

CENTER OF THE CITY DESIGN



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Ann Arbor is interested in completing a public planning process with the assistance of a planning, design and engineering firm team, for the Center of the City.

The Center of the City includes city-owned property on the block between 5th Avenue, William, Division, and Liberty Streets. Specifically, this includes Liberty Plaza, the surface of the Library Lane Parking Structure (known as Library Lane Lot) and Library Lane, and Kempf House.

BACKGROUND

On November 6, 2018, voters approved Proposal A 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.”

To advance the Center of the City as a public space, in April 2019, Ann Arbor City Council passed a resolution to establish the Center of the City Task Force. The Task Force developed a report that provided an initial set of recommendations, which included the recommendations to create a Council of the Commons and to authorize

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

Since then, City Council formed the Council of the Commons as an official board. The Council of the Commons is an advisory body to City Council and the City Administrator that is charged with building upon the work of the Center of the City Task Force. Additionally, City Council has allocated funding, with a call for match funding from interested private entities, to complete a design process for the Center of the City. Members of the Council of the Commons are now currently seeking the match funding.

DESIGN PLANNING PROCESS

The City desires a design planning process that includes a high level of transparent and meaningful community engagement that helps build trust and foster agreement. Therefore, it is critical for this effort to have an equitable engagement approach that is highly inclusive of members of our community, especially those that have been minoritized and marginalized from City decision-making processes.

The City envisions the final product of the design planning process to be an inspired design, or set of design options, that is community supported, grounded in engineering realities with implementation recommendations that include:

- Phasing

- Cost estimates for the proposed design elements.
 - Potential funding mechanisms
- And suggested ways for the Center of the City to:
- Be more physically accessible.
 - Create and enhance multi-modal transportation connections to, from, and within the block.
 - Include adaptable spaces that can support various activities and functions
 - Serve as a signature city space that is a welcoming community gathering space.
 - Support social, economic, and environmental sustainability, ultimately providing a sustainable legacy for future generations.
 - Maintain the structural integrity and functioning of the parking structure.
 - Account for on-going maintenance needs (e.g., trash and snow removal)

PROJECT ESTIMATE

In early 2022, the City released a Request for Information (RFI), which solicited

information from firms regarding cost and project scope. The funding being sought by members of the Council of the Commons is based on this estimate. Attached is a sample scope of work provided by a respondent to the RFI, which represents a process that the City anticipates following.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

Task Force Report: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/systems-planning/programs/Pages/City-of-the-City-Task-Force.aspx>

Task Force Report Appendix, which includes background documents and community engagement results, can be found here: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/systems-planning/programs/Pages/Center-of-the-City-Report-Appendices.aspx>.

Council of the Commons overview and meetings: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/systems-planning/programs/Pages/Council-of-the-Commons.aspx>

