

MEMPHIS UPTOWN TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE BRIEF

November 2023



Memphis Uptown Transportation Assessment – Executive Brief

The Memphis Uptown Transportation Assessment is a Memphis Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) study to review the status of the transportation network in the Pinch and Uptown neighborhoods. This assessment is recommended in the 2018 Memphis Uptown Community Plan shown in Figure 1, and includes a review of multimodal transportation conditions for the portions of the community closest to downtown Memphis where private-sector investment in land development projects is greatest. The assessment considers study area transportation needs across all modes and recommends projects and programs that can be developed as part of the implementation of relevant plans, including roles that the CRA could fulfill in both continued community engagement and potential support for funding capital and operations costs.

The transportation assessment describes the rationale for several key findings of the transportation assessment:

- The Pinch District and Uptown community are generally well connected from a motor-vehicle perspective (both cars and transit), but more can be done to shift the focus of the multimodal transportation system to **address local needs for walking and biking.**
- The study area transportation system has **sufficient capacity to accommodate planned economic growth** as well as the capacity to accommodate about twice as much economic growth as currently anticipated.
- Adopted city/community plans, developed in conjunction with community engagement, provide comprehensive guidance for integrating land use and transportation; although budgetary concerns may present an implementation challenge and is an area that **the CRA may be able to provide assistance.**
- Community stakeholders are interested in continued economic development but concerned that **new development be consistent with adopted municipal agency plans.**
- Some complete streets improvements can be implemented in the near term through either repaving projects, pilot projects, or tactical urbanism initiatives. Others require a longer lead time to complete planning and design.
- Continued **stakeholder engagement in transportation system investments is important**, particularly coordinating implementation roles among public agencies, land developers, and tactical urbanism projects that can also involve community members.

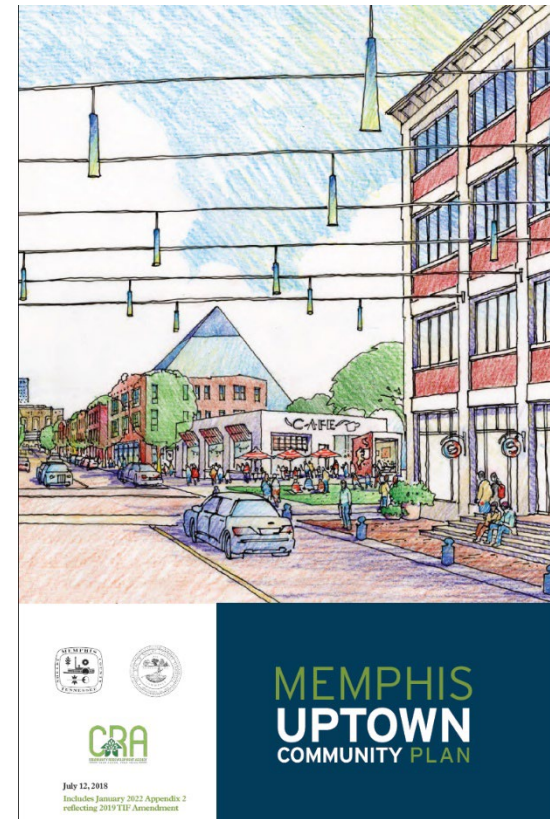


Figure 1. Memphis Uptown Community Plan

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Many streets serve multiple purposes. Figure 2 describes different scales of travel demand for travel to downtown Memphis, access to the William Hudson Transit Center, and circulation needs within the local community, as well as the need for local residents to access other neighborhoods throughout Memphis. Each street therefore serves some mix of through and local travel.

Walking and bicycling are challenging. Most streets feature auto-oriented design such as wide travel lanes and long crosswalk distances, encouraging motorists to travel faster than the posted speed limit and contributing to a negative experience for pedestrians and cyclists.

Funding is limited. Implementation plans should leverage innovative funding sources in addition to conventional transportation project development processes. Some recommendations might be nimbly completed as part of budgeted maintenance activities. Other elements may be suitable for grant programs to implement pilot projects, while still others (particularly those that have a public art or community branding component) may be suitable for implementation through tactical urbanism activities. The CRA may be able to help with both needed community engagement activities and some capital or operating costs.

