

APPLICATION



City Name City of Oxford

Population Under 10,000 Over 10,000

Category Public Safety Planning & Economic Development
 City Spirit Public Works

Title of Entry East Jackson Avenue Streetscape

Description of Project _____
The East Jackson Avenue Streetscape improvement project expanded the sidewalks to
_____ to make outdoor dining a permanent amenity for downtown restaurants which replaced
_____ temporary outdoor dining that came out of necessity from COVID-19.

Project Summary (use additional pages if necessary) _____
See attached summary.

Signature of Chief Elected or Appointed Official *Robyn Tannehill*

Please provide the following information in case of questions about the application.

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The East Jackson Avenue Streetscape project originated as a simple sidewalk widening project at the suggestion of the former police chief several years ago to increase safety for the large number of pedestrians who use the space (residents, visitors, students, etc.) at the suggestion of the former police chief several years ago. The Mayor and Aldermen appropriated funds for that project in 2019. The design planning to widen the sidewalk was underway to increase the width of the sidewalk and change the angled on-street parking to parallel space. In March 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, all capital outlay projects being paused due to the uncertainty of the time.

In an effort to support local businesses during the pandemic, many temporary measures like curbside pick-up, and outdoor dining areas were established to help with the impacts caused by COVID. The outdoor dining areas proved to be very popular with patrons and the businesses alike. Because the City hit the pause button on all capital improvement projects, it provided the elected officials and staff with the opportunity to observe how people and businesses used these spaces. Recognizing the success and the demand for these shared spaces, the Mayor and Board tasked staff with evaluating the possibilities for making these shared spaces a permanent fixture.

Working in a very short six-week window, staff contracted with a local engineering and landscape architecture firm to develop plans for the streetscape. The project went out for bid in late Spring and construction began on May 17th with a deadline of August 17th. Because Oxford is a college town, the goal for many capital improvement projects is to begin after graduation in May with a completion date before the start of school in mid-August. Construction of this project was completed nearly two weeks ahead of the August 17th deadline on August 2, 2021.

Ultimately the project widened the sidewalk to provide 18'-20' on the south side of the street and 8'-10' on the north side of the street. Brick pavers were installed to define potential shared space areas, primarily for outdoor dining. Large trees and landscaping were installed in several planters and street trees line East Jackson Avenue. Lighting was added to both sides of the street to improve safety conditions for pedestrians.

Another innovative element of this project was to legally facilitate a private entity to conduct business on public property. The Mayor and Aldermen voted to surplus designated areas defined by the brick pavers. In working with the City Attorney, staff developed a mechanism to license a space to a business annually. In addition to increased food and beverage sales taxes, the licensing of these areas will generate revenue that will off-set the overall cost of the project.

The infrastructure along East Jackson Avenue was aged, and provided challenges for mobility and safety for pedestrians and motorists. This project was able to redesign and updating all of the utility infrastructure along the corridor. Traditional concrete sidewalks were poured, but the shared space areas in front of the many businesses along this corridor were treated with a quality brick paver. While the street was paved with asphalt, the crossings were stamped,

painted and sealed to provide a brick paver appearance. Lastly, staff developed a Shared Space Permit & Design Guidelines to establish minimum standards that maintain the attractiveness of the historic Courthouse Square that people have grown to love.

The City needed property and business owner involvement at the project's conception, primarily because the success of shared spaces would depend on their use by the businesses. The Mayor and City Staff invited all of the property and business owners in the Courthouse Square District to attend meetings introduce the initial vision to them, to seek their input on the vision, to address any concerns and to better understand their needs for these spaces. A variety of one-on-one meetings were also held to provide people with a more discreet forum to express their support or concerns about the project. Not all of the businesses along this corridor are restaurants, and the feedback expressed by the mercantile businesses helped refine the project scope. The Mayor and Aldermen held several public work-sessions to discuss the scope of the project in public and providing a forum for stakeholders to provide comments. During the construction phase of the project, City Staff provided weekly updates to all business owners in the area. This helped keep everyone informed of the status of the project, made people aware of work activity scheduled each week, and provided a single source of information for all interested parties.

Engaging the stakeholders early on in this process helped build momentum for the project. Because businesses were already engaged in outdoor dining activities for their restaurants, they knew the benefits to their revenues. The challenge was how the construction was going to impact their businesses during the summer months due to the entire street being closed to through traffic. Keeping open lines of communication was critical to maintain the support of the stakeholders. Visit Oxford, the city's tourism office, promoted the businesses along East Jackson during construction to make citizens and visitors aware that pedestrian traffic was allowed while the street was closed to vehicular traffic. The city offered a monetary incentive to the contractor for each day the project was completed ahead of schedule; it was finished 14 days ahead of schedule. Ultimately, this project began as a way to widen the sidewalk along East Jackson Avenue to create a safer built environment for pedestrians and motorists. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project pivoted and became a better end result for pedestrians, motorists, businesses, patrons, and the community as a whole.

