

Coal Avenue Commons ribbon-cutting only days away

Written by Molly Adamson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 27 August 2021 07:45



The wait is finally over: the City of Gallup will be hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Coal Avenue Commons Project on Aug. 24 at 10 am. The city began discussing the need for infrastructure improvements for Downtown Gallup in 2018, but the pandemic and weather delays slowed the process.

The city's Planning and Development Director, Clyde Strain, said these factors played a huge part in the timing and in getting materials for the project.

"Coal Avenue freezes over during the winter, so that slowed things down," Strain said. "Then the pandemic led to material shortages."

One of those shortages left the area without the proper lighting. Strain explained that the string lights that are currently up will not be the permanent light fixtures for the Commons. The permanent lights are currently on backorder and are expected to arrive sometime in September or October.

According to Jennifer Lazarz, the city's tourism and marketing manager, the project was split up into two phases, and now Phase One is complete. This includes Second Street and Third Street, along with the intersection and the walkway through the two streets.

Phase Two, which will begin shortly, will include the intersection from Second Street to First Street. The project as a whole contains two blocks of downtown and the walkway.

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In an interview with the *Sun*, Lazarz said the city took on the project as a way to improve infrastructure and to make the downtown streets safer for pedestrians. She also hoped that a more attractive area would lead to more businesses coming to the downtown area.

Lazarz said these goals will be met by widening the sidewalks, making sure they're even, and updating the utilities.

Phase One cost almost \$4.9 million, according to Lazarz. She said the city staff is currently lobbying for the second phase, but she estimated that the total bill will add up to about \$8.3 million.

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