

Frequently Asked Questions about Stellar Downtown Construction Projects

Starting this year, construction will begin in earnest on downtown North Vernon's Stellar Community project.

The results will be a grand new meeting place for the community and a magnet for new businesses and shoppers.

"They'll be some dust and a little inconvenience, but when it's over downtown will look great," said North Vernon Mayor Harold "Soup" Campbell.

"Winning the Stellar Community grant will let us get more downtown revitalization work done in the next 24 months than we would have been able to do in years, if not decades," Campbell said.

Phases 1 of the streetscape work should begin construction in the second half of 2012. Phase 1 will include work on O&M and 5th streets north of the CSX railroad. Work in 2012 would also include work on Short Street. The second phase, including work on Madison and 5th street south of the CSX railroad, will begin in 2013.

Details about these and other Stellar Community projects can be found at www.northvernonstellar.com.

"We are doing everything we can to minimize problems for local businesses and their customers," said Cory Whitesell, project manager for Hannum, Wagle and Cline Engineering, which is overseeing the construction. "Meetings will be scheduled with business owners before construction begins to explain the construction sequence," Whitesell said.

In the meantime, the following section answers some basic questions about the project.

What work will occur in 2012?

Three projects will begin in the summer of 2012:

1. Streetscape improvements will be made on O&M between 4th and 5th, and on 5th from O&M to Hoosier.
2. Façade improvements will be made in the same area.
3. Short Street work will begin.

What work will occur in 2013?

1. Streetscape improvements will be made on Madison between US 50 and O&M/4th Street and on 5th Street from US 50 to O&M.
2. Façade improvements will occur in that same area.

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

Pedestrian access will be maintained to all businesses throughout construction. The streets will need to 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.

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

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

Which specific roads will be affected?

- Madison Street will be converted to two way traffic between US 50 and Main Street.
- Poplar Street will be closed from Jennings Street to Madison Street.
- Short Street will be closed entirely.
- Madison Street (South of US 50) will be closed.

How will this impact parking downtown?

There are currently over 800 parking spaces within a five-minute walk from Short Street; that's enough parking for downtown even if all floors of every building were occupied. As long as parking is not decreased, there will still be enough parking.

While closing Short Street eliminates 17 parking spaces, 28 new spaces will be added only steps away. Eight new spaces will be created along Madison Avenue. Twenty additional spaces are proposed in a new public lot near the Depot.

Won't redevelopment at the Arvin site and police station cause parking shortages?

No. Those developments will be required to provide their own parking.

What is happening at the Arvin site?

The Stellar project includes funding for the city to buy the property, clean up existing environmental issues at the site, and tear down the building. Ultimately, the intent is to ready the site for future private development. A voluntary offer to purchase the property has been made at this time.

What is happening at the Police Station site?

The Stellar project includes funding for a new mixed use building on the west side of the site. This would include commercial space on the first floor, and residential apartments on upper floors. The Police Station would remain in its current location.

Is acquisition of the former Napa building (next to the Carnegie) included in the project?

There is no funding in the Stellar Communities program for acquisition of the Napa building.

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

The drive-through/ATM is in the project area. In order to make Madison Street two-way, the bank site may need to be purchased. The city has initiated discussions with the bank regarding this issue, but no decisions have been reached.

What happens to the depot?

The train depot is in the project area. The tracks will remain “live,” but we are in discussion with CSX about the future of the depot, but no decisions have been made.

Is it too late to sign up for Façade improvements for my business?

Businesses have until February 29 to sign up. Signing up does not commit a business to participate, but instead makes them eligible to meet with the architect and receive a preliminary design for their business - at no cost to the business.

How can I review the materials that were presented at the January 23, 2012 meeting?

Plans are available at the Mayor’s office, or may be viewed online at www.northvernonstellar.com.

How can I provide input?

There are several ways. Persons can contact the Mayor, city council member, or any stellar committee member. There also is a way to ask questions on the North Vernon Stellar Ready website (www.northvernonstellar.com). Click “Contact Us” in the upper right corner.