

Downtown core work may be done by start of market

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ground thaws this spring and is expected to take three months to complete.

"There's certainly no shortage of concern, but I think we're working toward some solutions," said Sandy Martin, executive director of the Milton Chamber of Commerce.

"If everyone is kept in the loop, things should go reasonably well."

An early completion bonus and late penalty charge being built into the work tender has gone a long way to ease some of the merchants' concerns about access to their businesses being blocked, Ms Martin added.

"We'd really like to see it done before the Farmers' Market starts (on Victoria Day weekend)."

While the entire project — Bronte Street to Thompson Road — is designed to keep business and shoppers in the central area, the

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SANDY MARTIN

historic downtown must receive special considerations, said Councillor Rick Day. The historic core is essentially phase one of the project.

"I think they (the historic core and the eastern end of Main Street) are fundamentally different places," he told the committee. "If we're trying to protect the old downtown area... it seems to me we're making a mistake by making (the downtown business area) so

damn big.

"You also have to make it economically successful so the landlords can afford to keep the buildings up. You've got to give them all kinds of concessions in parking, taxes, bonusing, variance, etc. I don't think we've given the downtown a big enough break to encourage the kind of growth we want."

Admitting his colleague's concerns are valid, Councillor Barry Lee reminded the committee of the growth Milton is expected to experience in the next several years. The downtown core needs to be expanded to adequately meet the shopping needs of the larger community, he said.

"We have to look at preserving the historic downtown, but we also have to look ahead," he said.

"The population of Milton is going to rise and we should do this now, because this is our last chance."




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