

Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League
Land Use Committee Virtual Meeting
Meeting Notes for Jan. 6, 2021

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.

Fourteen persons attended, including the Land Use Committee (LUC) members.

1666 SE Lambert Street: Discuss land use process and follow-up to Dec. 17th neighborhood contact meeting

The LUC drafted a letter to comment on the redevelopment of 1666 SE Lambert. David Schoellhamer emailed letter to Save Sellwood, savesellwood@googlegroups.com, earlier today.

Several residents said they intend to reach out to City Council and the property owners to discuss the broader perspective of the neighborhood. They feel that the proposed building does not blend in with the neighborhood. The discussion covered needing better design for the building and that the community should "shoot for the stars" and look forward to the building being a landmark for the community. Several attendees said that we should make big asks of the developer and City, not to circumvent the code or process, but to get more awareness and support. It was recommended that the letter from the LUC be more assertive and be more appealing to the developer.

David agreed that the letter needs to be impactful to the developer. He would like to send the letter tomorrow as the developer is not so far along in the plans and may have time to make changes. He also noted that the last item on the agenda concerns the Design Overlay Amendments, DOZA, a major overhaul of the city code regarding design guidelines and standards; input to that plan is the big opportunity to improve development in the neighborhood.

Questions were raised about the design review process. David explained that the developer has a choice to meet the community design standards and avoid the design review process, or to try other design features and go through design review. He said that in the last five years, only a handful of projects have taken the design review path.

There was a question about the RM2 zoning which is supposed to be in corridors. It was felt that the project would push the boundary of the design to the maximum and not really meet the intent of transitional zoning. It was thought that the 4-story building height does not belong on SE Lambert Street and that the form, shape and garage entrance on SE Lambert (not a corridor street) should be questioned. It was suggested that the City reviewers should visit the site to get the neighborhood perspective.

David said that the Corridors have been designated for many years, probably decades. Sellwood-Moreland has more Corridor than any other southeast neighborhood and it has been pointed out to the City Council how much that designation impacts the neighborhood. He said that the City

would say that the R2.5 zone itself is a transitional zone. The reason the project has a 3-story building on SE 17th is the requirement that the building height not go above the height limit in the R2.5 zone within 15 feet of the street.

David summarized the design ideas in the letter to the developer. Additional comments: the landscape plan and elevation plan were needed so the community can better comment on the project; need to schedule a follow-up meeting with the developer; a traffic study (including crosswalk design) was suggested; and, request that the developer address tree preservation and affordability issues, and also that he compare the buildings' design to the design guidelines summarized on the last page.

Other comments from attendees were that effort is needed to make this big structure look less blocky, such as with step backs on top floors, interesting facades, and more greenery. Sellwood Library is an example of a great design, and an architect should want their new building to be the new benchmark of great design. The proposed building is monolithic, flat and ugly; extra height (5 stories at the garage entrance on SE Lambert) is an issue; community needs to know the actual height. Concerns were that the building is being made as cheaply as possible and that it's not built to last. David said that the LUC has asked for design treatment above the garage to break up the flat façade.

Comments on the letter being sent to the developer: It needs to be more direct and not passive. Recommended that we start with 3 major asks and follow that with the other comments. Ideas for these priorities were about materials; redesign of buildings (such as step backs on top floors and greenery) to moderate the building mass; use of a better type of window (not vinyl); and advocate for recessed windows.

David repeated that the letter needs to get to the developer soon so the developer can prepare revisions to present at the LUC meeting on February 3rd. He would like the developer to have the landscape plan available for that meeting and show what will happen to the existing large trees on the site. David will send the letter to the Save Sellwood group and to the developer by the end of the week.

Neighborhood contact rules

Concerns about the on-site sign required for projects were discussed. Currently the City has only one template that includes two steps that do not necessarily apply to every project. (For example, when a project meets the Community Design Standards, it does not have to go through a Land Use Review hearing.) The sign does state that the steps apply only to some projects, but that only adds to the confusion.

