



Ian Shannon - Assistant Photography Editor
Pack Square, under construction since 2005, sparked mixed reactions from downtown Asheville residents and employees.



Pack Square Park construction reduces College Street business

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The signs surrounding construction at Pack Square Park read "Working Safely," but some Asheville residents said the signs should read "Working Slowly."

"The most annoying part is just seeing it under construction for so long," said Asheville resident Alaya Dickinson.

All that residents and businesses can do is wait patiently.

Donna Clark, Pack Square Conservancy communications director anticipates the completion of the entire project by the end of this year except the pavilion, which should be completed by Jan. 4, she said. Until that time, the project continues.

"The Roger McGuire Green should be completed within the next couple of weeks. I expect it to be open by the end of the month, and if not by then, then very shortly thereafter," Clark said.

Construction for the project began in September 2005 with the demolition of the parking lot in front of City Hall, but the vision for the project and the Pack Square Conservancy started in the early '90s.

Clark credits Roger McGuire

"I remember Karen Green telling me about when she was standing at the top of the hill looking down at the area with Roger, and he reached out to the east with his hands and said, 'This should be a park. All of this should be a park,'" Clark said.

No action occurred with the park until a break in the downtown water line helped people realize it was time for revitalization, according to Clark.

The old Pack Square Park needed no amendment, according to Asheville resident Judith Cheney.

"I'm progressive, but I'm against tearing down old things," Cheney said.

One of the old things lost was a round reflecting pool.

"The old Pack Square had a reflecting pool, and I think children really enjoyed it. And children really enjoyed it during Bele Chere when they let them ride rubber rafts in the pool during the festival," she said.

Asheville native Scott Weisenberger, a UNC Asheville alumnus and employee of The Sisters McMullen Cupcake Corner, said he also remembers the way Pack Square used to be, including the reflecting pool.

"It was all really fine before, and that's what really bothers me about it. There was no problem. Everything was fine the way it was," the history and literature degree alumnus said.

Clark said she disagrees.

"That pool had some very serious leaks in it, and it was empty half the year. It also had a lot of cracks and stains in it and it was not very attractive a good deal of the time," she said.

In response to these issues and also concerns of people bathing in the pool, the city and the conservancy decided to replace the pool with a new fountain, Clark said.

The new interactive Haley Fountain, created by Hoss Haley, opened a few weeks ago.

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