

Seward Neighborhood Group: Community Development Committee (CDC)

March 21, 2023 | 7:00 - 8:30pm | via Zoom

Committee members present: Sara Rothholz Weiner (chair), Sheldon Mains, Winston Calvert, Rebecca Blumenshine, Lisa Boehlke (SNG board president), Philipp Muessig (minutes).

Others present: Terry Barnes (SNG Board; 36th A.R.T.), Michael Jon Olson and Jasmine Epps-Flowers (SNG staff), Carissa Hansen (new homeowner in Seward), Abby Romero and Gabriela Ortiz-Riera (Redesign staff), University of MN Carlson Graduate School consultants (Jill Hancock, Elise Erickson, Sarah Khan, Praneeth Punugoti, Matthew Serratore).

POTENTIAL NEW OWNER OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CENTER BUILDING

The Minnesota Fringe arts organization is considering purchase of the Playwrights' Center building at 2301 E. Franklin Ave. and has engaged Carlson students to explore to what extent this would be a good fit in the Seward neighborhood.

The Fringe has under 10 full-time staff, and would use the building for their administrative home for running the annual Fringe Festival (initiated in 1994), and for rental of classroom/performance spaces (the main theater holds 75) to arts/other groups.

Committee members felt it a good sign that Fringe approached the SNG, and were overall quite positive about the benefits of such a new use of the space, seeing no negative impacts, but had concerns about parking and had suggestions for other Seward organizations the students might interview.

Anticipated benefits included added street/night life, a stable organizational owner, a good fit with other Seward arts organizations, opportunity to engage with/benefit from East African neighbors, more Fringe and other theater events in Seward (especially for seniors), and added purchasing by staff and patrons from Franklin Ave. businesses. CDC members imagined "meal and a show" packages and similar '[Boneshaker] book and a show,' 'bakery and a show' packages.

Though Sheldon noted parking seemed to work well with the Playwrights' Center using the Clay Center parking lot, parking concerns (availability, parking during all-night events) led CDC members to suggest Fringe should develop a parking strategy to include way-finding to parking spaces and clear communication around parking/transportation options.

CDC members suggested the Carlson students interview Augsburg (its Bethany Lutheran Church property), CAIR, Seward Towers residents, SCCA, Milwaukee Homeowners' Association, Seward Montessori School, Seward Co-op, Thread Theater, Hook and Ladder, Playwrights' Center, Articulture, Northern Clay.

REDESIGN UPDATE

- * 3 new staff hired (welcome Gabriela).
- * The Somali Museum on Lake St. is a possible tenant of the Bethany Church space.
- * The Coliseum Building (27th & Lake) rehab project will hopefully close on financing this week.
- * Proposed financing in the infrastructure bill before the MN Legislature would fund sprinklers in Seward Towers.

36th ART — SNG Board action requested

Terry's update on the 36th ART Greenway bridge art project included:

- * approvals secured from Hennepin Co. Railroad Authority and CP Railroad
- * approvals needed from the City Arts Commission on tentative Oct. 22 art installation along the two underpass walls
- * further discussion with the City on installation of lights

- * meetings with Hiawatha Academy and artist Peyton Russell (Sprayfinger, Inc.)
- * total of \$31,500 in funding proposals submitted to Lake Street Council and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council under the project name 4 Directions: Bridging Neighborhoods, Connecting Cultures, Illuminating Voices, Engaging Communities
- * initial informational flyering/discussion with residents along 36th Ave.
- * planned application to SNG Small Grants Program

Lisa moved and Sheldon seconded a motion that Terry draft a letter of support for the bridge project that the SNG board would approve and submit to the Minneapolis Arts Commission.

26TH AVENUE WORKING GROUP

No updates this month as the group is on a winter break.

TRUCK PARKING ON ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH SITE

Michael Jon reported that the City issued a citation against the Church, and that the Church is applying for an interim use permit. CDC members observed that the site (south of 26th St., between 30th & 31st Aves.) is being used for snow storage and raised the issue of polluted run-off. Michael Jon will report further details next month

SUMMER IN-PERSON MEETINGS OUTSIDE

Philipp suggested 2-3 in-person CDC meetings/yr., possibly May, June, September, outside. Could be at Beka's house/Redesign office in case of rain; at Normana Triangle. For discussion/decision next meeting.

END OF NOTES