



# *Hometown Streets*

Re-imagining Safe Streets -  
Transforming an Urban Center





ABOVE: Fifth Avenue (1910)  
BELOW: Forbes Avenue (1937)





# Oakland

wasn't always a bustling urban center.

The name "Oakland" first appeared, in 1839, in a local paper called *Harris' Intelligencer*. It got its name from a stand of oak trees found on the farm of William Eichenbaum.

The trees are gone (some say it was ore dust that did them in) but the name stuck. And Oakland grew.

In 1904, Arthur A. Hamerschlag, Director of Carnegie Technical School, proclaimed that Oakland was **"bound to become the institutional center of Pittsburg\*."** Business leaders and property owners in Oakland agreed that Oakland's future would be filled with great prosperity.

They were right. Just look at Oakland today.

\*That's not a misspelling. Back in 1890, to try and make Pittsburgh conform to other burgs throughout the U.S., the United States Board on Geographic Names declared our city would be known as "Pittsburg." It took a public campaign in 1911 and angry local citizens to put the "h" back and restore the original spelling.

ABOVE: Oakland, September 2009

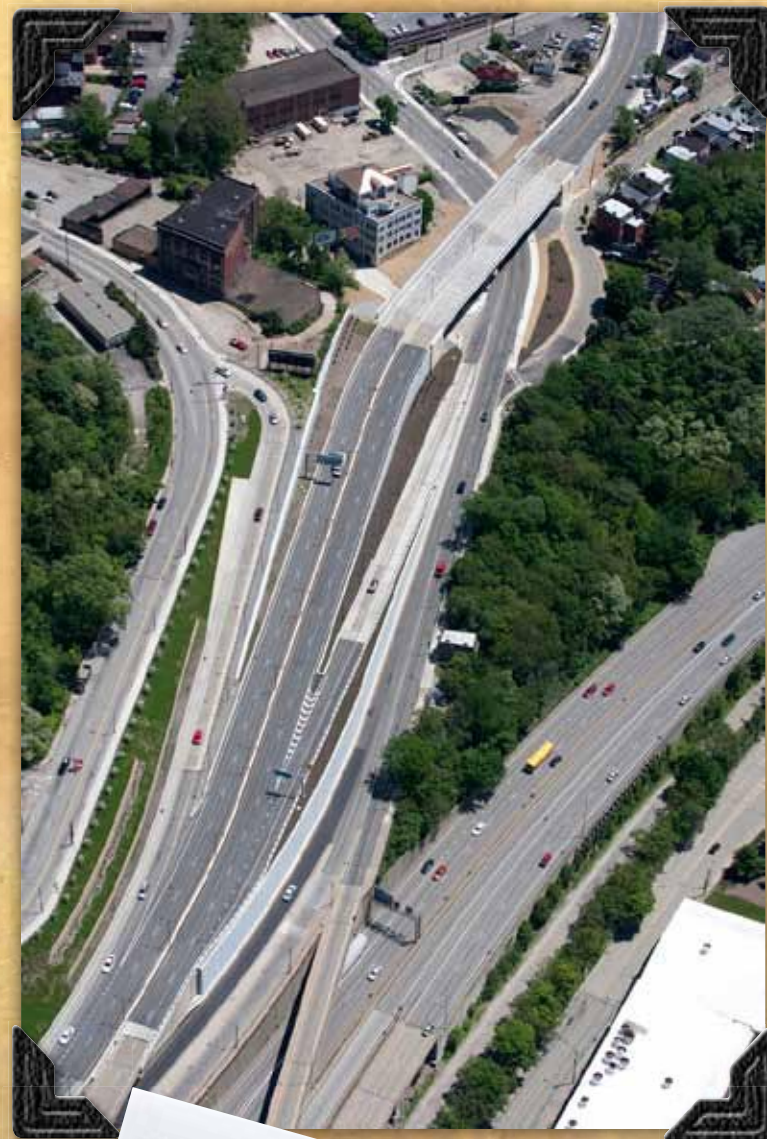


Walking around Oakland now it's hard to imagine a rural setting, with 100,000 pedestrians and 75,000 vehicles intersecting Oakland daily. Many of those vehicles come in and out of Oakland via the Boulevard of the Allies, Fifth Avenue, and Forbes Avenue. .

