**Seward Neighborhood Group – Community Development Committee**

**June 11, 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), Carissa Hansen, Sheldon Mains, Steve McCauley (SNG Board), Philipp Muessig (notes), Sara Rothholz Weiner (Chair), Michael Sedki.
* **Neighbors**: Greg Smalley, Bronwen Tynddol, Leighton Freeze.
* **Representatives from** the Debre Selam Medhanealem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (DSMA) Church: Debalke Gebeyehu, Merha Tibebu, Melaku Weldetsadik (Church Building Committee); Elias Workenh, Zenebech Demissie, Andualem Ennira.
* **Representatives from** the DSMA development team: Ron Spoden, Peter Lacey (ATSR Architects); Andrew Berenberg (VAA Engineering).
* **Representatives from** Arbitrarium Housing Co-op: Gerald Prokop, Steven Splettsteszer.

**Meeting notes:**

1. **MOTION: (1) *that the SNG board support the Debre Selam Medhanealem Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (DSMA Church) to be built at 2629 30th Ave. S and its request for a height variance to accommodate 3 religious domes as presented in drawings; (2) that SNG does not support an exemption from parking lot screening requirements; (3) that the DSMA Church keep in touch quarterly with the SNG (the CDC chair) in the future.***
	1. Established in 1994 and presently sited at 4401 Minnehaha Ave, the church (with 640 members and 250 children under age 18) plans to build this fall (8 month build) a 2-story roughly 20,000 ft.2 church building (seating 550 people) on 2.7 acres of the middle and southern portions of land the church owns between 30th & 31st Avenues and between the Greenway and 26th St. to support religious education, community voluntarism and cultural exchange. No weekday school is anticipated at this point.
	2. After 8 years of fundraising, work will include soil remediation on the entire site, with some stormwater infiltration on the northern portion that will remain in grass until further development. Work with Redesign on affordable housing was suggested.
	3. CDC members and neighbors shared disappointment with previous lack of productive communication with representatives of the church over lengthy illegal truck parking, failure to mow grass on the site, and a slow response (along with the City) in disbanding what had become a hazardous illegal homeless encampment.
	4. Church leaders pledged to become better neighbors, will communicate better with SNG, and will invite the neighborhood to a welcoming event at the church.
	5. CDC members felt strongly that the 65-space parking lot should be screened, and that parking along 27th St. and other neighborhood streets as needed should be sufficient on church service days.
	6. Motion passed unanimously with 1 abstention (M/S: Philipp/Lisa).
2. **MOTION: *that the SNG board support the Arbitrarium Housing Co-operative @ 2200 28th Ave. S in its financial and legal steps to establish long-term non-profit shared affordable housing for low-income creative individuals.***
	1. This 6-bedroom house has been leased by artists and musicians since 2010 and participates in the life of the block, hosting performances/community gatherings, with no complaints from neighbors.
	2. NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation), Shared Capital and others are assisting in the legal, financial and values formalization of this co-operative, which invites neighborhood involvement and accountability.
	3. Purchase of the property is scheduled to close Sept. 30. Residents will become co-op members (who elect a board of directors) via a small initial buy-in, and monthly fees will support maintenance of the household and building.
	4. CDC members felt the co-op is a good fit for Seward and an excellent model for others.
	5. Motion passed unanimously (M/S: Sheldon/Lisa).
3. **Updates / Announcements:**
	1. **Bike/Pedestrian Safety Plan**: No action yet on this review effort.
	2. **SNG letters of support**: Carissa and the board have clarified the process for issuing these.
	3. **I-94:** MnDOT’s ‘Rethinking’ project will host a public meeting on replacement of the bike/ped bridge over 94, which connects Seward with Murphy Square park at Augsburg College, on June 27th, 4:30-6:30, at the Brian Coyle Center.
	4. **Dark bus stop @ 27th Ave. & 25th St.**: Redesign is working with the building owner on the northwest corner to add a light on their building.
	5. **Redesign**: Wadaag Commons @ Cedar & 22nd (39 affordable units, 1/2 of them with 3-4 bedrooms) breaks ground July 1. Coliseum Building @ 27th & Lake opens during Juneteenth.
	6. **SNG**: Garden Tour is on the 20th. Garage Sale Days had 70 sellers.
	7. **Hub of Heaven community garden @ 28th Ave. & 26th St.**: Garden leaders and the SNG board are working with the City as ownership transfers to the City Park Board under a Park program that will assure long-term garden stability.
	8. **Church @ 2601 Minnehaha**: Since SNG board action the church has added 11,200 sq. ft. of landscaping, but the City Planning Commission did not approve the variance request for more parking spaces. Sara & Phil put church leaders in touch with City police/crime prevention and Council Member Wonsley’s staff to address recent crime issues (purse snatching, harassment, car damage, looting).
	9. **Seward Neighbors Forum**: Run by e-Democracy and a physical server, after the server failed with no back-up files, the Forum is defunct.

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