3072 N. Browncliff Lane
Bloomington, Indiana 47408
November 9, 2025

Mr. Ryan Robling
Planning Services Manager
City of Bloomington Planning and Transportation Department
401 N. Morton Street, Suite 130
Bloomington, Indiana 47404

Subject: Proposed Transportation Changes on College Avenue and Walnut Street

Dear Mr. Robling,

I am a long time Bloomington and Monroe County resident. I am also an auto owner, bicyclist, and pedestrian.

I attended the open house at City Hall on Tuesday October 28, 2025 where proposals for changes to the College Avenue / Walnut Street Corridor were presented. I spoke at various times with city employees David Hittle, Hank Duncan, and Katie Gandhi about the proposals. All three were friendly and helpful in explaining the proposed changes and answering my questions.

The discussions about changes to this corridor have been going on here in Bloomington for many years, and at least since 2018. I have argued against some of these proposed changes on several occasions since that time. I believe that a number of the changes being proposed for the College Avenue / Walnut Street Corridor should not be implemented. In particular:

1) **College Avenue and Walnut Street should not be converted from one-way to two-way streets.** This conversion was overwhelmingly opposed by both the public and local businesses when it was proposed back in 2018.
2) **The number of motorized vehicle lanes on College and Walnut should not be reduced in the stretch between Third Street and Eleventh Street.** The three lane sections are especially important when navigating around the many delivery trucks that occupy lanes in the downtown area during the day. The three lane sections are also important when navigating around stopped vehicles in front of restaurants and bars later in the day and at night.
3) **Bicycling should not be encouraged on College or Walnut in the several block area around the courthouse.** The adjacent bike routes on Washington Street, Lincoln Street, Morton Street, and the B-Line Trail are more than adequate and much safer than College or Walnut for handling north-south bicycle traffic in the downtown area.

A much more complete and thorough set of arguments against the proposed changes is as follows:

A) Back in 2018 when the conversion to two-way streets was initially being proposed, the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce did a survey of their members and found that 88% of their members did not want these streets converted to two-way traffic.
B) Back in 2018, I went through the public comments in the packet for one of the big meetings for the transportation plan that was being reviewed at that time. I found comments from 85

different people who made some reference to this street conversion directly or indirectly in their statement. Of those 85 people, 75 of them were against the idea. If you go through the math, you will find that 75 out of 85 works out to 88%. This 88% in opposition is the same percentage as the business survey by the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce!

C) The packet for that meeting back in 2018 also included a letter from Mr. Jim Murphy, who was the president of CFC Properties at that time. The letter stated that Mr. Murphy and CFC were against the conversion of College and Walnut from one-way to two-way. CFC is probably as responsible for the rejuvenation of the downtown area as any other organization in this city. They are a major property manager and developer in the Bloomington area. Their opinion on this issue was clear and should not be ignored. For reference, see attached a copy of this letter.

D) College and Walnut are the most important north-south streets in the city. They are far and away the best alternative for anyone traveling from the north to the south side of Bloomington or vice versa. A conversion from one-way to two-way traffic would significantly reduce the economic and social benefits of the wonderful transportation option that these streets provide.

E) The one-way sections of College and Walnut carry large amounts of traffic more quickly and more efficiently specifically because they are one-way streets. One-way streets lend themselves to synchronized stoplights which enhance traffic flow. Two-way streets cannot have synchronized stoplights since traffic is traveling in two directions. Two-way streets result in more stop and go traffic at stoplights which means more frustration and more air pollution.

F) One-way streets are much safer for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross than two-way streets. When crossing a one-way street, the pedestrian or bicyclist only has to be concerned about traffic coming from one direction. When crossing a two-way street, that person has to make certain there are no problems with oncoming traffic in two directions. This requires looking back and forth at least before crossing and probably looking back and forth at least once when crossing.

