



Parking garage proposed near Lancaster Square between hotel, former Bulova building

Money would come from CRIZ redevelopment fund



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The Lancaster Parking Authority will study the feasibility of building a parking garage where this two-story structure now stands on the east side of Lancaster Square. The site is between the Hotel Lancaster, at left, and the soon-to-be-redeveloped Bulova building.

The so-called “annex” on Lancaster Square’s east side has sat vacant for many years, resisting the city’s best efforts to lure developers to renovate it.

Now, with redevelopment projects afoot [at the Hotel Lancaster](#) to the north and [the former Bulova building](#) at 101 N. Queen St. to the south, the city is hatching a possible plan for the stretch in between.

On Thursday, after hearing from Randy Patterson, the city director of economic development and neighborhood revitalization, the Lancaster Parking Authority voted to conduct a feasibility study on building a parking garage at the site.

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The idea would be to construct a garage with roughly 350 spaces, give or take, which the authority would own and operate.

CRIZ financing

Providing additional parking will support the hotel, the 101 N. Queen St. development “and other potential entertainment uses,” Patterson said. “Parking becomes an integral part of the development plan.”

The ballpark cost would be about \$10 million, Patterson said. Financing would come from the CRIZ, the City Revitalization & Improvement Zone economic development program.

The parking authority would issue a bond to pay for the garage, and the CRIZ board would agree to provide debt service, Patterson said. On a \$10 million bond, that would run about \$750,000 to \$1 million a year, he said.

After an overhaul last year, the CRIZ is returning more than \$3 million annually in state and local taxes to Lancaster to fund redevelopment.

At present, only a small portion of that money is earmarked. If money is unallocated, it has to be returned to the state.

Responding to demand

The former Bulova building is being converted into a mix of retail, office and condominium space.

It will have its own small garage on the ground floor, serving the condo residents. Business employees and retail customers will have to park elsewhere, and prospective tenants have been asking about their options, Patterson said.

Officials have said for several years that the city needs more parking.

In a [2015 white paper](#), Parking Authority Executive Director Larry Cohen said parking is at “a critical stage,” specifically citing the Bulova building and Lancaster Square as projects that will create more demand.

The feasibility study will look at whether the proposed parking authority garage can connect to the nearby Duke Street garage, as well as having its own vehicle entry and exit.

There could be pedestrian connections to the hotel and 101 N. Queen St., though those details are far in the future.

Options to consider

It's possible the garage could be a mixed-use development.

John Meeder, developer of the Hotel Lancaster, has discussed with the city the possibility of putting an entertainment area in the garage's ground floor.

“There are no firm plans,” Meeder stressed to LNP. The garage is a new idea, and there's a lot to be looked at. The feasibility study needs to be done and its results digested.

When Lancaster was making its bid for the CRIZ in 2013, the city's list of proposed projects included an elaborate \$10 million entertainment complex in the annex.

It would feature “a bowling alley, bocce courts, a live performance theater, restaurant and game rooms,” [LNP reported](#) at the time.

Another possibility for the garage would be residential space above it, either built at the same time or left as a future option. That would require some structural adjustments, which the feasibility study is to consider.

Trading spaces

City officials are excited by the opportunity to replace the annex, part of a flawed urban renewal project built nearly half a century ago in an unsuccessful attempt to stem the exodus of shopping to the suburbs.

Shops in the annex, dubbed the Brunswick Mall, struggled from the start, eventually giving way to offices and conference space, then to nothing at all.

The side of the annex where the garage would go is connected to the hotel building, and Meeder's hotel company owns it. It housed a two-screen movie theater that operated from 1970 to 1995.

A NEW PARKING GARAGE?

The Lancaster Parking Authority is commissioning a feasibility study on building a parking garage adjacent to Lancaster Square.



If the garage project moves forward, that side of the annex would be sold to the parking authority. If the entertainment complex is part of the plan, that space would be leased back to Meeder, Patterson said.

The city might also trade Meeder some space by a stair tower near the hotel for development, Patterson said.

The rest of the annex connects to 101 N. Queen St., and is being redeveloped as part of that project.

In any case, Lancaster Square —which, with Binns Park on the other side of North Queen Street, forms downtown’s largest public space — would remain an open area.

The city has said it hopes to renovate and beautify the square in conjunction with the Hotel Lancaster and 101 N. Queen St. projects.

The feasibility study will be done by a consultant, possibly Walker Parking Consultants, a firm headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with an office in Philadelphia. It is expected to cost no more than \$50,000 and be completed sometime this summer.

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CRIZ: Lancaster's City Revitalization and Improvement Zone program

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