Interview Feedback

Below is a list created from interviewing 15 local businesses. The interviews covered a range of topics including how these businesses started on their journey to be more circular, the cost associated with such initiatives, and advice for other businesses interested in becoming more circular. We also asked them what the City could do to reduce barriers to circularity including potential policies, laws, programs, funding infrastructure, and technology support. A summary of suggestions is below. Our major takeaways are that there is a strong desire and need for a variety of financial support, free reuse support and space, and expanded composting services.

1. **Provide funding:** There needs to be explicit and accessible funding to support those with minimal resources with participating in and growing their circularity practices. Specifically, stakeholders need application assistance, financial support, and minimal reporting requirements. Solutions could come in the form grants or no or low interest loans. Some areas where grant/funding assistance is needed include things such as supporting restaurants with transitioning to electric cooking equipment, deploying returnable containers at small restaurants and grocers, and providing more veggie-based items on the menu. There is also a desire for the city to leverage bulk purchases for businesses and citizens to help reduce the price of things such as equipment and supplies.
2. **Provide promotion and education:** Many of the organizations mentioned a need for increased visibility as well as information on how to be more sustainable. Promotion can come through engagement with residents and continuing to encourage residents to frequent businesses on our circular economy map. Education could come through the Green Business Challenge and encouraging businesses to collaborate with each other as they transition their businesses towards circularity. And promotion could come through awards, branding support, and recognition programs. It's likely all of the above are needed at different times and for different stakeholders.
3. **Provide space:** Space in Ann Arbor is expensive and circular economy businesses need space to store, repair, reuse, and repurpose materials/items. Some businesses are interested in part-time or shared spaces while others would like to see communal tool sheds or repair stations. One suggested a free store run by volunteers. Regardless, a clear need exists to support shared space for those working to enhance the local circular economy.
4. **Complete comprehensive planning**: This involves embedding circularity and sustainability into city plans including the comprehensive land use, transportation, and resource management plans. And then making sure these plans speak to each other and are translated into the City's capital improvements plan (CIP).
5. **Update laws and policies:** Stakeholders identified a series of policies in need of updating such as removing or changing restrictions around abandoned property, health codes around composting, and repealing vagrancy laws. State-level changes included repealing

laws banning bans on single use plastics and plastic bags and providing discounts for non-profits to save money on dumpster fees.

6. **Encourage sustainable practices:** This topic spanned many areas, but stakeholders explicitly identified the promotion and spotlighting of sustainable practices through a designation or badge program (green business challenge) or via the lowering of costs associated with practices, including things like free commercial composting and tax incentivizes.
7. **Collaborate and network:** Businesses could benefit from working together to share information and resources, such as space or tools. Neighborhoods could benefit from similar sharing. The City could facilitate this by identifying spaces that organizations could use for satellite stations or storage and promoting collaboration between different groups. Additionally, there are resources that the City has that could be redistributed to the community. For example, the city has many vehicles that could be shared with non-profits and the police collect abandoned bikes that could be donated (note: The City is currently revising its policy to donate abandoned bikes).
8. **Be more inclusive:** There was a strong desire for the city to be more inclusive of BIPOC people and businesses including policies and programs that recruit BIPOC businesses and lower the cost of doing business with the City. Engagement and outreach around the circular economy must also be inclusive of all communities – although few recommendations were given on how to ensure this goal was achieved.
9. **Increase public transportation:** For residents to participate in the circular economy they need to be able to access it. Bus routes need to be more frequent, reliable, and numerous and land use practices need to support more neighborhood-based commercial activities – specifically activities that enhance the circular economy.
10. **Create systems to support and encourage reuse:** Some desired items include a city-hosted webpage for unwanted goods, electronics, and excess food. Others were interested in having a list of local suppliers and local products. And most pointed out the need for education of residents to encourage more reuse, including salvaging reusable items by allowing people to put things on the sidewalk for others to pick up or having a "Dumpster Diving Day".
11. **Increase composting:** Support year-round composting accessibility for businesses and multi-family residences.
12. **Promote local food:** Allow more community gardens and farm stands. This supports local food and could create jobs if the costs and other barriers are minimized.