



# City of Ann Arbor

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Ann Arbor, MI 48104  
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## Master

**File Number: 14-0959**

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<b>File ID:</b> 14-0959	<b>Type:</b> Resolution	<b>Status:</b> In Committee
<b>Version:</b> 2	<b>Reference:</b>	<b>Controlling Body:</b> Park Advisory Commission
<b>* Requester:</b> City Council		<b>File Created Date :</b> 06/16/2014
<b>* File Name:</b> 6/16/14 Resolution to Improve Liberty Plaza		<b>Final Action:</b>
<b>Title:</b> Liberty Plaza Improvement Resolution		

**Notes:**

**Agenda Date:** 06/16/2014

**Agenda Number:** DC-1

**Sponsors:** Hieftje, Taylor, Briere and Teall

**Enactment Date:**

**Attachments:** DC-1 Councilmember Lumm Amendment Liberty Plaza Improvement

**Enactment Number:**

**Drafter/Contact:**

**Hearing Date:**

**\* Admin/Mgr:**

**Effective Date:**

### History of Legislative File

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Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	City Council	06/16/2014					
1	City Council	06/16/2014					
1	City Council	06/16/2014					
1	City Council	06/16/2014	Referred	Park Advisory Commission			Pass

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### Text of Legislative File 14-0959

#### Liberty Plaza Improvement Resolution

Whereas, Liberty Plaza is a highly visible park located in Central downtown Ann Arbor;

Whereas, Liberty Plaza has benefited from the generous support and maintenance provided by the First Martin Corporation and other volunteer groups;

Whereas, Liberty Plaza has seen a slight increase in programming and activities as a result of the rental fee waiver implemented by Council in June 2013;

Whereas, Despite such efforts, Liberty Plaza continues to be underutilized and is often perceived to facilitate negative behavior;

Whereas, The FY15 Budget funds two additional, sworn community engagement officers to help patrol the downtown, an activity that will help improve Liberty Plaza although more needs to be done;

Whereas, Liberty Plaza could benefit from design improvements and increased programming to facilitate positive behavior and a public downtown space the Ann Arbor residents can be proud of and enjoy;

Whereas, The Parks Advisory Commission ("PAC") downtown subcommittee report recommends that significant capital/structural improvements to Liberty Plaza should be made in concert with the adjacent property owner;

Whereas, The PAC downtown subcommittee report recommends that any future improvements should also work to create a permanent and highly visible connection between the Library Lot and Liberty Plaza;

Whereas, It is understood that a successful programmed urban park requires significant staff support and on-going funding to sustain activities, security, and high maintenance standards;

Whereas, City Council increased the Parks & Recreation Services FY2015 budget by \$23,577 as a result of the Parks Millage Administrative Policy, the so-called Parks Fairness Resolution;

Whereas, These funds were not earmarked for a specific project or purpose;

Whereas, The residents of Ann Arbor wish to have a clean, safe, and successful park in the downtown; and

Whereas, Liberty Plaza does not currently meet these community expectations;

RESOLVED, That City Council directs the City Administrator to work collaboratively with the property owners adjacent to and near Liberty Plaza, the general public, PAC, the Ann Arbor District Library, and the DDA to develop a conceptual design for an improved Liberty Plaza;

RESOLVED, That the conceptual design for an improved Liberty Plaza recognize and account for open space on the west boundary of the Library Lot;

RESOLVED, That the collaborative effort be funded by the Parks & Recreation Services FY2015 budget's \$23,577.00 from the Parks Millage Administrative Policy;

RESOLVED, That multiple opportunities for public input and participation be provided to help shape a vision for a re-imagined Liberty Plaza;

RESOLVED, That staff provide PAC and Council funding scenarios and options for the capital construction costs;

RESOLVED, That staff provides PAC and Council a detailed estimated annual operating budget, along with funding scenarios, for the maintenance, security, and programming costs required to run a successful urban park at Liberty Plaza; and

RESOLVED, That the conceptual design, construction cost estimates, and estimated annual operating budget be shared with PAC by December 2014 and Council in January 2015.

