draft recommendations for comment before the formal adoption process.



## DESIGN

# V. CONCEPTS

In order to address the challenges posed by the current configuration of the interchange, the City of Milwaukee worked in cooperation with WisDOT to develop four distinct design concepts for a realignment of the ramps where the freeway portion of WIS 175 meets West Lisbon Avenue. While the concepts do not include all possible alignments, they do illustrate clear and distinct approaches to addressing the goals of the project. These are conceptual in nature, intended to show a range of options, and do not negate the need for a future engineering study, including an operational analysis.

While some stakeholders expressed the desire remove the entire freeway altogether and re-introduce the city grid, this was beyond the geographic scope of this study. That longer term possibility merits additional study when the Stadium Freeway is reconstructed. There were also concerns about additional traffic delays any reconfiguration may cause. Two of the proposed concepts maintain the freeway all the way to Lisbon Avenue as currently exists while two others begin to replace the freeway with city streets at Lloyd Street.

### CONCEPT ONE

Concept One maintains the freeway all the way to Lisbon Avenue. The northbound ramp is unchanged and the southbound ramp is reconstructed adjacent to the northbound ramp creating a more traditional intersection at Lisbon Ave. This is a simple solution and would be the easiest of the four concepts to implement.

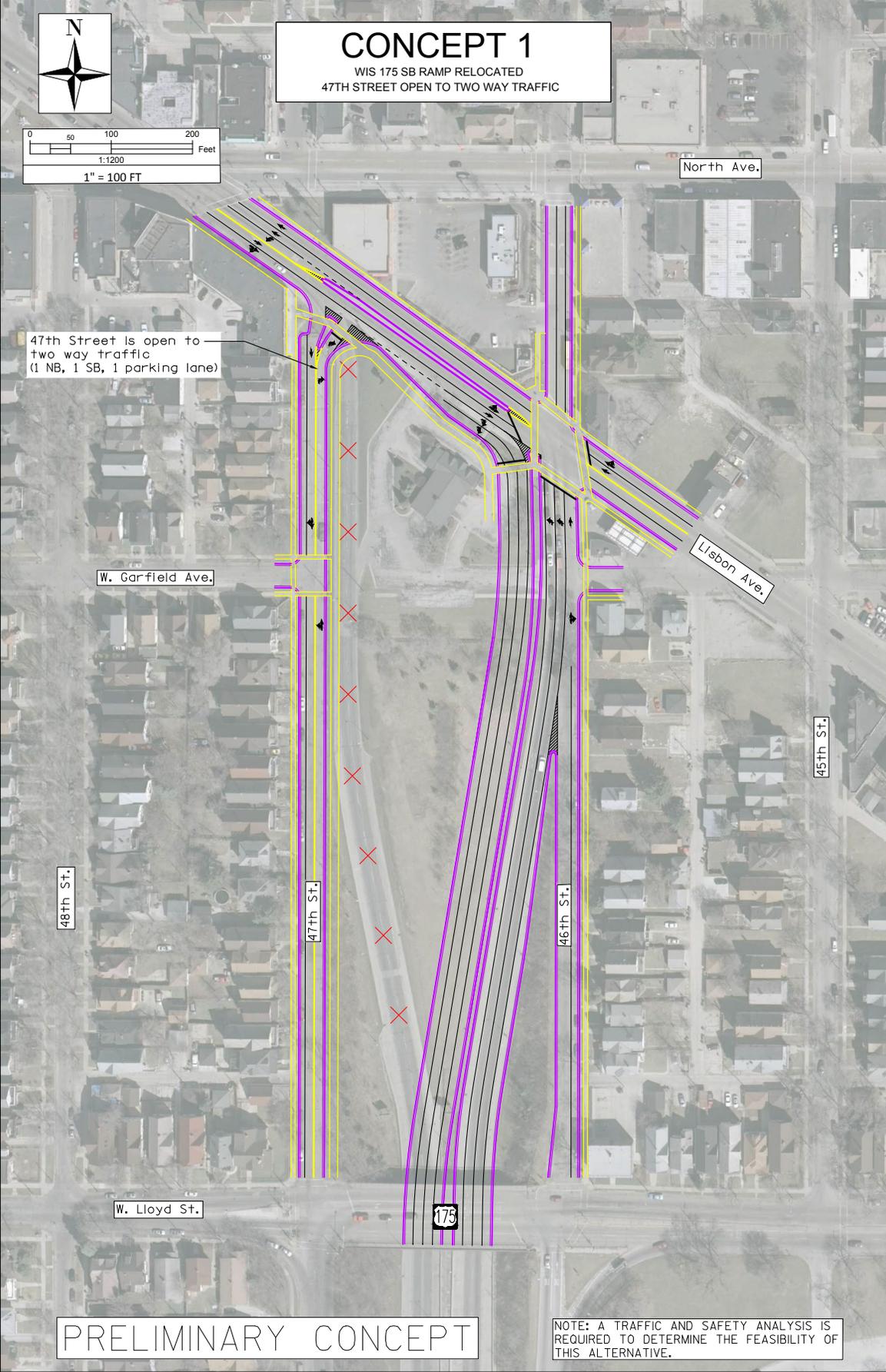
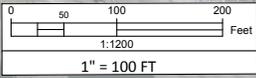
Relocating the southbound on-ramp eastward provides better visibility between motorists and pedestrians on the south side of Lisbon Avenue. This would allow for a more pleasant environment along North 47th Street. It also creates the opportunity to reconnect North 47th Street to Lisbon Avenue, providing better circulation and parking options for the neighborhood and the business district. The area currently being used for the southbound on-ramp could be reclaimed for neighborhood use. While this concept improves conditions on North 47th Street, residents on North 46th Street continue to front a freeway ramp.

This concept also maintains the abrupt transition from freeway to neighborhood commercial street.



