

**Council of the Commons
Activation Recommendations for
Ann Arbor's Center of the City
DRAFT - 3/1/23**

Background and Properties

As part of passage by a 2018 citizen-initiated [ballot proposal](#), the voters of Ann Arbor amended the [city's charter](#)^{P.10} to designate all of the publicly-owned properties on the downtown block bordered by Fifth Avenue, William Street, Division Street and Liberty Street to serve as a central park and civic commons in perpetuity. Combined, these properties make up what is known as the Center of the City. They include:

- **Kempf House Museum**
 - A [historic home](#) and museum located along Division street, having been owned by the city for many years and overseen by a special council within the city's Parks Department.
- **Liberty Plaza**
 - A [recessed plaza](#) on the corner of Liberty and Division streets that resides on the former site of another historical home.
- **Library Lot and Library Lane**
 - Two surface properties located on top of the underground Library Lane parking structure, currently used as a parking lot and private entry/exit 'lane' for one of the points of entry/exit to the underground parking structure.

City Council, following a series of [task force](#) report recommendations, established a citizen advisory council, known as the [Council of the Commons](#), to make recommendations on how to utilize and develop the Center of the City. As part of the charge of the Council of the Commons, its members have conducted considerable research on neighboring communities - near and far. This report attempts to take this research and utilize it to make recommendations to improve Ann Arbor's current activation practices and use of the Center of the City.

Current Process and Costs for Utilizing the Center of the City

The Center of the City is currently three properties that are managed by two separate departments. The city parks department manages Kempf House and Liberty Plaza, and the city Special Events office within the Community Services office manages non-vehicular uses of the Library Lot and Library Lane. The city contracts vehicular use management of the Library Lot and Library Lane to the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The following describe the processes and user fees for each of these properties.

- **Kempf House Museum**

- Kempf House is able to be reserved for [special events](#) through an email request on the museum's website, combined with a custom fee designated by its board, payable through the website. Casual use of this property - meaning not as part of a reserved event - is not permitted.

- **Liberty Plaza**

- Liberty Plaza is directly overseen by the city's Parks Department without a special advisory council, and thus governance and use are similar to all other city-owned parks.
- Similar to other city parks, there is a cost to reserve Liberty Plaza for special events - a standard parks rate of \$34/day.
 - In 2022, as part of the city's budget, \$100,000 in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) were designated to help promote and activate Liberty Plaza. Until these funds run out, normal usage fees are typically waived for this property.
- Process/contacts for reservation
 - Contact Jessica Black, Recreation Supervisor, Cobblestone Farm, Park Rentals & Special Events, City of Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation, 734.794.6230 ext. 0 | jblack@a2gov.org
- Casual use of this property - meaning not as part of a reserved event - is permitted.
- Additionally, there are several garden plots located within Liberty Plaza. [Ann Arbor Lions Club](#) supports volunteer gardening of the Sensory Garden plantings, and the Ann Arbor Commission on Disabilities and the Parks & Recreation [Adopt a Park](#) division support additional gardening efforts.

- **Library Lot and Library Lane**

- The Library Lot and Library Lane are overseen by the Community Services office. Vehicular use of the lot and lane are contracted by this office to the DDA, and non-vehicular [reservation](#) of these spaces are conducted through the office's special events department.
- Applications for special events are reviewed by multiple city departments, including Police, Fire, Legal, Solid Waste, and other departments, depending on the proposed activity.
- There is a \$34/day rental cost for reserving the spaces for special events, plus \$25/meter bagging costs should the reservation include closure of Library Lane.
- Additionally, applicants are required to provide 3rd-party event insurance in order to reserve the spaces, either the applicant's general liability policy, or an event-specific policy.
- Process/contacts for reservation
 - Contact Debra Williams, Special Events Coordinator, City of Ann Arbor 734.794.6000 ext. 42198 | dewilliams@a2gov.org

1. Complete the [STREAM form](#)
 2. Provide a map of event space setup
 3. Arrange with DDA staff for no parking
 4. Arrange and provide 3rd party equipment (seating, tables, etc) as needed
- Casual use of this property - meaning not as part of a reserved event - is not permitted.
 - Additionally, there are several garden plots located within the Library Lot and Library Lane. Larger garden plots are supported through volunteer efforts coordinated by the Green Team, and the DDA supports plantings in the smaller plots.

