

SAPCC Land Use Committee meeting – May 6, 2021

Committee members present: Karen Nelson, Bob Straughn, Amanda Longley, Roger Purdy, Nick Studenski, Regan Golden-McNerney, Ray Bryan, Sherman Eagles

Staff: Kathryn Murray, Jessica Willman

Guests: Aaron McCauley-Aburto, Colin Oglebay

Agenda overview

Guest – Colin Oglesbay – Principal -D/O Architects

Discussing plans to purchase and redevelop **2442 University Ave** as creative offices and non-profit arts center.

Roger – Unified Design Standards

Misc city notifications (2408 boundaries, 2300 Myrtle boundaries, Gym at Wycliff license

Updates on Kraus US Bank, Exeter/Territorial, Yellow Tree/Paster projects.

Bugle Story response

Administrative citation proposal

Introductions

Jessica Willman – new staff, started Monday, new Community organizer

Colin Oglesbay – he’s owner and principal at D/O Architects, they do mostly multifamily work, but this project is an office

Aaron McCauley-Aburto – architect, with Colin

Committee members introduced themselves

Approval of last month’s minutes

Motion and second, all in favor - passes

D/O Architects

-They’ve been looking for a home, and have been in contact with Exeter, who owns the SOS building; the furniture store there is moving to a new home.

-Architects would plan to move in in few months.

-Andrew and D/O and the director of another business, Film North, are partnering as co-developers – Film North would put in a new film arts center with classrooms, and small independent theatre, several floors, 60 person, private showings. There would be about 60k sqft remaining after Architects take what they need – architects would take the less public-facing parts of the building.

-They’ve started initial planning (plans shown via screen sharing). Film North would be the face of the building. Architects would do community engagement, and were in a building across the street a few years ago so know the neighborhood.

-Architects would probably be on the 3rd floor.

-Andrew and Colin are here to meet people and get to know who they should talk to.

-They’ve been working on plans for about a month; they are just beginning.

-They’d plan to use historic preservation tax credits, restore façade to 1930’s, as it is a beautiful building. Perhaps do green roof work, also possibly otherwise increase community access to the building and grounds.

-D/O Architects are currently comprised of 10 employees but thinking to grow to 20 or so. Arts district is inspiring. Perhaps bring in a public gallery, space could maybe be opened up in nights to people who need it. They are interested in hearing the committee's/council's thoughts.

-Roger asks who'd come during the days?

-Film – 4-12 person classes, diverse group. Staff of 10-11, during the day, not expected to grow much.

-Film presentations about 40-60 people; currently they have gatherings of about 20-30, but they're looking forward to larger space.

-Architects work all over the place so not all in all the time, but usually they are a 9-5 schedule group. Not that many clients come to the office during the day.

-Regan – asks what model they're using?

-Colin – Film North is looking to a film org in Iowa City as an example for the theatre/set-up - they're an older org, have a film center for about 200 people; this would be more intimate.

They've found they've done more stuff virtual during covid than they ever imagined, so they are planning smaller space than the larger buildings they were looking for previous to the pandemic.

-Architects – open floorspace, they're a small group, green roof to get outside.

-Haven't developed program yet, wanted to talk to people in the neighborhood.

-Karen – one thing we've brought up over the years, especially Roger, is wanting to have some type of theatre in the neighborhood, and now we have the Playwright Center (not an official large theatre, but small gatherings for exploratory-experimental type stuff), and now Colin is talking about larger sort of space. Interesting thing about SAP is that it's a fairly large jobs center, prior to pandemic we have a fair amount of people during the day, so good to be expanding to night more.

-Colin – likes performing arts focus of neighborhood.

-Roger – really likes the idea. Likes having some stuff on the ground floor public, hope their firm enjoys the upper floor, likes the possibility of public space in back, and restoring outside. We'll do everything we can to support you.

-Bob – also in favor, positive on building, looks forward to it being restored to former glory.

