



VISION FOR A BETTER MEMORIAL BUILDING: Architect presents plan that includes town and school offices, housing

By Charlie Breitrose NEWS STAFF WRITER

FRAMINGHAM - Architects envision overhauling the Memorial Building for public and private offices and housing, serving as a catalyst to revitalize down-town. Last night, Newton architecture firm ARCADD presented a plan to selectmen that calls for renovating the 75-year-old building and make two major additions. With the extra space, all town and school offices could be housed, along with private offices, shops and housing.

"I'm very excited about this plan," said Selectman Charlie Sisitsky. "It puts money where our mouth has been for downtown revitalization."

The new building would bring town government together, Town Manager George King said. Most town Offices are in the Memorial Building, while school offices are scattered throughout town.

"What we're looking to do is establish a modern municipal center where all town departments and all town services are in one place," King said.

The mixed use complex would sit in the middle of the library, the Danforth Museum and the Callahan Senior Center creating a civic center. The front of the Memorial Building will look much the same, said architect Hisham Ashkouri, while Concord Street and Union Avenue would have a new look.

"It does not take away from the historic building, in fact it enhances it," Ashkouri said.

In between the two new buildings would be a plaza where restaurants and shops could open.

The project would cost an estimated \$49.5 million, King said. Renting offices and housing would bring in \$2.1 million a year, King estimates, which would bring down the cost.

"The town needs to pass a Proposition 2 _ debt exclusion override to make the improvements," King said.

He told selectmen residents would be making a wise investment.

"They would pay not only to build a new municipal building, but put a stake in for major revitalization of downtown Framingham," King said.

King hopes to have a debt exclusion article ready for the January 2002 Town Meeting to place a measure on the April 2002 ballot. The town would end up with 81,000 square feet of office space with the combination of the Memorial Building and the new building along Concord Street.

The second new building, along Union Avenue, would have 45,000 square feet of office space and 18,000 square feet of retail space and 53 housing units.

"The units would be rented at market value," King said.

"The shortage of parking downtown would be helped by the new project," Ashkouri said.

Two levels of underground parking would provide space for 500 cars and 25 more spots would be built at street level. To keep the town running, the project would be built in phases. First the town must acquire the Buildings at 188 and 196 Concord St. Then the parking garage and the new town and private offices would be built.

When completed town offices would move in while the Memorial Building is renovated. Finally the three stories of housing will be built on top of the private office building.