

# Seeing Farther

A publication of Prein&Newhof

Spring 2023

## Community Revitalized Through Downtown Improvements

### *New Infrastructure and Gathering Spaces Restore the Village of Vicksburg*

When faced with critical infrastructure improvement needs, the Village of Vicksburg turned a major challenge into an opportunity to revitalize its community. For over 150 years, this small village in Kalamazoo County has had a history of rolling up its sleeves to bring vision into reality. In the early 1800s, its namesake, John Vickers, built a brush dam on Portage Creek that formed Sunset Lake. John then erected a water-powered log grist mill on Portage Creek and pioneers began to build homes and set up businesses around the lake.

In 1905, the Lee Paper Company constructed a mill along the creek at the heart of the village. As the business grew, so did the village population. For nearly 100 years, what was known as the Mill of South County was the catalyst and base for Vicksburg's economy and culture. When the plant closed in 2001, the 416,000 sq.-ft.-building on 120 acres sat vacant and the population of Vicksburg declined. Paper City Development purchased the property in 2014 with a new, bold vision for 'The Mill at Vicksburg'. The new owner is creating a revitalized heart of the community, with the goal of providing more jobs on this site than when the paper mill was fully operational. This mixed-use property is designed to host indoor and outdoor events, restaurants, multiple breweries and taprooms, a museum, offices, and residential accommodations.

While Paper City Development began reawakening the mill, the Village of Vicksburg learned, with Prein&Newhof's assistance, that its existing 80-year-old water and sewer lines that ran down Main Street were in serious need of replacing and upgrading. **Prein&Newhof Project Manager Mike Schwartz, PE** explains, "Inline televising inspection and smoke testing also revealed that stormwater was getting into the sanitary piping and going to the Kalamazoo Wastewater Treatment Plant for costly, unnecessary treatment." Prein&Newhof also identified three areas and lift stations within the sanitary pipe network that were undersized and inefficient for current flows.

By correcting these issues, the Village could reinvest its related future energy and treatment expense savings into upgrades for its stormwater and sanitary systems. Achieving this would require a large financial investment and come at the cost of digging up its Main Street. The village received low-interest loans from the USDA's Rural Development program to finance the project and secured a \$250,000 MDOT Category B Grant to help resurface several nearby streets that would be dug up in the process.

Vicksburg leaders saw the 'big dig' through their village as opportunity to help further revitalize the downtown area in other ways. To define this vision, **Prein&Newhof Senior Project Manager Jason Washler, PE** and his team of civil engineers and landscape architects worked with Village

leadership to form a group of next-generation business owners that could help steer this enhancement project. The group wanted the downtown area to be a place for people to walk and stay, not simply drive through.

The resulting plan called for redesigning Main Street for one-way traffic with on-street parallel parking on one side and angled parking on the other. It also specified wider 15-foot sidewalks and a plaza area at a midblock sidewalk crossing to provide more space for people to congregate. Other improvements included refurbished pedestrian streetlights, redesigned traffic signals, charging stations, planter beds and pots, underground irrigation, street trees, enhanced crosswalks for pedestrian safety, and new right-of-way furniture (benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, tables, and chairs).

Oswalt Park, located on the corner of East Prairie and Main Streets and named in honor of a local hero, was also enhanced as part of this project with expanded space for community gatherings. With the creative vision of Prein&Newhof's landscape architects, the upgraded space provides seating around a new community fireplace, tables and umbrellas, bike racks, charging stations, and is surrounded with lush landscaping that complements the surrounding new streetscape elements. The park was funded through the MEDC Patronicity program, Vicksburg Foundation, and local business owners and individuals. Together, the community raised \$267,000 to enhance its park as the hub for community events. "Village Manager Jim Mallery and his team pulled out all the stops to increase community awareness and generate enthusiasm and excitement about the project," said Washler. Social media, community newsletters, and local media and TV coverage were used to help keep the public informed and engaged in the diverse aspects of the project's progress.

The results of this multifaceted, award-winning project have positioned and provided the canvas for the Village and The Mill at Vicksburg to paint its future. The Mill is expected to spur further residential and commercial development by way of attracting a new workforce to the area. The work on both sides, infrastructure improvements in downtown Vicksburg and the new development at The Mill, will stimulate the local economy and increase the population with the addition of over 220 new jobs. If you want to learn more about the events happening at The Mill, visit [vicksburgmill.com](http://vicksburgmill.com).

***If you have infrastructure challenges and want to see farther for your community, call Jason Washler, PE at 616-364-8491.***



*Many members of the community attended the Oswalt Park Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.*

The Village of Vicksburg and Prein&Newhof received two awards for this Major Infrastructure Improvements Project:

- The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Michigan Section's *Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Award*
- Michigan American Public Works Association's (APWA) Southwest Chapter *Public Works Project of the Year | Environment | More than \$1M*



*To further promote its vision, the Vicksburg Downtown Development Authority created a \$30,000 grant program for businesses and commercial properties interested in renovating the front of their buildings. The program provides 80 percent reimbursement with a \$2,500 maximum request.*



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Prein&Newhof

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Prein&Newhof

## 10 New Professionals Join the Prein&Newhof Team

**Stephanie Potoka** joined Prein&Newhof in August as a Hydraulics Engineer. She graduated from Calvin University with a bachelor’s degree in Mathematics and from the University of Minnesota with a master’s degree in Civil Engineering and an emphasis in Environmental Engineering.

**Andrew Troyanowski, PE** began working at Prein&Newhof as a Transportation Engineer in September. He graduated from Michigan Technological University with a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering. He has almost 9 years of previous work experience as a Transportation Design Engineer.

**Amber Bouwman** joined Prein&Newhof in October as an Administrative Laboratory Assistant. She graduated from Grand Valley State University with a bachelor’s degree in Allied Health Science. She has previous experience working as a Microbiology Assistant, a Lab Technician, and a Pathology Administrative Assistant.

**Jeffery Miller** began working at Prein&Newhof as a Landscape Architect in October. He graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor’s degree in Landscape Architecture. He has 22 years of experience working in the industry as a Landscape Architect.

**Justin Chua** joined Prein&Newhof in February as an Engineer-in-Training. He graduated from Western Michigan University with a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering. He has experience working in the industry in his previous role as a Civil Engineering Intern for a Michigan municipality.

**Miguel Bowman** began working at Prein&Newhof as a Construction Observer in March. He has previous experience working in the industry as an Engineering Technician.

**Brad Kuiper** joined Prein&Newhof in April as a Construction Observer. He has previous experience owning an agriculture business and working in the industry, including 15 years of previous work for Prein&Newhof.

**Lexi Szurna** began working at Prein&Newhof as an Engineer-in-Training in May. She graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor’s degree in Biosystems Engineering. She has previous experience working for Prein&Newhof as a Construction Observation Intern.

**Jack Hoffman** joined Prein&Newhof in May as a Hydraulic Engineer-in-Training. He graduated from Michigan Technological University with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Engineering. He has previous experience working as a Hydrogeologist and Estimating Engineer.

**John Standinger** joined Prein&Newhof as an Engineer-in-Training in June. He graduated from Calvin University with a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering. He has previous experience working as a Land Development Intern using GIS and CADD programs.



### Prein&Newhof specializes in:

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- Environmental Consulting
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- Laboratory Testing

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