

Curb Masters Uses Graco's EcoQuip to Add Stencil Design to Nicollet Mall Sidewalks



SUCCESS STORY

Application

Curb Masters, a specialty concrete contractor, was recently tasked with improving the aesthetics of the pedestrianized Nicollet Mall area in downtown Minneapolis. Nicollet Mall spans 12 blocks in the heart of downtown, and is a popular shopping and dining district. The area is currently undergoing a complete redesign as part of a \$50 million project known as 'Minneapolis Big Build.'

Curb Masters is using Graco's EcoQuip Vapor Abrasive Blaster to create a variety of intricate stencil designs onto the pedestrian sidewalks of the Nicollet Mall area. Although the City of Minneapolis did not specify equipment for this project, Curb Masters felt it would be important to find a product that would minimize dust emissions for the many pedestrians that work and live in, as well as visit, the area. The company soon discovered Graco's EcoQuip vapor abrasive blasting equipment, which suppresses dust by up to 92 percent less than dry blasting. As the ongoing work continues, pedestrians visiting and working in the area have been able to watch the process throughout, with thanks to very little containment.

Process

Curb Masters was provided with large stencils featuring intricate designs. These stencils were produced via CAD software from the design agency in New York managing the project with the City of Minneapolis. They placed each of the stencils – which resembled a large jigsaw puzzle – onto the pavement and began lightly blasting with glass bead media until the design became ingrained onto the sidewalk. Because glass bead is a softer media compared to garnet and other options, it worked well for creating a design while preserving the integrity of the surface. In addition, glass bead media is typically made from recycled material and is safe for the environment.

The unique stencil pattern was designed by a New York landscape artist urban designer who strategically planned the entire 12-block sequence. In total, three types of stencil were used across a 150,000 square-foot stretch of sidewalk.



Vapor Abrasive blasting reduces dust by up to 92% over traditional dry blasting, resulting in less containment needed in downtown Minneapolis.



EcoQuip 2 gives an operator control over blast pressure, allowing them to blast very gently on a surface.

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Starting with the outer most blocks on both sides of the 12-block stretch, a leaf pattern was used in that area they call the 'Woods' zone because of the many large trees. The next three blocks inwards on both sides, called the 'Groves' area, had a branch stencil to represent the transition from trees to a more urban setting. Finally, a beautiful basket weave stencil was chosen for the 'Center Core' downtown area to compliment the decorative artwork that can be seen there.

Results

Curb Masters' work on this project is still ongoing, and is slated for completion in the Fall 2017. So far the City of Minneapolis is pleased with the results they have seen. A big benefit of using the EcoQuip skid unit is the reduced cleanup due to a lot less dust than with regular sandblasting. Minimal containment apparatus is also a plus – the reduced dust allows Curb Masters to use smaller shields in place of total containment.

This was Curb Masters' first project using the EcoQuip vapor abrasive blasting machine.

"Blasting in a busy pedestrian area downtown meant we needed an option that would reduce dust as much as possible while we were blasting," said Mark Callies, Vice President, Curb Masters. "EcoQuip helped minimize the dust, allowing us to reduce the impact on pedestrians by requiring very little containment. Also, typical cleanup was greatly reduced."



Branch stenciling on the sidewalks in the 'Groves' area.



Leaf pattern used on the sidewalks in the 'Woods' zone.

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTRACTOR

Curb Masters, Inc.

INDUSTRY

Surface (Concrete) Blasting

APPLICATION

Blasting Design Detail onto Pedestrian Pavements

ABRASIVE MEDIA

Glass Bead

GRACO EQUIPMENT

EcoQuip Skid Unit



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