-Karen – we'll try to get Land Use guidelines to them (Karen hasn't yet), they're still being finalized. Karen mentions CEZ, Colin says they hasn't connected with them yet. Good possibility for them to connect with; also there are other groups in the area, good to see the synergies. Karen appreciates the attempt at the community green space, it's always a big ask when we talk to folks, but public spaces, green spaces, tie people together, connect them. A lot of new developments have private courtyards, cut off space.

-Colin – they believe really strongly that urban environments need public green space, connect people. Says they will keep in contact with the committee.

-They hope to have control in few weeks, close on the building in 2-3 months. Current owner has been very positive; they ran into trouble with the building, they usually did larger spaces, not small, but D/O Architects do small spaces, so glad to work together and match needs.

-Karen – provides more info on the land use guidelines.

-Sherm – suggests they get in touch with CEZ, Angela Casselton is the executive director. CEZ also has a real estate function, so they're helping people find space, if you're looking for someone on for the second floor they may have ideas.

-Karen – Renae Spillum is the chair of CEZ committee, they've been working towards more community ownership and such, Karen thinks they could have cooperation and overlap with

Architects. Sherm will send Colin the people to talk to on the CEZ board/staff, he's also on the CEZ board.

-Colin also asks if anyone else they should get in touch with, want to know the neighborhood?

-Aaron, excited to be in the area, he grew up in the neighborhood, just south of the tracks.

-Various committee members thank them for coming.

Unified Design Guidelines

Roger – what was sent out earlier he thinks is the final draft; there have been some good suggestions made that may change that, but right now it's in the form that we've approved. Also Prospect Park, and Towerside have approved it, though he's not sure about CEZ.

-Sherm thinks CEZ approved it first.

-Roger – so that should be the final draft. Last meeting he said he'd be in contact with Mitra and Anton (planner at St. Paul city). Anton is very busy and can't meet on this for a little while, but when able to he'd love to meet with our group. Matt said the same, Roger didn't hear back from Mitra.

-So right now it's kind of a waiting time, nothing more to do until it gets passed. There are some changes, language that can be tweaked here and there. But what he'd like to do is see it go to the city, be handed out and really sanctioned by the city one way or another; that's what meeting with Anton is about. In the meantime, Anton said he'll make sure anyone who comes from our district with a site plan will get a copy and know that's what we want. He's not sure if there's that much more we can do.

-Sherm – commission approved our 10-yr plan. Next step is for it to go to the city council; then to Met Council, then it gets formally adopted and added to the city plan once that happens – he's not sure how long that takes.

-Karen says it seems to be going quickly compared to the last 10-year plan (which was a long process). but Sherm says it's been a few years. Karen agrees on second thought, it was 2016 or 2017 that the process started.

-Roger – people who were just here are just the sort we want to be encouraging.

-Sherm – that's much the part of having a historic district, with Exeter, without that, it would've been gone, bulldozed to be a new set of flats.

-Regan – don't want to throw cold water on the plan, but he knows some other architecture firms were interested in the building, in leasing part of it or such; if they got it instead of this crew, the only difference is the new group is a more diverse group, really dedicated to public projects in public spaces. However them taking it could be a bit like a rug being pulled out from under someone.

-Karen says there could be displacement concerns too; good to talk to CEZ, make sure know what's going on, because the way it was presented there's just a furniture store there, if that's not the case that's good to consider.

-Regan – really likes Film North, was doing good programming before the pandemic.

-Regan – liked the follow-up Roger did with Mitra, all this development is happening right now, it's urgent. Regan says she didn't realize the scope of what's happening until about 4 months ago when developers came before the committee. If the city wants the kind of neighborhood they are advocating for, the standards need to get in front of there now, or ship will have sailed.

-Roger – he'll stay on them. He hasn't heard anything from Mitra, maybe she's hoping Matt will speak for her.

