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Downtown project kicks off: Tulsa leaders break ground on Fifth Street extension

City breaks ground on Fifth Street extension.

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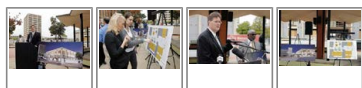
Posted: Thursday, October 1, 2015 12:00 am

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Paul Zachary, director of Tulsa's engineering services department, talks Wednesday about the upcoming extension of Fifth Street into downtown's Civic Center Plaza. STEPHEN PINGRY/Tulsa World

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By JARREL WADE World Staff Writer | 2 comments

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The project to extend Fifth Street is the first step to what city officials hope will be a new look for the crumbling Civic Center Plaza.

"Where the beloved, dry fountain has been for many years, there will be a roundabout," said Paul Zachary, director of Tulsa's engineering services department. "This has been the centerpiece that we've been trying to get done."

City and county officials gathered Wednesday morning on the plaza between the recently renovated Tulsa County Courthouse and under-construction Tulsa Central Library to announce the project's start next week.

The Fifth Street extension will bring the roadway from Denver Avenue into the plaza with a circular drive, giving vehicular access to the neighboring structures including Aloft Tulsa Downtown hotel.

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John Snyder, who redeveloped the city’s former city hall into the Aloft, said the new road will help the hotel establish a permanent entry instead of a temporary entryway they’ve used since opening due to limited access.

Snyder said the additional access will help increase occupancy at the hotel, which furthers taxes paid to the city.

“It’s really going to be beautiful in about a year,” Snyder said.

While construction is scheduled to begin Monday, officials hope to complete the extension project in time for the reopening of Central Library in June.

Michael Willis, chief deputy for the county commissioners, said the project is appreciated despite relocating some Tulsa County parking spaces, and courthouse workers are looking forward to the plaza changes.

Willis said a penguin statue from an early-2000s Tulsa Zoo fundraiser was saved from the fountain and replaced on the courthouse lawn in anticipation of the fountain’s destruction.

“It will have a birds-eye view of the entire project,” Willis said.

The first phase of the project will add the roadway, supporting infrastructure and repairs to several stairways that connect the multilevel structure, Zachary said.

The estimated cost of the project is about \$5.5 million, with the city paying the bulk through surplus 2008 Fix Our Streets money. About a fifth of the project will be paid through agreements with Tulsa County, the Tulsa City-County Library and the Aloft Hotel, [as previously reported](#).

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