# CONCEPT 1

WIS 175 SB RAMP RELOCATED  
47TH STREET OPEN TO TWO WAY TRAFFIC



47th Street is open to two way traffic (1 NB, 1 SB, 1 parking lane)

PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

NOTE: A TRAFFIC AND SAFETY ANALYSIS IS REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF THIS ALTERNATIVE.

## CONCEPT TWO

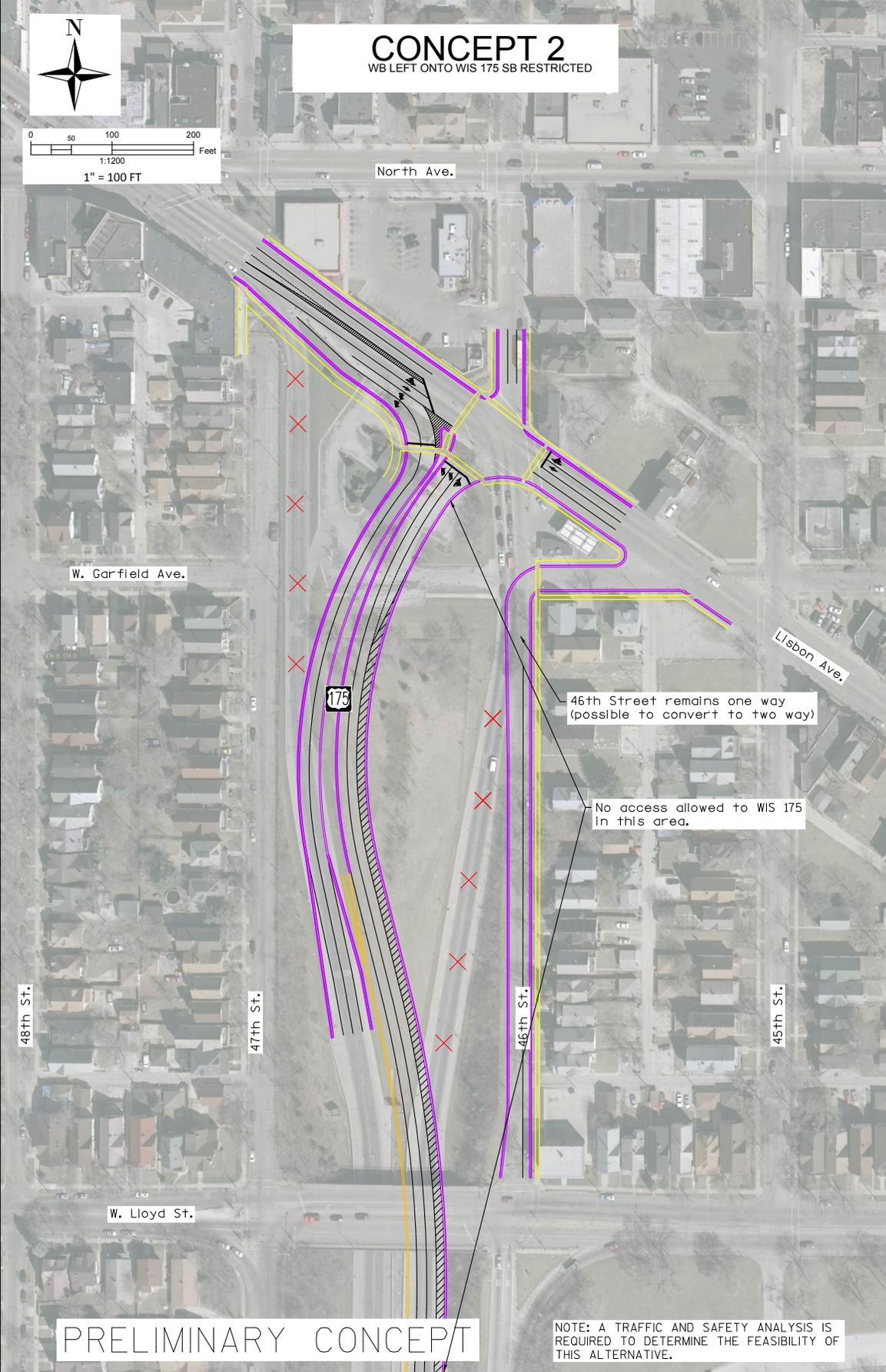
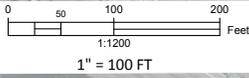
Concept Two also maintains the freeway all the way to Lisbon Avenue. The northbound and southbound ramps are reconstructed adjacent to each other in the middle of the block. The ramps would curve across the block in order to intersect West Lisbon Avenue at a 90 degree angle. The 90 degree angle would create a shorter pedestrian crossing distance across the entrance and exit to the ramps on the south side of West Lisbon Avenue and could serve to slow down traffic if designed with a small enough turning radius. The ramps would be pulled back from North 46th and North 47th Street providing some relief to residents.

The curving ramp alignment in the middle of the block limits the potential for new neighborhood connections and creates small awkward remnant parcels on either side with little potential for future development. North 47th Street would likely remain as a dead end and North 46th Street would end at West Garfield Avenue. It maintains the abrupt transition of the freeway into a neighborhood main street while further eroding the city grid and does not bring the different neighborhoods together.



# CONCEPT 2

WB LEFT ONTO WIS 175 SB RESTRICTED



46th Street remains one way  
(possible to convert to two way)

No access allowed to WIS 175  
in this area.

