

# Stakeholder Engagement and Conceptual Rendering Development

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Prepared by



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# Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

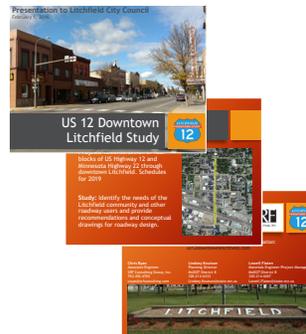
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		<b>Technical Corridor Assessment</b>	<b>15</b>
Project Advisory Team	ii	Corridor Roadway System Context	15
Project Management Team	ii	Cultural Resources Review	15
Project Consultant Team	ii	Section 106 Review Process	15
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>	Historic Properties in the Study Area	17
<b>Study Overview</b>	<b>5</b>	Parking Inventory	17
Study Framework	6	Roadway Geometrics	18
Stakeholder Engagement Process	6	Crash History	18
Technical Corridor Assessment	7	Rail Grade Crossing	20
Corridor Concept Alternatives	7	Existing Traffic Volumes and Operations	20
Findings and Recommendations	7	Corridor Capacity	21
<b>Stakeholder Engagement Process</b>	<b>8</b>	Intersection Capacity Analysis	22
Goals and Strategies	8	Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities	23
Outreach Tools	9	<b>Corridor Concept Alternatives</b>	<b>24</b>
Study Website	9	Concept Alternative Development Process	24
Walking Tour	9	Description of Concept Alternatives	25
Pop-Up Events	10	Initial Concept Alternatives - Step 1	25
Focus Group Meetings	10	Preliminary Concept Alternatives - Step 2	29
Targeted Presentations	11	Corridor Concept Alternatives for	
Open Houses	11	Recommendation Selection - Step 3	33
Surveys	13	<b>Findings and Recommendations</b>	<b>34</b>
Social Media	14	Study Findings	34
Traditional Media Outreach	14	Recommendations	34
Stakeholder Engagement Timeline	14		

# Executive Summary

MnDOT conducted the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study to gather public input regarding potential corridor concepts and design renderings. The purpose of the study was to identify the needs of the Litchfield community and other roadway users in order to provide recommendations and conceptual drawings for a street design that will balance the needs of various stakeholders. This executive summary outlines the processes applied, the information received from stakeholders and the recommendations to be carried forward through detailed design.

The images provided here summarize the study efforts, while visually indicating preferences and ultimate recommendations.

## Stakeholder Engagement Process



### Pop-Up Meetings:

- Nelson Farm Pumpkin Festival
- Litchfield Farmers Market
- Youth Basketball Tournament

### Focus Groups:

- Historical Preservation Commission
- Freight/regional business
- Small local business

### Presentations:

- Downtown Revitalization Committee
- Chamber of Commerce
- City Council

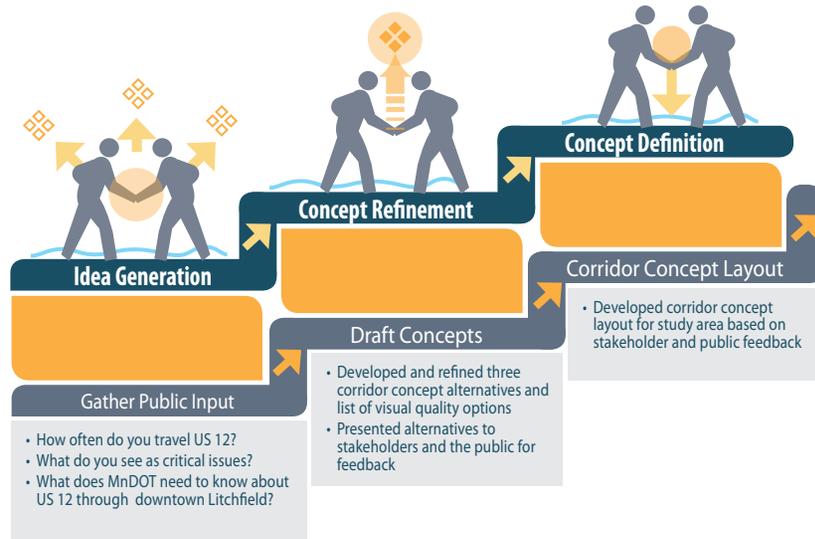
### Open Houses:

