

VERTE 3/2/11

→ URBAN PROGRESS: THE DDA REPORT

Downtown Projects and Improvements Well Underway

PARKING PLAN BUDGET PROPOSED

Augusta's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) presented a workshop to the Augusta Commission on January 24, in which they presented the proposed budget for the new downtown parking plan. The DDA asked for no money from the commission, instead arranging for a third party to finance most of the proposed ordinance.

"Most of the money would go toward technology to better enforce parking regulations, such as putting sensors in the ground," said DDA executive director Margaret Woodard. "This would also provide us with valuable information, including which blocks have the highest turnover and the average length of stays, which could possibly lead to future long-term parking in residential areas."

Current regulations stipulate two-hour parking only from 5th Street to 13th Street and from Reynolds Street to Ellis Avenue. However, these regulations are virtually unenforceable as the ordinance currently stands. A 2005 traffic study noted that as many as 40 percent of downtown shoppers ignored the two hour parking limit and that 212 cars were parked for over six hours.

A new ordinance would allow safety officers to encourage traffic flow throughout the downtown area and would be modeled after the Clean Augusta Downtown Initiative in which a third party hired and trained the required personnel. Woodard called the meeting with the commission "very successful."

LIGHTING PROJECT UNDERWAY

Construction is ongoing throughout the downtown area for the downtown lighting project. According

to Woodard, all major cutout work has been completed on both the north and south side of Broad Street and 70 percent of the underground conduit has been laid.

"So far they've been doing a great job of keeping traffic moving," said Woodard. "They may need to close a lane once the lights actually go up for public safety reasons, but traffic throughout the downtown should be relatively unhindered."

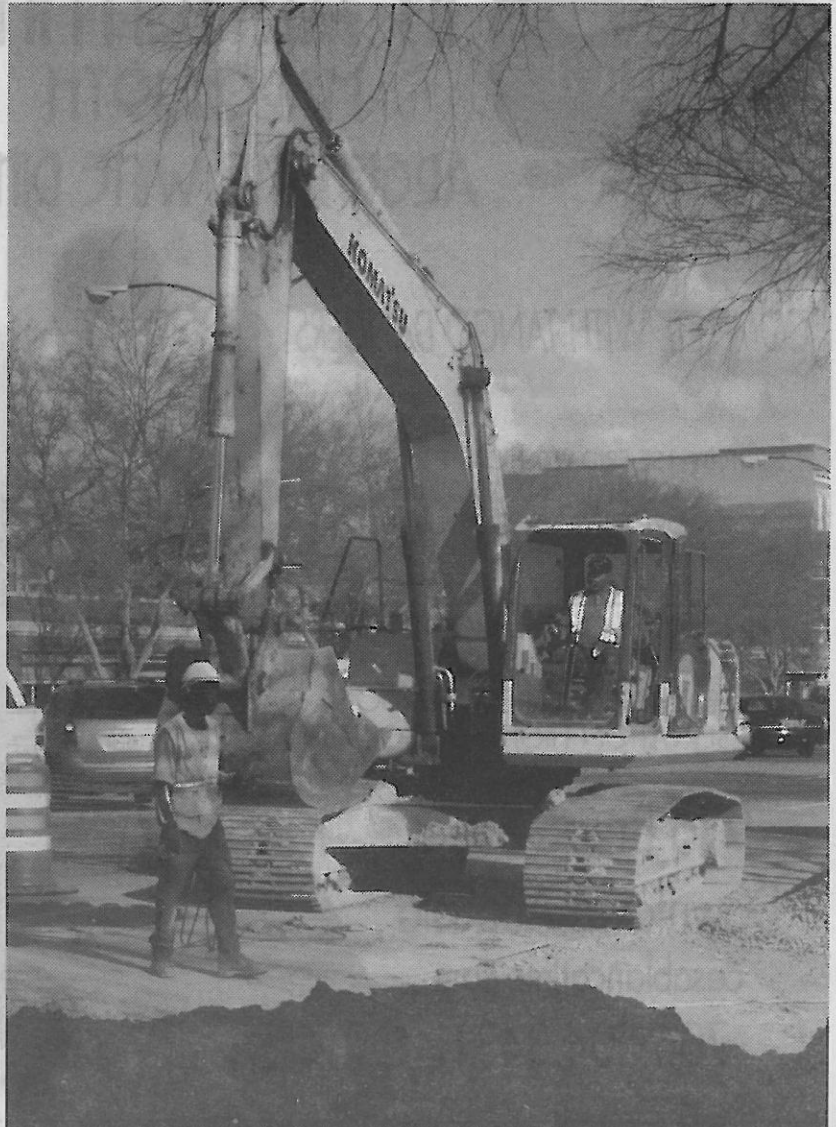
Next, the Department of Traffic and Engineering will begin construction on the street median. Ultimately, the area from 5th to 13th Street will receive 131 new overhead lights, including 91 pedestrian lights on both sides of the road and in the center median between 10th and 13th Street, as well as 12 area lights for parking bays. Woodard said that people can expect to see the new lights going up in 30 to 60 days.

BULKHEAD STAGE NEARS COMPLETION

The public stage at the end of 8th Street near the Riverwalk is nearing completion, and Woodard anticipates a groundbreaking in about 30 days. Improvements yet to be placed include an awning and bike racks. When finished, the stage will be available for Saturday concerts and other uses.

The Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) committee will convene again this month to approve applications for allocating these funds.

article and photo by CHRISTOPHER SELMEK



DOWNTOWN'S STREETS ARE BUSTLING WITH CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS