

2020

February 28

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# CENTER OF THE CITY TASK FORCE

# REPORT

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This report provides Ann Arbor's City Council with recommendations on the next steps for the public space on the Library Block and the development of a Civic Center Commons



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Visit [www.a2gov.org/citycenter](http://www.a2gov.org/citycenter) to  
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# THE CENTER OF THE CITY BLOCK







Denali  
Condominiums

Commercial  
Offices

Liberty Street

Liberty Plaza

Noble House  
Apartments

Kempf House  
Museum

Division Street



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & VISION

## OVERVIEW

In April 2019, Ann Arbor City Council passed resolution R-19-135 (see Appendix A) to establish the Center of the City Task Force with the charge “to engage citizens in visioning, long term planning, and immediate and intermittent uses, building toward the final vision for the Center of the City on the Library Block” (now being referred to as the Center of the City Block). This Final Report of the Task Force includes “recommendations to help determine the next steps to advance the development of a central park and civic center commons known as the Center of the City.” The Task Force was tasked with submitting its report and recommendations to Council by February 28, 2020.

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

On November 6, 2018, voters approved Proposal A (see Appendix B) to amend the City Charter, which states that City-owned land bounded by Fifth Avenue, and William, Division and Liberty Streets, including Liberty Plaza, the surface of the Library Lane parking structure and Library Lane itself, shall be retained in public ownership, in perpetuity, and developed as an urban central park and civic center commons known as the “Center of the City.”

The future of this block, especially the site commonly referred to as the “Library Lot,”

the surface of the Library Lane underground parking structure, has been a focal point of community conversation, and often controversy. For decades, both the City and citizen groups initiated planning processes resulting in numerous reports and plans that expressed various visions for the block (see Appendix C for a list of documents consulted by the Task Force). Without a clear consensus, however, questions remained about the future of the block’s city-owned land.

In recent years, this question came to a head with the prospect of a mixed use development on the Library Lot site. To many members of the community, the development represented an opportunity for increased walkability, economic investment in the downtown, and affordable housing, which is regarded as a critical need in Ann Arbor.

Meanwhile, others viewed the development as taking away one of the few opportunities for retaining downtown public space, which was viewed by many as a much needed and desired community asset, and something that been fought for by some members of the community for many years. Ultimately, this led to the citizen ballot initiative in 2018 known as Proposal A.

With the passing of Proposal A, the direction of the block is now set in the direction towards a Center of the City that consists

of an urban park and civic center commons. The role of the Task Force was therefore to help engage the community to further shape this direction. This report is the result of that effort.

## REPORT FUNCTION & STRUCTURE

This report presents a vision and set of recommendations to guide City Council on next steps, as called for in the resolution establishing the Task Force, and should serve as an advisory document that suggests a path towards achieving the “Center of the City,” including an urban park

and civic center commons.

The recommendations are the results of a compact, but rigorous, planning process that took into account past work, community member input, research, and expertise.

The recommendations, as outlined in the next section, represent as close to a consensus as the Task Force could come.

The remaining sections following the recommendations detail what informed the recommendations, Task Force activities, additional considerations, and appendices.

## VISION

As community feedback was reviewed and ideas were discussed by the Task Force, a vision for the “Center of the City” began to form.

Our vision is to create spaces that are:

- Inclusive and welcoming to everyone
- Safe, active, and foster a culture of peace and non-violence
- Easy to see, easy to get to, and easy to get through
- Flexible, adaptable and sustainable
- Inspiring and promote life-long learning

It is important to continue to engage with the community in the co-creation of this vision.

