

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Laura Newman, City Administrator

DATE: December 31, 2020

RE: Access and Road Closures During Construction of One Washington Place and  
Communication Plan

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This memo is to address concerns about the impact of construction of One Washington Place on area businesses and to set forth the plan for communicating with them and property owners about construction.

It has come to my attention that City Council has been contacted by business owners and constituents concerned about the impact that the construction of One Washington Place will have on area businesses. Specifically, there is a concern about how often and to what extent adjacent roads may be closed due to the construction.

Since it was first approved in September of 2016 and more recently on August 17, 2020, the Redevelopment Agreement for the project has contained the following provision:

**1.07. Disruption of Public Use or Public Property. Developer shall undertake the completion of the Project in a manner that is in the best interest of the Project, while acknowledging that the Redevelopment Site is bordered in part by public streets and walks. Developer shall perform all acts reasonably necessary to provide for continued public use of such affected sidewalks and streets without delaying the Project. Developer shall not disrupt the public use of City streets, City sidewalks and other City property without prior approval by the City of a reasonable detour plan, which approval of the City shall not be unreasonably withheld, conditioned or delayed, and Developer shall use its diligent, good faith and reasonable efforts, at all times and in a manner consistent with the Project Plan, to minimize the disruption to the public, and to obtain any approvals required of the State (IDOT) affecting roads under State jurisdiction such as Washington Street and Wilson Street, both of which function as part of Illinois Route 25 with the cooperation of the City. Both parties acknowledge that some road closure will be necessary for at some time or times during the construction of the Project that may extend for weeks or months, but the parties shall coordinate together to minimize those closures and, specifically, to minimize any closures of that portion of the roads that are part of Illinois Route 25.**

At several meetings where the project was being discussed, with the developer present, Council specifically requested that the developer was to make every effort to keep N. River St. open to traffic and that access to the N. River St. businesses by their customers and suppliers must not be obstructed. At each meeting where this was discussed the developer expressed his understanding that this is what paragraph 1.07 of the RDA requires and that he was committed to meeting this obligation.

I would also offer this video link, which is time lapse photography of the construction of The Rise in Columbia, MO, a ten-story, 178 luxury unit apartment building, as an example of what a similar construction project looks like in terms of disruption to traffic on adjacent streets:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr9KQv7xtPU&feature=youtu.be>

This week I sent you the lead article in Tuesday's Beacon News which provided an update on the Oswego Shodeen project that is very similar to One Washington Place. There, Shodeen has managed to build the project ahead of the expected schedule. After beginning in September 2019, the project is 75% complete. The City expects to take possession of the completed public parking garage in January and residents will begin moving into the building in February 2021. During construction, the developer supported local businesses by purchasing daily lunches for the workers on the project. He has mentioned that we could expect the same in our case. As well, the developer has offered to advertise for local businesses on the wrap around the construction fencing on the project. There are many other ideas that staff has been discussing with Mainstreet concerning additional ways that we can provide support to adjacent businesses during construction.

Key to any large-scale development project such as this is communication. The City has a good track record in this regard. For example, during the Wilson St. bridge reconstruction and N. River St. and Houston St. streetscape projects, the City hosted weekly in-person construction updates on these projects as well as providing websites where the public could follow the projects' progress.

After the first RDA was adopted for the One Washington Place project, City staff partnered with Mainstreet to host meetings the following spring of 2017 for nearby property owners and businesses to ask questions and share their concerns about the project. A contact list was created, and a weekly in person meeting on N. River St. was established to provide project updates. When the weekly in-person meetings began, it was anticipated that construction would get underway sometime that year. Unfortunately, delays due to an increase in expected costs and the need to renegotiate the RDA meant construction was put on hold. The following year, environmental contamination was discovered on the redevelopment site which has further delayed construction.

In retrospect, even when construction was still expected to begin in 2017, the in-person, onsite meetings were not well attended - only one member of Mainstreet and one to three business owners usually came to these meetings. As we look to the start of construction of this project in late summer 2021, we will look at a more effective means of communication. A good start would be weekly e-mailed briefings of the sort that our engineering department has produced for the Area 3, Ward 1, Main St., and Prairie St. projects in 2020. In addition to that, the City can host weekly online meetings that would allow property owners and business owners the opportunity to ask questions and interact with staff and the developer. We can also create a Facebook group for them where we post the weekly updates and recordings of the live meetings for those unable to attend in when the meetings are scheduled.

We would expect to initiate contact with the property and business owners about our communication plan at least six months before construction begins. Initial meetings will provide high level information about the phases of construction, timelines, and any known and anticipated disruption to the normal flow of traffic in the area. We would also share information about what the business owners can do to prepare for construction and listen and respond to any concerns they may have.

Right now, we are not within six months of construction. In fact, without TIF #6 being established and the developer acquiring financing for the private part of the construction, there is no anticipated date for the start of construction at this time. Once those two things have been accomplished, the developer will be able to estimate the time necessary to complete construction documents and apply for the building permit. Staff can then add the estimated time that it will take to review the building permit application to arrive at a potential start date for construction. Our best-case scenario at this time puts the start of construction in fall 2021. (NOTE: It may be possible to start excavation and environmental remediation sooner than when the full building permit is issued.)

In summary, I believe that the concerns raised about access can be addressed and solutions found that are mutually acceptable to all concerned.

One Washington Place is an important project for the future of the City of Batavia. With very little developable green space, this project represents the ability to create \$1,000,000 in additional tax revenue for all taxing bodies to share. The construction will fuel the local economy through employment of highly paid construction labor, construction materials and the consumption of local goods and services as evidenced by the Economic Impact Study (available on the One Washington Place web page). The residents of the nearly 200 luxury apartments will become patrons of existing downtown businesses and a great attraction for new businesses interested in serving a captive higher-income clientele. The public private partnership will result in adding new retail and office space and includes a 331-space public parking facility – one that is located beneath income producing real estate instead of surface parking which generates no revenue for the City. While there certainly is to be expected some disruption due to the construction of this project, careful planning and cooperation among all parties can result in a win-win-win for all concerned.