

Minutes
Community Development Committee
February 12, 2019

Attending: Garrett Peterson (Co-Chair), Sheldon Mains, John Tripp, Geoffrey Abbott, Ayan Isaq, Winston Calvert, Chris McLaughlin, Brian Miller (Seward Redesign), Doug Wise (SNG Housing Coordinator), Sam Graf (SNG Community Organizer), Faisal Aideed (Seward Towers Community Organizer).

The November 13, 2018, Community Development Committee minutes were approved.

Seward Commons and I-94 Reconnecting Neighborhoods

Brian Miller with Seward Redesign provided an update on the I-94 Reconnecting Neighborhoods project. Brian handed out drawings showing possible near-term and long-term improvements to Cedar Avenue between 6th Street and 20th Avenue. Near-term improvements would include restriping from four lanes to three, crosswalk improvements and changes under the I-94 Bridge. The area under the Bridge is not safe for pedestrians. The sidewalks are narrow, it is poorly lighted and there are pillars that could provide a hiding place for someone. Improvements would include widening the sidewalks with construction of a retaining wall, fencing in the pillars and improved lighting. Long-term improvements would include adding trees and green space, replacing the I-94 Bridge and making changes to the I-94 entrance ramp.

Brian also handed out a proposed cross-section drawing for replacement of the 20th Avenue Bridge over I-94. The cross-section shows two drive lanes, a bikeway separated from the drive lanes by a landscaped buffer and sidewalks on the outside. He said replacement of the Bridge is planned for 2020 or later.

In 2019, the city will be constructing a separated bikeway on 20th Avenue. Brian said Seward Redesign is working with the city and County to construct a bikeway connecting the 20th Avenue bikeway with the Hiawatha LRT trail in conjunction with Phase 3 of Seward Commons.

Brian handed out a drawing showing Phase 3 A & B of Seward Commons. Phase 3 A will include 121 market rate apartments located on the southeast corner of 22nd Street and Snelling Avenue. The building will be five stories tall with studio, one and two bedroom apartments. Phase 3 B, located across 22nd Street, will consist of 32 affordable units. Half of the units in Phase 3 B will have three or four bedrooms for larger families. Brian said they are seeking Tax Increment Financing (TIF) from the city for the project. They are also applying to the Metropolitan Council for Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) funding.

Motion: The Seward Neighborhood Group reaffirms its support for Seward Commons Phase 3 A & B, and supports Seward Redesign's application for Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) funding for Phase 3 A & B. Chris McLaughlin moved, Geoffrey Abbott seconded. Motion passed.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Subcommittee

Sheldon Mains distributed the Draft Seward Neighborhood Walking and Biking Safety Plan. Sheldon said the subcommittee received comments online and at the annual meeting. Other items discussed by the subcommittee included previous SNG recommendations, items already being planned by the city or Hennepin County, and discussion items from the I-94 Reconnecting Neighborhoods Study.

Sheldon said the city is currently preparing a Transportation Plan and has committed to “Vision Zero” to eliminate traffic related deaths and serious injuries. It is hoped that our ideas can be incorporated into the Transportation Plan. The next step will be to meet with the design professionals and leaders of the Minneapolis and Hennepin County Public Works departments, MNDOT design people, and our elected officials to refine our ideas.

The draft plan includes four guiding ideas. (1) Reduce speed; (2) make people walking and biking more visible; (3) get drivers to obey Minnesota laws about yielding to people walking and about sharing the road with people on bicycles and (4) improved facilities for people walking and people on bicycles.

The ideas for reducing speed range from joining the lobbying effort to allow Minneapolis to reduce the speed limits on its streets to 25 miles per hour to changing the design of streets to encourage drivers to drive slower.

- Reduce speed limits
- Reduce vehicle lane widths on streets with striping (e.g. 26th Ave)
- Curb bump-outs at intersections, or refuge medians when possible
- Do not paint center line on streets that are primarily residential (e.g. 31st Ave, 25th St, 27th Ave, etc.) (or just don't repaint the center lines)
- Replace traffic signals with 4-way stops at some lower volume intersections (e.g. 25th St and 31st Ave) to deduce the race to get to the green light.

Proposed changes to make people walking and biking more visible include:

- Leading walk signal for all signalized intersections (especially on Franklin)
- Painted crosswalks at all intersections on major streets.
- Improve lighting at intersections
- Curb bump-outs to make crossing pedestrians more visibility on major streets.
- More protected bike facilities on the busiest roads
- “No turn on red” policy at signalized intersections
- Automatic walk signal at signalized intersections (no need to press button to get walk sign)
- Inforce parking restrictions at intersections

The plan proposes a number of ideas to remind drivers of to obey Minnesota laws:

- Add “Turning vehicles yield to pedestrians and bicycles” sign at all signaled intersections
- Center (spring loaded) yield to pedestrians in crosswalks signs
- More education for drivers about what the law is at corners and crosswalks
- Enforce parking restrictions at intersections (no parking 20 feet from inside edge of sidewalk)
- Police enforcement of vehicles failing to yield to pedestrians in all situations
- Better enforcement of clearing sidewalks of snow and ice and programs to help ensure corners are cleared

The plan recommends the following facility Improvements for people walking and biking:

- More bump-outs at dangerous intersections to make people walking and people on the Greenway more visible

- A protected bikeway from the 20th Avenue I-94 bridge to the LRT trail on the east side of Cedar
- A number of improvements to crossings of I-94 also recommended by the Reconnecting Neighborhoods Project.
- Visibility improvements along the Greenway
- Painted crosswalks at all crosswalks of through streets
- A midblock crossing of the 25th/26th Avenue S curve for the Towers and Triangle Park.

The remainder of the plan lists locations throughout the neighborhood that have been identified as having safety problems and suggested ideas for helping remedy the problems. There was a brief discussion about some of these locations, including 26th Street and Hiawatha Avenue where new stop lights are being installed.

The response from the committee to the draft plan was very positive. Sam Graf, SNG's Community Organizer, said that he would put the draft plan on SNG's website. Sheldon said the next step will be to invite representatives from the city and County to a committee meeting to discuss the ideas included in the plan.

Report from Brian Miller, Seward Redesign

Brian said there is a vacant boarded property at 2113 27th Avenue. Brian said he has been trying to reach the owner, without success, to see if he would be willing to sell the property. He said he will continue to follow up on it and asked that anyone with more information about the property contact him.

Report from Doug Wise, SNG Housing Coordinator

Doug said the contract amendment allocating more money to the loan programs has finally been signed and the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) is moving ahead with the processing of applications. He said there are a number of applications waiting in the queue and it will not take long for the funds to be used up again.

Doug announced that he will be retiring at the end of August. He said he turns 70 in July and decided the time is right. Doug said he will be developing strategies over the next several months for the activities he is responsible for. He said some of the changes will affect the committee, such as electing a committee member to take minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27.