For Immediate Release
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MEDIA RELEASE
King Street Reconstruction receives $1.23 million grant from federal Community Adjustment Fund

KITCHENER – The King Street reconstruction project – which will see six blocks of downtown Kitchener's main street reconstructed throughout 2009 and 2010 – received an injection of $1.23 million today from the federal government's Community Adjustment Fund.

Mayor Carl Zehr and Kitchener Centre MP Stephen Woodworth made the official announcement this morning at a media conference along King Street, in front of the Centre Block site.

"We are very pleased to receive this additional funding for the King Street project," said Mayor Carl Zehr. "While this money allows us to further improve the modern and contemporary look and feel of King Street and Speakers' Corner, making our downtown more attractive to businesses and investors, just as importantly, it also represents an opportunity for the city to continue to do its part in helping the national effort that is underway to improve the economy."

The King Street Master Plan, which involves the reconstruction of six blocks of downtown Kitchener – between Francis and Frederick Streets – got underway in April 2009.

Aimed at stimulating economic regeneration and revitalization in downtown Kitchener, the reconstruction of King Street addresses the main purpose of the Community Adjustment Fund which is to stimulate the economy and to help to mitigate the short-term impacts of the economic downturn by creating employment opportunities in communities.

The additional funding will enable the city to increase the scope of the work on the streetscape project which is expected to create additional employment.

The funds will also enable such enhancements as improved night lighting, more street trees, more benches and bicycle racks, new Christmas decorations for the area and new furnishings for Civic Square in front of City Hall. Additionally, the money could help to pay for the protective sealant that will help to keep the downtown environment clean and reduce future maintenance efforts and expenses.

The project also provides many significant long-term benefits to the community. For example, through creating a vibrant and attractive urban environment, the newly-redesigned King Street, will help to attract new businesses and it will help to stimulate other private sector investment in the downtown.

"The city is not just building a street; it's building a vibrant urban environment – a place of creative energy – that will help us to attract new business and new jobs to our downtown," said Mark Garner, executive director of the Kitchener Downtown Business Improvement Area. "The project has re-energized existing businesses as well. Many of them are looking at ways – such as enhancing their storefronts – that they can contribute to the new look and feel of the downtown."

It is anticipated that in 2009-2010, the new street could leverage as much as $600,000 of additional private sector investment by downtown businesses in new facades, storefronts and signage improvements that will complement the new streetscape.

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Many businesses are now utilizing the city's downtown façade grant improvement program to assist with their efforts in this area.

Other benefits to be realized from the reconstruction of King Street include the potential reuse of properties which are currently vacant or underutilized and/or the remediation of properties which may be contaminated – by new investment and redevelopment projects. Additionally, residential and employment intensification in downtown Kitchener will enable more people use alternative modes of transportation such as transit and cycling – reducing dependency on cars.

An enhanced King Street will also enable businesses in the area to better attract and retain high-quality individuals who want to be located in modern, urban areas.

In the long-term, the fresh and modern King Street will also tie together a growing list of exciting new downtown developments including: the University of Waterloo's Downtown Health Sciences Campus, Wilfrid Laurier University's Faculty of Social Work, the new Victoria Park entrance, the Lang Tannery District, a new provincial courthouse and the Centre Block redevelopment.

The streetscape design – which was approved by Kitchener City Council in 2007 – is based on the results of the Help Design Downtown Kitchener survey, as well as many public open houses and meetings held with downtown businesses.

The new design includes:

- Wider sidewalks and flexible parking that will increase the city's capacity to hold special events and festivals in the core, and allow for more outdoor cafes, patios, restaurant seating and retain in the warmer months while maximizing on-street parking in the winter months.
- Improved street lighting.
- Environmentally sustainable features which have earned a "green street" designation from Tree Canada, including 120 new street trees; planter beds that collect and filter storm water before it reaches the sewer system; the recycling and reuse of road materials; improved waste management; new bicycle racks and improved transit stops and shelters.
- A contemporary design for Speaker's Corner, a traditional community gathering place, which include more street trees, added seating, sustainable planters, increased space for outdoor events and an interactive public art installation.

The $8.8 million King Street reconstruction project is funded through an investment of $5.68 million from the City of Kitchener, much of that from the Economic Development Investment Fund, and an additional $3.2 million grant from the Province of Ontario's Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative.

The improvements to King Street also address one of the community's key priorities for its future – the downtown. Through consultations in recent years, including the Environics Survey (2005) and Who-are-you-Kitchener? (2006) residents have identified a "dynamic downtown" – a downtown that is lively and vibrant and will provide them with a unique mix of exciting big city amenities and diverse services – as a priority.

The community's priorities are the foundation of the City of Kitchener's Strategic Plan (2008), the document which will guide the city's decisions over the next 20 years.

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