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# Rogers Downtown Plan Nears Completion

by Teresa Moss | May 4th, 2015

A downtown revitalization plan for Rogers about a year in the making is expected to be released to the public this summer, officials said Friday.

The city contracted with Gateway Planning of Texas last summer to create the plan. A final public review could take place in June, said Scott Polikov, president of Gateway Planning.

“The purpose of the initiative is to make sure that downtown Rogers is reinvigorated,” Polikov said. “Relative to other downtowns in Northwest Arkansas it has the most promise because of its historic preservation and amenities such as Lake Atalanta and the bike park.”

Community input sessions and workshops kicked off the process last year, Polikov said.

“We have probably interviewed about 150 people,” Polikov said. “A lot of it has been community driven.”

Results from the community sessions and a market analysis were merged together to create a plan, Polikov said.

“Remarkably a lot of the market study says what the community also wants,” Polikov said.

A variety of housing options downtown is one example of something the community wants and the market shows is needed, Polikov said. People also want more entertainment and restaurants downtown.

“There is also a strong market for that,” Polikov said.

The last phase of the project includes outlining technical aspects of what needs to happen for the city to reach its downtown goals, Polikov said. Recommendations for zoning ordinances, infrastructure improvements and policy changes are being developed to fit the plans, Polikov said.

Polikov said feedback will be collected about the plan once it is released in June. Additional changes based on feedback will be made before it is finalized, he said.

Mark Kruger, Rogers City Council member, has been the council’s voice in the process. He said the plan provides the research needed for the city to make educated decisions on how to move forward with the downtown area.

“It gives us a thought process of how we need to go about this,” Kruger said. “This will give us a huge boost in our efforts to revitalize downtown.”

Rogers is behind other towns in the region when it comes to revitalization, Kruger said. Fayetteville’s downtown has been developed for some time, and Bentonville recently has become an example for revitalization.

Kruger said Rogers has the benefit of a historic district. It also has already seen the opening of several businesses and restaurants that have begun to draw people downtown in recent years.

Additional efforts from the city to update infrastructure and create specific zoning guidelines will help develop the downtown further, Kruger said.

“It will pull more people in here and hopefully this will become a place that is vital and growing and will contribute part of the tax base for this community,” Kruger said. “This plan will hopefully give us a starting place for that.”

Lisa Hastings, co-owner of Kirby’s Kupcakes in downtown Rogers, said the downtown area already is seeing the start of

increased interest.

“A guy rode his bike from Bentonville just for cupcakes this weekend,” Hastings said. “He then rode back to Bentonville.”

The revitalization plan will bring awareness about what the city has to offer, Hastings said. She said it will also make it more usable and desirable.

“There is a story and a family behind every business down here,” Hastings said. “The revitalization plan will bring more people down here and each one of us will be touched.”