

## Coal Avenue spruce-up to continue all summer

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 01 April 2022 04:27

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In a few weeks, the intersection of Coal Avenue and Second Street may look a bit like a bomb went off. The explanation is more mundane, and the end result should be a big downtown improvement.

The big ditch is part of the Coal Avenue Commons project, and will make Coal Avenue between First and Second streets look like it does between Second and Third streets, with ADA-compliant sidewalks, new benches, landscaping and lighting and a new signal at the intersection of Coal Avenue and Second street.

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The first phase of the project was finished last July. The new phase will give the area a unified, more inviting look.

“We’re trying to make it like an attraction for downtown that benefits the businesses,” said Planning and Development Director C.B. Strain. “The more time people spend downtown, the more money they will spend downtown. The businesses will benefit and the city will benefit. It’s a project that we hope takes off and will allow people to do a lot more and better things downtown.”

But it’s going to get worse before it gets better, and the full construction project will last through the fall, Strain said, as crews work to replace water, sewer and drainage lines under the street, then rebuild the street and sidewalks. Some of the old pipes date back to the 1920s.

The intersection portion will take two to three months. When that’s completed, crews will work down Coal Avenue to First Street for another six or seven months – less if everything goes well and there are no surprises.

During construction that block of Coal Avenue will only be accessible to pedestrians, and the city is working to provide parking on Aztec Avenue for affected businesses, City Manager Maryann Ustick said.

The construction may also push the Arts Crawl over a block for a month or two, and will re-route the Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial parade in August.

The new signal at Second and Coal will have what public works types call “scrambling,” which accommodates pedestrians who want to cross the intersection diagonally instead of corner to corner across one street at a time.

“It allows for pedestrian travel in all directions,” Strain said. “It’s supposed to make it safer plus more pedestrian friendly.”

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The City Council awarded the \$3.5 million contract for the project to Murphy Builders at its March 22 meeting.

Funding will come 95 percent from NMDOT, with the city putting up \$175,000 in matching funds. A precise construction schedule will be available in a few weeks, Strain said.

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