G) Making College and Walnut two-way would require the addition of two new stoplights. One new stoplight would be at Dodds Street. The other would be at the north end of the College/Walnut Street corridor between Old IN-37 and the IN 45/46 Bypass. Additional stoplights mean more stoppage time for drivers on this route. Every year, it gets a little more difficult to travel around Bloomington with the addition of more stoplights, more stop signs, fewer lanes available, more traffic, etc.

H) Making College and Walnut two-way through the center of town would be a big problem during the middle of the day when deliveries are being made to downtown businesses. Delivery trucks are commonly parked in one or more lanes in the downtown area during the day. Since the streets are one-way and are multiple lanes then it is possible for other vehicles to still drive on these streets and get by the delivery trucks. As mentioned earlier, the three lane sections are also important when navigating around stopped vehicles in front of restaurants and bars later in the day and at night. If the streets were made two-way, then serious traffic stoppages and safety issues would occur.

I) Bicyclists accessing downtown from the north or south already have excellent bicycle-friendly streets and multi-use paths available. Additional changes to College and Walnut are not necessary for better bicycle access to downtown. Washington and Lincoln are one block and two blocks east of the downtown square. These two streets have bike lanes and relatively light motorized vehicular traffic. Morton Street and the B-Line Trail are one block west of the downtown square. Morton Street has relatively light motorized vehicular traffic and the B-Line Trail has even less motorized traffic (essentially e-bikes and small City of Bloomington vehicles).

All downtown businesses can be easily visited via a short walk from the B-Line Trail, Morton Street, Washington Street, or Lincoln Street. This walk is comparable and possibly even shorter than what a person would experience if they drove their car and parked in the downtown area.

J) A recurring theme during my discussions with city employees at the October 28, 2025 open house was that one-way streets encourage more speeding and are therefore more dangerous than two-way streets. However, if you review the online data at the City of Bloomington Dashboard (Crash Data for Bloomington-Monroe County, Indiana) you will see just the opposite. For the Crash Factor "Speed Too Fast For Weather Conditions", the top 8 high-frequency streets are all two-way. For the Crash Factor "Unsafe Speed", the top 7 high-frequency streets are all two-way. And for the general list for the number of crashes on High-Frequency Streets, almost all of the streets with the most crashes are entirely two-way.

In addition to my arguments above, please see several pertinent attachments as follows:

1) The aforementioned letter from Jim Murphy of CFC Properties dated October 22, 2018.
2) A guest column from Mr. Bill Witte entitled "Street ideas bad for bikes, walkers, cars" that appeared in the Herald-Times dated October 24, 2018. His comments on bicycle and pedestrian safety are especially insightful.
3) A guest column from Ms. Janet Templeton-Heise entitled "Can't force a return of traffic to 'way it was' " that appeared in the Herald-Times dated July 23, 2018.

I hope that you will consider my arguments as well as those appearing in the three attachments. For the good of our fine city, please refrain from making the following three proposed changes to the College Avenue / Walnut Street Corridor:

1) **Converting the one-way sections of College Avenue and Walnut Street to two-way.**
2) **Reducing the number of motorized vehicle lanes on College and Walnut in the area between Third and Eleventh Streets.**
3) **Encouraging bicycling on College and Walnut in the several block area around the courthouse.**

Sincerely,

George A. Keller

George A. Keller
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Cc: David Hittle – Planning Director - City of Bloomington
Hank Duncan – Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator – City of Bloomington
Katie Gandhi – MPO Transportation Planner – City of Bloomington
Hopi Stosberg – District III Representative – Bloomington City Council
Dave Rollo – District IV Representative – Bloomington City Council
Talisha Coppock – Executive Director of Downtown Bloomington Inc.
Rick Coppock – Transportation Commission – City of Bloomington
Attachments: 3 total

CFC PROPERTIES

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October 22, 2018

Amendment recommendation:

We respect the efforts of the City to help provide ease of travel for our downtown customers but do not feel the benefits outweigh the cost and inconvenience in regards to restoration of 2-way ROW within the Transportation Plan (Plan) and the streets as described below..

