

## **BMTS Article Digest April – May 2021**

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed from the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page at <http://bmtsonline.com/about/committees>.



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See the **Two Rivers Greenway Pedestrian & Bicycle Counting April 2021 Report** at <http://bmtsonline.com/data/bikeped-counts>.

# April 2021 Bike/Ped Report



Vision of Almond Avenue without the I-81 Viaduct. Source: Rethink 81



TRANSPORTATION

# Syracuse, on White House radar, should oppose highway designation for I-81 teardown

The replacement for Interstate 81 in the heart of Syracuse should be designed and built on the scale of a city street, giving the city an economic shot in the arm.

[ROBERT STEUTEVILLE](#) APR. 7, 2021

An Interstate 81 that no longer goes through the heart of Syracuse, New York—instead bypassing the city on the current I-481—could be a game-changer that benefits the entire region. Accompanied by good roadway design, facilitated by key political choices, that move has the potential to make the city's downtown stronger and spur mixed-use development that is socio-economically equitable.

Implementation could begin as soon as 2022. Last week [Public Square presented a vision for Syracuse](#) after the elevated I-81 Viaduct is demolished. Today's article examines how a vision along those lines could be built if local officials act decisively. At a time when in-city highway transformation is taking off nationwide, with [likely support](#) from the federal government, Syracuse could lead the way in demonstrating the benefits of converting a highway to city streets. The city is on the radar of the new administration. Last week the White House [mentioned I-81 in Syracuse](#) in its \$20 billion proposal to reconnect neighborhoods severed by 20<sup>th</sup> Century highways. I-81 in Syracuse has been on all six previous CNU [Freeways Without Futures](#) lists going back to 2008, and CNU will release a new list this spring.

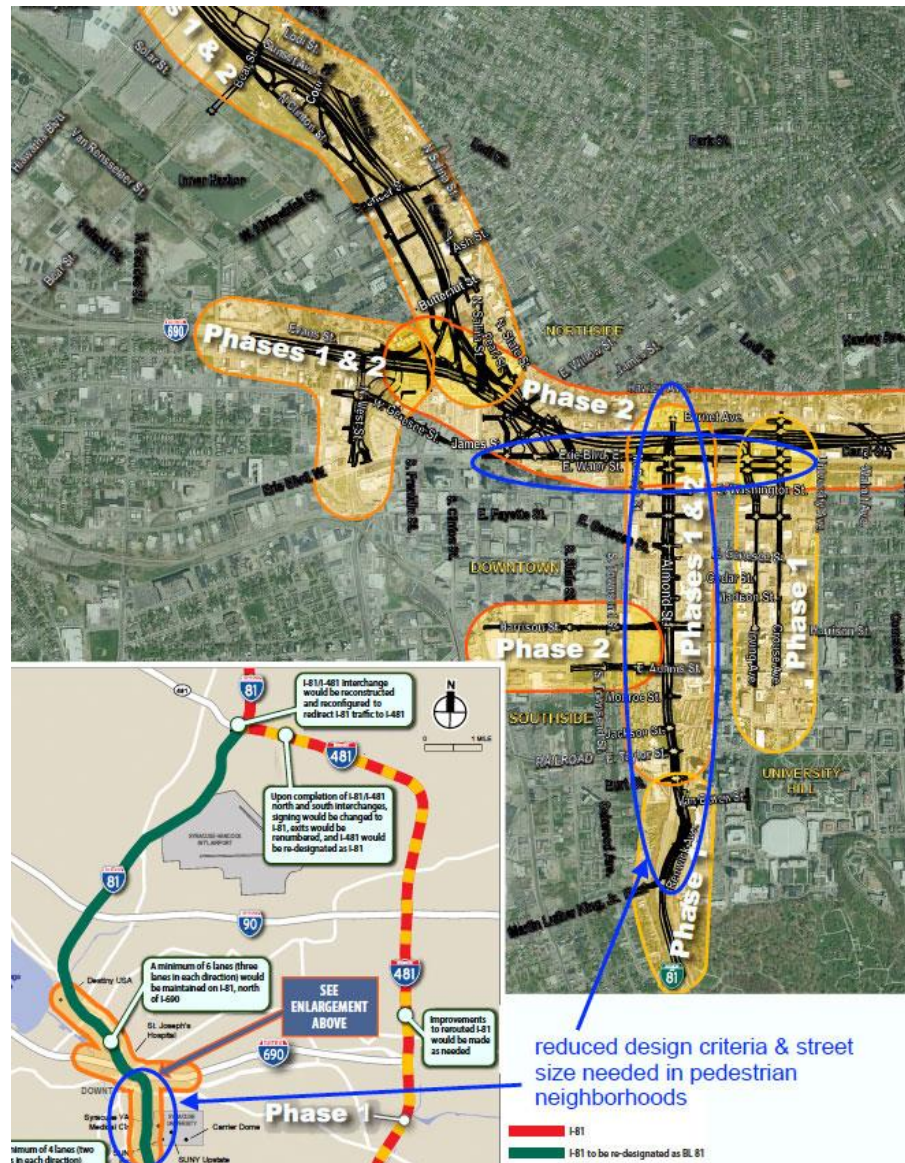
NYS DOT currently favors a "Community Grid" option for I-81, a highway that was built starting in the late 1950s and has done multigenerational damage to Syracuse—dividing the city and creating a swath of underutilized, vacant land. The "Community Grid" theoretically means re-establishing urban scale streets in place of the Interstate, which would be rerouted to I-481. Assuming that plan goes forward, a key issue is the design and scale of the replacement thoroughfare. The Interstate section that would be bypassed is about 10 miles long—seven miles of which are north of I-690. That northern section, which services the airport, the huge Destiny



