U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Economic Development and Highway Right-Sizing

At-Grade Freeway to Boulevard Right-Sizing

Community Motivations for At-Grade Freeway to Boulevard Right-Sizing

Successful right-sizing projects will rebuild, rehabilitate, or remove travel facilities in a way that balances traffic flow with changing community attitudes toward urban land use and desires for social and economic connectivity. Motivations for at-grade freeway to boulevard right-sizing include:

- **Economic Development:** Freeway to boulevard right-sizing creates better neighborhood connectivity and increases the amount of land available for development.
- **More Public Amenities:** Freeway to boulevard right-sizing can repurpose surrounding available land into public parks or other public spaces.
- **Improved Safety:** Freeway to boulevard right-sizing usually slows traffic, which improves safety.
- **Traffic Management:** Freeway to boulevard right-sizing can reduce congestion and improve traffic flow through context-sensitive road redesign.
- **Transportation Access and Choice:** Freeway to boulevard right-sizing creates additional multimodal transportation options.

Harbor Boulevard in Portland, OR Achieves Land and Revitalization Economic Development Goals

The Harbor Drive to Harbor Boulevard right-sizing project is an example of an at-grade freeway to boulevard right-sizing project that achieved economic development goals of recapturing additional land and revitalization. The project replaced the first limited access freeway in Portland, which had become less important since additional freeways were constructed around the city in the 1960s. The transportation strategy of replacing the freeway with a boulevard and waterfront park was selected by the Riverfront for Citizens coalition, who wished to reclaim the land along the western bank of the Willamette River as park space and to create stronger connectivity between the river and the surrounding neighborhoods. The project was completed in 1978 and created a 37-acre waterfront park from land recaptured from the former footprint of Harbor Drive as well as from demolishing industrial and commercial buildings that bordered the freeway along Front Avenue. Front Avenue was widened into a landscaped boulevard to support local traffic. The boulevard and park that replaced Harbor Drive led to significant new development, including at The Yards at Union Station to the north and RiverPlace to the south.

Photo of Harbor Drive after construction. (Source: reclaimingoldwestbroad.org)

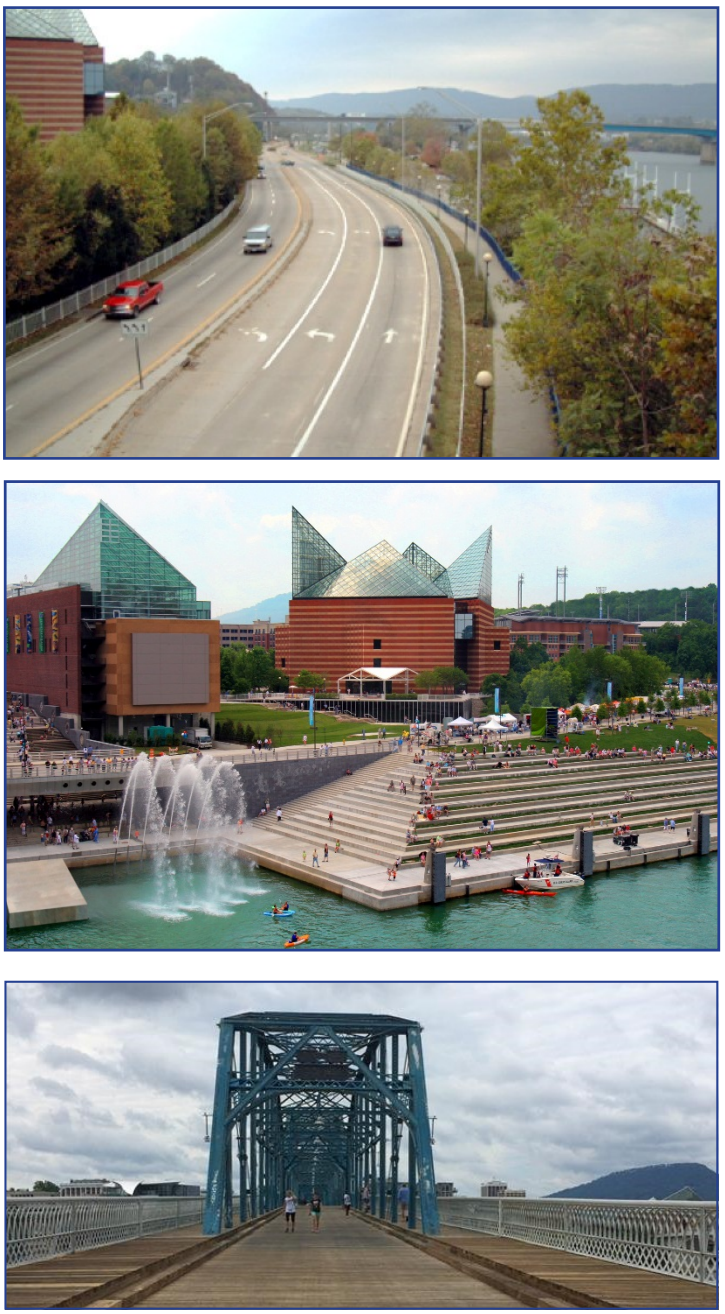
Photo of the Tom McCall Waterfront Park, created after removing Harbor Drive. (Source: CNU.org)

A Community Vision to Right-Size the Riverfront Parkway in Chattanooga, TN

Originally built to accommodate high volumes of truck traffic traveling through the region, the Riverfront Parkway in Chattanooga, Tennessee was designed to carry 20,000 vehicles per day at peak operation. Because the parkway only provided access to downtown at two points, it experienced severe traffic delays and contributed to the deterioration of the character of downtown Chattanooga early in its existence. In the 1960s, the city's economy shifted away from manufacturing, reducing traffic on the parkway. To reverse the effects of deindustrialization, Chattanooga Venture, a citizens group, worked with residents to help establish goals for the improvement of the city. This public engagement forum was called Vision 2000. One key goal established by citizens was to revitalize the waterfront along the Tennessee River. The waterfront revitalization began with the construction of a riverwalk between Riverfront Parkway and the Tennessee River. However, the underutilized Riverfront Parkway was a barrier to accessing the riverwalk.

The city began the planning process with the community by asking for their input on how to redesign the existing facility. This process included identifying priority zones, setting goals, and developing a plan of action. The community's vision resulted in the completed construction of a right-sized Riverfront Parkway in 2004. The project reduced the footprint of the original facility in several segments from four travel lanes to two, with additional parking and pedestrian bump outs added to facilitate safe crossings. Left- turn lanes where a second travel lane once was allow traffic to flow without unnecessary delay. The redesign also created more connections to the downtown street grid and the riverwalk, which became a 13-mile paved path along the Tennessee River.

In the past 10 years, development in downtown Chattanooga has accelerated. For example, the city has converted a vehicle bridge across the river (and adjacent to the right-sized Riverfront Parkway) to be for bicyclists and pedestrians only. In addition, the city has constructed miles of pedestrian pathways along the river, which can be accessed from new parking areas that resulted from the right-sizing project. The revitalization of
Chattanooga is widely considered a success, and the riverfront project, including the right-sized Riverfront Parkway, helped to facilitate that revitalization.



Before (top) and after (middle and bottom) photos of Riverfront Parkway showing increased connectivity and public space. (Source: CNU.org)