The devil is often in the details. A natural tension exists in the community between the desire to move expeditiously toward implementation and the desire to proceed in a methodical manner towards comprehensive and consistent solutions. These two desires reflect contrasting approaches, both of which have elements of community support. The desire to expedite implementation can be addressed in part through pilot projects, including tactical urbanism involving community members in planning and execution, that can often provide quick results but are by definition non-standard. Both approaches can lead to satisfying solutions, but the choices should be made in a deliberate manner.



Figure 2. Travel Desire Lines

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

The transportation assessment proposes a suite of improvements that can generally be described as complete streets improvements. These improvements were developed based on prior studies, an independent assessment of needs, and community engagement.

Establish committees to facilitate stakeholder involvement. Choosing the best approach for each project should include continuing community and CRA staff involvement in implementation activities, with a focus on coordinating public sector and private sector activities. Implementing a Transportation Improvement District may be an effective way to help direct private-sector participation toward needed projects.

Implement Complete Streets and Complete Intersections. Figure 4 shows the city’s Complete Streets plan recommended treatment for a typical avenue, with two travel lanes, separate bicycle lanes, on-street parking, and the ability to include landscaped curb extensions (or medians) where parking (or a left-turn lane) is not needed. Figure 5 describes elements of a “Complete Intersection” where two complete streets meet. Several elements should link the committee work to the implementation:

- Leveraging the city’s repaving schedule to implement changes; many of the neighborhood streets are scheduled for repaving in 2023.
- Focusing on the transition between the more residential and commercial portions of the study area by redesigning Third Street as a two-lane avenue north of A W Willis Avenue and implementing neighborhood traffic circles along Mill Avenue.

