

**Case Studies in Urban Road Removal - The Benefits and Impacts**  
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***LESSONS LEARNED***

**SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS**

1. Reduction in greenhouse gas
2. Spillover traffic's absorbed
3. Traffic finds alternate routes and travelers choose the most convenient mode or travel at different times or different locations
4. Removal is most effective when it is one element of a comprehensive, clearly articulated civic vision for enhanced quality of life, sustainability, and economic development that leverages the opportunity made available by removal
5. Removal for all its benefits is a means to advance greater goals and objectives:
  - a. In Niagara Falls – for example—Road Removal would support
    - i. North Star Project and
    - ii. Olmsted's Vision for Niagara
    - iii. Economic revitalization and growth
    - iv. Quality of life
    - v. New jobs and business
    - vi. Tourism destination initiatives
6. If public is forewarned, traffic is adequately redistributed.

**Portland, Oregon**

7. Removal in Portland, Oregon was a catalyst in the redevelopment of the downtown waterfront as it opened up access to the River and 309 acres
8. Development around the waterfront amenities had positive impacts within the city as a whole:
  - a. Provided public good and improved quality of life
  - b. Financial benefits:
    - i. Property values tripled
    - ii. Growth in this area outpaced growth in the city as a whole by 7%
  - c. Crime reduction in Portland declined by 65% in the waterfront area and declined 16% in the city as a whole.
    - i. Attributing factors:
      1. New visibility
      2. Increase in pedestrian eyes on the street

**San Francisco, CA**

9. Crime reduction in San Francisco occurred when the street transformed to one of stylish shops, restaurants, and galleries.
10. Removal provided a range of benefits without substantial negative impacts for commuters.
11. In the years following removal:
  - a. New neighborhoods were established
  - b. Major new civic amenities and tourist attractions were opened and
  - c. The existing tourist destinations remained major destinations
  - d. Merchants said they didn't lose their core customers despite the new competition and the removal of the road 9 years ago.
  - e. Tourism grew impressively in the years following removal and reclamation

- i. In 2006, visitors to San Francisco spent **\$7.6 billion** – the highest in the city’s history
- f. Removal did not negatively impact the economics of nearby neighborhoods
- g. The removal for the area and the city as a whole was positive.

**Boston, MA**

- 12. Benefits are aesthetic and commercial
  - a. If downtown is a more pleasant destination people linger longer and spend more money
- 13. The value of their commercial properties near their greenway increased by **\$2.3 billion, up 79%**
- 14. In 2006, the Boston removal project attracted an unprecedented level of private investment in new development downtown
  - a. **\$5.3 billion** worth in projects completed or underway within a 5 minute walk
  - b. An estimated generation of nearly **36,000 new jobs**

**Seoul, Korea**

- 15. Road removal and stream restoration restored to a 3.6 mile linear park
- 16. 15 months after opening, they had **90,000 visitors** of which 30% came from outside the area
- 17. The restored water and open space access enhanced recreational amenities widely viewed as having improved the quality of life of center city residents, workers and visitors
- 18. Restoration was part of a much larger development strategy with local and global components
  - a. Local level – project rationalization had to do with revitalization of historic downtown which lost much of its market share as the city’s economic center shifted
  - b. Global level – removal and restoration of the landscape has been described by officials as rebranding or repositioning of Seoul’s image internationally
    - i. A meaningful, symbolic gesture for a 21<sup>st</sup> century city
- 19. It projected **long-term economic benefits** of
  - a. Between **\$8.5 - \$ 25 billion** (US) and
  - b. 113,000 new jobs**
- 20. The Seoul project illustrates the tangible economic and environmental benefits that can flow from urban design that is richly symbolic and driven in large part by quality of life perceptions.

**Trenton, NJ**

- 21. Removal was undertaken to
  - a. Promote redevelopment downtown
  - b. Improve safety
  - c. Remove a barrier to the city’s waterfront

**Vancouver, Canada**

- 22. Removal achieved results with a progressive “Living-First” strategy and subsequent plans and policies that emphasized a shift away from automobiles as a dominant form of transportation

**Toronto, Canada**

- 23. Removal Benefit Strategies
  - a. To beautify the city
  - b. To improve a sense of place in neighborhoods

- c. To maximize the benefits of waterfront revitalization efforts

### **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

- 24. The estimated cost to rebuild an aging freeway was \$100 million
- 25. The road elimination came at a much lower financial cost of \$25 million (\$20 million was paid for with federal funds)

### **Chattanooga, TN**

Reasons why they removed the Riverfront Parkway:

- 26. In late 1960's its economy's manufacturing base contracted, eliminating thousands of jobs
- 27. Its air was declared the most polluted in the nation
- 28. The construction and configuration of roads intended to move traffic hurt the downtown business environment and hastened the decline of a once vibrant city center.
- 29. Their parkway no longer had a purpose; its physical location blocked the city from its waterfront
- 30. Their parkway was a far larger piece of infrastructure than the city needed
- 31. Removal benefits:
  - a. Pedestrian connection to the River waterfront

### **The Benefits of Parks and Open Space – National Park Service**

- 32. Increased value in neighboring residential properties
- 33. Similar increase benefit on commercial property
- 34. Important quality of life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities
- 35. Important for the well-educated in choosing where to live
- 36. Provides substantial environmental benefits
  - a. Trees reduce air and water pollution
  - b. Trees keep cities cooler and
  - c. Trees are an effective and less expensive way to manage storm water runoff

### **Open space - Social and Community Development Benefits**

- 37. Make inner city more livable
- 38. Provides places where low-income neighborhoods feel a sense of community
- 39. Access to public parks and facilities strongly linked to reductions in crime
- 40. Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health
  - a. Such settings are associated with enhanced mental alertness, attention and cognitive performance
  - b. A 10% increase in greenspace was found to decrease a person's health complaints in an amount equal to a 5-year reduction in a person's age

### **Open Space – Economic Benefits**

- 41. People are willing to pay more for property located close to open space
  - a. This translates into city revenue – in some cases the additional taxes are enough to pay the annual debt charges on bonds used to finance acquisition and development of the open space
  - b. In one study, a greenbelt added 5.4 million to the total property values of 1 neighborhood. That generated \$ 500,00/year in additional property taxes—enough to pay for a \$1.5 million purchase price in 3 years

### **Commercial Effects of Open Space**

- 42. Atlanta – Property values rose from \$2 per square foot to \$150 per square foot

### **Economic Revitalization Effects of Open Space**

43. Boeing, chose Chicago over Dallas and Denver because of the city's quality of life, its downtown, and urban life
44. In using greenspace to revitalize, Dallas emulated Portland, Oregon—a city with a reputation as one of the most livable
45. Companies like Hewlett-Packard, Intel, and Hyundai were drawn to the forests, orchards, and creeks on Portland's outskirt urban area
  
46. The real estate industry calls quality of life a litmus test for determining the strength of the real estate investment market
47. If people want to live in a place, companies, stores, hotels and apartments follow.

### **St. Louis, Missouri**

48. In Missouri, the 2004 bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition launched an ambitious effort to revitalize St. Louis and the nearby region
49. Improving quality of life was a major goal with a central emphasis on keeping well-educated young people in the region
50. A cornerstone to their plan was their greenway, a 200 square mile area, stretching 40 miles
51. Their greenway traces the first stretch of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
52. Other city and region benefits
  - a. Tourism
  - b. Pollution abatement
  - c. Storm water run off control
  - d. Crime reduction
  - e. It created stable neighborhoods with a strong sense of community

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NIAGARA