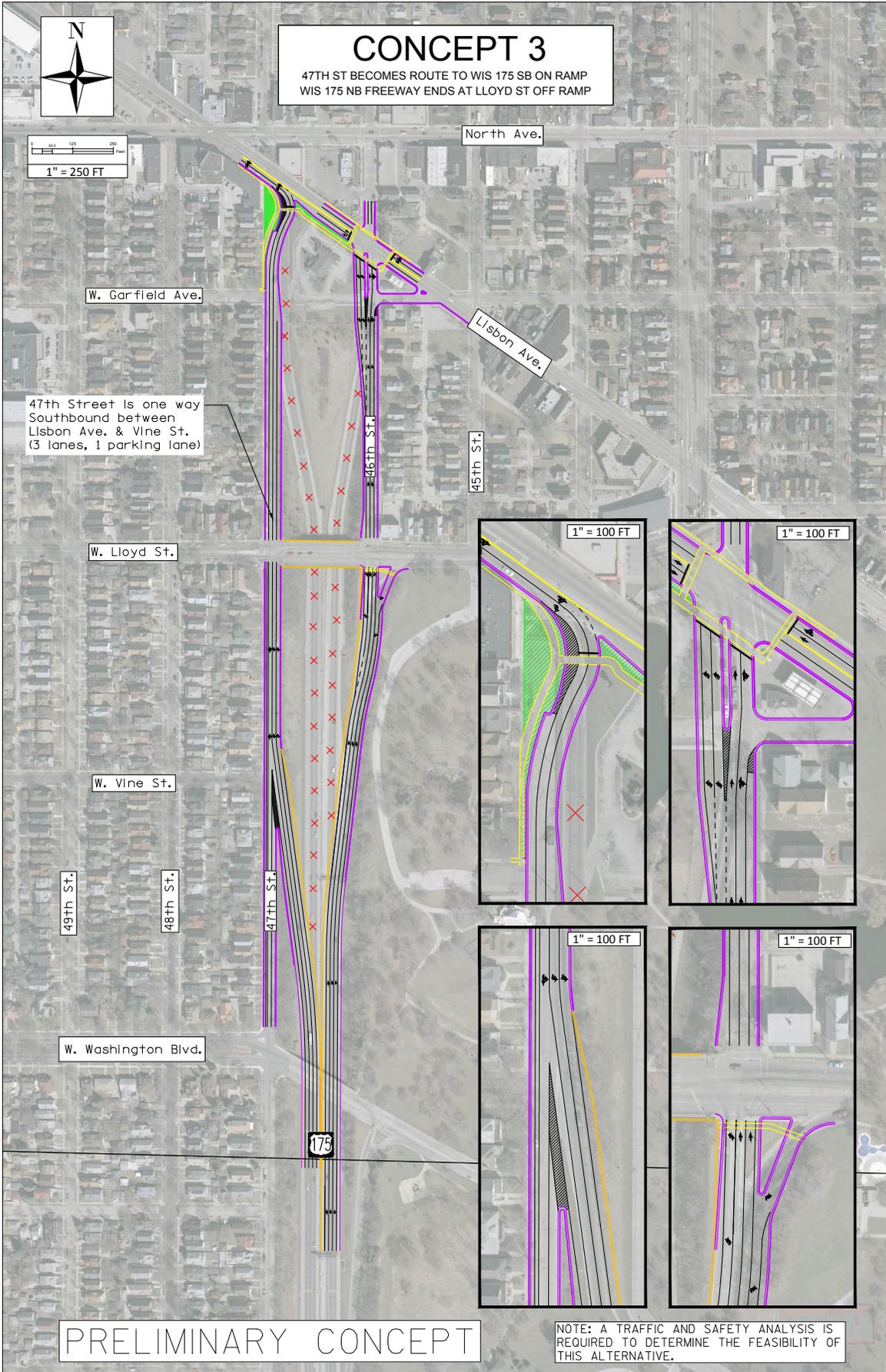
PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

NOTE: A TRAFFIC AND SAFETY ANALYSIS IS  
REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF  
THIS ALTERNATIVE.

### CONCEPT THREE

In Concept Three the freeway ramps end south of Lloyd Street, the interchange to the south of the current ending at Lisbon Ave. The northbound and southbound ramps to and from West Lisbon Avenue are removed entirely. Northbound traffic would connect to Lisbon Avenue by using the existing off-ramp south of West Lloyd Street and continuing on North 46th Street. Southbound traffic from Lisbon Avenue would connect to the freeway by using North 47th Street and the existing on-ramps south of West Lloyd Street. All of the land between West Lloyd Street and West Lisbon Avenue would be filled in at grade to street level.

This concept is the closest to what existed prior to the freeway being constructed and reclaims the most amount of freeway land for neighborhood uses. (The connection to I-94 that remains south of the study area, however make it almost certain that this corridor will continue to have very heavy traffic.) The local streets that receive this traffic would be turned into one-way streets and there could be increased confusion and difficulty wayfinding for motorists. Furthermore, the dangerous pedestrian crossing on the south side of West Lisbon Avenue at 47th Street would remain, and the proximity to North Avenue makes it difficult to add a stop sign or other traffic control device at this location.



