

Underground parking lot to be built in Civic District

Possible funding partnerships with the Province of Ontario, the Region of Waterloo and the Kitchener public library (KPL) motivated the city councillors to recently endorse a plan to build an \$18.5-million underground parking structure on Queen Street North, in the heart of the Civic District.

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— Rod Regier,

executive director of economic development,

City of Kitchener

The new parking structure, to be located under the KPL's future expansion area, will complement the future vision for the Civic District — the area bordered by Queen, Ellen, Frederick and Weber streets — as a centre of cultural and educational life in the community — a concept that has been supported by a number of community stakeholders.

“There are so many extraordinary ideas in the works for the Civic District — initiatives that will round out the existing selection of cultural and educational opportunities in the area,” said Rod Regier, the city's executive director of economic development. “Having adequate parking to support this vision is essential in ensuring its future success.”

Three separate developments in and around the Civic District have created a demand for parking that cannot be met within each individual development.

The expansion of the KPL will create the need for 112 parking spaces; the new provincial courthouse, to be constructed at the corner of Frederick and Weber streets,

will require 200 staff parking spaces; and the expansion of the region's offices into the county courthouse building will create a demand for an additional 100 spaces.

While some of the city's surface parking lots in the area, as well as nearby on-street parking will offer a combination of both short-term and long-term monthly spaces for users of these facilities, they are also heavily used with occupancy reaching 85 to 100 per cent each weekday.

In addition, evening use by events at the nearby Centre in the Square generate a demand that often fills all existing spaces and spills into the adjacent residential neighbourhood.

“We have a number of parking challenges in and around the downtown area, when it comes to accommodation,” said John McBride, the city's director of transportation planning. “Building a new underground structure of this size will help alleviate some of that pressure and provide drivers with a central location to leave their vehicles when they visit the downtown area.”

With the support of the city's finance and corporate services committee, city staff will now enter into letters of understanding to financially support the project, with: the province, in the amount of \$7 million; the region, in the amount of \$4.5 million, and the KPL, in the amount of \$4.845 million, which will come out of the library's existing central library project budget.

Such support would provide a significant and sufficient financial contribution, allowing the net revenues from the facility's user fees to pay for its operating costs, and the majority of its development costs.

Construction of the parking garage is set to begin in 2010 and wrap up in 2012, in co-ordination with the library expansion and the anticipated opening of the new provincial courthouse.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT -- The City of Kitchener is hoping to partner with the province and region to build an underground parking garage at Kitchener Public Library expansion site.