

**Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League**  
**Land Use Committee Virtual Meeting**  
**Meeting Notes for December 17, 2020**

Committee members present were David Schoellhamer, Miriam Erb, Vikki DeGaa, Rocky Johnson, Francisco Salgado, Karen Kelly, Bob Burkholder and Shari Gilevich.

David Schoellhamer called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He introduced the process for Neighborhood Contact meeting, and reviewed etiquette for the Zoom forum and meeting participation. He said that the "Chat" window in Zoom will be saved and a summary included with the meeting notes.

Forty persons attended, including the Land Use Committee members and the project spokesperson.

**Neighborhood Contact Meeting for proposed development at 1666 SE Lambert Street**

The 33,720 square foot site is zoned RM2d (Residential Multi-Dwelling). Mr. Schoellhamer reviewed basic development standards of the zone and overlay: maximum building height is 45 ft. (maximum of 35 ft. along SE 17th due to single family zone on east side of SE 17th); minimum front setback is 10 ft.; minimum side and rear setbacks are 5 ft.; maximum building coverage is 70% of lot; minimum landscaped area is 20% of lot; and, common and outdoor areas are required. Because the project will include affordable units, the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) was increased from 1.5:1 to 2.25:1, meaning the maximum building floor area is 75,870 sq. ft.

He noted that the signs posted at the project site show "Step 2" and "Step 3" with a public hearing, but these steps do not apply to this project. A public hearing is not required because the design will meet the Community Design Standards (CDS) per Zoning Code Chapter 33.218.

Sean O'Neill with Scotia Western States Housing, LLC presented the development proposal. The project has three buildings that have approximately 71,000 square feet of building floor area. The 85 units in the complex include 16 studios, 43 one-bedroom and 26 two-bedroom units. Building 1 (44 units) and Building 2 (36 units) will be 45 feet in height. The 3-story building facing SE 17th will be 35 feet high and have 5 units, office space and an exercise room. Seven units (8% of total number of units) will be "affordable" and the remainder of the units will be priced at market rate.

A total of 46 on-site parking spaces are planned; access to the majority of spaces in the parking garage is from SE Lambert Street. Three surface parking spaces at the east end of Building 2 have access from SE 17th Avenue.

Mr. O'Neill showed floors plans and renderings of the buildings' exteriors. The design has wood tone exterior, with sections of Hardie Board siding and brick. *(See site plan and floor plans here: <http://www.sellwood.org/projects-currently-under-development/> )*

**General comments:**

While a couple of attendees thought the design fit in with the neighborhood and overall liked it, many expressed anger and opposition to the proposal (detailed later). There was a question about window trim that lined up between floor in some instances, but did not line up in others. Mr. O'Neill said that he had just received the renderings today so would need time to review that

element of the design, He said that they expect still to tweak design as questions and concerns were brought up.

An attendee voiced concerns that he said represented the opinions of others in the neighborhood. He stated that a building of this magnitude is unprecedented in the neighborhood and should require a land use hearing. He wants the City to deny the application and require a land use hearing.

He enumerated several issues: the number of units (twice as many under the previous zoning); if the right-of-way of SE Bidwell between SE 17th and SE Milwaukie is actually vacated; if the long block length from SE Lambert south to SE Lexington should have a mid-block connection; that the insufficient design fails to meet CDS goals (the goals are that new development enhances the character and livability of the neighborhood, ensures that increased density makes a positive contribution to the area's character, and enhances the character and environment for pedestrians); if simply using CDS is allowed if the project also gets the bonus FAR; and, if the appropriate zoning for this parcel, which is not on frequent transit line, should be RM1d (not RM2d), like the area at SE 14th and SE Bybee.

Mr. Schoellhamer recalled that an earlier project had experienced an issue with the block length standards. The city had overlooked the standard in its initial review and then required a mid-block connection during permit review.

Mr. O'Neill answered other design questions: most of the units have balconies; secure bike parking will be provided; the developer considered the great supply of small units in the neighborhood and increased the number of two-bedroom units; the required "break" in the façade is shown in the large building facing SE Lambert; most of the trees on the site will be preserved or new ones planted for those removed. Some commented that the structure is monolithic and needs to be broken up more to create more visual interest.

Mr. O'Neill continued that it is still to be determined how on-site parking will be managed. A separate fee for the space may be charged or a cost may be added to the rent of larger units as those residents are more likely to have autos.

