

Section 1: Proposal Statement (RFP #743 Form)

The Proposal Statement / Legal Status of Proposer form is submitted separate from the A2C2 proposal along with the Section 12: Acquisition Cost Proposal.

Section 2: Project Description

Ann Arbor Community Commons -- Introduction

We are honored to make a proposal on behalf of the community of Ann Arbor. Our proposal aims to develop an urban public space, a focal place of community at the heart of downtown Ann Arbor. We are lifted by the spirits of previous and future partners, volunteers and activists. In this way, our proposal is theirs, just as a Commons should be.

Our proposal begins to integrate decades of community development and planning as we interpret the Request for Proposal alternatively. As the "Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons" we have begun another chapter of open community discussions to make this proposal. We expect the discussions to continue toward gratifying results.

While we do not propose intense building development, we do look forward to appropriately-scaled edge infill projects over time. We propose elements that define space, link places, express civic character, and combine as a palette for cultural interaction. As context-sensitive development evolves on and around the Library Block, community plans are likely to come true, at last. One of the most important acts of community ownership will be to choose a permanent name for our project on public land. For the purpose of this proposal, we call our project the "Ann Arbor Community Commons" (A2C2).

Decisions about the use of significant public land should be publicly deliberated. With so little public land available in downtown Ann Arbor, we can't afford to settle for expedient or piecemeal approaches. Since this site is publicly owned, the A2C2 utilizes a rare opportunity to engage in building community.

The site context demands design that is sensitive to historic adjacencies and promotes future connections. The challenges are daunting and require innovative approaches. The easier way would be to ignore the context, the past challenges and future opportunities. The A2C2 is a proposal that takes the more difficult path, daring to go in the direction of our common dreams toward unexpected success.

A fundamental question now underlies any public

*"We appreciate your interest in...the City of Ann Arbor and hope that you will consider submitting proposals on future city projects."
(Community Development, April 26, 2005)*



Miniatures from a community member

The urban design issues affecting Downtown Ann Arbor encompass a broad variety of topics ... providing public amenities such as a central "Town Square" and maintaining and designing new public spaces like Liberty Plaza and the Allen Creek Greenway. (Calthorpe, 2006)

"Create a program of events and activities based on a high level of community involvement.

Publicize local cultural events and businesses.

Band together to develop a management strategy for the area.

Create a neighborhood pedestrian and traffic calming plan."

(Project for Public Space)

...a place to demonstrate

decision, that is, whether or not the outcome will contribute to a humane and just response to ongoing global climate change. The A2C2 is aimed to enhance our current civic assets and to create the kind of framework upon which our sufficient and most livable future depends.

A2C2 – Goals and Benefits

The A2C2 will progress through phases of development with community-based goals and benefits. The A2C2 realizes goals and benefits both as applications of best practices in urban design and as implementation of enhancements that serve both the residential and business needs of Downtown. A preliminary and open-ended list of sources appears in **Appendix A**, reflecting a sustained evolutionary approach and dynamic partnerships.

Birdseye views of nineteenth-century Ann Arbor show shared rear yards within what we now call the Library Block. The apparently undivided and visually continuous area made up a shared semi-private place, a commons, for about a century. Over decades of the twentieth century, the Library Block changed drastically, including surface vehicle parking as a seemingly temporary use of vacant parcels which had made up about half of the previously undeveloped rear yards.

With the replacement of the County Courthouse in the early 1950's Ann Arbor lost the Courthouse Lawn. Depicted in panels of the "Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibits Program", this was such a significant loss of downtown public space, that Ann Arbor has never quite recovered. We have since had no public place of casual civic exchange in downtown Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor needs a proportional hub for our residents and visitors, similar to that which the 'Diag' provides for the University of Michigan community. (These are very different kinds of spaces.) Ideally located in the Library Block, the A2C2 will evolve into just such a hub, the public front porch for those who call Ann Arbor home and for those who come to visit.

transition to a greener, cleaner and simpler future...a place for ann arbor to play out our vision of ourselves, unfolding with long-lasting intentions.

Fulfill long-held community expectations for the site.



(Courthouse with lawn, 1878. Replaced by existing in 1950s)

Our public Downtown Library (AADL) is a major destination and has a strong identification with this block at the southern edge of the “Midtown” character district (cf., A2D2 proposed Zoning Ordinance amendments and draft Design Guidelines). Ann Arbor City Hall stands three blocks north, serving to define an opposite edge of the same character district. By its design, the public outdoor space at City Hall is too small and the adjacent destinations are too specialized to serve the purposes to which the A2C2 is dedicated.

A public institution as valued as the Downtown Library deserves a setting that supports its mission. With the likely orientation of a new Library entrance to the interior of the block, the A2C2 provides protected outdoor space for the growing number of library users. Public ownership of the A2C2 must also provide complementary programming and stewardship that supports, rather than burdens, Downtown Library functions.

The A2C2 holds partnership with the AADL at high priority. Problems which the Downtown library identifies and aptly addresses now, are also problems that the A2C2 will be designed to ameliorate. As a public space the A2C2 uniquely presents potential benefits to the AADL. From the start, the A2C2 must enhance the recognized success and reputation of the Downtown Library.

Bus transit provided by the AATA is assumed to continue to bring many workers and visitors to the area of the A2C2 and nearby civic destinations. Integrated planning and design should enhance safety, create complementary relationships.

In the last year or two, Washtenaw Community College (WCC) has apparently sought satellite campus space in downtown Ann Arbor. This is not a sudden idea. In 1991, WCC “...identified advantages in a downtown facility, and the possibility of connecting to the Library and the proximity of the AATA [transit] station...”(cf., Library Block Report, 1991). Since the public purchase in 2003 and later removal of the former YMCA building by the City of Ann Arbor, there has been no successful proposal for redevelopment.

Sustain a desirable relationship to the Downtown Ann Arbor District Library.

“Libraries are the cornerstones of many civic centers.” (Project for Public Space)



(Existing Downtown Library at Fifth Ave. and William St.)

Integrate transportation amenities, including services of AATA.