-Regan – timing of it is so unprecedented, she can't think of a time in the past in her time in the neighborhood where there's so much upheaval and knocking down and rebuilding and changing; if things wait, it'll be too late.

-Karen – agrees, not an uncommon concern here over the years; the city wants development, and we do, and yet we don't want to be too capricious or illegal, as developers need consistency and certainty and not to have things changed suddenly once they've completed plans. Some of the new developments are perhaps not the best for affordability, etc., but we need to get ahead of it, and have both teeth and reasonableness about the market, balance line between encouraging things we want and being so strict that developers walk away.

-Karen mentions task force Roger was going to start.

-Regan asks about overlay district?

-Roger – that's what we need to talk to Anton about; he's hoping that's a meeting that can be had with Anton and Mitra, to see what's possible and how far Mitra would go to support that. It's more advocating, convincing the city that this is a special district in need of some quick and stricter standards.

-Sherm mentions it's not a simple or quick thing; the zoning code is an ordinance, so it'd have to go through the normal city council process of 3 readings with a hearing.

-Karen – but it is a process, other districts exist.

-Regan asks if we can start it then?

- Sherm says that it's a process he thinks Mitra would have to start; though given the stuff at the Green Line, it might be more likely that there's a long district along University Ave, rather than just SAP.

-Karen – asks if there's some way we can start the ball on this.

-Bob – says the way we're going about is the only way, needs to be starting with the council, don't think we can go to the city employees, need to get political pressure first.

-Roger – key people Mitra, Anton, maybe Russ Stark – that crosses all three of those responsibility levels.

-Regan asks if Mitra's still doing open meetings? Karen hasn't seen any recently, Matt tends to be more accessible.

-Karen – we may want to make some proposals – for example, the Green Line idea is intriguing to her, it may get more interest than just our little neighborhood – we're seeing things that will change the neighborhood for 100 years but it's not emergency like the pandemic. But a district for the Green Line overall might be stronger.

-Bob – if reach out to other communities, esp. minority communities, might have more success? SAP is kind of overlooked, it's not where problems are.

-Nick – thinks there would be interest from city and neighborhood in something with teeth, perhaps Midway, Frogtown, others?

-Karen – Summit-University council, she has an old friend she can talk to.

-Nick asks if they have anything like our design guidelines, would that be a foundation for an overlay district?

-Karen – we could talk to Kathryn, she meets with the other exec directors.

-Karen – Karen says she's very pro-supply, it's important for even the high-end stuff to get built, because otherwise they'll rent single-family houses others might prefer/have more need of; but there's an intersection of supply and other long-term issues, and we need to aim for solving many things at once?

-Roger – the issue with Frogtown development, shows that the planning commission will listen to the community - they listened to the Frogtown council, and they were able to stop a project the council/community disagreed with.

-Nick – thinks it's a good point, identify whether our ideas match with theirs. Is it a pro-supply vs anti question, or rather question of whether given requirements get met?

-Karen – don't want all the high-end development in one area. But need affordability throughout. But while it's good to have the supply being built, as it's needed and more developers want to do higher-end, we don't we want it to gentrify and spill over, and can't push too hard and stop development from happening.

-Sherm – concern is that people's ideas for solutions may differ. Problem in Frogtown is that they were worried about displacement, concerned building market-rate housing would cause prices to rise elsewhere and thus displace people, that's what they were worried about.

-Karen – they might want some of what we see, but not others; we have similarities, but whether they're enough to do a joint overlay district is the question.

-Sherm, Regan – difference is we don't have a lot of existing older rental, unlike elsewhere, what's happening is industrial changing to residential, so different situation perhaps.

-Nick – Frogtown was also sort of building residential in a new place. Sherm agrees, concern was effect on other rents.

-Karen – thinks some neighborhoods and developers have tension that developers want to build to meet demand, think young professionals want to live near transit, thus build there. Thus important for places like us and Highland to do our part to build where there is demand. But there's still the tension of the effect of that on existing rents/housing.

