



News Release

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Williston Square moves Forward

Despite recent economic woes, City of Williston officials are cautiously optimistic about their community's future. Williston Economic Development Executive Director Shawn Wenko spoke on the topic at 1 Million Cups on Wednesday, June 3 at the Williston Area Recreation Center.

Wenko said he, and Williston, have been down this road before.

"It isn't unique to see ups and downs in our local economy since we are a region that relies heavily on commodity-based industries. What is unique, is the fact that this is a slow down that shows demand on the other side of the curve. As the global economy comes back, so will activity in the region. And it will come back rather quick," said Wenko. "I suspect the development announcements we had planned earlier this spring for Williston Square will still move forward. Albeit not in the original timeline we had hoped."

Regardless of COVID-19 repercussions and the slowdown in the energy sector; the city is moving forward with some significant infrastructure projects in 2020.

"I'm glad that they (Williston City Commission) are staying aggressive in their infrastructure development plan because now is the time to do it. You'll see with the Williston Square project an extension of 16th Avenue, 42nd Street and the entrance to Williston Square. When projects come back to the table, the infrastructure will be in place."

Wenko said that interest still remains high in Williston Square and that he receives calls regularly to inquire about property, but it may be a bit before you see individual lots for sale.

"At this time, the city is not advertising or auctioning off property at Williston Square. This is mainly in part because the infrastructure is in the infant stages with limited roads and zero utilities. As utility development progresses, you will see further opportunity become available. However, we do stress that if you have a proposal for a development project, we are more than happy to sit down and discuss," he said.

To learn more about the Comprehensive Plan, Design Guidelines, Subdivision Plat and Maps of Williston Square, go to www.cityofwilliston.com under the Planning Department Current Projects link.

As it relates to existing businesses and the impact they have felt through COVID-19 and declining oil prices, Wenko says there is cautious optimism.

"I am pleased to see how well our businesses adapted the last several months. They got creative and did what they needed to do in order to survive. There is going to be a delayed impact to this. The Cares Act stimulus funding was an important piece. However, once some of those dollars start to run out, it is going to get tight. The reality is that some businesses may not make it. Although, I do believe it will be minimal as we have faired better than some other communities," explained Wenko.

In order to be proactive, Wenko says the Economic Development Office is also considering a new STAR Fund program to assist small businesses on the back end of the recovery period.

"We are still kind of working out what an assistance program would look like," said Wenko. "We still have a lot of discussion to do as we reach out to our local lenders and stakeholders to see what would best fit everyone. We are going to stay as aggressive as we can as we work our way through this."