**Seward Neighborhood Group – Community Development Committee**

**April 9, 2024 | 7:00 - 8:30pm (Second Tuesdays)**

**Zoom attendance and in-person at Redesign, Inc.: 2619 East Franklin Avenue**

**Attendees:**

* **CDC members**: Lisa Boehlke (SNG Board member), Rebecca Blumenshine, Winston Cavert, Sheldon Mains, Steve McCauley (SNG Board member), Philipp Muessig (notes), Sara Rothholz Weiner (Chair), Michael Sedki.
* **Other SNG Board members**: Mary Pumphrey.
* **Redesign staff**: Krista Pearson.
* **Representatives from** the Re'ese Adbarat Tserha Aryam Kidist Selassie Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Cathedral (“RATAKSC – Holy Trinity”: Bayou Tekle (Parish Council), Million Dessalegn, Abiy Dejene (architect), Jay Koester (Solution Blue engineering).
* **Representatives from** the Corvidea Club: Jessica & Lucas Chamberlain, Nancy St.Germaine, Justin Wells, Reba Reed.

**Meeting notes:**

1. **MOTION:** *that the SNG board support the* ***Ethiopian church’s request*** *for a parking variance and a decreased Floor Area Ratio (FAR) on their property at 2601 Minnehaha Ave.*
   1. Summer improvements at the site include increasing parking spaces from 78 to 130 (City by-right allowance is 100), addition of a 2-story sanctuary and parsonage (at a lower density/FAR than by City code), underground stormwater storage, and planting of additional trees and shrubs.
   2. A talented development team presented a detailed business plan, which included multiple agreements with neighboring businesses for Sunday parishioner parking.
   3. The church, which stresses community voluntarism, has 1300 members and 600 children in its religious education program.
   4. The CDC (1) encouraged additional shrubs and trees along 26th St. and on the south side of the sanctuary, (2) requested an update on soil remediation being reviewed by the MPCA, and (3) would like an update on the decreased FAR request.
   5. Motion passed unanimously.
2. **MOTION:** *that the SNG board support the* ***Corvidea Club’s request*** *for a theater and strong beer and wine license.*
   1. New owners (majority women) of the old Jack’s Hardware/Seward Co-op building at 2201 plan building reuse as an age-18+ performance (ticketed shows for about 120 people) and arts space: plays, drag shows, poetry, cabaret music. 70% of the cover charge would go to performers. The Club would open with 3 shows/wk. with 7/wk. as a goal. With the burning down of the Hex Bar, the Club owners feel there is a market for their offerings.
   2. Food and marijuana products might eventually be served but initially the Club would encourage patrons to bring food from surrounding Seward businesses.
   3. The performance space may be rented out to others, and for business meetings, and the second-story space would be used as an apartment or short-term rental (e.g., for traveling artists) or an office.
   4. Cumulatively the owners have extensive experience running all aspects of the planned business, and they presented a detailed business plan.
   5. Discussion focused on parking - there are 4 spaces - and noise. Many walkers and bikers are expected, and sound deadening specifics were presented.
   6. Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Update: Rethinking I-94**
   1. Neighbor Eli Harvey would like SNG to support the Our Streets Twin Cities Boulevard proposal for the I-94 redo.
   2. Our Streets has still (after a 2013 request) not met with the ReConnect Rondo effort to build a land bridge (cap) over part of I-94. Therefore CDC members were in agreement that SNG take no position in support of either I-94 proposal. Sheldon will relay this thinking to Eli.
   3. CDC members had strongly divergent thoughts on the boulevard and land bridge proposals.
   4. It appears MnDOT will host some sort of meeting around I-94 this summer.
4. **Update: Seward Bike & Pedestrian Safety Report**
5. Philipp and Sheldon will meet in May to refine a short-version of this longer report. Future steps include soliciting feedback from a neighbor with limited mobility, and via other means such as the Seward newsletter.
6. **MOTION**: *that SNG ask the City to* ***clarify that the Seward neighborhood’s southern boundary*** *is the existing railroad track and that its* ***western boundary*** *is as defined by the City, and that the SNG eventually modify its bylaws to conform to these boundaries.*
   1. The existing southern railroad track trends west from the Mississippi River and then southwesterly from 26th Ave. to where it parallels Hiawatha Ave. at the level of 29th St. The City uses the old railroad track that trended northwest and slices off a number of Seward South industrial businesses into LCC territory. Current SNG bylaws use the Greenway as a boundary that also slices off businesses (2 of them), in this case out of Seward and outside Longfellow.
   2. Seward’s western boundary would be defined as the City defines it: Hiawatha Ave. at the level of 29th St. north-northwest up to Cedar Ave., then northeast up Cedar Ave. to the Hiawatha LRT line, then north-northwest up to I-94. Current SNG bylaws use Hiawatha Ave. up to I-94 as the boundary.
   3. This is a housekeeping matter - supported by LCC, Redesign, SCCA and LBA - to prevent further confusion about when the City should contact SNG about matters related to land parcels in what we consider the Seward neighborhood.
   4. Motion passed unanimously; Philipp will follow-up with the Cityafter board action.
7. **Update: Process for issuing SNG support letters.**
8. Carissa (CDC), Sara, and Andy (SNG board) are working on the process for people to request letters of support from the SNG board and the process for acting on those requests should the timing not fit SNG committee and SNG board review in regularly scheduled meetings.
9. **Update: Redesign**
10. April 27th and May 11th events to present proposed reuse of Bethany church site by the Somali Museum. 8 neighbors met once to criticize the process leading to the Museum selection and the desirability and possibility of saving the sanctuary from demolition.
11. Wadaag Commons will begin construction just before summer.
12. **Update: SNG board**
13. Contract staff person Ella’s contract was not renewed; board discussing how to increase community outreach, assistance, coordination of resident-run activities.
14. May garage sales scheduled, with an SNG sale behind the old Jack’s Hardware, or, as CDC suggested, perhaps a more visible location. Epilepsy Foundation pick-up of residue planned.
15. May 15th SNG annual meeting.
16. **Update: 36th ART**
17. Fundraising (including a $5,000 ask from SNG) ongoing for a mid-September ‘paint’ of the bridge ceiling, pillars, ‘banners’ (facing traffic lanes). City lighting to happen by summer.
18. **CDC meeting calendar**
19. Next meeting Tuesday, May 14th @ Redesign & online
20. As was the case last year, CDC members agreed to skip an August meeting and hold a party instead of a December meeting.

END