Explore an education and cultural center with Washtenaw Community College in relationship to the A2C2 and the AADL..

On the “Old Y” site with frontage on the 200-block of East William Street a mixed-income residential development could reflect the residentially-scaled historic district across the street. Such a development might also include office uses at the street level while respecting the context with compatible design.

Commercial frontage on William Street is designated secondary among commercial frontages. Existing front yards on the street need reinforcement to address residential character of its historic district. Prior proposals for the “Old Y” site were required to include replacement affordable and other housing. Combining some level of housing with a WCC satellite campus still presents strong potential for successful housing development in the broader context of the A2C2.

The A2C2 anticipates the possible incorporation of privately-owned intermediate surface parking and open space in exchange for dedicated replacement parking spaces in the underground parking structure. The owners of the intermediate property have previously indicated openness to proposals.

Further programming of Liberty Plaza and tenant development for the Michigan Square building would capitalize on existing assets, specifically windows and entrances at grade, re-establishing desirable active use.

Access to the Library Block must first serve pedestrians. Vehicular access must be efficient but explicitly subordinate to both pedestrian security and bicycle movement. Our A2C2 proposal reduces the width of Library Lane to one lane eastward for vehicular movement. If demonstrated to be necessary, the A2C2 might provide a single vehicular ‘flex’ (entrance or exit) lane for the underground parking at the interior of the site. (The preferred option is not to have vehicle access at the interior of the A2C2.)

A mid-block drop-off zone for the Downtown Library is proposed on the south side of Library Lane, allowing for adequate vehicle stacking and protected passenger unloading. Drivers may either continue to Division Street or, if the interior access is provided, enter the underground parking from the drop-off zone.

We should note that if the AADL resumes plans for a replacement building for the Downtown Library, the latest plan called for major entrances from both Library Lane and directly from underground parking.

Incorporate different types of housing within the context of the A2C2.

Improve visual and pedestrian connections to existing and future amenities including Liberty Plaza.

Assist business tenants in providing active uses at grade.

Take strategic measures to reduce conflicts among pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular movements.

A ramp on South Fifth Avenue would provide primary vehicular access to underground parking. The Division Street ramp should provide the primary vehicular *exit* north of pedestrian movement on Library Lane, turning left into the northward flow of traffic. This configuration would also resolve many of the implied vehicular conflicts in the narrow 'tail' of the underground parking spaces. Further, if the underground parking is expanded to the west in the future, the primary entrance ramp is well-situated on South Fifth Avenue.

Current drives to private surface parking areas within the Library Block should be considered for conversion as additional ramped access to designated underground parking and service access. Sensitive infill development should be encouraged in the resulting open areas which are currently used for private surface parking.

The Division Street pedestrian entrance to the underground parking should be designed both as visual infill for the neighborhood edge and as a gateway structure marking an entrance to the A2C2. Reflecting the neighborhood character, this residentially-scaled 'Commons House' could serve as a meeting place for peacemaking and downtown resident groups such as the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, the Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council and the Germantown Neighborhood Association.

Just off William Street, the A2C2 is about midway between the University of Michigan Central campus and the initial park of the Allen Creek Greenway. Coordinated planning and design can create both visual and physical linkage among these three green nodes. Innovative treatment of the existing Fourth and William parking structure frontage can create an intermediate point of interest.

Existing 'sidewalk seating' for nearby food vendors can be expanded outdoors and relating to the A2C2 (cf., Library Block Report, 1991). Shared customer facilities may be located underground with access from the A2C2.

The A2C2 will incorporate unusual and effective lighting. Both LED and OLED fixtures may be incorporated integral to design elements. In addition, integrated digital displays may utilize the transparent stair enclosures of the underground parking. These displays can provide orienting information and may alternately take the form of video art and interactive opportunities.

Enhance the environment for alternative modes of transportation.

Resolve conflicts.

Reduce the use of downtown land for surface parking lots.

Strengthen neighborhood edges.

Provide meeting places.

"Identify areas where greenways could link parks, neighborhoods, commercial areas, the University of Michigan and the downtown."
(PROS Plan 2006-2011)

Increase flexible space for outdoor seating and facilities for nearby small restaurants and street food vendors.

Create pedestrian-oriented amenities and attractions, including orientation to Downtown through interactive lighting and digital displays.

A generous public place above related parking can reduce street closures for events. Occasional rentals may be accommodated. Permanent structure may support performance equipment.

We recognize that several major projects could affect the overall character of two or even three blocks on the north side of East William Street. The “Old Y” site, a new transit center and redevelopment on Fourth Avenue with any expansion of underground parking could have profound effects on the district. We expect that a more coordinated approach to redevelopment would benefit from the focus provided in the A2C2, midway between the Allen Creek Greenway at First and William Streets and the eastern terminus of William Street at the State Street edge of the UM Central Campus.

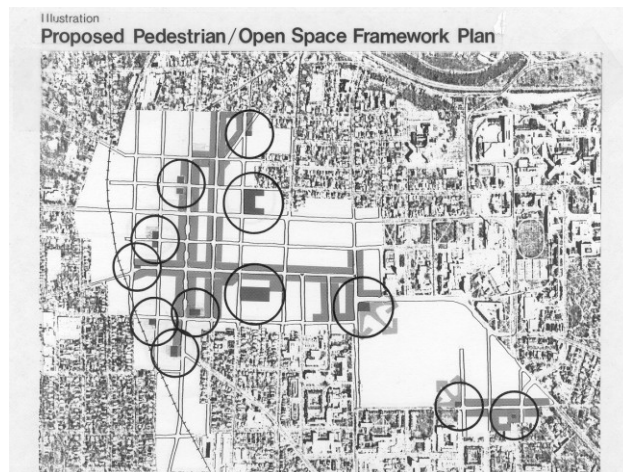
The west side of Fifth Avenue is already a poor quality pedestrian experience. The addition of a vehicle entrance ramp to underground parking will only exacerbate unsafe conditions for movement. Further, the Federal Building turns a high blank wall and a low buffer wall to a third of the block frontage. Another third of the block is transit drives or postal vehicle parking. Pretty dead. The A2C2 projects (possibly in a literal way) improvement of the pedestrian experience. Visual relief from these negative features may be achieved by providing attractive features in the A2C2, enlivening the South Fifth Avenue frontage of the Library Block.

