

KINGSTON CONFERENCE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT - TIMELINE

2013: The City of Kingston/KEDCO report on Block 4 use included the possibility of a mixed-use, hospitality-oriented project centred around a purpose-built conference centre.

2015: City of Kingston's Strategic Plan included as a priority the development of a downtown campus in partnership with St. Lawrence College and the private sector for a tourism, hospitality, and culinary arts centre of excellence.

2018/19: Kingston's Integrated Destination Strategy (IDS) recommended as one of its pillars conducting a feasibility study on using the Leon's Centre for events including meetings and conferences, and on a potential new venue.

June 2020: "A Business Case for a Conference Centre in Kingston, Ontario", the study commissioned by Tourism Kingston in response to the IDS recommendation, concluded there is clear rationale for a dedicated conference centre, that the design should be "iconic", and that it should be a multi-purpose, multi-function facility including retail, residential, hotel, and educational components.

May 2021: The Revised Forward to the 2020 study incorporated pandemic learnings and highlighted the competitive advantage to be gained by incorporating new health and safety realities and advanced hybrid technologies, and the potential to attract investment from all three levels of government as a result.

October 2021: KAP commissioned a report analyzing the potential impact of a 100+ room hotel as part of a conference centre development which showed that there is realistic potential for a "quantum" increase in conference activity with a dedicated facility, that it will reverse the current lost business situation, and that the additional hotel inventory will be absorbed by the increased business.

February 2022: Kingston City Council directed City staff to consider a Conference Centre as a "permitted use" for future development of the Block 4 property, to work with Tourism Kingston to identify options to support the feasibility of a Conference Centre, and report back to Council.

Spring 2022: Tourism Kingston created a Conference Centre Working Group comprised of 16 members representing a broad cross-section of local business sectors. The Working Group's mandate to consult broadly with key community stakeholders was carried out over the last 6 months of 2022 and early 2023, the result being the report titled "A Downtown Conference Centre for Kingston: A Case for Support."

November 2022: Tourism Kingston and The City commissioned HLT Advisory, the premier consultancy in Canada working in the conference centre sphere, to conduct a revenue modeling and economic impact study on a medium-sized (1000-person) conference centre development.

March 2023: HLT presented its report, "Kingston Conference Centre Feasibility Study", to Tourism Kingston and the City.

April 2023: The Conference Centre has been included in City Council's strategic priorities and therefore will be considered at the May 2nd City Council meeting, with the expected outcome being a direction to Staff to undertake an RFI process with the development community.