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On The Horizon

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As the new year approaches, the blocks along First Street have been taking on a new look. A new parking deck and other buildings have taken shape. More work is planned as the First Street Development Project progresses.

Today and Saturday, the Chronicle will explore the project's impact and its progress.

The five-phase project began in 2006. It is slated for completion in 2012 at a cost of more than \$100 million.

Phase one of the project, which includes the building of a new, larger building for the Blue Goose Supermarket, is complete. Phase two, the construction of a parking deck with retail and restaurant spaces included, will be finished in 2008.

The coming year will see more construction as two five-story, mixed-use buildings replace the old Blue Goose building and Harris drive-up bank. Plazas that could host performances and other events, as well as provide access to a new riverwalk, are planned.

St. Charles officials say they hope that the project leads to a more dynamic downtown area.

Key Elements

- 1. West pedestrian plaza:** The access street behind the first block of West Main Street will be closed, and a pedestrian plaza will be built in spring 2008. Part of it will include an area that could be used for performances.
- 2. Riverwalk access:** A plaza will be built to allow pedestrians to access a new riverwalk on the west bank of the Fox River. The walk will be built in conjunction with two planned condominium and apartment buildings.
- 3. The Plaza:** Construction began in June 2007 and will be finished in June 2008. The building will house a parking deck, retail spaces, and offices. The retail likely will open in August 2008.
- 4. River Loft and River Terrace:** The Blue Goose Supermarket will be demolished in spring 2008 and the store moved to a site between South First and South Second streets in March 2008. Condominiums and apartments will replace it.
- 5. Widening of First Street:** The additional space will accommodate diagonal on-street parking. The widening of South First Street is complete, and work on North First Street will begin at a later date.

– Amelia Flood



First street Project downtown St. Charles. West Main Street (top) Walnut St. (left to right bottom). (H. Rick Bamman photo)

COMMENTS

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