

Coal Ave. Commons construction underway

By Rodd Cayton

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GALLUP — Groundbreaking on the Coal Avenue Commons construction is set for Monday, the city has announced.

City officials say the project, which has been years in the making, will transform Coal Avenue into a vibrant plaza street with improved infrastructure and design.

City Manager Maryann Ustick said the goal of the project is to create a plaza that serves as an attraction. In addition to replacing the sidewalks and street surface, workers will be installing lighting and landscape improvements.

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Coal Ave. Commons

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“We’re trying to design a place that encourages people to want to be there,” Ustick said.

The first phase will include removing the curb and gutter from the street and installing bollards to protect pedestrians. Bollards are short, solid posts that prevent vehicles from entering protected spaces, such as walkways or building facades.

A ‘phenomenal’ transformation

“I think the transformation of the street will be just phenomenal,” Ustick said. “(Visitors) are gonna be amazed at the design.”

She said that a successful “placemaking” project in downtown Las Cruces is an example of what city leaders want for **Gallup**.

“There was absolutely nothing there,” Ustick said. “Now, businesses, hotels and restaurants are opening up.”

She said Farmington and other cities across New Mexico and the U.S. are undertaking similar revitalization projects.

The \$3,393,618.55 cost of the Coal Avenue

The work will include four milestones:

- The intersection at Third and Coal Avenue into the middle of the block west of the intersection will see replacement of the storm sewer and repair of the street into the intersection after the storm sewer is completed.
- Coal Avenue between Second and Third Part 1 will include removal and replacement of the sidewalk in front of businesses.
- Coal Avenue between Second and Third Part 2 will include removal of the road surface, completion of the storm sewer replacement and installation of underground utilities.
- Coal Avenue between Second and Third Part 3 will include installation of trench drainage and finishing of the road surface.

While this project takes place, additional construction is occurring in the downtown alleys to improve utility infrastructure. The city will issue separate updates about the impact of that project on trash collection and traffic flow within the alley as information becomes available.

The Coal Avenue Commons project originated as a collaboration between local organizations, community members, and business owners.

Commons construction project is being met with state and federal dollars, as well as money from the city and **Gallup Mainstreet**.

The project is expected to continue into March 2021. **Gallup** is collaborating with Murphy Builders and **Gallup MainStreet** to minimize the impact on downtown businesses and to encourage residents and tourists to continue visiting **Gallup**'s historic downtown, according to a city press release.

Coal Avenue will be closed from Second Street through the Third Street intersection into the middle of the block between Third and Fourth streets. The walkway between Coal Avenue and Aztec Avenue will remain closed for the duration of the project to ensure pedestrian safety.

A special fenced-off walkway will permit pedestrian access to storefronts in the construction area.

Information on project logistics is available from project manager C.B. Strain at 505-863-1244 or cstrain@gallupnm.gov. Anyone with any questions about construction mitigation and business retention is asked to contact Kara Smith of the **Gallup Mainstreet Arts & Cultural District** at 505-879-0366 or director@gallupmainstreet.org.

In addition, interested individuals may contact the city government or **Gallup Mainstreet** for regular project updates.

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