

## Ground broken for Kitchener library expansion

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RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER — After years of discussion, including cancelling an idea for relocation, ground was finally broken for renovation and expansion of the Kitchener Public Library.

About 100 library visitors and employees attended the upbeat ceremony at noon on Saturday outside the Central Library's Queen Street entrance.

"The project we are breaking ground on today will not only see the complete renovation of the existing building and the construction of a 25,000 foot addition, but also much needed space for current collections and services and enable us to better accommodate and adapt to future growth," said library board chair Dan Carli.



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*Community leaders who helped with the groundbreaking for the Kitchener Public Library expansion on Saturday were (from left, wearing white hard hats), MPP John Milloy, Kitchener Coun. Kelly Galloway, Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr, Kitchener Public Library CEO Sonia Lewis, library chair Dan Carli and Joe Maio from Maystar Contractors*

Kitchener Public Library chief executive Sonia Lewis was joined by Kitchener Mayor Carl Zehr, and Kitchener Centre MPP John Milloy, as well as representatives from project designers Levitt Goodman Architects, Walter Fedy Partnership and Philip H. Carter Architect and Planner.

The project will include renovations to all three floors of the central library, as well as the addition to the rear of the library and three levels of underground parking with 412 spaces.

Carli said an increase in accessibility is one of the most important improvements included in the renovation.

The first construction phase will be the parking garage which will be shared with regional headquarters and the new consolidated courthouse. The entire project is expected to be completed in January 2013.

Lewis said they will double the number of computers available to the public which provide free Internet access, and offer a more effective wireless network.

"Libraries are places to go to get training, take courses and learn computer skills, and that's what this

facility is going to allow us to do,” said Coun. Berry Vrbanovic.

Because of this, Vrbanovic said, library usage during the recession has gone up significantly across Canada.

The renovation will create new infrastructure that can adapt to changes brought on through electronic media and the Internet.

“It will be much more flexible in its space,” Vrbanovic said.

Avani Karadkhedkar, 14, member of the library’s youth advisory council is looking forward to a significantly updated teen section — including more space, new furniture and more privacy.

“The library’s going to be pretty cool after it’s done, so I think more teens will be attracted to the library,” she said.

“It takes that next step to build community,” Zehr said.