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Utility work will close part of Merrimack Street

By Mike LaBella mlabella@eagletribune.com Mar 7, 2016

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HAVERHILL — A short stretch of Merrimack Street will be closed to traffic on Tuesday while National Grid installs underground electrical and gas services to the Harbor Place buildings.

The closing will be from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. but drivers will be allowed to access the Herbert H. Goecke Parking Deck and nearby businesses.

In preparation for the work to be done by National Grid on Tuesday, there will be a lane restriction on Monday.

At least one lane of through traffic will be maintained throughout the day on Monday so the disruption should be minimal, city officials said.

William Pillsbury, the city's economic and development director, said National Grid trucks will be parked in front of the Pentucket Bank community room, blocking that short stretch of Merrimack Street to through traffic.

He said full access will be maintained to the parking garage and street level parking throughout the day.

Pentucket Bank clients will be able to access the bank and drive-through window by entering through the parking deck traveling east, and utilizing the eastern most entrance as an exit, Pillsbury said.

Customers exiting the drive-through must turn left onto Merrimack Street to reach Main Street at White's Corner.

Police details will be on site as needed.

Pillsbury said the street closing will cause some disruption.

"We appreciate your cooperation and understanding," he said.

Work on the \$65 million Harbor Place is proceeding at a rapid pace, Pillsbury said.

Workers are moving to enclose the building and are adding bricks to the exterior.

A second building is under construction and is still in the framing stage.

"We're also underway with the boardwalk along the river," Pillsbury said. "Work is at the preliminary stage and will be completed by June and we're very excited by that."

Merchants expect that when Harbor Place opens later this year it will herald the start of a new day for the eastern end of the downtown.

The \$70 million Harbor Place development will include HC Media on the first floor, a UMass Lowell satellite campus on the second and third floors, Pentucket Bank on the fourth floor and tenants yet to be chosen for the fifth floor. A plaza and two other public entrance points will provide public access to the Merrimack River, where a boardwalk is being built.

An adjacent six-story building will include 80 housing units on upper floors and first-floor retail shops and restaurants.

The Merrimack Street Ventures project is a partnership between the nonprofit Greater Haverhill Foundation, the same group that developed the Ward Hill Business Park in the 1960s, and the Planning Office for Urban Affairs, the nonprofit residential development arm of the Boston Catholic Archdiocese. A \$19 million grant was awarded to the project by the state.

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