mall, and other destinations, would remain of similar design—a limited access highway.

The areas shown in the blue oval show where pedestrian-scale is crucial.

The three-mile section south of I-690, especially the 1.4 miles going past downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, is most critical to be scaled-down to a city street. Instead of taking less than 2 minutes (currently) to drive that short section, the driving time may be 5 minutes. That's not a big increase, but it is important for the trip to take a little longer for two reasons.



One, it will encourage I-81 through traffic to use the bypass route. Two, it will slow down traffic on Almond Avenue, the replacement thoroughfare. Slowing traffic, particularly trucks, will save lives and injuries, and also is key to economic development and rebuilding a socio-economically equitable community. South of downtown, traffic could also be slowed and new street connections made in the Southside neighborhoods, a generally disadvantaged area that has been impacted by the highway.

In order to accomplish the goal of reconnecting neighborhoods, a critical decision must be made. That choice is to *not* designate the replacement road as a “Business Loop, Qualifying Highway.” The designation was proposed by New York State DOT at a meeting in early April, 2019, and it sounds innocent enough. The key words, however, are “qualifying highway.” That designation would drive design choices that will turn the Community Grid into a surface highway through downtown, which is what the renderings from the draft Environmental Impact Statement show (see below). Among the requirements are 12-foot lanes—the same width as an Interstate—larger curb-return radii (which means larger intersections), and a wider right of way, that will make the thoroughfare the wrong scale for Syracuse. Conversely, if Almond Avenue is not a “Business Loop, Qualifying Highway,” it can be built at an appropriate scale as a major city street that is still walkable and people-friendly.



Renderings showing a suburban-style highway for Almond Avenue. Source: NYS DOT

“I believe that traffic calming—that is to say 30 mph design speed, 11-foot travel lanes, two lanes each direction with on-street parking, bike lanes, and trees on both

sides—and maximum street width of 110-115 feet, are critical for the at-grade portion of the Community Grid,” says Bob Haley, an architect who served on the American Institute of Architects CNY I-81 task force, a community stakeholder requested by DOT. That section “should be a vibrant major city street, encouraging mixed-use development for the city's future. This portion of the Community Grid should not be designated and designed as a ‘Qualifying Highway,’ with all the larger design requirements this would entail.”

If Almond Avenue and its intersections are designed to be walkable and human-scale, conditions for redevelopment will be optimized. An analysis by AIA CNY task force shows that the city would acquire approximately 18 acres for new development in the public interest. For comparison, Rochester, New York, has already generated \$229 million in development in just two years on only 6.5 acres acquired from filling in a portion of the Inner Loop highway—and that number will rise as more sites are built upon. Some of that development has produced affordable housing. Syracuse could do the same—but the land reclaimed and the benefits could be larger.

Moreover, that 18 acres is just the beginning—because that entire corridor may get new development that could benefit city neighborhoods and the region as a whole. “Some believe downtown will benefit and nobody else will,” Haley says. “That’s a myth. The whole region will benefit.” The surrounding towns will benefit if the city is stronger as a cultural, economic, and social center. Currently, the corridor is flanked by parking lots, vacant lots, and automobile-oriented development. Intersections along this corridor could be significant locations for mixed-use development.





Existing view of I-81 through Syracuse.

To guide that development, Haley believes that a new agency could be created along the lines of a development authority. The city, county, and state could be involved in such an organization, which would look at all of the parcels along the corridor. It may help to develop a plan with community guidance, looking at the needs of everyone living nearby, and giving assistance to immediate neighbors as required. Incentives could be provided to achieve the community vision—especially if the federal government participates.

Up to now, the NYS DOT has been the lead agency in the project, and the visions presented have more to do with traffic engineering than reconnecting neighborhoods and revitalizing the city. But Haley believes that building a true Community Grid is achievable if the city and county work together to promote that vision, eliciting help from the state and federal governments. But acting decisively is important, because the clock is ticking. Infrastructure decisions may soon be made that either enable, or impede, the city's progress for generations to come.



Robert Steuteville is editor of Public Square: A CNU Journal and senior communications adviser for the Congress for the New Urbanism.



