

Resolution Designating an Urban Public Park Location on the Library Lot Site.

Whereas, City Council approved a resolution (R-07-517) on 11/05/07 directing the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to prepare a written recommendation for construction of a South Fifth Avenue underground parking garage which would include “above ground, in the short-term, surface public parking, and support in the long-term development which could include, but is not limited to, a residential, retail and/or office building(s) and a public plaza along either Fifth Avenue or the newly constructed street;”

Whereas, The DDA presented a site plan for the South Fifth Avenue Parking Garage (located at 319 South Fifth Avenue) which City Council adopted (R-09-061) on 02/17/09 without addressing the repeated, multiple public comments (e.g. during the 10/14/08 “Open House” and 10/21/08 Planning Commission meetings) requesting a public plaza or green space instead of the 38 surface parking spaces in the design;

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor issued Request for Proposals #743 for development of City-owned property on top of the new parking structure at 319 South Fifth Avenue in August, 2009 and the RFP called for proposals that would include a beneficial use of the site such as a public plaza, as well as provide a positive financial return or be financially neutral, to the city while demonstrating a clear benefit to the community and two proposals for park development for the site were among the submissions;

Whereas, Ann Arbor lost its historic central, civic open space when the old County Courthouse and its lawn were replaced and again, more recently, when the modest City Hall lawn was sacrificed to build the new Justice Center addition; and

Whereas, The Library Block Study (Luckenbach/Ziegelman, 1991) and the Recommended Vision & Policy Framework for Downtown Ann Arbor (Calthorpe Associates, 2006) both called for the creation of a substantial, “Town Square” type of public park or plaza on the Library Block;

Whereas, The Downtown Plan (2009) states “public spaces play an important role in structuring the “image of the city” by creating focal points – or landmarks -- which punctuate the urban fabric and provide relief to the hard surfaces of the built environment. They also create opportunities for social interaction; if they are located and designed to attract use, they can add substantially to the vitality of downtown’s street life;”

Whereas, the Master Plan: Land Use Element (2009) set as objectives the dedication of “more parkland than is requested by the Parks & Recreation Open Space (PROS) Plan” and the creation of linkages to existing parks when new parkland is dedicated;

Whereas, the PROS Plan 2011-2015 assessed a need for additional open space in the downtown and stated the goal to “Work with the Downtown Development Authority to plan for renovation and acquisition of downtown open space, including the development of the library lot;

Whereas, The City Council rejected the development proposal that emerged from the RFP #743 process (R-11-114) on 04/04/11, based on questions about the viability of the Valiant proposal for a hotel and conference center and the level of risk that would burden the City;

Whereas, The City Council also stated (R-11-114) 04/04/11 that any future planning and proposals for this (surface level of the Library Lane) site shall include a robust public process;

Whereas, The DDA oversaw construction of the Library Lane underground parking garage structure, completed in 2012 and resulting in the net addition of over 500 parking spaces, a new, mid-block through street, and including elements of infrastructure to support future development either on or adjacent to the Library Lane Parking Structure;

Whereas, City Council authorized the DDA to develop a plan to redevelop downtown city-owned parcels including the surface level of the Library Lane Parking Structure (R-11-129) on 04/04/11;

Whereas, The DDA followed City Council's direction and implemented a process called Connecting William Street (CWS) including an online survey that received over 2,000 responses and multiple focus groups as well as public meetings;

Whereas, The public input received by the DDA through its CWS process was strongly in favor of additional public open space in the downtown;

Whereas, The DDA presented its report to City Council on 1/14/13, including the recommendation for an expanded plaza north along Fifth Avenue at the City's discretion;

Whereas, City Council took no action on the DDA CWS Plan, instead requested that the Park Advisory Commission (PAC) study and make recommendations regarding downtown parks and open space;

Whereas, The PAC formed a Downtown Parks Subcommittee and conducted a process that included a survey that received 1,600 responses and multiple public meetings;

Whereas, The public input received by the PAC was seventy-six percent (76%) in favor of having more downtown parks and open spaces, strongly in favor of a large park/open space, more than medium or small, and indicated that the first choice site for a public park is the surface level of the Library Lane Structure;

Whereas, City Council accepted the recommendations received from the PAC (R-13-330) on 11/07/13, adopted them as guidelines including the recommendation that "a park/open space be developed on the Library Lot that takes advantage of the flexibility offered through temporary closures of Library Lane, The size of this space should exceed the proposed allocated open space in the Connecting William Street study (5,000 square feet);"

Whereas, City Council also approved PAC's other recommendations including, but not limited to, the importance of "placemaking" principles and the "activation" of urban public spaces through: pedestrian traffic, relationship to adjacent properties, activities desired by the community, and funding for maintenance and security, as well as close consultation with the Ann Arbor District Library (AADL), and further public input regarding the design and uses of downtown public open spaces;

Whereas, The principles of "placemaking" include the elements cited by the PAC such

as “access and linkage, comfort and image, uses and activities, and sociability,” but the concept of placemaking is better understood as an ongoing, iterative creative process that celebrates the community through the transformative use of a particular public place;

Whereas, the PAC’s survey showed a preference for a combination of public and private funding for the new urban park and City Council’s vote to designate the specific location for a public urban park will enable fundraising efforts toward the costs of the design, construction and maintenance of that park to proceed;

Resolved, That City Council approve the reservation of the site for an urban public park of approximately 12,000 square feet on the surface of the Library Lane Structure bounded by the Fifth Avenue sidewalk on the west, the Library Lane Street curb to the south, the western entry to the central elevator to the east, and the southern curb of the service alley on the north (see two related site plans). This portion of the surface of the Library Lane Structure shall be added to the PROS Plan and remain a City-owned, public park;

Resolved, that the City will encourage the creative use of this space to commence on an occasional basis during the transition from parking to public park even before the urban park design and installation work is complete, and hereby requests that Community Services and the Park Department work together with DDA and the AADL to encourage groups to reserve the space for public activities including, but not limited to, craft fairs, book fairs, food carts, fine arts performances, and other activities and consider modification of permit requirements in order to eliminate fees for those seeking to put on public programs on the Library Lane site;

Resolved, that the City will work with the developer of the remaining portion of the Library Lane site to ensure that the designs for both spaces, an urban public park and the adjacent development, complement and support each other’s successful uses;

Resolved, That all development on the Library Lane site, whether public or private, will proceed in close collaboration with neighboring properties and businesses including, but not limited to the Ann Arbor District Library, First Martin Corporation, the University of Michigan Credit Union, the Inter-Cooperative Council, and the businesses fronting on Fifth Avenue and Liberty Street. Possible goals of this collaboration include:

- Reorientation of the physical design and uses of these adjacent properties so that they help to create pedestrian interaction with the public park on the Library Lane Structure,
- Creation of pedestrian walkways that connect the Library Lane Structure and public park to Liberty Plaza, Liberty Street and William Street;
- Discussion about incentives, such as premiums or subsidies, that the City or DDA might offer to encourage both physical reorientation and pedestrian access/easements through adjacent properties, and
- Consideration of possible joint development on the Library Lane Structure’s remaining build-able portion.

3/11/14