- **City Process Improvements**

- As part of Council of the Commons members' research on activation efforts for outdoor spaces, it is clear that other communities are very intentional in their efforts to activate the spaces by private and city-sanctioned events. Unfortunately, Ann Arbor currently lacks many of these efforts. The Council of the Commons believes the following process improvements are necessary to aid in activation of the Center of the City.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation and Streamlining**
 - **Common Reservation Process:** while the city continues to operate with a governance model that includes multiple departments overseeing use of the Center of the City properties, these departments should jointly create a common reservation process. This common process should be facilitated, ideally, through the use of an online form and standard per-property fee that allows prospective users to easily select which property(s) are desired for use and submit their contact information to city staff.
 - **Common Calendar of Events:** the aforementioned reservation process should include an outward facing calendar of events for all three properties so that prospective users can navigate their date selection without having to engage city staff.
 - **Common Connections Online:** each city department that is charged with management of the Center of the City should include links to this common reservation process and calendar of events such that prospective users be looking at the city parks department webpage, or the city special events webpage, they will be able to easily find out how to use the Center of the City.
 - **Permanent/Semi-Permanent Parking Removal:** in concert with recommendations (below) to activate the Center of the City for planned, but especially for casual use, parking on the Library Lot should be eliminated for at least spring, summer and autumn months until such a

time that the lot is developed or the structure below it is regularly at capacity.

- **Building Bridges with Block Partners**
 - **Block Partner Engagement:** as part of the reservation process for the Center of the City, the city should create a common email listserv to quickly and easily let block partners and surrounding businesses know when events are scheduled for one or more of the Center of the City properties.
 - **Consistent Easement:** to facilitate use between Liberty Plaza @ the Center of the City and The Library Lot @ the Center of the City, the city should engage with adjacent property owners to ensure that a consistent process is in place that provides easement between these properties when reservations are requested that utilize them.

- **Enabling Sustainable Support of the Center of the City**
 - **Sustainable Fees:** the city should establish a unique fee structure for the Center of the City that is both consistent across the properties and contributes to sustainable (limited) staffing support of space management.
 - **Equitable ARPA Fund Usage:** use of currently-appropriated funds for activating Liberty Plaza @ the Center of the City should be able to be utilized across all of the Center of the City properties. Additionally, the city should reserve a portion of these funds to be targeted towards supporting less-financially-able applicants.

Enabling Conditions for Regularly-Planned Activations

Among communities that Council of the Commons members researched, a consistent trait of successful urban parks includes deliberate plans for activating them with planned events. These plans are rooted in events that through city or private sanctioning are intended to create lively and engaging participation amongst community members and serve as economic catalysts for the community's downtown. Although many urban parks that Council members researched are different from one another in their size, shape and terrain, all were successfully activated through deliberate planning and enabling by their respective city. The Council of the Commons believes that the following features would go a long way to enabling use of the Center of the City for planned, regular activation.

- **Establish Brand Consistency**
 - **Branding:** extend the good work that the parks department has begun with "Liberty Plaza @ the Center of the City" to the remaining other properties by creating similar micro-brands to identify each property, while establishing an umbrella brand of the *Center of the City* across all properties.

- **Signage:** establish on-site signage that utilizes the umbrella *Center of the City* brand and each micro-brand in-concert with one another to encourage consistent community identification with this brand and location.
- **Create a Public-Facing Portal**
 - **Website:** build a user-friendly website to serve as the online ‘face’ of the Center of the City - an online location with an intuitive URL where community members know to turn to in order to see what events are happening on-site, when they are happening, to learn more about them or to volunteer on-site. Great examples of this can be seen in [Royal Oak](#) and [Detroit](#).
 - **Social Media Presence:** to complement the public-facing website, establish a social media presence across standard social media platforms, and encourage use of hashtags and other identifiers to enhance both the Center of the City and planned event brands. Connect these social media accounts to the aforementioned website.
 - **Enhance Online Connectivity:** ensure that the public facing website has a connection to the city’s special events calendar, as well as to city process explanations for special event reservation at the Center of the City.
 - **Advertising:** build an advertising plan to ensure that events at the Center of the City, especially through the public facing portals, are being advertised to community members. This advertising should take multiple forms including (but not limited to) paid social media ads, earned media, and use of community connections.
 - **3rd Party Portal Management:** consider management of this public-facing portal to be sourced to a non-profit organization that the city designates to support volunteer engagement, aid in the reservation process, etc. A particular advantage of a 3rd party group is the ability for prospective event groups to be provided with recommendations on equipment, insurance, etc that the city cannot provide.
- **Facilitate Events**
 - **Quarterly Signature ‘Anchor’ Events:** anchor the year’s four seasons at the Center of the City by the city sanctioning, or working with an external group(s) to facilitate, publicize and support, a signature event at the Center of the City. Examples from other communities include summer and winter festivals, Halloween events, tailgates, and earth day community plantings in the spring.
 - **Monthly Gatherings:** to connect the months in-between each signature event, the city should sanction, or work with an external group(s) to facilitate, publicize and support, gatherings (at-least monthly) at the Center of the City. These could include formal food truck rallies, artist pop-ups, or as extensions of already-established events (ie. Art Fair, Green Fair, etc) [Examples](#).
- **Supporting Inclusivity**
 - Each community contains community members of all walks of life and socioeconomic statuses, and each of them has the right - and should feel they

