

CENTER OF THE CITY ISSUES EXPLORATION - 5/6/21

This is a living document to identify, organize, and track progress on issues related to the Center of the City that are of interest to the Council of the Commons. This document will be continuously updated.

CLEAR PARKING FROM SURFACE LOT

Purpose: Limitations to car parking to on the surface lot will help establish this as a public space.

Issues

- Completely removing parking to the surface lot will result in a loss of revenue, which in a typical year is \$275k (\$55k is portion that is direct to city).
- The surface lot accounts for \$132k debt associated with the bond that was issued to pay for the parking structure. Removal of this revenue stream needs to recognize the increased obligation on the parking system and DDA for affordability purposes.
- Piercing the surface of the lot would negate the warranty.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- The city and the DDA are currently exploring how to address the issues.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER AND RESTROOMS

Purpose: it would be helpful to have water and restroom facilities available to support the lot as a public space.

Issues

- There is drinking water capacity at the site, but it would require material planning, plumbing and expense to run to a location. Consequently, fresh water should be obtained through other means or locations until a firm plan for the site, which includes a drinking fountain location, is in place.
- Dedicated restrooms on the lot would require porta-John type installations. This has proven challenging at Liberty Plaza.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- Public restrooms and a drinking fountain are available across the street at the Blake Center and possibly at the AADL once they reopen.

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ELECTRICITY

Purpose: Electricity is desired to hold certain events, such as performances.

Issues

- Additional electricity will require funds.
- A plan is needed for the site to determine appropriate locations and how electricity would fit with the overall programming of the space.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- Electrical outlets are currently available by the elevator. Cords going to this outlet would need to be covered to avoid tripping hazards.
- Electrical outlets are available at the lampposts. This requires coordinating with city staff to provide access to outlets and cords would need to be suspended overhead.
- Develop a plan for the site that includes an electrical plan in addition to cost estimates and potential funding sources for expanded electricity.

PROVIDE WI-FI

Purpose: Wi-fi provides opportunities for virtual connections for users of the space and events that would need a wi-fi connection.

Issues

- Additional wi-fi will require funds.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- Wi-fi is presently available at AADL.
- Develop a plan for the site that includes a wi-fi plan in addition to cost estimates and potential funding sources.

PROVIDE STAGE/PERFORMANCE FACILITIES, STORAGE, SEATING

Purpose: These amenities will offer opportunities for events and support the use of the lot as a public space.

Issues

- Providing these amenities will require funds and a plan.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- Develop a plan for the site that includes a plan for these amenities in addition to cost estimates, potential funding sources, storage plans, and a maintenance plan.

DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Purpose: Clarifying who is operating and maintaining the space will help ensure the long-term success of the space.

Issues

- The roles of the city, Initiating Committee, and the Library Green Conservancy are currently unclear.
- Operations and maintenance will require funds.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- Develop a plan for the site that includes a long-term maintenance plan in addition to cost estimates and potential funding sources.
- The Library Green Conservancy develops a business plan, or something similar, to identify their role and how they intend to support the space.

- The Initiating Committee develops a business plan, or something similar, to identify their role and how they intend to support the space.
- Council of the Commons discusses proposed roles and provides recommendations to Council for consideration and potential agreements.

ACTIVATE THE SPACE IN THE NEAR-TERM

Purpose: Begin transitioning the lot into a public space.

Issues

- There is a lack of clarity about approval processes.
- The operation and maintenance of near-term improvements needs to be identified and assigned.
- Funding is required for some of the near-term improvements.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- A Special Events application process for the space is already in place. Information about that is available on the city website. Anyone can apply.
<https://www.a2gov.org/services/pages/specialeventscommunityservice.aspx>
- Any City Council direction to amend the parking agreement between the City and DDA could make arrangements to keep parking during the week with passive recreation on the weekend.
- A volunteer waiver has been approved and is currently being used by the planting group.

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS WITH THE ENTIRE BLOCK

Purpose: To create a seamless network of public spaces on the block.

Issues

- There is not a clear strategy/plan for this.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- The City Administrator will organize a Block Group meeting and the dedication of alley space could be an agenda item for Block Group members to discuss.

PROVIDE A BUDGET FOR THE SPACE

Purpose: Making improvements to the site requires funding.

Issues

- Funds are only currently available for staffing and technical assistance to the Council of the Commons in the city budget and that will remain. This includes Council of the Commons meetings being taped by CTN and re-broadcast.
- This is a public space rather than a city park so Parks funding is not available.
- The budget needs for capital improvements, operations, and maintenance is not clear without a detailed plan in place.

Potential solutions/steps towards solutions

- The Council of the Commons could make a recommendation to allocate funding for a public planning process to complete a physical design of the space. This process could include developing cost estimates for the proposed improvements and the maintenance of those improvements.

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