

13-story-high pedestrian skybridge set to be removed as development of SandRidge Commons enters next phase

The next phase of the \$100 million SandRidge Commons development is about to begin with removal of downtown's highest pedestrian skybridge.

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The next phase of the \$100 million SandRidge Commons development is about to begin with removal of downtown's highest pedestrian skybridge.

Contractor Stan Lingo has spent the past couple years overseeing a delicate rebuilding of the block that is home to SandRidge Energy, starting with renovation of the interior of the former Kerr-McGee Tower and then removing surrounding older buildings. When those buildings were removed, Lingo Construction's next task was a reconstruction of an elaborate substructure under the block that consisted of underground parking and mechanical systems.

That work is well under way, Lingo said, and landscaping has started on what will be a new plaza surrounding the 29-story SandRidge Building. Within the next couple of weeks, the contractor is set to remove a skybridge that for the past few decades has linked the 13th floor of CityPlace Tower with the former Petroleum Club building at 120 Robert S. Kerr Ave.

"It's a yearlong process of planning," Lingo said. "We started talking with CityPlace, SandRidge and crane professionals a year ago, started looking at how this is to happen. You can't see it now, but we're already removing the weight from the bridge and we're opening up the ends to see how it's connected."

Work begins with removal of the bridge's windows and roof. Then, on either Nov. 5 or Nov. 12, the bridge itself will be removed by Allied Steel using three 200-ton cranes over a two-day period.

The crew is experienced with removing pedestrian bridges, Lingo said, having worked on removing a shorter span between the 11th floor of the Braniff Building and the 135 N Robinson Building on the campus earlier this year. The crew also removed a pedestrian bridge a dozen years ago that linked the former downtown home of *The Oklahoman* with a parking garage across the street.

And while Allied Steel didn't erect the bridge connecting to CityPlace Tower, Lingo said some of the employees worked on the job with another company years ago.

The bridge is rigidly attached to CityPlace Tower and has a “sliding” connection to the old Petroleum Club Building.

“It has the ability to slide back and forth,” Lingo said. “It's just like a bridge — it's designed to be rigid on one side and flexible on the other.”

Once the former Petroleum Club Building is razed, work is set to begin on a yet-to-named amenities building in its place that will include an auditorium, fitness center and day care.

Aaron Young with Rogers Marvel Architects, meanwhile, is in the midst of conceptual design work for an overhaul of Kerr Park that will extend out from the new amenities buildings.

“The current area of couch park functions much like a building — it's enclosed, and it's used based on whether something is scheduled to happen,” Young said in a presentation on Tuesday.

In designing a makeover of the park, Young said he is trying to avoid creating a venue that will compete with the newly relaunched Myriad Gardens or a future park planned in the area south of the arts district known as Core to Shore.

Current plans call for a more “passive” park where visitors might choose to picnic, or classes might meet. The amphitheater will be replaced with rows of seating in the grass that could still be used for performances when needed, Young said.

‘Core of downtown’

“This is a park that holds a place in the core of downtown,” Young said. “In approaching this park, we looked at things going on around it. You have the Myriad Gardens that will be a highly programmed park, and the last thing we want to do is have something that will compete with that.”

Some art in the park will be relocated; other pieces, notably the “89er” statue, might be removed from its pedestal and placed among the native grasses planned in the park.

Young envisions a bust of Robert S. Kerr being replaced with a more heroic full-size statue of the man who not only founded Kerr-McGee but also was once considered “king” of the U.S. Senate.

Couch Drive will remain in place on both sides of the park to provide access for adjacent properties, but will be designed more for pedestrians than for vehicles, Young said. A restaurant on the ground floor of the amenities building will be designed to create a constant presence in the park and to encourage other adjacent buildings to interact with the park.

Development of SandRidge Commons began three years ago after the company bought the vacant former headquarters of Kerr-McGee. SandRidge CEO Tom Ward recently estimated the company will employ up to 1,900 people at the downtown corporate headquarters within five years.



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