

Downtown renovation nears start date

By Mike Moore

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After nearly three years of public meetings and planning, Nicholasville Mayor Russ Meyer announced that work on the long-awaited downtown renovation project will soon be under way.

Last week, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet District 7 sent the city final approval on its plans, and Meyer said it was just a matter of time before the work begins.

"That means we go to bid," Meyer said. "All plans are approved, and we're ready to go to bid with it. It's been approved by District 7, and that's where we've been though this process of getting everything approved. The reason it's taken so long is there's so many utilities down there and different regulations on how you handle them; it's been a long process."

The city now must go through a 30-day bid process. Afterward, the city will select a company to perform the construction.

Josh Karrick with CDP Engineers said the actual construction could begin as early as mid-June.

"Right now, we're scheduled to open bids on May 20, so construction would start as soon as the commission approves the best bid," he said. "I would say (people) will see activity beginning around June 15; I would think they would have some cones and stuff out."

The downtown renovation plan stretches from the new city hall location on North Main Street to the post office on South Main Street with the focus on the area in the center of town near Oak Street.

It also calls for moving utility lines off Main Street and preserving on-street parking while at the same time enlarging the pedestrian area, giving more flexibility for things such as outdoor cafes while making the distance across intersections shorter and safer for pedestrians to cross.

The work will be done one block at a time.

"It's a block-by-block process," Karrick said during a May 2009 public meeting. "Instead of having the contractor come in and do demolition on all three blocks, we will require them to only do demolition on one block, and as soon as that's over, they'll start the concrete work and come back down and finish it. Then they'll start the demolition on the second block and repeat that process."

The project also calls for three parks: a music park at the corner of Oak and Main streets that could be used for outdoor performances such as concerts and festivals; Vineyard Square located just behind the music park, an open-air outdoor plaza with water features that could be used for festival-type events; and Palisades Park on York and Maple streets along Town Branch Creek, which would have a limestone wall and green spaces with seats.

Karrick said construction will take eight to 10 months, including the bidding process.

The total cost of the downtown renovation project is \$1.5 million.

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