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The 'perfect gift?' Eighth Street chunks

Seller markets concrete fragments as three-piece gift set

BY JORDAN TRAVIS jtravis@record-eagle.com May 9, 2019



Record-Eagle/Jan-Michael Stump Traverse City's Eighth Street was closed Monday between Boardman and Woodmere Ave for a construction project that includes rebuilt road, crosswalks, trees, benches and lighting. Businesses in the three-block st will remain open during the project, which is expected to be completed in October.

Record-Eagle/Jan-Michael Stump



TRAVERSE CITY — It was called a moonscape, with craters once cited for their milkshake-mixing capabilities and used in a size comparison by a Traverse City meat market advertising steaks.

Eighth Street humor hasn't died just because the pavement's been nearly obliterated. One enterprising eBay.com user scooped up some fragments of the road and now offers the "artifacts" — three jagged hunks of concrete — as a "commemorative gift set."

Father's Day and Mother's Day are coming, seller vwsagecom helpfully reminded auction viewers. The concrete pieces were professionally extracted and are "fair trade" and come with a certificate of authenticity, the post reads. Pictures show the concrete laid out like unearthed ancient projectile points, a plain red gift bag with tissue paper sticking out the top — the "decorative satchel" mentioned in the listing — and a second-floor view of Eighth Street work in progress.

The seller set the starting bid at \$99, and the "buy it now" price is \$499, according to the post.

"I think somebody's making a joke out of this, and that's fine, I appreciate the humor," city Manager Marty Colburn said.

Seller vwsagecom doesn't mind if you laugh, but the winning bidder will get the real deal, they said — they're a local with ties to the Eighth Street corridor but declined to identify themselves beyond that.

"It's a real auction, and I'd be happy to get a bid, people spend money on much less concrete things," the seller said.

Colburn said he had no idea if any city ordinance would prevent someone from selling pieces of the road, and chuckled to hear the details of the auction. It's not the first laugh he's had at Eighth Street cracks — Maxbauer's billboard making the comparison to steaks and potholes got another, he said.

Eighth Street between Boardman and Woodmere avenues closed Monday and will be closed until Oct. 18, with partial reopenings possible toward the end of the time period.

Brian Boals, project manager for engineering firm Gourdie Fraser Associates, told commissioners Monday that the road is gone save one lane.

Commissioners in April approved a \$4,120,390.25 contract with Elmer's Crane and Dozer to rebuild a slightly narrower road with sidewalks and bicycle tracks along both sides, three mid-block pedestrian walkways and other features.

Colburn opened part of city commissioners' Monday meeting, where Boals presented details about the detour, with an emphatic "woo-hoo!"

The work has been a long time in the making, and Colburn credited everyone involved in the process, from city staff and leaders to residents who gave input, he said after the meeting. They worked on redesigning a stretch of road that's been the source of much angst, he said.

"The good news is that the frustration by the city over so many years as the road worsened, is that we're now going to take this corrective action and put it into a very healthy walkable, bikeable and driveable corridor," he said.

All the buzz around the street is part of what inspired the auction, the anonymous seller said.

"Eighth Street has consumed the community for many years," the seller said. "It just seemed like an appropriate thing to do to say farewell to a few blocks so many people have an opinion about."

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