PRELIMINARY CONCEPT

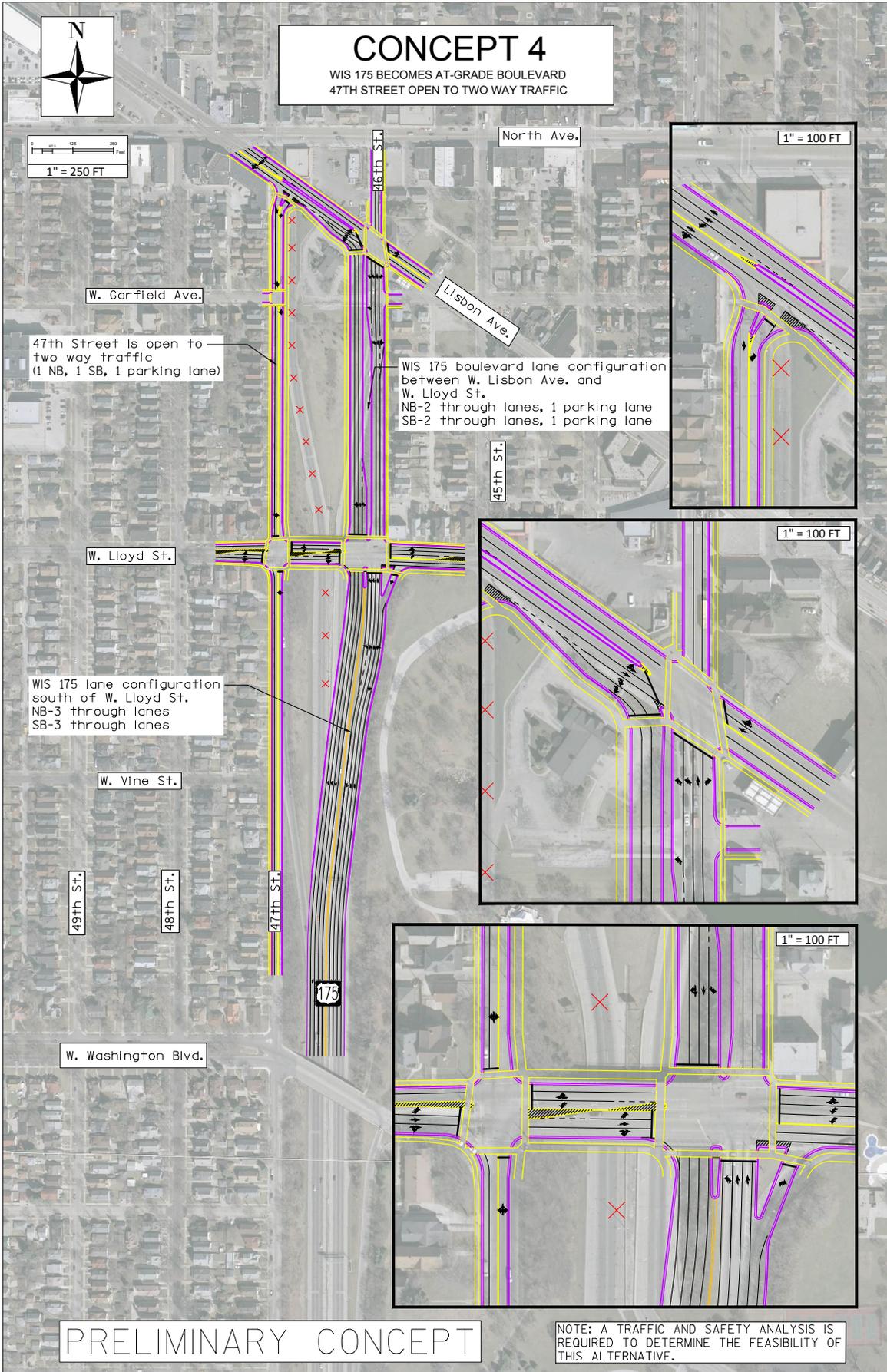
NOTE: A TRAFFIC AND SAFETY ANALYSIS IS REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF THIS ALTERNATIVE.

## CONCEPT FOUR

In Concept Four, the freeway ramps would end at the intersection of West Lloyd Street and North 46th Street, also south of the current ending at Lisbon Ave. North 46th Street would be reconstructed as an at grade boulevard from West Lloyd Street to West Lisbon Avenue. The existing ramps would be removed entirely and all the land between West Lloyd Street and West Lisbon Avenue would be filled in to street level reclaiming five acres of usable land.

Similar to Concept One, this solution moves the frequent right-turn movement further west, providing better visibility between pedestrians and drivers. A heavily landscaped boulevard serves as the transition between the freeway and the neighborhood, calming traffic before it enters the business district. A well-designed boulevard would beautify the neighborhood and create a pleasant pedestrian and bicycle connections between the Uptown Crossing Business District and Washington Park.

This solution improves the quality of the public realm and reconnects the neighborhoods. It also could potentially serve as a first step toward pulling the freeway back and restoring the urban fabric, though the concept was designed to be a viable regardless of the future of the larger Stadium Freeway. In the longer term, the boulevard constructed under Concept Four could also be extended southward replacing further sections of freeway and returning land to Washington Park.





## SURVEY FINDINGS

The primary goals of the initial survey that was conducted during November and December of 2016 were to set priorities and goals for the project and solicit initial feedback on the interchange configuration concepts under consideration.

When asked about the proposed goals of the study, the public affirmed that they were all important, with improving safety being the goal that the highest number of respondents believed was very important.

	COMMERCIAL VITALITY	IMPROVE SAFETY	NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS	TRAFFIC FLOW
No Selection	3	3	3	3
Not Important	6	0	6	13
Slightly Important	37	18	44	40
Very Important	81	103	74	67
Total Responses	124	121	124	120
% Slightly or Very Important	95.2%	100.0%	95.2%	89.2%

\*Of people who responded

When asked to rate the importance of various goals on a scale of 1-5, safety, especially for pedestrians, emerged as a clear frontrunner. Creating more land for development or open space were less important to respondents.

RATE: CONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS	RATE: DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	RATE: DRIVE QUICKLY	RATE: SAFER DRIVING	RATE: MORE LAND	RATE: OPEN SPACE	RATE: WALKING SAFER
3.8	3.3	3.4	4.1	3.0	3.3	4.3

\*Average on a 5 point scale

Many of the comments received along with survey responses reiterated the importance of improving safety and walkability in the study area.

Respondents were also asked to provide feedback on the four initial concepts being considered

for a potential interchange reconfiguration. The feedback received during the public meeting and through the survey was utilized in determining which concepts best achieved the goals identified by stakeholders for the study and would be refined for presentation during the second public meeting.

A second survey was conducted during April and May of 2017 to inform the final recommended concepts. This survey was conducted “live” using the iClicker system at the April public meeting, as well as online in the weeks following the meeting.

The survey did not reveal a clear consensus between the two alternative concepts presented among respondents. A slight majority of respondents (51%) indicated they preferred Concept 4. Similarly, it was the preferred concept for improving pedestrian safety and connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods.

