

Clubs, Orgs & Events
Keep W.P. Beautiful

Lamps light up new downtown

☐ Old-fashioned lights installed along Winter Park's signature street signal the beginning of a three-year make-over.

By Ines Davis Parrish
OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — It was an illuminating ceremony to highlight what can only be called the dawning of a new era for this city's beloved downtown district. The installation and lighting of 13 old-fashioned Sternberg street lamps on the west side of Park Ave.

last week was a visual sign to usher in a three-year intensive make-over for the city's signature street. At the lamp-lighting event, Mayor Joseph Terrano thanked the Keep Winter Park Beautiful committee and donors who contributed the \$1,500 per street lamp. Then he threw the switch to light up the lamps. The lamps, specially made at the Sternberg Vintage Lighting factory in Chicago, carry plaques inscribed with the donors' names or messages. Donations for more lamps will continue to be collected, said Gordon Blich, the city's spokesman for the Park Avenue project.

While Keep Winter Park Beautiful raises money for accessories such as the street lamps and park benches, the city is busy doing the infrastructure work that prompted the call for beautifying the avenue. The estimated \$4.9 million upgrade will include laying new water and sewer pipes underneath Park Avenue, burying electrical wires for the street lamps and street lights, widening sidewalks, installing new directional signs and adding new park benches and shade trees on the east side of the street. Next week, city crews will begin underground boring.

Please see **LIGHTING, I-4**

Merchants want taxpayers to pitch in

LIGHTING from I-1 *Orlando Sentinel*

ing to install a new water line. The work will not close the street, and it will take only a few parking spaces, Public Works Director Jim English said. About 400 feet of an 8-inch water line will be installed.

In May, construction on the Rollins College-Faison project — the biggest downtown building the city has seen in nearly 20 years — is slated to begin. The 81,000-square-foot, three-story retail and office complex with a parking garage will be a significant change from the vacant lot currently used for parking.

And around June 1, the first phase of rebuilding the road itself will start, English said. The 90-day project will mean barriers will have to be installed in front of stores and parking will be at a premium. The south half of the street, from Fairbanks Avenue to the south corner of Central Park, will be rebuilt. There will also be new curbing and wider sidewalks. Next summer, the north half will be done.

Money for the project will come from various sources, including a special assessment on prop-

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erty owners along Park between Fairbanks and Swoope avenues, and 125 feet in each direction from Park.

A levy hasn't been determined. Many downtown property owners and merchants are concerned about the assessment, saying the cost to beautify and improve the avenue should be borne by all city taxpayers because the project benefits the entire city.

In a compromise, the city will begin collecting the assessments at the end of the project, instead of at the start. Many merchants are bracing for a serious slowdown in customer traffic during the summertime construction and have said the assessments will hurt their business.

City commissioners are expected to adopt an ordinance at Tuesday's meeting that will allow them to collect the levy. But it will be at least April before the actual amount is determined.

The city plans to use about \$1.1 million from stormwater and utility funds for the project.

City officials have discussed asking the Park Avenue property owners to pay anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of the remaining \$3.8 million. The city would look at other options, such as bonds, to cover the rest.