Oakland is a regional hub providing economic growth, capital and jobs. Over the last 25 years, Oakland's educational and medical institutions have become an international draw bringing students, patients, and visitors from all parts of the world.

### **Fifth Avenue – Institutional Corridor**

It just takes a quick walk down Fifth Avenue to understand why it would be called the Institutional Corridor: the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Carlow College, Carnegie Mellon University, Falk Clinic, the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, just to name a few of the world-renowned institutions that line this famous street.





## Forbes Avenue – Business Corridor

The O (the Original Hot Dog Shop), Pamela's Diner and Primanti Brothers "almost famous" Restaurant are just a few of the hundreds of businesses that make up the business corridor along Forbes Avenue. Book shops, pharmacies, coffee shops and businesses of all kinds serve the local community and draw people into Oakland. And every school child recognizes the dinosaur on the corner of Fifth and Bellefield and its invitation to stop in at the Carnegie Museum.

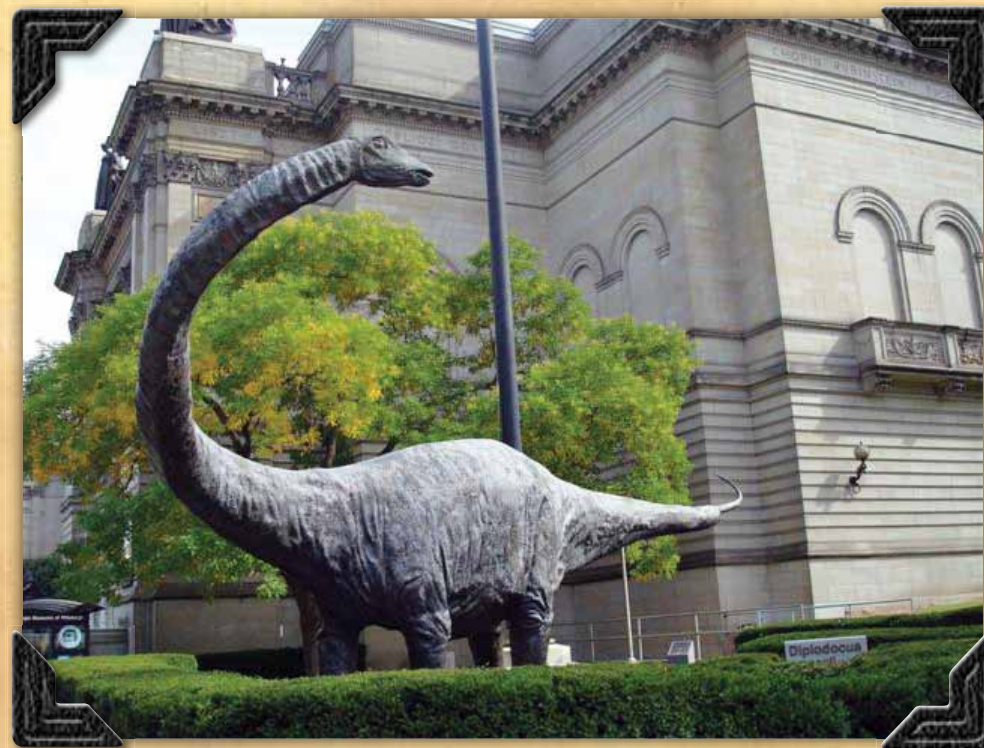


photo by Rick Armstrong



photo by Rick Armstrong



photo by Rick Armstrong

Transportation is a key factor for people living in and visiting Oakland. With students, patients, shoppers, employees and visitors walking, driving, riding the bus and biking through this bustling area, safety is a natural concern. OTMA was committed to ensuring the safety of everyone who passes through our neighborhoods regardless of which mode of transportation they choose.