have the right - to use the Center of the City the same as any other community member. Researched communities that were successful at being inclusive did so intentionally. The Council of the Commons believes that the following would be good ideas to include in any activation plan for the Center of the City.

- **Volunteer Ambassadors:** establish a volunteer ambassador program to recruit volunteers and establish training that supports helping community members who are experiencing homelessness, and ensure these ambassadors are present at all planned events to help assure community members that all are welcome and encourage them to participate.
 - **Fully Fee-Free Events:** in facilitating planned events, deliberately include events targeted at constituencies of community members who may normally feel left out. Work with community partners to financially support these events and ensure things like food, etc. are free for them.
- **Establish a Limited Joint Management Partnership**
 - To build upon the recommendations that involve the aforementioned public-facing portal and various forms of volunteer recruitment, the city should establish a formal (limited) partnership with a 3rd party non-profit to aid in supporting these efforts and collectively raising funding to help match public funding contributions.

Enabling Conditions for Casual Use

Similar to consistency among communities that Council members researched on hosting regularly planned activations, a second trait of successful urban parks includes consistent availability for casual uses. This availability is helpful to signal to community members that the space is always available for their use, and to meet them where they are in how they want to use their community's public open space. Although many urban parks that Council members researched are different from one another in their size, shape and terrain, all featured components of both regularly planned activations interwoven with intentional enabling of the spaces for casual use in-between these events. The Council of the Commons believes that the following features would go a long way to enabling use of the Center of the City for casual use by Ann Arborites and visitors alike.

- **Permanent/Semi-Permanent Parking Removal:** in order to enable the Center of the City to be fully-utilized in a casual manner, and in particular should Ann Arbor want to enable its use for mobile food vending, parking on the Library Lot should be eliminated for at least spring, summer and autumn months until such a time that the lot is developed or the structure below it is regularly at capacity.
 - **Financial Impact is Negligible:** parking in the underground structure directly under the Library Lot and Library Lane properties is significantly overcapacity for current use. As a result, closure of the surface Library Lot will likely result in zero loss in revenue to the city, but poses significant benefit to the community to aid casual recreational use of the surface spaces.

- **Permanent/Semi-Permanent Facility Improvements**
 - **Configurable Furniture Arrangements**
 - A significant benefit of 21st century urban parks is their intent to promote community engagement by deliberately utilizing mobile furniture such as tables and chairs to allow community members to configure the spaces to fit their needs at the time of use.
 - **Recommendation:** Ann Arbor should invest in mobile furniture arrangements, including lounge-style seating, tables and up-right chairs that promote community engagement in groups and allow users to determine the sizes of those groups. These arrangements should be built from long-lasting environmentally friendly materials and should be located throughout all three of the Center of the City Properties, including throughout Liberty Plaza, the Library Lot and even including seating under the trees at Kempf House. Though not necessary, the city could also consider completely removing (existing) fixed furniture in the Center of the City's Liberty Plaza property.
 - **Local Examples:**
 - Royal Oak's [Centennial Commons](#) utilizes adirondack style seating to promote configurable seating arrangements
 - Detroit's [Capitol Park](#) includes adirondack seating on a [seasonal basis](#) and movable chairs and tables for promoting outdoor lunching all throughout the warmer months.
 - **Cost Estimates:**
 - Seating Tables or Picnic Tables: ~\$600-\$2300/table:
 - Chairs: ~\$100-\$330/chair
 - Lounge Chairs: ~\$240-\$350/chair
 - **Fixed String Lighting**
 - One of the attractive features of the Center of the City's Liberty Plaza property today includes a beautiful array of [string lights](#) that help illuminate the park after dusk. As can be seen on porches all over Ann Arbor, string lights are a great way to provide additional soft lighting to accentuate outdoor spaces of all sizes and shapes.
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Ann Arbor should invest in linking Liberty Plaza's current overhead string lighting array across the yard at Kempf House and add string lighting over the Library Lot's surface. This type of arrangement will promote consistency in lighting across the Center of the City and support planned activations and casual uses of the properties, especially in concert with aforementioned configurable furniture.

