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Improving downtown Algonquin after the bypass

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Algonquin has hired a consultant to plan how to enhance the downtown shopping district once the Western Bypass takes some of the heavier traffic away from the intersection of Routes 31 and 62.

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By Elena Ferrarin

Algonquin has hired a consultant to work on a strategic plan to enhance its downtown as a walkable, mixed-use business district once the so-called Western Bypass of Route 31 is built.

The village board voted Tuesday to authorize the agreement for the downtown planning study with [Land Vision Inc.](#), which has offices in Chicago and St. Charles. The company will lead a consulting team that also includes Sam Schwartz Engineering of Hoffman Estates and Business Districts Inc. of Evanston.

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The Western Bypass will divert major traffic from the intersection of Route 31 and Route 62, and is scheduled to be completed by the Illinois Department of Transportation by late 2013.

The planning will be funded by a \$90,000 community planning program grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. The consultants will look at how downtown can be improved in terms of land use, access and aesthetics while maintaining a viable business district and

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encouraging environmental conservation and alternative methods of transportation, Village Planner Ben Mason said.

The study will include a public workshop in the spring to discuss preliminary findings and solicit feedback, and a second workshop in the summer to get input on improvement alternatives, Mason said. The plan should be finalized in the fall, he said.

"One of the main reasons for doing the plan is to start identifying what the business owners, property owners, residents and others with an interest in downtown Algonquin would like to see as a vision for downtown moving forward," he said.

Downtown business owners said the Western Bypass will likely foster a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere downtown, but improvements are in order.

Diagonal parking is needed along Route 31 (Main Street) in order to accommodate more shoppers, said Klara Cuokva, owner of Martinis on Main. "They should somehow connect the park along the (Fox) river, so that families can have a nice time at the park, then maybe come over to Main Street for some food and a little shopping," she said.

The planning should capitalize on the quaintness and historic nature of Algonquin, said Reggie Andrews, owner of Handmade on Main, a pottery studio. "A lot of people who come here can't get over how old it is, the woodwork, how it's laid out," she said.