The (Plan) states, "College Avenue and Walnut Street, and 3rd Street and Atwater Avenue are two one-way couplets that are currently designed to carry high volumes of traffic...." The Plan goes onto to state, "To support the Comprehensive Plan goal of 'nurturing a vibrant city center,' this plan recommends restoring these streets to two-way circulation and reallocating existing ROW to safely accommodate all users. Future study and detailed design will be required to evaluate [the proposed] feasibility..."

- Walnut and College are 3-lane, one-way streets - parking on each side, intermittent bike-lanes
- 3rd and Atwater are 2-lane, one-directional streets with intermittent parking on either side

The proposal to restore 2-way ROW to these roads should be removed from the Plan with no further consideration; studies and evaluation would be costly, implementing the plan would be additionally cost prohibitive.

Supporting factors to eliminate proposed restoration of 2-way streets

- Disruption during the change of the ROW, causing frustration to drivers to undue construction in a city already plagued with road construction fury
- Burden to emergency services, delivery drivers and mass transit systems, and danger to vehicles getting into and out of parking spaces
- Bicyclists will cross oncoming traffic, pedestrians will have to heed to two-way traffic
- Some parking may have to be eliminated which will further frustrate shoppers in the downtown area as parking is already considered a concern
- Inhibitive cost of creating 2-way traffic flow (lights, paving, signage, bus routes, etc.)

With these points being considered, and as a business owner in the downtown area we duly request

- Page 2 of the Plan, remove the paragraph, Restore Two-Way Circulation,
- Page 52, Table 7 – Multimodal Projects, references CC-1 through CC-4,
- Any other language in the Plan that refers to the conversion of these streets to two-way should also be removed, although we may have not listed those references.

Sincerely,

Jim Murphy
CFC Properties, President

Jim Murphy, President, CFC Properties

Can't force a return of traffic to 'way it was'

- H-T report
- Jul 23, 2018

This guest column was submitted by Janet Templeton-Heise, a 30-year resident of Bloomington; this is her edited response to the city's survey about its draft Transportation Plan.

Some of the draft plan is realistic and practical, such as making more street connections and creating more bicycle boulevards in neighborhoods.

However — and I cannot say this strongly enough — the idea of switching the main north-south arteries of Walnut and College through town, as well as the one-way east-west artery sections of Atwater and Third, back to two-way streets, is absurd. I wonder about how much money was spent to the Toole Design Group, which on its website states it is "... the nation's leading planning, engineering and landscape architecture firm specializing in bicycle and pedestrian transportation."

It seems to me that with this choice, the city wants to force a shift of the existing downtown orientation toward accommodating the daily and necessary flow of motorized vehicle traffic toward bicycle and pedestrian traffic. This is not feasible. Our parking garages are already at or near capacity, and the ways to get from the south side to the north side of town are nearly locked in as a necessity. Other nearby city streets (noting Washington and Lincoln) have been adapted to increase bicycle safety, and I would encourage adapting other nearby streets to increase bicycle lanes and safe flow through town.

Bloomington's downtown, as well as the south edge of the IU campus, cannot be shifted back to "the way it was" in the 1950s or 1960s, due in large part to the high levels of the more recent development that has been done and is continuing to be done, facilitated by the city, which has multiplied the residential density downtown. Personal vehicles are a reality for many of those residents, and ignoring that reality will not make it disappear.

Stating that one of the goals is to "shift outward" the business opportunities north and south along Walnut and College leads me to wonder about the city's level of commitment to maintaining the healthy and vibrant downtown we currently have. There's rarely a time when at least one downtown storefront isn't empty, so there is already a level of turnover in the downtown business establishments, but maintaining that occupied and flourishing downtown requires a balance between the city and the business community for it to remain healthy.

I do not want to see a decline in our downtown to the way it was in the 1970s, before the revival effort started and it was not the attractive and healthy area it is now. I well remember the crumbling downtown of Indianapolis, and the shabby downtown of Bloomington when building malls was the rage, and many businesses left the downtown areas for the suburbs.