- Ann Arbor could also invest in [tree lighting](#) to string around tree trunks or throughout limbs in the Liberty Plaza and Kempf House properties, and around light poles at the Library Lot. Similar to overhead string lighting, wrapping lights around trees and poles help promote a safe, fun and illuminating atmosphere.
 - **Cost Estimates:** ~\$250/100 ft
- **Shading**
 - The Center of the City's Liberty Plaza and Kempf House properties benefit from a wonderful natural shade provided by surrounding trees, but the Library Lot does not.
 - **Recommendation:** in concert with lighting improvements and with the incorporation of configurable furniture, Ann Arbor should add [sail shading](#) (and/or umbrellas) across portions of the Library Lot to allow users who prefer sun or shade to be able to utilize the space to their preference.
 - **Cost Estimates:**
 - Umbrellas: ~\$250/umbrella with base
 - Sails: ~\$1200-\$10,000, depending on post requirements.
NOTE: sail shades installed at Fuller Pool and Vetseran's Park Pool can probably provide better estimates..
- **Waste Disposal**
 - **Recommendation:** in concert with Ann Arbor's A2Zero sustainability goals, the city should ensure sufficient waste and recycling receptacles are located throughout all of the Center of the City properties, but especially Liberty Plaza and the Library Lot. Should there be significant increases in use of these properties, emptying-frequency of these sites should be evaluated.
- **Artistic Enhancements**
 - All around Ann Arbor, we see wonderful examples of art that lightens up public and private concrete surfaces. From the sides of buildings, to the sides of parking structures, local artists are transforming surfaces and adding vibrancy to our community that displays Ann Arbor's uniqueness in visually-appealing ways.
 - **Recommendation:** Ann Arbor should work with local artists and interested volunteers to design and fund art displays that support a consistent brand for the Center of the City, and artistically 'connect' concrete surfaces in Liberty Plaza, on the Library Lot, and surrounding Library Lane.
 - **Cost Estimates:** \$10,000-12,000, with funding already covered by The Green Team for two murals close to the Library Lot community gardens.

- **Natural Area Enhancements**
 - Throughout the grounds of Kempf House, Liberty Plaza, the Library Lot and Library Lane, there are wonderful teams of volunteers that currently help with gardening on these individual properties.
 - **Recommendation:** as part of the aforementioned 3rd party joint limited management partnership, Ann Arbor should link existing volunteer gardening efforts across all of the Center of the City properties to take advantage of a multiplying effect of already-dedicated volunteers, including the Ann Arbor Lions Club, Commission on Disabilities, the Green Team and the Adopt-a-Park program.
 - **Cost Estimates:** Negligible, as most of it would be conducted through volunteer efforts and currently most plants are donated.
- **Equipment Storage**
 - **Recommendation:** in speaking with the DDA, they have identified and offered a storage unit located at the Library Lot for equipment storage. The city should take advantage of this space and include in it tools and equipment that aids planned activations and supports casual use, such as electrical cords, gardening tools, additional lighting bulbs, etc.
- **Addressing Theft and/or Vandalism**
 - In researching other communities, Council members asked specific questions about rates of theft and damage to downtown spaces. Though some should be expected, comparisons indicate that expectations should be small.
 - Downtown Detroit Partnership estimates that they lose approximately 3 bistro-type tables per year across the downtown parks they maintain.
 - Plymouth estimates that some vandalism at Kellogg Park has taken place over the years, but it has been minimal.
 - Royal Oak has not had any reports of damage during their first year of Centennial Commons.
- **Funding**
 - **Recommendation:** As part of the aforementioned joint limited management partnership with a non-profit organization, Ann Arbor should work to combine both public and private funding to support permanent/semi-permanent facility improvements at the Center of the City.

Intersection with Resolution R-22-362: Explore the Feasibility of Activating the Library Lane Surface Parking Lot with Food Trucks and Mobile Vendors

Background

On August 5, 2021, the Council of the Commons passed a recommendation that City Council pursue short-term activations in the Center of the City, especially highlighting mobile food and artistic pop-ups. This recommendation led to a resolution being considered by City Council later that month, but this action was paused. City Council then revisited this recommendation later in November 2022 with resolution [R-22-362](#), sponsored by Councilmembers Briggs, Disch, Grand and Hayner.

