

Public to get update on library expansion plans

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Next week, library officials will hold two public meetings to share detailed drawings for the expansion of the main branch and update the public on the \$39.8 million project.

"We are always looking for public feedback, but at the same time we are giving a progress report to the community," Sonia Lewis, the Kitchener Public Library's chief executive officer, said in an interview Friday.

Plans call for adding 30,000-square-feet of new space, mostly to the back of the main library on Queen Street. A new children's section will be in northeast corner of the new addition with floor to ceiling windows.



A rendering of the Kitchener Public Library main branch on Queen Street.

A large part of the Queen Street side of the building will be covered in glass to create a light-filled space. A ramp leading in and out of the new underground parking garage will be located off Queen Street on the south side of the building.

"I think the architects have really tried to respect the existing building and marry the old and the new," Lewis said.

"There is a real sensitivity, I think, to how much the community values the existing building," Lewis said.

The first open house will be held 7-9 p.m. in the Main Library at 85 Queen St. N., on Tuesday, Nov. 3. The second open house will be held from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 7 in the Kitchener Market, 300 King St. E.

Levitt Goodman Architects of Toronto is working on the library expansion. The principal there, Janna Levitt, is a graduate of the University of Waterloo School of Architecture. That firm also designed the Waterloo Region Children's Museum in downtown Kitchener.

"The preservation of the mature trees in front of the library is a goal," Lewis said.

The library is planning a campaign that aims to raise \$4 million to help pay for the project, which will increase the floor space by 30 per cent, collections by 20 per cent and public computers by 50 per cent. A complete renovation of the existing building will be done to, among other things, make all of the book collections accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Construction of the 400-space underground parking garage will begin next summer. The cost of that \$18.5 million garage is being shared among the province (\$7 million), Region of Waterloo (\$4.5 million) and \$7 million from the library and city.

Work on the library is scheduled to begin late next summer and be finished by the end of 2012.

"I would really encourage people to come out and have a look at the design because there will be information about the library, the underground garage and at the same time we will be showing three concepts for a possible public square in the Civic District area," Lewis said.

"We have a vision to create a public square there and so what we are going to be doing is testing some ideas with the public and getting their input about what the public square would look like," Lewis.

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