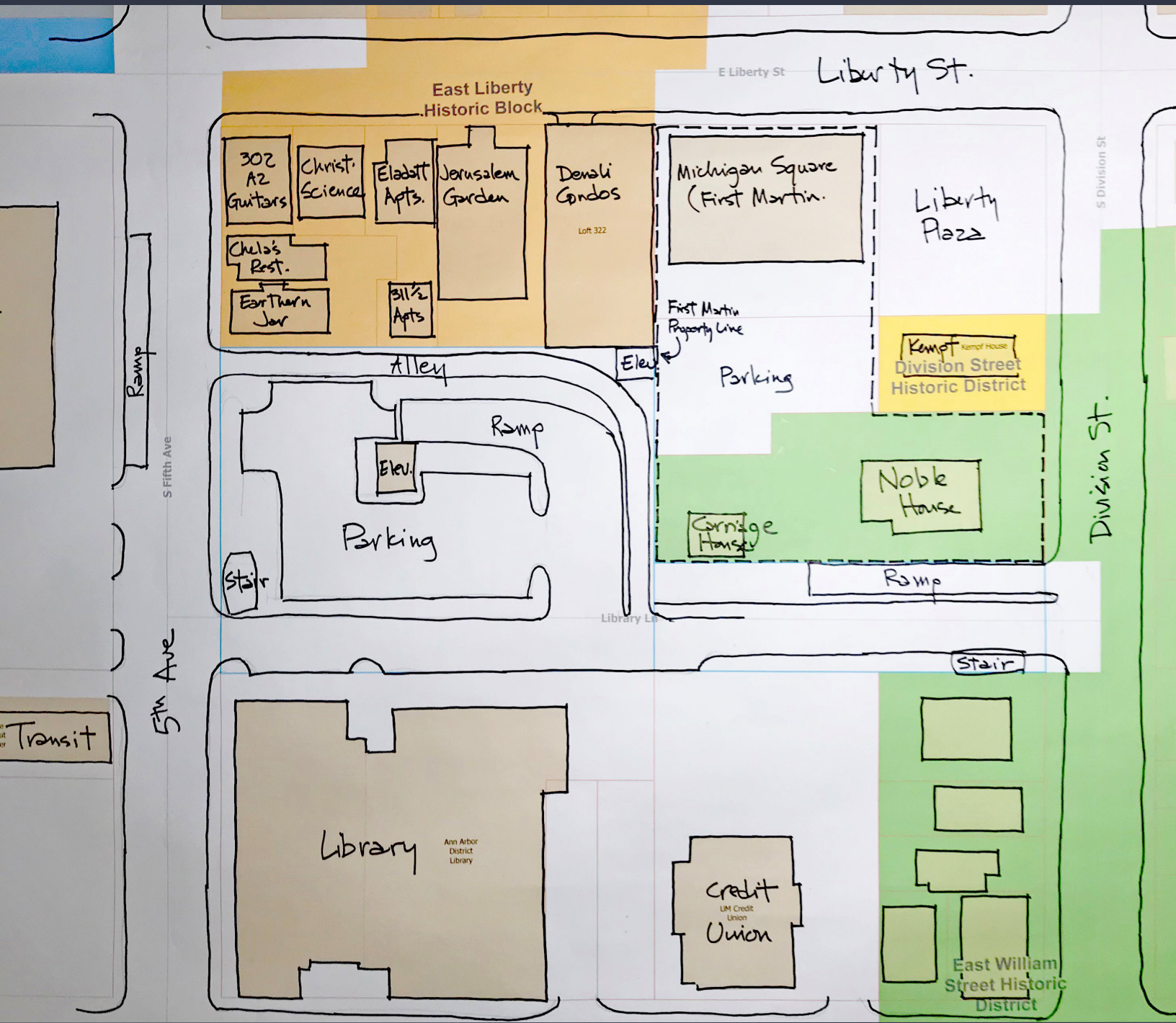


# RECOMMENDATIONS, GOALS & ACTION STEPS

The following summary of recommendations suggests next steps for City Council to advance the development of a central park and civic center commons on the three public spaces: Library Lot, Liberty Plaza, and Library Lane.

1. Facilitate the formation of the Ann Arbor Council of the Commons
2. Schedule regular meetings of a Center of the City Block partners group
3. Remove ground-level parking on the Library Lot parking structure and begin efforts to redesign as an active public space
4. Authorize initial planning for the long-term development of the Center of the City Block as a priority under the City's Master Plan
5. Authorize initial planning for the development of the public spaces on the Center of the City Block
6. Negotiate potential agreements/easements that allow for future expansion and connections of the public spaces on the Center of the City Block.

The Task Force provides additional information for each of the recommendations listed above in the remainder of this section. This includes high-level goals for the recommendations, suggested responsible parties, as well as additional actions that will help to inform each recommendation.



The Task Force utilized this map when considering physical determinants on the Center of the City Block. It shows existing structures and pathways and the location of adjacent historic districts (historic districts shown as colored areas).

