

December 2025

Ames Avenue Safe Mobility Recovery Plan

MEMO E: HIGH-LEVEL ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this economic impact assessment memorandum is to analyze key economic aspects of the Ames Avenue study area in order to provide a broad, high-level view of its potential for growth, reinvestment, and community benefit. The memo is intended to help readers understand the economic implications of the Ames Avenue Safe Mobility Recovery Plan. The assessment frames how transportation and safety improvements, such as lane reconfigurations, roundabouts, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and other traffic-calming measures, may influence economic outcomes along the corridor.

The report examines the existing land use context, identifying how residential, commercial, institutional, and vacant properties shape opportunities for future development. Next, the analysis reviews the socioeconomic profile of the corridor, considering factors such as income levels, automobile availability, housing characteristics, age distribution, and race and ethnicity. These elements provide important insights into how targeted investments may address socioeconomic disparities in the area. Finally, the assessment incorporates relevant case studies offering examples of how safety and mobility improvements similar to what may be proposed along Ames Avenue can lead to economic, social, and quality-of-life benefits.

1.1 DATA SOURCES

The data used in this report were provided by the City of Omaha and the U.S. Census Bureau. Trip statistics were accessed through Replica, a third-party data sourcing tool. Replica provided both summarized census information and estimated trip counts with related attributes. The trip estimates are for travel on a typical weekday (Thursday) in Spring of 2025, offering a representative picture of travel behavior along the corridor.

Socioeconomic data for the Ames Avenue population were drawn from 18 census blocks, using the 2023 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) as the baseline. This approach enables the analysis to capture the characteristics of residents who live directly within the study corridor.

In addition, case studies were identified by reviewing transportation projects from other communities that may be comparable to future safety-related improvement recommendations developed as part of the Ames Avenue Safe Mobility Recovery Plan effort. These case studies provide real-world insights into how safety and multimodal transportation improvements have influenced travel behavior, economic activity, and quality of life, and they serve as valuable context for evaluating potential outcomes along Ames Avenue.

2.0 EXISTING LAND USE CONTEXT

Ames Avenue features a unique combination of residential, commercial, religious, educational, and recreational facilities, among other land uses. The existing land use along the corridor reflects a diverse mix of activity but also highlights clusters of vacant parcels where reinvestment could improve safety, accessibility, and economic opportunity. **Figure 1** and **Figure 2** show the current classifications of land use surrounding Ames Avenue.

Of the 348 properties located directly on the corridor, the largest share—158 parcels—are residential. Commercial and real estate uses make up 82 parcels, while 56 properties are currently vacant. The corridor also includes 11 religious institutions and seven schools or daycares. This distribution highlights Ames Avenue's role as both a residential street and a community-serving corridor that provides access to schools, services, and local businesses.

Looking beyond the properties directly along Ames Avenue, within a half mile of the corridor, nearly 84% of all properties are residential, emphasizing the importance of the corridor as a connector for nearby households. Omaha North High School, the largest school in the study corridor, is a major destination with over 1,700 students enrolled. Other youth- and family-focused destinations include the Omaha Home for Boys, the Boys and Girls Club of the Midlands, and several childcare facilities.



Figure 1: Existing Land Use – N 72nd Street to Fontenelle Boulevard

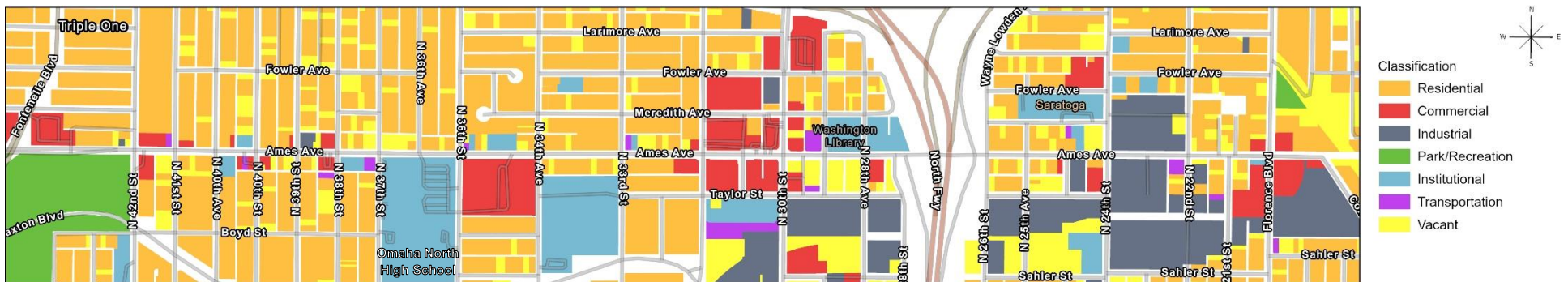


Figure 2: Existing Land Use – Fontenelle Boulevard to Florence Boulevard

The corridor is also home to several community-serving institutions and amenities that attract daily activity. These include the Charles B. Washington Public Library, Butler-Gast YMCA (currently under redevelopment), and two major parks, Fontenelle Park and Benson Park, which provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Larger retailers such as Walmart, Bakers, and Home Depot draw customers from both the immediate neighborhoods and the broader Omaha area. Together, this mix of land uses demonstrates the corridor's unique role as a place where people live, learn, shop, gather, and play, underscoring the value of investments that enhance mobility, safety, and access.

Figure 3 shows the business types of the 82 commercial parcels immediately adjacent to Ames Avenue. **Mixed-use parcels (parcels that have two or more business types on the same parcel) make up the largest share of commercial parcels.** These parcels typically include a strip mall that has several business tenants of different business types.