Sponsored: Councilmember Taylor, Briere, Teall and Mayor Hieftje

Councilmember Lumm's June 16 Proposed Amendment

AMEND AS FOLLOWS IN CAPS:

Deletions in [Brackets]

RESOLVED, That City Council directs the City Administrator to work collaboratively with the property owners adjacent to and near Liberty Plaza, the general public, PAC, the Ann Arbor District Library, and the DDA to develop AN INTEGRATED PLAN FOR THE LIBRARY BLOCK EXTENDING FROM LIBERTY PLAZA TO THE LIBRARY LOT INCLUDING a conceptual design for an improved Liberty Plaza;

RESOLVED, That the conceptual design for an improved Liberty Plaza recognize and account for open space on the west boundary of the Library Lot;

RESOLVED, That the collaborative effort be funded by the Parks & Recreation Services FY2015 budget's \$23,577.00 from the Parks Millage Administrative Policy;

RESOLVED, That multiple opportunities for public input and participation be provided to help shape a vision for THE LIBRARY BLOCK, HOW THE TWO PARKS WOULD BEST COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER, AND POTENTIALLY INCLUDING A REDESIGNED [a re-imagined] Liberty Plaza;

RESOLVED, That staff provide PAC and Council funding scenarios and options for the capital construction costs;

RESOLVED, That staff provides PAC and Council a detailed estimated annual operating budget, along with funding scenarios, for the maintenance, security, and programming costs required to [run a successful urban park at Liberty Plaza] RUN TWO SUCCESSFUL URBAN PARKS AT LIBERTY PLAZA AND THE LIBRARY LOT; and

RESOLVED, That the INTEGRATED PLAN, conceptual design, construction cost estimates, and estimated annual operating budget be shared with PAC by December 2014 and Council in January 2015.

## LIBERTY PLAZA

### Background

- Liberty Plaza was constructed in 1977, replacing a gas station and small apartment building. Unknown whether there was an Environmental Assessment done for the site. Demolition included removal of underground gas tanks.
- The plaza was built in conjunction with the building immediately to the west – owned by First Martin - to facilitate access and windows at the basement floor of the building on the east and south sides.
- Several businesses have occupied the storefronts facing the plaza - the Pan Tree, a restaurant on the second floor, and a news stand in the basement were the most beneficial to the plaza. These provided foot traffic and eyes on the park. Both have been replaced by offices with less foot traffic and pedestrian turnover.
- Funding for the original design and construction of the park was partially through HUD and CBDG.
- The plaza has undergone several renovations since its construction, all to deal with issues surrounding the type of use. The renovations have never really changed the structure of the plaza, but only replaced paving materials, benches, tables and lighting.
- Discussions about this plaza and its issues have taken place several times over the life of the park (1991, 1998, and 2003).
- There have been ongoing efforts to increase programming and to have greater police presence.

### Issues

- Perceived as unsafe place.
- Residents tend to be concerned about safety and security.
- Downtown workers and plaza users tend to be more concerned about activating the space and creating an oasis in the downtown - these goals can at times be at odds with the desires of the residents.
- Is not surrounded by retail or restaurants to activate the plaza.
- Access to library lot is not visible and pedestrian access crosses private land.
- Plaza accommodates building to west, which creates a sunken area with dead space on every side of the building.
- Kempf House is a passive use and cut off from plaza by a wall and fence.
- A significant amount of money (over \$200,000) was invested into the plaza structure, paving and furniture as recently as 2003. Parks contributed \$50,000 and the DDA covered the balance. The improvements are still in good shape.
- There is currently approximately \$100,000 in the developer contribution fund that is either specifically designated for Liberty Plaza or could be used for it (designated simply for downtown parks). This would likely be sufficient for design. Demolition and construction would require additional funding sources.

- Each year approximately \$200,000 of Parks Millage revenue is allocated to neighborhood park improvements and Liberty Plaza could be considered for a portion, or all of that funding in a future fiscal year.
- The current PROS plan does not identify Liberty Plaza as an area of focus.

#### Ideas

- Create highly visible pedestrian way to the Library lot from corner of Division and Liberty that feels safe.
- Integration with Kempf house while remaining cognizant of the unique nature of the Kempf site.
- Change structure of plaza to create active use such as a dog park, play ground, or fountain.
- Work with First Martin to create better connection through their property – request public access easement or acquisition of portion of unused space.

