

SAPCC Land Use Committee meeting – 10-7-2021
7pm, via Zoom

Committee members: Karen Nelson, Roger Purdy, Amanda Longley, Bob Straughn, Ray Bryan
Staff: Abdirahman Ali
Visitors: Laura Shegalu

Initial agenda

DJR Architects – had initially said they'd like to present at the October meeting, but recently responded, won't be coming to this meeting
Court West - 2610 University Dumpster Variance
2495 Kasota Update?
Luther Sem Update - Sherm
Design Standards Update - Roger
Seal and Territorial and paint event update - Ray
Towerside Update - Bob
Greenline Overlay - Nick
Goals Review
News/upcoming - Mayor's Office's - Legislative Priorities & Class N License Update Call for District Councils - Wed Oct 27 2-3 pm

Introductions

-Committee members introduce themselves.
-Visitor, Laura Shegalu - new resident of SAP as of two years ago. She works at an architect and design firm that opened a new office in Minneapolis in 2019. She's just curious about the committee, has no particular business for the committee.

Court West – dumpster variance

-We received the information from the city about the variance, but haven't been contacted by them. They haven't asked for anything from us.
-Their neighbor had asked them to move their dumpster, so they did, but then received notice from the city that it wasn't in an allowed location; hence the variance.
-We don't have a quorum today (Bob and Ray joined later in the meeting), so can't suggest a letter to the council anyway, but we're not completely sure where the dumpster is, there were images but not terribly clear. No particularly strong feelings about it – so we have no comments.

2495 Kasota

-Karen - Haven't heard anything further on this.
-Karen sent an email to Dan to ask for an update, but hasn't heard anything.
-Karen will begin setting up the task force with people who volunteered, and will keep us updated.
-Roger – he had breakfast with Michael Russel this morning; as he understands it the people who wanted to do the original storage idea there, it didn't work out for, so they sold it to the new person.

- Karen – that person, Paul Abdo, presented a rough presentation of what he was intending on doing at the last Land Use meeting, in September. Michael and Betty from the Environment Committee were at the meeting to give input. Paul indicated he would be agree with meeting with a task group and discussing along the way. Karen would be surprised if there weren't issues though; even with a parking lot and storage, when Env. raised issues to the right people at the city, they also had concerns.
- Roger – as background to Laura, others, there was ash dumping, other toxic soil issues there, reaching about 20 feet deep - it'd be problematic to build there.
- Karen – agrees, but who knows, you never know.
- Karen – the premise of the development would be student rental housing, Paul indicated.

Luther Seminary development

Sherm emailed Karen, no update on Luther.

Street Painting project

- This was a project Transportation Committee did last weekend.
- Ray – project between Seal and Carleton, where there's now a new sidewalk - better crossing, safer for residents. We got a new crosswalk painted on Territorial about a week before that, by another artist – that had to be approved by the city roads department and they had very strict rules about it. So they wanted something more neighborly and celebratory for the neighborhood, so they got an artist, engaged the community. Over the course of the day he thinks there were about 30, 35 people who helped.
- Ali – there were mostly people in the area there, but also people from farther away who'd signed up.
- Karen – she wasn't there in the afternoon though was in the morning, but she thinks more kids showed up in the afternoon. Given how much organization needs to go into these things they did a great job; suggests people go by and take a look at it. The Transportation Committee is going great, got an AARP grant, hired an artist, are getting benches, etc. SAPCC made it happen, so we can bask in the glow a bit too.

Towerside

- Roger – grand opening of Malcom Yards Market happened.
- Karen – says it's crowded whenever she goes by there. One of the last hurdles for the aquifer/thermal energy system that they needed to do before the wall companies, was the development next to the food market; it'll be market rate and affordable apartments – they wanted it to be in the district heating/cooling system. They needed the city of Minneapolis to decide, so they could decide their apartments for the right HVA system. It got voted in at the council just a few weeks ago. But now it appears the developer is having some trouble with the cost of the project. And if heating and cooling costs more then it's harder to meet limits to be affordable, might have trouble with regs there. But it's a good project in that area that may move to Westgate, and then to the other side of the 280 eventually – but have to get the first buildings going first.

Overlay district idea

- Karen - heard nothing from Nick; he's trying to coordinate with other councils.

Goals

-Karen – we'll deal with when have more people at a meeting.

Event

-Event with the St. Paul Mayor's office – Karen will send an email on that to committee members.

-The mayor's office's is presenting a webinar on “Legislative Priorities & Class N License Update – Call for District Councils.” Wed Oct 27 2-3 pm.

Design Standards

-Roger – Anton is done with his other work, and ready to meet with us. Roger will send out another copy of the standards and what we want to get out of the meeting, and a Google poll to see when would work to meet for most people in next 2-3 weeks.

-Anton is the planner assigned for our district for the city. In May 2019 we drafted design standards we want to be applied to new developments in our district. What we're looking for is city buy-in to it, and a way to give more teeth to it. So if a developer comes and has a project they want to be approved by the city of St. Paul, here are the twelve issues we'd be looking at, in our consideration of whether the city should support it. Ex: walkability; parking under buildings; connection to district; systems – storm, etc.; to make the parcel open to foot traffic and non-resident public; emphasis on affordability and mixed use; and possibility of eyes on the street and commercial space on the ground floor.

-We've been tossing this around for several years now - the city's now finally willing to consider it, and give us feedback on pitfalls if there are any.

-Mitra will join us, Roger talked with her the other night and she's happy to join us.

-Anton's been working on the 20-40 plans, but those seem to be now moving off of his desk, so he'll be more available.

Towerside, continued

Karen – we discussed district energy for Towerside, asks for an update from Bob, who had stepped away.

-Bob - \$2m grant from city, \$1m from McKnight Foundation; not sure where in the process they are for other grants. There was discussion of the affordable housing component and whether that'd interfere with going ahead.

Westgate Park

-No update that Karen's gotten.

-We did get the good news they did get some kind of grant funding, she thinks either from the DNR or the water people, for the trail side of the project; so that may be something they're trying to package together, not sure. She tried to see if something has been put out to bid, for the city to get bids from contractors, but isn't sure.

-Roger – when he talked to Michael this morning, he seemed to think it was out for bid.

-Karen – so that will be grading plans, etc.; though she imagines it's not something that'll happen this year, so rather they'd plan for spring.

-Roger – park is on Emerald and Sharon.

-Karen – a few blocks south of Westgate Station.

-Bob - Sharon is the Minneapolis name, Myrtle is the St Paul name of the street.

Towerside Innovation District – background, candidates

-Bob – it's centered on the Prospect Park light rail station, but includes SSAP that side of the railroad tracks and west of the 280. There's a lot there - business, apartments, new development. The district looks for ways to create resilience, improve the community.

-A district energy system which uses something other than fossil fuel - in this case underground water – was part of it.

-Parking is another part – they're going to do a study. Two areas - one would be by the stadium, U of M foundation has a project plan, East Gateway project, they'd need additional parking for that. The other one would be near Surly – in Minneapolis mostly but kind of on the border; there's a need for district parking there that'd be shared by some property owners. A brewery, other development will be going on.

-There will be a board election coming up. Bob's seat is expiring and he won't be renewing it.

-Two candidates – Gloria Jeff, with MNDOT, involved in planning for MNDOT rebuild – having her would give them opportunity to work more closely with MNDOT for stuff in the area, good candidate. The other one is Pat Macia, head of U of M Foundation real estate advisors, his focus would be the east gateway project, but would serve the whole area.

-Bob has put in a word that they need someone more from St. Paul. Kathryn Reid Day is on the board but has just one more year before her term expires, though she's a candidate to renew as she left? kept? her position with CEZ.

-It's an important group, gives input to Minneapolis and St. Paul; we (the SAPCC and Land Use) get a lot of good stuff from it, such as the land use guidelines that we and Prospect Park use.

-Karen – suggests one person, John, who just popped in to Transportation Committee, lives in the Westgate area, and involved in national policy and blue-green kind of stuff, she was going to reach out to him, he's seems like more of a staff member rather than high-up in policy, but involved.

-Bob – If you don't want to be on the board, they also have a technical advisory committee - Bob, Roger, Karen are on it too.

-Karen – perhaps we should send an email to the whole committee about that.

-Bob says should also send to Transportation.

E-Line

-Bob – E-line proposal is up again, for community involvement to what they're doing. Hoping the Transportation committee and counsel will get involved. It affects SAPCC, with the last stop – it goes down University, they're proposing all the way to Westgate station – would give access from Westgate, etc. to Dinkytown, etc. The original proposal was to stop at Stadium Village station, but we proposed extending it and gave good points, connect with other routes – so it would be good if we again spoke up in support, so they have that in their files that the community's in support.

-Kathryn – they did talk about it at the Transportation Committee. Westgate seems baked in, a sure part of the plan, other smaller stops are more up in the air. It seems the stop would be in

front of the Wells Fargo branch – which is where people jump over the concrete barrier to go south – you’re not supposed to, but lots do. We had discussion about that at Transportation, tried to suggest they go farther east and to closer to Hodges Bend or so; but she thinks what’s driving it is they have to stop and turn left sooner rather than later, else they’re all the way almost to the 280.

-But please do talk.

-One thing she thinks is that as we get transit hubs is it’s a bit of a land use situation, they do these hubs but then don’t necessarily do stations, etc.

-Bob – instead of turning left on Berry, they could go a bit longer, turn right on Franklin and go to Curfew, would give more access to the LRT station.

-Karen – that would make it longer, but someone should give that comment; but might just be too much to loop around - and even at Hodges Bend, too much to ask to move two lanes over and take a left.

-So we would want to say they should go further east, but that might be too big an ask; also, there could just be improvements at the station area in general, design things to make it better.

-Bob – could reopen Territorial behind KSTP, go around there, have the stop at Berry on the north side of University. He’d very much like to see Territorial opened up again as long as one can bike there.

-Karen – do you think Metro Transit has the power to do something like that?

-Bob – not sure, you’d have to pay KSTP to transfer it; the city/transit vacated it because KSTP wanted to expand a bit, but that never happened.

-Karen – so maybe KSTP would be more willing to vacate it now.

-Check out the E-line comments on the metro transit and make your comments there.

Adjourn about 7:55.