

Unique engineering projects are norm

by Susan Marquez

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Throughout the state, major engineering projects have recently been completed or are in the works.

A unique project in the City of Ridgeland is the Historic Jackson Street District. Since the spring of 2008, residents and visitors have been enjoying the pedestrian-friendly streets, community plaza, restaurants and shops now found in the revived area. Waggoner Engineering, Inc. helped the city transform the town's hub into a space for businesses to thrive and families to gather.

"The Historic Jackson Street District project presented multiple challenges, including a nearby railroad corridor and concerns about safety in creating essential parking and an environment welcoming to pedestrians," said Joanna Triplett, marketing coordinator for Waggoner. "The outcome has transformed the area, and the district is now an important part of Ridgeland's future — both for economic development and for community growth."

Waggoner's services included planning, conceptual design, topographic surveying, design, right-of-way and permit application services, bidding and construction phase services and other related services. A major challenge was that the historic renewal district was divided by an active railroad. The property along the railroad was an unsightly and unkempt boundary area unsuitable for pedestrians, with steep drainage ravines that posed safety hazards and with overhead and underground utilities that made these conditions difficult to remedy.

The City of Ridgeland, the landowners and tenants and Waggoner engineers realized an opportunity to convert these railroad boundary areas into useful and beneficial space that could accommodate multiple uses in keeping with the District — community gathering, parking, sidewalks, benches, landscaping, as well as the essential safety barrier to the active railroad.

In Tunica County, a new \$9-million commercial terminal building and jet bridge was recently added to the Tunica Airport. The project was engineered by Allen & Hoshall.

"We have a diversified mix of clients consisting of mostly governmental entities and we have been successful in assisting many cities and towns in obtaining grants to fund needed projects," said James C. Nelson, P.E., vice president of the company. "While our business has remained steady in the past year, most of that has come from those government projects. Due to the slowdown in the economy, we have seen a drop off in the number of privately funded projects, particularly in North Mississippi."

Some of Allen & Hoshall's most significant projects include water wells, water treatment projects and drainage work.

"We have also worked with several cities and towns regarding various potential economic stimulus projects, but the final details of the stimulus funding has yet to be determined by government officials," Nelson added.

Williford, Gearhart & Knight Inc., an engineering and surveying firm, works with approximately 20 Mississippi cities and three counties, so much of its work is governmental. According to company principal Greg Gearhart, P.E., D.E.E., current projects under construction include sewer improvements in Brookhaven, Port Gibson, Morton and Wesson; wastewater treatment plant work in Raymond, Oakley Training School and Wesson; the Mid-Point Park Baseball Complex in Hinds County; and, drainage channel work in Vicksburg, Clinton and Wesson. Projects in design include: upgrades to the SCADA control system for the Meridian water system; the extension of Hampstead Blvd in Clinton; the Mississippi State Veterans Cemetery near Newton; sewer improvements at Decatur, Hazlehurst and Camp Shelby; and, site design for Kings Daughters Hospital at Yazoo City.

"The potential for stimulus funding assistance on water and sewer projects has created substantial interest by our clients, particularly in projects promoting energy efficiency and reuse of resources," Gearhart said.

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