

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

City Council



STAFF

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SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION

College Avenue Infrastructure Improvement Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to bring awareness to this significant infrastructure project in downtown, ensure the proposed project is in alignment with current Council priorities, and seek feedback, concerns, or suggestions related to the project approach and timing.

This project includes replacing the water main along the east side of College and installing new pavement along both sides of College from Mulberry Street to Laporte Avenue through downtown Fort Collins. Minor wastewater and stormwater main replacement will also be completed. The water system improvement is being funded through the 2025/2026 budget and will replace existing 4-inch cast iron water mains installed in the early 1900's with new PVC pipe. Replacement of the aging water mains will improve levels of service for the water distribution system including water quality, system reliability, resiliency, and safety.

This project also includes concrete curb, gutter and sidewalk as well as asphalt pavement rehabilitation. Concrete curbs, gutters, sidewalks and the asphalt pavements have only received minor safety maintenance in this area since 2010. This area of College Avenue is especially important as it is the gateway to the downtown gem of Northern Colorado. Maintaining the quality and look of this area is essential to what makes the City of Fort Collins so unique and a destination for tourists and residents. Funding for the concrete and asphalt improvements are being sought after from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), City of Fort Collins Downtown GID #1 and City local funding resources.

Design of the improvements and initial outreach to the downtown community began in early 2025. The water system improvement project is currently at a 30% design level, and the contractor RFP went out in late January 2026. Once the contractor is selected, the project team will progress to final design and prepare a final construction cost estimate by the fall of 2026.

Construction is anticipated from January to June of 2027.

GENERAL DIRECTION SOUGHT AND SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. None.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

The Distribution System Replacement Program implements strategies to cost effectively maximize improvements to levels of service for the water distribution system such as quality, reliability, resiliency, and safety. The goal of the program is to replace or rehabilitate aging water distribution infrastructure with new infrastructure that meets current standards. The 2018 Water Distribution Master Plan identified high priority portions of the system for replacement or rehabilitation based on the system age, main break history and fire flow capacity. Currently, the program focuses on waterlines generally in the Downtown and City Park areas where Utilities records indicate the water system was installed in the early 1900s and fire flows typically do not meet current standards.

In 2023, City Streets Maintenance Program (SMP) and Utilities staff began coordinating the utility replacement ahead of planned re-paving of the roadway. Conversations with key stakeholders including the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) continued into 2024 and confirmed support for moving forward with the project ahead of the paving effort.

In 2025 funding was approved through the BFO process to complete the water improvement portion of the project. BFO Offer 5.32 Utilities – College Avenue Water Main Replacement provided partial funding of \$1,000,000 in 2025 to begin design, and \$2,527,000 in 2026 for construction.

All existing water mains identified for replacement in the College Avenue Infrastructure Improvement Project are 4-inch cast iron pipes installed in the early 1900's. Water mains will be replaced from Laporte Avenue to Mulberry Street with new 8-inch, and 12-inch PVC pipe. Total length of water main replacement is approximately 3,300 liner feet along five blocks. Dual water mains exist along this section of College Avenue on the eastern and western sides of the roadway. The focus of this project will be to replace only the eastern water main. Additional work to One Water infrastructure including replacement of smaller segments of existing stormwater and wastewater mains will also be completed as part of the project.

Design for the improvements kicked off in early 2025 with Ditesco Construction Services. After completing ground survey and utility locates, utility potholing began in early fall of 2025. The utility potholing effort involved collecting over 130 potholes along the project corridor and wrapped up in late October. To date, the project is at a 30% level of design. The current alignment for the proposed water main is located in the inside northbound lane of College Avenue. Sections of lateral distribution mains will also be replaced at Oak Street, Olive Street, and Magnolia Street.

Due to the inherent complexities with construction projects in the downtown area, this project will be delivered under a Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) project delivery method. This allows for the contractor to be brought on-board earlier in the design process to provide constructability reviews, cost estimating, and provide key input into construction phasing. This delivery method also focuses on a team approach while fostering collaboration, innovation, and ultimately leading to enhanced project quality and value.

Targeted concrete in the corridor includes upgrades to the curb, gutter and sidewalk safety maintenance work. It is anticipated that concrete work can be done directly behind the waterline effort as this work can be performed in colder weather. As during the last asphalt maintenance project in this area in 2010, the Streets Department is proposing to do nighttime asphalt paving work to minimize overall impacts to the area. Because asphalt work is highly dependent on ambient temperatures and dry weather, it is projected this work will need to be done in the May - June timeframe. As in 2010, the Streets Department is in the process of partnering with CDOT to procure the asphalt materials, while the Streets Department will utilize internal crews and equipment to perform the work. Funding beyond the asphalt overlay materials for this effort is proposed to come from the City of Fort Collins ¼ Cent Sales and Use (S&U) Tax Reserves. In the event of funding short falls from either CDOT or the ¼ Cent S&U Tax Reserves fund, the Streets Department will either submit a request for additional funding from the 2027 budget process or request to use funding from the annual Street Maintenance Program budget.

The overall project schedule is provided in Figure 1. The project team will progress the project to final design once a contractor is brought on-board through the spring and summer of 2026. Final cost estimating, an Independent Cost Estimate (ICE), and negotiation of the final cost to construct the improvements will be completed early this fall. Coordination between CDOT and SMP is ongoing to develop the final scope of work for the paving operations.

Figure 1 – Project Schedule

Task	Date
Design	
Initial Outreach and 30% Design	Jan 2025 – Dec 2025
CM/GC Contractor RFP and Selection	Jan 2026 – Feb 2026
90% Design and Cost Estimating	Mar 2026 – May 2026
Final Cost Estimate	June 2026
Independent Cost Estimate and Establishment of GMP	Aug 2026
Pre-Construction/Construction	
Outreach	Aug 2026 – Jan 2027
Construction Work Order	Sept 2026 – Oct 2026
Pre-Construction Activities	Nov 2026 – Jan 2027
Construction	Jan 2027 – June 2027
Paving	May 2027 – June 2027

Outreach

Public engagement and outreach efforts have been ongoing since the beginning of 2025 to gain support for the project and raise awareness of the aging infrastructure and pavement degradation in downtown, and the need for the proposed improvements.

During design, outreach efforts included seeking business and key stakeholder input on time of year for construction, and overall phasing of the project. Face to face interactions with businesses along College Avenue were completed twice in 2025 to inform of the project, and then again ahead of the utility potholing effort.

The project has also been presented to several boards and commissions including the Executive Leadership Team, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority, Downtown Executive Board, North Fort Collins Business Association, and Water Commission.

Public outreach for the project will continue through 2026 with additional in-person meetings with businesses once design of the improvements is complete. During construction, weekly newsletter and website updates will be available to keep businesses and the public informed on the status of the project.

ATTACHMENTS / LINKS

1. Presentation