New York State Police say a woman is dead after being hit by a vehicle while crossing the street in Deposit.

Authorities were called to the intersection of 2nd and Dean Street in the Village at around 6:13 a.m. April 13 with a report of a collision involving a motor vehicle and a pedestrian.

Troopers say 78-year-old Katherine Parsons of Deposit was crossing the street when she was hit by a Chevrolet Tahoe driven by 68-year-old Danny Kinzer of Deposit as he was turning onto 2nd Street from Dean Street.

The woman was taken to Wilson Memorial Regional Medical Center in Johnson City where she succumbed to her injuries.

The investigation is continuing.

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# State police investigate fatal car/pedestrian accident in Village of Deposit

Jeff Murray

April 14, 2021 / Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin

An elderly woman was killed Tuesday when she was struck by a vehicle while crossing the street.

The accident took place around 6:13 p.m. near the intersection of 2nd and Dean streets in the Village of Deposit along the Delaware-Broome County line, according to New York State Police at Deposit.

An investigation at the scene revealed that a 68-year-old man was operating a Chevrolet Tahoe on Dean Street when he turned onto 2nd Street and struck a 78-year-old woman who was crossing the street, state police said.

The victim was transported by Eastern Broome Emergency Services to U.H.S. Wilson Medical Center in Johnson City, where she later died from her injuries, according to troopers.

State police have not released the names of the victim or the driver at this time. The investigation into the accident is continuing.

This is a developing story. Check back for updates as more information becomes available.

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# Syracuse Couldn't Fine Its Way to Clear Sidewalks, So It's Trying Something New

CINNAMON JANZER APRIL 14, 2021



Sure, it looks cute and walkable now, but wait until it snows for [66 hours straight](#).  
(Photo by [Design for Health](#) / [CC BY 2.0](#))

As the snowiest city in the United States and even [one of the snowiest in the world](#), Syracuse, New York struggles with keeping the 124 inches of average snowfall it sees off its sidewalks in winter.

Traditionally, the city relied on property owners to clear the sidewalks on their properties as outlined in what Corey Driscoll Dunham, the city's chief operating officer, describes as a "vague ordinance." Because of the consistent lake-effect snow Syracuse gets, it's been hard for the city to determine and, therefore enforce, exactly when sidewalks are expected to be cleared. "Do we say sidewalks have to be clear six hours after it snows? What if it never stops snowing?" she says about the city that saw [66 continuous hours of snow](#) in 2018.

Driscoll Dunham spent several years working in code enforcement. She came out of it with an understanding of the time-intensive difficulties of enforcement — tracking violations, issuing and following up on tickets, and finally issuing fines. So when the city began discussing ramping up ticketing property owners who didn't shovel their sidewalks, Driscoll Dunham disagreed. "Our goal from a removal standpoint was to get the sidewalks cleared," she says. "What's the easiest way to guarantee it will be cleared? If we do it ourselves."

So, in 2018 the city took over snow clearing responsibilities for 20.1 miles of city streets. Since most of Syracuse's streets have sidewalks on each side, the city was agreeing to clear more than 40 miles of sidewalk.

The city worked with the [Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council](#), the group responsible for the metropolitan region's transportation planning, to decide which streets to start with. SMTC identified the best places to start based largely on which sidewalks saw both high levels of pedestrian traffic and those that often saw people diverting them to walk in the street instead — a common, albeit risky, workaround when sidewalks aren't cleared. "We used common sense and computer tools to filter things out," says James D'Agostino, director of SMTC.

When a limited program like this is introduced, it can be easy for residents to question why certain streets were selected over others. "A major reason why our program has been a success is that it's driven by data," Driscoll Dunham says.

Rather than investing in equipment themselves, the city contracted with a local company to carry out the work for \$170,000. The following year, the city scaled up the project to cover 38 street miles and increased the cost to \$250,000. Syracuse University also stepped up to clear some city streets on and adjacent to campus, adding to the program voluntarily. Other cities have taken notice: last month, Boston city councilors [heard from Driscoll Dunham while debating whether to apply the model there](#).

Driscoll Dunham created a contingency budget for keeping the program moving forward, but it was paused last year thanks to pandemic-related budget shortfalls. In the meantime, Driscoll Dunham has been coming up with other ideas for funding and expanding the program.