# 1. Facilitate the formation of the Ann Arbor Council of the Commons

Responsible party: City Council

Goals:

1. Develop programming, educational opportunities, activities and structures for the spaces that have broad community appeal
2. Define the “Culture of the Commons”
3. Foster partnerships that will create financial sustainability

Action steps:

1. City Council should facilitate the formation of an Ann Arbor Council of the Commons. The Council of the Commons would be composed of community members and partners of all ages and backgrounds who volunteer to undertake the responsibilities of bringing the Commons into existence. The Council of the Commons could take the form of a non-profit or another model. The Council of the Commons would be charged with the following:
  - a. Educating themselves about commons and commoning.
  - b. Creating structures for decision-making following the principles of the commoning movement.
  - c. Developing a code of conduct for the space that upholds principles of mutual respect and the practical knowledge of intergroup relations.
  - d. Developing and creating inclusive programming activities in partnership with community groups and government agencies, including the City Parks and Recreation Department.
  - e. Raising funds to support programming activities.
  - f. Continuing community engagement to gather programming ideas.
  - g. Developing an assessment strategy to ensure programming is inclusive, welcoming, and meets the needs of the users.
2. Form partnerships to coordinate opportunities on topics that support the vision of the commons (for example, wellness, gardening, exercise, art, music, volunteerism, civics, energy efficiency, Ann Arbor History, sustainable technology, permaculture, etc.).
3. Use the Library Lot, Liberty Plaza, and Library Lane as spaces to pilot programming
4. Based on community input, determine the best opportunities for a playground and/or public art that can function as a play structure that brings people of all ages together.



## 2. Schedule regular meetings of a Center of the City Block partners group

Responsible party: City Staff (City Administrator)

Goals:

1. Create and enhance connections between representatives of all spaces on the Center of the City Block.
2. Foster partnerships that will create financial sustainability.

Action steps:

1. The City Administrator should invite a group of representatives with a direct interest in the Center of the City Block to meet regularly. The group would discuss how to provide long-term support for the design, development and funding for the Center of the City Commons and its public spaces.
  - a. Invitations should be limited to one representative from the following groups and any additional relevant groups: Downtown Development Authority, Ann Arbor District Library, Historic District Commission, University of Michigan Credit Union, First Martin Corporation, Ann Arbor Council of the Commons, Denali residents, and Center of the City business owners.
  - b. Establish long-term support toward implementing design and funding of the Center of the City Commons.
  - c. Establish a public/private partnership structure designed to generate private revenues and solicit donor funding for the final Library Lot and Liberty Plaza.
2. As the role of the public spaces on the Center of the City Block becomes clear over years, study the need for and feasibility of a multi-use civic commons building as part of the commons, taking into account near-term and future community needs, as well as existing infrastructure.

### 3. Remove ground-level parking on the Library Lot parking structure and begin efforts to redesign as an active public space

Responsible parties: City/Downtown Development Authority (physical improvements), Ann Arbor Council of Commons (programming)

#### Goals:

1. Design and update spaces to be physically accessible.
2. Create and foster flexible, safe, and adaptable spaces that can support various activities and functions.
3. Designate a space for public discourse.

#### Action steps:

1. Based on community input, explore cost-effective additions to the Library Lot to create a green space, such as container gardens.
2. Design mechanisms (for example, a natural barrier or artistic fence) to ensure the safety of users of the spaces, especially along Fifth Avenue, Library Lane, and the entrance to the parking ramp for the parking structure.
3. Create a flexible platform or stage area for use by speakers, demonstrators, and performers.
4. Create a power source for microphones and other resources that will support performances and speakers.
5. Repurpose or purchase flexible furniture for the spaces that are accessible and will accommodate year-round individual and group activities.
6. Create a storage area for furniture and other needs.
7. Install a drinking fountain.
8. Install public bathrooms.
9. Investigate free wifi for the entire space.
10. Designate a space that will accommodate food trucks and/or other temporary vendors based on community input.
11. Add recycling, composting, and trash receptacles to accommodate increased activity and potential food/vendor purchases.

#### 4. Authorize initial planning for the long-term development of the Center of the City Block as a priority under the City's Master Plan

Responsible party: Planning Commission

Goals:

1. Create and enhance connections between features of the Center of the City Block.
2. Create and enhance transportation connections to and within the Center of the City Block.
3. Look for opportunities to physically expand and maximize the use of the Center of the City Commons.

Action steps:

1. Work with urban design and planning professionals and the community to create and integrate a conceptual/physical plan for the Center of the City Block into the City's Master Plan that meets the vision and goals of the Center of the City Task Force's Final Report.