The idea of building a 15-story building on the A2C2 site, or one even half that tall, especially one dedicated to workday or occasional event use, is like landing the anvil on top of Wile E. Coyote (“Lickety-Splat”). The site area might waiver back to its knees now and then, but a full recovery or regeneration seems unlikely if like Mr. Coyote, we keep repeating the dead zone mistakes.

Expand outdoor event space for programs per regional cultural plan.

Coordinate planning of destinations and public amenities.

Enliven ‘dead zones’.



In a previous plan for Downtown open space we can see how one major opportunity has been diminished on the City Hall block. Even with many other changes since, a great opportunity remains on the Library Block.

Section 3: Target Population

Our target population includes those residents, local businesses and service providers who expect public property to be put to public use, to have a purpose that meets their needs and fulfills the promise of our community. As the A2C2 evolves our expected daily population is the expanded creative throng. We define the creative population broadly, to include not only young adults, but their mentors, clients and protégés, workers and retirees, parents and children. The A2C2 will respond to both the near neighborhood residents and visitors. All who enter the A2C2 should enjoy choices of destinations, activities, respite and interaction with security and delight. The A2C2 is inclusive and ultimately seeks to creatively engage the broadest spectrum of visitors and residents, welcoming all generations and walks of life.

“Create a program of events and activities based on a high level of community involvement.” (PPS)

Section 4: Impact Analysis

Our analysis of the impact of the A2C2 centers on the public need for Third Places. The concept of Third Place recognizes the invaluable community benefit of a public place that completes a triad with the controlled or private venues of Work and Home.

Every neighborhood needs a Third Place where healthy society thrives.

Among positive impacts, the A2C2 opens views, lifts gates and protects access for those who seek that public Third Place in Downtown Ann Arbor. As an outdoor Third Place the A2C2 expects to complement the existing and future Downtown Library which is already a successful indoor Third Place. Both places provide public focus for communication and cultural experience that are essential to our democratic society. Not only will Downtown Ann Arbor continue to benefit from a captured working population, but the A2C2 will also attract and retain cultural consumers of choice.

Attract and retain ‘cultural creatives’.

The A2C2 site is publicly owned and should be considered a public asset with extremely high value to the public. The A2C2 will accrue additional value as the focus of successive community-based proposals and design competitions. Since the A2C2 implements many of the strategies of the Downtown Plan, adjacent properties and business will accrue value and vitality from increased pedestrian activity. Existing residential properties will hold or increase in value by proximity to an amenity-enriched location and enhanced residential character. New residential development will benefit from the essential common ground that makes compact living attractive.

“Public acquisition of land for park [plaza or open space] use is difficult in the downtown because of the high price, demolition costs, soil contamination possibilities and general unavailability of vacant land.”(City of Ann Arbor PROS Plan 2006-2011)

In creating a place of public focus, the A2C2 answers a question that has endured for many decades.

Where to experience the essence of Ann Arbor?

The essence of Ann Arbor keeps residents here throughout their stages of life. It is what attracts new residents for study, work and new ventures. It is what makes us proud to identify ourselves as “Townies” even if it is less logically than abiding in our hearts.

Create community.

Section 5: Plans

The A2C2 is not yet a fixed plan. It is a community process, to shape what the people of Ann Arbor would like, primarily by asking and providing opportunities for participation.

We respect the previous work and conversations of others. We seek new examples and community conversations to further reveal a common vision for common ground.

Some general planning concepts and principles have been accepted in community discussion:

Capitalize on proximity to the initial Allen Creek Greenway at First and William Streets. The A2C2 anticipates a verdant path to the Fourth and William parking deck and beyond to the initial park element of the Allen Creek Greenway at First and William Streets. An elevated element is a highly desirable feature of a successful urban space and provides three-dimensional orientation. The conceptual path includes the existing parking deck elevator and stair tower, returning to grade and continuing to the Allen Creek greenway on tree-lined William Street sidewalks. At least part of the south face of the Fourth and William parking deck, and possibly the depth of one parking space, would be transformed into a living wall.

One of the elements of the 1991 urban design study (Library Block Report) was infill development on the interior of the Library Block, specifically behind the existing Michigan Credit Union building. In a swap for underground parking spaces, residentially scaled structures would be appropriate facing Library Lane. With sensitive diverse redevelopment of the rear lot areas of the historic Liberty Street commercial structures, the A2C2 can create a more continuous level of activity with both feet and eyes on the scene.

Observe the most robust application of the Ann Arbor Citizen Participation Ordinance. “This ordinance will provide many benefits, including minimizing the costly and time-consuming reworking of plans that often results from getting feedback late in the design development process.” (a2gov.org)

Create a linking streetscape and pedestrian way between the A2C2 and the Allen Creek Greenway.

Convert surface parking lots to housing or locations for small businesses.

Context analysis:

Recent planning documents have begun to emphasize ‘corridors’. The Draft Design Guidelines dub Fifth Avenue as a “civic corridor” connecting the Library Block to Huron Street. William Street is might be looked upon as a ‘residential corridor’ connecting neighborhoods and their open spaces from the future Allen Creek Greenway to the University of Michigan’s Central Campus.



Designated Historic Districts border three sides of the Library Block. An official study is underway to evaluate the “Germantown” area of Fifth Avenue and E. William Street for historic district designation. The Kempf House Museum is a City-owned property adjacent to Liberty Plaza. Kempf House is maintained by Parks and Recreation, staffed and supported by community volunteers. These historic resources indicate the need for particular sensitivity and innovation to achieve compatible design for the A2C2 site.

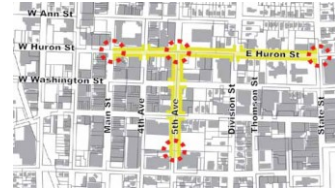
Downtown Neighborhood and Commercial Associations have keen interest in existing amenities and enhancement of their unique quality of life and business opportunities.

