

Fort Collins Coloradoan

Old Town Square Renovations Begin March 23

Pat Ferrier, *The Coloradoan* 3:09 p.m. MDT March 12, 2015



(Photo: Courtesy of Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority)

Renovations to aging Old Town Square will begin the week of March 23 and be fully finished in September.

The Fort Collins Downtown Development Authority board of directors on Thursday approved a \$2.86 million guaranteed maximum price contract with Mortenson Construction to update the square that is suffering wear and tear that comes with age. The contract is expected to be signed on Wednesday.

The total project will cost \$3.9 million, including a potential \$130,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Costs are about a third higher than the DDA originally expected but additional funding will come from \$900,000 in interest earnings and money set aside for Downtown River District improvements on Jefferson Street. The DDA hopes to recover some of that money through a \$130,000 Great Outdoors Colorado grant.

After combing through construction and materials costs again and again, DDA staff and contractors reduced construction costs by 13 percent. The final price tag also includes \$163,000 set aside for unforeseen expenses.

DDA projects manager Todd Dangerfield said the process was an "exercise in shaking out estimates, finding efficiencies and where errors in estimating" can occur and how amenities are installed and how it can be done more efficiently.

In addition to construction and contingencies, project costs include \$100,000 for benches, tables, chairs and other furnishings; \$47,000 for permits, materials testing and fees; \$60,000 to relocate utility lines and \$10,000 for legal fees.

City Manager Darin Atteberry questioned whether \$100,000 was enough to outfit the entire square. "The amount seems a little low given what this project is."

DDA Executive Director Matt Robenalt said the GoCo grant also includes some money for furnishings. If the grant does not come through, "We will have a conversation about the furnishings," he said.

Construction is behind schedule but Dangerfield said the project will be substantially finished in time for Bohemian Nights at NewWestFest and fully completed in September.

A shortage of construction workers and subcontractors throughout the Front Range, plus new and expanded features added after public comments, led to costs higher than the DDA's original budget, project manager Todd Dangerfield said in a Feb. 12 memo to the DDA board.

The costly additions include the vernal pool and pop-jet water feature in addition to refurbishing the iconic fountain, moving and expanding the stage, enhanced pedestrian and event lighting and putting down new pavers.

Also added are a second water feature to complement the iconic fountain; a new shade sculpture; an expanded children's play area; an outdoor fireplace; more and smaller gathering areas; and an enhanced entryway along Mountain Avenue.

Construction will be done in phases, with the stage and kiosk the first areas to be worked on. That's the area that will take the greatest amount of work, including relocating utility lines and public restrooms that are now in the kiosk. Engineering functions will be moved and pump systems for the existing fountain and new water feature will be relocated to space beneath the new stage.

The Square's restaurants, shops, bars and public spaces will remain open during construction.