

## Tons of soil soon be trucked in EP's Downtown 2010 site

**By Leslie Fark**  
**of the Journal Star**

Posted Jun 15, 2009 @ 10:24 PM

EAST PEORIA — It's going to take 100 semis hauling trailers piled high with dirt every day for almost four months to move the soil needed to level the Downtown 2010 site for development.

The 125,000 cubic yards of clay-based dirt - enough to fill a football field 23 feet high - equals to about 10,000 trailer loads, said Steve Ferguson, the city's director of public works.

Transportation of the soil from property off Cole and East Washington streets to the 86-acre site, located between West Washington and Camp streets, is expected to start at the end of the month.

"It's the next step toward redevelopment of the site," said Rick Jeremiah, director of site planning and construction for Cullinan Properties Ltd., the developer of the site.

The City Council recently agreed to purchase up to 300,000 cubic yards of dirt from Mike Sutherland, owner of East Peoria's Ace Hardware. Stark Excavating was awarded the contract for loading, hauling and compacting the structural fill at the site.

In all, the total cost could range between \$1.8 million and \$3.2 million. Funding for the project will come from either the Washington Street tax-increment financing district or the state capital bill.

But before the earth-moving project begins in two weeks, the city has to finish cleaning up steel scrap, mostly guardrails left behind from when the property was home to a Caterpillar factory. Public works employees also have the job of plugging with concrete about 140 manholes and storm and sewer lines throughout the site.

When those tasks are complete, the semis will begin their trek to the Downtown 2010 site. Temporary stop lights will be placed at Cole and East Washington streets, just west of Springfield Road, to help with traffic flow.

Dust and mud from the dirt are expected. Gravel will be laid at the entrance and exit to Sutherland's property as a means to remove debris from the vehicles' tires before hitting the city's pavement.

"We will try and control it that way to minimize the eruption," said Ferguson. "I'm sure there will be a little bit. We're going to try and clean it up."

The large amount of dirt at the site is needed to shore up the 6-foot elevation difference from the west side of the property to the east side. Ferguson described the discrepancy in elevation as "sloping down toward the river."

Jeremiah said the dirt will create a "level playing field" for the site. "If not, you would end up with the development stair-stepping across the site, which isn't desirable," he said.

Once all the soil has been spread and compacted, the city will plant grass seed to spruce up the area and make it more inviting.

"It won't be a bombed city-look," said Ferguson describing the look of the site now after it was rubblized earlier this year. "It will be a green space. It will be nice."

Developers still are being sought for the site, which is intended to transform downtown into a retail and commercial center by introducing new shops, restaurants, offices, civic buildings and more.

"We've got a lot of interest in the site," said Jeremiah, adding ground breaking may not begin until next year. "Turn me loose. I want to build something."

*Leslie Fark can be reached at 686-3188 or [lfark@pjstar.com](mailto:lfark@pjstar.com).*