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# Rightsizing Streets

The needs of our communities evolve over time, and our street design should, too. That's the idea behind 'rightsizing streets' – reconfiguring the layout of our streets to better serve the people who use them, whether they're commuters driving, shoppers walking, or children bicycling. Across the country, communities large and small are achieving impressive safety, mobility, and community outcomes by implementing such reconfigurations. Project for Public Spaces created this rightsizing resource to highlight the accomplishments of these communities and share best practices. Our [transportation staff](#) can advise stakeholders and decision-makers, skillfully facilitate a rightsizing process, and adeptly produce rightsized designs for agencies and community groups.

## Case Studies



Stone Way, Seattle, WA



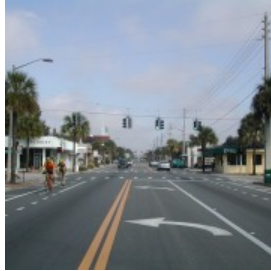
"The Porch" Philadelphia, PA



Raymond Ave, Poughkeepsie, NY



Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, NY



Edgewater Dr, Orlando, FL



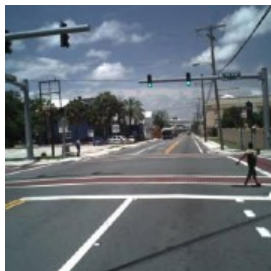
East Blvd, Charlotte, NC



Broadway, New York, NY



Bridgeport Way, University Place, WA



## Nebraska Ave, Tampa, FL



## Main St/US 395, Bridgeport, CA

### What is 'Rightsizing' a Street?

Rightsizing is the process of reallocating a street's space to better serve its full range of users. Picture a four lane road that was built thirty years ago in an undeveloped area, but that now has housing, shops, and an elementary school in close vicinity. The needs of the community surrounding that road have changed over three decades – and the design of that road may need to change to meet those needs as well. It may need a sidewalks or a median to help people cross safely, or on-street parking for folks who want to frequent local shops, or other safety features to prevent injuries. Rightsizing a road can encompass a broad array of redesign measures, and should always be sensitive to context and the vision of the local community, but often involves some or all of the following goals and strategies:

#### Typical Goals

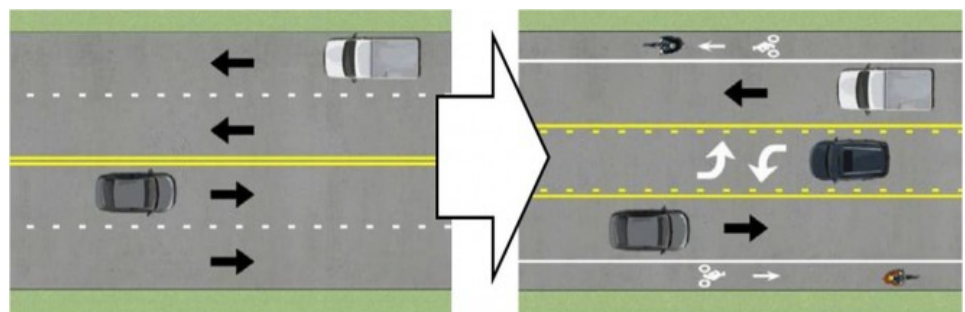
- Increasing safety and access for all users
- Encouraging walking, biking, and transit use
- Supporting businesses and the local economy
- Creating places that foster community livability

See [Project Selection and Before & After Measurements](#) for more info on selecting streets for rightsizing and methods of measuring rightsizing's outcomes.

#### Typical Strategies

- Converting vehicle travel lanes to other uses
- Narrowing vehicle lanes
- Adding bike lanes
- Improving pedestrian infrastructure
- Changing parking configuration
- Adding roundabouts and medians

See the [glossary of rightsizing strategies](#) for definitions and background links



A typical 4 to 3 Lane Rightsizing Project (Image Credit: Seattle DOT, Edited by PPS)

Street rightsizing projects are sometimes called 'road diets,' or 'Complete Streets,' but rightsizing also describes street redesigns that might be considered outside of those frameworks.

