

The Complete Street for Hoboken

Revitalizing the city's Washington Street

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Among the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a renewed focus and appreciation for our outdoor public spaces. Washington Street, our main commercial corridor here in Hoboken, has been a symbol of our recovery from the pandemic, supporting activities ranging from outdoor dining to open streets. Our new look on Washington Street is in large part thanks to an extensive “complete street” redesign, which has revitalized our most popular street.



New environmentally friendly rain gardens beautify the streetscape while diverting excess stormwater from the sewer system. (Photo courtesy of T&M Associates)

This concept incorporated robust community input to enhance and improve safety, comfort, and enjoyment for all Washington Street users. The redesign resulted in not only one of the most “Complete Streets” in New Jersey, but perhaps the entire country. It has been rewarding to watch Washington Street become safer, greener, and more accessible than ever.

Restoring a fading “great street”

Washington Street has a long and storied history within the city of Hoboken. It was named by American Planning Association as one of the nation’s “10 Great Streets.” Washington Street grew up with Hoboken, becoming busier with each passing decade from the days of the first automated traffic light through the great industrial boom brought on by World War II. Recent years have brought new families and New York City commuters to Hoboken, now among the country’s most densely populated cities.

By 2015, it became obvious that Washington Street needed a redesign. Traffic signals were outdated, resulting in increased collisions and dangerous conditions for pedestrians. The roadway had no accommodations for bicycles and was frequently overwhelmed by double parking. Superstorm Sandy and other major rainstorms made it clear that the aging sewer system was

overtaxed. The water infrastructure was a century old, and critical facilities lacked emergency backup power.

Hoboken officials contracted with T&M Associates to redesign the thoroughfare as part of the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s “Complete Streets” program. The goal was to modernize Washington Street and make it safer and more accessible for all users—not only the street’s 9,000 daily drivers, but also its 14,000 bus riders and 18,000 pedestrians.

The project’s transportation engineer and construction manager oversaw a comprehensive rehabilitation that involved an in-depth traffic assessment. The redesign also relied heavily on input from the general public. Numerous stakeholder interviews, surveys, public meetings, and workshops were conducted to help finalize the conceptual design. This ensured the redesign resulted in a safer, more accessible thoroughfare for all users.

From “Great Street” to “Complete Street”

The redesign went well beyond traffic improvements. It oversaw the installation of conduit for one of New Jersey’s first municipal electrical microgrids. The microgrid will supply backup power to up to 10 critical community facilities in the event of a main power grid failure. The facilities covered include first responder facilities, wet weather pumping stations,

and City Hall, which houses the City’s emergency operations center.

Approximately 9,000 linear feet of water main was replaced, and the aging water distribution system was upgraded to include new lateral service connections for all residences and businesses along the street. We built 15 rain garden curb extensions to not only help with pedestrian safety, but also to capture stormwater runoff and reduce localized flooding. This green enhancement allows excess stormwater to beautify the street-scape rather than burden the sewers.

The result has been a new “Complete Street” that our city and residents can be proud of for years to come. 

Ravi Bhalla has served as Mayor of the City of Hoboken since 2017. Ryan Sharp is Hoboken’s Director of Transportation and Parking. Don DiZuzio is Senior VP and Transportation Practice Leader for T&M Associates, a leading national consulting, environmental, engineering, technical services, and construction management company.

Making a Complete Street

More than 35% of households in Hoboken do not own a private vehicle. The Washington Street redesign made the corridor safer for users of all abilities and modes of transportation, including those who don’t use private vehicles. The redesign also enhanced Washington Street’s role as a regional center of employment and commerce, increasing access for all users to jobs, economic opportunities, and a variety of public transportation options.

To accomplish this, we built high-visibility and ADA-compliant crosswalks and traffic signals that were safe for all pedestrians, including the visually and physically impaired. We also added leading pedestrian intervals, giving people in crosswalks a head start before parallel traffic can make turns. To help facilitate Hoboken’s bike-sharing program, we installed dedicated, high-visibility bike lanes. Back-in parallel parking spaces were added for improved pedestrian, bicycle, and driver safety.

Improvements to the site to optimize traffic signal locations included a roadway rehabilitation and the installation of 14 state-of-the-art traffic signals. We added dedicated loading zones and color-coded bus stops to improve curbside management.

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