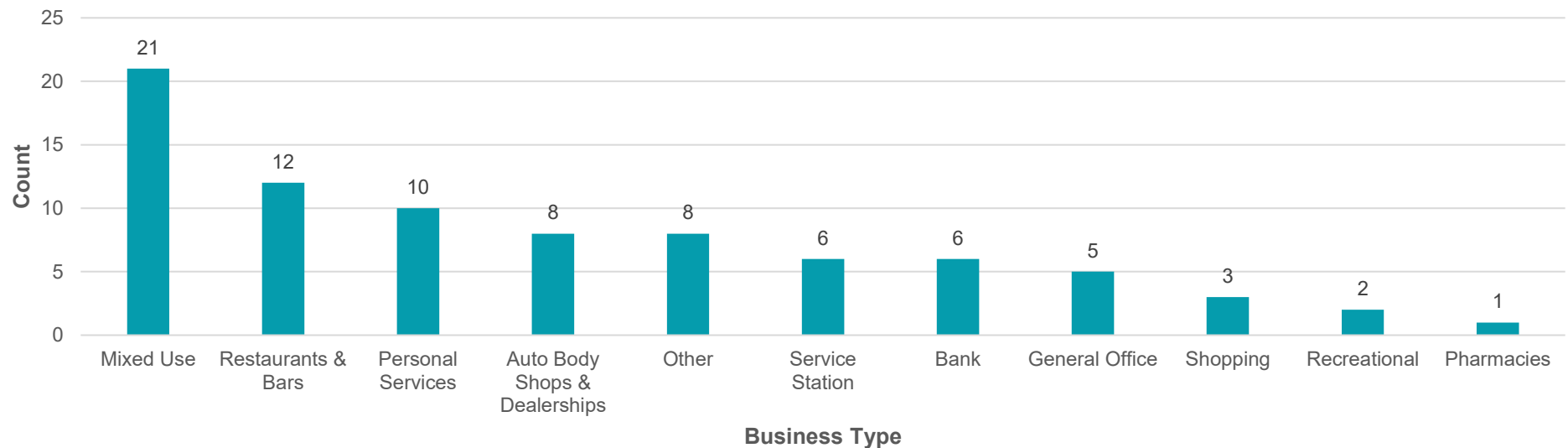


Figure 3: Businesses Directly on Ames Avenue by Business Type

Figure 4 shows the percentage of trips by purpose in the census blocks along Ames Avenue using Replica data. One-third of trips are homebound, one-third of trips are for shopping and eating, and the remaining trips are for various reasons, including school and work.

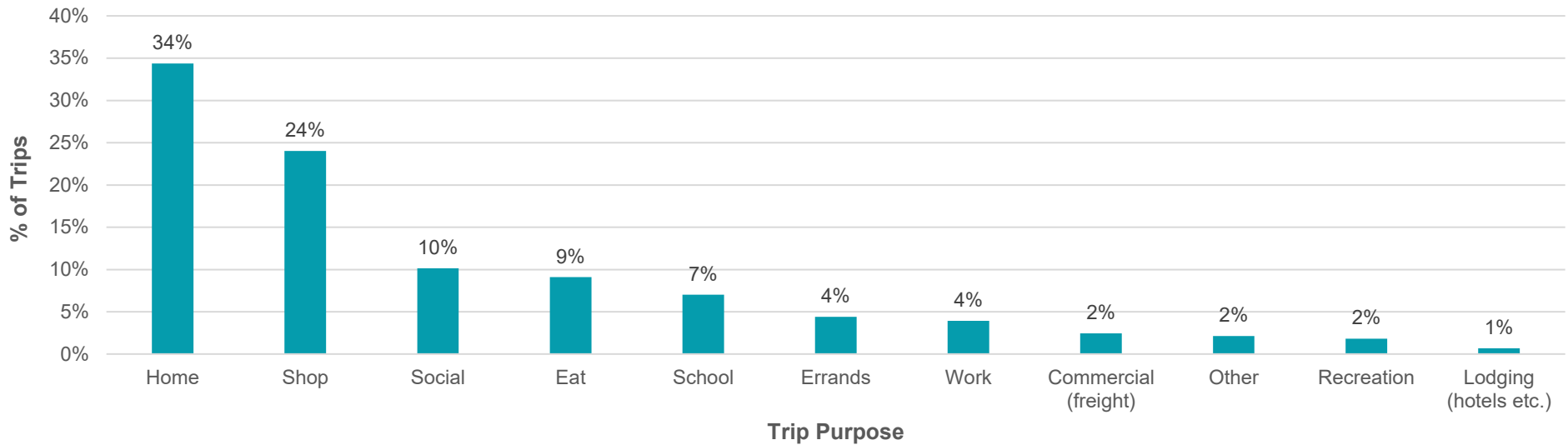


Figure 4: Percentage of Trips by Purpose (Source: Replica, March-May 2025)

2.1 REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Much of the land along the eastern portion of the corridor (east of N 42nd Street) consists of vacant, undeveloped parcels. Approximately 16.1% of the parcels (5.2% by developable land area) directly along Ames Avenue are vacant, and 11.1% of parcels by count (9.4% by developable land area) within a half mile of Ames Avenue are vacant. Concentrations of vacant parcels directly along Ames Avenue can be found between 42nd Street and 36th Avenue, southeast of 30th Street, and scattered sites between the North Freeway and Florence Boulevard. These areas with concentrations of vacant parcels may represent the most promising opportunities for redevelopment in response to potential future investments in multimodal transportation improvements along the corridor.

The eastern portion of the Ames Avenue corridor from Commercial Avenue to N 40th Street was historically developed around the historic streetcar system (**Figure 5**). This led to concentrations of traditional commercial and mixed-use buildings at key stops concentrated at the intersections of Ames Avenue with Florence Boulevard, N 24th Street, N 30th Street, N 34th Avenue, N 36th Street, and N 40th Street.



Figure 5: Historic Streetcar-Era Photo (circa 1940) at N 24th Street and Ames Avenue, Looking North. (From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection, owned by KMTV3 on permanent loan to the Durham Museum)

While much of this streetcar era commercial development has been lost over the decades, significant clusters of streetcar era commercial buildings remain in some locations, including:

- On the south side of Ames Avenue at Florence Boulevard
- Just west of N 24th Street & Ames Avenue
- Just north of N 30th Street & Ames Avenue
- N 40th Street & Ames Avenue

Coupled with nearby vacant and underutilized land along the eastern portion of the corridor, these remaining clusters of historic streetcar-era buildings, situated near key intersections, may present an opportunity to serve as anchors for catalytic redevelopment. Implementing complete streets improvements—such as enhanced pedestrian connections and streetscape upgrades—around these key intersections could be an effective strategy to help spur activity, attract new businesses, and encourage mixed-use development.

3.0 SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT

The socioeconomic characteristics of the population living along the Ames Avenue corridor are critical for evaluating how transportation and safety improvements will affect the community. Factors such as household income, housing tenure, age distribution, race and ethnicity, and access to a vehicle all shape travel behavior and influence how residents interact with the roadway corridor. These characteristics also frame which community members may best benefit from improved roadway safety and mobility along the corridor.

Figure 6 through **Figure 11** shows the percentage of the population by various socioeconomic metrics, comparing the population of the census blocks along Ames Avenue to the City of Omaha.