## 5. Authorize initial planning for the development of the public spaces on the Center of the City Block

Responsible party: City/Downtown Development Authority (physical improvements), Ann Arbor Council of Commons (programming)

### Goals:

1. Design and update spaces to be physically accessible.
2. Design the public spaces with a variety of transportation options that encourages people to move through them at all times of the day and foster natural “eyes in the park.”
3. Create and foster flexible, adaptable spaces that can support various activities and functions.
4. Create and nurture environmentally sustainable spaces.
5. Create a sustainable, relaxing green space.
6. Create an active play area.
7. Create and enhance connections between all spaces on the Center of the City block.

### Action steps:

1. Work with design professionals and community members to create a conceptual/preliminary physical plan for the Center of the City’s public spaces that meets the vision and goals of the Center of the City Task Force’s Final Report.
2. Work with local experts (for example, eco-landscapers, permaculturists and soil scientists) to identify the best opportunity for green space locations and types of sustainable plantings within the Center of the City block.
3. Based on community input, utilize the City’s Department of Sustainability and other community partners to plan and install renewable energy sources to the extent feasible.
4. Work with local disability advocates and urban design consultants to determine potential improvements, layouts, and designs for all the spaces in the commons to ensure accessibility.
5. Work with a professionals and partners to assess opportunities to increase safety through environmental design, including considerations of lighting.
6. Enhance the connections between the public spaces and other adjacent properties (the Kempf House, the Blake Transit Center, the Ann Arbor District Library Downtown branch, neighboring restaurants, the Denali building and First Martin-owned properties) by investigating landscaping, art, and design opportunities, including enhancing pedestrian pathways through the spaces.

## 6. Negotiate potential agreements/easements that allow for future expansion and connections of the public spaces on the Center of the City Block.

Responsible party: City Staff (Planning Department and City Attorney)

### Goals:

1. Develop a concept for expansion of the public commons as opportunities arise in the future.
2. Develop a working relationship with all parties that have a direct interest in the future development of the Center of the City Block.

### Action steps:

1. Work with First Martin to identify opportunities to increase physical and visual connections between their building and the public spaces (Liberty Plaza, Library Lot, and Library Lane), in order to better activate the space, such as ground-floor night-time businesses (e.g., coffee shop, bookstore).
2. Work with transportation planning experts to study opportunities for pedestrian accessibility and safety improvements for streets that border the Center of the City block (Fifth Avenue, William Street, Division Street, Liberty Street, and Library Lane)
3. Establish a mid-block pedestrian connection between Liberty Street, Library Lane, and William Street.
4. Work with the Downtown Development Authority, Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority and mobility-focused groups to strengthen transportation links to and from the spaces.
5. Negotiate for public use of the Noble House and/or Carriage House.
6. As circumstances change, pursue land acquisitions to expand green space on the Center of the City Block.

# WHAT INFORMED THE RECOMMENDATIONS

## LISTENING TO FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

Our proposed recommendations were informed from what we heard from our fellow community members about the future of the Center of the City Commons. We gathered feedback during our two open houses, our two DecaDome/IdeaPod engagements, our online survey, conversations with neighbors, an urban spaces preferences survey, an activities preferences survey, guest speakers at our meetings, and emails from community members. For more information about our community engagement activities, please see the next section and Appendix D & E.

## BUILDING ON PAST WORK

In order to honor previous community efforts and City research, the Task Force built our recommendations on the foundation of previous work and conversations related to the Center of the City. Please see Appendix C for a list of reference materials provided to the Task Force.

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT COMMONS AND COMMONING

The resolution establishing the Task Force defines a commons as: “a traditional form of shared space based on mutual benefit, mutual responsibility and mutual respect, conveying a culture of sustainability now

and for generations to come.”

To further the group’s understanding of a commons, the Task Force met with researcher, professor and author on the history of commons and commoning, Peter Linebaugh, in addition to receiving information from Geoffrey Henny, Professor of Economic, Business Studies and Sustainability Innovation at Cleary University. The Task Force was also encouraged to read a selection from *Governing the Commons, the Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action Principles of the Commons* by Elinor Ostrom (winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics).