- November 19, 2015
- February 16, 2016
- April 19, 2016

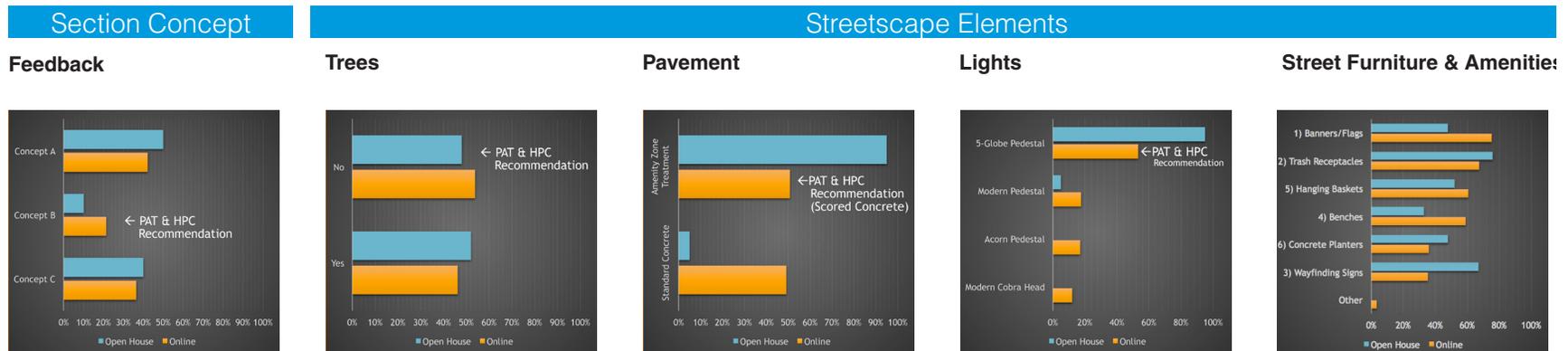
### Online Engagement:

- Social Media
- Press Releases
- Surveys

The graphic below illustrates the three step process used to develop the concept alternatives as part of this study. Public input was the cornerstone of developing the conceptual renderings and the final recommendation.

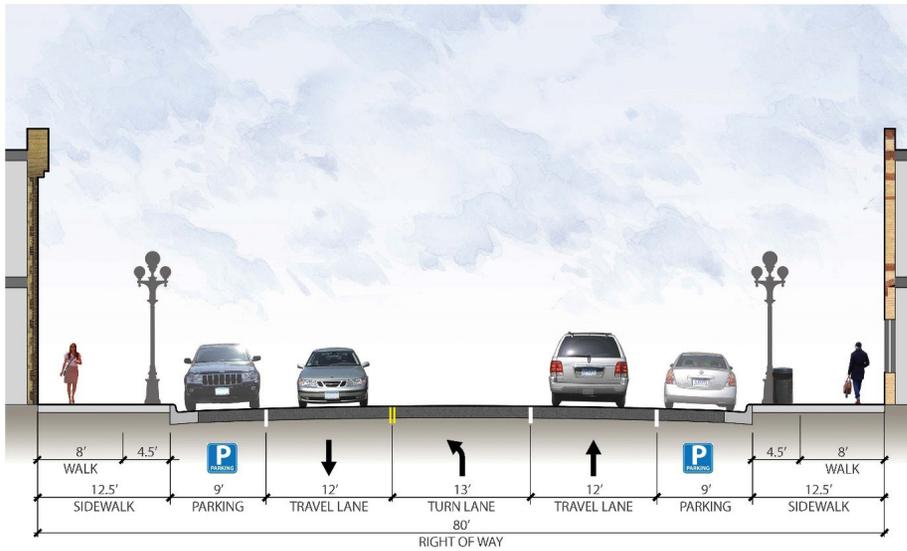


## Feedback Summary



The feedback summarized above was received from community members during open houses, HPC meetings, and PAT meetings throughout the study.

Through thoughtful consideration and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, the proposed typical section (left) was developed as the final recommendation.



Typical Cross Section - 12' Lanes with No Trees (Mid-Block)

PROPOSED STREETSCAPE FEATURES			
LANE WIDTHS	TREES	LIGHTING	STREET FURNITURE
12' Travel Lanes 13' Turn Lane	None	Tall, modern "cobra head" lights at intersections & historic 5-globe lights midblock	Historic ornamental lights and waste receptacles in Amenity Zone behind curb



Maintaining historical integrity was an important component in developing and refining the concept alternatives.



Proposed Streetscape Concept Plan



LEGEND	
+	Historic 5-Globe Ornamental Light (14')
+••	LED Mid-Level Street Light (30')
⬇	Traffic Signal with LED Street Light (30')
○	Waste Receptacle

The corridor concept layout depicts the entire four block study area above.

# Study Overview

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) intends to reconstruct four blocks of US Highway 12 (US 12) and Minnesota Highway 22 (MN 22) through downtown Litchfield from Commercial Street to 4th Street. The project is planned for 2019 and includes the reconstruction of the existing roadway and sidewalks from building face to building face. To improve project outcomes, MnDOT conducted the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study to gather public input regarding potential corridor concepts and design renderings. The study efforts and outcomes are documented herein; the purpose of the study was to identify the needs of the Litchfield community and other roadway users in order to provide recommendations and conceptual drawings for a street design that will balance the needs of various stakeholders. The corridor limits are presented in Figure 1.

