



## Downtown improvements planned for St. Cloud

 **Kari Petrie, kpetrie@stcloudtimes.com** 9:53 p.m. CDT April 7, 2015



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(Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

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Downtown St. Cloud is about to light up.

A new street light, camera and dynamic sign system is going in downtown St. Cloud, Mayor Dave Kleis announced Tuesday during his State of the City Address. It was one of several announcements Kleis made to the crowd of about 200 at the River's Edge

Convention Center.

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The event was the mayor's 10th address and gave him an opportunity to recognize highlights from over the past decade, such as \$145 million spent on building public facilities and \$130 million spent on roads.

"We're a community that cares for our future," Kleis said. "We're motivated to succeed."

*Story continues below.*



Mayor Dave Kleis delivers State of the City address

### Street lights, cameras

The biggest announcement was the new street light, camera and dynamic sign display going in downtown. The signs allow the city to display messages about detours, events or parking availability. The street lights are all light-emitting diode lights, or LEDs, and have cameras in them.

Kleis said the new system will increase safety downtown because the light is brighter

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and the cameras will catch what's going on. The system also allows recorded messages to be transmitted through the light poles.

All city street lights will be switched to LEDs. That means changing more than 2,000 lights, which will take about 22 months to do.

Kleis said the LEDs should save on energy costs by about 50 to 60 percent. That money saved will be used to pay for the lights. Kleis said street light utility payers will not see an increase in their rates to pay for the new system.

The City Council must approve the project before it can move forward.

### **Parks, trails and downtown improvements**

The long-discussed George Friedrich Park, located at the end of University Drive Southeast, will open in August, Kleis said.

The city is looking at a land-swap deal with St. Cloud State University. The university is interested in some city-owned land to use for parking.

The park is 51 acres and includes quarries. The trails in the park will be open by August, as long as the university and City Council approve the swap.

*Story continues below.*



People listen as Mayor Dave Kleis gives his State of the City Address at the River's Edge Convention Center. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

Kleis said he plans to ask for \$6 million in state bonding dollars to clean up the water in the quarries and make other accessibility improvements. Eventually, he would like to open the quarries for swimming.

Trail connections along the Mississippi River have long been a goal. The council approved last month a \$8.4 million extension of the Beaver Islands Trail through downtown from River's Edge Convention Center to Fourth Street North.

Now St. Cloud State and St. Cloud Hospital officials have said they want to bring access to the river along their properties, Kleis said. That will connect the city's largest employer and largest university through downtown.

Kleis also wants to ask the Legislature to create a fund to help pay for accessibility improvements in historical buildings. New laws require those buildings to put in elevators, which is costly.

He would like to see a fund set up so cities could apply for grants to help cover the costs of those improvements.

### St. Cloud City 101

In another announcement Tuesday, Kleis said he wants to help residents become more engaged with their city government. He said the city will start a course called St. Cloud City 101.

Using social media, tours and making more information available online, residents will have a chance to learn more about how city government works.

Kleis said many residents don't want to go to public meetings to ask questions. This will be an opportunity for them to easily learn about how things work.

Kleis also encouraged residents to get to know their neighbors better. One thing constant for St. Cloud is change. As new people come into the community, it's up to residents to bridge the gaps. The city can't do that for them; the community needs to do it, he said.

"Our community changes," he said. "We have to find a way to welcome each other, to live as a community."

Follow Kari Petrie on Twitter @kariPETrie or contact her at 255-8765.



Mayor Dave Kleis talks Tuesday about new informational signs and lights to be installed in St. Cloud during his State of the City Address at the River's Edge Convention Center. (Photo: Dave Schwarz, dschwarz@stcloudtimes.com)

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