

Main Street improvement project set to begin in Bridgton

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By Jane Vaughan Lakes Region Weekly

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Bridgton's Depot Street intersection, depicted here looking east, will be renovated with accent crosswalks, bike racks and new lights. *Courtesy HEB Engineers*

BRIDGTON — Renovations to Bridgton's streetscape will begin Tuesday with work being done to the storm drain system.

Construction will "bounce around a little bit throughout the first weeks," said Colin Dinsmore of HEB Engineers, the project's engineer.

"There's little pockets where (underground utility work) is going to occur throughout the whole project area," he said.

The renovation project has been in the works for five years, said Town Manager Bob Peabody.

"The last streetscape was done in the mid-80s. So obviously you have to upgrade your infrastructure," he said.

The project will involve various renovations and improvements to the upper portion of Main Street, from Pondicherry Square to the monument. Work will include reconstructing sidewalks, installing new energy-efficient lighting and improving the safety for all users.

The town hopes the upgrades will stimulate economic investment.

“Obviously economic development is an important component of doing this work,” Peabody said. “With the ability of people to shop online now, you really have to create an atmosphere that people find attractive.”

As the renovations begin, residents will have to deal with some disruptions to traffic, including minor delays, although there will always be at least one lane of traffic open, Dinsmore said.

While some sidewalks will be dug up, he said that businesses and residents will still have access to their properties and homes.

“The contractor will work with all businesses to make sure they can still maintain their access to get into their building,” Dinsmore said.

“Everybody’ll have a little bit of pain, but I think the gain will be well worth it,” Peabody said.

Beth Doonan, owner of Beth’s Kitchen Cafe on Main St, is excited about the changes.

“I think the newly designed downtown will be beneficial,” she said. “I’m excited for the future of Bridgton. I hope we are wise in our decision making and don’t move too fast or too big or too greedy. I would like to maintain the way of life we work so hard to maintain.”

At the same time that the streetscape project is being done, Bridgton will also be undertaking its wastewater project, which will involve upgrading the town’s 30-year-old sewer system.

“The two projects will be going concurrently,” Peabody said. “It’ll be a challenge keeping both projects going as smoothly as possible. We’re going to have to closely coordinate both those projects so we’re not stepping on each other’s toes.”

Dinsmore said the two projects will work well together, saying, “There will be some new sewer mains that need to go into Main Street. Might as well do it all at the same time. We’re communicating well.”

He said as much renovation work will be done this fall as the weather allows, and it will pick up again in the springtime, perhaps April.

The streetscape project is set to be completed before the Fourth of July next year, Peabody said, “if all goes well, Lord willing and the creek don’t rise.”

Daily updates on the streetscape renovations as well as travel advisories will be posted on the town’s website and Facebook page.



Depot Square looking east will be renovated as part of the upcoming streetscape project. *Jane Vaughan / Lakes Region Weekly*