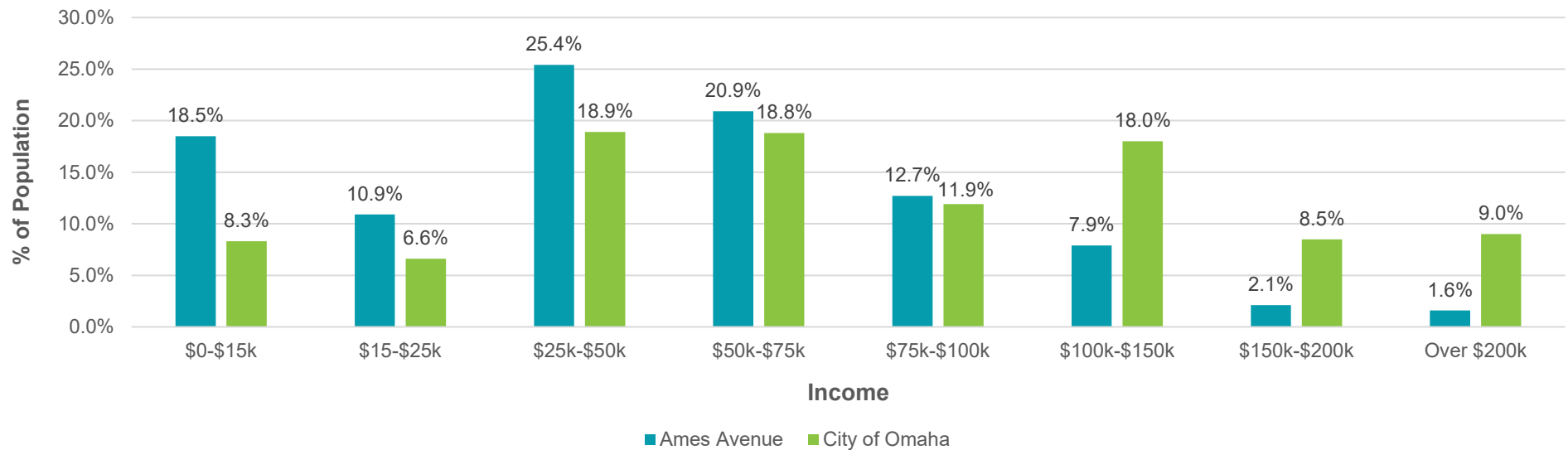


Figure 6: Percentage of Population by Income (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

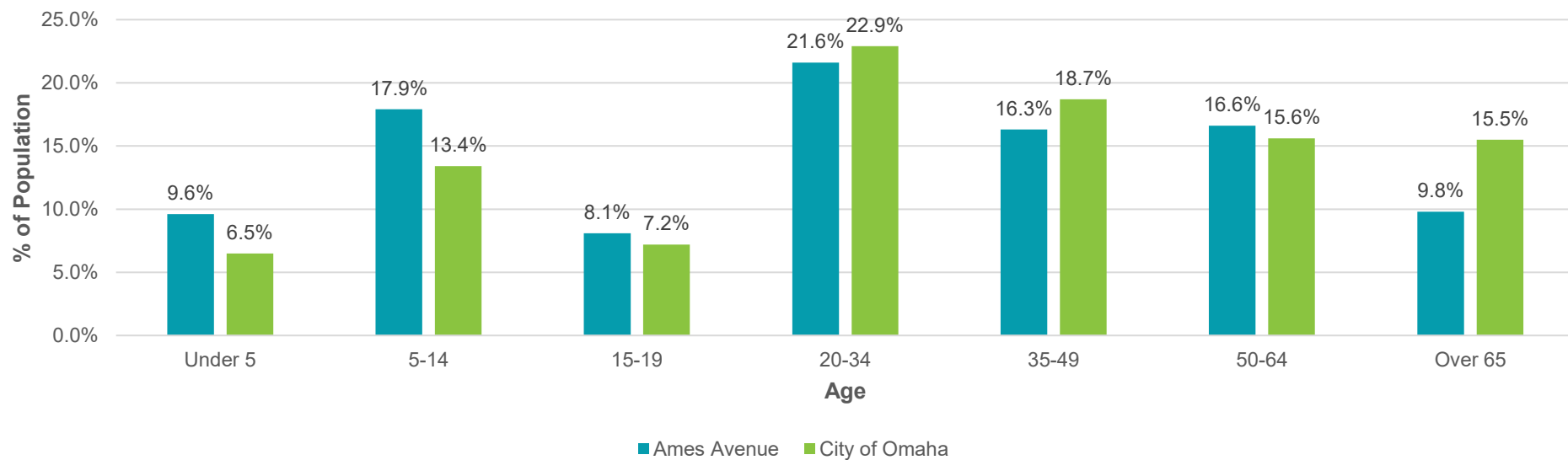


Figure 7: Percentage of Population by Age (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

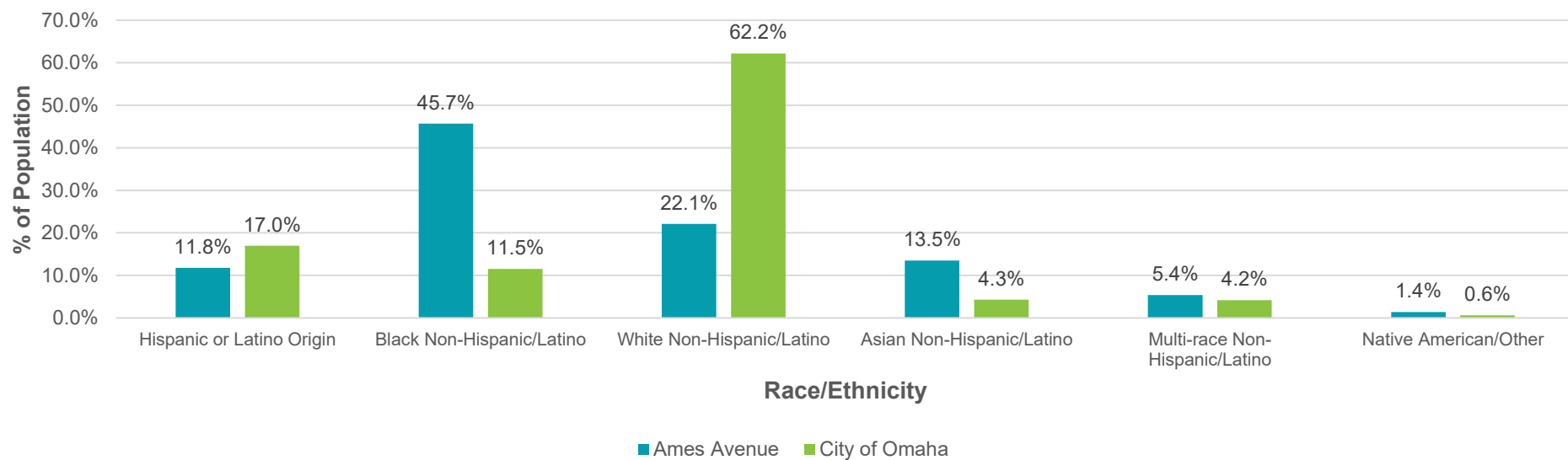


Figure 8: Percentage of Population by Race/Ethnicity (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