That's how the Forbes/Fifth Avenue Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Improvements Project was born. Dedicated people and institutions came together to re-imagine safe streets and transform an urban center – Oakland.







Everyone in Oakland is a pedestrian at some point. The Hometown Streets project makes Oakland more accessible, safe, attractive and friendly, no matter how you travel.

Pedestrians are potential consumers walking by storefronts and through the business district. Any project that attracts people to the business district and makes them feel more comfortable and relaxed is good for business. Just ask the more than 150 retailers and businesses along Forbes and Fifth.



Because of the Universities, Oakland is brimming with students. Fifth and Forbes Avenues run through the heart of these campuses, so the new intersections are getting a workout. The improvements are getting a good grade from students who find it safer and easier to get to class.







Oakland is home to world-renowned medical institutions, so the new intersections are helping visitors make their way to important appointments in a much safer and friendly environment. Visitors in wheelchairs are finding it easier and safer to navigate with the new ADA compliant curb ramps.



photo by Rick Armstrong

With theaters, museums, restaurants and points of interest, visitors from all over the world are making Oakland a destination point and discovering first-hand how one urban center evolves to meet all needs.



Anyone who drives down Fifth and Forbes Avenues or uses the busy crosswalks along those corridors will immediately see the improvements created by the Hometown Streets project. If you are walking or biking, you get the sense that Oakland is paying attention to your need to share space with traffic and reach your destination quickly and safely. If you're driving, pedestrians are much more visible. The improvements are especially evident at rush hour, when offices empty out for the day and employees become pedestrians to begin their journey home.

The Hometown Streets project brought enhancements to eleven intersections in the Fifth and Forbes corridor making it safer, more convenient and very appealing to the eye.

## Forbes Avenue Intersections

McKee Place • Meyran Avenue • Atwood Street • Oakland Avenue • South Bouquet Street



*Forbes and Oakland - BEFORE*



*Forbes and Oakland - AFTER*



*Forbes and Atwood - BEFORE*



*Forbes and Atwood - AFTER*



# Fifth Avenue Intersections

Thackeray Avenue • Bouquet Street • DeSoto Street/Oakland Avenue  
Atwood Street • Lothrop Street/Meyran Avenue • Darragh Street/McKee Place



*Fifth and Meyran - BEFORE*



*Fifth and Meyran - AFTER*



*Fifth and Oakland - BEFORE*



*Fifth and Oakland - AFTER*



*Fifth and Thackeray - BEFORE*



*Fifth and Thackeray - AFTER*



**The project balanced the needs of pedestrians with the needs of vehicular traffic, and came up with innovative solutions.**



### **Pedestrian countdown signals**

It's really helpful to have the signals count down so you know when it's safe to step into the intersection or when you should just stay put.



### **Curb extensions**

Concrete curb extensions create a place for pedestrians to gather while waiting to cross the street. They provide greater visibility in the intersection and reduce the crossing distance. That's especially important for the physically handicapped, the aged and children. The bump-outs also force cars to stay in their own lanes and stop the dangerous right-hand turns from the parking lane, eliminating a safety hazard and creating a more comfortable street crossing.



### **ADA compliant handicap curb ramps**

If safe walking was a concern prior to the project, imagine trying to get around in a wheelchair or scooter. Hometown Streets made all the intersections ADA compliant. That's a huge improvement for an area with so many hospitals.



## Crosswalk delineations

Wider and more visible crosswalk markings help motorists be more aware of the presence of the crosswalk and the likelihood of pedestrians.



## Enhanced lighting

The project replaced old street lights and added some new lighting to brighten up the corridor along Forbes from McKee to the University of Pittsburgh foot bridge. Before, it was a dark stretch, but now, it's brighter, safer, and more inviting for both pedestrians and vehicles.



