

11th Street Wins 2020 CD Week Award

The 11th Street Project has won Lincoln's 2020 Community Development Week award – at last! 11th Street has been a study in tenacity and perseverance. Over nine years ago, the City and Everett Neighborhood Association were partnering on community revitalization efforts. The neighborhood had identified improvements to the 11th Street corridor as a priority. When City staff heard about a federal initiative called Greening America's Capitals (GAC), it was the perfect opportunity and perfect timing. Lincoln applied for and was chosen as one of the first five state capital cities to participate.

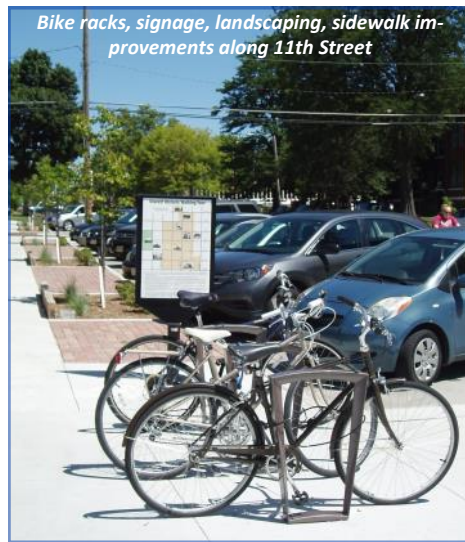
At that time, *Greening America's Capitals* was a project partnership between three federal agencies: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Department of Transportation (DOT). GAC's purpose was to help state capitals develop an implementable vision of distinctive, environmentally friendly neighborhoods that incorporate innovative green building and green infrastructure strategies. Now known as *Greening America's Communities*, the program has been expanded beyond state capital cities, but the basic purpose remains the same.

In late 2011, GAC sent a design team to provide design assistance for the project -- 11th Street between A Street and Lincoln Mall. The GAC team facilitated a workshop to hear ideas and suggestions from the people who knew the 11th Street area best -- neighborhood residents, local small business and property owners, students, and local organizations active in the area. The community needs that emerged most strongly were improving safety and security, retaining neighborhood history, adding lighting, and increasing green space. The GAC design team recommended concepts to address the needs: outdoor amenities and a festival space at 11th & G Street, bike lanes, landscaping with native plants, a roundabout at 11th & D Street, an urban garden at Everett Elementary, and green alleyways.

Using the GAC concepts, City staff, local design consultants (*The Clark Enersen Partners*) and neighborhood residents prioritized implementation actions. The top priorities were pedestrian lighting and pedestrian bump outs. Lighting would improve safety and visually create a sense of space. Pedestrian bump-outs at street intersections would improve pedestrian safety and allow bio-retention planting areas for aesthetics and to improve storm water drainage. The next priority level included a traffic circle at 11th and D Street, street amenities like bike racks, trash receptacles, recycling receptacles, signage, gathering space at Klein's Corner, sidewalks, parking improvements and painted bike lanes. Alleyway "greening" and the urban garden at Everett Elementary were at the lowest priority level, mostly because both were beyond the scope of the project.



Lighting, signage, landscaping, sidewalk improvements along 11th Street



Bike racks, signage, landscaping, sidewalk improvements along 11th Street



Traffic circle at 11th and D Streets, native plantings in pedestrian "bump outs"

Ironically, pedestrian lighting was the last part of the project completed. Bids in 2013 and 2014 exceeded available funding. Finally, with some adjustments to the specifications, a bid in 2018 was accepted. In 2019, the final pedestrian lighting improvements were installed – persistence paid off!

While waiting for the lighting, many other things were accomplished:

- ▶ The traffic circle was built at 11th and D Street to help slow traffic.
- ▶ Bump-outs were constructed where D, E, F, and G Streets intersected 11th Street and the accompanying bioswales are planted with native species. The bioswales help reduce stormwater run-off and pooling.
- ▶ Bike lanes were painted on 11th Street from D Street to Centennial Mall.
- ▶ The Klein's Corner signage at 11th & G Street was cleaned and restored and new neighborhood signs were installed at the 11th & D Street traffic circle.
- ▶ A map of historic neighborhood sites was built by the Everett Neighborhood Association and installed at 11th & G Street.
- ▶ Bike racks, trash receptacles, and recycling receptacles were installed.
- ▶ Sidewalks were repaired and/or replaced.
- ▶ Trees were planted.
- ▶ RESTORE (**R**evitalizing **E**leventh **S**treet **T**hrough **R**ehabilitation of **E**xteriors), a housing rehabilitation program, was made available to both rental and owner-occupied housing units along the 11th Street corridor. Using about \$73,000 in CDBG funds, the exteriors of one single family house and nine multi-family units (in three buildings) were rehabilitated.
- ▶ Lincoln Transportation and Utilities Department (LTU) replaced storm sewer along the corridor earlier than scheduled, so the street would only need to be disrupted once. The project helped reduce standing water in several locations.
- ▶ Sculptures (created by nationally known artist, Jim Huntington) were installed on the east side of 11th Street at G Street. The sculptures were also lit in conjunction with the recently completed pedestrian lighting.
- ▶ Banners celebrating the area's historic past are now being installed on select pedestrian lights throughout the corridor.
- ▶ The streetscape project is currently maintained by the City of Lincoln and managed by LTU staff.



Over \$1.1 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds leveraged nearly \$420,000 of additional investment from Lincoln Transportation & Utilities for storm sewer replacement, bioswales, and traffic circle design and construction. Investment by neighborhood residents continues to illustrate neighborhood pride of place, with building murals, community gardens, and monthly alley clean-ups.

And those green alleys that were "beyond the scope" of the plan? The Everett Neighborhood Association is forging ahead, in partnership with the South of Downtown Community Development Organization and the City, to improve drainage, safety and aesthetics in alleys throughout the corridor – as visualized nine years ago in the Greening America's Capitals Plan for 11th Street. Persistence does, indeed, pay off!