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Robotic garage gives parking a lift

By Janet Zink

In a region where parking is increasingly a problem, two local developers have come up with a solution: a robotic garage.

Who's doing it: Colin Breen, owner of the South Tampa Irish pub Four Green Fields, plans to build a 180-space robotic parking garage on a parking lot two doors down from the popular watering hole.

Fate plays a part: Breen originally planned to build a conventional parking garage. While researching robotic parking garages on the Internet, he discovered one of the world's leading manufacturers was in Clearwater. He figured he was fated to invest in the technology.

Who makes it: Robotic Parking, a Clearwater-based company owned by German-born engineer Gerhard Haag, is building both Breen's garage and a 450-space robotic garage at Harrison Village, a 141-unit condominium and retail complex on Fort Harrison Avenue at Jones Street in Clearwater.



Handout photo

The first robotic parking garage is in Hoboken, N.J.

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How it works: Motorists drive their cars onto a pallet and then exit. An elevator moves vertically to the proper level and then horizontally to deliver the car to its resting space. Car retrieval takes about two minutes, Haag said. It features multiple elevators with backup motors, a backup computer system and a generator in case of a power outage.

What's the advantage: The new plan allows Breen to fit more cars on less land. The traditional garage would have had a footprint of more than 32,000 square feet. This one takes up 6,000 square feet.

Who else has them: In 2003, Haag's company completed construction on the country's first robotic parking garage in Hoboken, N.J. Besides the two local projects, he's designing robotic garages for Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Brooklyn.

TIA rates going up Maybe Tampa International Airport should consider a robotic garage. Faced with an ever-worsening parking crunch, airport officials plan to vote next month to raise parking rates. They had planned to raise the daily rates in November but are moving that up to try to encourage people not to park at TIA or to choose the remote economy lot, where prices won't change.

Current New

Valet parking \$18/day \$24/day

Short-term garage \$14/day \$18/day

Long-term garage \$10/day \$14/day

Remote economy lot \$7/day \$7/day

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