

A PARKING LOT THAT EASES STRAIN ON PUBLIC SERVICES



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Workers maneuver extra pavers around the new 300,000-square-foot, semi-permeable paving parking lot at Westlake Shopping Center in Peoria.

PAVING THE WAY

Fresh Market's parking lot at Westlake will use environmentally friendly, permeable pavers

PEORIA

Environmentalists are praising the new parking lot at Fresh Market in Westlake Shopping Center as an environmentally responsible example of private investment with great public benefit.

Installation of the lot is expected to be complete days before Fresh Market opens Aug. 25.

An existing 300,000-square-foot asphalt lot is being replaced with semi-permeable pavers. Conventional asphalt replacement would have cost \$1.3 million compared with \$2.5 million for the pavers, but Westlake developer Les Cohen said that, with a life expectancy of 30 years, the new pavers will save money in the long run.

He estimates the break-even point at 15 years when the additional cost will start paying for itself.

However, environmentalists say the public benefit is immediate.

As Peoria grapples with an \$85 million upgrade to its storm water sewers, permeable and semi-permeable pavers are designed to deal with water where it hits the ground rather than allowing it to run off into the sewer system.

"There is a huge public benefit. It's so much

cheaper to handle water at the source," said Mike Friberg, planner with the Peoria Park District. "I'm really excited to see this technology being used around here. It took longer than I had hoped, but I'm excited it's here. This is a great thing."

Friberg, who designed and installed a small demonstration permeable parking lot at Robinson Park in 2007, said he hopes the city is able to

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modify regulations in the future to facilitate more use of this technology. "When private developers use this technology, there is less stress on the system and it's better for all of us. This is the responsible thing for developers to do," he said.

Joyce Blumenshine, member of the Heart of Illinois Group Sierra Club, said Peoria's proximity to the river and the fragile river bluffs make it even more urgent to embrace this technology.

Overseeing installation of the Westlake project is John Lockett, special projects manager with CR Schmidt company of Warrenville. He said Chicago Mayor Richard Daley is a driving

force behind permeable paving installations and Chicago now has outstripped Portland, Ore., as a national leader in permeable paving.

Cohen made the decision to install a semi-permeable lot after doing extensive research and finding a local bank, Morton Community Bank, to finance the project.

His conclusions are supported by the work of scientists and designers at Morton Arboretum in Lisle who pioneered research into permeable paving.

Kris Bachtell, vice president of collections and grounds at the arboretum, said that, since installation in 2004, the parking lot at the arboretum has not buckled or cracked. It can be plowed or swept with no problems. It has never been clogged with litter or chewing gum, which would require vacuum cleaning. Only a small portion of the lot near the kitchen grease drain required vacuuming.

"It cost more than a regular lot but with a 50-year life cycle and no annual maintenance, it's significantly less cost. We totally recommend it," he said.

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Brachtel based his longer life cycle in part on the 3-foot gravel base for the pavers at the arboretum, compared with a base of about 1½ feet at Westlake. Large tour buses don't cause any rutting or shifting in the arboretum parking lot.

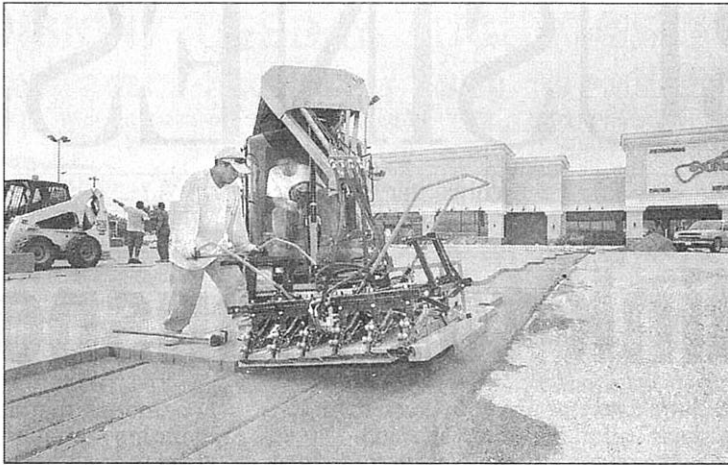
Some permeable parking lots have been constructed at airports to accommodate large jumbo jets.

Cost benefit analysis turns positive sooner when municipalities give developers credit for not requiring water retention systems, Bachtell said, noting that European countries typically charge developers for water that runs off their site.

Advances in permeable installations show the technology pays for itself in time even without adding the "soft cost" of environmental damage done by impermeable paving, Bachtell said.

At more than 300,000 square feet, the lot at Fresh Market in Westlake will be the largest parking lot of its kind in the state, edging out a 285,000-square-foot paver project at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago.

Cohen said regular maintenance on an asphalt lot involves the cost of seal coating every three years, which means additional toxins. Seal coating the Westlake lot in 2007 cost



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DAVID ZALAZNIK/JOURNAL STAR

Jose Hernandez positions a load of 56 pavers into place with a machine driven by Jose Alfaro during large-scale installation of a semi-permeable parking lot at Westlake Shopping Center. The project is the largest permeable parking lot in the state, surpassing in size the U.S. Cellular Field permeable paving project in Chicago.

\$42,000 and increased to \$89,000 in 2009. Besides eliminating this toxic maintenance schedule, the pavers require less salting in winter because water does not pool and freeze on the surface, he said.

He expects the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will soon require all new development to include some form of green technology such as permeable paving or green roofs.

Schmidt said his company will be installing permeable pavers to replace the sidewalks

at Oakbrook Center. Shopping centers create more paved parking areas than any other industry in the country, he said.

Whole Foods is installing permeable paver lots in its new locations in the Chicago area.

Farnsworth Group designed bioswales using deep-rooted plants for the perimeter of the Westlake parking lot. The design calls for no sod, which acts like concrete in situations involving water runoff.

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