Like it or not, Walnut and College are heavy-density traffic arteries, with buses and delivery trucks a reality for businesses and high-density residential buildings along both sides of both streets. I see gridlock and further frustration with being stuck behind either type of vehicle, which would most definitely occur with those streets becoming two-way again.

I encourage the planners to understand the realities of traffic flow through Bloomington and plan for the future, which will undoubtedly include private vehicles, which will have to be able to move safely through our city, those of both residents and the city-encouraged visitors to Bloomington. I agree with Margaret Clements, who said, "I think we are over-engineering for a nonexistent problem," as well as her comments about the increased hazards and risks as a result of narrowed lanes.

Please, do not increase the hazards of vehicular traffic, which already exist in Bloomington, further taxing our battalion of guardian angels.

Street ideas bad for bikes, walkers, cars

- By Bill Witte
  - Herald-Times Oct 24, 2018

This guest column is by Bill Witte of Bloomington, associate professor emeritus, economics, Indiana University.

The current Bloomington administration has produced several dubious schemes, but nothing that comes close to its proposal to convert College, Walnut, Third and Atwater to two-way circulation. I would characterize this proposal as moronic, but that would be an insult to morons.

Their rationale is that these changes would create a more conducive environment for non-automobile users, especially bicyclists and pedestrians. In fact, the opposite is true.

I have ridden a bicycle for transportation almost every day for nearly four decades. But I do not ride on College, Walnut or Atwater. There is too much traffic and too little room for safety. If they were two-way, the situation would be worse. There would be no more room (probably less) and the traffic patterns would be more chaotic. Third Street is different. Currently, the dedicated bike lane on its north side is useable, but if the street were two-way, that lane would certainly disappear.

For College and Walnut (C/W) there is another bike-related matter. Currently, there are good alternatives for north/south bike use. To the east (which is more relevant to my use) Washington and Lincoln are good options. They have dedicated bike lanes and not much traffic. They are also flatter than C/W, a definite consideration at my age. The congestion from a two-way configuration of C/W would surely divert traffic onto Lincoln and Washington, making them less attractive for bike use.

Regarding pedestrians, city planners seem to believe that two-way streets are more pedestrian-friendly. I don't understand this. An intersection with a one-way street is inherently simpler than one between two-way streets. There are just fewer directions from which you can get run down. Consider the intersection of Walnut and Kirkwood. Currently, when the light is east-west, crossing Walnut on the south side involves virtually no possibility of being hit. But if it were two-way, there would be turners from Kirkwood to evade.

In summary, for either pedestrians or bicyclists, the proposed changes would go in the wrong direction.

But in reality my main objections are as an automobile user. Bloomington has a lousy street network. There is no real east/west connectivity. Making Atwater/Third two way will significantly degrade what there is. The north/south situation is better, but only because the current C/W configuration works quite well. I regularly drive Walnut north to the bypass. It's simple: Turn onto Walnut and get into the center lane. Align speed with the stoplights and proceed unimpeded (past delivery trucks, buses, whatever). But if Walnut becomes a two-way street, delivery trucks (almost always present somewhere) would require a dangerous switch from the travel lane to the shared center lane. The stoplights would be difficult to sequence, and when you get stopped at one you would have to wait through a left turn sequence. The efficiency of the current configuration would be destroyed.

Additional issues:

(1) The reconfiguration would be very expensive.

(2) The reconfiguration at both ends of the C/W pair (where the two streets merge into one) would be complex. At the north end, for example, a car continuing north from College would cross with southbound traffic headed to Walnut and also with northbound Walnut traffic turning left. And this would be at the bypass, which is already one of Bloomington's most complicated intersections.

I understand that Bloomington political elites have an aversion to automobiles and a utopian vision of alternate transport technologies. I'm OK with this when it simply means wasting small change designating bike routes and pedestrian crossings. But not when it involves spending real money and destroying the workability of an already bad street network.