

From Arkansas Online

Infrastructure Key to Rogers Downtown Plan

By Teresa Moss - July 6, 2015

Updating roads and alleys are infrastructure improvements suggested in the newest draft of the Rogers Downtown Plan released late last month.

“If you don’t upgrade infrastructure you limit the potential of the plan,” said Scott Polikov, Gateway Planning president.

Rogers contracted Gateway Planning of Texas to create the plan last year. Officials have said the plan should be finalized by the end of July.

Redoing streets in some downtown locations could help activate the plan, Polikov said.

Arkansas Street between East Walnut Street and East Cherry Street is one road highlighted in the downtown plan. Polikov said pedestrians will need to cross the road heading to a city bike park on East Cherry Street. The bike park is currently under construction.

“We are not talking about widening the road,” Polikov said. “When streets are wide, the traffic moves faster and it is not friendly to pedestrians.”

The road needs to look more aesthetic, Polikov said. Improvements to the intersection of East Cherry and Arkansas Street also could be needed, he said.

Rogers City Council approved \$365,000 for the purchase of property at 101 E. Cherry St. last month. It includes a city block between Cherry and Poplar streets. It also is bordered by Arkansas Street.

Mayor Greg Hines previously said the purchase makes sense because the city will need to update Arkansas Street in the future. A portion of the property would need to be purchased for right of way before starting the project, he said.

Funds have not yet been allocated by the city for improvements of Arkansas Street.

Derrel Smith, Rogers city planner, said the city is working on other road projects that will enhance downtown Rogers. The street improvements are projects paid for by the Rogers’ 2011 bond issue.

First Street between Olrich Street and Veterans Park is being widened to five lanes. The project started in February and is set to be completed during Spring 2016. The improvements will make access into downtown easier.

Monte Ne Road also is being widened from Oak Street to New Hope Road. A portion of the project will be completed this summer. Another portion will be completed by the end of 2016. The project also will make access to downtown more convenient.



PHOTO BY JASON IVESTER

Downtown businesses are reflected in the storefront windows of White Dress Boutique in this January 2013 file photo. Owner Debbie Abbott, who bought the boutique in November 2013, moved the store to its current location at 116 W. Walnut St.

Another suggestion in the plan includes reworking alleyways, Polikov said. The space could be used for events or even utilized by food trucks. Alleys between First and Second streets and Second and Third streets are highlighted in the plan.

“You have some great spaces,” Polikov said. “How can you activate those and get people to use them?”

Smith said the city has already started investing in lights to string along some alleys in the city. The lights will make the alleys more usable in the evening, he said.

Clarice Moore, owner of The Rabbit’s Lair, said she would like to see alleyways used in the city.

“I think it would be very attractive,” Moore said. “It makes for an interesting city.”

Using alleyways for events instead of closing down streets could also be beneficial for business owners, Moore said. She has sometimes been burdened by events that close down First Street in front of her business that sells fabric, yarn and needlework items.

“Most of our customers aren’t young,” Moore said. “They complain to us about it.”

Revamping green space in the city could also provide other options for events, Polikov said. The plan suggests that Frisco park be updated from West Walnut Street to just past East Cherry Street.

“We want to reinvent this to be a better space for events,” Polikov said.

Smith said there have been some discussions at the city level about Frisco Park. There aren’t any official plans made at this time, he said.

The city is currently spending \$17.5 million to renovate the 236-acre Lake Atalanta Park. The park connects to downtown and has been described as a major attraction to the area.

“The city is committed to downtown,” Smith said. “We will continue to do projects to spur development.”

The plan also suggests sidewalk work, updates to sewer and water utilities and revamping parking downtown.