



Main Street Update: Light Rail Corridor Gets Paved in Brick

Houston, Texas... Thanks to an upgrade made by the City of Houston and the Houston Downtown Management District, 19 blocks of the new light-rail corridor in downtown Houston are now paved with genuine clay paving brick. The project was part of a major redevelopment effort in which 58% of all downtown's streets are being rebuilt. The work includes resurfacing streets, adding pavers, sidewalks, upgraded streetlights, head-in parking, landscaping, street furniture, water features, fountains, trees and new transit stops.

History

On Aug 7, 2002, Houston City Council approved an \$8.9 million pedestrian plaza in the 1000 block of Main called Main Street Square, which will be closed to traffic. The decision was based partly on a retail study by Urban Marketing Collaborative shows that by 2005, downtown Houston will have enough demand for over 775,000 square feet of retail space, and retail, eating and drinking sales should grow to \$856 million.

The Concept

The project is designed to bring retail development and pedestrian traffic on downtown Houston's Main Street back to the level it was decades ago. It was also created to enhance other projects that were already under way, including Metro's first light-rail line and the new Main Street Square, the pedestrian plaza through which the Metro line will pass under 61 arching water jets.



Clay Pavers Lay the Groundwork

Replacing the asphalt and concrete with the colorful clay pavers will give the street more character, says David Moss, an architect who worked on the design of the paving project for architectural firm Pierce Goodwin Alexander & Linville. “The design is meant to be a unifying element and work with a lot of the components of the rail work,” Moss says.

More than two million clay pavers will stretch from doorstep to doorstep across the street from the University of Houston’s downtown campus all the way to Clay Road, creating a carpet of burgundy, brown, black and white bricks.

The Right Choice

“It was an aesthetic decision for us,” said Guy Hagstette, Director of Planning & Development for the Houston Downtown Management District. “We had used concrete pavers before, and while they performed well, their looks just didn’t hold up over time. By choosing clay pavers, we knew we were getting rich colors that would last as long as the brick paver was around. I expect these streets to age well, as clay pavers typically do, and 100 years from now we’ll still have a downtown streetscape that will make our citizens proud.”

“While we knew we were making the right choice by choosing clay pavers,” remarked Hagstette, “we also had to convince the merchants along the street, some of whom has recently installed new sidewalks of other materials.” Only one owner objected to the paving choice, and, according to Hagstette, as soon as he saw the clay pavers on his neighbor’s sidewalk, “he was at my door asking when we could get his section done.”



To find out how clay pavers contributed to this successful downtown redevelopment in the nation's 4th largest city, contact:

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