However, a majority of respondents to the survey also had concerns with the freeway ending at Lloyd St. as proposed by Concept 4. The differences between the concepts and potential strategies to address the concerns raised by residents are discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

To further gauge stakeholders’ preferences for the final design of the interchange, respondents were asked a series of questions about potential tradeoffs between travel times through the area and bicycle and pedestrian safety and accommodations. As shown in the charts below, respondents generally favored designs that prioritized pedestrians over automobiles.

Potential interim uses of the vacant lot between the existing on and off-ramps were also included in the survey. Images were shown of a number of potential uses for the land that would be desirable to residents until a more major reconfiguration takes place. Respondents generally liked all of the options presented, and favored a combination of all of the elements.

Question	Answer Options	Public Meeting		Online Survey		Total Combined %
		Number	%	Number	%	
1: What neighborhood do you live in?	A: Sherman Park	11	22%	27	10%	12%
	B: Washington Park	6	12%	11	4%	5%
	C: Washington Heights	15	30%	120	44%	42%
	D: Other	18	36%	114	42%	41%
	Total Responses:					322
2: Would you prefer that the freeway end at Lisbon Avenue (as it does currently) or transition to an at-grade street at Lloyd Street?	A: Lloyd	34	62%	107	39%	43%
	B: Lisbon	16	29%	144	53%	49%
	C: I don't know/ No preference	5	9%	21	8%	8%
	D: Other					0%
	Total Responses:					327
3: Which concept do you think would be best for pedestrians?	A: Concept 1	14	25%	73	27%	27%
	B: Concept 4	21	38%	134	50%	48%
	C: Both	10	18%	27	10%	11%
	D: Neither	9	16%	36	13%	14%
	Total Responses:					324
4: Overall, which concept do you think fits into the surrounding neighborhoods the best?	A: Concept 1	13	23%	101	37%	35%
	B: Concept 4	30	54%	135	50%	50%
	C: Neither	6	11%	11	4%	5%
	D: Not Sure	7	13%	25	9%	10%
	Total Responses:					328
5: Overall, which concept do you prefer?	A: Concept 1	14	25%	109	40%	38%
	B: Concept 4	29	53%	136	50%	51%
	C: Neither	9	16%	8	3%	5%
	D: Not Sure	3	5%	18	7%	6%
	Total Responses:					326
6: What would be most effective at improving commercial vitality along Lisbon and North Avenues?	A: More convenient parking	16	36%	98	36%	36%
	B: Less space dedicated to traffic and more for other uses	7	16%	49	18%	18%
	C: Improved quality of pedestrian areas	15	33%	86	32%	32%
	D: Not sure/ Indifferent	7	16%	39	14%	15%
	Total Responses:					317
7: Are you willing to accept additional traffic congestion in return for an improved pedestrian and bicycle experience?	A: Yes, increased congestion is acceptable and may help to slow traffic.	16	53%	86	32%	34%
	B: Slightly more congestion would be acceptable, but not too much.	6	20%	64	24%	23%
	C: No, this area is too congested already.	6	20%	110	41%	39%
	D: Not sure	2	7%	11	4%	4%
	Total Responses:					301

Question	Answer Options	Public Meeting		Online Survey		Total Combined %
		Number	%	Number	%	
8: What should be prioritized when the streets in this area are redesigned?	A: A safe and enjoyable experience for pedestrians and bicyclists should be the top priority	21	40%	61	22%	25%
	B: Minimizing the amount of traffic congestion at rush hour should be the top priority	7	13%	93	34%	31%
	C: The experience for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists should be considered equally	24	46%	110	40%	41%
	D: Not sure/ Indifferent			8	3%	2%
	Total Responses:					324
9: Community Space	A: Fantastic	21	44%	57	45%	45%
	B: Pretty Good	13	27%	51	40%	37%
	C: Okay	5	10%	11	9%	9%
	D: Don't Bother	8	17%	9	7%	10%
	Total Responses:					175
10: Gateway Element/ Public Art	A: Fantastic	15	28%	66	34%	33%
	B: Pretty Good	10	19%	53	27%	25%
	C: Okay	13	25%	36	18%	20%
	D: Don't Bother	15	28%	41	21%	22%
	Total Responses:					249
11: Landscaped Edge Treatment	A: Fantastic	2	4%	25	22%	16%
	B: Pretty Good	18	35%	54	47%	44%
	C: Okay	20	39%	25	22%	27%
	D: Don't Bother	11	22%	10	9%	13%
	Total Responses:					165
12: For overall design direction: What is the best fit?	A: Community Space	13	25%	56	29%	28%
	B: Gateway Element	7	13%	25	13%	13%
	C: Landscaped Edge	6	11%	36	19%	17%
	D: Combination of all three	26	49%	76	39%	42%
	Total Responses:					245
13: Of the community space options, which do you prefer? (Asked by Mayor at public meeting)	A: Community Gardens	17	35%			
	B: Plaza with seating	19	39%			
	C: Art intervention	3	6%			
	D: Covered walkway	8	16%			
	E	2	4%			

## CONCEPT SELECTION

Following the initial public engagement process Concept Three was removed from consideration due to lack of support from the public. This concept was unlikely to produce livable streets and may have resulted in unacceptable traffic patterns. Furthermore, Concept Three did not address the free flow right turn movement from West Lisbon Avenue onto North 47th Street, which is the most dangerous condition for pedestrians along Lisbon Avenue.

Concept Two was later removed from consideration as well. Concept Two was seen as similar to concept one in that it rebuilt the ramps adjacent to one another and maintained the freeway all the way to West Lisbon Avenue. Concept Two addressed some of the existing problems, but it also created new problems including a further division of neighborhoods and a lack of potential for new connections both immediately and over time. The curving ramps consumed an excessive amount of land and the resulting parcels did not fit in with urban context of the neighborhood.