#### Process - Background before any potential Public Meetings

- Research whether there are development restrictions tied to the original CBDG/HUD funding and whether an EA was ever done for the removal of the gas station.
- Coordinate with Connecting William Street public process and the Library Lot project to make sure that any proposed concepts for Liberty Plaza are aligned with the larger vision for downtown open space and pedestrian connections. Wait to hold public meetings until some of these proposals have been publically vetted.
- The Park Advisory Commission is considering forming a work group to look at downtown parks and to discuss how efforts in the downtown should be prioritized.
- Meet with Kempf House board to solicit feedback about creating a closer relationship between the Kempf House and Liberty Plaza.
- Bring the topic of Liberty Plaza to PAC for their recommendation on whether to move ahead with a renovation/rebuild, etcetera. This should likely be done when there is greater clarity on the Connecting William Street recommendations as the DDA attended a LAC meeting for feedback on the topic and Liberty Plaza was discussed given its proximity to the 5 public areas Council has charged the DDA with exploring uses for.

#### Future Steps - Public Meetings

- Hold an initial public meeting, possibly two, to simply gather ideas – what is working, what is not, is there a desire for a wholesale change, are there ideas for redevelopment.
- Hold a second public meeting where several concepts incorporating feedback from the first set of public meetings are shared and receive feedback.
- Hold a third public meeting to present a final concept plan.
- Hire consultant to develop detailed engineering plans of the agreed upon final concept.
- This is the process that was used when West Park was re-imagined and worked well.

# Park Advisory Commission (PAC) Downtown Parks Subcommittee Report

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## Recommendations

1. The development of any new downtown park or open space should prioritize community preferences. The most commonly expressed community-based priorities include: a central location; sufficient size for passive recreation/community gatherings; shade; and natural features.
2. New downtown parks and open space should adhere to placemaking principles. Necessary criteria for a successful downtown open space include: high traffic/visibility; flexible programmable space; active use on at least three sides; the ability to provide activities desired by the community; and funding for maintenance and security.
3. Any new downtown park should enliven the downtown, complement existing parks and development, and serve the community desire for a central gathering space.
4. Any additional downtown park space should not come at the expense of the quality or maintenance of Ann Arbor's existing parks. Downtowns parks are expected to be more costly to develop and maintain. Further, existing downtown parks are not currently utilized to their potential. Given the limits of current parks funding, the development of new parks should not be approved without an identified funding source for capital development, ongoing maintenance, and programming.
5. Significant capital/structural improvements to Liberty Plaza should only be made in concert with the adjacent property owner. Short-term efforts should continue to focus on smaller-scale incremental changes (removal of shrubbery) and programming opportunities (fee waiver). Future improvements should also work to create a permanent and highly visible connection between the Library Lot and Liberty Plaza.
6. The downtown could benefit from the addition of small "pocket" parks and flexible spaces. The City should work with potential developers of City-owned properties to identify opportunities, create, and maintain privately funded, but publically accessible open spaces. (e.g., the Y and Kline lots). As a part of this effort, staff should develop recommendations for how development contributions can better serve to provide and improve downtown passive recreational opportunities, including proposals such as flex space (parklets), streetscape improvements, and public art.
7. The public process for downtown parks and open space does not end with these recommendations. Any additional park/open space would require robust public input regarding the design, features, and proposed activities.
8. Based on the aforementioned criteria, the Downtown Parks Subcommittee recommends 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). However, the subcommittee is strongly in favor of a mixed-use vision for the Library Lot that utilizes the City's investment in development-ready foundation and infrastructure. Development of the site and adjacent parcels, including the accompanying increases in activity, is essential for the future success of this site. In order to adequately address issues of safety and security, the Ann Arbor District Library must also be strongly represented in the planning process.

# Downtown Public Space

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The topic of public space in downtown Ann Arbor has received significant public outreach over the last few years and correspondingly has generated a large amount of feedback and data from the public. Between the DDA's Connecting William Street Study and the Park Advisory Commission Downtown Parks Subcommittee Report over 40 public meetings were held on the subject. Both efforts also made significant outreach to various stakeholders, ranging from business associations to advocates for additional open space in the downtown area.

Both efforts also included surveys that allowed for a tremendous amount of feedback and data collection. The DDA survey was broadly distributed and received over 2,000 responses. The PAC survey was also broadly distributed and promoted and received over 1,600 responses. Respondents gave generously of their time in filling out the surveys and provided a wealth of information as a result.

Not surprisingly, with such a high level of feedback, unanimity on what public space in the downtown should look like and how it should be funded was not achieved. Nonetheless numerous themes emerged that should be helpful in shaping future decisions pertaining to downtown public space.

