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# Veterans Boulevard redesign approved

1/16/2009

By [Owen Covington](#)

Messenger-Inquirer

A community steering committee signed off Thursday on a proposed redesign of Veterans Boulevard to make it pedestrian-friendly and better incorporate the street into future plans for Smothers Park along Owensboro's riverfront.

The redesign was prompted by a downtown master plan recently adopted by local governments that included suggestions for how to attract more foot traffic to the riverfront and better connect downtown to the Ohio River's edge.

"It is designed as a place for people that cars can drive across," Paul Kissinger with EDSA told the steering committee during a meeting at City Hall. "This is a pretty full-on streetscape."

Under the new design, Veterans Boulevard will be covered in decorative paving stones and there will be a nearly seamless transition between the street, the sidewalks and the park area.

While Veterans Boulevard is currently lined with curbs, the new design calls the driving and walking areas to be on the same level, with traffic separated by

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landscaping and protective bollards, which are widely-spaced concrete or steel posts.

The design will create a plaza effect that will almost make Veterans Boulevard an extension of Smothers Park but won't sacrifice pedestrian safety, Kissinger said.

"In Europe, they move cars and people all over the place," Kissinger told the group. "We created certainly a very safe environment."

The plans for Veterans Boulevard come as the city works to finalize a contract for the construction of the new river wall about 45 feet into the river that will expand Smothers Park by about two acres.

In October, the Owensboro City Commission approved a contract for a joint venture between Hall Contracting of Louisville and Richard Goettle Inc. of Cincinnati to build the wall for a cost of \$37.6 million.

The final contract had not been signed as of Thursday primarily because the city attorney has been reviewing the agreement to ensure the group has its proper licensing and bonding to undertake the project, city Operations Manager Tony Cecil said.

There are no issues with the contractors or the contract, but City Attorney Ed Ray "asked a lot of questions that they've never been asked before," Cecil said.

The contract should be signed within a week, and mobilization by the contractors should begin shortly thereafter, Cecil said.

"Any time they've lost in mobilization can be easily made up," Cecil said.

In incorporating the ideas proposed by Gateway Planning Group regarding Veterans Boulevard, EDSA, which created the riverfront development plans, faced a challenge with storm water drainage that has typically been handled by the curbs along the downtown street.

With the new design, the street and sidewalks will be slightly sloped to channel storm water onto the north side of Veterans Boulevard, where it will be drained through street-level landscaped "swales" that can

absorb the water or through newly positioned drains, Kissinger explained.

The design also creates several trellised areas by the "signature" fountain at Veterans Boulevard and St. Ann Street that can meet the need for additional space for vendors or performers that Gateway had suggested.

EDSA designers considered additional stationary, walled kiosks for Smothers Park, but instead opted for open areas covered by trellises that have greater flexibility of use.

The areas would provide space for vendor tables or carts, but could be used in other ways when vendors weren't there, Kissinger said.

"The last thing you want to have happen is they're empty," Kissinger said of the kiosks. "This is about as flexible as you can get."

Now that the steering committee has offered its approval, EDSA will be working with the city's engineering staff on the changes to the design that will include alterations of the drainage system originally proposed.

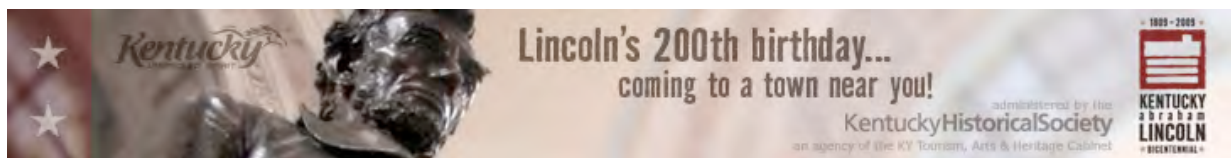
Other portions of the Smothers Park design, such as the outdoor children's museum and playground, the Charles E. Shelton Freedom Memorial and other public spaces won't be altered, Kissinger said.

The \$15 million in funding for Smothers Park, which will be constructed once the river wall is completed in 2010, is part of a package of \$80 million in downtown projects the city and county hope to fund through an increase in the insurance premium tax.

The renovation of Veterans Boulevard is expected to cost between \$1.5 million and \$2 million, and is part of \$12.9 million in downtown transportation projects.

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