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[City paves way to an inviting downtown](#)

[Rick Hohlt](#), *Publisher*

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Sometimes the road to a better place is bumpy and filled with potholes. Such is the case as the city of Ruston has embarked on a journey to build a more beautiful downtown area.

For several months now, traffic has been slowed on Vienna Street while improvements are made to the sidewalks and water lines. Businesses in the downtown area have offered sales or accommodations to help lure shoppers through the construction zone to browse the specialty items so unique to Ruston.

Unfortunately, neither drivers nor business owners can expect a reprieve from the construction any time soon.

Because of many unexpected rain days, the estimated completion date for the phases of construction work currently under way has been pushed back to March.

And once work is done on Vienna Street, the city is expected to begin comparable work on Trenton Street between Park Avenue and Alabama Avenue sometime in late 2010. Then in 2011, it will be time for Alabama and Mississippi avenues to receive their upgrades.

When all is complete, the downtown will look more inviting to local residents and visitors alike. Those who attend events at Railroad Park or shop at the downtown businesses will travel on more pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and view more attractive scenery.

The sidewalks will be leveled out with brick pavers decorating them. Benches will be strategically placed throughout the downtown, power lines will be moved underground and lampposts and greenery will adorn the area. Additionally, new water lines will enable access to greater volumes of water in the area, which will open up opportunities for development on the second floor of downtown structures.

When the finished product is complete, it will be a welcoming sight for the community and will fall right in line with many of residents' desires expressed through the Ruston 21 initiative.

But progress comes with a price, and right now residents are experiencing the traffic congestion that is part of that price. In the next few months, drivers who must travel through this area of Ruston should continue to utilize alternative routes or adjust their schedules so as to have time to make their appointments.

With residents working together, our city can make a smooth transition to produce a more greatly thriving downtown.