

# Downtown Kitchener



## Civic District: *imagine the possibilities*

Earlier this spring, Kitchener city council endorsed the Civic District vision and master plan – a long-term initiative that will transform the district into a dynamic center of arts, culture and educational opportunities for both downtown Kitchener and the entire region.

The Civic District area in downtown Kitchener is bordered by Queen, Ellen, Frederick and Weber streets. This area is already home to Centre in the Square, Kitchener Public Library (KPL), the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery and the Registry Theatre and has all the ingredients to become a central hub for the arts and culture in the region.

The vision is driven by a desire to offer an experience that can educate and enrich people's lives and foster broader, more creative community interaction.

Part of the vision and master plan will include an expansion of the KPL main library, as well as the city's approved plan to build a 412-space underground parking structure beneath the KPL's expansion area. This project will be funded via a partnership with the province of Ontario, the Region of Waterloo and KPL.

The Civic District visioning team undertook a public vision process in 2007 that included surveys, focus groups, public meetings and a design charrette, where city residents were invited to identify new opportunities for programming and land uses in the Civic District.

Staff will continue to work with the Civic District visioning team to move the project forward through the development of business cases, community partnerships, and a proposed model that will include funding opportunities for the implementation of the master plan.

For more information on downtown events, or to sign up for the Downtown E-News, go to [www.downtownkitchener.ca](http://www.downtownkitchener.ca)

## Sale of Centre Block another step in downtown revitalization

The vision of a redeveloped Centre Block in downtown Kitchener moved another step closer to reality as council recently endorsed the agreement of purchase and sale for the property.

The city has now officially entered into the agreement with Andrin Investments Limited – the site developer selected in 2007 after extensive public consultation about their vision and plans for the block. Andrin Limited has had positive redevelopment experiences in downtown Kitchener in the past with their redevelopment of the former Kaufman Footwear factory into residential lofts.

Andrin's plans for the Centre Block site include:

- A mixed-use residential and commercial building with 385 residential units located in two towers and three four-storey podium buildings fronting on King, Young and Duke streets;
- 10,000 sq ft of retail fronting on King Street;
- A three level parking structure of which the city will own the top deck consisting of 200-230 public parking spaces;
- A publicly accessible open space/court yard that will be located in the centre of the development on top of the parking structure.
- Redevelopment of heritage properties including the former Mayfair Hotel and 156-158 King Street.

"Andrin's proposal to redevelop Centre Block delivers on all of the things we as a city said we wanted on that block when this project began," said Rod Regier, the city's executive director of economic development. "And, in addition to meeting the community's vision for the block, in Andrin we have found a private-sector partner that has proven its ability to get the job done well, and has the confidence and ability to invest substantially in our downtown."

The negotiations of the new agreement between the city and Andrin involved two real-estate appraisals and a detailed residual land valuation by a national real-estate valuation firm.

Additionally, the process was overseen by the city's fairness advisor, Dr. James McKellar, director of the real property program at York University and a national expert in public-private partnerships.

With this agreement, the city achieves a fair price for the Centre Block lands and buildings and the parking it will purchase from Andrin. Andrin obtains an excellent redevelopment site at a cost that allows it to earn a reasonable rate of return.

While the redevelopment of the heritage buildings had been included as the third phase of Andrin's original proposal to the city, the new agreement includes amendments designed to fast track the redevelopment of those buildings.

Their redevelopment is now considered a separate phase to be completed concurrently with the residential and retail elements of Centre Block.

Andrin has agreed to begin to actively seek opportunities to find a partner who would redevelop the heritage properties quickly.

Additionally, Andrin will be working with the city, the Downtown Kitchener Business Improvement Association (BIA) and several local building owners to explore opportunities to redevelop the heritage properties faster.

A new liaison committee including representatives from Andrin, the city and the Downtown Kitchener BIA continues to meet to explore any issues related to the site.

A project sales office and model suite will be constructed on the site by Aug. 31, 2010.

For more information about the project, visit [www.downtownkitchener.ca](http://www.downtownkitchener.ca)