

Frequently Asked Questions: North Vernon Downtown Projects

With the proposed changes to the Stellar Streetscape plan for downtown North Vernon, the following FAQ has been updated to answer key questions about what has changed with this plan.

Why is the plan changing?

Concerns were raised with the current plan, including the loss of parking on Short Street, potential traffic concerns associated with making Madison Street two-way, and the desire to make Madison Street more park-like.

What changes are being made?

The revised plan is to keep Madison Street one-way southbound. To make up for parking lost on Short Street, Fifth Street will be made into a one-way northbound street with angle parking on one side.

Will Short Street be closed?

The current plan does propose closing Short Street.

When will this change be finalized?

The City Council must authorize and pass an ordinance to make these changes. These will be considered in upcoming City Council meetings.

Are other traffic changes being made?

As part of Stellar, there are several traffic changes being made:

- 5th Street: Convert 5th Street to 1-way northbound between US 50 and O&M.
- O&M/4th Street: Add stop sign on westbound O&M at 4th Street. Relocate stop bar and sign on 4th street to before the crosswalk.
- Poplar Street: Close Poplar Street to vehicular traffic at Madison Street. Poplar Street will become a dead end, and Poplar/Jackson will be converted to a 3-way stop.
- Short Street: Close Short Street to vehicular traffic
- South Madison Street: Close South Madison Street to vehicular traffic south of US 50.

When will downtown work begin?

Work will begin late this fall, or early in 2013 depending on weather. More specifically,

- O&M Avenue: Facades and streetscape work will start in late 2012/early 2013.

- 5th Street (North of the Railroad): Facades and streetscape work will start in late 2012/early 2013.
- Madison Avenue: Facades and streetscape work will start in mid-2013.
- Short Street: The plaza construction work will start in early 2013.
- Walnut Street: Façade work will start in late 2012/early 2013.

How long will it take to get the work done?

Work on each street will take 6-9 months to finish after work begins. Everything should be completed by the spring of 2014.

How will customers be able to reach downtown businesses during construction?

No business will be cut off to pedestrians during construction. Some streets will be closed to vehicular traffic at times to complete the work. Details are being worked out and will be discussed with local business owners before construction begins.

How will this impact traffic?

A key goal of the project is to simplify an area that out-of-town drivers find confusing and local drivers find inconvenient.

First, the plan will eliminate two of the six roads intersecting at Madison Avenue and U.S. 50 – greatly simplifying this intersection.

Second, at the Madison/U.S. 50 intersection, the revised plan will allow traffic on Madison, US 50 eastbound and US 50 westbound to each have a dedicated signal phase. This eliminates traffic conflicts that currently exist.

Third, the plan will eliminate two of the three roads intersecting Madison Avenue near the CSX depot – improving traffic safety in this area.

How will this impact parking?

The revised plan matches the number of parking spaces that currently exist downtown. The parking simply moves the angle spaces from Short Street to 5th Street.

Will Madison Street look any different than it does now?

Streetscape improvements will be made on Madison that will make it an attractive space. Landscape areas will be added. New park benches will line the streets providing attractive places to relax. The sidewalk in front of the Park Theater and White Front Café will be widened to allow outdoor dining.

Why close Short Street, did you look at other options?

The community's 2009 North Vernon Comprehensive Plan recommended, as the first priority for downtown revitalization, the closure of Short Street to create an active public space in the

downtown. As a community without a courthouse square or other public space downtown, the goal of this plaza is to provide a central focal point and gathering space for the community.

Other options were considered before selecting the current plan.

We reviewed ideas for keeping the street open to traffic and parking – and only closing it for events as needed. This was ruled out because keeping the street open to traffic would not allow the space to be used on a daily basis by residents. Permanent trees, seating and other amenities are also not possible with this approach.

Most recently, we reviewed a plan that converted Madison Street to two-way traffic. Many residents and businesses have expressed concern that this plan does not adequately address traffic and parking issues.

Will the new Wal-Mart increase traffic on Madison Avenue downtown?

While some increase in traffic could be anticipated, there is already an existing Wal-Mart on the north side of the City. No large change in traffic patterns from local residents should be expected.

Will traffic at 4th and O&M be impacted?

A new stop sign is proposed on westbound O&M at 4th Street.

Will rail crossings on Madison near the Post Office and on 5th Street near Greathouse Hardware be impacted?

All three crossings in this area will be improved. The new crossings will have a concrete surface, similar the work installed on the Madison Railroad crossing over U.S. 50.

Will pedestrian crossings over the Madison Railroad be restricted?

There will be a fence along either side of Madison Railroad parallel to Madison Avenue/Short Street. There will be designated pedestrian crossings at two to three locations.

What is happening at the Police Station site?

A new mixed use project was originally proposed. We are discussing ideas with potential developers, but nothing is proceeding at this time.

What happens to the bank drive-through on Madison Avenue?

The drive-through/ATM is in the project area. In order to accommodate the proposed project, it is proposed to acquire the bank site. The city has initiated discussions with the bank regarding this issue, but no decisions have been reached.