In reference to the SMILE Main Street Design Guidelines, adopted by the SMILE Board in May, Mr. O'Neill said that the architect had looked at them. The Land Use committee would like to know if and how the guidelines were referenced.

Mr. O'Neill said that the affordable units will be priced for an income of 60% of Median Family Income. Several people thought that 60% level is still expensive and doesn't meet the needs of low-income residents. It was suggested that the affordable units be priced at the 40% Median Family Income level, or that at least have one or two units be at the 40% level. Making this change would be a great public service and help marketability and attractiveness of this development for our community. Mr. O'Neill said it's something they could look at.

**Role of the SMILE to this development:** Mr. Schoellhamer said that SMILE's only role is to host the neighborhood contact meeting, while all regulatory functions are at city hall and with the Bureau of Development Services (BDS) that enforces the zoning code.

**Rendering of building on SE 17th:** A resident who lives across from the project site on SE 17th asked for a rendering of the building facing SE 17th. There's concern about the lack of privacy with

balconies (two on the 2nd floor and two on the 3rd floor) facing SE 17th and that the structure will block the sky. Mr. O'Neill said that they could get that rendering soon for the neighborhood.

**Traffic mitigation and concern about on-street parking clogging the streets.** Mr. O'Neill said that residents in studio apartments often do not own cars, so they calculated parking needs based on the one- and two-bedroom units, and feel that the number of on-site spaces will meet the needs. He noted that there was not a requirement to provide any on-site parking. They do not have any parking strategies for their tenants who might choose to park on surface streets.

Issues brought up were whether long-term parking is allowed on city streets and whether residents would need a permit to park on the street. People can't afford to pay for a parking space in addition to the high rent, so they will choose to park on the street. This development comes as the neighborhood has seen dramatic increases in traffic on SE 17th and increasing number of cars parked on the street which add to the traffic problems.

Mr. O'Neill described the parking issue from two perspectives: one side is to have no on-site parking to encourage residents to use transit or bicycle, while the other side is to require on-site parking. Their goal is to create a desirable place to live and believe they achieve this by providing on-site parking. The development has not yet been through traffic review with Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and they will evaluate various stages of traffic impacts during that review.

**Project liaison:** Several residents suggested that a neighborhood liaison be found to provide a link between the developer/contractor and neighbors to ensure good communication through the demolition and construction process. Mr. O'Neill agreed that it would be great to have a neighborhood person in that role. Vikki DeGaa was the neighborhood liaison for the Meeting House apartments and is willing to help someone figure out what they would do in that role.

**Rents:** Ultimately, rental costs will be determined by the market, but the developer is generally estimating costs of \$1,300 to \$1,600 for a one-bedroom unit, and \$2,100 to \$2,500 for a two-bedroom unit.

**Timing and Street Closures:** Mr. O'Neill said they hope to submit building permits in February. It will take 18 to 24 months to develop. They don't know when street closures might occur. Typically that's handled through the building permit process and there is no public review.

**Issues:** Several attendees expressed anger at the project, with issues about the huge building that does not fit in with the neighborhood, the lack of community input, the belief that the developer does not listen to the neighbors' concerns, and that most people cannot afford the high rents, so actually fewer people can live in the city. The sentiments were that the developer is just making money and has no consideration for the impact on the neighborhood and residents. Mr. O'Neill said that they do listen to community concerns and at the same time, work with what is allowed in the code. He thought development in general is a driver in the economy, provides jobs and brings nicer, newer buildings to the neighborhood.

Mr. Schoellhamer said that for the past five years, the Land Use committee has submitted testimony to the City to limit code changes that allow this type of development. However, the City's goal remains for higher density with more affordable units.

Concerns were raised about the project location itself, that this level of development should be at major crossroads, not dropped in the middle of the single family homes. The lack of parking for delivery trucks is an issue because even more limited on-street parking spaces will cause the trucks to double park. Balconies are an issue as they become simple a place to store junk.

**Follow up meeting:** Several attendees wanted to know how the developer is held accountable for responding to the issues. A follow-up meeting was requested and Mr. O'Neill agreed that they would do that. It also was requested that the developer provide an example of how their designs previously have responded to residents' concerns. Mr. O'Neill suggested reaching out to the Homestead Neighborhood where the developer incorporated more parking spaces in a project in response to residents' concerns. Mr. O'Neill also said that he would follow up with a timeline to show how comments from neighborhood meetings were then incorporated into design changes.