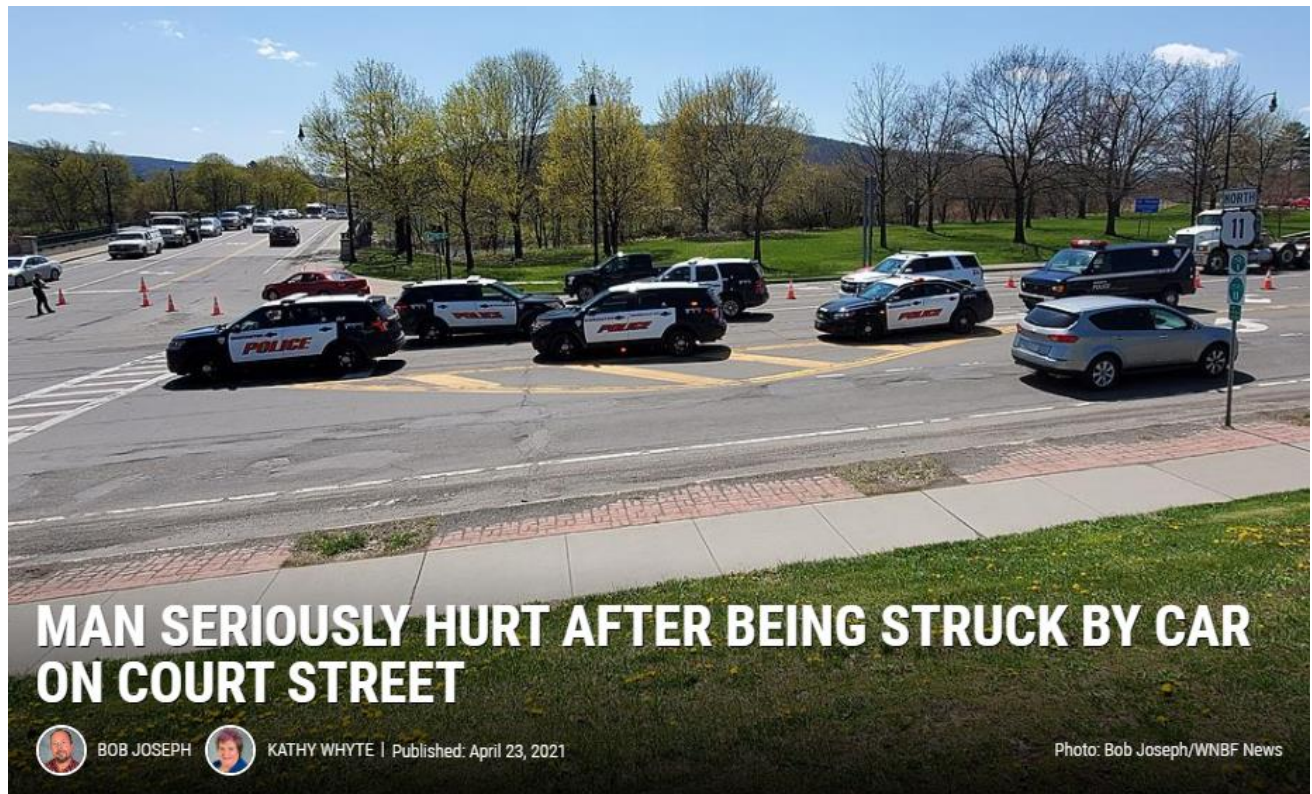
First there's the potential to use federal aid money, but the city is waiting on spending guidance first. Second, she's given the city council a proposal for a completely municipally owned sidewalk program that would take complete ownership of the sidewalks, from snow removal to repairs, funded by fees from property owners. She proposed starting at \$20 a year for residential properties and \$60 for nonresidential and scaling that up respectively to \$100 and \$300 annually across five years.



While no one likes an extra fee, Driscoll Dunham thinks many might actually prefer it. Not only are residents currently responsible for shoveling their sidewalks, they're also held responsible for repair bills, which can sometimes stretch into the five figures. Returning sidewalks to city control would help property owners avoid both these costs. "Sidewalks are a public good," she says. "It's not like you only walk on the sidewalk in front of your house."

*Cinnamon Janzer is a freelance journalist based in Minneapolis. Her work has appeared National Geographic, U.S. News & World Report, Rewire.news, and more. She holds an MA in Social Design, with a specialization in intervention design, from the Maryland Institute College of Art and a BA in Cultural Anthropology and Fine Art from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.*

