

Subject: Town Center/Corridor Concept
Attachments: Town CenterCivic Corridor.pdf

From: Norman Tyler
Sent: Tuesday, July 23, 2024 12:06 PM
To: Lenart, Brett <BLenart@a2gov.org>
Subject: Town Center/Corridor Concept

Brett,

Based on your response to my query yesterday on presenting the Town Center/Civic Corridor Concept, I have prepared a brief written description. It is included below both as a .pdf attachment and in the body of this email. Please forward it to members of the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee today prior to this evening's meeting.

Thanks.

Last year, a small group of Ann Arbor urbanists (henceforth "the Group") recognized the need for the city to develop planning for a new town center. As they independently explored ideas, the Group found the city's Planning Commission had sponsored a study in 1962 titled "A Guide to Action" proposing a new town center be located along Liberty Street in the underdeveloped "Middle Ground" between the Main and State Street districts.

Based on this notion, the Group looked in detail at the area between 4th Avenue and Division Street, a two-block area that includes Liberty Plaza, the downtown library, underground parking structure, transit center, and Federal Building. It soon became obvious a town center with a significant civic park could best be developed if the Federal Building could be obtained by the city, demolished, and the site redeveloped as the "heart and soul" of a new Town Center. Research by the Group suggested that if the GSA was willing to move remaining functions in this underutilized building to other more favorable sites, the site would become a key site. While the GSA indicated to city officials the Federal Building was listed as a long-term hold, the current building does not meet current security standards and is not large enough to accommodate their anticipated growth needs.

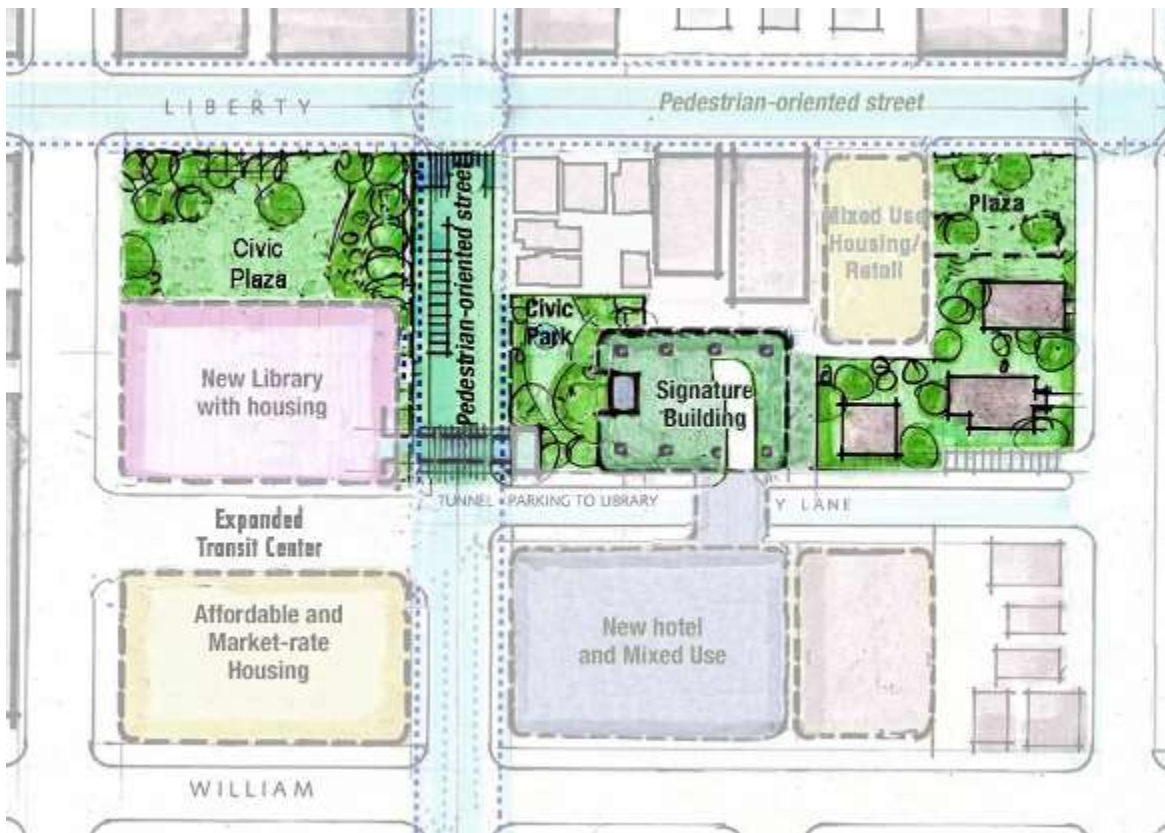
The Group assumed the Federal Building site would eventually become available and the illustrations below show a possible conceptual plan for this two-block area.