While the study process was predicated on significant public stakeholder input and feedback regarding potential corridor concepts, the study process and decision-making was guided by two key teams with distinct roles:

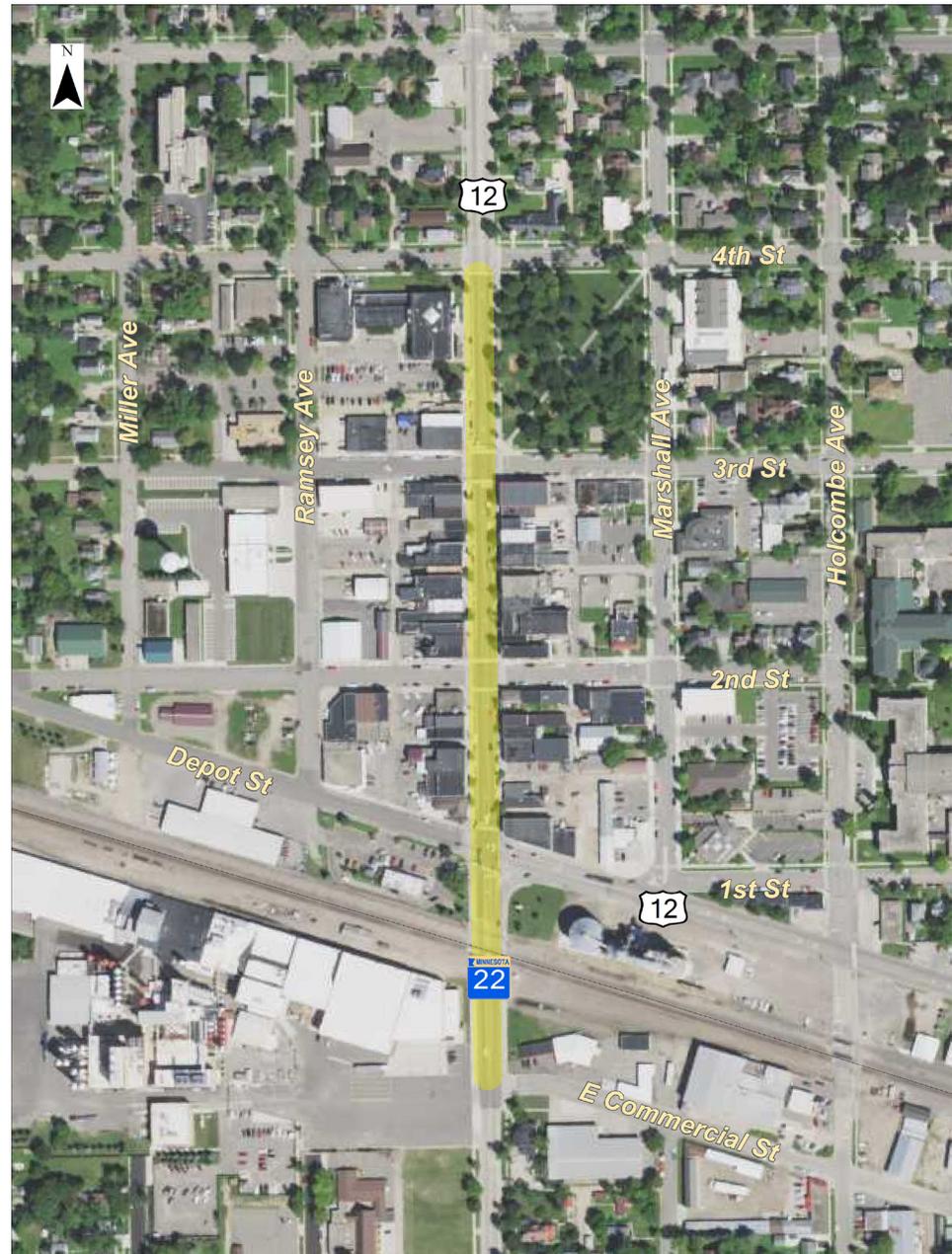


Figure 1. Corridor Limits (Commercial Street to 4th Street)

**Project Advisory Team (PAT):** The PAT is comprised of representative key stakeholders from various businesses, local commissions or targeted groups, city officials, and the general public. The PAT reviewed, assessed, commented upon, and made a general recommendation to elected officials for consideration. The PAT met on two (2) occasions toward the later portion of the study. Members of the PAT were asked to act as ambassadors for the study and seek additional feedback from the Litchfield community based on information shared and discussed at the first PAT meeting, with the charge that all feedback would link back to the group ultimately forming a general recommendation to the Litchfield City Council. The PAT may continue to meet, when needed, throughout the development of the US 12 and MN 22 reconstruction project to provide input at key decision points.