After the initial round of public input, concepts one and four were identified as the most favored concepts for further analysis. These two concepts were the most elegant of the four options and both received significant support from the public. They also clearly illustrated a fundamental difference between two approaches, with concept one maintaining the freeway to West Lisbon Avenue and concept four transitioning the freeway to an at grade boulevard north of North Lloyd Street. After the feedback received during the second round of public engagement, where more detailed renderings of Concepts One and Four were produced for review, Concept Four was determined to be the alternative that best met the goals of the project. This recommendation is explained further in the next section.

Many stakeholders expressed a concern that allowing traffic considerations to be primary factor influencing the future redesign of this intersection will result in an area that is not hospitable to pedestrians and that is not an improvement for the neighboring business community or neighborhoods. Public input showed that residents generally favored designs that prioritized pedestrians over automobiles. Residents and stakeholders must continue to be engaged as the project moves into any future phases to ensure that any final design is appropriate for its context and ensures safety and mobility for all users, especially pedestrians and bicyclists.



Concept

1

LOOKING NORTH

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Concept

1

LOOKING SOUTH

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Concept

4

LOOKING SOUTH

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Concept

4

LOOKING NORTH

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## PRELIMINARY TRAFFIC ANALYSIS

While the scope of this visioning study did not include an in-depth operational analysis on each of the different concepts, SEWRPC was able to provide some preliminary traffic data, including preparing traffic forecasts to determine whether traffic is expected to grow in this area, and an origin-destination analysis to determine how much of the traffic in the area comes from the local neighborhoods and how much comes from people travelling through the area. When an engineering study is conducted, an in-depth operational analysis would be used to determine safety and operational performance.

The forecast tells us that, in general, traffic volumes are not expected to increase, which means that a future intersection will not need to accommodate significantly more traffic than it does today. Because the area is fully developed and land uses are well-established, there is little opportunity for traffic growth.

SEWRPC's analysis determined that none of the four initial concepts are expected to change traffic patterns significantly. Importantly, significant traffic volumes are not expected to divert from WIS 175 onto other local roads. Lisbon Avenue is an important angle-street that connects to the Stadium Freeway, which is a major connection point for the Northwest side of Milwaukee and the northwest suburbs to I-94 East-West. On the one hand, this is good news in that traffic would not likely divert onto more residential streets. On the other hand, the intersection of Lisbon Avenue and the Stadium Freeway will likely continue to service a very large number of cars regardless of the configuration of the interchange. The hope that traffic will disperse to other crosstown routes if there is more congestion at this interchange may not be realistic if Lisbon Avenue and the Stadium Freeway remain the most direct routes for commuters and others traveling from the northwest side to downtown and I-94 East-West.

Approximately three-quarters of the traffic on Lisbon Avenue is travelling from outside the surrounding area (defined as Capitol to the North, Wisconsin Avenue to the South, 35th Street to the East, and 60th Street to the West). The high percentage of traffic from outside the immediate area is fairly typical for a state highway.

## VI. | INTERIM USE

In addition to developing concepts for a reconfigured interchange, this visioning study also considered interim uses for the vacant lot between the two ramps. Because the City owns the lot, it is in a position to implement aesthetic improvements prior to any long term redesign. WisDOT has jurisdiction over the WIS 175 and Lisbon Avenue interchange and would typically be responsible for any reconstruction. At the time of this study, the state's transportation budget is strained. Currently, there is not enough revenue to pay for already-scheduled road projects. WisDOT has stated that this intersection is not a priority since it has not reached the end of its useful life, from an infrastructure point of view.

Because of the current budget shortfall for state transportation projects, stakeholders agreed it would be wise to consider an interim use for the site so that it does not remain an eyesore. A number of criteria were considered to determine the most appropriate interim use for the site until it is reconstructed or redesigned:

- Are there available funds for the project or could funds be acquired through grants or other fundraising?
- Is the project of positive benefit to the area (e. g. recreational use, gateway marker, addition to the business district)?
- Is the project removable or relocatable at a point in time when a more permanent use is on the horizon?
- Is the investment reasonable for an interim use, or relatively low given the projected lifespan of the project?
- Is the interim use not too negatively affected by the "traffic island" nature of the site and the associated safety and access issues?

The initial discussion of potential interim uses included eight initial options that were presented at the November 2016 public meeting and in the online survey to give stakeholders a sense of what might be possible from a land use standpoint.

They included:

- Freeway cap park
- Community gardens (with possibility of fresh food cafe)
- Dog park
- Skate park
- Park and ride lot
- Development site with gateway element or public art
- City park or green space
- Urban forest or well-landscaped area with trees

Based on these criteria noted above, the interim uses under consideration as the process moved forward were generally grouped into three categories: community spaces, gateway elements, and passive landscaping, or a combination of all three. Different versions of these options were presented at a second public meeting in April of 2017, with the opportunity for community members to vote and comment. People were invited to look at the options, consider whether people in the area would enjoy it, whether the option works for that particular location, and whether they would actually like to see it there. The preference of stakeholders was for community gardens or a small plaza in a landscaped setting.

Based on the feedback from stakeholders during the process, DPW's Forestry Division worked in conjunction with DCD and local elected officials to develop a generous landscape plan tailored to the site that could stand alone as a gateway marker or accommodate the future addition of public art, community space, or other gateway elements. The landscape plan was also designed to be able to be adapted or adjusted in the future to make room for a permanent use.

That landscaping called for in the plan was installed during May of 2017.



The City will continue to work with the Uptown Crossing BID or neighborhood groups who are interested in options to implement additional improvements to this site on an interim basis. The City's Vacant Lot Handbook provides a number of resources for this type of project and the City's Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) provides matching grants that can be utilized to support community led projects to enliven vacant spaces.

The City of Milwaukee is also exploring funding options for interim bicycle and pedestrian improvements. WisDOT administers a Transportation Alternatives Program that can be used to fund various improvements for non-motorized transportation users. The scope of improvements would necessarily be smaller than the long-term vision, but, for example, improvement might include improved crosswalks at the ramps.

