

Meeting with Josie Parker and Eli at AADL

Task Force members: Ann, Norm, Alan

General points made by Josie:

They would like to see as much pedestrian activity as possible on block to give better general oversight and security.

Westgate library is one-quarter the size of the downtown library, but has just as many users; this is because of all the other activities found at the Westgate Mall in general.

The many student high-rises built in the downtown have not had significant impact on library users. Many users come from areas outside the downtown, including the surrounding townships, and seven townships help fund the AADL.

The downtown library attracts more people than any other activity (other than the stadium), and the library board is committed to keeping a library downtown

The library sees itself as “givers” of community support, not “receivers.” In some ways, it can be described as the “mother ship.”

The programming for a future library was presented in a lengthy presentation by HBM consultants. A video is available on YouTube.

Alan presented his plan for use of the DecaDome on the parking structure. Both Josie and Eli were quite concerned about safety issues of having a single individual in the structure, when there are continuing problems with violence even at the library itself. They suggested discussing this problem with Dan Kelly at the Delonis Center.

Presented, Norm Tyler

13 October 2019

October 14 meeting at Kempf House

Task Force members present: Ann, Norm, John, Alan.

7 attendees from Kempf House board; no attendees from HDC

Norm presented

History of Library Block presentation

Urban spaces exercise

Ann discussed role of Task Force

Discussion points:

Board members present said their comments were individual and did not represent Board as a whole.

Asked if Task Force was looking at what had been done in other cities

Issues at Liberty Plaza must be addressed as a first step, do not create a new park and abandon Liberty Plaza, do not have duplicate spaces at Liberty and the new park

When block is vibrant (Sonic Lunch) or there are many eyes on the park (in past the Pantry restaurant/Newsroom had many people within view of LP) behavior problems were minimized.

Suggestion was made to have COC ambassador that could help connect people needing social services with appropriate resources. Perhaps the ambassador could be a COC docent as well.

Liberty Plaza should be connected to the new park - opportunity to create a new "diag"

Businesses are needed to drive activity and eyes on the park

There are dead zones for walking in this area (along Liberty and 5th) maybe a connection here can help people avoid these areas

Think about social services support, not just enforcement security

First Martin input - cooperation is key to this being successful

Several voted for commons because they felt the Core building was too big, too tall

Feeling that 3-5 story development is in scale with city and with the character of the block

Did not want to be the small house surrounded by huge buildings (reference to movie "Up")

Kempf House Role:

Potential to be integral part of what is developed

Local History Center - could provide this broad mission

Potential to open gardens from backside

Need funding-staffing to integrate Kempf House, currently small group of volunteers are maxed out on what they can do

Recognize that KH contributes in part to issues at Liberty Plaza as it is unoccupied and doesn't provide "eyes on the plaza"

Members of Kempf House would be interested in getting more visitors but would need more volunteers and/or paid employees. Currently all volunteer. One member questioned if there was enough interest in the history of just this property to get visitors to increase and felt including the entire Ann Arbor area or having a much wider range of topics could accomplish this.

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Submitted: Ann Dilcher, John Haines, and Norm Tyler, 16 October 2019

Meeting of Library Block business people

21 October 2019 in Freespace Room at library

Attendees: 5 business people

Task Force members, Norm, Ann, John, Dean

Agenda:

History of block PowerPoint presentation

Administered Urban Spaces evaluation exercise

Pretested new Library Block Activities evaluation exercise

Comments from attendees:

Ann Arbor is known as a "green city"

Would like to see green space on north side of library,
convert west end of Library Lane and put drop-off from Division Street

Build a new library building on top of parking structure

Make a park at current site of library

Playground could be successful

Playground adjacent to Millennial Park in Chicago is always active

Activity would mean less need for security

Maintenance costs for a playground would be low once built and many kids come now to the area when visiting the library. A natural connection.

Liberty Plaza has security problems; police come multiple times each week

It was safe when adjacent businesses were Community News and PanTree restaurant

Maybe have Literati bookstore relocate there, or a coffee shop

The sunken features should be filled in and made level.

Interested to know how Bank of Ann Arbor feels about relative success of Sonic Lunch at Liberty Plaza

Library Lot would benefit by having big events take place there

Have smooth concrete for dancing/skating; make this area as large as possible

No sure band shell would work. West park has one and it is rarely used.

Program outdoor activities for cold weather months

e.g., Artisans market during holidays.

No retail would survive at this location; Amazon is taking away all growth in retail

Food services could work, but likely there are already too many downtown. Ginger Deli had difficult time surviving during winter months near Liberty Plaza.

The proposed 17-story building would have caused severe traffic and access problems

Pedestrian connections between Liberty Plaza/Kempf House/Noble House/Carriage House and the Library/Library Lot Commons Area are critical.

Meeting of Old Fourth Ward Neighborhood Association

22 October 2019 in St. Andrews Church

Attendees: 40 residents

Task Force member: Norm

Agenda:

Administered new Library Block Activities evaluation exercise

I was given 10 minutes at beginning the neighborhood's semi-annual meeting to distribute flyers announcing the November 6th meeting and to collect approx. 40 Library Block Activities surveys.