Communities and transportation departments around the country are successfully implementing street rightsizing projects, with impressive results. Collecting before-and-after data about key issues like safety, mode splits, and mobility is crucial to ensuring that these projects meet their communities' needs and stated goals. Each case study in this resource includes before-and-after results.

### Rightsizing: Transforming a Street to a Place

Rightsizing a street is often a prerequisite to the street becoming a place where people want to be, instead of just a corridor to pass through. Rightsizing reconfigures a street to best serve the people who need to use it, whether they're drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists. By improving safety, especially for people walking or biking, and by increasing space devoted to people, rightsizing projects cause vehicles to slow down and people to spend more time outside on the street. This is great for people who live in the street's vicinity, businesses that line it, and those who travel through it.

The most common type of street rightsizing converts a two-way four lane street to a three lane street. Removing one of the vehicle lanes can free up space to add or expand pedestrian, bicycle infrastructure, and on-street parking, or other uses. A rightsized three lane street commonly has one traffic lane and one bicycle lane in each direction, with a shared two-way left hand turn lane in the center that allows cars in both directions to make a left. These changes help make a street better for the range of people using it, typically without restricting vehicle volumes or lengthening travel times.



Nebraska Avenue, A Typical 4 to 3 Lane Rightsizing Project (Photo Credit: Florida DOT)

However, many other street changes could compose a rightsizing project. For instance, on [Prospect Park West](#), in Brooklyn, a one-way three lane street was converted to a two lane street with a protected bike lane, and [The Porch](#) in Philadelphia converted unnecessary parking to a successful public space.

**Rightsizing works.** Our case studies highlight these projects' positive impacts, and [significant academic research](#) confirms that vehicle lanes can be converted to other purposes to achieve safety goals without negative transportation impacts. Rightsizing enables mobility for all users, increases safety for all users, and can contribute to the vitality of communities. The [Strategies Glossary](#) includes research describing the positive effects of many of the most common rightsizing strategies.

**Rightsizing facilitates street safety.** Traffic calming improves safety by reducing dangerous driving speeds and movements. Speeding vehicles are exponentially more dangerous than vehicles traveling at appropriate speeds. [Over 80% of pedestrians hit by vehicles traveling 40 miles per hour die, compared to less than 10% that are hit at vehicles traveling 20 miles per hour.](#) Dedicated pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure also improves street safety.

**Rightsizing improves street access for pedestrians** by increasing safety and appeal. All transportation trips at least start and end as pedestrian trips, regardless of the intermediate mode. Making these trips safer and more enjoyable for people is crucial for communities' physical health, the cultivation of public spaces, and the success of street-fronted businesses. Not all transportation modes are created equal. Each has its own advantages in terms of safety, cost, efficiency, speed, and inclusivity. When redesigning a street, it is vital to prioritize designs that enable safe mobility for

particularly vulnerable users, such as children and elderly pedestrians.



East Boulevard Crossing (Photo Credit: City of Charlotte)



Prospect Park West: A street for cars, vs. a rightsized place for everyone (Photo Credit: NYC DOT)

Project for Public Spaces often encourages rightsizing to enable community-driven placemaking, and created this resource to encourage best practices and to raise awareness of rightsizing’s benefits for communities and for cities’ most common public space — the street.

*Special thanks to the Anne T & Robert M Bass Foundation for their support as well as Daniel Gallagher of Charlotte, Jeffery Arms of Orlando, Brian Dougherty of Seattle, and many more for their expertise and consultation. If you have a case study or other input to improve our resources on rightsizing streets, please email [transportation@pps.org](mailto:transportation@pps.org) with “rightsizing” in the subject line.*

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Author: [Seth Ullman](#)