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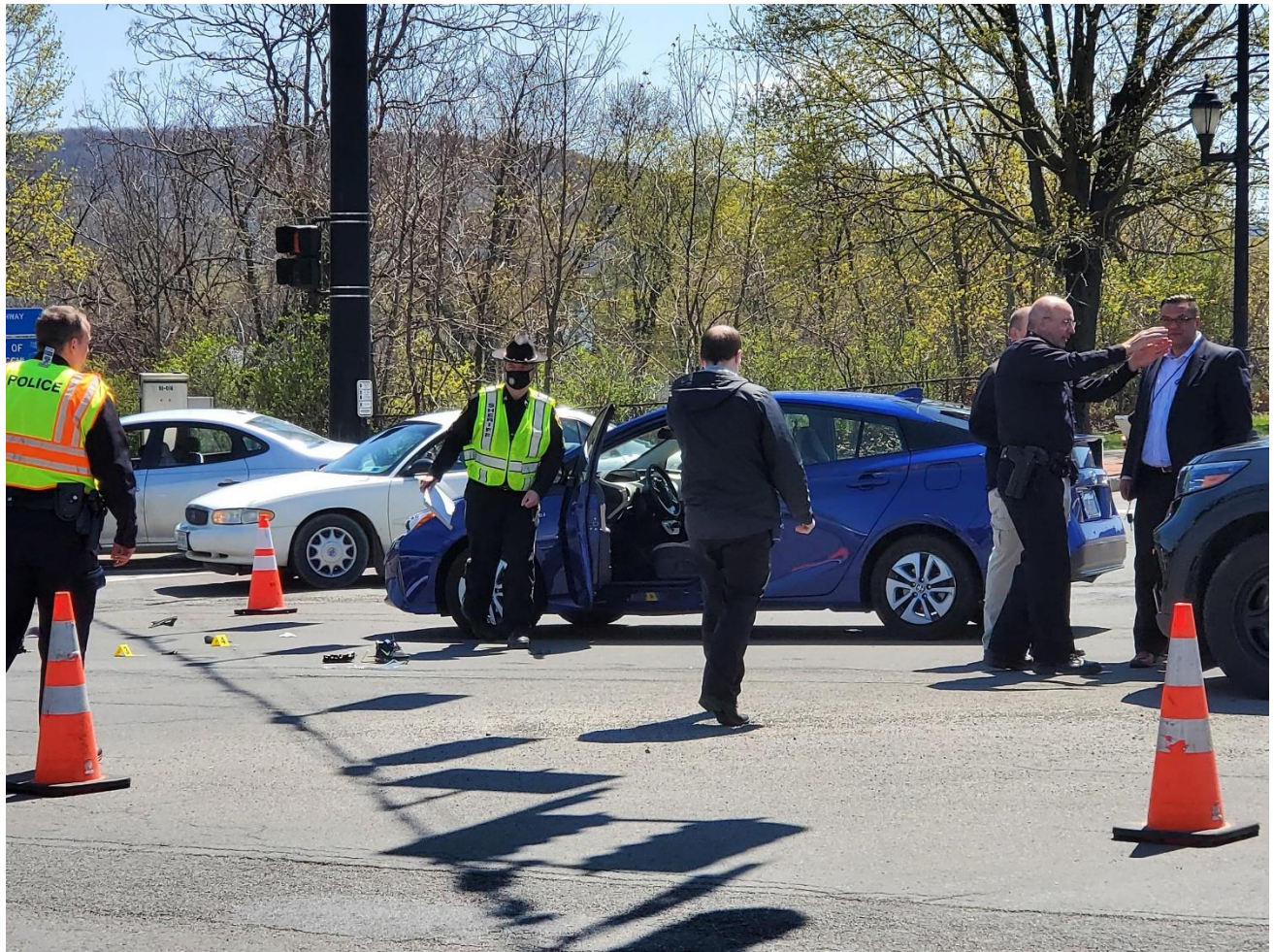


Binghamton police are investigating an incident in which a man was struck by a car on Court Street.

The crash was reported shortly after 11:30 a.m. Friday. It happened on Court Street, just north of the Tompkins Street bridge.

Several police cars remained at the scene nearly an hour later. Binghamton police officers and detectives interviewed witnesses.





A police crash investigation on Court Street in Binghamton on April 23, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Investigators placed yellow evidence markers on the street in front of a blue Toyota sedan that appeared to have been traveling east on Court Street. A sneaker and a backpack were on the pavement near the vehicle.

Detective Captain Cory Minor said the man who was injured was transported to Wilson Medical Center in Johnson City. The man's name and condition were not released.

**This story was updated with additional information provided by Binghamton police.**





A Binghamton police officer directs traffic at Court and Tompkins streets on April 23, 2021. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

## Look what's coming to the former Drover's Inn in Vestal!

The Trailside Inn

<https://trailsideinnny.com/>

Located just north of the Vestal Rail-Trail West Extension.

Gotta love the name!







A building that's been a fixture in the town of Vestal for more than 175 years is about to come alive with activity again.



Town of Union resident Jeannie Post has acquired the Drovers Inn property on Pumphouse Road, just west of Main Street.

Post said she's planning to open a boutique hotel called the Trailside Inn. She also intends to open a restaurant at the site, which is **located near the start of the western portion of Vestal's Rail Trail**.

Drovers Inn was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. (Photo: Bob Joseph/WNBF News)

Post became interested in the property a little over a year ago, just before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The sale was completed early this month.

The inn will feature five guest rooms. The restaurant will serve lunch and dinner. Post hopes to open the business around August 1.

The Drovers Inn was constructed around 1844. In recent years, it's been home to various restaurants and other businesses, including a photography studio.

