

Vineland government, Landis Avenue undergoing millions in upgrades

THOMAS BARLAS Staff Writer Nov 29, 2016

VINELAND — Eileen Schrandt walked her little dog Lucas across Landis Avenue, right in the middle of the 600 block of the city's business district. That would normally be, on a busy traffic day, something requiring speed of foot and dodging cars and trucks.

But Schrandt and Lucas used a new walkway, recently installed to help pedestrians cross the wide avenue. And it was appreciated. "We walk this street a lot," said Schrandt, a local resident. "It's a lot safer."

The work was part of a \$2.4 million upgrade of Landis Avenue from Myrtle Street to the Boulevard. It's also the first phase of a federally funded project that will run until 2020, resulting in an improved Landis Avenue all the way to the Route 55 interchange. The final price of the project, of which five phases remain, is still to be determined, city officials said.

For now, Landis Avenue between Myrtle and the Boulevard is repaved. The two lanes of traffic and parking spaces are clearly marked. Motorists have a safety zone that gives them more room to back out of parking spaces. There are new sidewalk "bump-outs" at intersections, giving pedestrians a shorter walk across Landis Avenue. New pedestrian walkways cross the middle of the 600 and 700 blocks, and both lead to municipal parking lots.

While the work makes Landis Avenue more attractive, city engineer Brian Myers said the project's main goal is safety.

The work should prevent motorists from passing on Landis Avenue, he said. And he expects a study of accident reports to show, in a few years, a reduction in the number of sideswipe and backup collisions. "It helps keep traffic flowing," Myers said. There is still some work to be done to improve traffic flow, he said.

The reduction in the time it takes pedestrians to cross Landis Avenue at the sidewalk bump-outs also reduces the time motorists wait at red lights, Myers said. That will be accomplished with the installation of new traffic signals that will allow the city to better synchronize green, yellow and red lights. That can't be done with the current batch of out-of-date traffic signals.

Merchants on Landis Avenue seem pleased with the work. "It looks better than it was before," said Michelle McDonald, who owns Michelle's Kitchen & Catering. McDonald said the work is one way to attract more customers to the business district.

Robin Hope, who manages The Spot, a mixed retail outlet, said the work shows the city is trying to help local businesses. “It looks like they’re trying to make the avenue all that it could be,” she said. “I think things are going to be better in the next few years.”

The rest of the project includes:

- Phase 2, which runs between the Boulevard and West Avenue
- Phase 3, which runs between West and Coney avenues
- Phase 4, which runs between Moyer Street and Orchard Road
- Phase 5, which runs between Orchard and Mill roads
- Phase 6, which runs between Mill Road and the Route 55 interchange

Meanwhile, the city is investing an additional \$5.5 million in projects to bolster local government operations. The projects, approved recently by City Council, include:

- City Hall security enhancements such as a full-time security guard, mandatory visitor sign-in and bulletproof glass at the customer-service window
- More parking and building improvements to the Vineland Public Library
- New vehicles for the Engineering Department
- Two new trucks for the Vineland Fire Department
- New equipment for the Public Works Department