## Pedestrian Island

On Fifth Avenue at DeSoto Street, a pedestrian island was expanded as a safe haven for those crossing at this wide intersection. In addition to this convenient stopping point, greenery was added to beautify the space.



# RE-IMAGINING SAFE STREETS IN AN URBAN CENTER

## BEST PRACTICES

*OTMA was the impetus for getting the project to come together and be implemented. These kinds of projects need a champion and they filled that role.*

**Michael Stern, Principal**  
**Strada Architecture**

### Vision

Someone had to start with a vision of what could be and for this project it was OTMA. When Federal funds became available, OTMA saw how Oakland could benefit and shared their vision with key partners.

*OTMA was instrumental in the success of the project. They were the visionary, seeing what needed to be done. They studied it, got the designer on board and submitted the transportation enhancement application.*

**Cheryl Moon-Sirianni, P.E.**  
**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Engineering District 11-0**

*When the Hometown Streets project came up, we quickly saw the opportunity to upgrade a number of intersections have a high pedestrian traffic, not only for the students and the people who live and work here everyday, but also the visitors to the medical centers and those who come on the weekends.*

**Renny Clark**  
**Community Initiatives**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

*One of the biggest challenges with any project delivered with Federal money is bureaucracy and procedural steps. OTMA brought a wide range of Oakland leadership and expertise to the table to help solve the problems and served as a conduit to all the universities, hospitals, community groups and public agencies that interface with Oakland.*

**Charles DiPietro**  
**Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**

### Leadership

OTMA's partnerships in the Oakland community and its relationships with transportation agencies paved the way for a collaboration to explore the possibility of applying for funds. Leadership roles and responsibilities were shared with various partners, with OTMA maintaining the communication and facilitator role.

### Funding

Once OTMA identified a funding source that was applicable to the Oakland neighborhood, institutions and the business community stepped up with additional financial contributions and in-kind services to make it happen. For instance, OBID provided monies for surveying each of the eleven intersections within the project and the University of Pittsburgh's Facilities Management provided critical project oversight.

*I believe OTMA may have been the only or one of a few TMAs that has secured funding for this kind of project. The project was on time and under budget.*

**Michael Baker**  
**PennDOT**

*This was a community collaborative and everybody was engaged. We're getting pretty good at that now. We did that with Schenley Plaza, the Boulevard of the Allies portal bridge and now we've done it with Hometown Streets. One of the best things about Oakland and the Oakland Task Force is that we find a common denominator that works for everybody and then we move forward.*

**Renny Clark**  
**Community Initiatives**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

### Partnerships and Collaboration

Many organizations came together to work with OTMA to make this project happen:

#### Community Partners:

Oakland Transportation Management Association  
City of Pittsburgh  
University of Pittsburgh  
Oakland Taskforce  
Oakland Business Improvement District  
Oakland Community Council  
Oakland Planning and Development Corporation

#### Funders:

City of Pittsburgh  
Oakland Business Improvement District  
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission  
University of Pittsburgh  
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center  
Urban Redevelopment Authority



# Project Management and Facilitation

A project this size with so many partners involved required keen three-ring mastery. All the key parties parked their egos at the door, lent their unique expertise and focused on getting the job done safely, on time and within budget.

- The University of Pittsburgh was a big partner. The Legal Department spent a lot of time figuring out how to structure agreements and define roles and responsibilities. Facilities Management managed the design, engineering and construction of the project.
- SPC oversees all transportation programs in the region funded by the Federal government and assured that this project advanced.
- PennDOT managed the day-to-day work.
- OTMA made sure all of the partners were at the table and working together.
- The City of Pittsburgh assisted in securing the federal funding, was responsible for approving the engineering drawings and for the upkeep and maintenance of some of the project elements.
- Facchiano Contracting, Inc. had experience with complex projects like this and had just finished a project in the vicinity, so they had a staging area ready to go. By working at night, collaborating closely with the partners and putting safety first – they delivered the project on time and with no pedestrian or vehicular accidents.