**Project Management Team (PMT):** The PMT is comprised of individuals representing engineering, planning, public relations, cultural resources and historic preservation, city, and state interests. The PMT helped guide the study team and provide oversight for all aspects of the study, including scheduling, coordination and conducting outreach, review and development of draft materials, presentation to targeted stakeholder groups, and shaping recommendations. The PMT met on five (5) occasions throughout the study.

## Study Framework

The study documentation contained herein serves as a roadmap for decisions made regarding the locally preferred corridor concept for US 12 through downtown Litchfield. It is a blueprint for future detailed design of the US 12 reconstruction project. Further, it offers guidance and direction for elected leaders, citizens, business interests, and general stakeholders to consider as discussions continue regarding detailed design elements along the corridor (i.e., street furniture, lighting style, plantings, etc.). In order to develop this framework and the recommended corridor concept, the following key elements were conducted:



## Stakeholder Engagement Process

Public participation was the main component of the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study. The entire study was based on engagement of key stakeholders to identify issues, needs and opportunities so that corridor concept alternatives could be developed and reviewed by the public to arrive upon a select concept to move forward for design. In order to build consensus and garner support toward a select concept alternative, a series of stakeholder outreach meetings and public open houses were conducted. In addition, other outreach tools were used to gather public input and feedback.



## Technical Corridor Assessment

The technical corridor assessment provides a baseline to understand how the corridor currently functions and interacts with its surroundings. This chapter presents information on corridor roadway system context, cultural resources, parking inventory, crash history, existing traffic volumes and operations, roadway geometrics, along with multimodal considerations including freight, rail, bicycle, and pedestrians. This information aided in the development of the study's corridor concept alternatives and ultimately in the selection of the locally preferred concept alternative.

## Corridor Concept Alternatives

Corridor concept alternatives were developed based on input from the public and various stakeholders. These alternatives address the goal statements and address issues and needs identified through the study process. In order to satisfy the project's goal of building consensus and acceptance for a locally preferred corridor cross section, a range of conceptual alternatives were developed that are a direct byproduct of public and stakeholder feedback. This chapter documents the iterative development process, elements that were considered along the way, and products that were produced through the study.

## Findings and Recommendations

The culmination of this effort is the documentation of the findings and recommendations for the study. The findings from the public and stakeholder input are contained in this chapter, specifically as they relate to items that are not definitively recommended but prioritized for future consideration as the detailed design of the corridor progresses. In addition, the corridor concept recommendation is presented here as a typical section and corridor layout for the four blocks of US 12 / MN 22.

# Stakeholder Engagement Process

MnDOT, the City of Litchfield, and the consultant team began the public participation process for the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study in fall 2015 to identify the needs of the Litchfield community and other US 12 roadway users as part of this study.

A public participation plan (PPP) was developed to guide the study team's engagement efforts and overall process. The purpose of the PPP was to clearly articulate the goals, objectives, and strategies for public participation; to identify key stakeholders and define the roles of decision-making and advisory bodies; to identify available communication methods; and to set a schedule for conducting public participation activities.

The PPP served as a living document that was updated throughout the study timeline, as necessary.

One of the chief focuses of the study was conducting meaningful engagement by seeking input from a variety of members of the public. It was important that the study identified the needs of multiple stakeholders, including downtown business owners and residents, as well as regional users that rely on US 12 for transportation of people and goods throughout the region. The study team's approach to public participation centered on the following three principles:

## **Everyone**

Key stakeholders, businesses, agencies, and established committees and groups were engaged throughout the process and invited to provide input, regardless of their ethnicity, age, income, language, mobility, or previous experience with public processes. All engagement activities and products were designed to be easy to understand and inclusive.

## **Whenever**

Instead of implementing a "one size fits all" outreach approach, the stakeholder engagement process sought to meet people where they already were in order to ensure a cross section of community

input was received. Engagement included offering engagement opportunities throughout the Litchfield community during convenient times and as part of scheduled events in the area.

## **Interactive**

Understanding that people are more engaged and learn best through interactive, visually appealing activities and events, the study team provided various engagement opportunities that were hands-on, thought provoking, collaborative and concise.