The second issue is that the City no longer distributes the meeting ground rules. David suggested sending a letter to the Bureau of Development Services, BDS, requesting that the City provide two templates for the on-site sign and that they return to sending out the meeting ground rules with correspondence.

Attendees discussed how they learned about the neighborhood contact meeting. Several people said the on-site sign was very helpful. One resident had created a flyer and distributed that to neighbors to advise them of the meeting.

Bob Burkholder, liaison from the SMILE Board on the Land Use Committee, said that the Board would not need to weigh in on this.

DOZA: Our response and advocacy plan. DOZA has been in the works for three years and before the Planning Commission for 1 1/2 years. The LUC commented on the plan throughout the process, focused on Community Design Standards because they are used so often for projects in the neighborhood. The Planning Commission did not adopt our previous testimony. The DOZA recommendations now go to City Council, but not before March 2021.

We didn't get a lot of feedback from Planning Commission except that the "bottom-middle-top" design was viewed as an European concept and they don't want to bias the standards with European concepts.

To respond to this dismissal of our guidelines, the idea was to research non-western architecture and compare those building design elements with what we have in the Main Street design guidelines. A source on non-western architecture was found from a University of Idaho class: <https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/syllabus.htm>. The materials show that many design features in the Main Street guidelines are common in a variety of non-western structures. He asked the LUC members to divide up the list and identify features that appear similar or consistent with the features that we have advocated and supported. This information would be compiled as an appendix to the testimony that we submit to show the breadth of cultures with these architectural features and that, in fact, these design elements are multicultural.

It was recommended that we further prioritize our input the DOZA process. Focus on one, two or three key items so that they're not lost in the detail, and be assertive in advocating for them. It would also be effective to meet with City Council members.

David said that he did not think of a priority as a specific feature, such as bottom-middle-top, but rather to prioritize that we want the Main Street Design Guidelines to be part of DOZA and that, where the city has already designated a Main Street overlay, we want projects to be required to use the main street guidelines. It was noted that the Main Street design guidelines still must be part of the City's process or they won't be used.

David will send the University of Idaho link to LUC members and requested that members divide up the material and annotate features of the non-western structures that are consistent with design elements from our guidelines. The LUC will review and discuss at a future meeting to prepare comments on DOZA.

Because the City Council will have the DOZA hearing soon, David said that we need someone to step forward and coordinate meetings with commissioners, get people to write many letters on this issue to Council, and, when there's a hearing, get a dozen or more people to attend. Vikki said she would contact Drew who has been interested in this effort.

Concerns were voiced about the overall view of the City. The neighborhood has been working on ways to support buildings that will last and buildings that we love, like the library. But, it seems that the city is saying that people from other countries, people of color or people who don't have a place to live right now don't care if a building is beautiful or not. We also want to help developers

find a less expensive way to bring more interest to their buildings so that the neighbors aren't really upset about the building.

The hope is that with our examples of non-western architecture that have similar design elements, we can tell city commissioners that our recommendations are multicultural.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

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Summary of Chat comments

Requested email address and mailing address of developer.

Confirmed that future meetings with developer are voluntary on developer's part.

Suggestions for letter that will be sent by LUC: pick top issues; request that developer / council look at input from all parties.

Issues: break up façade at entrance to parking (on Lambert); concern with Lambert Street design -- needs to be broken up into more appropriately scaled sections. Need landscaping plan to soften size and scale of building.

Attendees found out about this meeting from the sign posted on site as well as by word of mouth and a flyer distributed by a neighbor, and from SMILE's email.

Revised letter was sent during the meeting to savesellwood@googlegroups.com

Course at the University of Idaho about non-western architecture:
(<https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/arch499/nonwest/syllabus.htm>)

People want to be sure we coordinate with the SMILE Board (Bob Burkholder is the Board liaison on the Land Use Committee) and become acquainted with city staff. It was noted that we work closely with SE Uplift Neighborhood coalition.