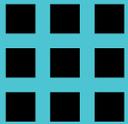


VII.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

There is rarely a unanimous opinion on planning and transportation studies. Each concept has unique challenges and opportunities. As noted in the public involvement section, there was no overwhelming consensus on which design concept was preferred; however, there was a clear message about the study goals. Any solution will need to be respectful of the various stakeholders' concerns and circumstances.

This visioning study recommends Concept Four as the preferred design concept while, at the same time, acknowledging that more information will need to be gathered and more input from residents will need to be considered as this project moves into the formal design phase. Concept Four best fulfills the goals of the study and was well supported by the SAG and the larger public. While Concept Four is the recommended concept, there are several items that will need further



## Neighborhood COHESION

More than the other concepts, Concept Four has the potential to reunite the Washington Park and Washington Heights neighborhoods that were divided when the freeway was originally built. Bringing the freeway to grade north of Lloyd Street also reestablishes the street grid.



## SUPPORTS Commercial Corridors

Concept Four supports the Uptown Crossing BID's ongoing efforts to reinvigorate North and Lisbon Avenues. A reoccurring complaint is that the current configuration funnels fast-moving traffic onto city streets. Moreover, the presence of a partial interchange in the middle of a commercial corridor disrupts the continuity of the commercial activity. The BID and area neighbors want to slow traffic before it reaches Lisbon Avenue. Concept Four, by transforming from a freeway to a boulevard design, best accomplishes this aim.



## Improves SAFETY for All Users

Safety is a huge issue for this intersection. All users—drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists—have complained that the intersection is confusing and dangerous. Pedestrians and bicyclists, being the more vulnerable users, need special consideration to be safe.



## MAINTAINS Traffic Operations

More traffic analysis will need to determine whether the anticipated level of service under Concept Four is acceptable. Federal funding for state highways is typically contingent on meeting certain operational thresholds.



Concept

4

LOOKING  
SOUTH

Concept

4

LOOKING  
NORTH

consideration. Though a slight majority of survey respondents favored Concept Four, there was considerable concern regarding the question of whether the freeway should terminate at Lisbon Avenue, as it does now, or transition into an at-grade roadway at Lloyd Street, as it would under Concept Four. Some residents in Washington Heights expressed concern that traffic would divert to Lloyd Street from Lisbon Avenue if the Lloyd Street interchange were converted to an at-grade intersection. There is also concern that if the intersection becomes more congested, traffic will divert to Lloyd Street. While preliminary traffic data suggests that most travelers would continue to Lisbon Avenue if their destination is in that direction, further traffic analysis is needed to better determine potential impacts. There was also concern that cars would take 47th Street south to the on-ramps south of Lloyd Street, in an effort to bypass the intersection at Lisbon Avenue if 47th Street were to be opened to Lisbon Avenue.

One of the reasons that Concept Four is supported by the public is that it was the only concept to show the roadway design as a boulevard along the segment north of Lloyd Street. Although Concept Four is the only concept that shows a boulevard option, it is also possible for other concepts to transition from a freeway to a divided roadway with landscaped median prior to reaching Lisbon Avenue. A key takeaway is that the public wants the Stadium Freeway to look and feel less like a freeway and instead to be designed with aesthetics and context in mind. If traffic analysis suggests that six lanes are not warranted and that four traffic lanes are sufficient, there would be opportunity to add a landscaped median. This would include adding in a landscaped median, terrace, and narrower lanes.

## LOOKING AT THE BIGGER PICTURE

While the scope of this study does not include the entire Stadium Freeway, many stakeholders and some elected officials have expressed a broader goal of bringing the Stadium Freeway up to grade as a boulevard, perhaps similar to Miller Parkway to the south. Because it is difficult to discuss the Stadium Freeway terminus at Lisbon Avenue without some thought to the rest of the roadway, this study offers a few future considerations.

Currently, no construction project is scheduled, and SEWRPC does not anticipate a full-scale reconstruction in its regional plan until 2040. Furthermore, WisDOT recently resurfaced the Stadium Freeway and rehabilitated some of the bridges, including a concrete overlay for the Lloyd Street Bridge. The typical lifespan for a concrete overlay is 10-15 years. The most obvious time to consider implementing a redesign would be when the Lloyd Street Bridge is replaced.

When WisDOT reconstructs the Stadium Freeway, they will complete an environmental document that considers a full range of alternatives and compare impacts. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires that every federal agency assess potential environmental impacts of federal actions and make the information available to decision makers and the public. An environmental document will typically analyze a range of different alternatives and compare their respective impacts to both the human and natural environment. The City expects that an at grade boulevard option will be considered at that time. The overall goals of stakeholders articulated throughout this study support giving such an option very thorough consideration. Impacts that would be particularly relevant in reviewing such a proposal would include traffic noise impacts to Washington Park and surrounding neighborhoods, impacts to historic neighborhoods, air quality, and real estate impacts near interchanges and intersections. Also, WisDOT has future plans in place to reconstruct the I-94 East-West Corridor, including the Stadium Interchange, and the construction limits would extend to Wisconsin Avenue. Any plans for the Stadium Freeway would need to consider how to match into this design.

The intersection at Stadium Freeway and Lisbon Avenue is not the only confusing intersection in the area. Whenever this intersection is reconstructed, attention should also be paid to potential impacts to the intersection at Lisbon and North Avenues and the intersection of Sherman Boulevard, Lloyd Street, and Lisbon Avenue. A formal engineering study should evaluate how the intersection of the Stadium Freeway at Lisbon Avenue affects these other intersections, as well as traffic patterns in the neighborhoods. Steps should be taken to avoid increasing traffic through residential areas and to ensure that redesigned intersections are designed to further the goals of this Visioning Study and the Washington Park and West Side Area Plans.

