

To Barrie City Council

Selling the library parking lot is short-sighted.

I agree with Brandy Cericola's letter to The Barrie Examiner printed Thursday, March 10, 2016 concerned about access for patrons, especially moms and kids, seniors and the disabled, whom we all encourage to use the library.

Worse than that, selling the parking lot will severely limit the future of the library for possible expansion. It does need expanded. Barrie is building downtown. More condo residences, the old Mady project and the planned for building at the Five Points. And in the years to come, significantly more.

The library is a key selling point for moving downtown. Council is spending our money to attract people downtown. The library is, and needs to even more, to become a community centre in the heart of the city. Not a sports complex, but a mind complex; a centre for learning and discovery and a key resource for the electronic and printed worlds to intertwine.

In comparison to libraries in Cambridge, Kitchener, Bradford, Painswick and Orillia, the most recent ones I've seen, the downtown library is ancient. It was wonderful when new, but time marches on and upgrading and expansion are necessary. Al Davis and his staff have done just about all they can to reconfigure the interior - it needs expanded. All the libraries mentioned are very rectangular in design, the current trend. The Kitchener re-configuration is amazing and very friendly. It can be done.

The parking lots surrounding the library are very necessary. Perhaps if expansion goes to the north, an underground parking lot may be constructed, or, the building raised on stilts like the Bell building on Bayfield St. To the west, in the "H" block, the lot there needs to be kept for the same reason.

The current library needs light. It has great windows and if the lots are sold off, buildings constructed will obscure the light. Of course, this is an environmental issue as well. Daylight is free.

Barrie Council has, over the decades, not done well with our history and buildings. Tear them down and trumpet, "Historic Barrie." Once land is gone - it is gone. Amazingly the council at the time the library was built planned for parking, not enough, but they had that foresight. In a major city I can see no parking lots for libraries, but then most have better public transit. History gets in the way. But Barrie?

If Council do decide to sell off this lot, what is Council's plan for the future of the downtown library? At the moment, I don't believe there is one. Selling off the family silver to pay for past fiscal indebtedness is not responsible management, just short-sightedness.

Jim Perrin

Copy: Barrie Downtown Neighbourhoods Association  
The Barrie Examiner