

# **Rock Island, Illinois' Historic Brick Streets Plan**

- **Streets – maintenance**
- **Streets - funding**

## **Background**

Rock Island is located in the southwest corner of the Quad Cities area in western Illinois on the Mississippi River, 165 miles west of Chicago.

In 1988, Rock Island, IL created a 'Brick Streets Plan' for the purpose of preserving the best of Rock Island's 8 miles of remaining brick streets. "Brick streets are an asset to the community and provide a very real sense of "time and place" in a residential neighborhood. The Plan includes a preservation prioritization list of all brick streets, maps, methodology by which the plan was created, and background and information about the streets."<sup>1</sup>

## **Development History**

"First, existing brick streets in 1988 were identified. Then, these streets were analyzed in terms of condition of the paving and architectural and structural condition of the buildings abutting them. With assistance from the Public Works Department, utilities and street standards were also identified.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Rock Island Community & Economic Development Department Planning & Redevelopment Division. Brick Streets Plan. Rep. Rock Island: Rock Island Preservation Commission, 2005. Print.

After factoring in these street and building condition variables, the Preservation Commission recommended the streets be split into five categories...today, there are four brick street

categories, with separate preservation recommendations for each. These recommendations range from restoration to no preservation.

In late 1999, City Council requested the Preservation Commission look again at the Brick Streets Plan, specifically the repair and reconstruction provisions. The 1988 plan was largely silent on these provisions, with the exception of utility cuts, so Planning & Redevelopment Division staff canvassed 25 other communities for their practices on brick streets preservation, repair and reconstruction...while the prioritizations and basic preservation recommendations changed very little in 2000, a major maintenance program was implemented and policy changes were recommended for brick streets reconstruction."<sup>2</sup>

## **Financing**

"An equitable proportion of the city's street maintenance budget is reserved for brick streets. There are 8 miles of brick streets out of 170 miles of streets in the city, which is 4.7% of all streets and rounds up to 5%."

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

“With the 2000 version of the Brick Streets Plan, City Council approved a new maintenance budget to be specifically targeted for brick streets. Five percent of the annual budget for street maintenance will be set-aside to remove patches and potholes, level surfaces and generally do surface improvements that would improve the rideability and appearance of brick streets.”

### **Utilities Policies to Consider**

“The excavation of utility cuts is made by private contractors after receiving a city permit. However, patching the utility cut is accomplished by city contracted crews, with the person who caused the utility cut reimbursing the city for the cost of the resurfacing. The resurfacing material (concrete, asphalt or brick) and cost are determined by the City’s Engineering Division through referencing the Brick Streets Plan. Some utility companies (MidAmerican Energy and AT&T Cable) are granted variances from this practice in their franchise agreements. These companies with variances are still required to obtain permits, have work inspected and patch with type of material determined by the City Engineer.”<sup>3</sup>

### **General Maintenance Policies to Consider**

Monies from the bricks streets budget shall (annually) cover removal of patches and potholes, leveling of surfaces, and generally do surface improvements that improve the rideability and appearance of brick streets.

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<sup>3</sup> City of Rock Island Community & Economic Development Department Planning & Redevelopment Division. Brick Streets Plan. Rep. Rock Island: Rock Island Preservation Commission, 2005. Print.

### **Reconstruction Policies to Consider**

“Reconstruction policy for category 1 and category 2 streets is clear: If the surface is disturbed, it is to be relaid with brick...some portion of the cost is borne by adjacent property owners. For brick streets, City Council has authorized the creation of special service areas or districts in instances where reconstruction of a brick streets are either necessary or requested by adjoining property owners.

At the time adjoining residents or the city determine that a residential brick street is in need of total reconstruction, the residents will be informed of the special service area procedure. This procedure allows for a negotiated cost-sharing of the street reconstruction between the city and the adjacent property owners. This differs from the typical residential street assessment petition, which provides for an independent appraisal and property owner cost is based on the value of the improvement to the property.”<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Lessons for Minneapolis' Warehouse District

- Minneapolis was once paved entirely in wood, brick, and/or granite pavers; today less than 35 segments of these historic street materials are visible throughout the City. The vast majority of the city's original brick, wood, or granite-paved streets have been paved over with asphalt.

Roads with historic street materials should be evaluated and a Historic Street Materials plan should be created for the purpose of preserving the remaining clay, wood, and granite paver streets in Minneapolis.

- In a survey conducted in February 2000 of 25 other Illinois and Iowa communities, Rock Island's Planning & Redevelopment Division staff found that those handful of cities that were proactively repairing brick streets (Champaign, Davenport and Galesburg) had special set-asides in their street repair budgets.

- Utility work presents a challenge to preserving roadbeds with historic street materials, however there are no brick streets in Minneapolis that are free of utilities. Rock Island addressed the problem as follows: "The City Engineer mandated that all surfaces disturbed by utility cuts for these streets be replaced in brick. This repair policy has been limited to utility cuts, which excavate the surface of the street. Asphalt or concrete fill are permitted when dips or holes occur through underground, natural or wearing circumstances. The

City has an obligation to eradicate unsafe situations. If existing utility patches are re-excavated on category one and category two streets, they must be replaced with brick if some portion of the newest excavation touches brick."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> City of Rock Island Community & Economic Development Department Planning & Redevelopment Division. Brick Streets Plan. Rep. Rock Island: Rock Island Preservation Commission, 2005. Print.