There are no public plans to relocate the AATA transit hub. It is apparent, however, that facility replacement is desired even as transportation issues are intensifying.

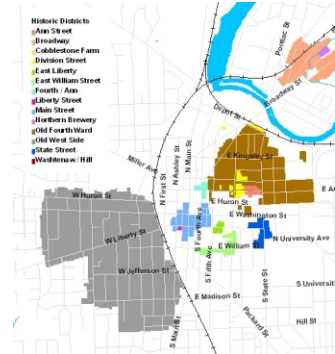
The AADL has made a long-range plan to remain on their current site, eventually to replace the current building.

The nearby site of the existing Federal Building was historically platted as “Jailhouse Square” faces Liberty with a blank wall and surface parking on Fifth Ave.

Private owners in the range of the A2C2 should be sounded out and encouraged to participate in projects of mutual benefit. These could include rear lot infill.



Civic corridors such as 5th Avenue and Huron Street are distinguished by important civic anchors and institutions such as the Ann Arbor City Hall, Washtenaw County Courthouse, Ann Arbor District Library and the University of Michigan Campus. (Draft Design Guidelines, October 2009)



*Germantown NA,
Jackson-Huron NA,
Downtown Citizens AC.*

*DDA, State Street and
Main Street Area
commercial associations.*

Public owners.

Private owners.

Artistic verve of the A2C2 can also ‘spill’ out to the surrounding area to influence the development of other downtown public spaces.

Oklahoma City Memorial

This National Park has a somber and formal purpose, but its relationship to government and civic buildings has inspired a high level of design in the rebuilding of the area. One building was rehabilitated to serve as a museum for the site, and as an educational center for peace and conflict resolution. Cultural symbolism is subtle and impressive.

An interactive children’s area is included. One elevated terrace highlights the “Survivor Tree”. On the opposite side of the rectangular reflection pool a terrace is formed from the foundations of the bombed building. The terrace overlooks a field of symbolic chairs that are lighted during evening hours.



St. Louis City Garden

Covering two small city blocks in the heart of downtown, the newly completed St. Louis City Garden has elements that are both playful and serene. The combination of passage and repose makes for a dynamic public space.

In our case, the use of circular patterns and cylindrical forms in the A2C2 will contrast with the orthogonal landscape of Liberty Plaza. The use intermediate space in the design would open interior corners with a geometrical design transition. The resulting soft axis would terminate at the main entrance to the anticipated new Downtown Library.

Use design to unite the elements of the Library Block and adjacent uses.

Calthorpe Report Illustration

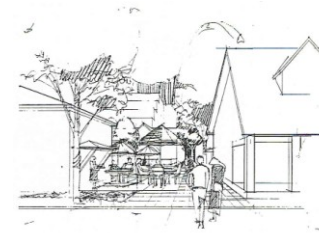
The illustration of potential development on around an open space at the Library Lot shows extension of concerns from Division Street toward Main Street.

The A2C2 is does not model the entire illustration, especially concerning compatibility and openness, but the coordinated planning is noteworthy. We can do even better with the character district and design guidelines that we have created as part of the Calthorpe Report recommendations.



Library Block Study

Like a tree firmly rooted in the underground parking structure, design elements of the A2C2 will branch out to encompass improvements shared by adjacent and related properties. In the 1991 Library Block study, depicted a “Possible retail court behind the East Liberty shops” facing the block interior, the site of the A2C2. A succession of opportunities like this shared amenity will demonstrate partnership advantages.



The A2C2 offers several placement options for the re-mounting of the Kamrowski mosaic to be moved from the original City Hall location. Highlighting such installations, including the mosaics at the Fourth and Washington parking deck, may establish an artistic theme and social identity for the [Mosaic] Midtown district.

Integrate public art installations both permanent and ‘visiting’.

In addition to lighting and surface treatments, the A2C2 design elements will accommodate other permanent and visiting artistic and cultural performances, exhibits and demonstrations. For example, an individual scale, visitors may be able to experience environmental audio works.

The A2C2 contemplates incorporation of a water element to complement the planned Herbert Dreiseitl work at the municipal center under construction three blocks north of our site. While the underground parking structure is designed to “...detain storm water in excess of what is required on this [RFP] site”, the A2C2 water element would be designed to enhance the performance of the provided system to achieve a more beneficial outcome along with experiential aspects.

Environmental water.

Although the initial design of the A2C2 does not include restroom and washing facilities, secure free-standing and self-cleaning single-occupant units may be evaluated at a later stage. These units could be installed in the first level of the underground parking deck, particularly in areas where vehicle parking is less functional, as in the ‘tail’ at the east. Bicycle commuters may request this amenity along with underground bicycle parking provisions (cf.

Design for future amenities.

Decaux or other secure high-quality low-maintenance toilet and washing stations).

A successful outdoor urban space contains flexible seating choices. Seating options should accommodate multiple passive activities.

Diverse and generous seating is essential for multiple uses of the A2C2. Low-rise integrated amphitheater seating should be provided to echo an interior auditorium that will be a prominent element of a new Downtown Library building. One or more slightly elevated landscape elements may accommodate both occasional street musicians and scheduled performers. Movable, adaptable, sculptural and environmental seating should be considered.

Seating for success.

Section 6: Project Schedule

While the A2C2 will not require the kind of intensive infrastructure contemplate in the early design of the underground parking structure, other efficiencies and cost savings are sought through continuous coordination of the underground design and construction with what is planned above ground.

Our proposal while specific to the library lot, envisions a larger perspective in relation to adjacent properties and the downtown generally, including the Allen Creek Greenway.

The A2C2 is the first of at least 3 desired stages of general downtown development--

1. Create the community commons.
2. Develop a connection with the key greenway park at First and William Streets.
3. Re-develop the 'Old Y' site including new mixed-incomes housing or educational uses, in conjunction with anticipated transit hub improvements.

This proposal focuses on creating the A2C2. We expect the resulting A2C2 to stimulate formal competitions or requests for proposals for the later development phases.

