

# I Feel Good!

James Brown Boulevard to get makeover



Thanks to a special grant administered by the State Department of Transportation (DOT), James Brown Boulevard will be getting an extended facelift.

Funding for the streetscape project comes from the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, a federally funded program that allows the State Transportation Board to help local communities fund special enhancement projects.

The key to this particular program is local quality. When State Transportation Board Member Bobby Parham announced the award, he singled out state Representatives Quincy Murphy and Wayne Howard for their efforts.

According to Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Margaret Woodard, the \$1.3 million project will have a dramatic impact on the aesthetics of James Brown Boulevard, stretching from

Reynolds Street all the way to Laney-Walker Boulevard.

"It's going to have new sidewalks, new lights, trees and handicapped ramps," she said. "It will be very similar to the sidewalks we did on 10th Street."

Recently, the city agreed to match \$100,000 of the \$500,000 TE grant. The DDA contributed \$150,000.

The project, currently in the design phase, began in 2005 when the TE funds designated for the clean up of the depot property at 5th and Reynolds were unable to be used due to a change in the make up of the project.

"That was when Harry Kitchens had just put a contract on the Watermark project," Woodard said. "We were awarded the grant, but because the depot was going into private hands, we couldn't use public money, so DOT transferred the depot money to the newly approved 9th Street project."

The grant for the second phase allows the designers to go back and correct some things they were unable to include in the first phase due to a lack of funding, including the railroad crossing and the area in front of Dyess Park.

"This money allows us to go back and complete the project," Woodard said. "We felt it was important to go ahead and pick up these two areas because of the new Judicial Center."

The Judicial Center and the cluster of other major new projects along the road were prime reasons for the choice of location.

"The reason we started with 9th Street a couple of years ago was because of the new library, the TEE Center and the new Judicial Center," Woodard said. "Ninth Street is now going to become a gateway into downtown."

Even now, she said, it's difficult to make a left from Ellis onto James

Brown Boulevard.

"We felt like with these new projects, a new streetscape would really give it a much needed facelift," she said.

The first phase of sidewalk design has been designed and the environmental work has been completed. Design for the second phase will begin immediately.

Woodard says the grant will go a long way toward sprucing up one of the city's most important and historic streets.

"It's not pretty, and that's why we looked at it," she said. "We just considered all the SPLOST projects that are going on here — especially the three major ones — and that allowed us to partner with other entities."

Because anything involving the DOT is historically slow moving, progress might be slow, but Woodard said that completing the design phase will go a long way toward moving the project forward.