

Minutes (Approved)
Community Development Committee
January 9, 2018

Attending: Ken Webb (Acting Chair), Alexis Troschinetz, Sheldon Mains, Gar Hargens, John Tripp, Peter Fleck, Geoffrey Abbott, Bob Hain, Bruce Martens, Samantha Sencer-Mura, Winston Cavert, Brian Miller (Seward Redesign), Scott Shaffer (Seward Redesign), Doug Wise (SNG Housing Coordinator).

The October 10, 2017 Community Development Committee minutes were approved.

I-94 Reconnecting Neighborhoods Project

Scott Shaffer with Seward Redesign summarized the I-94 Reconnecting Neighborhoods project. In particular, they are looking at improving bicycle and pedestrian crossings across I-94.

Scott said that the Management Committee has decided to focus first on a crosswalk between Seward Tower West and their green space across the street. Scott passed out a drawing showing the proposed crosswalk on the 25th/26th Avenue S-Curve. The proposal would reduce the southbound traffic north of the crosswalk to one lane and slightly widen the median with an at grade crossing to make it handicapped accessible. There would be two southbound lanes south of the crosswalk.

There was discussion about the intersection of 26th and Franklin Avenues. The proposal shows the left lane for left turns only and the right lane for vehicles both going straight and turning right. The right lane would also be used by bicycles and there was concern about safety for bicycle riders. It was suggested that the left lane should be for traffic going straight and left turns. It was also suggested that Seward Tower West may be willing to donate some land at the corner to widen the street to three lanes.

Scott was asked if they have given up on the idea of opening up 25th Avenue to 9th Street and closing the S-curve. Scott said it is still a long-term vision for the area, but would not be feasible until street reconstruction is needed. He said they are focusing on the crosswalk because it is a lot less expensive and can be accomplished much sooner.

Motion: The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) supports the proposed design for a crosswalk on the 25th/26th Avenue S-Curve and recommends the city implement the proposed plan as soon as possible. Sheldon Mains moved and Ken Webb seconded. Motion passed.

Motion: The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) asks Seward Redesign to look into bicycle and car conflicts and safety issues at the intersection of 26th Avenue and Franklin Avenue. Bob Hain moved and Sheldon Mains seconded. Motion passed.

Concerns about obtaining Building Permits in Minneapolis

Gar Hargens said his architectural practice has been located in Seward for 50 years. He gave an example of back in the 1980's when he worked on the Ronald McDonald House and a subsequent addition, both Nonconforming Uses; city staff was very helpful in getting approvals. He said he is now working on a simple house addition and after he had thought that he had

jumped through all of the hoops, the city sent him another packet of papers with additional requirements. He said architects much prefer working in St. Paul and the suburbs, and usually charge higher fees for working in Minneapolis. He said the local AIA Chapter has set up a committee to try and deal with Minneapolis' requirements.

One of the committee members said it is common practice for contractors to increase their bids by 10-15% when the project is in Minneapolis due to the difficulty in working with the city. Brian Miller said that St. Paul is the other extreme and he has seen stuff built over there that should never have been built. Brian said that there needs to be a balance between the two. Gar said he had hoped the City Council Members would be here tonight to hear this. The committee suggested that he meet with the council members and work with the local AIA Chapter.

Discussion about Establishing a SNG Energy Policy for New Construction and Major Rehabilitation Work

Doug Wise said that at the October meeting, when variances were being requested for a new house, Dan Handeen asked the developer if they were including any special energy saving features. The developer indicated they were not. Dan brought this up again at the board meeting and the board asked the CDC to discuss the possible establishment of a policy by SNG.

The committee agreed that establishment of a policy would be good and the neighborhood needs to encourage energy efficient development. There were questions about how it should be used. The neighborhood has no authority to approve projects, but could recommend against projects that require a variance. Sheldon Mains said he used to be on the Planning Commission and said there are neighborhoods that the Planning Commission listens too and neighborhoods they don't. He said Seward is one they listen too, but that could change. Doug Wise said he agreed with Sheldon that if the neighborhood recommended against a project for a reason unrelated to the criteria for approval; that would not be good for the neighborhood.

It was suggested that the policy could be posted on the SNG Website and provided to people considering new construction, rehabilitation or an addition to property in Seward. It was suggested that this could be a project for a student intern.

Ken Webb said that he thought getting an energy audit was a requirement for getting a SNG loan at one time. Others did not recall this, but felt it should be a requirement. Doug said SNG currently covers half the cost of a full energy audit, reducing the cost from \$100 to \$50. Committee members felt that \$50 was not too much to pay considering homeowners receive much more than \$50 worth of energy improvements, which installed free as part of the audit.

Motion: The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG) requires all applicants for SNG home improvement loans to obtain a full Home Energy Audit if one has not been completed within the last five years. Alexis Troschinetz moved and John Tripp seconded. Motion passed.

Report from Brian Miller, Seward Redesign

Brian said that with the change in the City Council, he is more hopeful that they can make some progress on Phase III of Seward Commons this year.

Brian said that there is a proposal for a Somali Mall at 26th Street and Minnehaha Avenue. Brian said that while he is supportive of a Somali Mall, he has concerns about this location because of the heavy vehicle traffic. He said the site is not close to where many of the customers live and would create safety concerns for pedestrian traffic. It was suggested that a better location would be where Cedar Box is located because of its close proximity to the LRT Station.

Brian said their building at 2525 Franklin Avenue is fully leased up. He said they are also planning to make some changes to their property at 22nd Street and Minnehaha Avenue. It would include removal of the split-entry building on the corner. Brian said they have received \$50,000 for the Business Façade Improvement Program.

Report from Doug Wise, SNG Housing Coordinator

Doug said he had heard that SNGs recommendation to switch the stop signs at 29th Avenue and 27th Street is against the city's policy for T-Intersections. *(Following the meeting, we found out the stop signs have been switched.)*

Doug said the city is holding a meeting on the 2040 Plan at Plymouth Church, 1900 Nicollet Avenue South, on January 23rd from 6:00-8:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50.