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N E W S R E L E A S E

July 10, 2009 – For Immediate Release

Dubuque Alley Pilot Project Percolates

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The City of Dubuque is replacing two one-block sections of alleys with a permeable surface that will allow rainwater runoff to soak into the ground rather than enter Dubuque's stormwater management system.

The pilot project involves two one-block sections of alleys between Jackson and White Streets in Dubuque's downtown Washington Neighborhood, an area the City has targeted for revitalization. The alley between 11th and 12 Streets will be repaved with concrete brick pavers specially designed to allow rainwater to pass between the pavers while the alley between 12th and 13th Streets will be paved with a porous asphalt.

Because of the permeable nature of both surfaces, they require a special substrate below the pavement that allows the water to filter down. Jon Dienst, of the City's Engineering Department, is managing the project. He said the substrate for permeable pavement consists of various sizes of clean stone that allows the rain water to be stored below the alley before it percolates into the ground and eventually back into the water table.

"These alleys are ideal for this application due to the native sand soil below the existing alleys," said Dienst. "The native sand allows the water to percolate faster than clay soils that are found in other areas of Dubuque."

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The City of Dubuque will monitor the alleys several times a year to ensure the alleys continue to drain as expected and that proper maintenance is performed (i.e. once a year sweeping and vacuuming). Depending on how these alleys perform, the City will explore future alleys in which to install these paving systems to minimize the stormwater runoff associated with impervious surfaces.

In addition to diverting water from the City's stormwater management system, there are a number of advantages to permeable pavements. In urban areas, pollution carried in rainwater runoff is a concern, particularly in cities near rivers. Rainwater flowing across alleys, streets, and sidewalks picks up contaminants associated with spilled oil, detergents, solvents, de-icing salts, dead leaves, pesticides, fertilizer, bacteria from pet waste, air pollution particles. Permeable pavement allows natural filtration of runoff water through soil, which is the simplest way to control these pollutants.

Both alleys are being prepared for paving in late July. Currently, contractors are removing the existing alley pavement and substrate and any necessary replacement or repair of utilities is being completed.

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