



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0284, **Version:** 3

Resolution Establishing Center of the City Task Force

Prepared by: Councilmember Eaton

Whereas, On November 6, 2018, electors approved Proposal A to amend the City Charter, which, in relevant part, 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;'"

Whereas, A "commons" is a traditional form of shared space based on mutual benefit, mutual responsibility and mutual respect, conveying a culture of sustainability now and for the generations to come;

Whereas, The Center of the City will draw on earlier community visioning for the downtown including the call from Ann Arbor's 2006 Calthorpe Report to "Encourage the creation of new public spaces within the Downtown and rehabilitation of existing spaces: Pursue and design a Town Square or central civic area that incorporates an outdoor meeting Place;"

Whereas, On April 7, 2014, City Council approved by a vote of 7-4, a resolution R-14-091, related to the creation of a public park on the Library Lot, which resolution, in relevant part, provides guidance for a planning process that actively engages multiple stakeholders and the public at large and includes recommendations for specific actions that will encourage and support the redevelopment of adjacent properties;

Whereas, The Library Block is home to a variety of stakeholders: residential property owners/tenants, small businesses, large businesses and organizations; city-owned properties and two downtown historic districts protecting a total of 13 structures; and

Whereas, City Council is taking action to implement the Center of the City Charter Amendment as approved by the voters on November 6, 2018;

RESOLVED, That City Council will establish a Citizen Task Force to engage citizens in visioning, long term planning, and immediate and intermittent uses, building toward the final vision for the Center of the City on the Library Block;

RESOLVED, That the Task Force will consist of 9 members, each of whom represents one or more of these categories, (1) immediate residential and business neighbors; (2) other downtown business and residential neighbors and commuters; (3) supporters of the concept of a Center of the City; (4) planners landscape architects, architects, and/or engineers with experience designing public open spaces; (5) those citizens throughout the wider community who will participate in the events and use the public space(s) of the site; and (6) members of historically underrepresented groups in planning processes, such as youth, minorities, and people with disabilities;

RESOLVED, That members of the Task Force will be appointed by City Council based on a nomination of the two Council Members serving on the Parks Advisory Commission (PAC). Feedback will be solicited from PAC regarding the questions on the application to serve on the Task Force. The City Council will also appoint two members of City Council to serve as advisory members of the Task Force;

RESOLVED, That this Task Force will convene with the goal of facilitating a shared vision of the Center of the City. The process will encourage public participation and result in written recommendations to City Council;

RESOLVED, That City Council will use the Task Force recommendations to help determine the next steps to advance the development of central park and civic center commons known as the Center of the City;

RESOLVED, That the City Council directs the City Administrator to provide assistance to the Citizen Task Force in the following ways:

- Provide a Community Engagement Specialist to support the work of the Task Force. This staff person will help with facilitation tasks and will be empowered to reach across organizational lines and bring the necessary staff expertise to the table. The staff person will provide other logistical support and assist with internal and external communications to create and maintain transparency and ensure compliance with the open meetings act.
- Ensure a multi-disciplinary resource team comprised of staff members with expertise in planning/urban design, landscape architecture, engineering, community engagement, historic preservation, sustainability, and water resources is available to prepare a document that provides baseline data. This resource team may also be utilized throughout the process to provide guidance on technical questions.
- Provide data and resources to address the following:
 1. The evolution of the site's development including prior public input and proposals for public use.
 2. The design of successful central commons in other communities, their management models and funding sources.
 3. The limits of the site including zoning, positive and negative attributes; weight bearing capacity of the existing parking structure roof, central down-up ramps, and peripheral foundations along Library Lane.
 4. A list of potential civic center structures and functions to be part of the plan.
 5. An inventory of the public and private structures and vacant lots on the block including factors that might serve as incentives for their renovation, restoration or future redevelopment with an orientation to the public spaces, and an assessment of their

potential for easements to facilitate pedestrian access.

- Assist the task force in generating multiple use and design ideas for the site derived from prior public input and proposals as well as those gathered during new constituent interviews and larger community meetings.
- Provide support to the task force in analyzing all use and design ideas to find agreement; conduct cost-benefit analysis, triple bottom-line (social, financial and environmental) analysis; and prioritize elements of the vision.
- Coordinate with a working group of volunteers who will help to complete the work of the Task Force. The working group will be open to people who attend the Task Force meetings and may work on projects and assignments as defined by the Task Force chairperson.

RESOLVED, That the Task Force will submit its report and recommendations to Council by February 28, 2020, or earlier; and

RESOLVED, That City Council requests that the City Administrator include in his budget proposal the funding adequate to pay for the costs of the Center of the City Task Force public engagement process and that the City Administrator acquire additional support from the Downtown Development Authority as appropriate to the specific elements of the project.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Eaton, Bannister, Lumm and Ramlawi

As Amended and Approved by Ann Arbor City Council on April 1, 2019