



# City of Grand Forks Staff Report



**Committee of the Whole – January 28, 2019**  
**City Council – February 4, 2019**

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**Agenda Item:** City Project No. 8042, District 738 – University Avenue Reconstruction (Coulee to Columbia) and Median and Streetlights (Coulee to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street)

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**Submitted by:** Engineering Department, Mark S. Walker, PE (Assistant City Engineer)  
Todd Feland, City Administrator

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**Staff Recommended Action:** Proceed with development of Project No. 8042, District 738 – University Avenue Reconstruction (Coulee to Columbia) and Median and Streetlights (Coulee to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street)

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**Committee Recommended Action:** Moved to City Council with a unanimous recommendation to approve

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**Council Action:**

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## **BACKGROUND:**

Mayor Michael R. Brown and the City Council have recognized University of North Dakota (UND) and City of Grand Forks (City) Collaboration and the 2019 Strategic Priorities to include the “Coulee to Columbia” Redevelopment, UND research with the City, public transit integration, and internships.

Related specifically to the “Coulee to Columbia” Redevelopment, UND has been considering various improvements on the portion of University Avenue passing through the UND campus for some time. To evaluate various alternatives, a consultant was hired to study and recommend improvements to this street corridor. An Agreement between the City and UND was approved at the August 21, 2017 City Council meeting wherein the City would hire a consultant to study and recommend improvements with the consultant fees to be reimbursed by UND. At the November 20, 2017 City Council meeting, an Agreement between the City and AE2S was approved to conduct the study.

Based on the conclusions of the study, UND identified several alternatives they wished to pursue to improve the corridor. These improvements enhanced the overall efficiency, safety, and aesthetics of the University Avenue corridor for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. In general, the proposed improvements include realignment/closure of several drives and driveways, installation of aesthetic median barriers to funnel pedestrians to specific crossing locations, realignment of Oxford Street with West Centennial Drive and converting both to two-way operations, installing pedestrian crossing beacons at various locations, installing a new traffic signals at realigned Oxford with a pedestrian scramble, interconnecting the new traffic signals at Oxford with the existing signals at Columbia and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, converting Harvard to a southbound one-way, installing bus turnouts and shelters at various locations, closure of Cornell northward of University Avenue and using it as a pedestrian corridor, converting the lane configuration of University Avenue to a dedicated vehicle lane and a shared bus/bicycle lane in each direction from Columbia to the Coulee, new street lights, new pedestrian lighting, new sidewalks, upgrading the sidewalk curb ramps to meet current ADA requirements, curb and gutter repairs, and other miscellaneous improvements. The majority of the improvements were proposed for the University Avenue section from the English Coulee to Columbia with significantly less improvements to occur on the University Avenue section from the English Coulee to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Upon reviewing the amount of work proposed along the University Avenue section from the Coulee to Columbia, UND and City staff concluded that reconstruction of this section should be considered given the significant amount of improvements proposed. In addition to the significant amount of street work proposed on University Avenue from Columbia to the Coulee, UND is currently planning significant development investments along this same stretch of University Avenue to include the following developments: new Student Union, Chester Fritz Library renovation, new School of Business and Public Administration building, Gershman Engagement Center, new Steam Plant, and various public/private mixed use developments.

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF FACT:**

- All engineering work on the project to date has been funded by UND and will continue to be funded by UND until the project Special Assessment District is created.
- UND and City staffs are currently working out the details of the proposed project including working with the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education to make sure they support the project.
- The project is currently proposed to be Special Assessed and UND has requested that all assessment benefits be assigned to UND properties so that no portion of this project is special assessed to private property owners.
- There are a number of features, including pedestrian lighting, landscape features, median planters, sidewalks, etc. that are proposed to be included in the project and special assessed to UND at 100%.
- Other project features are proposed to be paid for at 50% City funding and 50% Special Assessed.
- Normally, a street reconstruction project is funded with 80% City funding however, University Avenue was not scheduled for reconstruction at this time so a lower and compromised City funding share is being proposed. This arrangement is similar to the City funding share proposed for reconstructing S 30<sup>th</sup> Street adjacent to the new Altru Hospital facility that is proposed to be reconstructed in the 2021/22 timeframe.
- Based on a Traffic Study Report by KLJ, they determined the proposed improvements had substantial safety and operational benefits and that during peak pedestrian/bicycle/transit

periods (9 AM-4 PM), the planned roadway improvement plan is forecasted to reduce conflicts by 27% and improve overall roadway efficiency by 42%.

- The current project schedule is as follows:
  - February 25<sup>th</sup> - Special Assessment District to Committee of the Whole
  - March 11<sup>th</sup> - Plans and Specifications to Committee of the Whole
  - April 1<sup>st</sup> – Bid opening
  - April 15<sup>th</sup> – Bids to Committee of the Whole
- The current construction cost estimate is approximately \$11m with the City share at \$4m.
- The local share will be from a combination funds from the Economic Development Fund 2163, the Job Development Authority Fund 5996, and the Street/Infrastructure Fund 4815.
- Other complementary street projects in this area planned to be constructed in the near future include:
  - 2020 - Mill and overlay University Avenue from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to State Street, excluding the proposed reconstructed section of Columbia to the Coulee
  - 2021 – Reconstruct Columbia Road from University Avenue to the Overpass
- The replatting and right of way vacation process of Oxford and Cornell Streets is currently underway and is scheduled to be brought before the Planning and Zoning Commission in February.
- AE2S will present a project overview at the Committee of the Whole meeting and UND representatives will be present to comment and answer questions.

#### **SUPPORT MATERIALS:**

- PowerPoint presentation to be provided at the Committee of the Whole