Creating the A2C2 may be accomplished in 6 stages that must be coordinated with the underground project:

1. In advance of City Council action, develop public interest and educate. Invite the community to think about a permanent name.
2. Upon positive City Council action, officially and safely celebrate at the site, demonstrating the core purpose of the place to be made. Invite the community to create the celebration of creating a commons. Keep the activity open

Coordinate final design of the underground parking structure with major design features of the A2C2.

Schedule to accommodate public participation

Goal #5: Provide the City Council with clear direction on a Downtown Development Strategy ... Identify catalyst sites for short term and long term development. (Calthorpe)

***Goal #1: Encourage a transparent process with public input, debate, and consensus building:
_ Convene public workshops that allow participants to discuss future development in Downtown Ann Arbor;
_ Emphasize***

and guided by a formalized representative group.

3. Establish public and professional liaison for coordination with underground parking structure design and construction to integrate innovative systems and services.

4. During early design and construction stages of the underground parking structure, explore, develop and define and solidify community partnerships for the A2C2. Maintain partnerships during a period of integrated planning and design.

5. Maintain a continuous program of financial development.

6. Make a congruent plan for construction of the A2C2.

*neighborhood involvement; and
_ Listen to and incorporate community input. (Calthorpe Report)*

Section 7: Development Team

The A2C2 starts with community leaders. As community leaders, we expect coordinated and open participation with design professionals connected with the City, DDA, AADL, AATA, and other organizations for which a relationship to downtown Ann Arbor is vital.

The primary authors and organizers of this response to RFP #734 are Alan Haber and Alice J. Ralph.

As part of the A2C2 proposal an invitation extends to a preliminary list of potential community partners who may take a self-defined role in the development team over time. See Appendix C.

Section 8: Overview of Organization and Services

The Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons came together to create a public purpose alternative response to the City of Ann Request for Proposals. We composed ourselves for this project. As an informal group, our number is fluid but growing. Among us we offer expertise in planning, organizing, activating, urban design, scientific research, politics, law, and other fields. As volunteers, our time and resources are tightly managed. The keys to our success are cooperation and collaboration.

"Band together to develop a management strategy for the area." (PPS)

Section 9: Professional Qualifications

There is no stronger qualification for the design and realization of a public space than the support of a broad sector of the community.

Alan Haber is a community organizer and activist in local, national and broader arenas. As an author with formal training in social work, Mr. Haber has focused on issues of poverty, energy independence and self-sufficiency. He is a self-employed professional woodworker and cabinetmaker. His design of a Table for Peace serves as one of the inspirations for the A2C2 proposal.

Community support backs the volunteer professional leadership that is provided by Alice J. Ralph. Emerging as a local public policy advocate and civic activist during the last decade, Ms. Ralph is a registered architect with training and significant experience in urban design, historic preservation and building rehabilitation. She engages broadly in neighborhood, Ann Arbor and County issues.

Section 10: Prior Experience with Downtown Infill Projects

The A2C2 responds to aspects of the request for proposals that call for innovation. Not only does the A2C2 address context-sensitive infill, but also extends to a community mission for which the public is uniquely experienced.

The A2C2 may be more aptly described as ‘outfill’ (rather than infill), keeping the Library Lot commercial district viable and making the downtown residential neighborhood more livable. For this dual purpose, public experience has recently been intensified.

In the last several years a series of planning efforts, issues and contentious projects have engaged many more Ann Arbor residents than officially presumed. Citizens have been obliged to arm themselves with specialized knowledge beyond personal experience. We have volunteered (and sometimes paid for) professional expertise to bear on complicated issues. The Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons draws on vast experience and expertise of ‘users’ of Downtown as well as knowledge accumulated during the last several years of community study and consultant presentations.

Certainly, City officials and administrators have struggled to ensure successful private or public-private development in many cases. Not only have tax revenues been disappointing but profits have been elusive. The current and five-year projections for development are the lowest in decades.

Whether or not City Council implements required compliance with urban design principles with pending regulations, public management of the A2C2 will compare well with the relative risks of private infill development proposals on public land.

Not everything in the 1991 Library Block study is appropriately revisited, but the preceding 1988 Library Lot Task Force made recommendations about infill that are

“_Work together to create a vision for the civic center as a livelier place.

_Create a neighborhood pedestrian and traffic calming plan.” (PPS)

rather durable.

Edited for brevity—

Givens

Surface parking is not the best use.

Designated historic and other significant structures are to remain.

Pedestrian access and movement are a high priority.

Short-term public parking is important.

Liberty Street frontage should remain commercial.

[Violated.]

A public space on the Library Block should be in addition to Liberty Plaza.

New construction should be mixed use on the Library Block. Housing could be in the mix.

The area for development could be expanded beyond the Library Lot.

None of the appointees of the former Library Lot Task Force of 1988 continue in staff, appointed or official City positions today. None of those in similar positions today were engaged or employed by the City in 1988. In contrast, the team of consultants recommended by the Task Force included the same architectural firm that leads the design of the underground parking structure and was selected to design the replacement Downtown Library. A sustaining public committee can reflect the excellent performance of their forbears to direct the creation of the A2C2 and realize its potential.

Compare--

“The Fifth Avenue civic core within the downtown is dominated by surface parking lots and inhuman building scale. The Vision plan demonstrates how the City might add a much needed “Town Square” or central plaza. A combination of civic uses including an outdoor [amphitheater] as well as mixed-use retail and office with upper-floor residential would add much needed housing, pedestrian activity, and safety to the area. The Vision also shows an improved Blake Transit Center and a redeveloped [Y] site that should retain affordability.” (Calthorpe, 2006)

Section 11: Financial Capacity

We measure public financial capacity by different means than we do that of private corporations. As a group of Ann Arbor residents, the Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons shares financial interest in the A2C2 with a broad spectrum of fellow citizens. In that respect, current financial capacity in the public sector casts its shadow on us. We call upon the values that have positively transformed our society in previous difficult times.

Success has sprung from the non-profit sector and from innovative public-private partnerships not only to rescue citizens from during difficult economic periods, but to generate durable organizations for the common good. We persistently find ourselves banding together in common purpose. We discover hidden talents and re-discover necessary skills.

