

THE CITY OF  
**GREAT BEND**

**IMPROVEMENTS  
CONTINUE TO CITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**STREETS • BAND SHELL & WATER FEATURE • ZOO**

When reviewing a color-coded map that indicates City of Great Bend street conditions in 2008, there are many areas of black and blue – not a good combination in many respects. But after flipping to the current street map, the yellows and greens leap out. “These yellows and greens are what you want to see because they indicate good street conditions,” City Administrator Howard Partington explained.

Street improvements don’t just happen; there are many factors to consider, Partington noted during a review of current street, water and zoo projects, as well as the many improvements at Jack Kilby Square. “The street department and engineering technician drive through the city regularly and make suggestions about the most pressing needs,” Partington said. “Then we consider water projects so that we aren’t trying to overlay a street when a water line is being replaced. Next, we seek cost estimates and the issue goes to the Great Bend City Council for final approval.”

Upcoming street projects will include sealing Main Street between 10th and 19th, and milling and overlaying Main Street from 19th to 24th and from 10th to the south city limits. “In the next few months, Main Street should be up-to-date,” Partington noted. “Next will come areas of 10th Street.”

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is paying for 50 percent of these projects. The 2018 Geometric Improvement Project is also in the works with the help of Professional Engineering Consultants (PEC).

In 2018, 10th and Grant will be widened to better accommodate truck traffic. KDOT will pay 90 percent, up to \$800,000, with the city picking up the remainder. “We maintain state highways in the city limits,” the city administrator noted. “It used to be a 50-50 split, up to \$200,000, but now it is 90-10. This is great for city taxpayers.”

State highways run on Main, 10th and K-96 in the city limits.

Now for some water-related projects. A 2016 bond issue will allow \$350,000 for water-well improvements. This includes new pumps, and some will get generators. About \$5 million has been earmarked for water-line improvements. A majority of these projects will be in the city’s mid-section. Examples are Main from 10th to 19th, and 10th from Washington to Main.

“We hope to get a good start in July,” Partington said. “PEC will function as inspectors, and as a liaison between the city, business owners, homeowners, utility companies and others. They are our eyes and ears.”

A different type of water project is just one of many upgrades at Jack Kilby Square. The new recreational water feature will help attract families to the downtown area.

In addition, the Clayton L. Moses Bandshell has been equipped with a bigger stage; upgraded handicapped-accessible bathrooms; new surfaces; new paint; and refurbished lighting. The roof has been repaired, the old fountain removed and new landscaping has added to the aesthetics. These projects came to \$359,120. Of that, \$300,000 came from the Thelma Faye Harms Trust.

Many Great Bend Brit Spaugh Zoo improvements are in the beginning stages.

“We have been gathering information from architects, engineers and a contractor,” Partington said. “We hope to seek bids soon for the re-introduction of a bison exhibit and an expansion of the grizzly bear exhibit.

The Dorothy M. Morrison Foundation donated \$230,000 to the cause.

“Most of the city’s projects get their start during city council goal-setting sessions,” Partington commented. “For example, if the mayor and city council indicate they would like to upgrade the zoo, we start talking about possibilities. All department heads and their staffs are involved too. And sometimes we must contact state and federal officials to ensure compliance with regulations.

“We consider benefits to the whole community, as we weigh the value of a project,” he added. “A majority of local residents appreciate these efforts by all these city employees who genuinely care about Great Bend.”

Partington has been city administrator for 36 years. “When I first came, the oil bust of the early 1980s didn’t allow us to do a lot. But we have been able to create reserves over the years, while looking to the future. This planning continues today. The mayor and city council have provided positive direction.

“Yes, we have to keep up on all the necessities such as streets, water and sewers. But we also have to consider our quality of life with parks, the zoo, splash pad and bandshell. All of us will keep talking to residents, and to our mayor and council about new growth in the future.”



Even the branding for the City of Great Bend is undergoing a facelift, with a newly approved logo. This is the old version, which will slowly be replaced by the version at the top left of this feature story.

