

Tiny 'park' provides mini-oasis downtown

By Deana Stroisch

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Springfield officials hope a redesigned intersection near the Old State Capitol will help provide sort of a mini-oasis for downtown visitors. They also hope the changes to the intersection of Sixth and Adams streets will make downtown Springfield a little greener, safer and pedestrian friendly.

A similar project was planned for Fifth and Adams, although officials say that project might not happen, because downtown tax increment financing funds are running low. "The idea of the park is to not only improve the visual aesthetics of downtown, but to soften traffic, enhance the pedestrian experience and provide a welcoming green space oasis to visitors, workers etc. who wish to enjoy the Old State Capitol, Lincoln-Herndon Law Offices etc.," said Mike Farmer, director of planning and economic development.

The \$60,000 project has been referred to as a "pocket park," although city planner Paul O'Shea admits calling this project a pocket park, a term that originated years ago in New York City, is a stretch. It's certainly a "bump out," he says, a term that refers to the curb line bumping out to accommodate landscaping, he said. A bump-out design tends to slow traffic, or at least make drivers more attentive, O'Shea said. "You have the visual impact of a narrowing that appears to occur," he said.

In some cities, the lanes actually do narrow. But that's not the case here, O'Shea said. O'Shea, Ferry and Associates and Hanson Professional Services helped design the project, Farmer said. Three black benches, which match others downtown, also were added, providing places to sit. Three crosswalks were redone as well.

About 100 different types of plants and flowers were donated by Springfield's CopperTree Outdoor Lifestyles -- including red daylily, gold lace juniper, blue lirope and caramel corabell, said Amber Sabin, Springfield Green's project Manager. The labor and materials are valued at \$3,000, Sabin said.

"The idea is just to add green space to an urban environment, show the benefits of green spaces in a downtown setting," Sabin said. "All the plants that were selected are tough and salt tolerant for what would be appropriate in downtown Springfield."

Mayor Mike Houston and members of Downtown Springfield Inc., Springfield Green and CopperTree Outdoor Lifestyles will hold a "ceremonial watering" of the newly installed mini-park at Sixth and Adams streets.

The event will be held at 4 p.m. today at Sixth and Adams streets. Copper Tree Outdoor Lifestyles donated and installed about 100 types of plants for the Sixth and Adams streets project, including:

- *Red daylily
- *Karl Foerster grass
- *Gold lace juniper
- *Kims knee high echinacea
- *Autumn joy sedum
- *Blue lirioppe
- *Caramel corabells