

Kuna receives \$500K grant for downtown revitalization

- By ALX STEVENS editor@kunamelba.com
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Phase 2 of Kuna's downtown revitalization project will be from Avenue C (near the Post Office) to Bernie Fisher Park and Avenue A (before the roundabout).

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The city of Kuna received a \$500,000 Idaho Community Development Block Grant to complete its downtown revitalization project.

The grant, announced Tuesday, was recommended by the state Economic Advisory Council and approved by Idaho Gov. Brad Little.

"I think it's exciting times for Kuna, finishing this project," said Bob Bachman, Kuna Public Works director. "It's exciting to increase the opportunity for people to walk around downtown, make it very inviting."

The city can now start the second phase of its downtown revitalization project: improving the roadway, utilities, parking, lighting and sidewalks through Main Street.

The entire project has been a work in progress for years but gained momentum in 2015 as funding for phase 1 was being secured. The city received a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant for phase 1 of the project in 2015. Other funding has come from the city's budget, Ada County Highway District, Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho and Idaho Transportation Department.

Bachman said phase 2 of the project is shovel ready, being 95% of the way planned. Construction is planned to start in 2020. It will add stamped sidewalks and street lighting and improve parking spaces, roadway and utilities from Avenue C to Avenue A at the roundabout. Sidewalks and the roadway will be torn up and completely redone.

Phase 2 is estimated to cost about \$2.7 million. This \$500,000 grant is one of the last pieces needed.

"I'm excited. I can't wait to get it going," said Chris Engels, city clerk. Engels and other departments worked collaboratively to apply for this grant and other funding. "It's been a good process. It feels like it's been long, but we've been working on it the whole time."

The city has had a long-term goal of making downtown pedestrian-friendly and attractive. One of the hopes, Engels said, is that art will help foster downtown's "hometown" feel. That comes from parades, mom-and-pop shops, unique restaurants, even nightlife.

So far, benches, trees and banners have been added.

Engels said she is appreciative of the collaboration among city departments, stakeholders like downtown businesses and consultants such as J-U-B engineering.

"The other thing is the wonderful support from the mayor, who has been a part the leadership team on this, the council staying involved and being supportive, and the community being supportive," Engels said. "Those are key factors to the funding received and success of the project. The community has shown it's worth it."

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