*Educating the community in general and the education community to use the enhancements was one of the big challenges. From my perspective, this project improves safety. It is now a much safer atmosphere and more friendly.*

**Michael Baker**  
**PennDOT**

*Making all those extra phone calls and talking to all those people to stay on top of it and keep pushing was really the key to getting this project done, especially with so many stakeholders. It's really a matter of getting the right people to talk to each other and sometimes that doesn't happen on its own. That was a big plus with OTMA.*

**Douglas G. Smith**  
**Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**

*Ron Liebow and the University of Pittsburgh Facilities Management was a key element in the success of the project. He was dedicated to keeping it going.*

**Joe Pastorius**  
**Wilbur Smith Associates**

*One of OTMA's roles was to help expedite some of the checks and balances on progress. I'd give them an "A" for getting all the right people to the table, their coordination, resolving any day-to-day coordination issues, their basic watch guard. They are very, very responsive.*

**Charles DiPietro**  
**Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**

*OTMA played the roll of convener for all the folks who have a stake in transportation improvements whether it is for safety or operations. They have great relationships and a great communication process.*

**Ron Liebow**  
**Facilities Management**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

*We started out with a good set of design drawings and worked hand-in-hand with the design firm resolving any issues. Close collaboration with PennDOT, the University of Pittsburgh, the City of Pittsburgh and OTMA allowed the project to stay on time and within budget. OTMA kept the communication flowing to the merchants, so everyone knew what was happening in enough time to plan around any disruptions. And, we made safety number one. Our industry is a profit-driven industry, but there's no money that can replace someone getting hurt.*

**Michael Facchiano, Jr.**  
**Michael Facchiano Contracting, Inc.**

# Communication

OTMA created the communication process for all the partners and made sure everyone was aware of the project schedule. OBID partnered with OTMA to use its communication channels to business and property owners in the area and arranged public meetings. In addition to the meetings, there were one-on-one conversations with all of the businesses impacted by the intersection construction.

# Design

The challenge was to improve safety and walkability and create “complete streets” in an area with old infrastructure and road limitations. It took a shift in mindset on the part of the engineers and sponsors in downplaying the importance of the automobile and raising the level of the pedestrian.

- Strada Architecture and Wilbur Smith Engineers worked to develop basic design improvements: sidewalk expansions – curb bump-outs, lighting, crosswalks, and greenery.
- Wilbur Smith provided the engineering and created a detailed traffic control plan with very tight technical specifications that included a lot of detours.
- PennDOT monitored the project from a livability perspective and made sure it met guidelines for the various the community based initiatives
- Construction was done on a rolling schedule to diminish disruption. Daily visitors saw minimum disruption in one spot and progress moving down the corridor.

*Balance had to be created between aesthetic improvements that everybody likes to see on urban streets and fulfilling the pedestrian safety and security principles of what the Hometown Streets project was meant to serve. The process that OTMA spearheaded helped to determine what to invest in to accomplish these goals.*

**Ron Liebow**  
**Facilities Management**  
**University of Pittsburgh**

*This is the first commercial district where we've reconfigured the sidewalks with curb extensions and updated the crosswalk design. Those are very visible improvements. We can point to Oakland now as a prototype that should be considered for other commercial districts.*

**Patrick Hassett**  
**City of Pittsburgh**



# Hometown Streets Project Timeline



In 2003 during the milling/resurfacing of Forbes Avenue, OTMA-Oakland Transportation Management Association and the Oakland Taskforce worked with PennDOT District 11-0 on the installation of 4-way crossings at various intersections along Forbes Avenue. They include the intersections at Craft Avenue, Halket Street, McKee Street, Meyran Avenue, Atwood, Oakland, South Bouquet and Bigelow Boulevard. During the installation of stop bars and cross walks, pedestrian interval signals were also installed. These interval signals provide the opportunity for the pedestrian to receive the walk signal three (3) seconds before the motorists was given the signal to proceed into the intersection; this enabled the pedestrian more visibility to the motorist when proceeding into the intersection.