R-22-362 Text

Whereas, On August 5, 2021, the Council of the Commons, an advisory Commission to City Council, unanimously recommended the City explore temporarily activating the Library Lane surface parking lot through regular and recurring use by food trucks/carts and other like commercial vendors such as artisan pop-ups to foster a more vibrant, urban environment;

Whereas, The Council of the Commons recommends planning efforts:

1. Make use of existing city 'use' processes from like spaces and activities (e.g. A2 Farmer's Market, street fairs, and community events*) to aid activation of the Library Lane surface parking lot. The Council of the Commons urges the City not to "reinvent the wheel", to the extent possible and to utilize best practices.
2. Solicit the involvement from Center of the City block participants - including the Downtown Development Authority, the Ann Arbor District Library, street associations, private businesses, and others - to collectively ensure this activation is successful,
3. If programmed, the City works to attract a diversity of vendors, as well as the creation of activities that attract diverse participants, to support and advance Ann Arbor's values of social and racial equity and inclusion.

Whereas, The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Food Truck Nation 2018 Report finds that "food trucks offer a net positive to the established restaurant industry", notes that the relative low cost of entry make food trucks a vehicle for entrepreneurial opportunity and economic growth, and can foster the development of small, minority owned businesses (in Chicago 80% of all food trucks are minority owned);

RESOLVED, City Council directs the City Administrator to investigate the costs, operational needs, sustainability, and feasibility of utilizing the Library Lane surface parking lot for regular and recurring use by food trucks/carts and other similar and complementary programming such as artisan pop-ups and small musical performances and provide a report to City Council no later than April 1, 2023; and

RESOLVED, City Council further requests the City Administrator's final report examine the challenges and benefits of partnering with an external or non-profit entity to manage the program on the City's behalf, if barriers to City operation are deemed significant.

R-22-362 Regularly-Planned Activations

- Taking into consideration the August 2021 recommendation by Council of the Commons members to not reinvent the wheel and learn from existing successful efforts, Council members looked for successful mobile vendor activations around Ann Arbor and elsewhere.
 - **Best Practices and Recommendations:**
 - **Aforementioned Recommendations Serve as a Guide**
 - Many of the recommendations contained throughout this document can serve as a baseline for improving the activation process for any and all planned events hosted at the Center of the City. The Council of the Commons urges the city to use this document to holistically activate the Center of the City in the spirit of resolution R-22-362.
 - **Consistent Dedicated Space**
 - A key characteristic of activated successful open space is that the community knows what to expect from these activations, largely set by historical precedence. In order to be successful, Ann Arborites need to see the Center of the City being activated consistently, and in the interim periods between activations, see it being seen as an open space for eating, lounging and gathering as a community.
 - **Advertising**
 - In support of planned activations and casual use, the city should invest in an advertising campaign for the Center of the City, utilizing at-least the common branding elements noted in this document. Similar to how Ann Arborites see the Farmers Market associated with the brand of Kerrytown, the city should develop a brand for the Center of the City to be associated with downtown.
 - **Logistical and Staffing Support**
 - Similar to how the Farmers Market has city staff time dedicated to supporting its activation efforts, Ann Arbor should dedicate a staff liaison from each of the involved city departments (Community Services and Parks) to support activating the Center of the City. In order to save costs, the city should set up a limited joint management partnership with a non-profit organization to help these staff liaisons recruit volunteers and establish volunteer-charged roles to aid and staff planned events.
 - **Recommendations:**
 - **Establish a Business Partner Communication Chain**

- The city should gather input from surrounding businesses on an event-by-event basis and work to increase communication on how local businesses can complement events at the Center of the City, and vice-versa. This effort should be utilized to help build support for local businesses as event participants, especially those in the food industry.
- **Social District Boundary Expansion**
 - The city should extend Ann Arbor's successful social district boundaries to include the Center of the City, in efforts to support planned activations. *In conjunction with planned events such as food truck rallies, this could turn the Center of the City into a temporary food and beer garden.*
- **Plan Food-Specific Rallies and Other Events that include Mobile Food Vendors**
 - **Monthly Food Truck Rallies**
 - Food is popular in Ann Arbor, and mobile food vending as a whole is a growing industry. Leaders at the Ann Arbor Farmers Market have developed a replicable model that works well for their warm-month food truck rallies - rallies that attract hundreds of loyal followers. To complement these efforts, Ann Arbor should set up similar rallies at the Center of the City each month on a different week day and add additional flair to these events by recruiting local musical artists, similar to how Bank of Ann Arbor's Sonic Lunch is curated. In addition to needing the aforementioned dedicated staff and volunteer support, the city should also utilize food truck recommendations noted in the following section on casual use.
 - **Examples:**
 - [Farmers Market](#); Ann Arbor
 - [Little Fleet](#); Traverse City
 - [Back Lot](#); Petoskey, Charlevoix, Grand Rapids
 - [Mark's Carts](#); Ann Arbor (*now closed, but acknowledged as successful*)
 - **Food at Other Pop-Up Events**
 - Similar to what local breweries and organizers of events have found out, mobile food trucks and vendors have a following amongst community members. The city should capitalize on this existing positive relationship by seeking to facilitate mobile