## **Goals and Strategies**

The study team was committed to creating meaningful dialogue with stakeholders and the public during the engagement process in order to meet the following goals:

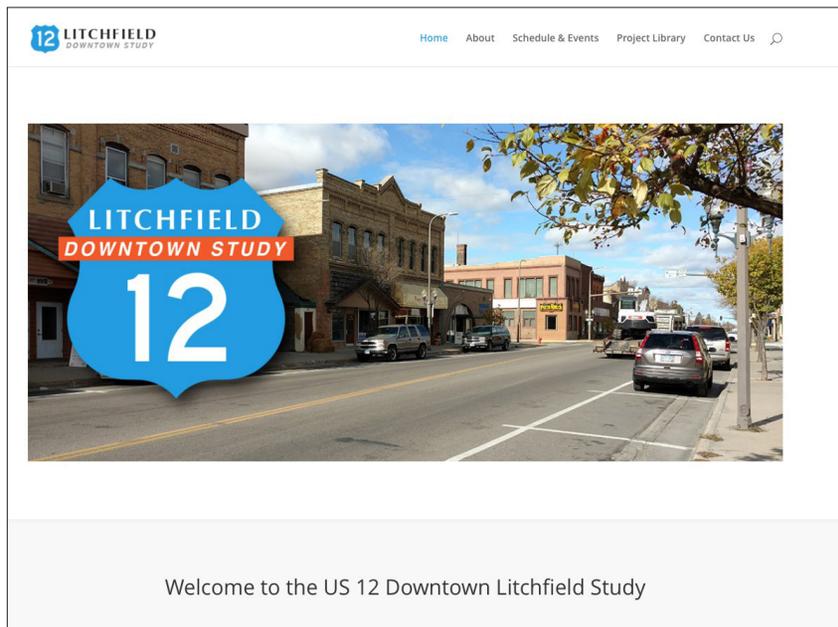
- Establish a credible relationship early with the community and general public
- Create an inclusive public participation process
- Understand the needs and concerns of stakeholders and the general public regarding conceptual cross sections, historic preservation, heavy vehicle freight, geometrics, intersection control, parking, pedestrians/bicyclists and corridor aesthetics
- Solicit community input regarding preferences for the reconstruction project
- Present information clearly and concisely to reflect the study goals
- Clearly demonstrate how public input influences project development
- Ensure transparent decision-making
- Build consensus and acceptance for a locally preferred corridor cross section

## Outreach Tools

In order to meet the goals outlined above, MnDOT and the study team used a variety of methods to conduct inclusive outreach by building credibility, educating the community, and fostering support for the US 12 reconstruction project through downtown Litchfield. A summary of the goal and purpose of each of the outreach activities is summarized below.

### Study Website

A study-specific website was established to inform the public about the background and purpose, study schedule, opportunities for public participation and serve as a repository for meeting materials, contact information and showcasing the study area map. The website also provided an additional tool for agency staff, stakeholders and the community to keep up with key milestones of the study as it progressed.



### Walking Tour

A walking tour was held early in the process to aid in providing a real-world visual of the concept development work that will be prepared as part of this study. Members of the Project Management Team (PMT) were invited to walk the corridor to discuss existing conditions and the future vision of the corridor. The walking tour also provided an opportunity for the PMT to stop by four businesses along US 12 and talk with the owners about the study, answer questions, and gain input regarding their concerns and issues as business stakeholders. The businesses that participated included:

- The Sweet Depot
- DeAnn's Country Village
- Main Street Café
- Sibley Antiques

Key themes from conversations with the business owners included:

- The quantity and speed of truck traffic traveling US 12 was a concern.
- There is limited on-street parking which decreases customer accessibility, therefore potentially decreasing the number of visitors coming to downtown Litchfield, especially those with physical limitations.
- Parking is non-existent near the antique store and limits the number of customers that stop in. Customers cannot carry the large antiques they purchase to their cars, which are often parked far away. Availability of parking detracts from the overall business.
- The high curb in front of businesses on the west side of US 12 is unsafe and not ADA compliant.

## Pop-Up Events

Pop-up outreach events were conducted at local events held in the community in order to gain feedback about the needs and opportunities of the corridor. This approach allowed the study team to hear community and non-local traveler concerns, along with their ideas through face-to-face interaction in a relaxed environment by meeting where they already were instead of expecting them to come to us. Feedback was also collected at these events using short surveys and “write-in” sections on informational boards. A half-page flyer with information about the project and contact information was also provided at these events.

Pop-up events included:

- Nelson Farm Pumpkin Festival
- Litchfield Farmers Market
- Youth basketball tournament

Pop-up meetings were aimed at seeking input from community members at local events.



## Focus Group Meetings

Multiple focus group meetings were held during the study. These targeted meetings allowed for the study team to have open dialogue with businesses and other interest groups in a more focused and intimate setting compared to an open house with the public. It was important to have dialogue with these specific stakeholders to build relationships, gain community insight, help identify preliminary issues and concerns, create buy-in, and foster active support for the project. Focus group meetings were held with the Litchfield Heritage Preservation Commission, regional businesses, and local downtown businesses.

