



City Manager's Office

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## River District streetscape designs nearly complete

Designs for the streetscape improvements along portions of Main Street and Union Street in the River District are nearing completion, with final designs to be submitted for consideration in early June.

Consultants hired to develop the designs said on Wednesday that their work is 75 percent complete.

"We are close to having the full package together," John Schmidt, vice president of Land Planning & Design Associates (LPDA), said Wednesday. "We are at that threshold now where we are looking at all of the logistics, including all the utilities."

The project remains on schedule. Following design approval, construction bids will be solicited, with construction scheduled to begin in July and continue through March of 2013.

The streetscape project will focus on Main Street from Memorial Drive and Craghead Street to Floyd Street and on North Union Street from Main Street to Spring Street.

Funds will be used to widen existing sidewalks, install brick pavers, create more visible and safer pedestrian crossings, and provide amenities such as outdoor café space, trees, benches and new lighting.

Also as part of the project, the number of traffic lanes on Main Street will be reduced from three to two by eliminating the center turn lane. This change will allow for the wider sidewalks.

Consultants once again provided on Wednesday a computer-aided view of how each block might appear as currently designed. Those designs were presented at three meetings on Wednesday, beginning with an early afternoon meeting of representatives from several city of Danville departments that will play a role in the project. Later in the afternoon, a meeting was

held for merchants and business owners and operators along Main and Union streets. The final session was an evening community meeting at the Community Market.

Wednesday's meetings were the fourth in a series of meetings held this year to obtain input into the designs. Schmidt said they have incorporated that information, including the following:

- Install concrete curbing instead of granite,
- Use more cobble and brick pavers,
- Make use of the current street lights,
- Do not neglect Union Street.

Schmidt said using concrete cubing is less expensive than granite curbing. The savings will allow greater use of cobble and brick pavers for sidewalks as preferred by citizens.

Money also will be saved by refurbishing the existing street lights. In addition, walls and other vertical elements are no longer planned at this time. The consultants had proposed walls be placed in front of the parking lots located in the 500 block of Main Street from Union Street to Floyd Street. These walls would screen vehicles from view, much like on Bridge Street.

Other vertical elements were suggested to cover the fronts of non-commercial areas along Main Street – such as the school administration building.

The savings will allow more attention to be given to Union Street through the use of decorative trim on the sidewalks and planting of trees.

The designs take into account the varying character of the blocks, such as whether they are lined by traditional downtown storefronts or by non-traditional structures such as administrative office buildings.

Tree pits will be placed throughout the streetscape. Elm trees that have a high canopy and are urban tolerant will be placed in the pits on Main Street. Crepe Myrtles are planned for Union Street.

Decorative flower boxes will be near street corners.

LPDA is a landscape architecture and planning firm providing services since 1971 for both public and private clients. The company has offices in Charlottesville and Sterling. Its list of clients includes more than 25 cities and counties in Virginia, as well as hospitals, universities, state agencies and U.S. military departments.

The project is estimated to cost \$2.8 million, with half of the total provided by the Virginia Department of Transportation.

The streetscape project was determined to be the most feasible public project at this time following a study last year that identified public and private projects to bring new life to the River District. The district includes the downtown and tobacco warehouse areas.

Upon completion of the project, a second phase is planned if funding is available. The second phase will involve the reconfiguration of Main Street from its intersection with Memorial Drive

and Craghead Street to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge. The city is in the process of seeking a VDOT grant of \$800,000 to pay for half of the \$1.6 million cost.

However, LPDA is now developing designs for the creation of a plaza with a large fountain on Main Street near the bridge. JTI Leaf Services is donating \$400,000 for that project.

For more information on the River District and the development project, visit the city of Danville's website at www.danville-va.gov. For more information on LPDA, visit www.lpda.net.