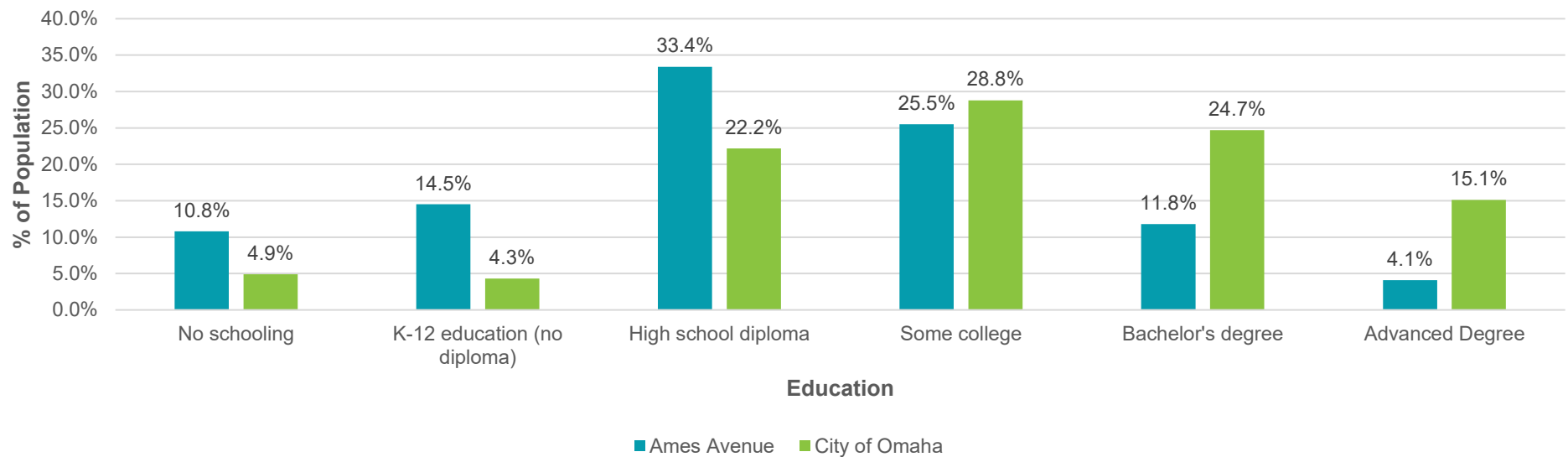


Figure 9: Percentage of Population by Education (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

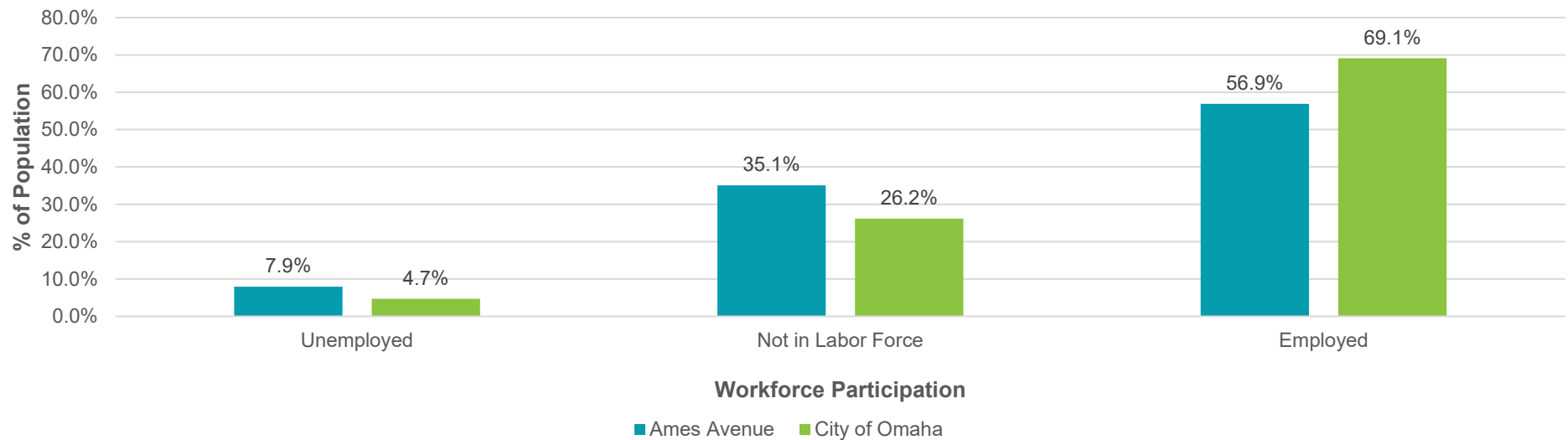


Figure 10: Percentage of Population by Workforce Participation (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

Note: "Unemployed" are considered individuals actively searching for work, whereas "Not in Labor Force" are individuals not actively searching for work.