-Karen – take-aways – maybe to make a note to follow up with Kathryn about talking with other councils.

-Roger – who's our planning commission person? Used to be John Commers?

-Sherm – planning commission is not specifically neighborhood based, but the commission tries to spread them around.

-Roger - he'll talk to John and see if he knows who to contact, and try to get them a copy of the guidelines.

-Nick – how to reach out with other councils? Karen asks if he's volunteering to email Kathryn? He says he will. Karen will also reach out to people she knows.

-Amanda, Regan mention other city council websites via St. Paul city website – people can go to meetings if want, just as a guest, introduce yourself, and say you're trying to connect with other councils.

*Amanda will make list of to-dos at end of minutes.

Administrative citations

-Amanda presents on it. Currently St. Paul can only resort to criminal citations if developers, residents, etc. violate zoning codes and a variety of other codes. The city is proposing a resolution to support an addition to the city charter that would provide for administrative citations – essentially allowing for fines to be an option, rather than merely criminal citations. A person/entity in violation of a local ordinance would first be informed of the violation and given an opportunity to respond or fix the cause of violation; then if the violation was not fixed, would be issued a citation which notifies them of the proposed fine and gives them avenues to respond.

The person/entity may then pay the fine, admit the violation occurred but request a reduced amount of penalty, or request a hearing before a neutral decision maker.

-Roger, he likes it, there seem to be adequate protections for anyone who was cited;

-Sherm – seems Matt mentioned this when we were talking about the noise issue for Kraus-Anderson, there was no penalty there for them; seems like this would allow for that, makes some sense.

-Karen, in favor.

-Amanda – motion to send a letter in favor. Roger seconds, all in favor – so we'll recommend to the exec committee – it's happening before our next board meeting.

-Amanda will email Kathryn to draft letter to exec committee.

-Sherm mentions it would have to get done quickly – Amanda will email Kathryn tonight.

Misc. updates and city notifications

-Karen mentions various notifications and updates.

-Ray – Exeter property on territorial seems to be going a lot faster than Kraus-Anderson, their building walls are going very quickly.

-Karen says Krause has two levels of underground parking she thinks, perhaps that's why.

-Myrtle – Karen - seemed like people were partly changing the boundaries? Sherm's not sure.

-Sherm – that street was vacated, but property boundary was to edge of street not into it, so what they're doing is extending the property parcel to middle of the street, not sure exactly why, something with exterior changes.

-Karen – so just formalizing the fact that the road is privately held, then. She thinks the public works dept. would have protested if it was a public road.

Luther Seminary

-Sherm – after Master Properties' plan didn't go through, they really lost when United decided they didn't want to build an assisted living facility. Master has been looking for another partner, but no success yet, and Luther hasn't found another group that wants to take control of the entire site – perhaps partly because of the difficulty of a site in two cities. Luther is in discussions with a 'group that does land development', though it doesn't sound like they would be buying the property. Sherm isn't sure how that would work exactly, he's guessing that the Seminary is having them do the work of finding developers, and then the Seminary will sell off the pieces individually. But hope is that the new group would deal with various issues rather than each individual new purchaser of a piece.

-Karen – sounds like something she's familiar with from her work, like a national chain store - they have another group do all the land moving, etc., get it ready for having a building, and then the eventual owner buys it.

-Sherm – but who pays for the land development then?

-Karen – she doesn't quite understand the financial parts of it, but thinks they have an understanding with the eventual owner, that the group does all the work and then eventual owner will buy it.

-Bob – it used to be common that a group would plat the land and such and then sell it to individuals to build houses on it, the group takes some risk. The land developer takes title, or perhaps arranges with the current owner; borrows money, and then pays it back when sells the plots. The difference with Master Properties' plan (Sherm asks) is that Master knew all the parts before they finalized it, weren't taking a risk in the same way.

