

2013: North Vernon Stellar Year in Review

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Downtown North Vernon has been transformed by the Stellar Community project, now in its third year.

Three significant accomplishments were finished during the past 12 months. The first was completion of the new downtown plaza. Features of the plaza include a stage, archway, fountain, decorative seat walls, lighting and electrical power for events. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the projects will be held this spring.

A second major accomplishment was the acquisition of the First Financial Bank drive-through. After the acquisition, the staff was transitioned to their flagship site on the north side of town to make room for streetscape improvements on Madison Avenue. First Financial Bank made significant strides in working with the city to accomplish these goals and had a deep understanding for the need for a safe pedestrian focal point downtown. This need is aligned with one of the major goals from the North Vernon Comprehensive Plan that the city is working to achieve.

“It’s a huge transformation,” said North Vernon Mayor Harold “Soup” Campbell. “In the past three years we laid down the infrastructure for large-scale economic growth in the city.”

The third achievement was completion of Phase I of the downtown streetscape, including restoration of the brick street on O&M Avenue, and new sidewalks, lighting and planters along Fifth Street, north of the railroad tracks.

Work on remaining Stellar Community projects will continue in 2014. Phase II of downtown streetscape work will include new sidewalks, pavements and planters on Madison Avenue and Fifth Street, south of the railroad tracks. The overall design theme will be consistent with the elements from Phase I.



These achievements join previously completed projects such as converting the empty Carnegie Library into the new North Vernon Government Center which is now operating as intended for public use.

Phase I of the Irish Hill Housing Revitalization project was also completed with improvements of streets and sidewalks as well as expanding the housing revitalization to other parts of the city. In Phase I of the project, 14 homes were renovated. In Phase II, 22 homes will be assisted with various improvements such as roofs, furnaces and electrical improvements.

Façade improvements will be made to 27 downtown businesses that have been qualified to participate. The contract has been awarded to West Bradshaw Construction and will start at the beginning of March and is expected to take a year to complete.

Planning for the Muscatatuck Trail also took a major step forward with the approval of the environmental reports for the project. Clearing this hurdle has allowed the city to move forward with appraising the property for the trail. It is expected that offers will be made later this year, and that construction work for the trail could begin in 2015.

Details about the Stellar Community projects can be found at www.northvernonstellar.com.

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