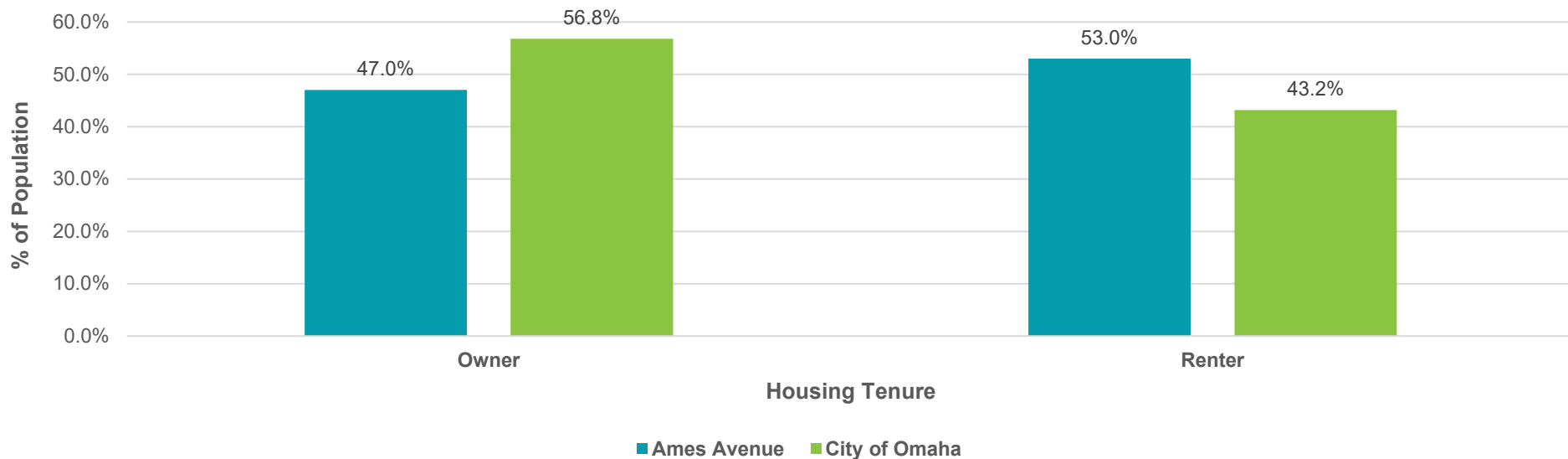


Figure 11: Percentage of Population by Housing Tenure (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

Looking at how users are currently traveling along Ames Avenue can provide insights into how improved mobility and safety might impact the current corridor users. **Figure 12** and **Figure 13** compare auto availability and mode choice and highlight how access to a vehicle strongly shapes travel behavior along the Ames Avenue corridor. While a large majority of households own at least one car, a notable share (7.7%) of residents do not have reliable vehicle access, underscoring the importance of alternative modes.

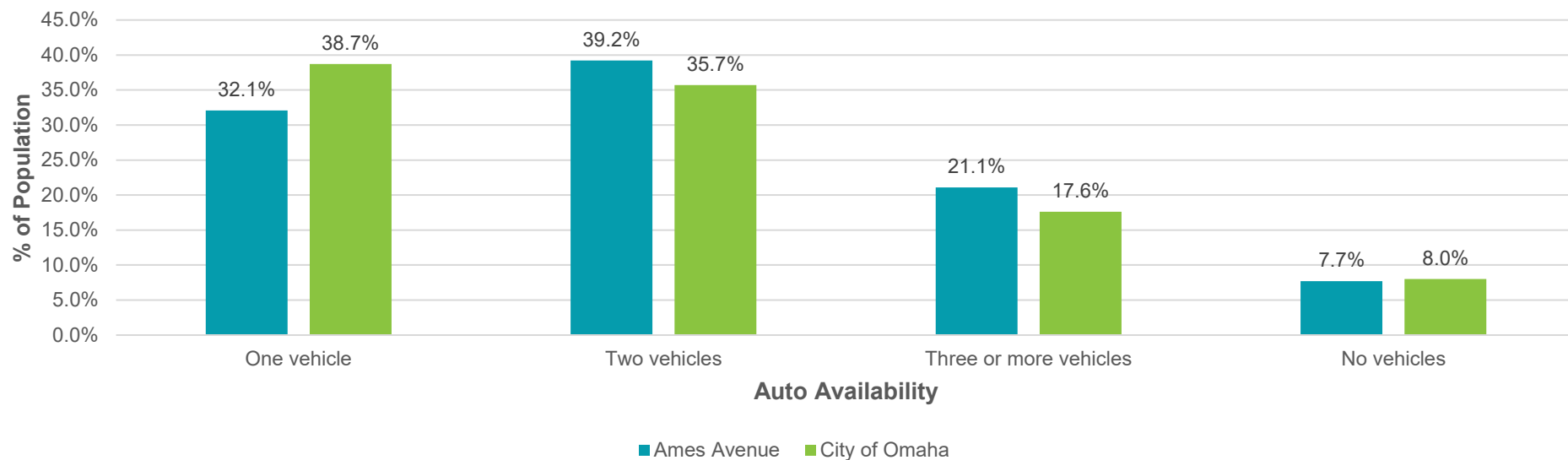


Figure 12: Percentage of Population by Auto Availability (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

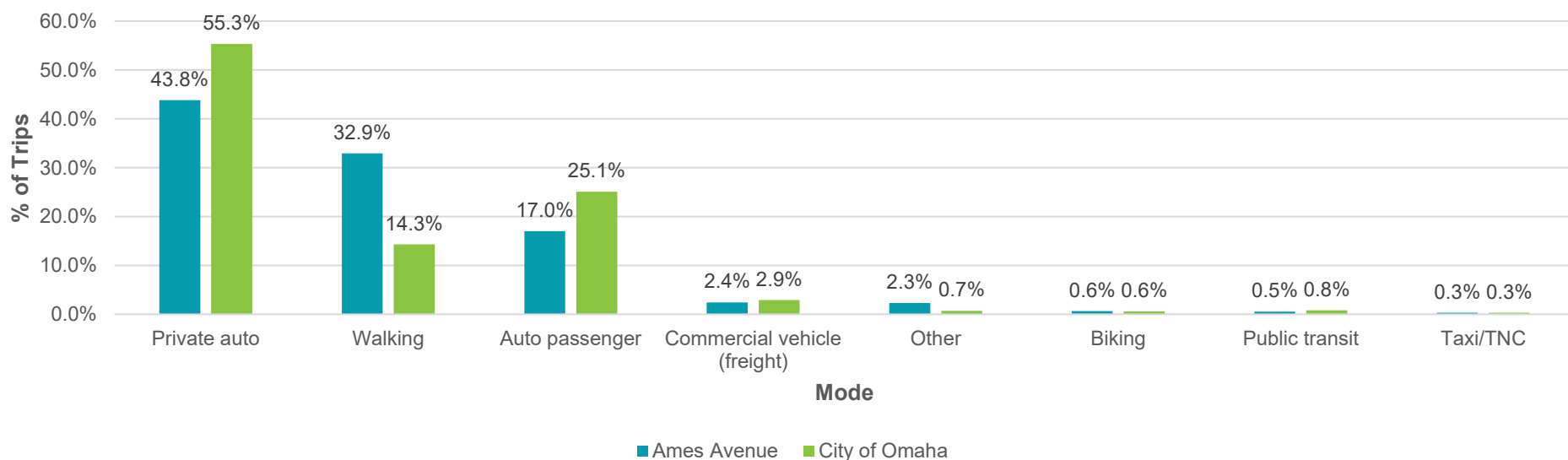


Figure 13: Percentage of Trips by Mode Choice (Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

The mode choice data reflects the reality that although most trips are still made by car, walking represents a substantial share of daily travel. These patterns reinforce the need for investments that provide safe options for walking, bicycling, and transit trips.