As vested residents, members of the public are reliable, watchful and resourceful. Our capacity as managers of our own resources, including public land, is demonstrated in appointed boards and commissions such as Parks Advisory Commission, Zoning Board of Review, Historic District Commission and others.

The A2 Committee for the Commons expects robust public discussion about the A2C2 and related components. In planning for a new or renovated Downtown facility, the Ann Arbor District Library set an example of a process that was open, deliberate and bold. Although the plans were suspended before being finalized, the process was invaluable to the AADL and its users.

The concept of the A2C2 deserves serious engagement of our citizenry. We should not be looking for a windfall or temporary infusion of cash when we risk the very place that could harbor our civic soul. Even if selected, the A2C2 concept engenders an ongoing focus of knowledge and talent that make up the ever renewable financial and creative capacity of our organization.

Section 12: Acquisition Cost Proposal

The Acquisition Cost Proposal is submitted separate from the A2C2 proposal along with the Section 1: Proposal Statement / Legal Status of Proposer.

Announcement of 2009 Nobel Prize for Economics

*By Anna Ringstrom and Nicholas Vinocur, Reuters
Mon Oct 12, 10:28 AM EDT*

A U.S. academic who proved that communities can trump state control and corporations became the first woman to win the Nobel prize in economics on Monday, sharing it with an expert on conflict resolution.

Elinor Ostrom defied conventional wisdom with studies that showed that user-managed properties -- such as community fish stocks or woodland areas -- more often than not were better run than standard theories predicted.

"Since we have found that bureaucrats sometimes do not have the correct information while citizens and users of resources do, we hope it helps encourage a sense of capacity and power," the Indiana University professor told a news conference via telephone.

The previously accepted view was that common property was poorly managed and should be either regulated centrally or privatized.

Section 13: Project Financing

Information of this section is submitted with Section 12.

Alternative Section 13: Financial Prospects

The A2C2 is an evolutionary, collaborative and incremental project with richly complex and dynamic financial prospects. The opportunities for public and private partnerships are numerous. The efficiencies and added value to institutions, services and systems are nearly unlimited. Partners will structure mutually beneficial investments with measurable results.

Parking structure construction cost savings from building more conservative foundations may be applied to the alternative surface development of the A2C2.

Estimated costs of surface parking lot development could be transferred to the initial alternative installations of the A2C2. We recognize that several parking spaces will be sacrificed for the A2C2. We believe that the net benefit to the city, including the inducement to use the underground parking spaces, far outweighs the loss of surface spaces.

The **DDA Housing Fund** may support infill development to enhance the edges of the A2C2 and nearby street frontages. This housing should be in a scale and configuration that would complement the adjacent historic districts and other existing residential properties. In addition, other small-scale development would create 'secondary addresses' at Library Lane compatible with offices that face William Street.

Parking swaps for dedicated underground parking or private buildable area should also result in contributions for further public A2C2 projects.

Parks millage funds may be applicable to certain phases of the A2C2.

Future event rentals may offset a portion of costs, including costs related to event street closures.

The Dean Fund may consider participation with tree installation as an updated companion to the Dean Promenade, part of our award-winning South Main Street.

External community development and cultural grants will be applicable due to the focus that the A2C2 provides.

Programs of the Downtown Library can benefit from generous accommodation for visitors and to stage outdoor events at reasonable cost. The AADL is a highly

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

*"Market the civic center."
(PPS)*

Parks and Recreation

External Grants

AADL

prized and top-rated public institution that plans a building replacement design that will be oriented to Library Lane and integrated with the public underground parking.

The 1% for **Public Art Fund** may consider commissions.

The **Ann Arbor Convention and Visitors Bureau** may partner with the other business development organizations to fund an interactive information center. Ideas include a digital events calendar and illustrated orientation map, a digital non-motorized travel information center.

The online **annarbor.com** recently opened a highly visible interior community space. Located diagonally from Liberty Plaza, the new space is now open to the public weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Public community space may naturally extend outdoors beyond to the A2C2 and inside the Downtown Library.

At the northern part of the “Midtown District” the City of Ann Arbor is completing city services buildings including **Fire Services, Safety and Court Services, and Administrative Services**. After the loss of the printed daily newspaper, the City will need increasingly innovative means to communicate with and inform the public. Parking directly associated with this concentrated service center is severely limited. Interactive digital installations in the A2C2 can expand access to and information about these important services. Locating this information center adjacent to the Downtown Library, directly above convenient parking and amid inter-modal transportation services makes for a dynamic and efficient partnership.

If **SPARK** achieves its ultimate goal, the City may facilitate the transformation of current offices in the Michigan Square building to incubator-style offices and meeting rooms for **non-profit organizations**. The activities of non-profits often occur outside of regular business hours and would close a gap in activity levels to benefit Liberty Square and its relationship to the A2C2.

An alternative is location in new infill development on Library Lane.

AAPAC

Ann Arbor CVB

Media

Enhance innovative news and public information outlets.

Essential Services

Expand innovative delivery of public services.

Non-profit Co-op

The programs of **Washtenaw Community College** are enjoying high demand during the current economy. The Main Campus suffers from dependency on car commuting and parking shortage. With strategic planning, a satellite campus and mixed-use development on the “Old Y” site could be a positive legacy in the periphery of the A2C2.

The A2C2 is a catalyst for **increasing community value**. Savings will compare favorably to initial costs. Taxpayers and civic volunteers have already made contributions in money and in kind. We will continue to do so. Public investment is projected to be incremental and paired with various private initiatives. At what price, in any case, do we value our democratic civil society and the physical fabric where we thrive?

WCC

Citizenry

*To paraphrase the Song of Solomon, the essence of Ann Arbor requires a worthy setting, holding **value above rubies**.*

Appendix A – Sources

Goals, objectives, benefits and inspiration have been drawn from many sources and individuals. We include a partial list with some excerpts.

“[Number] 69 Public Outdoor Room

... There are very few spots along the streets of modern towns and neighborhoods where people can hang out, comfortably, for hours at a time.