Meeting with members of the DDA Board

23 October 2019 at DDA offices

Attendees: Susan Pollay, Joan Lowenstein, Bob Guenzel, Tyler Kinley

Task Force members: Norm, John, Dean

Agenda items:

Presented History of the Library Block PowerPoint
Administered new Library Block Activities evaluation exercise
Open discussion

Susan Pollay offered a few minor corrections to history presentation. Mayor Brown 1st one to install metered parking for self-sustained funding, Main/Ann parking lot is owned by the county, Valiant was defeated by community rallying against conference center, DDA was directed by Council to build underground library lot parking to accommodate multiple future uses/connections (punch-outs are all around the structure for future connection possibilities underground, in Core deal they paid 20% above market rate for parking spaces, over 700 total spaces available in structure.

Comments from various DDA members

- All the areas around the library block should not be siloed. Proposals for Library, Y-lot, Liberty Plaza, Credit Union, Federal Building, etc. should be considered as a whole.
- The definition of a Commons is a space that has levels of interaction with the public.
- The history presentation indicates an appropriate solution for the library lot was the Core Spaces proposal.
- The Library Block would benefit from more residential use.
- A mixed-use development may be what is needed. Accept the idea of encouraging more people in this area.
- The CORE proposal responded to various concerns raised by City Council over time, resulting in adjustments to satisfy those requirements and necessitating the maximizing of the development.
- Stay focused on reality versus fantasy. The underground parking structure was built to support a significant structure.
- Land is priced based on the volume that is allowed to go on top. The land cost of this property means larger structures are necessary.
- One way to allow for a smaller structure on valuable land is for the city to sell it at a lower price. This would be the city's way of investing to meet community needs.
- Some landlords have allowed for lower rents in a philanthropic way to make for successful blocks/retail areas in our city.
- Some cities use a Homeowners Association (HOA) or a Business Improvement District (BID) type of arrangement as a pool to help establish/maintain urban parks.
- In most cities, successful urban parks utilize private funding.
- 600,000 visitors a year come to the library, contributing in a major way to the number of pedestrians on 5th Avenue. Also, the Blake Transit Center attracts 5,000 people per day.
- The Task Force should focus on what is the idea of a civic commons.
- Could surrounding buildings create new elevations facing toward an open plaza?
- The library is the gem of the city; it could be considered a "Commons."
- Doug Kelbaugh developed a study showing a pedestrian mid-block walkway from State Street to Main Street.

- Areas in town with reasonable rents have retail establishments that are succeeding. Areas with high rents are struggling.
- William White was referenced for excellent urban space study in which he found that people love being in areas that have many other people.
- To get more outreach, consider partnering with Y-lot development.
- Mixed use development would provide eyes on the park, positively impacting potential security issues.
- Whatever happens on Library Block must incorporate the library and not exclude it.

Norm asked if the DDA could attend a TF meeting so that the larger group could hear from them directly instead of through our notes. They will discuss and get back on this.

Submitted: John Haines and Norm Tyler

Meeting with AAATA staff

29 October at AAATA offices on South Industrial Highway

Attendees: Mary Boonin, Manager of Community Relations; Bryan Smith, CEO Operations

Task Force members: Norm, Alan & John

Comments did not necessarily represent official opinion of AATA.

- AAATA operations is focused on 3 things as relates to COC: Access to Air Ride, security, and crosswalk.
- Important first point is that there should be a pedestrian crosswalk at Library Lane.
- They were interested in the idea of an underground connection under 5th Ave. Blake Transit Center was built to also be open on southside facing the Y-lot. This could fit well with underground connection.
- Keeping Library Lane open is important for traffic flow. Don't know how the Air Ride could work otherwise.
- Should check with fire department on importance of 4th Ave, 5th Ave, etc. and impacts of changing traffic flow stemming from eventual vision for COC.
- Long-term AATA goals - Get buses off 4th Ave, make safer for riders and make it easier to use.
- One way they could make safer/easier to use is to remove buses from 4th street and expand into Y-lot. They have had several discussions with the city regarding their interest in the Y-lot. In 2002 AAATA wanted to buy Y-lot for expansion, but city retained ownership. AAATA indicated they could utilize the entire ground level and allow a different-use building above.
- With CORE Spaces proposal, AAATA's main concern was the impact the increase in people living near Blake would have on the transit center. They see no need for additional parking, since goal is to encourage more use of transit.
- When thinking of Center of the City there is concern in how large groups of people coming for events could affect ridership/service.
- Regarding security/safety, Blake has public restroom requiring policing due to periodic issues. 4th Ave has loitering in bus shelters. Having another public restroom at library lot could be good. Bryan showed sample of Portland, Oregon, Portland-Loo as urban-friendly outdoor restroom. Cost is \$120,000. <https://portlandloo.com/>
- Big events on library block should not block 5th Ave. or Library Lane; needed for access.
- Personal idea suggested to make William St. become a bike/bus-only street in the future.
- Finally, the transit center wishes to stay at its current location but would like more ground-level space.
- AATA has very challenging conditions where their transit center is located compared to the rest of the state, and yet they have some of the highest ridership rates.

Alan is working to get notices on buses via Mary. Norm will send electronic version of Activities survey to Bryan who will seek input from other employees.