

Four-level parkade planned for Z-Lot

With an eye to improving public access to campus, the U of S put out a call in July for architectural and engineering proposals for a four-level, 985-stall parkade to be built on what is now Parking Lot Z, just south of College Drive.

Larry Harder, Director of Planning & Development with Facilities Management, said the opportunity to proceed with the project "is presenting itself now with the completion of the new Kinesiology Building scheduled for 2003, and with the parking study we did as part of the Core Area Master Plan". The parkade is one of the first projects to take shape from that plan, a guideline for campus development over the next century.

The parkade project will go to the Sept. 20 meeting of the University's Board of Governors for approval in principle, supported by a feasibility study that shows the structure is financially viable and the location is optimal for improving visitor access, said Harder.

The final version of the Master Plan was also to have gone to the Board in September, but delays in the offices of the Toronto-based urban design consultants on the plan, Brook McIlroy, mean it likely won't be available until November, he said. Even so, the nearly-completed plan is already being used to guide development decisions like the parking structure, so "getting the final report out is more of a formality".

At 985 stalls, the parkade will more than triple the number of cars that can be accommodated now on the Z-Lot site. The University is also asking for proposals for additional surface parking west of the Field House and about 350 square metres of office space either in or beside the parkade as part of the project. Harder said Facilities Management is considering relocating Security Services and the Parking Office to the new space on the site "if it's economical".

The biggest question about the project is the cost "so we're looking for (architectural and engineering) consultants to give us a little bit more information. This is just a proposal right now. We'll see what it costs."

Tony Whitworth, Vice-President, Finance & Resources, said parkade construction is expensive - "I'm told between \$10,000-\$12,000 per stall" - so the University plans to charge market rates for stalls in order to recover the capital costs. Although it depends on the timeframe of that cost-recovery program, the University expects it will need at least \$1,000-\$1,200 per year from each stall, he said.

Should construction go ahead as planned, student parking spots now in Z-Lot will be moved to the Field House area until the structure is complete, which preliminary schedules indicate will be early 2004, said Harder. The finished parkade will then be open to any short-term user willing to pay market rates.

Whitworth said while he does not view the Z-Lot parkade as a test-run for other such structures on campus, the defeat in March of a U of S Students' Union referendum calling for an all-access transit pass means "what we do with student parking comes

back to another parkade question". He added there isn't a university in North America that isn't constantly dealing with parking issues.

"We're fortunate on this campus in that we have a great deal of land, but we're almost built out as far as surface parking is concerned," he said. With no plans to increase surface parking, the University is attempting to create enough capacity for both faculty and staff, and short-term users who could be either visitors or students. For faculty and staff, Whitworth said "our intension is to get the right balance" between scramble and assigned parking.

Plans announced in August to convert Lots F and G to the scramble format starting Sept. 3 are on hold pending discussion of University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association concerns.

The parkade proposal will likely be discussed by the University's joint parking committee at a future meeting but John Olson, Consumer Services Director and an administration representative on that committee said because it is designed for short-term users, it should have no impact on faculty or staff parking.

Speaking on behalf of the U of S Students' Union (USSU), Brenda Jackson, Vice-President for Student Issues, said the parking structure is viewed as a positive move for the University but concerns remain over permit parking for students, particularly those who reside on campus.

A large number of permits issued for Z-Lot go to students living in residence who pay \$196.43 for eight months in an electrified stall and \$155.03 for non-electrified. Jackson said the USSU suggested to administration that the parkade contain a mix of hourly-rate stalls and permits. Those permits "are really precious. We can't afford to lose any more" and residence students will not be able to afford to pay \$.75-\$1.00 per hour long-term, she said.

As part of the parkade plan and to enhance public access, Harder said the existing pedestrian bridge over College Drive will be improved to create a direct link from the parking structure to the new College of Kinesiology Building and from there, the rest of campus. Harder said the parkade should prove a boon for sporting events held in the new 2,500-seat Kinesiology gym.