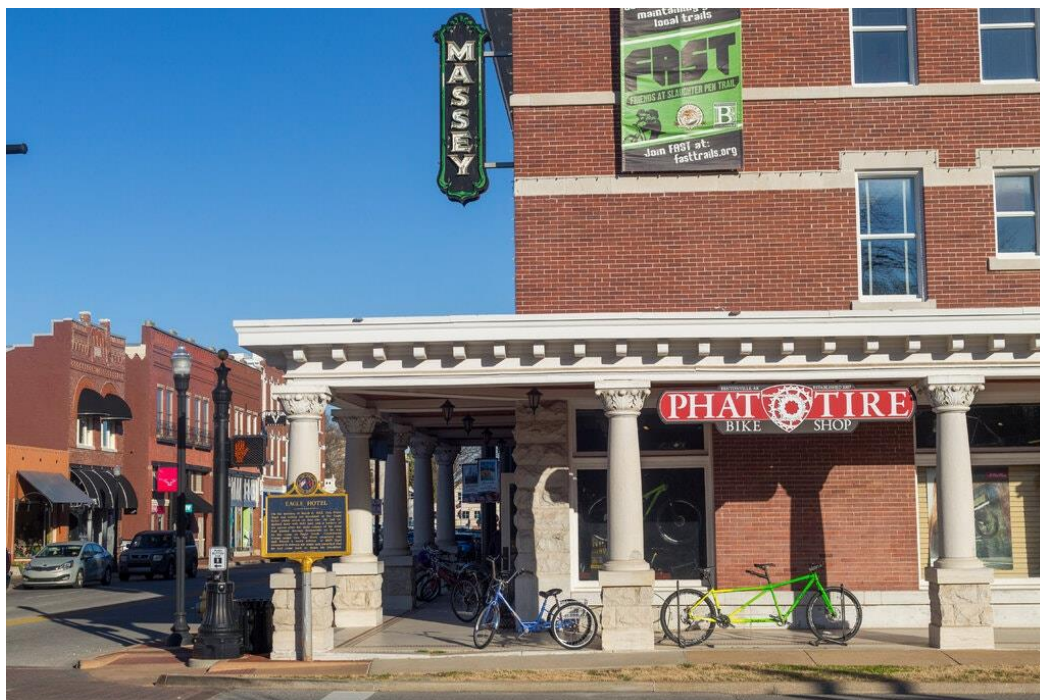
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## The New York Times

### Want to Move to Our Town? \$10,000 and a Free Bike.

Here's

With offers of cash, housing and a budding talent pool, smaller cities and states hope to get in on the ground floor of a new era for remote workers.



Bentonville, Ark., city of roughly 55,000 in Northwest Arkansas, is best known as the home of Walmart's global headquarters. Now it's expanding its reach under the banner of the Life Works Here initiative, which awards selected remote workers \$10,000 and a free bicycle for moving to the area.

Credit: Beth Hall for The New York Times

**By Alyson Krueger**

April 30, 2021, 5:00 a.m. ET

Jennifer Hill Booker has spent much of her professional life on the road. Ms. Booker, 45, a chef and entrepreneur, is the author of two cookbooks, and her travels on the lecture circuit have taken her around the country — but always back to Atlanta, where she lived with her two children. Then, last year, with her daughters off at college, she realized there was

nothing keeping her there. “I am an empty nester looking for that next stage in my life,” she said.

Last winter, as the pandemic kept most Americans confined to their homes and flattened local economies, she learned that **the Northwest Arkansas Council had launched a program offering select remote workers \$10,000 and a free bicycle (the region has 322 miles of biking trails) if they relocated there within six months.**

Ms. Booker had been to the area a few times and found the budding restaurant scene exciting, so she decided to give it a shot. “The \$10,000 would give me an opportunity to put down a down payment on a small little bachelorette pad,” she said. “I also like that the program introduces you to other transplants, plus people who are already residents of northwest Arkansas. They can tell me where to shop, where to eat, where to worship.”

Nearly 30,000 people applied for the [Life Works Here](#) initiative, said Nelson Peacock, president and chief executive of the Northwest Arkansas Council, with slots for only a few dozen in the first round of selections. Ms. Booker was one of the winners, and is preparing to move this summer to Springdale, a small city outside Fayetteville, home to the University of Arkansas and about 85,000 residents. She’ll have to stay for at least a year as part of the program, which is fine with her. “Seeing people who are so excited to welcome me into the community, it’s like, I want to go there,” she said.

The Fayetteville region — including Bentonville, best known as the home of Walmart’s global headquarters — is one of several smaller metro areas and states across the country, from Georgia to Hawaii, trying to lure high-net-worth workers who can increasingly do their jobs remotely. The idea is that they’ll shop in local stores and pay real estate taxes, but they won’t take jobs away from locals. For regional economic development organizations, it’s an effort to build communities with high skill sets to attract start-ups and larger companies in the future. For the migrating workers, it’s a chance to try out an up-and-coming place alongside other newcomers.

Mr. Peacock said the program has been overwhelmed with interest. “We had 29,000 people apply for our first round, from every state and also multiple countries around the world,” he said, including James Beard-nominated chefs and Emmy Award-winning artists. “We never expected this response. The problem was figuring out how to choose.”

