

Engineering Division of the Public Works Department

To: Committee of the Whole Members
From: Nathan R. Williams, Civil Engineer I
Date: January 15, 2026
Subject: Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 20, 2026

Review and take possible action: Downtown One-Way to Two-Way Streets Conversion Study

Background

The Engineering Division retained raSmith as consultant for the Downtown One-way to Two-way Streets Conversion Study. This study evaluated the feasibility of converting one-way streets within the downtown area to two-way operation. It evaluated all existing one-way streets within this area but focused on the Third Street and Fourth Street corridors, as these are heavily traveled streets containing traffic lights and requiring traffic software modeling and coordination with the 2028 Main Street reconstruction project design. Preliminary results were available in August 2024, after which the conversion of Third Street and Fourth Street to two-way traffic in 2028 was taken to the Public Works Commission, the Public Safety and Welfare Committee and the Common Council for approval in October 2024, Ord. #24-25. After this approval the Wisconsin Department of Transportation included this two-way operation in their 2028 Main Street reconstruction design. The study could not be finalized at that time due to a lack of reliable traffic data in the downtown area as a result of the Main Street Bridge Reconstruction. Once the bridge was completed, updated traffic data was gathered in May 2025, and the study was refined and finalized. The traffic data confirmed the assumptions made in the preliminary report.

In addition to traffic operations, raSmith completed a parking analysis as part of the study to evaluate the impacts of proposed roadway changes on public parking supply within the downtown area. The parking analysis generally showed that adequate parking exists to support the limited parking removal associated with certain alternatives, including the parking impacts identified under Option #2 described below.

Within the final version of the study, three options were presented regarding the block of Main Street between Third Street and Fourth Street pertaining to designated turn lanes on Main Street, and potentially affecting on-street parking.

As part of the study, raSmith modeled traffic operations under all three options using industry-standard traffic analysis methodologies. The analysis showed that traffic operations under each option meet applicable performance benchmarks for downtown arterial and collector streets. While all three options operate acceptably from a traffic standpoint, the modeling indicates that overall traffic flow and intersection performance improve under Option #2 and further improve under Option #3 due to the addition of dedicated turn lanes and reduced turning conflicts.

- Option #1: maintain existing turn lane configuration of a single left turn lane for eastbound traffic between Third Street and Fourth Street from E. Main Street to N. Fourth Street.
- Option #2: maintain the existing eastbound turn lane from Main Street to Fourth Street and add one new left turn lane for westbound traffic between Third Street and Fourth Street. This option results in the anticipated loss of two parking spaces on the south side of Main Street between Second Street and Third Street.
- Option #3: maintain the existing eastbound turn lane from Main Street to Fourth Street and add three new left turn lanes – including the one proposed in Option #2, an additional left turn lane for westbound traffic between Fourth Street and Fifth Street, and an additional left turn lane for eastbound traffic between Second Street and Third Street. This option results in the anticipated loss of nine parking spaces on the south side of Main Street, including six spaces between Second Street and Third Street and three spaces between Fourth Street and Fifth Street.

A representative from raSmith will be in attendance at the January 20, 2026 Committee of the Whole meeting to present the study findings, including the traffic and parking analysis, and to answer questions from Council members.

Budget Goal

2. Proactively maintains and improves our parks and infrastructure to ensure safety, quality, and equity
4. Fosters community growth by assessing opportunities, stakeholder input, environmental needs, and modern code and policy priorities
5. Maintains a safe and healthy community, with an eye toward future needs and trends

Financial Impact

The conversion of Third Street and Fourth Street to two-way traffic is expected to cost approximately \$175,000 to \$225,000. This cost estimate includes re-striping, signage, sealcoating, temporary traffic control measures, and pedestrian crossing improvements. This conversion is anticipated to be completed in 2028. There will be additional costs should other one-way streets be converted to two-way within the study area. The timeline and cost for these additional conversions will be determined through further evaluation.

Recommendation

The Engineering Division recommends continuing with the One-way to Two-way conversion of Third Street and Fourth Street as recommended by raSmith's study, and as preliminarily approved by the Public Works Commission, the Public Safety and Welfare Committee, and the Common Council in October 2024. All other one-way streets mentioned in the study will be further evaluated and brought to these Committees and the Common Council for conversion at a later date. Some of these streets may require widening or on-street parking removal to accommodate two-way traffic.

In addition, the Engineering Division recommends selecting Option #2, which adds a dedicated westbound left turn lane to the block of Main Street between Third Street and Fourth Street. This turn lane would result in the loss of two parking spaces on the south side of Main Street between Second Street and Third Street. If the committee selects this option, the Engineering Division will draft an ordinance to remove the affected on-street parking and present it for consideration at the next Public Safety and Welfare Committee meeting.

Attachments:

- Slideshow summary of the study