



*City of Reidsville Press Release – Release Date October 2, 2018*

## **New tree plan for downtown will alleviate sidewalk issues**

*Trees in planters to serve as replacement in 2-phase plan*

Residents and visitors alike love Reidsville's downtown trees, especially when they are lit up at night.

But the trees have outgrown their sidewalk space in the 100 and 200 blocks of South Scales Street. The trees, which have been in place since the early 1990s, have spread their roots over the years and are creating uneven sidewalks, increasing the likelihood of people falling. The City's Public Works Department has repaired and replaced more than 100 sections of sidewalk in these two blocks of South Scales based on some 236 work orders. In the future, some roots could reach out into the buildings themselves. Other trees are dying, bringing the chance that the limbs will fall off and strike vehicles or pedestrians. While the trees are beautiful to passersby, some business owners have also complained that the trees block their store signage.

City of Reidsville staff and the Reidsville Downtown Corporation have been studying the situation to come up with a plan that will both address how to maintain the aesthetic beauty of the downtown "treescape" while providing a safe environment for those walking and parking downtown. City staff also contacted an arborist to determine which trees would work best in a downtown environment.

"This can has been kicked down the road for years because no one wants to see these trees removed," said Reidsville Mayor Jay Donecker. "But the City has been put on notice that these trees could create a safety issue for our residents and visitors. We can't put it off any longer.

"But just like today, we expect 25-plus years from now that residents and visitors will still be saying how beautiful our downtown area is, especially when these trees are lit up at night."

Of the 38 trees still standing in Reidsville's downtown, 15 of the trees that are in the poorest health will be removed and replaced with either Kousa Dogwoods or Oklahoma Redbuds in the first phase of the replacement plan. (Several trees have previously been removed because they were dead.) Instead of being placed directly in the ground in the sidewalk, these new trees will be put in large custom planters created by local business Amos Welding. In the future, if the trees outgrow their planters, they can be transplanted elsewhere without ruining the sidewalk brickwork and pavement. In planters, these trees will not reach their maximum height of approximately 15 feet, but they will probably get to at least ten feet tall and will be aided by the four-foot height of the planters as well.

City staff will consult with the arborist as to the best time of year to plant the new trees. The plan is to make the transition as seamless as possible, taking the dying trees down and installing the new trees and planters in a coordinated effort. The change will not take place until the planters are ready. City leaders have also asked that the transition take place, if possible, after the Fall Jubilee and the annual Christmas Parade.

Instead of using the string of lights that have been problematic to put on dying tree limbs, the new trees will be lit using LED uplighting. The use of LED lights will provide more light but cost less money than the current lighting. Though this will be different than the “twinkle lights” that currently light downtown trees, the new trees will be beautifully lit.

Four of the planters will feature “bottle” trees, also crafted by Amos Welding. These trees will provide a unique piece of street art, in keeping with the Reidsville Downtown Corporation’s “Project Dream” that is designed to bring more art to the downtown area. The inspiration for these bottle trees is an installation in Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, Texas.

Two of the remaining trees in front of Mural Park will be removed since these trees block the downtown mural and the attractive plantings in the park there. The rest of the trees will be replaced in phase 2 of the plan.

This tree replacement project is estimated to cost \$60,000. Staff discussed the tree situation with the Reidsville City Council at its retreat earlier this year, at which time Council approved the budget. Staff’s plan was presented to Council at its reconvened meeting on September 17.

###