

Downtown Street Lighting Project

The City of Laramie has awarded the bid to Spiegelberg Lumber and Building Co. to complete the upgrading and replacement of the electrical infrastructure serving downtown street lights this summer between Garfield Street and University Street, First and Second Street in the spring/summer of 2009.

In this area are six separate electrical zones that are the responsibility of the city. This first phase of the project will include the replacement of all of the underground conduit and wiring to fifty three light poles between Garfield Street and University Avenue and First to Second Street, along with the replacement of twelve light poles with new antique light fixtures and replacing seven existing cobra head light fixtures with new decorative antique light fixtures. Prior to design and bidding of the project, the electrical engineering consultant researched lighting alternatives, including solar and LED street lights. Electrical engineers determined that in order to maintain the same lighting levels, two additional solar light fixtures would be necessary per block on the north side of downtown streets. On the south side of downtown streets, a traditional hard-wired electrical system would still be required due to the height of the buildings. These modifications would have increased the cost of the project by at least 23%.

Why must the downtown electrical infrastructure be replaced?

The current downtown electrical infrastructure was installed in the early 1970's and light poles were fitted with "cobra head" light fixtures. Since that time the downtown electrical infrastructure has been modified and expanded including the installation of decorative antique light fixtures and modifications to accommodate decorative lighting. In 2007 the city completed an assessment of the downtown electrical infrastructure that identified numerous deficiencies and potential safety hazards within the downtown electrical infrastructure zones. The report identified some significant deficiencies in the electrical system, noting there were "no equipment grounding conductors present in five of the six existing downtown streetlight electrical zones" and that "the majority of the conductors (wire) feeding the light poles were too small for the electrical load." These findings are significant because such inadequacies in the system "may result in excessive heat and electrical fires."

How will the downtown street lighting project impact downtown businesses, residents and special events?

City staff and the general contractor will coordinate and work together to do everything possible to minimize the disruption to the downtown. It is anticipated that downtown streets will be closed for a short amount of time, but only when electrical infrastructure must cross a street. All the remaining street closures will only involve the diagonal parking on a single side of the street at any given time in one half block intervals. The construction impact will be very similar in nature to the downtown streetscape tree project that was completed in 2006.

The Summer 2009 project is scheduled to begin in early April and will be completed by the end of September. This scheduled work is only the first of an estimated four-phase project. Total estimated cost for this first phase is projected to be \$750,125 with funding coming from a variety of sources, including:

\$425,000 from city general revenues;

\$215,889 from the 2001 Specific Purpose Tax, Downtown Streetscape Improvements;

\$165,000 from a Community Enhancement Grant from the Wyoming Business Council.

For further information please refer to the city's web page at www.cityoflaramie.org or Public Access Channel 11. Also, watch for forthcoming information about other projects slated to occur in the downtown this summer!