

## **City Revises Utility Plans on Cumberland Ave.**

The City of Knoxville has revised its preliminary plans and will bury the existing overhead utility lines on Cumberland Avenue when it begins construction on the Cumberland Avenue Corridor Project.

The city had previously planned to move the electrical transmission lines running along the street into the alleys bordering Cumberland - where they would have remained overhead. A better than expected construction budget, however, changed those plans.

"We were looking at relocating aboveground in the alley because, at the time, it was the least expensive option that accomplished our goal of removing the poles and wires from Cumberland and we felt like the cost of burying the lines could be somewhat prohibitive," said Anne Wallace, the city's Cumberland Avenue Project Manager, referring to a November public meeting when the city laid out its preliminary design for the streetscape.

"That also wasn't changing the current function within the alley because there were already overhead lines there," Wallace added.

The features of that design included a three-lane cross section of traffic with a shared east-bound bike/travel lane, a two-way left turn lane and wider sidewalks without any utility poles.

The city's initial construction estimates indicated it would cost about \$1.2 million more to bury the lines than to relocate them to the alley. But more detailed work on the overall construction budget - done after the preliminary design decisions were made - yielded some favorable news.

"We had more in the budget to move the utilities than we expected," Wallace said.

The city subsequently decided to relocate the utilities underground, a decision that should make stakeholders in the area happy. Most of the ones attending the meetings had preferred burying the transmission lines rather than moving them to the alley.

The Knoxville Utilities Board has also indicated that they would take the opportunity to make improvements to its water, sewer, and gas lines along Cumberland in conjunction with the construction project.

The Cumberland Avenue Corridor Project aims to guide the city's effort to work with business and property owners, the University of Tennessee and the hospitals in Fort Sanders to transform Cumberland into an attractive, thriving pedestrian-friendly corridor featuring a mix of retail, residential and business establishments. Both the UT and Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center are supporting the effort.

It's hoped the changes would make Cumberland Avenue - a corridor to downtown, UT and West Knoxville - more of a destination rather than a place people pass through on the way to someplace else. Having a stronger mix of residential and business elements in the same buildings - another feature of the plan - could help Cumberland thrive year-round, rather than just when students are present.

Federal funds have been allocated for the project and work is slated to start in 2012. Early estimates are that will take about 18 months to complete the renovations.

More information about the Cumberland Avenue Corridor Project is available at [www.cityofknoxville.org/Cumberland](http://www.cityofknoxville.org/Cumberland) or [cumberlandconnections.blogspot.com](http://cumberlandconnections.blogspot.com).