



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Photo: View of improvements to Duke Street in downtown Beaufort

Duke Street improvements complete in Beaufort's Northwest Quadrant

Duke Street in downtown Beaufort has a new look with improved sidewalks, fresh asphalt, brick-paver parking areas, new streetlights and landscaping.

The project also saw crews relocate underground utilities and improve drainage along Duke Street, part of the city's Northwest Quadrant neighborhood.

"The Duke Street project is complete, except for finalizing the punch list. It is a huge improvement to the neighborhood and the traffic and drainage should all flow better now," said Lamar Taylor, public works director for the City of Beaufort.

"We are proud of this project and I think the area's residents are equally proud," he said. "This is an important street in an important neighborhood downtown. We appreciate the residents' patience with us getting it all done."

A separate Duke Street project is expected to start later in September, which includes removing a portion of overhead electrical and communications cabling. Underground utilities not only look better, but they are less prone to storm damage.

The Duke Street improvements were slowed by rain delays and gas lines that had to be relocated, Taylor said. The gas lines had to be moved to make room for new stormwater drainage pipes.

This is the second phase of streetscape improvements along Duke Street in the Northwest Quadrant, which in 2010 was named one of the nation's 51 "Best Old House Neighborhoods" by *This Old House* magazine.

The area, once a thriving neighborhood originally built by freed slaves just blocks off the Beaufort River, fell into disrepair in the 1970s. It became one of Beaufort's blighted and neglected areas until renovations started in earnest in the mid-1990s.

Starting in 2009, City leaders joined hands with involved area homeowners to remove huge amounts of accumulated debris as well as help them remove overgrowth and clean up the blight.

Since then, there's been a fairly steady improvement to sections of the Northwest Quadrant, notably along Bladen Street and Duke Street. In the past 20 years, the City of Beaufort has invested more than \$5 million to improve the Northwest Quadrant.

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