

# Larchmere Boulevard in Cleveland Area Redecorating

By Eva D. Vargas, AICP

Orange barrels and hardhats are common on Lachmere Boulevard this summer as construction crews turn paper plans into reality. The section from MLK Boulevard (in the City of Cleveland) to Kemper Road/North Moreland Boulevard (in the City of Shaker Heights) ***“is home to a fascinating mix of antique stores, bookstores, stores selling handcrafted items, and eclectic eateries”***. It also has a strong record of community involvement through organizations such as the ***Shaker Square Area Development Association (SHAD)***, ***Larchmere Merchants Association (LMA)***, ***Buckeye Shaker Square Development Corporation*** (formerly Buckeye CDC) and ***Shaker Square Alliance***.

The streetscape and road rehabilitation project was made possible after the City of Cleveland sought and received funds through the Transportation Enhancement (TE) and Surface Transportation Program (STP) managed by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). The project limits include a section within the City of Shaker Heights, so both cities provided matching funds and participated in the process.



From the beginning, the active community involvement shaped the project. Through a series of meetings and workshops, the scope of work evolved to better reflect the vision held for the neighborhood. Emphasis was placed on providing “jewelry” for the street rather than just new asphalt and concrete, and a continuous dialogue was established among the community, city representatives, ODOT and the design team to establish what was eligible for funding, and how much. The final decision included the following project elements:

- Edge treatment and landscaping including new curbing, pervious pavers in a distinctive running bond pattern and tree pits with stabilized aggregate. Most of the original trees were preserved.

- Colored concrete crosswalks with a custom design, used at nine locations. The crosswalk colors, texture and repetition remind drivers that they are traveling in a pedestrian centric zone.

- “Classic chair back” bike racks designed by local artist **Tom Hubbard**, inspired

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by the area's antique furniture stores.

- Special directional and parking signs designed by Larchmere firm Epstein Design Partners, following the look of the initial gateway signs they had designed previously in conjunction with the Larchmere Merchants Association.

- Removal of rush-hour parking restrictions to promote parallel parking and lower speeds of through commuter traffic. In addition, the City of Cleveland removed all parking meters.

- Shared lane markings (“sharrows”) in both directions to further enhance multi-modal transportation options for the area, which is located between the recently completed Lake-to Lakes trail and the rapid transit station at Shaker Square.

- Installation of Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFBs) at select crosswalk locations. These are user-actuated amber LEDs with an irregular flash pattern similar to emergency flashers on police vehicles.

Though pedestrian lighting was high on the community's wish list, there was no funding mechanism for installation under the current project. However, provisions were made for future pedestrian lighting at gateway locations, and all the existing electrical outlets used for Christmas tree lighting will be preserved.

The design team consisted of CHA Consulting, Behnke Landscape Architecture, Michael Benza & Associates, Suhail & Suhail and Aerocon. They benefited from the support of various Larchmere volunteers, the cooperation and collaboration of the cities of Cleveland and Shaker Heights, and the expert guidance of LAND studio during the Call for Artists process. ■

*Eva D. Vargas, AICP, is a Transportation Manager at CHA. She can be reached at [evargas@chacompanies.com](mailto:evargas@chacompanies.com).*

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