

MAKING SHERMAN AVENUE NEW AGAIN

CITY WORKING ON RESHAPING EAST END OF CITY ENTRYWAY

July 29, 2016 at 5:00 am | By KEITH COUSINS/Staff Writer



Coeur d'Alene residents David Duncan and Brittany Fonseca cross Sherman Avenue near 13th Street on Thursday. The City of Coeur d'Alene is proposing the installation of crosswalks at three intersections on East Sherman. "There definitely needs to be more crosswalks here," Duncan says. "It's constantly so busy."

COEUR d'ALENE — Efforts to revitalize the East Sherman Avenue area of Coeur d'Alene are progressing and gaining more momentum every day, said Hilary Anderson.

Anderson, the community planning director for the city of Coeur d'Alene, briefed members of the Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene chambers of commerce on the past, present and future of the project during a public policy meeting Thursday morning. She told The Press the city's efforts are focused

on tackling smaller projects that are easier to accomplish, all while continuing to work with residents and business owners to develop a concrete plan to reshape one of the dominant entryways into the city.

"People are very enthusiastic and very interested in being a part of this revitalization effort," Anderson told chamber members. "They're excited about what's already happening in the corridor and want to see more of it."

This year, Anderson said the city's planning department has interviewed 27 individuals who own businesses and properties in the area about what they would want to see. Stakeholder involvement, she added, is important because it ensures everyone is on board once the city creates a master plan for revitalization.

Most of the stakeholders interviewed, according to Anderson, have been on board with the project and supplied great feedback to the city. Those who are not on board, she said, still want change to come to the area, but think it will happen organically.

City officials, as well as eight partners in the community, worked together this year to pursue a grant through the Idaho Transportation Department that would have allowed for the purchase of three rectangular, rapid-flashing beacons. These beacons, Anderson said, allow pedestrians to safely cross the street because with a push of a button, solar-powered lights flash to make motorists explicitly aware people are trying to cross.

Even though the city was unable to obtain grant funding for the \$45,000 project, Anderson said it is exploring other financing options and still considers the project a priority. The beacons, she added, would be placed at Sherman Avenue and Ninth, 13th, and 21st streets.

"We feel like it's important to do something at these three key intersections and the sooner the better to show that we're really making an effort and giving attention to the corridor," Anderson said.

One member of the chamber asked Anderson what sort of personality city officials and residents are hoping to see in a revitalized East Sherman. Anderson said although the city has not identified a particular theme for the area, it is clear from discussions with the community that there is a desire to see it as a space geared toward residents.

"We heard from some that they would like to have it look more like the early 1900s with a kind of industrial look," Anderson said. "They don't want it to just be an extension of downtown — they want it to have its own unique look."

Anderson added there has been strong support for a mixed-use area, with a "Makers District" aspect containing a lot of local business owners who make things like furniture or bread. Last year's "PARK(ing) IT ON SHERMAN" event was a tremendous success, Anderson said, and saw more than 700 people attend.

The event, which was financed through a community block grant, was what Anderson called a "demonstration project" to show residents what it would look like if portions of East Sherman were dedicated to local businesses that make handcrafted products.

Steve Wilson, president of the Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce, said the East Sherman corridor is comprised of an "older demographic," and asked Anderson if the city has received any push back on the project from those members of the community.

"They have been very involved and we have received great support from all the residents," Anderson replied. "Everybody seems to be saying that it's time to do this and is willing to help."

Anderson said the next step for the city in the revitalization project is to once again survey the community to ensure the master plan is developing in a way that fits the community's vision for the area. It will also host another PARK(ing) IT ON SHERMAN event in September, and plans to conduct a feasibility analysis to determine which aspects of the project can be completed quickly.