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Home > What's Up with East Lansing's Big Construction Projects?

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[1]

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By:

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While two high-rise development construction projects in East Lansing are now reaching their ultimate heights, the longest-awaited one is just starting foundation work. Meanwhile, the Royal Vlahakis proposed redevelopment is stalled according to Mayor Mark Meadows.

Here's your omnibus big construction update from ELi.

Royal Vlahakis project for the Dublin Square area:

The relatively new "Park Place" redevelopment proposal is for a \$190 million public-private partnership [2] and is proposed by Royal Apartments and Vlahakis Management for the area on and around the site of Dublin Square. This project has been under consideration at East Lansing's Planning Commission [3], and City Council has been working on zoning changes [4] to support the project.



But now, according to remarks made by Mayor Mark Meadows last night at the Council of Neighborhood Presidents, that project appears stalled.

Meadows described the project as "going real slow" and added, "I'm not convinced we will see the Dublin Square [project] very soon, if at all."

That project's next step was supposed to be review by Transportation Commission of a traffic study. But according to City staff, that study has not been submitted. Planning Commission will not be reconsidering the project at its meeting tomorrow according to its published agenda [5], but it will be reconsidering an ordinance [6] designed to allow buildings up to 160 feet in height [4] - an ordinance drafted to support the Royal Vlahakis project.

We asked Paul Vlahakis for comment on Meadows' remarks. He responded late last night, "The project is moving forward" and "we are less than 2 months in." (The project was actually submitted on December 17 [7]. See a timeline here. [2]) Says Vlahakis, "Keep in mind we don't set

the meeting schedules but we are prepared to move as quickly as possible as the process and project will allow."

DRW Convexity project for the blighted corner:

Just south of what would be the Royal Vlahakis project, the "Park District" project by DRW Convexity is finally underway at the long-blighted northwest corner of Abbot Road and Grand River Avenue. DRW Convexity is starting the three-building project with construction of what will be the biggest of the structures, installing over 100 auger cast piles at the corner for the foundation of "Building A." (Read about the project here [8].)



This project has been causing intermittent lane closures along Abbot Road as the Board of Water and Light (BWL) works to move a duct bank for the project. That duct bank includes major electrical trunk lines for East Lansing's downtown, and it has to be moved slightly north, because where it currently exists there will soon be a 13-story building.

Below: BWL work moving a major trunk line along Albert Avenue just west of Abbot Road, with Peoples Church shown in the background.



East Lansing's Community and Economic Development Coordinator Tom Fehrenbach told members of the DDA last week that that work along Abbot Road is expected to be completed by March 1. Fehrenbach indicated that the developer has now filed for a permit for the foundation of the hotel building set to be constructed just east of Peoples Church, and said that construction of The Graduate hotel is expected to start in the near future.

Additional lane closures expected:

City staff is warning of more upcoming lane closures on Abbot Road and Albert Avenue as work on various projects continue. Albert Avenue is set to be closed and torn up again between Grove Street and Abbot Road for about two weeks, including MSU's Spring Break, which starts on March 4. This will be for more utility work.

"The good news is it is when students are on break. The bad news is it is pretty impactful," said Fehrenbach to members of the DDA last week. Grove Street will still be open, with access to the Grove Parking Garage. Pedestrian access will continue for all downtown businesses.

Center City District project in the downtown core:

The Center City District project, co-developed by Harbor Bay and Ballein Management, has completed the final concrete pour for the 12th and final story on the "Landmark" apartment building fronted along Grand River Avenue. Occupancy of those apartments is expected in August. (Read about the whole project here ^[9].)



Target Corporation, the tenant slated for the 20,000-square-foot retail section along Grand River Avenue, is handling the contracting for the retail build-out for their storefront. The Target store is expected to open for business late this summer according to the construction forecast on the East Lansing Buzz website [10].

The parking garage along Albert Avenue has also reached its final height, according to Fehrenbach's update last week to members of the DDA. The apartment building above the parking garage along Albert Avenue has reached about two-thirds of its final height. That building (shown below) is being reserved for seniors aged 55 and up, in compliance with East Lansing's Ordinance 1384, requiring a mix of housing types in big new downtown developments.



Two tenants for the retail store fronts on the Albert Avenue side of the Center City District project

have already been announced, namely Foster Coffee [11] and Barrio Tacos [12]. Fehrenbach said last week that more announcements about retail tenants are expected soon.

The Hub at Bogue Street:

The Hub [13] student apartment building, built at the southeast corner of Bogue Street and Grand River Avenue at a major entrance of MSU, has now seen completion of the concrete work for the building's roof level. One additional "terrace" level is still to be completed, which will be part of an "amenity" deck for the building's residents.



According to the East Lansing Buzz website, delivery traffic around the building is expected to increase as supplies for the interior mechanical work are delivered. According to Fehrenbach's presentation to DDA members last week, The Hub expects to have apartments occupied in August.

Plans are moving forward for retail space there to include Georgio's Pizza and 7-Eleven, both of which were displaced when the project was started. Other retail tenants for The Hub's ground floor have not yet been announced.

Then there's the Red Cedar Project, just over the border:

The Lansing State Journal has a recent report out on plans for the Red Cedar Project [14], which would add housing units for another 1,100 students just past East Lansing's western border on Michigan Avenue in Lansing. The LSJ also has a column by Judy Putnam [15] looking at the potential use of public funds to support that project.

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Related Categories:

Big Development [17]

Center City District [18]

Park District [19]

Downtown Development Authority [20]

Development and Planning [21]

Government [22]

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[1] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/whats-east-lansings-big-construction-projects>

[2] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/parkplace>

[3] https://eastlansinginfo.org/Royal_Vlahakis_mixed_reviews

[4] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/officials-looking-allowing-taller-buildings-more-downtown>

[5] http://eastlansing.granicus.com/GeneratedAgendaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1779

[6] https://eastlansing.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1779&meta_id=73393

[7] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/park-place-plan-surprises>

[8] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/parkdistrict>

[9] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/centercity>

[10] <https://www.eastlansingbuzz.org/>

[11] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/foster-coffee-be-first-tenant-center-city-development>

[12] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/barrio-tacos-looks-locate-albert-avenue-part-center-city-project>

[13] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/content/council-approves-hub-5-0-vote>

[14] <https://www.lansingstatejournal.com/story/news/2019/02/20/red-cedar-developers-infrastructure-reimbursements-brownfield-ferguson-kass/2913652002/>

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[17] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/bigdevelopment>

[18] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/center-city-district>

[19] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/tags/park-district>

[20] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/dda>

[21] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/devplan>

[22] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/government>