In July 2004 Governor Rendell introduces Home Town Streets; Safe Routes to School program

After a series of meetings and discussions throughout the Oakland community, OTMA assured of the community's support submitted a funding application in July 2004 for the Forbes/ Fifth Avenue Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Improvements = \$1M.

In January 2005, OTMA's funding application was approved. \$500K would be through regional funding from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and \$500K would be funded through the state's Hometown Streets Safe Route to School program.

As planning and engineering began, it became clear that eleven (11) intersections of improvements wouldn't be able to be completed with the initial \$1M funding so a second application for funding was submitted by the City of Pittsburgh in September 2005. This application also included streetscape enhancements. That application: Forbes/ Fifth Avenue Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Improvements, Phase 2 = \$483K.

*Many of the Oakland partners are looking at how we can green Oakland. The City of Pittsburgh has a goal of adding trees to make it more environmentally friendly. This conversation is taking place within the Oakland Taskforce.*  
**Georgia Petropoulos Muir,**  
**Oakland Business Improvement District**

*We're continuing to work on the perception that there is no parking in Oakland, which we've proven not to be true. We're working on better ways to communicate about parking with those who drive into Oakland, like a digital interconnected parking information system, so that when people pull up to a parking lot that says it is full, they can check a kiosk or call up information on their smart phone and show them to other parking garages in Oakland where there are spaces available. Prototypes should be ready over the next few years.*  
**Renny Clark, University of Pittsburgh**

*We might look next to see how we might improve the transit elements in those two corridors by linking them to a broader bus rapid transit improvement downtown.*  
**Patrick Hassett,**  
**City of Pittsburgh**

## Vision for the Future of Transportation in Oakland

The Hometown Streets project helped all of Oakland to re-imagine safe streets and in doing so, it transformed its urban center. Imagination doesn't take a vacation, however. Our partners share their vision of the future.

*We're going to see a shift away from new construction projects and toward enhancing the existing transportation network, including bikeways and pedestrian, and focusing on safety.*  
**Michael Baker, PennDOT**

*Hometown Streets was a challenging and successful project that brought the community together to focus on one goal – improving pedestrian safety and mobility within the central core of Oakland. The support that we received at the regional and state levels is evidence of the respect and confidence in our ability to coordinate a project of this magnitude. Coupled with local municipality and institutional support, the total project investment was more than \$2.3M. The project took five years to complete from the beginning funding application process, through planning, engineering, design and finally construction. We're proud that we were able to stay within the schedule, avoid any incidents and stick to the budget.*

*As a TMA we certainly will continue to look at future opportunities to advance the transportation agenda for the Oakland community that includes expanding pedestrian safety and mobility improvements beyond the boundaries of the Fifth/Forbes project. Bus Rapid Transit, biking mobility and transit oriented development are key components we hope to focus on.*  
**Mavis Rainey, Oakland Transportation Management Association**

*Continue to offer a wide range of travel choices to and from Oakland; strengthen the transit system to encourage people to take the bus rather than drive; create a strong bike-friendly community and continue projects like this to make walking safer.*  
**Charles DiPietro, Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**