## VIII. | CONCLUSION

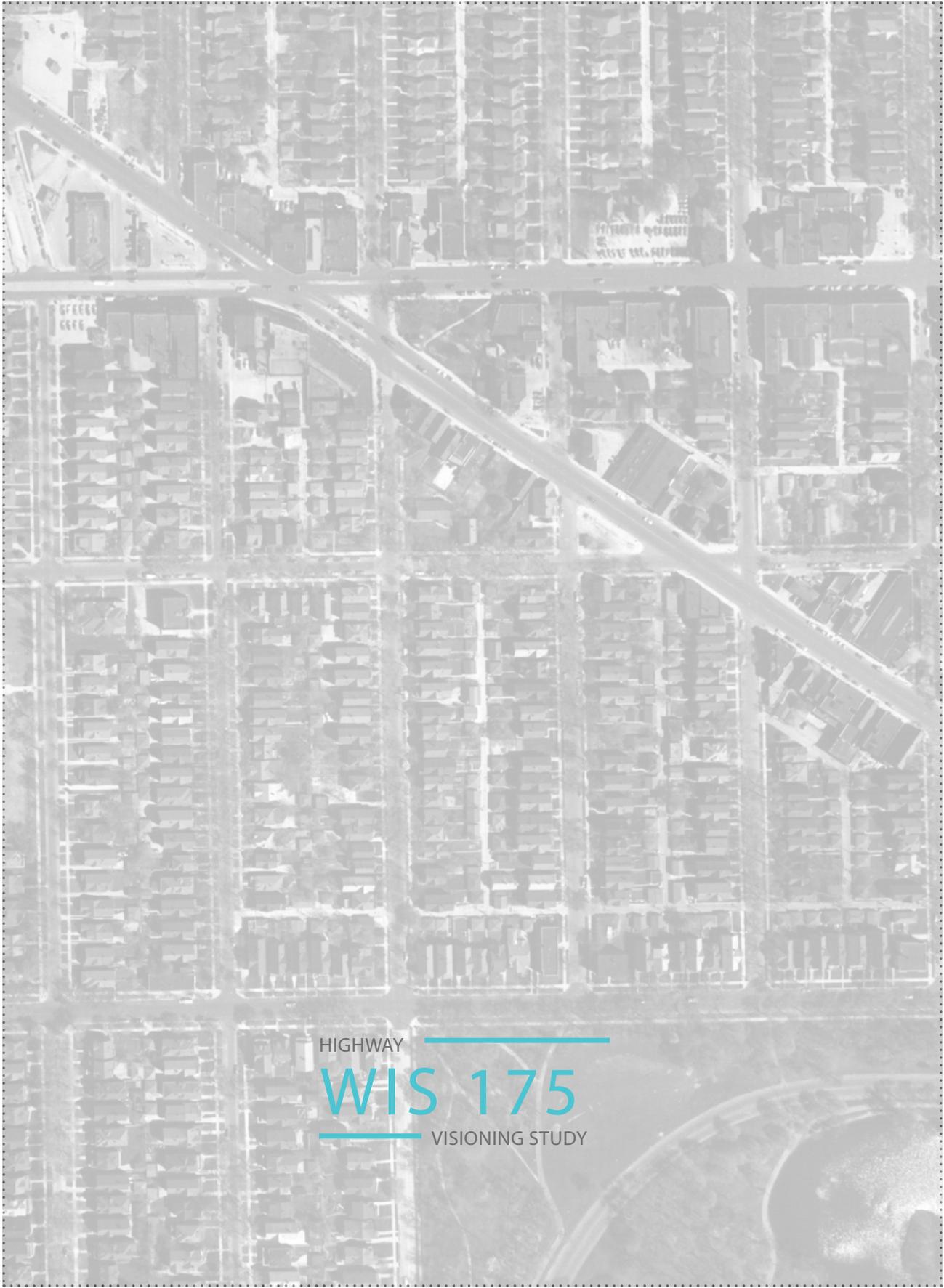
A roadway does more than move traffic from point A to point B. How a roadway is designed has the ability to affect every aspect of the urban fabric, including what types of businesses choose to move to a corridor; access to amenities such as parks, schools, and libraries; whether people on foot or bike, including the young, handicapped, and elderly, can travel safely; and even whether an area is viewed as attractive or not. Roadways serve many purposes, and sometimes those purposes seem at odds. Moving traffic is important, but not to the detriment of the neighborhoods and commercial areas. The Stadium Freeway terminus at Lisbon Avenue is an awkward and abrupt ending to what was originally intended as a larger freeway system. Never built, the resulting intersection does not function well for any users. Reimagining this intersection has the ability to correct a historical afterthought and to build trust in a community that has traditionally borne the brunt of impacts associated with freeway building without always receiving many of the corresponding benefits.

This Visioning Study has shown that there is near universal consensus that the intersection of WI-175 and Lisbon Avenue has a negative impact on people living in the area and the adjacent commercial corridor. However, there are ways that it can be improved, as documented in this report. Residents and business owners favor a design that integrates the state highway into the neighborhood in a more thoughtful manner and achieves the other goals articulated in this study. Based on public input, data analysis, and an evaluation of which concepts best address project goals, the City of Milwaukee believes that Concept 4 best achieves these aims.

The City of Milwaukee is gratified by the successful collaboration between the City, WisDOT, and neighborhood stakeholders to develop this vision and looks forward to ongoing conversations with WisDOT to identify resources that can advance this project. While the state's transportation budget is currently facing revenue challenges, the City of Milwaukee strongly encourages WisDOT to prioritize funding for engineering and construction for this intersection. This visioning study has clearly articulated the significant challenges posed by the current configuration of this intersection and the high priority placed by the surrounding neighborhoods and businesses on implementing a solution. The recommendations contained within this document provide a path forward to reconnect communities, increase safety for all users, and support the vitality of the neighborhoods and business districts surrounding this critical intersection.

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HIGHWAY

# WIS 175

VISIONING STUDY