

For Immediate Release

Tourism Kelowna to Submit Rezoning Application for New Visitor Centre Downtown

KELOWNA, November 1, 2016 – In early November, Tourism Kelowna will apply to the City of Kelowna for rezoning to build a new visitor centre downtown on a small City-owned parking lot at Queensway and Mill Street, a parking lot that is slated to be closed as part of the new hotel project. It would lease this land from the City for this public amenity. The proposal is different from the one Tourism Kelowna announced earlier this year.

“We started this public process in March. We listened to the people of Kelowna and have made improvements to our plan,” says Tourism Kelowna Chair Daniel Bibby. “We realigned the building to remove it entirely from the Simpson Covenant. Respecting the Covenant was important to both the citizens of Kelowna and City Council.”

The proposal no longer includes office space. The Visitor Centre will be entirely dedicated to serving visitors and the citizens of Kelowna. The result is a building that is 3,000 square feet, 40 per cent smaller than the original proposal without sacrificing services to the public.

“We were able to find new office space to rent at a cost saving that allows us to stay within our overall budget,” says Tourism Kelowna CEO Nancy Cameron. “The visitor centre construction cost drops from \$3.5 million to \$2.8 million as a result. Tourism Kelowna is responsible for raising or borrowing the entire amount to build the centre.”

The building will be set back from the water’s edge allowing for the expansion of the waterfront area between Stuart Park and Kerry Park with new, landscaped public space to more than twice the width (15 metres) of the one in front of the Yacht Club (7 metres).

The new visitor centre would replace the current centre located on Harvey Avenue, which continues to see declining usage due to a shift in visitor behaviour seen across North America. In comparably sized communities, 78 per cent of North American visitor centres have moved off highways and into high volume pedestrian areas in order to dramatically increase the number of visitors that they can influence to see and do more, which in turn results in additional spending at local businesses.

Visitor centres provide a human touch to travelers coming to a new place. By providing ideas for vacation activities and attractions, visitor centres boost enjoyment levels and encourage longer stays and future trips. Over time, increased spending by visitors creates more jobs and higher tax revenues. This visitor centre will also serve residents and support Kelowna’s cultural community, as it will sell local artisan products and tickets for local cultural events and entertainment.

Tourism Kelowna will hold a public information session on November 9 at the site of the proposed visitor centre to collect feedback from the public.

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About Tourism Kelowna

Tourism Kelowna is the official not-for-profit tourism marketing association for Kelowna and area. In partnership with over 300 businesses, Tourism Kelowna undertakes strategic sales, marketing and visitor servicing to fulfill its mandate to generate overnight visitor demand to economically benefit Kelowna and its neighbouring communities.