Main Street Square makes underground progress

By Barbara Soderlin
Journal staff

Work on the future Main Street Square plaza is progressing according to plan, even if it might seem like little has changed in the past month.

"While all the stuff on the surface will be pretty and that's what people will come to see, that stuff underground is extremely important," said project architect Deane Rundell of Indiana-based Rundell Ernstberger Associates.

"A lot of people don't understand that."

The underground work, including infrastructure for the interactive water feature and skating rink, is "considerably more complicated" than what will go in on the surface, said Neal Schlottman, president of SECO Construction, the firm handling the project.

Right now, it is a mass of pipes and wires all carefully laid to specifications at the right depth below grade, Schlottman said.

Also recently, the contractor has continued to remove more dirt and rubble from the site and is preparing foundations for the "tapestry stones" that will line Sixth and Main streets.

And micropiles, a type of foundation support, have been installed under the parking garage to hold the restrooms and mechanical room for the plaza.

On Tuesday, a trench was dug in the alley between the plaza and the parking garage and crews are installing utility conduit in preparation for removing overhead power lines.

In coming days, the city will temporarily close the north lane of Main Street in front of the Square to allow for demolition and curb and gutter work associated with the project.

Also, the sidewalk corner at Sixth and Main and the temporary sidewalk on Sixth Street along the west side of the plaza will be closed and pedestrian traffic diverted to the west side of Sixth Street along the side of Prairie Edge, Schlottman said.

The temporary closures are necessary for work that will extend the plaza pedestrian area into what had been parking spaces along Sixth and Main streets.

Work has been smooth and uneventful over the past month, Schlottman said, with some days of warm weather perfect for construction, and other days so cold that crews stayed home.

The contractor is obligated to finish the work by Sept. 30 and expects to be able to meet that deadline.

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