In an effort to commemorate the newly developed streetscape, Visit Oxford planned a day of family-friendly festivities throughout the day before ending with live music that night entitled "Eat in the Street." The day started with morning yoga, followed by live caricature drawings, interactive games and meet-and-greets with Ole Miss athletic coaches. Live music started at 5pm with local musicians before headliner Drew Holcomb & the Neighbors took the stage. Thousands of people came to the event throughout the day to enjoy the beautiful new streetscape.

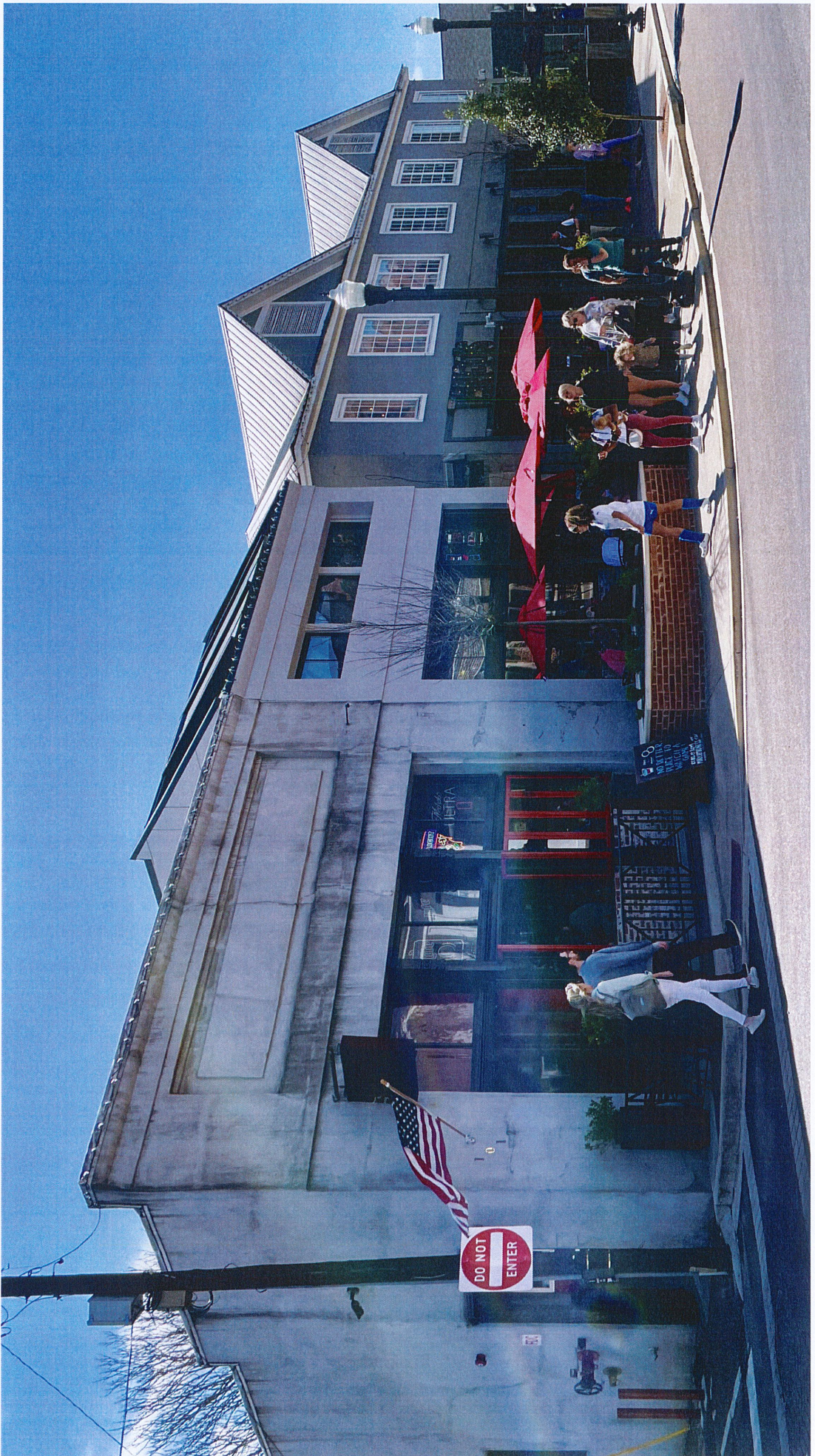


























EAT IN THE SKILLET
A CELEBRATION OF THE AREA'S
BEST LOCAL PRODUCE AND TALENTED CHEFS

EAT IN THE SKILLET
DREW HOLCOMB & THE NEIGHBORS
ELIZABETH KING
JIMBO MATHIS
THE SOULTOVES

PAYSON