Figure 14 demonstrates the importance of local mobility. Nearly two-thirds (65.7%) of trips along Ames Avenue census blocks are one mile or less. Creating a more walkable, bike-friendly corridor could improve access for households without vehicles, reduce traffic congestion, and generate more foot traffic that can support local businesses.

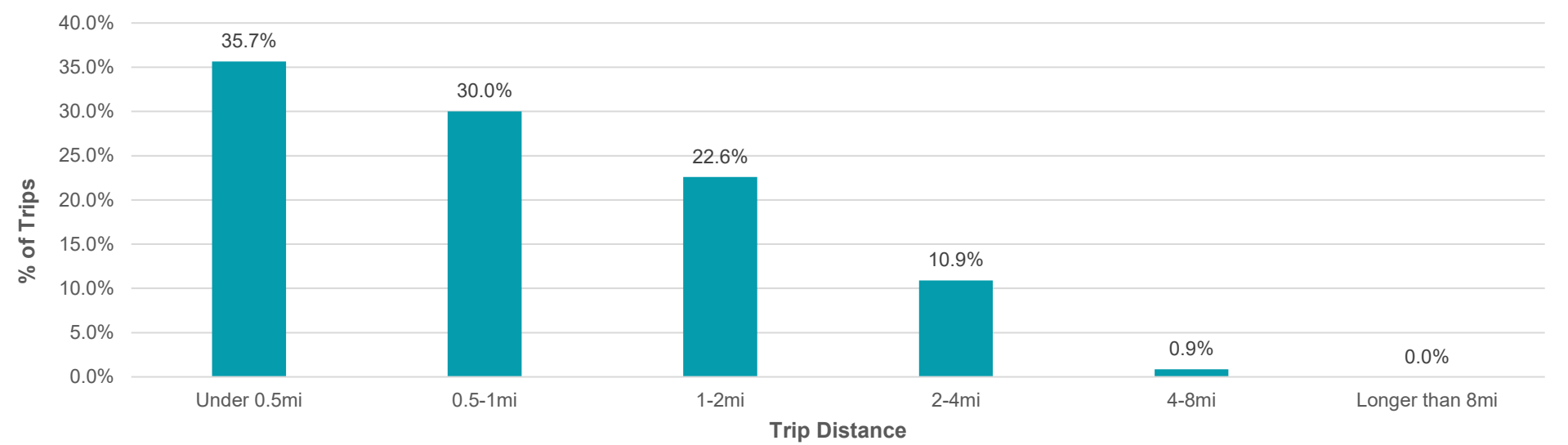


Figure 14: Percentage of Trips by Trip Distance (Source: Replica, March-May 2025)

4.0 CASE STUDIES

To better understand the potential outcomes that future mobility and safety improvements may have along Ames Avenue, this report examines case studies from comparable roadway projects. These examples highlight how multimodal safety improvements have influenced travel behavior, supported local businesses, and enhanced community vitality. The case studies examined are:

- Edgewater Drive – Orlando, FL
- East Boulevard – Charlotte, NC
- South Golden Road – Golden, CO
- York Boulevard – Los Angeles, CA
- Vanderbilt Avenue – New York City, NY
- Lyndale Avenue – Minneapolis, MN

4.1 EDGEWATER DRIVE, ORLANDO, FL

A 1.5-mile segment of Edgewater Drive in Orlando, FL, was reconfigured from four lanes to three lanes in 2002 (**Figure 15**). The roadway was located near downtown Orlando with an average daily traffic count of 20,000 and experienced frequent crashes. Orlando wanted to improve not only the safety, but also the community along Edgewater Drive. The city first tested the concept by restriping the roadway to the new 3-lane reconfiguration. After the success seen during the concept testing, the city made the changes permanent in 2002. The final conversion included three lanes, a bike lane, wider on-street parking, and improved pedestrian safety designs.

Safety and use along the corridor increased. Traffic volumes returned to normal levels after a 12% drop following the project's completion. Collisions decreased by 40% and injuries decreased by 71%. Beyond the safety improvements, the corridor saw a 23% increase in pedestrian counts and a 30% increase in bicycle ridership. In addition, the corridor has gained 77 new businesses and an additional 560 jobs between 2008 and 2016. The value of property adjacent to Edgewater and within a half mile of the corridor rose 80% and 70%, respectively.¹



Figure 15: Edgewater Drive Before and After Lane Reconfiguration

¹ <https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Building-Healthy-Corridors-ULI.pdf>

4.2 EAST BOULEVARD, CHARLOTTE, NC

East Boulevard runs through a historic district in Charlotte, NC. The roadway saw roughly 16,000-21,400 motorized vehicles daily. The neighborhood adopted a plan to encourage more foot traffic and improve safety along the corridor to transform the street into “main street” for the surrounding neighborhoods. The city implemented a lane reconfiguration in three phases, converting four-lane and five-lane sections of the corridor to three lanes.

The project started in 2006 and was completed in 2010. After Phases I and II were completed, 77% of people in a public survey said they were in favor of implementing a 4-lane to 3-lane reconfiguration in Phase III (**Figure 16**). Those same survey respondents highlighted the increased safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. The corridor also saw an increase in outdoor dining following the implementation.²

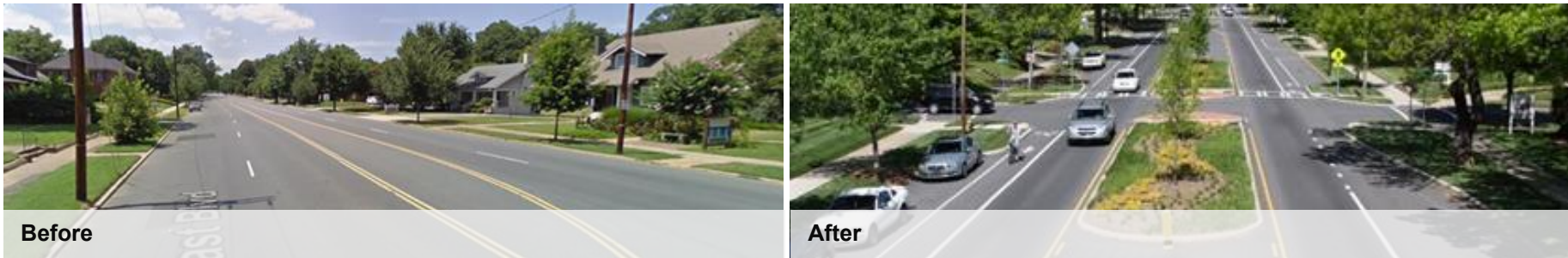


Figure 16: East Boulevard Before and After Lane Reconfiguration

4.3 SOUTH GOLDEN ROAD, GOLDEN, CO

After South Golden Road in Golden, CO, was redesigned and reconstructed with a median and a series of roundabouts in 1998, the area saw economic and community benefits (**Figure 17**). In the six years following the road reconstruction, sales tax revenues increased by 60% and more than 75,000 square feet of new commercial and office space were constructed. South Golden was the only area in the city that reported consistent revenue growth while the rest of the area slowed down.