food vending in conjunction with other types of planned activations.

- **Strategize Planned Activations each Month**

- To enhance continuity across all seasons, the city should build a strategy that includes a variety of monthly events, such as:
 - Hosting free birthday celebrations each month,
 - Warm-month gatherings such as outdoor yoga, dance, exercising, etc.
 - Activities targeted towards children and families such as chalk-muraling, etc.
 - Facilitating mobile food vendors at Library Lane in conjunction with Sonic Lunch,
 - Season-specific events that capitalize or expand upon already-planned activities such as Earth Day, Green Fair, the Art Fair, the Independence Day parade, various local 5k/10k races, Halloween, the winter Holiday Market, etc.

R-22-362 Casual Use

- In all communities that Council of the Commons members researched, activated open spaces were supplemented with proactive, daily casual use by community members. In each of these cases, the city or non-profit space management organization aided these casual uses using strategies that were deliberately intended to enhance the welcoming nature of the space to community members.
 - **Aforementioned Recommendations Serve as a Guide**
 - Many of the recommendations contained throughout this document can serve as a baseline for improving casual use of the properties at the Center of the City. The Council of the Commons urges the city to use this document to holistically supplement planned activations and support the community in its casual use of the Center of the City in the spirit of resolution R-22-362.
 - **Recommendations:**

Note: many of these recommendations are applicable to planned events

 - **Create the Library Lane Food Truck Zone**
 - **Designate Food Truck Spaces Along Library Lane**
 - During certain times of the day and/or week, designate reserved parking or other spaces along Library Lane for use by approved mobile food vendors.
 - **Standard Permit Fee**
 - Develop a standard mobile food vendor permit fee and reservation process that helps sustain support and activating the Center of the City. Ensure that with payment

of this fee, mobile food vendors are able to reserve parking spots or spaces along Library Lane during certain times of the day and/or week.

- **Approved Vendor List**
 - The Ann Arbor Farmers Market has created, and updates each year, an approved food truck vendor list [List](#). The city should work with the Farmers Market to ensure this list is compatible for other areas of the city, including for use at the Center of the City.
- **Mobile Food Calendar**
 - Ensure that a common calendar exists that includes standard known times when food trucks will be present on Library Lane so that downtown workers and residents can quickly view and understand what mobile food options are available during the lunch hour or in the evening.
- **Advertising**
 - As noted throughout this document, events - even those like casual appearances of food trucks during the lunch hour - only work if community members know about them. Advertising through low-cost, high-impact means like organic and paid social media, coupled with earned local media attention, is essential to building an organic following for all planned and casual uses of the Center of the City.

Center of the City Activation Plan Recommendations, Summary and Conclusion

“The importance of making intentional change across government and community to facilitate activation of the Center of the City for the betterment of the Ann Arbor community.”

Council of the Commons members believe this document represents the best first attempt to determine a plan for activating the properties that comprise the Center of the City, in the spirit of the 2018 citizen-initiated city charter amendment, city council resolution R-22-362 and other council resolutions.

Contained herein range recommendations from initial management structure, to staffing and volunteer connection building, to outfitting these properties with equipment to encourage both casual and planned activations.

In every community that Council members researched or contacted, the city and/or its non-profit open space management partners were intentional and iterative with their decision-making on open space use. These communities take pride in their central, activated areas, as indicators and generators of recreational, economic, and cultural benefits for their residents and visitors. They didn't leave things up to chance and as a result, have likely had some failures but many

successes - both of which strengthened these communities. We recommend that the city government and greater Ann Arbor community follow a similar process: be deliberate, attempt, improve, and continue moving forward to create lively, activated uses for the Center of the City.

Dead space helps no one, but lively space can benefit all.