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## **LIFECYCLE OF A CITY OF THOMASVILLE PROJECT**

Have you ever wondered why large projects in our community can take years to be completed? It can sometimes feel as if it takes a really long time from the beginning when a project is first discussed to the end when it is completed, and that can make you wonder – what is taking so long? We hope after reading this post, you will better understand the complexity of completing large projects, the steps involved in completing them and how all of this impacts the City's budget.

In our last budget series post, we explained what capital improvement projects are and discussed some of the ways they are funded. [Click here to read the article.](#)

(<https://thomasville.org/uploads/files/d4/82/d4822359f6bccfb4385083e6d402643f.pdf>) Today, we're going to take it a bit further and explain the lifecycle of a typical large City of Thomasville capital improvement project. As you will soon learn, there are several steps involved in the lifecycle of a project such as project identification, planning, funding, design and construction. The typical timeframe from when a large City project is identified to the beginning of construction is usually two to three years, depending on the complexity of the project. The timeline for the construction itself varies as well but it can take 12-24 months to complete construction. This timeline explains why you can hear a lot about a project before construction even begins!

So, how are these large community projects identified? One way is by using our City's comprehensive plan, *Blueprint: Thomasville 2028*. The comprehensive plan was formally adopted by the Thomasville City Council in July 2018 after an 18-month community engagement process that involved more than 6,000 citizens. This plan contains many projects and plans for our community's future, so many of our current capital projects will sometimes pull right from this plan and the projects our community voiced as important during its development.

Once a project has been identified, preliminary work is performed so that a plan can be presented to the City Council for consideration. If the project is approved by Council, staff will then begin a more in-depth planning process to determine costs and identify potential funding. Funding for our community projects can come from a variety of sources, including the City's capital budget, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST), state and federal grants, private-public partnerships and low interest loans and funding sources. One note that is important to keep in mind about SPLOST funding is that these funds are generated from a one percent sales tax that accumulates over a six-year period. This means that it may take several years before adequate funding is available for that specific project, which may delay the start of the project until



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enough funding has been collected. Part of the responsibility of identifying funding sources is to consider all obligations. Many state and federal grants, for example, will have very lengthy application processes. These grants can often require matching funds and generally require additional oversight, making it very important to consider which funding source is best matched to each capital project. Keep in mind that each of these factors and the time that is required to complete them can add to the length of the project timeline.

Once funding has been identified, the project design phase begins. Public input is a crucial part of the design phase for many large community projects. Information gathered during the public input phase ensures that our citizens, businesses, and community's needs and expectations for the project are met. Public input is gathered through multiple opportunities, including meetings, workshops and open houses. All of the valuable information that is gathered from public input opportunities helps to shape a final proposed design, which is then presented back to our community. The final proposed design is then taken before the City Council for consideration and, if approved, will then move forward into the engineering phase. Depending on the size and scope of the project, this phase can sometimes take up to two years to complete before construction ever begins.

To put all of this information into perspective, let's take a look at a few projects that you may be familiar with and see how their timelines evolved. The West Jackson Streetscape project was first identified in 2014 during a public visioning session focused on the revitalization of this important area of downtown Thomasville. The first public meetings were held in August of 2017, and the project was completed in November of 2019. The sidewalk project on South Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive was first requested by Council in February of 2017; it was later completed in July of 2019. The South Pinetree Boulevard project, which began as a project for Thomas County, was first discussed in 2017, and construction is scheduled to begin next year (2021).

There are other circumstances that can add to the timeframe required to complete a capital project. Sometimes there are limited funding sources, so the project cannot move forward. Other issues that can impact the timeline of a capital project include state and federal permitting issues, utilities locations (involving other carriers) and limited staffing. While all projects are important, prioritization must occur so that staff can properly allocate their time and resources to a project's completion. For example, a failing infrastructure like water and sewer lines may need to take priority over resurfacing or repairing a road since important utility services are involved.

Finally, there are many times when weather delays, material shortages and contractor delays keep a project from progressing. There may also be unforeseen delays that occur, such as failing underground facilities that can cause a project timeline to expand during construction. It is good to remember that the size and complexity of the project will contribute to the overall timeframe



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that will be required to begin and complete the construction phase. The larger and more complex a project, the longer the timeframe between project identification and completion.

We hope today's blog has given you a better understanding of the lifecycle of a large City project and the time that is invested in completing them. We hope as a member of the community, you will participate in the City's budget planning process. The dates for the remaining 2021 budget hearings are as follows:

- November 30, 2020 – Proposed budget available online at [Thomasville.org](http://Thomasville.org).
- December 7, 2020 – Proposed Budget Review Meeting: 5:30 p.m., Municipal Building
- \*December 9, 2020 – Regular Workshop of the Thomasville City Council: 4:00 p.m., Municipal Building
- \*December 14, 2020 – Regular Meeting of the Thomasville City Council: 6:00 p.m., Municipal Building

\*These are regularly scheduled meetings where action and/or discussion regarding the proposed budget is expected to take place.