Examples of active commons include:

- Driemasterpark in the City of Ghent, Belgium. This park is on a former industrial site and managed by neighboring residents.
- Bologna, Italy, which launched “the city as a commons” project in 2014, which establishes a legal and administrative framework for citizens to care for urban spaces. A tool used as part of this is a “collaboration pact,” which establishes rules between stakeholders.
- Other examples of pioneering Commoning cities include Ithaca, Ghent, Barcelona, Frome, Bristol, Amsterdam, Marseille, Grenoble, Lyon, and Seoul.

In summary, the Task Force learned that commons and commoning is a movement

based on the concept of community assets being held in common (not privately owned) and these assets being collectively managed. The commons movement calls for a commitment to a shared set of values and norms, long-term stewardship, and little reliance on the private sector and the government. To see resources consulted by the Task Force on commoning, see Appendix F.

## LEARNING MORE ABOUT DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACES

To further the Task Force’s understanding about urban design, we reviewed work from the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build strong communities. PPS deems the following as the four key attributes to successful spaces.

1. Sociability
2. Uses & Activities
3. Access & Linkages
4. Comfort & Image

As stated by PPS:

*Great public spaces are those places where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges occur, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the “front porches” of our public institutions – libraries, field houses, schools – where we interact*

*with each other and government. When these spaces work well, they serve as the stage for our public lives.*

*In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, PPS has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.*



Gathering ideas for the recommendations



# TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

## THE TASK FORCE

In accordance with the resolution establishing the Task Force, two Council Members serving on the Parks Advisory Commission appointed nine community members to the Task Force and an additional two members of City Council to serve as advisory members. The Task Force is comprised of members who have expertise in urban planning, architecture, economics, library science, strategic planning, teaching, political science, social justice, and community organizing. The Task Force also includes two students, one from Community High School and one from the University of Michigan.

Members of the Center of the City Task Force:

Hannah Boettcher  
Ann Dilcher  
Alan Haber  
John Haines  
Jeff Hayner (Council member)  
Miles Klapthor, Vice Chair  
Carolyn Loh  
Meghan Musolff, Chair  
Chip Smith (Council member)  
Norman Tyler  
Dean Yang  
Staff Liaison: Heather Seyfarth



(L-R) John Haines, Meghan Musolff, Chip Smith, Carolyn Loh, Norman Tyler, Hannah Boettcher, Ann Dilcher, Heather Seyfarth, Dean Yang, Alan Haber, Miles Klapthor, Jeff Hayner

## PLANNING PROCESS

The Center of the City Task Force followed a five step planning process that was designed to work directly with the community, ensuring concerns and aspirations were understood and considered as various options were explored. The planning process steps included:

1. Gathering and reviewing information on past planning efforts and the block's history.
2. Soliciting ideas and thoughts from the community and topical experts.
3. Developing preliminary goals and objectives based on community input, research, and relevant expertise.
4. Collecting feedback on outstanding questions to further shape the recommendations.
5. Developing, vetting, and revising recommendations to finalize the report.

## REGULAR TASK FORCE MEETINGS

Beginning in August 2019, the Task Force typically met every other week on Wednesdays. In total, there were fifteen Task Force meetings. All Task Force meetings were open to the public and notified through postings, the project website, and the City calendar.

With the exception of the initial meeting and a meeting that required a room change, meetings were recorded by the Community Television Network (CTN), the local public access television station, and can be found at [www.a2gov.org/departments/communications/ctn](http://www.a2gov.org/departments/communications/ctn) and the project webpage, [www.a2gov.org/citycenter](http://www.a2gov.org/citycenter).

## GUEST SPEAKERS

At several meetings, the Task Force invited



experts to share information. The topics and experts included:

- Safety: Officer Jeffrey Rork
- Urban Design & Climate Change: Doug Kelbaugh
- Sustainability: John Mirsky
- Commons Concepts: Peter Linebaugh
- Historic Preservation: John Beeson

In addition to invited speakers, various community members also shared their expertise and thoughts with the Task Force via the open comment periods at our regular Task Force meetings.

Links to meeting materials, including agendas, minutes, notes and speaker presentations can be found on the Task Force website at [www.a2gov.org/citycenter](http://www.a2gov.org/citycenter). Copies of the presentations can also be found in the Appendices.

## TASK FORCE WEBPAGE

City staff created a Center of the City project webpage as part of the City's overall website: [www.a2gov.org/citycenter](http://www.a2gov.org/citycenter). This page included background information about the project and Task Force, links to related City documents, and information about each meeting. Additionally, the webpage provided a link for community members to sign up for updates.

