Chicago Central Medians

2001 PGMS Grand Award Winner for Public Works Sites

What started as a way to provide work experiences for the homeless has turned into a $3.5 million venture for the non-profit Christian social agency, Chicago Christian Industrial League (CCIL). It all started in 1993 with a three-year, $350,000 contract with the City of Chicago for landscape care. With the addition of many new roadway medians to Chicago in 1996, CCIL expanded its maintenance operations on several high visibility areas located within the city.

The Central Business District contains 16 major roadway medians with more than 17 miles of plantings, 167,000 sq. ft. of planting beds and 865 trees. Harsh winters, hot summers and pollution take their toll on these plants, and many locations have specific needs and require constant maintenance.

Because most of the maintenance work is done on highway medians, workers must observe strict safety rules and wear orange work vests.

Since all of these locations are high traffic areas, safety is a huge challenge. All median work requires lighted arrow boards, orange work vests and safety cones. The heavy traffic also provides plenty of trash for the crew to pick up, and makes sweeping and power washing all hard surfaces a must.
What started in 1993 as a $350,000 venture to provide work experiences for the homeless has grown to a $3.5 million operation directed by the non-profit Chicago Christian Industrial League. Workers maintain 17 miles of plantings and 865 trees on highway medians and other high visibility areas in the City of Chicago.