## **DDA Survey Summary**

- The DDA survey focused on goals for the Connecting William Street study area.
- The goal with the highest percentage of respondents selecting a 4 or 5 rating was "opportunities for social interaction". The goal selected fourth highest was "opportunities for outdoor community events".
- When presented with open ended questions that allowed for written comment, many respondents articulated a desire for additional public space downtown, ranging in character from paved plazas to green space. Desired site qualities varied as well.
- Other respondents shared concerns regarding park maintenance and funding – expressing that funds should first be prioritized to existing public space needs before adding new.

## **PAC Survey Summary**

- The PAC survey focused specifically on parks and open space considerations as they relate to downtown Ann Arbor.
- From the PAC survey and outreach efforts it emerged that a clear majority (75%+) would like to see more downtown parks/open space.
- The size of the space showed a preference towards large but first choice responses were varied (over 600 PAC survey respondents chose large, over 400 chose medium, slightly over 200 chose small, and about 200 responded additional open space wasn't needed at all).
- PAC survey respondents evaluated 15 potential park features and activities for a downtown park/open space and then chose their 5 most important and 5 least important features. Qualities that ranked highest were relaxing and people watching, landscaped/green space, a place to meet friends, a place for community gatherings and the availability of shade features. The least desired qualities were water features, playground equipment, food vendors, free



## Downtown Public Space

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wireless, and moveable tables and chairs. The theme that emerged is a space more suited to passive recreation than active, and is not heavily amenity based.

- The PAC question of how to fund construction, maintenance and programming of a new public space resulted in a relatively clear direction toward public/private partnership. Of the 1,445 people that answered the question, 68% said through public/private partnership. Only 9% of respondents believed the City should assume all funding responsibility, and only 6% thought the private sector should be wholly responsible. 6% of respondents said they didn't know, and the remaining 11% believed additional downtown parks to be unnecessary.

Both the DDA and PAC efforts reached out to professional leaders and experts in the areas of urban planning and successful downtown design. Themes that were reiterated were the need to incorporate placemaking principles in design, to consider development and park space in conjunction with one another to successfully activate space, and to identify and secure funding sources for construction, on-going maintenance and programming. Many of these themes and concerns were articulated in PAC survey responses. The distilled picture of these 1600 responses indicate that the community is strongly in favor of additional open space in the downtown area, and that the open space should lend itself to a more passive type of recreation, focused on community and relaxation, rather than active recreation based on amenities. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that the City should not undertake the financial responsibility of construction and on-going operations alone, but rather through mutually beneficial public/private partnerships.

### Case Studies

Successful urban parks are expensive endeavors and are perhaps a large reason why many existing models look to collaboration with neighboring businesses, sponsors, or benefactors. The following case studies provide snapshots of urban parks in the hope that Ann Arbor can position itself in the best possible way to ensure future downtown public space is enjoyed and deemed successful.

As a reference point, the Library Lane site portion currently designated for a park is 12,000 square feet. The entire Library Lane site is 35,112 square feet.

### **Director Park – Portland, Oregon**

Cost to develop: **\$9,500,000**

Funding Sources: **\$3,100,000 private donations; \$4,500,000 Portland Development Commission; \$1,200,000 Portland Parks System Development Charges; \$700,000 City of Portland General Fund**

Annual operating cost: **\$475,000**

Adjacent uses: **High-rise office and residential towers, hotel**

Size: **43,560 square feet**

Image: <https://maps.google.com/maps?q=director+park&hl=en&sl=45.543408,-122.654422&sspn=0.221216,0.438766&t=m&cbll=45.518871,->

## Downtown Public Space

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[122.680986&panoid=mMiRhIT9OoQlJ2g7UjJoA&cbp=12,247.36,,0,4.14&ie=UTF8&ll=45.51806,-122.679863&spn=0.00003,0.019205&z=16&vpsrc=0&ei=B-ROU6i9OMfrwQH17YCwDw&pw=2](https://www.downtownkalamazoo.org/Visit/Events/Arcadia-Creek-Festival-Place.aspx)

Director Park makes for an interesting case study. The park size is slightly larger than the entire Library Lot footprint. There are also six floors of parking located beneath Director Park and two structures in the park that are parking garage entrances. Features at the park include a fountain, artworks, a cafe, and a distinctive glass canopy. Annual operating costs are \$475,000 and are funded by the City's General Fund. This funding provides for maintenance and staffing. Director Park has a full-time benefited position referred to as an Urban Park Specialist, dedicated solely to overseeing the park. Director Park contracts with a security company to provide checks of the park for 10 minutes of every hour, 24 hours a day, and to respond to additional requests as needed.

