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### **Marion Street project earns awards**

The reconstruction of a block-long section of Marion Street in the heart of downtown Oak Park is doing more than attracting shoppers and turning heads of passers by who may be wondering how such a historic streetscape could have made it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The project also is earning accolades from professional organizations that recognize extraordinary efforts to improve neighborhoods and communities.

The state's leading association of planners, a national proponent of creating walkable communities and the brick industry all have recognized the Marion Street project as a standout among efforts to improve community life. The project also will be featured in an industry publication for landscape architects.

The [Illinois chapter of the American Planning Association](#) just announced that the Marion Street project was selected for an award in the *implementation of a plan* category of its annual competition. The award will be presented at the 2008 APA-IL State Conference scheduled for Oct. 29 - 31 in Champaign.

Within days of learning the Marion Street project had won a state planning award, word came that the project had earned an honorable mention award from the [Congress for the New Urbanism](#) (CNU), a national organization that promotes walkable, neighborhood-based development as an alternative to sprawl. CNU recognized the project not only for the street that was created, but for block and the buildings that now are framed by the new streetscape.

The [Brick Industry Association](#), which conducts a national competition to select and showcase the best examples of the use of brick in architecture, also made the Marion Street project a top pick for 2008. The award likely played a key role in plans for Marion Street to be featured in an upcoming issue of *Landscape Architecture & Specifier News*, a magazine published for landscape architects and related industries.

The last remnant of a pedestrian-only mall created in 1974, the project entailed redesigning and rebuilding block-long sections of Marion Street and connecting Westgate Street to showcase downtown Oak Park as a shopping, dining and gathering destination not only for the community, but the region as well.

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The streets are paved with bricks similar to their original early 20th century look, and are framed by bluestone sidewalks and granite curbs. Other features include a system to capture and filter storm water for irrigating the trees and plantings, and an under-surface heating system to melt snow and ice from the sidewalks. Even the lighting fixtures are modern reproductions of the fixtures that lined the street in the 1920s.

Representatives from the Village Board, downtown businesses, citizen commissions, Village staff and professional consultants worked together to create the plan and oversee its implementation. Marion Street officially opened to the public in November 2007, culminating a year of planning and actual construction.

For more information on the project, visit [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us) – just click on *Breaking News* and look for the [Marion Street](#) icon along the right margin.

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