... In every neighborhood and work community, make a piece of common land into an outdoor room - a partly enclosed place, with some roof, columns, without walls, perhaps with a trellis; place it beside an important path and within view of many homes.”

Proposed Downtown Zoning Ordinance amendments
Midtown and Main Street character overlay districts

“The Silent Theft: Private Plunder of our Commonwealth”, 2005

“The Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Build a Digital Republic of their Own”, 2009

Recommended Downtown Vision & Policy Framework, 2006

[From an Appendix showing two- to ten-year

recommendations. Most of these should be underway.]

Encourage the creation of new public spaces within the Downtown and rehabilitation of existing paces

A. Pursue and design a Town Square or central civic area that incorporates an outdoor meeting place, underground parking, an indoor facility, and mixed-use buildings.

1. Conduct a design competition for the library lot site.

2. Study the impact of removing the surface parking stalls for the library lot and absorption into surrounding DDA structures.

Human Spaces

Life Enhancing Designs for Healing, Working, and Living (Rockport, 1998)

Site Development Objectives

“Preference will be given to proposals that incorporate a use (or uses) that provides a publicly available service to the community, for instance, building or open space that may be used for public meetings, recreation, or civic/ cultural events.”

Development Specifications

“The site has been designed with flexibility for future development in mind. ... Additionally, the site has been

A Pattern Language (Alexander, et al)

Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (A2D2)

Bollier, David

Calthorpe Associates



Crisp, Barbara

City of Ann Arbor RFP No. 743

Development of City- Owned Property

“Library Lot”

(319 S. Fifth Avenue)

planned to accommodate lateral expansion as well, if neighboring properties wish to pursue additional underground parking.”

Reservation of Rights

“The City reserves the right to accept any proposal, to reject any or all proposals, to waive irregularities and/or informalities in any proposal and to make the award in any manner the City believes to be in its best interest.”

Placemaking Guidebook

(Leis and Lerch, eds, City Repair Project, Portland Oregon, 2003) www.cityrepair.org

Fifth Avenue Underground Parking Project website:

“... in the Calthorpe report the following community vision for the central core area was established:

Create a dense, mixed-use core area that is connected to adjacent neighborhoods. ...

Redevelop the library parking lot. This lot might be appropriate for a design competition and should include a central “town square,”

underground parking, and residential uses.... An analysis of the Downtown land use data

illustrates the significant amount of land devoted to parking lots. In many cases, these parking facilities foster pedestrian dead-zones. Create a framework for the transformation of vacant and underutilized properties.

LEED points [toward achieving certification] may include:

- Community connectivity
- Access to public transportation...
- Renewable energy/Solar power
- Storm water management
- Reduce heat island effect...
- Reduce potable water consumption
- Reduce light pollution
- LED lighting
- Use of materials with recycled content
- Recycle construction material waste
- Use regional materials
- Use low emitting materials

“A diverse and concentrated mix of land uses and activities is critical in drawing people downtown to create a lively atmosphere and a profitable business setting. If these uses are linked together by streets and open spaces which accommodate and encourage pedestrian movement, the activity generated by one use will provide support for others and downtown’s street life will act as a magnet which draws

The City Repair Project

**Downtown
Development Authority
(DDA)**

Downtown Plan (2009)

more people.”

“Continue to invest in streetscape improvements ... as part of the strategy for enhancing downtown’s attractiveness as a residential investment location.”

“[A variety of] 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. These spaces are most meaningful when they reinforce locations of special visual significance such as downtown entry points and civic buildings [like the Downtown Library] and functional importance [such as major “crossroads” of pedestrian movement].”

2009 Nobel Prize in Economics
Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (1990)

Elinor Ostrom

Seventeen citizens, plus four ex officio members (1988)

Library Lot Task Force

Principles of the Commons
Bing! Bing! the light bulb of an idea
Blah! Blah! talking it over with neighbors or colleagues
Pow! Pow! telling truth to power.

Linebaugh, Peter

The Library Block, A Planning and Urban Design Study (1991)

**Luckenbach /
Ziegelman and
Partners Inc.
Coopers & Lybrand
Walker Parking
Consultants/Engineers**

Central Business District Issues

- ... Better coordination of pedestrian amenities including light fixtures, furniture and planting would help improve the appearance and unity of the downtown and foster the connection between Main Street and State Street.
- ... There is a need to involve businesses and residents in park planning and have them contribute to the programming of parks. One way to participate is by locating outdoor cafés and restaurants adjacent to or in the parks.
- Downtown is increasingly becoming the site of special events including the art fairs, the Summer Festival, the

**Parks, Recreation and
Open Space (PROS)
Plan
2006-2011**

Ethnic Festival and most recently the Blues and Jazz Festival. These festivities enliven the downtown and every accommodation should be made to retain them.

Urban Parks/Plazas

Urban Parks and Plazas provide open space and pedestrian oriented amenities in the downtown area where the surrounding population includes high-density residential and commercial districts. These areas are defined by the presence of a significant infrastructure, a greater formality and furniture to serve a greater density of people at peak times. ... Residents and downtown employees utilize these areas as a gathering space for eating and work breaks... [Parks and plazas] often serve as a location for public art and performances. They ideally function in concert with the surrounding businesses, especially restaurants and cafes, where a cooperative effort energizes the physical space.

Body of previous work in Ann Arbor

Proposed Pedestrian / Open Space Framework Plan Illustration

Pollack Design

Project for Public Space www.pps.org

Numerous studies and other resources.

Recommendations for successful civic places.

Ultimate Inspiration

Last here, but always first, we honor the inspiring traits of the citizens of Ann Arbor.

Appendix B – Sample Community Questions

The A2C2 also answers some outstanding questions:

Where is the public place where residents and users of downtown may seek respite while remaining at the heart of civic activity?

The A2C2 can become the calming place in trying times. We may enter distracted or worried, to find balance in a reassuring environment of choice.

Create Ann Arbor's Center for Peace at a peaceful center of Ann Arbor.

What venue can make up for the civic loss of a printed daily newspaper?

What if important local information were right there in front you, on your way? What if you saw a friend or heard about something unexpected just because you went through the A2C2? What if you needed a place to post information for a diverse audience? That place could be the A2C2.

