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## Residents revel in downtown revival

By Kathleen Foody • Wausau Daily Herald • June 19, 2010

Jillian Kurtzhals of Wausau, her two children and the family dog spent their Friday morning strolling around downtown Wausau for the first time in weeks, enjoying the revitalized central business district.

Coming downtown on foot wasn't an option during the past several weeks as Third Street reconstruction made it difficult for Kurtzhals to maneuver a stroller as the dog tugged on its leash and the kids wandered. On Friday, however, she was eager to get back downtown for some relaxation in the City Square.

"I'm glad the construction went fast and it looks great now," she said.

City Public Works Director Brad Marquardt said contractors still are putting the finishing touches on Third Street, including new paint on parking stalls in nearby lots, but all work should be completed by next week "if the weather cooperates."

The construction project, completed largely on time and possibly under budget, was labeled a success by nearly everyone involved or affected. Even the business owners who saw the construction through their storefront windows each day praised the city and contractor for keeping them informed during the process.

The final cost won't be available until the city receives all the contractors' expenses and adds its own purchases. About \$1.2 million was budgeted for the entire project, but Marquardt said he expects the bill will be lower.

Day-care chaperones ushered a group of toddlers and restaurant patrons sipped iced coffee at sidewalk tables Friday morning, nearly all reminders of construction gone.

Third Street corners now feature large cement planters and new red brick to replace the old wooden planters and brickwork that sometimes became slippery during rain or snow, Marquardt

said. The materials were matched with those used between Washington and Jefferson streets in a prior renovation.

Kurtzhals said the sidewalks on Third Street feel wider than before, giving the entire block a cleaner look. She also looks forward to seeing trees and flowers in planters grow taller and bloom as the summer goes on.

"It's great to be able to come down here as a family," she said.

The renovations to the street, curbs and sidewalks on Third Street between Grant and Jefferson streets began in April. With a tight timeline, Pember Companies of Menomonie, the contractor heading the job, had to keep every phase of the project on schedule for a June 11 deadline.

"The businesses' success factored into our timetable quite heavily," Marquardt said. "We did each block as a phase and the contractor had six weeks on each block to get it open to traffic and pedestrians."

Jane Janke Johnson, co-owner of Janke Book Store, said the city and construction workers kept business owners updated weekly and made sure customers could access the shops and restaurants.

"I even saw workers helping older ladies cross the street a few times," she said.

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Kevin Korpela, co-owner of Downtown Grocery, said the workers often paused in their work to allow people to enter stores or pass by the construction zone.

"For the past seven weeks, we've just had to be careful where we walked and listen for beeps," Korpela said.

**Evolutions In Design** co-owner Lisa Macco said customers still found their way to the store during construction, sometimes using the back door that leads directly into the florist's workspace.

"But I'm still glad the work is done and the pace was really good," she said.



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