## TASK FORCE EMAIL

Community members could send messages to the Task Force through the Staff Liaison either at the Liaison's email or a Task Force specific email: [CityCenterTF@a2gov.org](mailto:CityCenterTF@a2gov.org). These emails were forwarded to the full Task Force and saved in the Task Force accessible Project Management site.



November 6, 2019 Open House



## NEIGHBOR OUTREACH

A Task Force subgroup conducted a series of interviews to hear the perspectives of neighboring entities and groups (see Appendix D for the invitation). These interviews included perspectives from the following organizations and/or community groups:

- Ann Arbor Public Library
- Downtown Development Authority
- Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority
- First Martin
- Kempf House
- Neighboring Business Owners
- Neighboring Residents

At these interviews, Task Force members listened to perspectives about the history and potential future of the space and asked participants to give feedback on proposed activities, examples of urban parks, and

potential plans.

## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSES

The Task Force held two Open Houses to gather community feedback. The Open Houses were advertised through postings on social media, email notifications, the project website, the City calendar, and printed flyers (see Appendix D for a copy of the flyer).

Both Open Houses had the purpose of:

- Building trust in the process.
- Fostering a feeling of co-creation within the community.
- Gathering community input and clarity on topics related to the concept of the commons and to inform the development of conceptual proposals for the space.
- Using the feedback gathered to help inform Task Force recommendations to City Council.



January 15, 2020 Open House





November 6, 2019 Open House

The first Open House was held on November 6, 2019, at the Downtown Library and had about 150 participants. The format of the Open House involved four stations, staffed by 1-2 Task Force members. Station topics included defining the commons, identifying potential users of the commons, reviewing images of example urban parks, and completing a survey about potential activities in space. The Open House also included a PowerPoint presentation illustrating the history of the Library Lot and Center of the City Block from the 1950s to the current time through maps and photos (see Appendix D for a copy of the powerpoint presentation and a letter of comment on the history).

The stations included:

1. Welcome Station: Staff at this station welcomed participants, oriented them to the open house, and encouraged participants to sign-up for Task Force updates.
2. Definition Station: At this station Task Force members gathered feedback about how participants define the commons, as well as what activities/experiences might support their ideal commons. To start the conversation, Task Force members provided a draft definition of a commons for review and asked participants to complete the following sentence “My ideal commons looks like...” and post answers to the questions:
  - What activities support your ideal commons?
  - What experiences support your ideal commons?
3. Audiences Station: The Task Force designed this station to help determine who might use this commons and what their ideal experience might be. The activity for this station involved

completing an empathy map.

4. Urban Spaces Station: At this station, Task Force members asked participants to review images of ten examples urban parks and provide feedback and complete a survey that asked participants to rate a list of proposed activities and provide additional activity ideas.

The second Community Open House was held on January 15, 2020 at SPARK, located adjacent to Liberty Plaza and had about 75 participants. The format of this meeting included a welcome station and the following:

1. “What We’ve Heard” gallery walk: The Task Force printed “comment summary snapshots” and asked participants to provide feedback on what they most supported and if anything needed to be added. Participants could either write directly on the board or use sticky notes. This activity was intended to allow people to provide written feedback and/or an opportunity for people to give input if

they were not able to stay for the whole meeting. Full page comments sheets were also made available to everyone as another means to provide written feedback.

2. Group conversation: The Task Force provided an opportunity for participants to have group conversations. Community members could join and leave the conversation groups as they wished and rotate among the groups. The conversation focused on outstanding questions, which included:

Discussion Topic #1: Civic Commons Building

*We have heard enthusiasm for a Civic Center Commons building that would host activities such as:*

- Commons decision making space*
- Cafe*
- Community theater auditorium*
- Celebration room*
- Art gallery and studio*



January 15, 2020 Open House





Visitors to the IdeaPod

- Visitors' center*
- Exhibitions*
- Help and information center office*
- Wireless hot spot*
- Meeting space and classrooms*
- Peace place*
- Commons history records and archives*

*We have also heard that people want such a building to include additional private uses, such as housing and/or retail. To do this we would need an amendment to the existing City Charter. How do you think we should move forward and why?*

#### Discussion Topic #2: Governance

*We have heard that the community wants a space that is programmed, safe, inclusive, welcoming, maintained, and appropriately funded. What is the appropriate governance structure for this future Commons?*

*Some ideas and examples that we've heard include Public/private partnership, People's Park model (Berkeley, California), City-owned and managed.*

#### Discussion Topic #3: Liberty Plaza

*We have heard that Liberty Plaza is an existing park that is an important part of the City. What do you think is the role of Liberty Plaza as part of the Commons?*

3. Share-out: At the end of the Open House, the Task Force community members to speak any thoughts they wished to share to the room of remaining Open House participants.