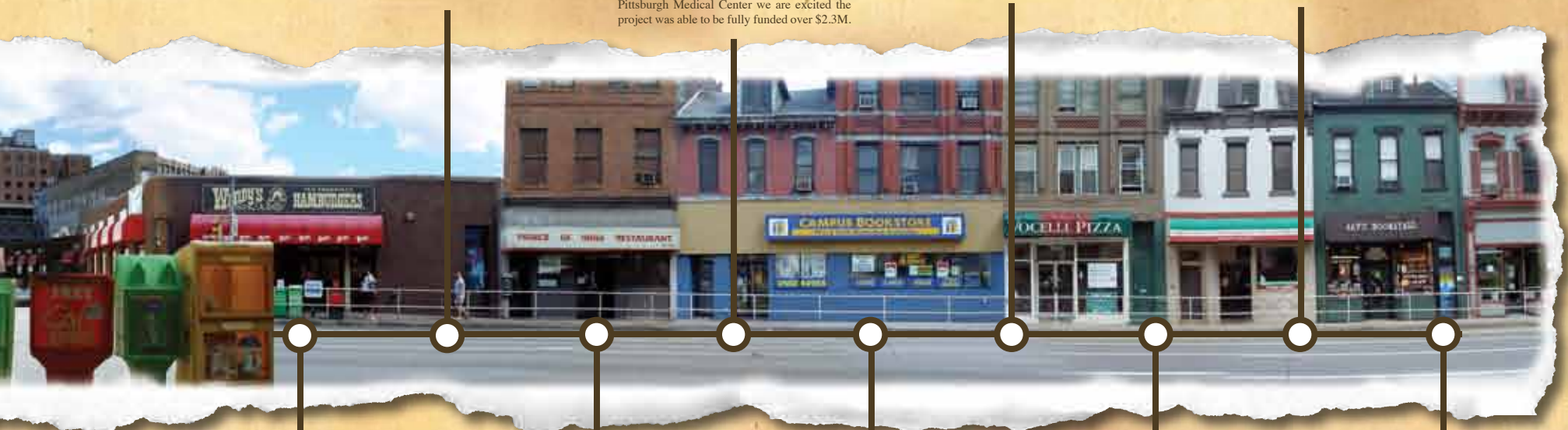


2006-2008 the community partners worked together to finalize the planning, engineering and design of the now combined pedestrian safety and mobility improvements projects.

The project co-sponsors, OTMA and the City of Pittsburgh along with key institutional partner and funders met to determine the next course of action, which was to identify funding streams to meet the project funding shortfall. Through the continued commitment and support of the OTMA, the City of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh, and University of Pittsburgh Medical Center we are excited the project was able to be fully funded over \$2.3M.

October 2008 work was completed on Fifth Avenue and on November 7, 2008 the project was shut-down for the winter.

April 6, 2009 construction began on Forbes Avenue and on August 8, 2009 the final inspection of the work on Forbes Avenue was completed.



In May 2006, the City of Pittsburgh's funding application was approved. \$483K would be provided through the Transportation Enhancements/Hometown Streets Safe Routes to School Funding program.

After all of the necessary approvals were in place, the project went out for bid on April 3, 2008. Total federal funding awarded for construction = \$1.483M However, the lowest construction bid received totaled \$2.1M leaving a funding shortfall of almost \$700K.

Construction began on Fifth Avenue on June 30, 2008. Michael Facchiano Contracting Inc. the contractor on the project. The University of Pittsburgh-Facilities Management was construction managers on behalf of the project sponsors: OTMA and the City of Pittsburgh.

December 12, 2008 the final inspection of the work on Fifth Avenue was completed.

September 23, 2009 the Fifth/Forbes Avenue Pedestrian Safety and Mobility Improvements Project was completed.

**Oakland Transportation Management Association (OTMA)** is a nonprofit membership organization that recognizes the serious consequences of today's community environment on economic vitality and quality of life. OTMA is committed to promoting transportation options that help reduce congestion, enhance safety, improve air quality, and increase community access. OTMA strives to build connections within the community and with regional and state planners and providers. The ultimate goal is to create an environment that meets the needs of individuals who visit, work and live in the Oakland area.





**Oakland Transportation  
Management Association**

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The OTMA website provides information on public parking or commuting alternative options such as vanpooling, carpooling, ridesharing, public transit and biking/walking. Get connected – sign up to receive email advisories on construction, transit and traffic. Follow us on Twitter or submit questions via our website. Visit us at [www.otma-pgh.org](http://www.otma-pgh.org)

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