Additionally, safety improved along the corridor. Based on the crash history during the three-year period before implementation and the five-year period following implementation, average annual crashes dropped from 123 to 19, and injuries fell from 31 to only 1. Travel speeds decreased from 47 mph to 33 mph, while travel times improved.^{3,4}

² <https://www.pps.org/article/east-boulevard-was-remade-to-achieve-community-desires>

³ <https://www.unb.ca/research/transportation-group/assets/documents/evaluation-of-a-series-of-roundabouts-implemented-on-south-golden-road.pdf>

⁴ https://onlinepubs.trb.org/Onlinepubs/circulars/ec083/39_Ariniellopaper.pdf

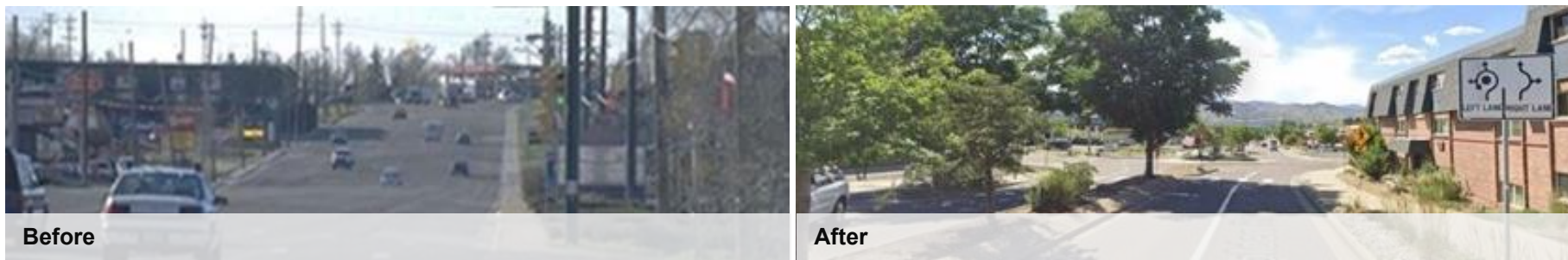


Figure 17: South Golden Road Before and After Lane Reconfiguration and Roundabouts

4.4 YORK BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, CA

The lane reconfiguration implemented on York Boulevard in Los Angeles, CA, gives insight into the economic and community impacts of reconfiguring streets to support multimodal transportation (**Figure 18**). The corridor saw roughly 22,000 vehicles daily. The project converted a segment of the corridor from four lanes to three lanes, adding bike lanes while maintaining on-street parking. This change was aimed at improving safety and accessibility without compromising business performance or property values.

A quantitative analysis showed that the lane reconfiguration did not cause property values or business closings to go up or down in any significant way. There was no data showing a direct correlation between property values and the implementation of the road diet. However, after the lane reconfiguration, new businesses popped up in both the lane reconfiguration section and the non-lane reconfiguration section. Businesses along the lane reconfiguration section saw about twice as much sales tax revenue as those in other parts. Additional outcomes included both surveyed merchants and customers being in favor of bike lanes. The slower traffic speed was generally noted as a positive improvement, which contributed to safer shopping environments and increased visibility for the businesses.⁵



Figure 18: York Boulevard Before and After Lane Reconfiguration

⁵ https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/yorkblvd_mccormick.pdf

4.5 VANDERBILT AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY, NY

This project converted the previously 4-lane undivided section of Vanderbilt Avenue in Brooklyn, NY, into a 2-lane section with center/left turn lanes while maintaining on-street parking. As pedestrian and bicycle traffic increased following the initial conversion in 2006, the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) identified an opportunity to add to those initial improvements by striping bike lanes and adding landscaped medians with pedestrian refuge islands in select locations in 2008 (**Figure 19**). NYCDOT conducted a before-and-after analysis of economic performance in the three years before and after implementation of the improvements, comparing the corridor's performance to nearby similar streets over the same period. By 2011 (the third year following implementation), retail sales had more than doubled compared to the baseline period, compared to a 64% increase along the nearby comparison corridors (**Figure 20**). In addition to these economic benefits, speeding and crashes involving turning vehicles and pedestrians decreased significantly.⁶