Focus group participants from regional businesses included:

- First District
- Hicks Bus and Trucks
- Custom Products
- Litchfield Industries
- Felling Trailers
- Anderson Chemical Company
- Litchfield Shipping

Focus group participants from local downtown businesses included:

- Litchfield Chiropractic
- Mary's Jewelry
- Pizza Ranch

The following summarizes feedback received from the focus group participants (not all inclusive):

- Business access during construction is important, especially for those businesses without a rear door access.
- Local business owners expressed concern about the potential financial impact of costs of assessments to pay for the necessary repairs needed to underground utilities as part of the construction project. The assessment could be a tipping point for some businesses.

- Concern about public safety and general appearance of the public parking lot during construction. The parking lot is located between 2nd Street and 3rd Street behind the buildings on the west side of Sibley Avenue.
- Some participants preferred streetscape elements such as trees, trash receptacles and specific lighting improvements while others disagreed.
- Regional businesses were concerned about the detour and how their trucks will be able to reach their destinations and access their Litchfield facilities safely and efficiently.
- Some participants asked about how the turn lanes will be modified at the US 12/ MN 22 intersection.
- Heard about the importance of preserving the character of the historic district and the viability of its businesses.

### Targeted Presentations

Presentations were made to local established organizations in an effort to build a positive relationship with each group, educate its members with project and study overviews, and seek their buy-in for the project. The study team made presentations to the Litchfield City Council, the Litchfield Chamber of Commerce and the Litchfield Downtown Revitalization Committee.

The following summarizes feedback received from those present during the target presentations (not all inclusive):

- A consistent visual theme should be applied throughout downtown.
- Current sidewalks seem narrow and do not appear to accommodate strollers and wheelchairs well.
- Some felt the trees should be removed and replaced with light fixtures; while a counter statement was made that the trees provide visual interest and are pleasing.
- Concern over construction impacts to the structural integrity of many buildings in downtown Litchfield.
- Construction phasing and maintenance of traffic for pedestrians and trucks is important.

### Open Houses

Three public open houses were held at key milestones throughout the study. These meetings provided the study team an in-person opportunity to present information to members of the public, collect feedback and answer questions regarding key aspects of the design and analysis of the corridor. Display boards, surveys, comment forms, and hands-on engagement activities were used to create an interactive open house format. Open Houses were held in an informal venue at central locations in downtown Litchfield and the surrounding area.

STREET FURNITURE AND AMENITIES						
STREET FURNITURE TYPE						
	BENCHES	TRASH RECEPTACLE	HANGING BASKETS	REMOVABLE CONCRETE PLANTERS	BANNERS/ FLAGS	WAYFINDING SIGNS
DESCRIPTION	Benches can be placed in the amenity zone or adjacent to the building face.	Trash receptacles may discourage people from littering, but require regularly scheduled maintenance to replace bags.	Hanging flower baskets can be very visually appealing, but require daily watering and other maintenance.	The planters provide visual appeal and have the advantage of being easy to remove if they are no longer desired. Many concrete planters are currently located in the corridor.	Banners and flags provide additional visual aesthetic options and can be changed to match various seasons and regional events.	These signs direct downtown visitors to key locations such as parks, historic buildings, schools, and other public buildings.
ADDITIONAL CITY COST	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
HISTORICAL INTEGRITY	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Vote						

The dot exercise shown above allowed participants to vote on ideas for what the future corridor could look like.





**The first public open house** was held early in the study process. The purpose of the open house was to introduce the study and reconstruction project to the community, identify issues and needs, gather information, and request feedback as part of the public participation process. Various display boards and maps were presented to help facilitate discussion among attendees. Results from the initial data collection and analysis were also shared and helped inform the understanding of existing conditions. To make the open house more interactive and encourage participants to brainstorm initial corridor concepts, a puzzle with roadway typical section pieces was developed. Puzzle pieces were based on roadway design and potential streetscape elements. Participants could pick and choose their pieces, with the goal of making all of the pieces fit within the existing right of way constraints. This exercise helped generate fresh ideas from the public while prioritizing their thoughts regarding which elements



should be included understanding that not everything can fit. A dot voting exercise was also used to gauge which streetscape elements and general images participants preferred by placing colored dots next to their choices and providing opinions on positive characteristics of the images.

**The second public open house** was held to share three proposed typical section concepts and streetscape elements that were developed as part of the public input received from the first open house and visual quality survey thus far in the process. The proposed detour route was also shown. Another dot voting exercise was



used to gauge the community's response to the range of concepts and streetscape elements presented and understand their preferences.

**The third and final public open house** was held near the end of the study to present the draft streetscape concept recommendations, share results from the final survey and circle back with stakeholders and the public to seek their feedback prior to the study concluding. The study concept recommendations are further discussed in the Corridor Concept Alternative section.



## Surveys

To identify and gather the needs, concerns and desires of the public and stakeholders as well as document their input, three surveys were conducted during the study to coincide with the three distinct themes of each open house. The surveys were primarily completed online using SurveyMonkey. This allowed stakeholders and the public an additional opportunity to share their thoughts if that was the preferred method of communicating with them or if they were unable to attend an engagement activity in person. Surveys were made available at many of the public outreach activities and paper copies were provided to the PAT for their own outreach efforts.

