

Innovative Broadway Street Reconstruction for the City of Akron

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The Broadway Street Reconstruction project was a vital improvement to the City of Akron's transformation of its Central Business District. Located just south of the City's core business area, the Broadway Street improvement will push new development to an area that was once covered with old buildings and rail tracks. Broadway Street, a northbound one-way arterial, carries more than 18,000 vehicles per day into the city. Today, after completion of the project, one can see that the lands once landlocked are now open and ready for the next influx of companies to fill the acres of the University Technology Park.

City of Akron planners were looking to the future. They wanted to redevelop the Opportunity Park Urban Renewal Area, just as it was done 40 years earlier. Through the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21), enacted in June 1998, the City was able to obtain a federal grant. The grant, which enabled the City to move forward with its plans, required that the funds be used only for "construction innovation."

The City hired McCoy Associates, Inc. to perform a study to research the various

alternatives for improvement and, ultimately, for the final design of the project. The preferred alternative included the demolition of the existing South Broadway Street Viaduct and the construction of a new Broadway Street at-grade. The at-grade approach allowed the City to provide direct access to adjacent properties that could be developed and sold.



The project was initiated on a fast-track program, and construction was completed as planned by December 2002. Due to project complexities, including new utility services, street lighting, retaining wall restoration, and unsuitable pavement soil conditions, considerable time was needed for coordination among all stakeholders.

Another important element of the project required that access to the new Opportunity Park parking deck had to be provided and

maintained during construction. Two access locations to the deck were available – one off the High Street bridge and the other from a ramp that runs below the old Broadway Street bridge. The High Street ramp was maintained during construction, and the Broadway Street ramp was kept open as long as possible until it had to be removed to complete construction.

Innovation and aesthetic features were extremely important for the project to be successful. As a result, the use of crushed concrete from the old Broadway Street Viaduct proved to be both economically prudent and very innovative. The crushed concrete was utilized as a base material for the new pavement. Aesthetically, the City not only wanted to provide such

things as the use of brick in the sidewalks but, more important, to provide a "gateway view" of Akron's skyline as a driver approached the city from the south. In addition, the historic Selle building, located in the southwest quadrant at the intersection of Broadway Street and Selle Street, also became visible as a landmark from the at-grade surface. This project was the culmination of the City of Akron's foresight, sound engineering, and cost-effective construction techniques. ■