The council, with philanthropic assistance from the Walton Family Foundation, currently has \$1 million set aside for the program. “We’re looking at awarding multiple dozens of people,” Mr. Peacock said. “We aren’t sure exactly how far the money will stretch.”





#### Image

Locals gather at Maté Factor, a coffee shop in Savannah, Ga. Last June, the Savannah Economic Development Authority announced that it would award \$2,000 to selected tech workers who could do their jobs from home and commit to living in the city for at least two years.

Credit...Adam Kuehl for The New York Times

Though that money is intended to spur the local economy, some

area residents argue that it's being spent in the wrong place, especially as Arkansas continues to live under a [public-health emergency order](#).

"I could probably get a lot of my life together with \$10,000," said Justin Ratliff, 31, a Fayetteville resident who has been a vocal opponent of the initiative. "When they announced it, it was the thing everybody was talking about. It made a stir."

As these initiatives have picked up steam around the country, so have their detractors, who push back against the idea of giving much-needed financial assistance to prosperous out-of-towners.

"The money can be rerouted to help people who are struggling," Mr. Ratliff said. "This program is spitting in the face of people who are already here and doing the best they can. They are graduating from university and getting degrees."

He said he understood that the goal was to attract prized talent to the region, but he rejected the notion that people should be paid to move there. "We have more and more people moving here without the incentive," he said. "The town has expanded so much in the past few years just from people moving here." (Indeed, the Northwest Arkansas Council estimates that 32 new people moved to the region every day in most of 2019 and into early 2020.)

Mr. Peacock acknowledged the backlash, and pointed to the program's long-term goals. "There were a few local organizations that felt we should be investing in some of the businesses that were being harmed during the pandemic," he said. "I think they made a fair point, and we have invested in a lot of our small businesses, but what we are trying to focus on here is: What does the future look like?"

He added, “We don’t need any individuals to move here. We need the people working in the right types of industries.”

In Georgia, the city of Savannah is aiming specifically for tech professionals. Last June, the Savannah Economic Development Authority announced that it would award \$2,000 to selected tech workers who committed to living in the city, Georgia’s third-largest, for at least two years. Applicants had to have at least three years of work experience, and move from a destination at least 60 miles from City Hall. “We don’t want to steal from our neighbors,” said Jen Bonnett, who oversees the program.

City officials consider the [Savannah Technology Workforce Incentive](#) a chance to import residents who might one day build Savannah into a tech hub. “When Covid hit, we thought this was a unique opportunity to get the right people with skills here, so when the world opens up again, we will have more skilled labor in our community,” Ms. Bonnett said. “If the next tech company wants to move here and hire 30 people, we want to have people already here who can do the job.”

Those people are typically young and middle-tier economically — an age group the city felt it was missing. “It’s \$2,000, which is not enough for recent graduates, but it’s also not for someone who wants to move a five-bedroom house from California to Savannah,” she said.

Thus far, she said, 26 recipients and their families have moved to Savannah under the program, including Bridget Overson, 41, who was living in Concord, N.H., and works in user engagement for Updater, a company that streamlines the moving process.

As the pandemic stretched on, Ms. Overson realized she was hungry for more space and warmer weather. “I had been to Savannah a few times on family vacations, and it’s a beautiful city,” she said. “The weather is great and the property values are amazing. It’s such an appealing environment: the parks, the trees, the nature, the history, the culture.”

She’s now living in a three-bedroom ranch with a big yard that costs less than her two-bedroom townhouse up north. The \$2,000 didn’t make her decision — she probably would have moved anyway — but it felt like a present. “It cost me around \$6,000 to move my things down here, so I was happy for the stipend for sure,” she said. “It just made it feel easier.”

Other programs have more short-term goals. At the end of November, a group of business and community leaders in Hawaii launched [Movers and Shakas](#), which is designed to encourage professionals to live in their state for at least 30 consecutive days. Recipients receive a free plane ticket as well as discounted long-term hotel rates. In exchange, they must commit to 15 hours of community service each month mentoring local businesses and nonprofits, and participate in group activities where they learn about Hawaii’s culture and ecosystem.

The initial goal was simple: to replenish revenue for a state that lost countless tourism dollars in 2020. Beyond that, Movers and Shakas hopes its participants will provide needed guidance and skills to local professionals who might not have regular access to tech conferences, networking events or graduate courses.

“We talk a lot about brain drain, about people who go to the mainland for college and careers,” said Nicole Lim, the director of the program, who used to work for eBay out of San Francisco. “We hope to promote brain gain, where our locals can build professional collaborations.”

Ms. Lim hopes some recipients will stay in Hawaii long-term and help diversify the economy. But those who leave can serve as ambassadors for the state. “We want to create a sense of shared stewardship for Hawaii’s culture,” she said.

