

# City council approves additional \$141,000 for downtown project

- [By DANIELLE WILEY editor@kunamelba.com](#)
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Left to right: Councilman Greg McPherson, Councilwoman Briana Buban-Vonder Haar, Kuna Mayor Joe Stear, Council President Pat Jones, Councilman Richard Cardoza

KUNA — After weeks of discussion, the Kuna City Council decided to spend an additional \$141,000 to make up for a shortfall identified in the budget for the city's downtown revitalization project.

The council recently discussed the shortfall at a Feb. 3 meeting after city staff discovered a funding shortage in phase one of the project.

The city initially projected costs at \$2.14 million, but city documents show that estimate falls below the \$2.38 million price tag estimated by J-U-B Engineers.

On Jan. 17, the city council approved an additional \$66,300 for extra engineering work and curb extensions. The city council also approved another \$75,981 in additional federal funding for the project, which calls for building new sidewalks, creating more parking, improvements to street drainage and new lighting with the help of a \$500,000 grant from the state.

During the Feb. 3 meeting, the council unanimously approved to allow the extra funding to be used on curb extensions, moving electrical power lines underground and to leave another \$10,081 in reserves.

In November, 2015, the city of Kuna and J-U-B Engineers performed an assessment of the existing conditions in the city's downtown.

According to the document, the roads were ranked "substandard" because of crowning and pavement conditions. The assessment determined that Main Street is ranked as fair based on ACHD standards, but the alleyway from Avenue C to Avenue D between Main Street and Fourth Street is in poor condition.

The city and engineering assessment also states downtown's catch basins and storm drain lines are substandard, which contribute to creating ponds on roads during fall, winter and spring. Improvements identified include the installation of new catch basins, inlets, underground drainage pipes, oil-water separators and other infrastructure that complies with ACHD.

The assessment also addressed parking in the core of downtown. Currently, the city and engineers believe downtown parking is not clearly delineated or accessible. The assessment states more designated parking areas, including more spaces for handicapped motorists, should be created in the downtown area.

The document also outlines efforts to conduct a building assessment for a 12-block area in the city, limited to property lots within the Avenue E and Main Street project.

“Eight buildings were rated in poor condition and 12 properties rated in fair condition,” the assessment states. “Building façade upgrades and the replacement and widening of sidewalks will be identified to address these substandard conditions.”

The first part of the plan was originally estimated to cost \$960,000 and is limited from Avenue E starting from Fourth Street to Main Street and Main Street from Avenue E to Avenue C, which will then tie the first phase of the revitalization plan into the ongoing construction projects happening on Bridge Avenue and Avenue E sidewalks. The first phase of the plan will now cost just over \$1.1 million. The city plans to widen the sidewalks by five feet, place stamped concrete, create new landscaping, add decorative lighting and to create new benches and bike racks. Sidewalks will also be installed along the south side of Main Street from Avenue E to Bridge Avenue, according to the city document. New curb extensions will also be used on the intersection of Main Street and Avenue D to help ease traffic in the intersection.

Phase two of the revitalization plan will cost an estimated \$1.18 million and will start on Main Street from Avenue C to Avenue A, which will tie into the current roundabout construction. The city plans to replace the 10-foot-wide sidewalks, and six-foot wide landscape and hardscape sections, decorative street lights, bulb-outs at intersections, new roadway paving and new striping.

An official start date has not yet been announced by city officials.

“We are excited to begin,” city clerk Chris Engels said. “Now we are looking at starting the details of the design.”

The city document states funding for these projects comes from the city’s in-kind labor and cash, ACHD resources, the newly received grant, funding from the Community

Planning Association of Southwest Idaho, foundation grants, the Idaho Transportation Department's Alternatives Program grants and private donations.

## NEW CITY ENGINEER

A new city engineer was appointed during the Feb. 7 city council meeting to replace long-time engineer Gordon Law.

Paul Stevens was appointed by the council upon the request of Mayor Joe Stear.

"I put together a committee made up of the directors of the city and we vetted through the applications that we received. We did end up with some very good applicants ... and I think we had a consensus of Paul Stevens. He had the most working knowledge into the areas which Gordon works with."

Law announced his retirement last fall.

Stevens currently works in eastern Oregon and has a home in Payette, Stear said.

"The appointment doesn't mean he will take the job," Stear said. "But this appointment will let me finish negotiations and training."

Stevens was not present for the appointment.

Councilwoman Briana Buban-Vonder Haar and councilman Pat Jones said they felt comfortable with the appointment because the city directors agreed unanimously on Stevens.

In October, 2016, when the city was creating its annual budget, officials set aside enough money to pay for two city engineers for a full fiscal year to help fund a new engineer who could be trained by Law.

Law said he will be retiring officially on June 3.

The Kuna city engineer is in charge of managing the city's water system, well system, waste-water treatment plants and more.