Figure 19: Vanderbilt Avenue Before and After Lane Reconfiguration

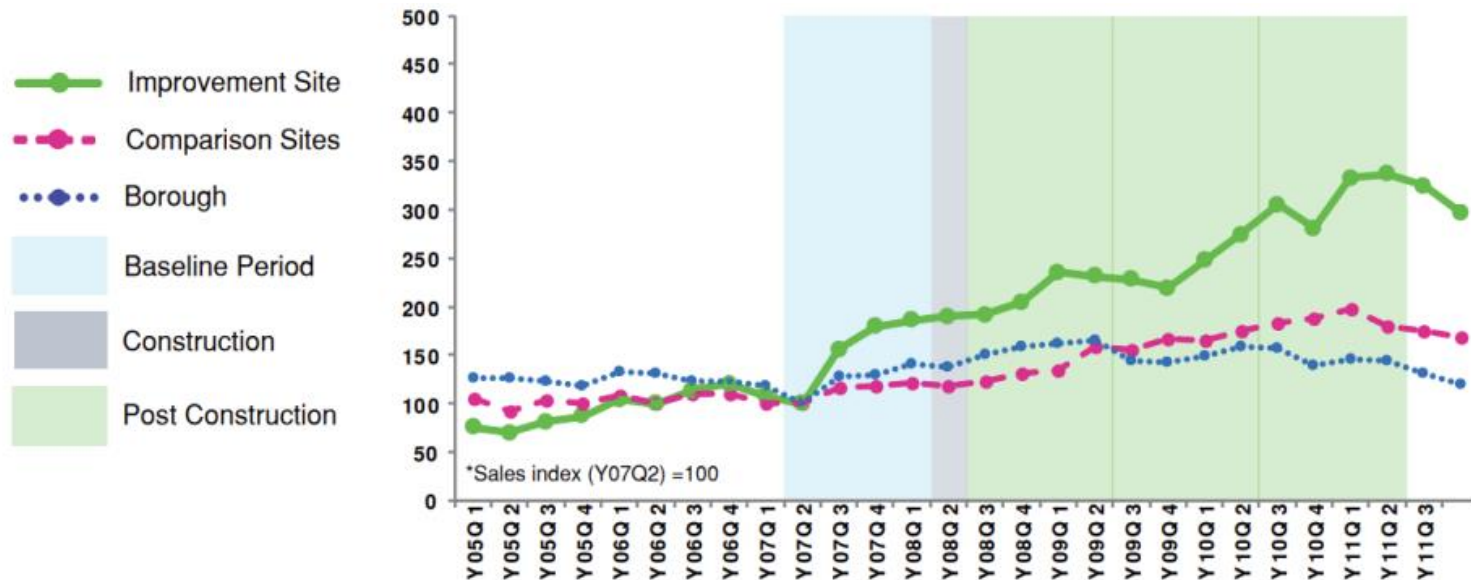


Figure 20: Combined Sales: Improvement Sites vs. Comparison Sites – Vanderbilt Avenue (Source: NYCDOT)

⁶ <https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/dot-economic-benefits-of-sustainable-streets.pdf>

4.6 LYNDALE AVENUE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

A lane reconfiguration project on Lyndale Avenue in 2008 converted the corridor from a four-lane undivided cross-section to one lane in each direction with a center turn lane and landscaped median in select locations, as well as curb extensions, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, and pedestrian lighting (**Figure 21**). A before-and-after study of economic impacts compared Lyndale Avenue to an untreated nearby corridor (Grand Avenue) over the same time period. Using three different analysis methodologies, the study found that Lyndale Avenue performed significantly better on retail sales growth than Grand Avenue following the road diet implementation.⁷

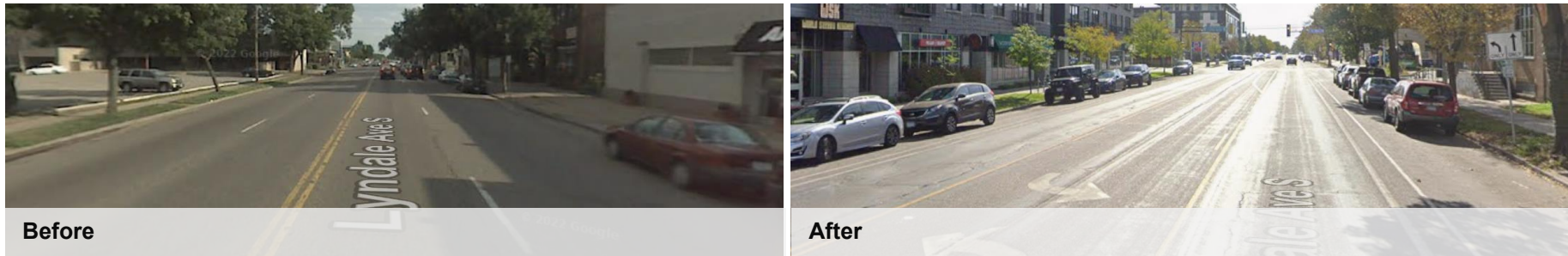


Figure 21: Lyndale Avenue Before and After Lane Reconfiguration

4.7 ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

In addition to the case study examples detailed above, some studies have more systematically and rigorously studied the economic impacts of lane reconfiguration and Complete Streets projects across multiple locations. In general, these studies have looked at changes in retail sales volumes, employment, and (in some cases) the number of employers before, during, and after construction of improvements that typically include reducing travel lanes or on-street parking and implementing sidewalk and streetscape improvements, bicycle facilities, dedicated turn lanes or medians, and curbside management improvements. The following are some of the key studies in the literature on the economic impacts of Complete Streets improvement projects:

- Liu and Shi (2020) conducted a study of seven corridors located in Memphis, Minneapolis, Portland, and San Francisco using three different analytic methods to compare the economic impacts of pedestrian and bicycle-focused lane reconfiguration projects before and after implementation. Their findings generally showed either positive or non-significant impacts on corridor economic activity.
- Fonseca-Sarmiento (2022) studied economic impacts of Complete Streets improvements along nine different “main streets” that are also state highways in small (less than 20,000 pop.) Minnesota communities. The study found significant and positive impacts on property values per capita in treatment communities, when compared to control communities that did not have Complete Streets projects. The study found positive but non-significant impacts on gross sales and a negative and significant impact on the number of businesses in the treatment communities. The authors note that additional research is needed to understand impacts of Complete Streets projects on business retention and attraction.

⁷ https://ppms.trec.pdx.edu/media/project_files/Minneapolis-2020-Street-Improvements-Study-.pdf

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Ames Avenue corridor is home to a blend of residential, commercial, and civic land uses such as schools and parks; there are a large number of community-based uses along the corridor including a YMCA, Omaha North High School, Boys and Girl Club of the Midlands, Omaha Home for Boys, a library, a fire station, as well as several churches and daycares. Approximately 16% of parcels directly along the corridor and 11% of parcels within a half mile of Ames Avenue are vacant. These vacant parcels are mostly concentrated near historic nodes of streetcar era commercial development, which may present opportunities for reinvestment and redevelopment coupled with multimodal transportation improvements.

Census blocks along Ames Avenue have a higher share of non-white population, lower education levels, higher unemployment, and a higher share of renters than in the City of Omaha as a whole. Almost one-third of trips taken along the corridor are walking trips, and more than two-thirds of trips are less than 1 mile. Investments in multimodal infrastructure—such as pedestrian crossings, roundabouts, and traffic-calming measures—are expected to not only reduce crashes and improve mobility but also stimulate reinvestment in vacant and underutilized parcels, particularly near historic commercial nodes. These types of changes can support local businesses, attract new development, and create a safer, more vibrant environment for all corridor users.

Case studies from comparable projects in other cities demonstrate that thoughtfully implemented lane reconfigurations and safety enhancements can yield substantial benefits, including increased property values, business growth, and improved travel behavior. The Ames Avenue corridor's unique blend of residential, commercial, and civic uses, combined with its strong community assets, positions it well to realize similar positive outcomes.