

Nepessing street reconstruction adds historical flavor to Lapeer

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Bird's eye view of the newly reconstructed street and downtown.

2005 Project of the Year Award

Category: Transportation \$2–\$10 million

Owner: City of Lapeer

Engineer: Rowe Incorporated

Contractor: Zito Construction

The \$2.2 million reconstruction and streetscaping of Nepessing Street is one of the Lapeer area's most visible projects to date, stretching from M-24 east to Saginaw Street. City and DDA officials first began discussing the project in the mid 1990s and worked together to bring about various improvements, using several funding sources.

- A newly-milled and resurfaced roadway;
- Conversion of a segment of Mason Street from one-way to two-way traffic;
- Various selective sidewalk improvements and parking lot repairs;
- New curb along portions of roadway;
- Resurfaced alley and connection of an existing parking area to the alley.

Streetscape improvements, implemented to enhance the roadway's appeal to vehicular and pedestrian traffic, involved the following.

- Replacement of portions of parallel parking with five banks of angled parking;
- Creation of gateway treatments using five raised planters (incorporating three salvaged/restored cupolas from the Oakland Center);
- Construction of new brick-paver crosswalks;
- Placement of new trees, tree grates, benches and trash receptacles;
- Removal of overgrown trees;

- Placement of new pedestrian-oriented decorative lighting along the length of the project;

- Addition of brick-paver band following curb; and

- Construction of new connector street, from parking lots north of retail stores to Nepessing Street.

As this project progressed through the planning and preliminary design phases, it became apparent that staging of the work was of critical concern. The City of Lapeer held input sessions with building owners and merchants to explain the project's goals and hear business owners' concerns. Input from these meetings dictated that the contractor could not disturb the front and rear of the businesses simultaneously, and that businesses were to remain fully operational and accessible during the final design phase. The team placed heavy emphasis on ways to accomplish the work and abide by the merchants' needs; completing the project in two phases caused the least disruption to downtown traffic.

Phase I

This phase included the following.

- Completion of all work in parking lots and alley to the north of downtown businesses;
- Creation of the new section of Cedar Street and festival areas between the al-

ley and Nepessing Street;

- Changing one block of Mason Street from one way to two way.

Phase I did not disrupt business fronts and only minimally impacted them during the bustling fall season.

Phase II

Phase II involved constructing major improvements along Nepessing Street.

- Watermain (2,000 linear feet);
- Brick pavers in crosswalk and in linear band behind curb;
- Parallel parking reconstructed to angled parking, adding 31 net spaces and a drop-off zone for Pix Theater;
- Sixty-six new ornamental lights (most located along Nepessing Street);
- 24 new benches, 19 trash receptacles;
- Five raised planters; and
- Street resurfacing (3,100 feet).

The project team worked out a phasing plan which minimized disruption and allowed for timely work completion.

Project Staging

Prior to beginning construction of Phase II, the project team discussed which work items should be constructed first, and ways to minimize disruptions. The team decided to start with watermain construction, and complete it from one end of the project to the other. The contractor proceeded with the other improvements, progressing from the projects' east to west end. Each downtown block was opened as work was completed, and when it was deemed safe to do so.

Project Team Meetings

The project team met biweekly to discuss project progress, determine the portion to begin next, review the schedule, and discuss any concerns. This allowed the team to work through issues that arose during construction and keep the project moving ahead and on schedule.

ROWE tracked all project quantities, negotiated changes, and processed biweekly payment applications and contract modi-

fications, using MDOT's "Field Manager" system.

The city's DPW assisted the contractor with scheduling water shut downs, operating existing watermain valves, and locating existing water system components.

New Storm Sewer Leads

One of the project's work items was to provide storm sewer leads to all buildings not already hooked up to storm sewer. Numerous roof drains were also disconnected from the sanitary sewer and tied into a storm sewer. In some cases, this required construction of new storm sewer to facilitate sanitary sewer disconnection. Shortly after completing this work, the city's wastewater treatment plant operator reported a noticeable decrease in the plant's wet-weather flows.

New Tree Plantings

Another goal was to introduce a different species of "street trees" into downtown. The design team determined early in the planning stages that a different species of tree would better serve downtown; this decision was reinforced by complaints from merchants about having to clean up fallen leaves from the honey locusts, as well as concerns about the way they impeded the public's view of storefronts. The contractor removed 34 trees and planted a variety of 38 new species, including ornamental pears, green spire lindens, maidenheads, and ivory silk lilacs.

Raised Planters

The project placed five raised planters containing a variety of shrubs, trees, and flowers along Nepessing Street. The planters serve as "gateway" features to downtown and effectively display annual flower accents, provide seating, and highlight entry signage and distinctive cupolas.

Salvaged Historic Cupolas

Historic cupolas salvaged from the Oakdale Center are used as signature elements in the design. The city purchased this landmark facility from the state and demol-



Historic cupola welcomes visitors to downtown.

ished most of its buildings, but salvaged and restored the cupolas. The cupolas bring a unique and locally significant theme to the entire project, one which most longtime residents recognize.

Public Input

This project was in the planning stages for several years while the city applied for an ISTE A grant, during which time the city and DDA initiated a public awareness campaign, involving public hearings and other public input sessions. After several submittals, the state's ISTE A program granted funding. As this project began to develop, public awareness of the project increased. The city and DDA capitalized on various venues to increase the public's awareness of the project, including: Lapeer Chamber of Commerce monthly meetings; DDA meetings; city commission meetings; the city's newsletter; special assessment public meetings and hearings; and various public input meetings.



The project created places for people to sit and enjoy the city space.