

7 July 2022

TO: City of Ann Arbor Council of the Commons  
FR: Robert Black/Member/Initiating Committee of the Commons  
CC: Initiating Committee of the Commons  
RE: Inputs to Next Steps

Over the past year and a half, I have attended Council of the Commons meetings and worked before that with the Initiating Committee of the Commons to offer inputs to both process and goals of the Center of the City project. I'm writing here to summarize three key ideas for your consideration that I have spoken about during the Public Comment period of many of the Council's monthly meetings. I trust this may be helpful in your deliberations for next steps.

**IDEA 1 (Small Steps in the Present)**

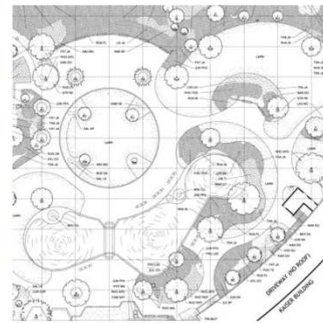
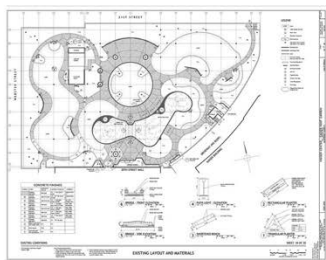
The No. 3 recommendation of the Center of the City Task Force in Feb 2020 was to remove ground-level parking on the Library Lot and begin efforts to make it an active public space. I suggest a small step, incremental approach to solving this issue, rather than the politically divisive "all or nothing" approach that has stymied progress for over two years now. The below diagram shows a three-phase parking attrition program as a workable compromise among the constituent groups (DDA, Republic Parking, Council of the Commons). Phase 1 involves the relatively simple removal of only 12 parking spaces from the northwestern section of the lot. The two access driveways to that area would be blocked with planters that would preclude vehicular access, while "greening up" the southern edge of that space. This space now can be safely "activated" with a variety of regular events to build public awareness and interest in The Commons. This approach provides opportunities to learn about which activities hold the most promise in the long-term success of the space. Future phases of parking attrition for the entire lot can be scheduled by mutual agreement about all parties involved.



## **IDEA 2 (Inspiring a Future Vision)**

Many people in Ann Arbor have argued that the third parcel of the Center of the City project (Library Lane Parking Lot and Driveway) may not be appropriate for a Central Park and Civic Center Commons. Fortunately, a majority of Ann Arbor voters and other visionaries of the Community have the experience to face this challenge. Through imagination and creativity (in design, collaborative partnerships and public-private fundraising), it is possible to generate a compelling vision to create the kind of award-winning design solution and public pride inducing project that The Kaiser Center Roof Garden is for the City of Oakland, CA. Financing such a project in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century need not rely on the generosity of a single wealthy entity as with the Kaiser Center. Today, successful fundraising is best done when public and private monies are blended. This approach leverages the whole economic scenario by 1) reducing the long-term public debt; 2) inducing private sector donors to invest in the long-term health of a community that has supported them (*Ann Arbor has many examples of this!*); and 3) building a groundswell of small-scale donorships that dramatically increase total funding and bring the whole community together in greater connections across usual lines of division.

***This three-fold approach is critical to the success of the A2 Commons.***



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## **IDEA 3 (Learning from the Past)**

This idea supports Alan Haber's 03JULY2022 email to the Council of the Commons, regarding "Elements" or "Ideas for Central Park" started on 14JULY2012. Many of these ideas were reiterated, including other "preferences" from citizen inputs summarized on pp. 26-27 (and elsewhere) in the Center of the City 2022 Task Force Report. Building on the rich findings of both of these efforts, the Initiating Committee of the Commons created the following diagram as a sample of how the Council of the Commons might index, quantify and prioritize its work relative to all that has been generated to date. ***Documenting the preferred future components of The Commons is a critical foundation to writing any RFP seeking professional services to guide the next phase of the project. Doing this work now will serve to reduce funding needs.***