Copies of Open House materials and results can be found in Appendix D and E.



## DECADOME/IDEAPOD

Originally called the Decadome and eventually titled the IdeaPod, this temporary structure served as an onsite Center of the City Block repository for community ideas and feedback. During the week of November 3-10, 2019, the same week as the first Community Open House, several Task Force members and the manufacturer of the IdeaPod, staffed the structure at the Library Lot from 11-2 each day. These volunteers invited those passing by to complete the activities survey (see Appendix D), and to submit any additional ideas or thoughts on poster boards mounted to the IdeaPod. Community members completed over 300 surveys and filled three poster boards.

During January 5-16, 2020, the days leading up to the second Community Open House. Task Force members and the IdeaPod manufacturer once again staffed the structure from 11-2 each day, this time at Liberty Plaza, and invited community members to share their thoughts on Liberty

Plaza and concepts being developed for the civic center commons.

## ONLINE SURVEY

The Task Force created an online survey that reflected the same questions that were asked at the November 6, 2019 Community Open House (see Appendix D for a copy of the survey questionnaire and Appendix E for the results). City staff disseminated the survey through GovDelivery, a system used by the City, which sends survey invitations to over 6,000 subscribers. In addition, Task Force members sent invitations to their contacts and those that signed up through the project webpage. In total, the survey received 534 responses.

## TARGETED MAILINGS

In an effort to help ensure that a broad range of community members were included in the process, the Task Force developed a mailer that provided an update of Task Force activities and invited community members



to the January 15, 2020 Open House, the remaining Task Force regular meetings, and/or to provide comment through email (see Appendix D for a copy of the mailer).

The Task Force sent 6,500 mailers in late December/early January to households in areas of the City which, based on census data, have a higher concentration of people under 30, incomes under \$50k, and people of color. According to demographic data collected at the first Community Open House and online survey, these were groups that were underrepresented in the process.

In addition to sending out 6,500 mailers through the mail, Task Force members distributed another 1,000 copies by hand.

## URBAN SPACES PREFERENCES SURVEY

As part of outreach efforts, a sub-group of the Task Force invited residents and business owners/employees to view photos of urban parks/plazas from twenty-eight different communities and asked to

indicate their preferences based simply on each photo (see Appendix E). Nine of the twenty-eight photos received the highest evaluations. Although there was considerable variance in the responses, participants in the survey responded positively to images with the following characteristics:

- A balance of fountain, prominent sculpture, grassy and paved areas, trees, and ample seating (as illustrated in the consistently highest rated photo of Bhadra Fort Park, India).
- Integral paved walkways.
- Prominent trees (5 of the 9 spaces).
- A water feature (3 of the 4 most highly rated photos had a prominent water feature—generally a fountain).
- Prominent areas for sitting.

Shown below are the two of the highest rated photos.

The Task Force also conducted a version of this exercise at the first Open House.



Bhadra Court, India



Plymouth, Mi



## ACTIVITIES PREFERENCES SURVEY

Hundreds of citizens provided feedback on what activities could be considered for one of the Center of the City Commons spaces through a survey that included twenty-three activities. This survey was an activity during the November Open House, included as part of the online survey, used in the Decadome/IdeaPod to gather feedback, and distributed in-person through various Task Force member conversations. The Task Force asked survey participants to indicate how important each activity was to them. Respondents rated the two following activities as the most important:

- Sit and talk with friends
- Visit the downtown library

Other activities that respondents ranked as highly important include (listed by priority):

- Sit and quietly read a book
- Listen to live music
- Have a drink at an indoor/outdoor cafe
- Use a public restroom
- Buy from a food vendor
- Experience a water feature

For a copy of the survey and the compiled data, see Appendix D & E.

## ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUAL SKETCHES

To encourage a broader perspective on the entire Center of the City Block, a Task Force member developed seventeen sketches to offer a series of alternative concepts for review and discussion. These were published in an article in the Ann Arbor News and drew 82 comments from the public expressing a wide range of feedback. While the sketches did not directly influence the



November 6, 2019 Open House

recommendations in this report, they did have an impact on our discussions and influenced the planning for our January Open House. The sketches can be found in Appendix D.

### TASK FORCE WORK SESSIONS

On January 10, 2020 and January 11, 2020, the Task Force held Work Sessions at the downtown branch of the Ann Arbor Public Library. These meetings were open to the public and notified through postings, the project website, and the City calendar. These were two hour sessions that involved a deep discussion on unsettled questions and the potential direction of the report. The

Task Force used this discussion to formulate the structure and content of the January Open House.

### SUMMARY OF INPUT

The Task Force received thousands of comments through surveys, meetings, and email. To help manage this large amount of feedback for review and consideration, the Task Force organized the input into Project for Public Spaces four key attributes for successful places, in addition to the category of Carbon Neutrality, to support the City's initiative to become carbon neutral by 2030.



November 6, 2019 Open House



Community comments are therefore summarized under the following five categories and presented as “snapshot summaries” in Appendix E.

1. Access and Linkages
2. Sociability
3. Comfort and Image
4. Uses and Activities
5. Carbon Neutrality

The Task Force also cataloged public spaces that community members offered as examples. A sampling of these examples are also presented in Appendix E.



### SUMMARY OF NOTIFICATION METHODS USED

Emails to list of 500+ addresses	Social media: Twitter, Next Door & Facebook	Online City calendar	Postings at City Hall
Project Website	Ann Arbor Observer calendar	Flyers posted around town	Mailing to 6,500 residents

### SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

Task Force email	Regular Task Force meetings	Interviews	Library Lot IdeaPod Input Station
November 6, 2019 Open House	Online Survey	Liberty Plaza IdeaPod Input Station	January 15, 2020 Open House

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As part of our community engagement efforts, the Task Force heard many voices calling for more affordable housing in downtown Ann Arbor. It is important to acknowledge this perspective in our report. The Task Force recognizes the urgent need for additional affordable housing in our community, but at this time, because of the wording of the Charter Amendment, creating housing on the Center of the City block is not an option. The Task Force strongly encourages City Council to continue to work to address the affordable housing shortage.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

As we planned and conducted our community engagement activities, it was

important to the Task Force to hear a diverse set of voices and perspectives in order to inform our recommendations.

To help with these efforts, we gathered demographic data at our open houses and through our online survey. In addition, we created a targeted mailing and conducted outreach to specific communities such as those served by the DeLonis Center, the Native American Student Association, and the Neutral Zone.

As the work of creating the Commons continues, it will be important for the groups charged with stewarding the next steps to develop mechanisms to ensure diverse perspectives and voices continue to be heard throughout the planning process.

### What is your race?

	%	Count
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2%	1
Asian	1.5%	8
Black or African-American	0.8%	4
White	81.5%	426
Two or more races	3.1%	16
Prefer not to say	13.0%	68

Online survey respondents by race

FFORDABLE HOUSING

11 AM — 2 PM

A Carousel

stop wasting tax dollars on this stupid yurt

### Ann Arbor WE DEMAND

- 37,000 people eligible for "affordable" housing.
- Only 95 units have been built since 2010, despite 400 housing units promised by the city by this year, and money being allocated specifically for development.
- 170+ new bars & restaurants opened, 400 luxury rental units built in 2018.
- \$622,000 was spent on deer management, \$30,000 to study more deer (and?)
- 11 of 40 units (27% of the total) are (and growing) pay NO property tax.
- All promised ALL public housing in 2023. How the average resident for housing elsewhere in 20 years.
- Another article is broken - Landlords make it purposefully hard to use another by charging extra costs and other realising measures to keep recipients out of their buildings.
- 2,000 empty rental units in AA, while shelters are at over capacity. Student Center has become long term housing without having the resources to sustain a permanent population.

### HOUSING NOW!

SOCIAL HOUSING FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE!  
 General Defense Committee - Washtenaw  
<https://www.facebook.com/washtenawGDC>  
 (734)-249-8051



# OPEN FOR IDEAS!

Affordable Housing!  
 Mixed-Use Development

An 18-story mixed-use building atop a structure designed for that purpose ☺

A call for affordable housing at the November IdeaPod