

City to build \$8-million garage in downtown Muncie

The 400-space garage will serve the downtown Courtyard hotel and Horizon Convention Center

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This is an artist's rendering of a downtown parking garage to be built by the city of Muncie. This view shows the garage from the southwest with Victor Street in the foreground.



Written by

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City parking garage announced

Mayor Dennis Tyler and city officials on Thursday announced a new downtown parking garage. Details:

- **LOCATION:** North of Victor Street on the south edge of downtown Muncie, adjacent to the Horizon Convention Center and soon-to-be-built Courtyard by Marriott hotel.
- **COST:** \$8 million, to be covered for the first five years by \$230,000 annual payments from the city to HWC Engineering, then afterward by revenue from the local food and beverage tax once the convention center is paid off.
- **SIZE:** Four levels and 400 spaces.
- **ENTRANCE:** On the south side, from Victor Street.
- **ELEMENTS:** Parking spaces for the disabled, including space for vans; one electric car power station; a “significant” number of **secure** bicycle cages.
- **CONSTRUCTION:** Poured concrete and brick with mesh covering openings on each level to block the view of vehicles inside but allow daylight to enter.
- **SECURITY:** Plans call for **security** cameras. Officials say they’d like to have them monitored in the city-county 911 dispatch center a few blocks away.

MUNCIE — Another day, another multi-million-dollar project.

The city on Thursday unveiled plans for an \$8-million downtown parking garage to be built adjacent to Horizon Convention Center and the planned Courtyard by Marriott hotel.

Mayor Dennis Tyler, Muncie Redevelopment Commission director Todd Donati, downtown officials and members of the teams that will [design](#) and build the garage, HWC Engineering and Garmong Construction, gathered at Muncie City Hall to show artist's renderings of the garage and answer questions about details.

The project, in a nutshell, would see construction of a city parking garage with about 400 spaces on four levels. The garage would fit in the corner formed by the convention center and the Courtyard which, like the garage, could begin construction in August on the south edge of downtown.

Construction of the garage is projected to be complete by April, months before completion of the Courtyard, which is supposed to be open in late summer/early fall 2015.

"This is something we've wanted in downtown Muncie for a number of years," Tyler said.

The garage announcement came a day after Tyler detailed to The Star [Press](#) his plans to pursue, at a cost of up to \$5 million, a downtown quiet zone to silence train whistles in a half-mile radius of the Courtyard.

Tyler acknowledged the price tag of the garage and the quiet zone improvements.

"There's a cost to [investing](#) in our community," he said. "But at the end of the day, we get that back," adding that the hotel and garage "are our defining moment."

Besides being a 150-room hotel that will service Horizon Convention Center business, the \$40-million Courtyard — to be built by Arc [Innovations](#), the for-profit division of The Arc of Indiana, a disabled advocacy group — will serve as a first-in-Indiana training center for the disabled who want to work in the hospitality industry.

Tyler said Thursday that the hotel and garage — which will have a still unspecified number of parking spaces for the disabled — will work as a package.

"It's more than a special needs hotel and a garage," he said.

Tyler has made the [financial](#) argument that revenue — from property taxes and from spending by visitors — will return the city's investment on the hotel, garage and quiet

zone projects in a matter of years. Tyler has cited a study that projected a 40-percent increase in business for the Horizon Convention Center, which hasn't had a downtown hotel since the Roberts closed in 2006.

A number of downtown stakeholders, representing the convention center and the Muncie Downtown Development Partnership, were on hand for Tyler's garage announcement. The downtown group was also meeting Thursday afternoon to talk about a downtown traffic plan to put into effect during several months of construction of the Courtyard and parking garage.

Tyler said the city wants to make sure people can get to downtown [businesses](#) and still take into consideration as many as 400 construction workers who will be downtown every day for much of the next year.

Officials said the financial plan for the \$8-million garage is for HWC Engineering, the designer, to lease the structure to the city for five years. The city will make \$230,000 annual payments. After five years, revenue from the local food and beverage tax can cover the cost since the convention center, currently paid for by that tax, will be paid off by then.

An enclosed glass corridor through the Muncie Children's Museum — part of the convention center building — will channel visitors from the convention center to the garage, which will also connect to the hotel.

The downtown garage is the city's second garage project in a year. The city built a \$5-million garage in the center of the \$55-million Village Promenade apartment-and-commercial development in the Village near Ball State University.

The Village garage will be all but invisible, however, with Village Promenade wrapped around it. While two faces of the downtown garage will be mostly unseen as they sit adjacent to the Courtyard and convention center, officials emphasized the aesthetic qualities of the garage's south and southwest faces.

Tyler — who received a commitment of about \$1.6 million from The Arc of Indiana for the quiet zone and improvements to South Madison Street — ties the hotel and garage development on the south edge of downtown to the city's south side and approaches to

it. Tyler noted again Thursday he's working with legislators and the state to improve the Hoyt Avenue exit that brings traffic from Indianapolis and points south via Ind. 67.

Another major part of the city's plans for downtown will be unveiled next month. Vicki Veach of the downtown group said plans for the streetscape redesign of Walnut Street in the heart of downtown will be presented to the public at 5:30 p.m. July 9 in the auditorium at city hall. The Walnut Street rebuild will include new street surface and at least partial new sidewalks. Two years ago, Tyler estimated that cost at \$2 million.