- Sherm – he'd be only in favor of this if we could get some sort of agreement on affordable housing first.
- Roger – beauty of Master's was you could talk with one person, he'd be in favor of just one developer with a master plan. Why not that?
- Amanda, Karen – easier/faster to do it in pieces, they haven't been finding one to do all of it. If were to insist on one, it might take say five years or more.
- Sherm – we don't have control over what Luther does, just can try to engage with whoever buys and try to encourage them to follow the design guidelines. The Seminary did say they'd let us know.
- Roger - lots of issues to consider with the area - woods, traffic, affordability, etc.
- Sherm – woods perhaps less an issue, after Lauderdale did a conservation easement?
- Karen – not sure what it all will look like – on a flat area, easy enough to plat it and then build; but this isn't that, and Masters' was looking for a lot of TIF money, and large things seem not to happen without it. Also it's just a difficult site, as the plan they had was varied with different heights – she's not sure how you separate the land from the structures themselves, not a site that lends itself to compartmentalize the infrastructure and building.
- Regan – also says hard to compartmentalize, due to water retention, grade of site, etc.. She feels strongly that the lower part of the woods, even though it's in St. Paul rather than Lauderdale, retaining that in full or part; without it, the woods makes it feel more like a fragment, with the lower part it's a full woods, part of the community – Masters' plan was good at that, and you need that additional green space to make it a fully-realized green space for the community. If we give it up, we lose opportunity to make a sort of focal point out of Breck Woods
- Sherm – almost all the woods is in Lauderdale, Hoyt is the dividing line, almost all of it is north of that and in Lauderdale.
- Regan – she's thinking of little retaining pond, just by Lutheran Social Services, with little cattails, etc. – for her neighborhood, that's where they enter the woods.
- Sherm says the path there is clearly in Lauderdale, but he agrees that there's probably a part of the woods there, that's by Stub hall, that's in St. Paul.
- Roger – asks Sherm if there's any future in reaching out to Michal Morrow? Knows Sherm is staying in touch with Tanya; to say we're here, interested in reaching out with whoever they talk with.
- Sherm – thinks he's aware we want to keep informed; is it worth saying we're concerned? Sherm isn't sure we know enough.
- Roger says we have a few concerns we could talk about already; there was one entity with Masters' that we could talk about with our concerns, you had one party that would do all that thinking.
- Roger, Karen, Sherm – it'll probably all be housing, to support the price Seminary is asking for.
- Regan – we're trying to be proactive, that sounds like a thing to do, say we're still interested in engaging, here are the strengths we thought Masters' had, would hope to have also with new ones.
- Karen asks, Sherm mentions task force has been on hold, as without Masters there's been no one to talk to; if they go this direction and have a land developer, that's who we (the task force) would want to talk to first. It may be that because Seminary has been talking with developers, it may be they already have parties interested, who just don't want to take on the whole site – so what they're trying to do now is help with that without parties having to take on the whole deal.

Sherm isn't sure though, because this all isn't zoned for any of this stuff, seems a bit unlikely for someone to buy it without having people lined up to build.

-Regan – asks if there are a lot of developers like Master Properties that Seminary is reaching out too, or are they few and far between?

-Sherm – when Seminary made agreement with Masters, there were maybe 15 parties interested, the task force talked to 6 or 7.

-Regan – so it could go quickly if they got the right match.

-Sherm – if they got people from that first round who wanted to do part of it, if just someone else did the infrastructure – there was more than one co-op proposal for example, more than one affordable housing developer/group. PPL was in one other group, Common Bond was in Masters' group.

-Roger – beauty of Masters was that they were very sensitive. You could get a Ryan Companies or Opus who would have the money, but he doesn't think they'd have the sensitivity for neighborhood concerns, it'd be about how many units they could squeeze onto the site.

-Karen – one of the reasons Luther preferred Master's.