We don't have town criers either, but we are depending more often on word of mouth for local information. Digital communication may extend the personal network, but human interaction is essential to a healthy society.

What amenities improve the climate for local and small businesses?

The A2C2 provides a place for customers to eat street food, to get 10 minutes of sunshine and shop before returning inside, to wait for a companion, to read during a work break, to park in shelter and find out how close local and small business are.

Most people can get the recommended vitamin D naturally with 10 minutes of sunshine 3 times a week.

What can be added to the mix of institutions and business that will encourage parking once to spend several hours of the day or evening as a patron of downtown Ann Arbor?

When a centrally located public place is strongly linked to the wide array of destinations of choice, nobody worries about whether “that’s just too far” or “the meter is about to expire”. We don’t go downtown just to park. We go for every other destination—if it is close enough. Both bicycle and car parking can be sheltered.

The A2C2 may provide many conveniences to downtowners and visitors.

What place can increase the convenience and attractiveness of coming to downtown Ann Arbor without a car?

As our digital age progresses, geography will change relatively little, but choices of destination will increase. The A2C2 can incorporate information kiosks to reinforce

The central location of the A2C2 makes it possible to return on the way to another destination.

A ‘Bike Station’ should be planned in the underground structure.

the new Downtown wayfinding signage program. If you don't know where you want to go, you can decide once you arrive at the A2C2. No matter how you arrive, you'll find detailed information about all of the districts within walking distance.

How can the quality of life be improved for a diverse population of downtown residents?

Downtown residents usually have fewer square feet of both indoor space and outdoor places per person. The popularity of Third Place relaxation shows how important public meeting places are to people of all ages. In the Digital Age It is important to note that Age matters less and Place matters more. With careful integration, the A2C2 can be the place of choice for those who don't have yards or simply want to enjoy the scene beyond home. The A2C2 should be like a great big shared front porch.

Where does Ann Arbor celebrate in community?

Replacing the long-mourned Courthouse lawn, the A2C2 can be the joyous center of civic celebrations and ceremonies.

Time-limited lockers can be installed near pedestrian access to store the unexpected purchase or heavy backpack.

Downtown neighborhoods need Third Places.

At less than two acres, the ratio of public open space per capita is by far the lowest for downtown residents.

"There is no outdoor place to hold a civic ceremony or for [local] elected officials to make a speech." (The Library Block, 1991)

Appendix C – Potential Community Partners

A letter of invitation

Dear Community Partner,

Because you are active in the civic life of Ann Arbor, **we invite you to join us** in creating and supporting a new Downtown public place. The site is our publicly-owned “Library Lot” (391 S. Fifth Ave.) on top of the underground parking deck for which ground was broken recently. We [and you?] are the Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons (A2C2).

The official parking deck design currently includes a ‘temporary’ paved surface parking lot of about 20 spaces upon completion of over 600 underground spaces. The official ultimate plan is for private development of a multi-story building or buildings which could be as tall as **15 stories**. City Administration has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding above-ground “infill development” for which foundations are being designed as part of the underground parking deck construction. **Responses to the RFP are due at 2pm on November 13, 2009.**

As an ad hoc grass-roots committee, we intend to propose a public place that addresses decades of social and physical fragmentation in the area. We are responding with a **framework** of programmed spaces and interconnections **that can evolve** with additional civic projects over time, bringing benefit to all community partners. We are responding to community needs that have been expressed in a variety of plans for about 50 years, since Ann Arbor lost the County Courthouse grounds to new construction in 1953.

We recognize that this site is likely the last chance for the kind of downtown public space that is essential to attractive downtown living and healthy society. We should not sell it. We know that there will be many opportunities on other sites for compatible downtown building development. In proposing the **focal place of our community**, we recognize that success is only possible with public and private community partners. That is why we are writing, asking you to imagine what your role could be, as an individual or as an organization in realizing this future place of community, the **essence of Ann Arbor**.

We include a preliminary list of both public and private potential partners to whom we are making this first invitation for participation. We have drawn on our knowledge of ‘the usual suspects’ as well as some we hope will be inspired by our efforts. We would be honored by your supportive input, especially since your own projects require so much commitment and determination. Join the evolution. Become a ‘charter member’ of A2C2 by letting us know if will **lend your name to support a public purpose proposal**.

All we are asking, is **give Place a chance**.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Ann Arbor Committee for the Commons,

Alan Haber and Alice Ralph

Your ideas or your endorsement can be transmitted in writing by mail to PO Box 7213 / Ann Arbor, MI 48107. Alternatively, send email responses to ajralph@comcast.net using ‘Place’ in the subject line. Attachments (.doc) of modest size are especially welcome.

Potential Partners—A Sampling

Our potential partners may play different roles both in creating and supporting a Downtown public place that celebrates the essence of Ann Arbor. We hope this list is just a sampling of future community partners.

Access International Business Institute
Allen Creek Greenway Conservancy
Ann Arbor Arts Alliance
Ann Arbor Art Center
Ann Arbor Chess Express
Ann Arbor Civic Theater
Ann Arbor Community Foundation
Ann Arbor District Library
Ann Arbor Summer Art Fairs
Ann Arbor Summer Festival
Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA)
Center for Independent Living
Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibits Program
Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Committee
Downtown District Authority (DDA)
Ecology Center
First Martin Corporation
Germantown Neighborhood Association
Google
Gray Panthers
Keith Hafner's Karate
League of Women Voters
NEW Center
Neutral Zone
Public Art Commission
Parks and Recreation (includes Liberty Plaza and Kempf House)
Parks Advisory Commission
Segway
Transition Ann Arbor
UM Credit Union
UM Center for the Education of Women
UM English Language Institute
Herb David Guitar Studio
Seva Restaurant
Earthen Jar Restaurant
Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice
Jerusalem Garden Restaurant
Shelter Association
Washtenaw Bikers and Walkers Coalition
Washtenaw Historical Society
Women's Farm and Garden Club of Ann Arbor
Zingerman's Community of Businesses

And many individuals who know the value of a place to exercise community values.