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## A Main Street makeover

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Downtown

2020: Widening project meant for business growth, not beauty

Widening Main Street's sidewalks isn't about making the downtown "pretty," said Jennifer Kretovic.

Since she began pitching a proposal to revamp Main Street, Kretovic, the executive director of citizens group Concord 2020, said she's heard people dismissive of the idea describe it as a beautification project.

But that "was never the focus," Kretovic said. The aim, she said, is to make Concord "the city where businesses coming to the state want to put their business."

To that end, the consulting firm that 2020 and nonprofit Main Street Concord have hired to come up with a plan for Main Street includes an economist.

Russ Thibeault of Laconia will work with Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, studying growth and demographic patterns to ensure that the firm's vision

for Main Street would bring the city "strong economic return for the next several decades," said Jessica Eshleman, Main Street Concord's executive director.

But besides drawing new businesses, Eshleman and Kretovic said they want to make sure those already downtown are on board with the project. Friday marked the first of four days the pair planned to spend visiting businesses, explaining what's happened since February, when they made presentations on a remade Main Street, and what's coming next: an open-house-style meeting June 30 at the Holiday Inn.

At that meeting, the consultants will have on display potential traffic configurations for Main Street: four, three or two lanes.

Those scenarios will also be on display at Market Days, where Eshleman and Kretovic will be on hand to talk about the project and get feedback.

The consultants will wrap up their work by November, when Eshleman and Kretovic intend to submit a plan to the city council.

Where it goes from there depends on the council's desire and the availability of federal funding, which the city hopes would cover at least 80 percent of the estimated \$8.25 million project.

Kretovic thinks the earliest any construction could begin is 2013.

And while the number of lanes, the width of the sidewalks and whether they'll be heated are all still up for debate, Kretovic said at least one option for Main Street seems to enjoy a consensus: "more strong, healthy trees."

## Parking plans

It may seem hard to imagine, but the city thinks it might someday need another parking garage.

That possibility - and the prospect of future development in the South Main Street area - prompted the city to insist it have the right to reacquire the Theatre Street parking lot from Steve Duprey when it agreed to sell the developer the property for his project at the Sanel Block.

While that's still the case, recent changes to the city's agreement with Duprey would make it more complicated to take back the 24-space lot, which Duprey will expand to hold about 100 cars.

Duprey's lender wanted language added to the agreement that more clearly defined how close to the new office building the city would have to provide replacement spaces: within 100 to 120 percent distance of the farthest Theatre Street space lost, if the city were taking the lot back for good, and within 150 percent distance if it were taking the lot for two years or less - to turn the property into a garage, for example.

Within that range are the Capital Commons garage and a number of on-street spaces, as well as the Market Basket shopping plaza, which has spaces the city could potentially lease, said City Assistant for Special Projects Matt Walsh.

"We don't want to stymie any development," Walsh said. "It's our anticipation that in the future South Main Street will continue to redevelop, and maybe 10, 20, 30 years from now, that property we sold might become an important linchpin."

The city had also agreed to let Duprey lease between 80 and 150 spaces in the Capital Commons garage at a discounted rate for the next 20 years, and he recently settled on 83 uncovered spaces, Walsh said.

But Concord Hospital, which will fill several floors of the five-story office building, will also lease spaces, and Walsh said he expected the hospital to take the remainder of Duprey's 150.

Of the garage's 516 spaces, the city designated 300 to be leased. Developer Michael Simchik, who owns the Capital Commons building, has rights to half of the leased spaces.

## Done, done and done

The buildings have yet to come down, but last week marked a less visible milestone for Duprey, who has finally closed the deal at the Sanel Block.

"It is done," the developer said Thursday. "Done, done, done, done." Though not without

signing his name 2,000 times, he added.

A trailer will be at the Sanel Block while crews handle asbestos removal, and then comes demolition, which Duprey said would happen within two weeks.

There won't be any traffic disruption on Main Street because of the demolition, he said, but Theatre Street will likely be blocked off while utility lines are relocated.

## Expanded menu

For two weeks, the Holiday Inn sign off Loudon Road has been plugging a new menu for Nonni's.

But the old menu hasn't disappeared - it's a menu insert available on top of the current offerings.

"My Goombah's Favorites" is a compilation of the restaurant's most popular specials, now available every night of the week, said Nonni's owner Matthew Mitnitsky. Included are a steak and shrimp scampi dish and lobster ravioli, as well as new salads and brick oven pizzas.

"Goombah" is slang for Italian-American, and Mitnitsky said the restaurant's use of the term ties into its efforts to brand itself as serving New York-style Italian food.

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