

Section 106 Success Story

Pontiac Wide Track 2-Way Conversion

PONTIAC | OAKLAND COUNTY

The Pontiac Loop (Wide Track Drive) was built in 1962 – 1963 with the intent to reduce traffic congestion in the Pontiac core by creating a one-way perimeter road around the downtown core. The loop was closely tied to a major Urban Renewal program that resulted in the leveling of much of the south end of the downtown. By the late 2010s and early 2020s it was clear that the Loop was not functioning as intended. The downtown core was isolated, speeding was endemic on sections of the Loop, and there were limited areas for safe pedestrian crossings. In the early 2020s the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), in cooperation with the City of Pontiac, Oakland County, and multiple state agencies, including SHPO, devised a plan to reintroduce two-way traffic while minimizing impacts to the loop configuration.

MDOT worked closely with SHPO during the environmental study and planning phases of the project to craft a design that would allow the loop to safely and efficiently handle two way traffic, provide traffic calming, and enhance pedestrian safety while minimizing or avoiding impacts to historic resources.

LOCATION

Pontiac, Oakland County

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

11

FEDERAL AGENCY

Federal Highway Administration

PROJECT DATE

2026

MICHIGAN SHPO STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Through the consultation process several resources were identified as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), including one recommended historic district (Pontiac Civic Center HD) comprised of the City Hall (1955, Leo Heenan), Public Safety Building (1957, Leo Heenan), Public Library (1960, Odell, Hewlett & Luckenback), Central Fire Station (1961, Odell, Hewlett & Luckenback), and the Public Schools Administration Building (1964, Eberle M. Smith Associates). The Brutalist Pontiac Place (1973, Gordon – Levin) is the first infill structure in the Pontiac Plan, an ambitious Urban Renewal Plan that was never fully realized.

Corollary improvements were proposed for East Huron Street, including minor widening to allow two-way traffic between Mill Street and the east leg of the loop. This will require relocation of the north sidewalk and encroachment into a portion of lawn area and staff parking at the former 1st Congregational Church, a contributing property within the NRHP-listed Pontiac Commercial Historic District. Located close to the East Huron intersection with the west leg of the loop is a Mid-century Modern building built as a Detroit Edison customer service center. The building, with its prominent glass front section, was among the first buildings in Michigan to use ground-based heat pumps for heating and cooling.