One Possibility for a Town Center Concept.

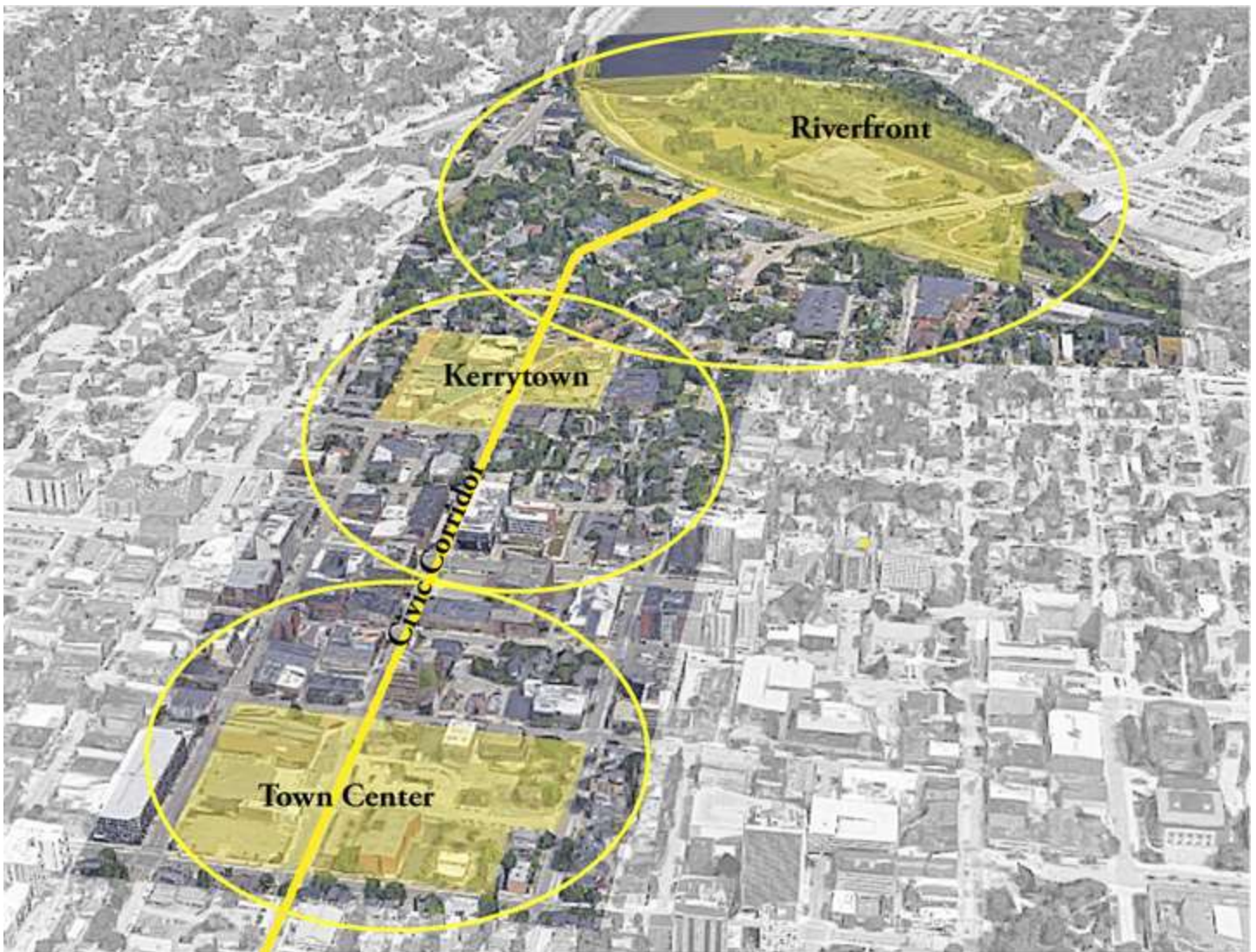


A Town Center plan should include:

- a civic plaza
- expanded park area
- a new library
- a conference center
- additional housing
- an enlarged transit center
- historic areas
- public facilities



The scope of the Group's planning was expanded to look at the Town Center as part of a more comprehensive plan for Ann Arbor. The city could greatly benefit if this prime urban location could be linked to two of the city's other primary amenity areas, the Kerrytown district and the Huron River.



The Group's analysis saw great potential in making such a connection by redesigning 5th Avenue as a Civic Corridor. They visualized a pedestrian-oriented route with wide sidewalks, space for walkers and bikers, and minimal auto use. The route along 5th Avenue currently includes City Hall, the Hands-On Museum, Kerrytown and the Farmers Market, Zingerman's Deli, Wheeler Park, the train station, Riverwalk/Cascades, the new Broadway West development, and other new housing. As this Civic Corridor developed new life over time, the Group it could include a festival park in the lot behind Jones School, possibly including the band shell no longer needed at West Park. They also reviewed the long-standing need for a new train station, suggesting the park space across the tracks from the Gandy Dancer Restaurant would give a location with easy access (under the bridge from the Broadway West site) and adequate space for a much-needed new facility.



Our Group now presents these ideas to the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee to suggest possibilities for development of a true Town Center and Civic Corridor as part of the city's comprehensive look at its future potential. The ideas presented in this Town Center/Civic Corridor Concept have been presented individually to dozens of the city's "influencers." Many were willing to include their name publicly as a supporter. Each supporter recognized these are only conceptual ideas that would be implemented only through a rigorous planning process by the city and its Planning Commission.

Coalition of Supporters

Individuals who have indicated they individually support the Concept:

Concept Initiating Group:

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Norman Tyler | - Adam Zemke, Frank Wilhelme, Del Dunbar, Rita Mitchell |
| Ann Dilcher | - Alice Ralph: Council of the Commons |
| Peter Allen | - Jeff & Chris Crockett: Commons Green Team |
| John Mirsky | - Gary Cooper: Cooper Design |
| John Fournier: Assistant City Administrator | - Sarah Lorenz, Equitable Ann Arbor Land Trust (EA2) |
| Lisa Disch, Erica Briggs: City Council | - Bob Gibbs: Gibbs Planning |
| Jason Morgan: State Representative | - John Myefski: Myefski Architects |
| Joan Lowenstein, Kathy Griswold: former Council members | - Jan Culbertson, Retired architect |
| Matt Carpenter: Director, A2 Area Transportation Authority | - Ryan Tobias: Triad Real Estate |
| Jeff Watson: Director, Ann Arbor DDA | - Caitlin Olmsted Phillips: Ann Arbor Real Estate Associates |
| Don Duquette, Peter Honeyman: DDA Citizens Council | - Julie Ritter: Old Fourth Ward Association |
| Andrew DeLeeuw, Strategic Planning, Washtenaw County | - Joseph and Carolyn Arcure: Downtown residents |
| Eli Neiburger: Director, Ann Arbor District Library | - Brian Chambers: Tech Executive |
| Board of Ann Arbor District Library | - Mike King/ Jo Davis: County residents |
| Paul Krutko, Phil Santer and Tom Crawford: SPARK | - Robert Marans, Ilene Tyler, Joseph Tyler: Project Advisors |
| Paula Holtz: MEDC (Mich. Econ. Devel. Corp.) | |
| Andrea Brown, Wendy Rampson: Michigan Assoc. of Planning | |
| Russ Collins: Executive Director, Michigan Theater | |
| Mike Martin: First Martin Corp. | |
| Michael Kaplan: Related Group Midwest | |

Thank you for your consideration. I would be willing to share the full presentation with your Subcommittee at your convenience.



Norman Tyler
Chair, Town Center/Civic Corridor Group