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Growth spurs south St. Cloud projects

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Kari Petrie, kpetrie@stcloudtimes.com

9:23 p.m. CDT April 12, 2015



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With a new interchange and the possibility of a new high school, the most southern section of St. Cloud is ripe for development.

And there are a number of projects planned to accommodate that growth.

Those projects will bring utilities, upgrade roads and add amenities to the area east of the new Minnesota Highway 15 and 33rd Street South interchange. Those improvements and the proposed high school at 33rd Street South and Stearns County Road 74

will make the area attractive to developers.

Nine projects in that area are included in the 2016-2021 Capital Improvements Program, or CIP, which outlines building projects for the next five years. Want to know when a certain road will get fixed or when a city facility will see an expansion? This is where you find that information.

Many of the projects have been in the plans for over a decade, but this marks the first time projects in the southern portion of the city are given specific construction years, St. Cloud Community Development Director Matt Glaesman said.

"We made an investment at that interchange to promote growth in the southern area," he said. "As a result of that, we need to put in services that are demanded by urban development."

The CIP designates a year to build those projects, how much they will cost and possible funding sources. The St. Cloud Planning Commission will consider approving the document at its 6 p.m. meeting on Tuesday at City Hall.

Each individual project must go through the approval process before construction can begin. The CIP prioritizes the projects.

Projects include spending about \$2.75 million to bring utilities to the high school site in 2017 and expand and reconstruct 33rd Street South from Southway Drive to Cooper Avenue in 2019. That project could cost about \$3.4 million and be paid for with Municipal State Aid and federal funding.

There are also plans to spend \$10 million in local-option sales tax dollars to develop Neenah Creek Regional Park, which is currently undeveloped. Improvements would include parking, access roads, shelters and athletic fields.

Glaesman said the city has talked to the St. Cloud school district about its needs and what it might be putting at the high school site. The park and school sites are next to each other, so they want to make sure they complement each other.

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And with all that development, the city must make sure there is adequate fire protection in the area. Plans call for a new fire station at Neenah Creek Regional Park in 2020. That station would cost about \$2.7 million in 2011 dollars.

Glaesman said there's been interest from commercial developers in the lots near the \$16.7 million Highway 15 and 33rd Street South interchange. And there is room for thousands of new homes in the area.

With the CIP the city has framework in place to accommodate that growth.

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