The purpose of the first survey was for information gathering to better understand who the US 12 roadway users were (residents, business owners, visitors, etc.) and why they were using the corridor. Some of the survey questions included:

- What is one suggestion you would make to MnDOT regarding this project?
- How often do you travel through/visit downtown Litchfield?
- What do you see as critical issues for US 12 through downtown Litchfield?
- What's the best way to communicate with you about this project?

The visual quality survey was the second survey administered. A total of six streetscape images featuring downtowns similar to Litchfield were chosen for respondents to provide feedback on.

The same survey questions accompanied each image, which were:

- How appealing do you find the streetscape image?
- Which street elements in this image would you prefer to see in downtown Litchfield?
- What do you like about the image above?



*Stakeholders and the public provided input on streetscape images of downtowns similar to Litchfield.*

The third survey sought feedback on draft streetscape concepts to determine preference of elements to be implemented in downtown Litchfield, including trees, bumpouts, and other amenities. For example:

- Do you prefer trees?
- Which type of light do you prefer?
- Which sidewalk pavement do you prefer?

Complete survey results and the process by which stakeholder general public input influenced the final recommendations of the US 12 Downtown Litchfield Study is further described in the Corridor Concept Alternative chapter.

### US 12 Downtown Litchfield Draft Streetscape Concept Survey

#### Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) intends to reconstruct four blocks of US Highway 12 and Minnesota Highway 22 through downtown Litchfield from Commercial Street to 4th Street. The project is planned for 2019 and includes the reconstruction of the existing roadway and sidewalks from building face to building face.

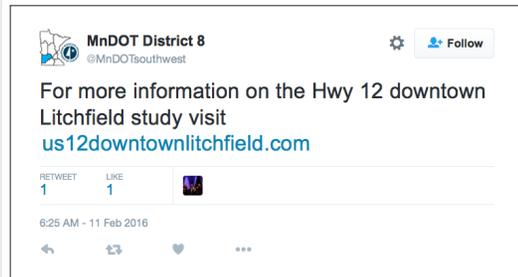
MnDOT is seeking public feedback on a number of potential streetscape features such as trees, light fixtures, and other amenities. Please review the features on the following pages and let us know which you would prefer to see implemented in downtown Litchfield. Each table also contains additional measures of Additional City Cost and Historical Integrity.

- **Additional City Cost:** MnDOT will be funding the reconstruction of the roadway and sidewalks. However, features that are above and beyond the basic reconstruction costs will be funded by the City if Litchfield. These costs may be related to additional construction and materials costs or may require ongoing maintenance by the City.
- **Historical Integrity:** Much of the project is located within the Litchfield Historic Commercial District and some design features are more appropriate than other for maintaining the historical character of the area. "High" indicates that the feature is historically appropriate. "Low" indicates that the feature is not historically appropriate.

Next

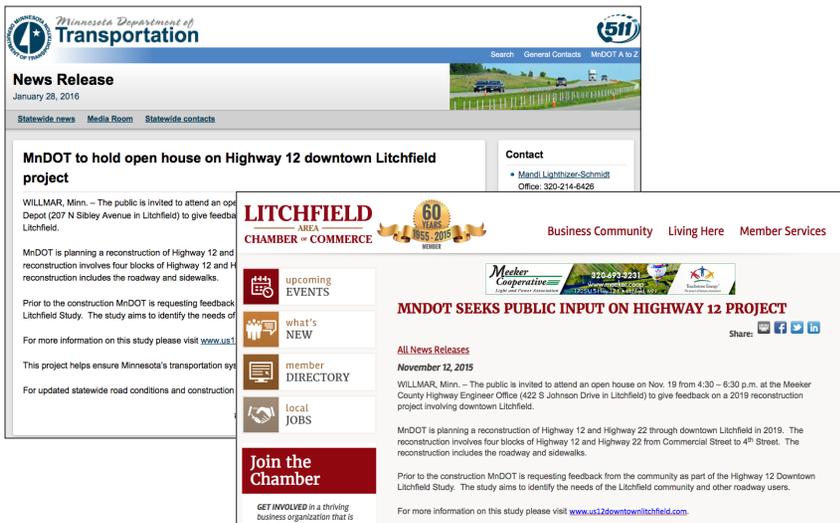
## Social Media

Social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, were also used to promote the study's open houses, surveys and direct users to the project website for additional information. Communicating through these outlets provided an additional opportunity for stakeholders and the public to stay engaged with the study and provide their input as part of the process.



## Traditional Media Outreach

MnDOT and the study team coordinated meeting notices, media advisories/press releases, and other relevant information with local media outlets, including the Litchfield Independent Review.