-Sherm – reason they got chosen was United was part of the effort, he thinks, if they were in on it there was enough money behind it, that was a big piece of it he thinks. But Master wanted to do the overall site proposal and was willing to put money into it, though it was perhaps not their typical project. Masters is not very big, we talked to all or nearly all the people every time we met.

-Regan – it's good to know what we thought worked and what was successful previously, in going forward; keep up with Tanya, pursue those connections.

-Sherm – also try to talk to Deanna Seppan; she's the one who said it's usually the 2nd or 3rd developer that has success, she might have a better idea of what does on with this kind of development group.

-Sherm will talk to some of the folks on the task group, try to reiterate what we liked and would like to see staying in all the overall development; that could be sent to both Mike (?minute-taker didn't quite catch the name) and Tanya.

-Karen – always feels something in writing is impactful – so a discussion, but if you can forward as a letter, that'd be good.

*Nick's to-do about neighborhood councils. Sherm as above. Roger follow up on design guidelines. Amanda to email Karen about admin citations. All of us try to make contact with other Green Line councils.

Energy

Bob – hasn't heard about the environmental/energy thing any more, concerned it might not happen if Minneapolis can't get their act together

Westgate Park

Karen – Westgate park, she reached out to Parks, knows Environment Committee has also given some additional advice to them. She knows they were trying to get stuff ready before season started but that's passed. She'll reach out again, as a to-do.

Bugle Article

Bugle story – Karen – if everyone saw it, it's out. Roger emailed Kathryn, and Karen feels Kathryn did a good job including the stuff we mentioned. Karen would like to see more mention of who helped with it all, but very good to have Bugle readers more familiar with the council. Amanda – we could reach out to the Bugle more – District 10 seems to do well with that. Just say a few sentences about what's going on with us, either a 'this is what's coming up' or 'this is what we did this month'.

-Regan volunteers.

-Karen says transportation has events, lots going on, also.

-New staff, Jessica, says she's preparing submission for the Bugle right now, so let her and Kathryn know anything we want to include, now or in the future.

-Roger – Karen will send design guidelines to the D/O Architects, also, as a to-do.

Adjourned

To-do/takeaways

- Karen:
 - Send D/O Architects the Unified Design Standards.
 - Reach out to people on other district councils she knows to see their interest in the idea of a Green Line-area overlay district.
 - Reach out to Parks people about progress on the future Westgate Park.
- Nick:
 - Follow up with Kathryn about contacting other councils on the Green Line about their potential interest in a Green Line-area overlay district.
- Sherm:
 - Send Colin from D/O Architects contact info for the people he should talk to on the CEZ board or CEZ staff, for information on potential tenants for 2nd floor or general contact about business activity in the area.
 - Check whether there are other existing businesses in the building or otherwise connected to it, besides the furniture store? (Who would do this was not decided.)
 - Talk with Luther Seminar task group about what we felt worked and what didn't and reiterate interests. Possibly provide that in writing to Mike? (minute-taker didn't quite catch the name) and Tanya with Luther Seminary. Keep in contact with Luther Seminary contacts.
- Roger:
 - Talk to John on the St. Paul planning commission to see if he knows who to contact about an overlay district. Provide that person with the Unified Design Standards for their or the planning commission's reference.
 - Continue to follow up about Unified Design Standards with Prospect Park, Towerside, CEZ.
- Amanda:
 - Email Kathryn tonight (5/6) to request that the Exec committee send a letter to the city/relevant people in favor of a resolution supporting Administrative Citations.
 - Email meeting minutes to committee members and Kathryn. Include list of to-do's at bottom of meeting minutes.
- Regan:

- Draft addition on Land Use news to provide to the Bugle and email to Kathryn and/or Jessica.
- All committee members, as available:
 - Check the St. Paul city website and other district councils' websites for land use committee or equivalent meeting times for districts along the Green Line. Go to meetings if you want, just as a guest, introduce yourself, and say you're trying to connect with other councils. Get to know and make connections with other councils. Determine potential interest or relevancy to them of a Green Line-area overlay district.