

## Rejuvenating downtown streets

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent  
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### Coal Avenue Commons project nearing completion

City Manager Maryann Ustick and Planning and Development Director Clyde Strain were expecting the Coal Avenue Commons project to be finished around March or April of 2023. But as most Gallupians know, traffic is now flowing smoothly along First Street and Second Street.

Construction company Murphy Builders wanted to finish up before Christmas, so they did. In an interview with the *Sun*, Ustick said everyone was glad they finished earlier than expected with the bad weather Gallup has been experiencing lately.

The first phase of the project was finished in July 2020. The second phase focused on First Street and Second Street, with ADA-compliant sidewalks, new benches, landscaping and lighting and a new signal at the intersection of Coal Avenue and Second Street.

The only thing that still needs to be done is putting in the pedestrian lighting. Currently, the traffic lights work, but they only blink on and off, acting as a four-way stop.

The new signal at Second and Coal will have what public works people call “scrambling,” which accommodates pedestrians who want to cross the intersection diagonally instead of corner to

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corner across one street at a time.

Strain and Ustick said one of the main goals of the project is to bring more people downtown.

“I think it was very important for the City of Gallup. Traditionally, small towns were built around their downtowns... And as time went on and big box stores came about, downtowns kind of died, or [didn't have] as much traffic come downtown,” Strain said. “So this was a critical project to kind of revitalize our downtown, to make it more pedestrian friendly or event-welcoming. ...”

Although the Coal Avenue Commons project is basically finished, Ustick said the city has more plans for downtown.

“We're not done. We're working on pedestrian alleys,” Ustick said. “We're looking at ways to do some additional infrastructure in some of the alleyways that will help some of the businesses that are already here expand and redevelop. The investment in infrastructure by [the] government is a catalyst for investments by the private sector.”

Ustick and Strain said there would be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the project, but a date had not been set by press time.

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