## Stakeholder Engagement Timeline

Date	Meeting/Event
2015-10-20	Project Management Team 1
2015-10-24	Survey 1
2015-10-24	Pop-Up Meeting 1 - Nelson Farm Pumpkin Festival
2015-10-29	Pop-Up Meeting 2 - VFW Farmers Market
2015-10-29	Walking Tour
2015-11-10	Heritage Preservation Commission Focus Group 1
2015-11-10	Regional Business Focus Group
2015-11-12	Downtown Business Focus Group
2015-11-19	Survey 2
2015-11-19	Open House 1
2015-12-10	Project Management Team 2
2015-12-14	Presentation to Downtown Revitalization Committee
2016-01-21	Presentation to Litchfield Chamber of Commerce
2016-01-27	Project Management Team 3
2016-02-01	Presentation to City Council
2016-02-13	Pop-Up Meeting 3 - Youth Basketball Tournament
2016-02-16	Survey 3
2016-02-16	Open House 2
2016-03-15	Project Management Team 4
2016-03-16	Project Advisory Team 1
2016-03-28	Heritage Preservation Commission Focus Group 2
2016-04-04	Presentation to City Council
2016-04-07	Project Management Team 5
2016-04-08	Project Advisory Team 2
2016-04-19	Open House 3

# Technical Corridor Assessment

The technical corridor assessment provides a baseline to understand how the corridor currently functions and interacts with its surroundings. This chapter presents information on corridor roadway system context, cultural resources, parking inventory, crash history, existing traffic volumes and operations, roadway geometrics, along with multimodal considerations including freight, rail, bicycle, and pedestrians. This information aided in the development of the study's corridor concept alternatives and ultimately in the selection of the locally preferred concept alternative.

## Corridor Roadway System Context

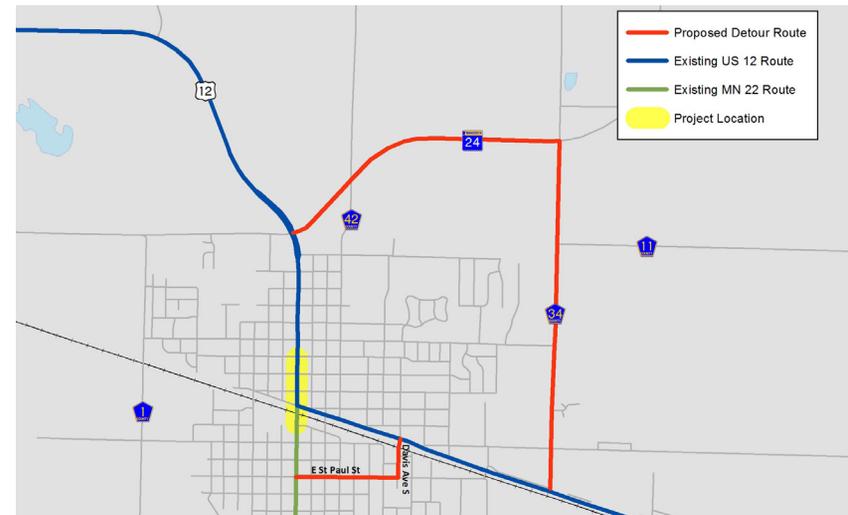
US 12 is a significant transportation route through the heart of downtown Litchfield, located in Meeker County. The portion of the corridor that is being reconstructed is oriented north-south through downtown and connects to MN Trunk Highway 22 on the south. The corridor limits for the year 2019 reconstruction project are Commercial Street to 4th Street along US 12 / MN 22. The significance of the US 12 route is evidenced by its transportation functional classification as a Principal Arterial. Furthermore, US 12 is on the National Highway System of roads (roadways important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility).

MN 22 is functionally classified as a Minor Arterial, which is one class below a principal arterial. While this underscores the importance of the roadway in the overall transportation system it provides context for how important it is to identify an alternative route during construction that is sufficient to provide adequate safety and mobility for the goods and services that need to move along this route (significant freight movement).

There are adequate roadways available to reroute traffic during construction; they are comprised of city, county and state roadways. Davis Avenue to East St. Paul Street south of US 12, and County Road 34 to MN 24 north of US 12 are the current identified alternate routes during construction.

Figure 2 graphically depicts these alternate routes.

**Figure 2. Study Detour Map**



## Cultural Resources Review

MnDOT must balance the state's transportation needs with historic preservation as part of all of their project undertakings. Consistent coordination with various agencies takes place and the consideration of historic properties occurs early in the transportation planning process through construction.

### Section 106 Review Process

The cultural resources review process is pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966; it requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of federally funded projects on historic properties. Since much of the US 12 reconstruction project is located within and near the Litchfield Historic Commercial District and other historic properties, the Section 106 review process was a crucial component of this study and will continue