26 businesses perimeter the park, providing for a dynamic environment. The Urban Park Specialist described the park as "a community center without walls that requires attention every hour of every day" for it to be the success that it is.

### **Arcadia Creek Festival Place – Kalamazoo, Michigan**

Cost to develop: **\$3,000,000**

Funding Sources: **\$1,500,000 private donations, \$1,500,000 grant/loan from Kalamazoo Community Foundation**

Annual operating cost: **\$75,000 (maintenance only)**

Adjacent uses: **Parking lots, residential, some commercial**

Size: **approximately 80,000 square feet**

Image: <http://www.downtownkalamazoo.org/Visit/Events/Arcadia-Creek-Festival-Place.aspx>  
<https://plus.google.com/112885544869306038186/about?gl=us&hl=en#112885544869306038186/photos>

Arcadia Creek Festival Place was built in 2004 and is located in downtown Kalamazoo. The public space contains a play area, large festival space, covered structure, water feature, and band shell. It is publicly owned by the City of Kalamazoo. Maintenance is the responsibility of the Kalamazoo DDA. The DDA dedicates approximately 1/3 of a full time staff person to manage maintenance needs, and another 1/2 of a full time staff person to perform the maintenance. Operations, festivals and programming are managed by a non-profit organization, the Downtown Kalamazoo Association Charities. Public Safety monitors the site on a regular basis. In conversation, the DDA felt that their maintenance budget should be doubled to be able to do more than just basic maintenance, as they don't have funds to make any improvements or upgrades to the park.

## Downtown Public Space

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### **Campus Martius Park – Detroit, Michigan**

Cost to develop: **\$24,374,907**

Funding sources: **\$19,499,925 private donations, \$4,874,982 City of Detroit**

Annual operating cost: **Approximately \$1.25 million**

Adjacent uses: **High-rise office and residential towers**

Size: **108,900 square feet**

Image: <https://maps.google.com/maps?ll=42.331776,-83.046738&z=19&t=h&hl=en-US&gl=US&deg=0&mapclient=embed&iwloc=lyrfr:m,16893991028364648225>

Campus Martius Park is a 2.5-acre urban park owned by the City of Detroit. It was completed in 2004. Construction costs were funded primarily by the Detroit 300 Conservancy (now the Campus Martius Conservancy), which contributed \$8 million, and Compuware and the Ford Motor Company, which contributed \$8 million. Over \$4 million was contributed by the City of Detroit.

The park is operated by the Campus Martius Conservancy, a non-profit organization that is responsible for the management, maintenance and operation of the Park under a long term operating agreement with the City of Detroit. The Conservancy's annual budget is approximately \$1.25 million. Adjacent property owners generate the majority of this cost through annual assessments. Additional revenues come from event sponsors, facility rentals, and rent paid by refreshment vendors. The high-rises that surround the park are home to thousands of residents and businesses that draw tens of thousands of employees daily.

### **Katz Plaza – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

Cost to develop: **\$4,500,000**

Funding Sources: **Private - Capital Campaign for a Dynamic Downtown**

Annual operating cost: **Approximately \$140,000 (maintenance only)**

Adjacent uses: **Theater, commercial, office**

Size: **23,000 square feet**

Image: <http://www.downtownpittsburgh.com/go/katz-plaza>

Katz Plaza was developed and is operated by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, a 501(c)(3). Adjacent to it is the Trust's Michael Graves-designed O'Reilly Theater and the Trust's Theater Square complex. This complex contains an 800-space parking garage, central district box office, restaurant, 250-seat Cabaret Theater, and a broadcast studio. The funds to develop Katz Plaza were part of the Capital Campaign for a Dynamic Downtown, a \$100,000,000 effort that financed all of these projects as well as 2 riverfront parks and improvements to the Trust's 100 year-old Byham Theater. Maintenance costs include over \$65,000 annually to daily cleaning of this park, given its high use and visibility. Water costs related to the fountain are in the region of \$25,000. Additionally, the Trust is responsible for programming the space, including a weekly summer free jazz series.