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Wednesday April 30, 2008

Downtown Master Plan is in place

By Bob Flynn
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After almost six months of collecting data on the area, conducting conceptual studies and getting input from residents and city and county officials, CDP Engineers unveiled its proposed Downtown Master Plan for Nicholasville Tuesday.

The proposed plan for a nine-block area, stretching from the new city hall location on North Main Street to the post office on South Main Street with the focus on the area in the center near Oak Street, was unveiled at a meeting with the Jessamine Fiscal Court and Nicholasville City Commission.

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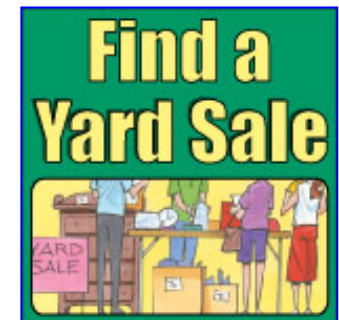
Image courtesy of CDP Engineers

An architect drawing shows the proposed Music Park and Vineyard Square on the corner of Oak and Main streets. The parks, part of the proposed Downtown Master Plan would serve as a gateway to downtown.

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Scott Southall of CDP said the plan incorporated some of the county's unique cultural, historical and physical aspects with things residents had asked for at two public meetings held earlier, such as more parks and open space, improvements in parking and sidewalks and a community center.

The proposed master plan incorporated those ideas as well as others, Southall said.

"We found three things that were unique to Jessamine County; the beautiful palisades region, the history of music, both country and bluegrass and the wine industry, and took some of the ideas from the focus meeting and tried to incorporate them into some ideas to our design process," Southall said. "We wanted to look at some opportunities at creating some downtown anchors such as a park, and using those ideas of the palisades, the music and the wine industry, came up with park ideas that kind of play on those ideas."

The plan showed three parks: A Music Park at the corner of Oak and Main streets that could be used for outdoor performances such as concerts and festivals, Vineyard Square located just behind the music park, an open air outdoor plaza with water features that could be used for festival type events, and Palisades Park on York and Maple streets along Town Branch which would have a limestone wall and green spaces with seats.

Southall said the plan calls for moving utility lines off Main Street, preserving onstreet parking while at the same time enlarging the pedestrian area, giving more flexibility for things such as outdoor cafes while making the distance across intersections shorter and safer for pedestrians to cross.

Tying in with the area's many rock fences, the plan calls for using limestone pavers along sidewalks, improvements to lighting and signage and replacing trees where needed.

Officials at the meeting like what they say and heard the engineers.

Nicholasville Mayor Russ Meyer said he loved the plan.

"I think it's doable with the city and county working together on it. I feel like it's a plan we can accomplish," he said.

Just when implementation of the plan can begin depends on how much money the community wants to spend initially and how long officials want to take to finish the project, because the entire project will be costly, Southall said.

City Commissioner Chris Moore said the Downtown Master Plan Committee would like to get cost estimates on moving utilities, then come back in a month or two to decide what the next step would be.

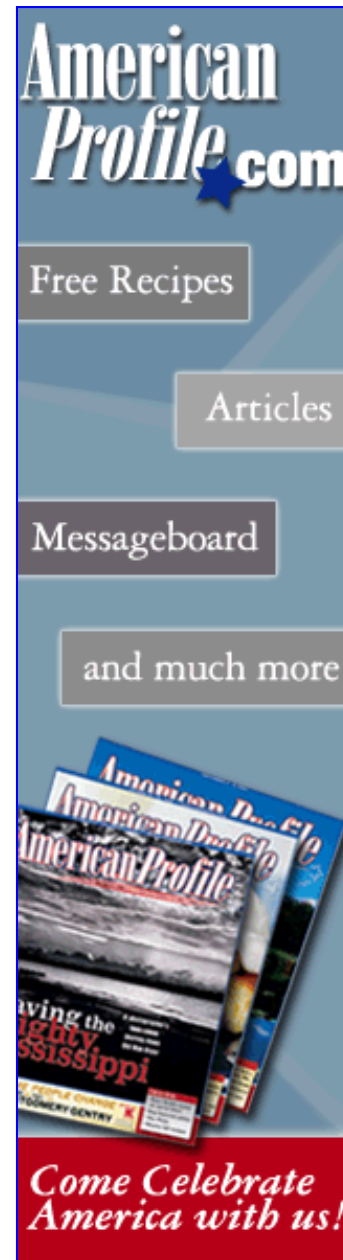


“We would like to get cost estimates and come back in a month or two with what it would take to do the lines and utilities and the sidewalks and then really decide what is the next step, because money is an issue,” Moore said. “Lets move all the lines and do all the sidewalks and hopefully over the next two or three years we can possibly bite off little chunks, moving toward the end goal.”

Southall said that just having the master plan in place would put the city in a position to present a package to go after grants because it showed the community was involved and moving forward.

The proposed master plan will be brought to the next joint government meeting in June for approval.

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