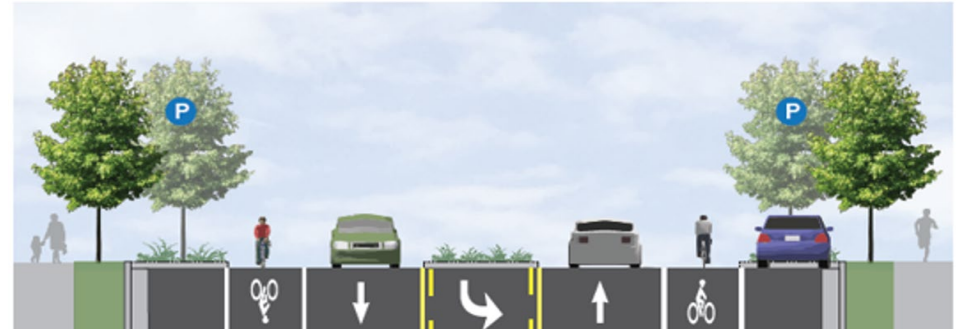


Figure 3. Avenue Concept in Memphis Complete Streets Plan

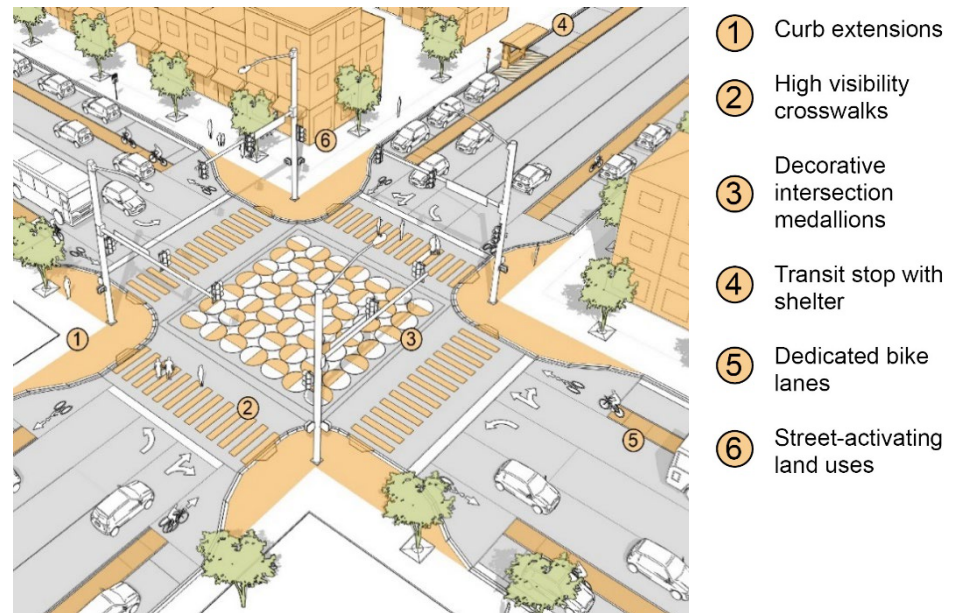


Figure 4. Elements of a Complete Intersection

Develop a TDM Plan for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. St. Jude is the largest employer in the community and continues to expand. The recently proposed parking garage on the Gayoso Bayou is inconsistent with adopted plans. A Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan developed in coordination with the city can document needs for multimodal access, circulation, and parking and provide guidance on managing demand by auto travel and meeting the amount and location of needed parking in a manner consistent with adopted plans.

Begin studies to refine the larger recommendations. Several recommendations to be implemented in the mid-term to long-term will require further planning, notably: a cycle track along A W Willis Avenue, better multimodal access to the William Hudson Transit Center (study to begin after the Memphis Innovation Corridor (MIC) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service has been underway and can be evaluated as part of the transit needs), reconfiguration to I-40 access points.

Figure 5 summarizes the recommendations, with information about timeframe, the suggested lead agency and supporting agencies, and the top-priority location-based projects. Figure 6 graphically illustrates the top-priority location-based project recommendations. Community involvement through new subcommittees within the Uptown Advisory Committee will not only help refine subsequent project details, but committee members can serve as champions to help maintain project delivery momentum.

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Priority	Project or Program	Timeline	Location	Type	Lead Agency	Supporting Agencies	Scale of Project
	Establish tactical urbanism subcommittee of Uptown Community Advisory Committee	Immediate		Collaborate	CRA	City of Memphis, TDOT	\$
	Establish local development review subcommittee of Uptown Community Advisory Committee	Immediate		Collaborate	CRA	City of Memphis	\$
	Implement Transportation Improvement District elements	Near term		Collaborate	City of Memphis	CRA, TDOT	\$
1*	Implement Avenue and Complete Intersection treatments during near-term repaving	Near term	N Front, N Main, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, Keel, Looney, Saffarans, Greenlaw	Build	City of Memphis	CRA	\$\$
5	Convert 3rd Street to Avenue treatment north of A W Willis; consider transfer to City	Near term	3rd Street	Build	TDOT	City of Memphis, CRA	\$\$
2	Construct neighborhood traffic circle at Mill / 3rd	Near term	Intersection of Mill and 3rd	Build (potential pilot)	TDOT	CRA, City of Memphis	\$\$
3	Construct neighborhood traffic circle at Mill / 6th	Near term	Intersection of Mill and 6th	Build (potential pilot)	City of Memphis	CRA, TDOT	\$\$
	Develop St. Jude Transportation Demand Management Plan	Near term		Study	St. Jude / ALSAC	City of Memphis	\$
	Conduct William Hudson Transit Center Circulation Plan	Near term		Study	MATA / City of Memphis	CRA, TDOT	\$
	Conduct I-40 Access and Circulation Study	Near term		Study	TDOT	City of Memphis, CRA	\$
4	Construct Two-Way Cycle Track on A W Willis Avenue	Mid term	A W Willis Avenue	Build	TDOT	City of Memphis, CRA	\$\$
7	Implement I-40 Access Improvements	Mid term	I-40 ramp near 2nd St	Build	TDOT	City of Memphis, CRA	\$\$\$
6	Extend Overton Avenue to create connection from Pinch District to the Pyramid	Long term	Overton Ave	Build	City of Memphis	CRA	\$\$\$

Priority column only applies to location based improvements

*Streets identified for Complete Intersection pilot interventions during near-term repaving require additional analysis to determine the best locations and type of intervention

Figure 5. Recommended Projects and Programs

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Figure 6. Top Five Location-Based Project Recommendations

For more information and to review the full transportation assessment final report, please visit the CRA website at: [Uptown TIF Transportation Assessment – Community Redevelopment Agency \(cramemphis.org\)](http://cramemphis.org).