



For Immediate Release: 12.07.09

From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: David Pope
Village President
708.358.5796

Marion Street receives landscaping architects' highest urban design award

Oak Park's [Marion Street](#) reconstruction project has received the highest award for urban design presented this year by [Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects](#).

This urban design landscape award is the latest in a list of accolades Marion Street has won since it opened, including awards from the state's leading association of planners and a national proponent of creating walkable communities.

The Illinois ASLA *honor award* was given in recognition of the quality and functionality of the Marion Street design and its environmental responsibility. The award was presented at the ASLA's annual awards ceremony held Friday at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

Completed in late 2007, 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.

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 those that lined the street in the 1920s.

Representatives from the Village Board, downtown businesses, citizen commissions, Village staff and landscape architects from the [Lakota Group](#) created the concept, which was the culmination of two years of planning and construction.

This portion of Marion Street included in the project was the last remnant of a pedestrian-only mall created in 1974. The mall portions that included Lake Street from Forest Avenue to Harlem Avenue, and a half block of Marion north of Lake, was reopened to traffic in 1988. Eliminating this last section of the mall, downtown business owners say, was critical to the economic future of the area.

While the design reopened the street to vehicular traffic, it also allowed for it to be closed for street festivals and community events, and includes traffic-calming features to ensure low traffic speeds and pedestrian safety.

-more-

Marion Street
2-2-2

Last year, the project was selected by the [Illinois chapter of the American Planning Association](#) for an award in the implementation of a plan category of its annual competition.

The Marion Street project also earned an 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 also for block and the buildings that now are framed by the streetscape.

In addition, 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.

For more information on the project visit www.oak-park.us/planning and click on the Marion Street icon.

###