As in Arkansas, the local community isn’t entirely on board with the initiative, especially during the pandemic. “Certainly we are getting backlash, and it’s something we take super seriously,” Ms. Lim said. “Here in Hawaii, it’s a small community, and we care about our elders.” She said the program is following the state’s travel guidelines, including a 10-day quarantine or a pre-travel testing regime.

Ms. Lim said nearly 90,000 applications poured in for the Movers and Shakas program, which currently has 50 slots.

One of them went to Krist Wong-Yamamoto, 51, an Oahu native who moved to the mainland to attend Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. She has lived in the Salt Lake City area ever since, and now works as a corporate communications manager for JetBlue. She had always wanted to return home one day — her parents still live there, and she missed the lifestyle. But she couldn’t bring herself to take the needed steps.

“I looked at this like a trial,” she said. “I needed to understand how this would work and get a feel for what the lifestyle will be if I move back.” She spent a month networking and socializing with fellow participants and business leaders, to see if it could be a stimulating professional home for her. After completing the program, she said she was still interested in moving back home if her company would allow it.

For some cities, appealing to outside talent with development programs is nothing new — but the volume of interested applicants is. [Tulsa Remote](#), a program that offers people \$10,000 to move to Tulsa, Okla., for a year, started in the fall of 2018, but has seen a spike in demand during the pandemic. Of the nearly 800 people who have moved there as part of the program, 380 arrived last year. “We had 50,000 applicants in 2020,” said Ben Stewart, the executive director of Tulsa Remote. “We are more selective than Harvard.”

The program has no age or industry specifications; the main requirement is articulating why you want to call Tulsa home. While participants are required to stay for a year, the vast majority have remained after that deadline, Mr. Stewart said, adding that the program organizes regular events, including drive-in movies, cooking classes, historic tours and volunteer opportunities.

Alana Mbanza, 35, applied for the program mostly because she was looking to move somewhere new with a built-in community. “I moved to Chicago 10 years ago from a small town, and I really struggled to break into social networks,” she said. “But literally, two months into moving to Tulsa, I had enough friends to host a Super Bowl party.” She moved into a cute brick house in Tulsa, and met some new friends on her first day in the city. “There was a street party, and I reached out to a few people on the Tulsa Remote Slack channel to see if anyone was going,” said Ms. Mbanza, a writer and educational leadership coach. “Those people are still my friends.”



Locals are, in turn, making friends with the transplants. “Everyone I have met has been really freaking cool,” said Darku Jarmola, 30, a DJ and program manager at a dance club in Tulsa. “One of them has even become one of my best friends.”

Still, he said he resented the notion that the city felt it had to import culture. “I have been throwing parties in Tulsa since 2008 and putting all my money into creating this culture of disco and house music,” he said. “I don’t understand this mentality that if you have a stamp of New York City or Los Angeles or a major city, your product is infinitely better than what we have here. It’s a little confusing.”

For the people organizing these programs, the bottom line is the investment in talent growth. Mr. Peacock, of the Northwest Arkansas Council, reiterated that the pandemic, for all its devastation, has created a moment worth seizing for local economies, namely expanding the work force with remote workers who won’t take jobs from locals.

“When the pandemic hit, we had to make sure we had visibility for individuals who were leaving the Bay Area or New York City or other metro areas, who were looking to reset their lifestyles,” he said. “We wanted to take advantage of those migration patterns.”

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## **Stomach-churning pedestrian bridge opens in Portugal**

World’s largest pedestrian suspension bridge is 1693 feet across

By Jesse O'Neill | [New York Post](#)

This bridge will take a toll on the faint of heart.

The world’s largest pedestrian suspension bridge — 516 Arouca — opened Thursday in Portugal.

The views of rock-strewn mountains covered in lush greenery are spectacular from the 1693 foot crossing, but the see-through metal grid pathway that wobbles with every step might give many walkers pause.

The bridge traverses the fast moving River Paiva in the Arouca Geopark, suspended 574 feet above the water.

"Oh...here we go!," Hugo Xavier, 42, said, as he gathered the courage to be one of the first to walk across 516 Arouca.



**People walk on the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge '516 Arouca', now open for local residents in Arouca, Portugal. (Reuters)**

"I was a little afraid, but it was so worth it," the Arouca resident said on the other side. "It was extraordinary, a unique experience, an adrenaline rush."

The \$2.8 million bridge took two years to build, and officials hope it will attract visitors to the economically depressed region.



**The bridge traverses the fast moving River Paiva in the Arouca Geopark, suspended 574 feet above the water. (iStock)**



"It is a breath of fresh air for our land because it will attract more investment, more people," said tour guide Emanuel.

The bridge will open to tourists on Monday.



**The 1693 foot bridge opened to residents on Thursday and will open to tourists on Monday. (iStock)**  
"There were many challenges that we had to overcome... but we did it," Arouca Mayor Margarida Belem said.

"There's no other bridge like this one in the world."

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