Mr. Schoellhamer said that it would be best for impacted neighbors to have the follow up meeting as he as the Land Use Committee chair would essentially be just a middle-man in the process. The attendees generally thought that two or three neighbors close to the project should participate.

One of the property owners, Nickolas Diamond, said that he and family members are real estate brokers who have been in Portland a long time. They want to hold this property long term, and welcome feedback that can be incorporated in line with the zoning code allowances. He said that they are not pushing the limits with the proposal.

**Building Height:** Questions were raised about how the 45-foot height limit is applied with four stories. Mr. O'Neill said that the floors have 9-foot ceilings, with 12 to 15 inches between floors and an additional 12 inches at the top.

The rendering of the façade facing SE Lambert appears to show five stories at the parking garage entrance. Mr. Schoellhamer requested to get the building height for this façade. He said that current code allows building height to be measured from the highest point on the parcel, which in this case is the corner of SE Lambert and SE Milwaukie. So, as the land slopes down to the east, Building 2 mid-block has five stories, not four.

Mr. Schoellhamer said he looks forward to having the full design plans so the committee could better discuss design elements. He noted that the committee has had over 20 neighborhood contact meetings in the past five years, and the experience is that the developer is most likely not going to develop less than allowed in the code, such as building only three stories where four stories are allowed. It is a benefit that the development would have more on-site parking than required by the code.

He has an email list of those who contacted him and will let them know about a follow up meeting. He suggested that attendees sign up for the Land Use Committee email list and encouraged neighbors to keep getting organized and stay with it.

*(Sign up at <http://www.sellwood.org/subscribe/> and select the Land Use Committee.)*

Meeting adjourned at 7:30PM.

**SMILE Land Use Committee Virtual Meeting -- December 17, 2020**  
***Summary of Chat comments***

**Requests:** Send out link of the slides or other media to attendees or how to view copies of meeting documents. Please post contact information for Sean O'Neill. Would like another meeting with developer. Need the rendering of the building that will face SE 17th and an example of a project that the developer has modified based on citizen comments.

Several people want to be "RSVP'd" for every Land Use Committee meeting from now on and any meetings or communications about this project. *Please sign up for Land Use committee communications at <http://www.sellwood.org/subscribe/> and select the Land Use Committee.*

**Zoom issues:** Unclear who was moderating the meeting. Meeting was difficult to access. Meetings should be promoted more. Someone separate from the committee chair should monitor the Zoom waiting room and Facebook.

**SMILE and Land Use Committee :** What is role of SMILE in this development?

**Issues:** Too short of time to view renderings and information to effectively comment on design. Vik presented several issues during the meeting and nine persons noted agreement with his comments and idea to petition the city. He is willing to organize a group and people can contact him at [vik.anantha@gmail.com](mailto:vik.anantha@gmail.com). The perception is that the project is driven by developers who want to make as much money as possible, and that this meeting is only a token effort and the project is a done deal. Units are unaffordable to a large part of population and do nothing to solve homeless issues. There is concern that there is no obligation to answer neighborhood questions. Neighbors want more process and public input.

**Parking:** Not enough on-site spaces. A separate fee for parking space is a burden to residents, so they will choose to park on the street -- negative impact on businesses and homes. Car ownership has increased over the years which contributes to the problems. The City wants residents to bicycle and use transit instead of owning cars, but the city needs to manage development better and more equitably. Bicycle riding is more dangerous due to all the cars parked on the street.

**Design & Development questions:** Is a traffic study required? How is parking managed and what is the fee? How many units have balconies? Is the common area open to the public? Is there a place for kids to play, to foster living, vibrant community? What is the project timeline? Why is the garage entry on Lambert? Some want to discuss how to improve the external appearance; they're not a fan of the depressing, green color. The façade facing SE Lambert is monolithic and should be broken up. Some pointed out that this meeting is to address design concerns only.

**Opinions:** Looks great. Liked the large signs posted on the site about the proposal. More housing allows more people to live in the city. Most were very opposed to the project size and design.

**Neighborhood liaison:** Several people thought that having a neighborhood liaison is vital and they need to know the process to set that up and who chooses the liaison.