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# Funding agreement reached for Fifth Street extension project downtown

The extension of Fifth Street will be done in three phases.

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By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 10 comments

The parties involved in funding the Fifth Street expansion project downtown have come to an agreement.

The city of Tulsa, Tulsa County, the Tulsa City-County Library and Aloft hotel signed a memorandum of understanding last week outlining their financial responsibilities for the first phase of the project.

City Manager Jim Twombly said the project will be put out to bid soon after some engineering work is completed. He expects construction to begin in about 90 days.

The project has been divided into three phases. The first, estimated to cost about \$5.5 million for construction and implementation, will extend Fifth Street one block west from Denver Avenue to Elwood Avenue.

According to the agreement, the city will pay \$5.3 million of the cost, the county and library will each pay about \$92,000 and Aloft will pay \$12,000. But Aloft has already paid \$295,000 to cover design costs and has agreed to pay an additional \$110,000 to complete the design and engineering work, for a total contribution of \$417,000.

Twombly said the plan is for the first phase to be completed before the grand opening of the renovated Central Library, which is projected for June 2016.

Tulsa City-County Library CEO Gary Shaffer is glad an agreement has been reached.

"We're obviously very excited about the fact that we're seeing progress, and that all groups have come together and have hammered out a deal," he said.

Shaffer previously warned that the Central Library renovation was predicated on the Fifth Street extension and that the library project would have to be halted and redesigned if the extension was not completed.

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The city originally budgeted about \$4.7 million in surplus 2008 Fix Our Streets funds for the project, but when bids were unsealed last year the cost estimates ranged from \$7.9 million to \$12.5 million. The latest cost estimate is \$9.6 million for the entire project, which includes constructing a turnaround in front of the former City Hall building, now the Aloft hotel, a one-way ramp from Elwood to Frisco Avenue as well as improvements to the Civic Center Plaza.

City engineer Paul Zachary said several methods were considered when trying to divide the funding allocations between the parties, and a decision was made to consider each entity's property boundaries and isolate the improvements.

The original proposal was for the county to pay \$127,000 and the library to pay \$57,000 for the first phase, but county officials said in January they did not have that amount to contribute. At last week's meeting, the library agreed to share costs equally with the county for the first phase.

City voters approved \$10 million for the \$50 million library project in the Improve Our Tulsa capital improvements package.

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