

12th Avenue Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2009
5:30pm-7:00pm
Seattle University (SU) Admissions & Alumni Building
824 12th Avenue

Introduction – Bill Zosel passed around the agenda and introduced the purpose of the group, to steward the 12th Avenue neighborhood plan within the urban village. He announced that the group would now meet every second Tuesday of the month in this new SU space. He thanked SU for the room and Capitol Hill Housing (CHH) 12th Avenue Initiative for the food.

James Court Gathering Place Park (Suzanne Friedman, Parks Department)
Suzanne opened the presentation by thanking the group for having her and the Parks Committee for sending a list of questions for her to address in the meeting (letter attached). She laid out the following timeline for the pocket park project located at 12th and E James Court:

3rd & 4th Quarters 2009 – Public meetings with neighborhood to refine design
1st & 2nd Quarters 2010 – Design completion and construction start (to be coordinated with the start of construction for the SU/Seneca Group project just to the north of the park.)

Some other facts about the park:

- “Purchased” from Seattle Department of Neighborhoods in 2007
- January 2009 – City Council allocated money for development
- Total Development Cost – \$489,893
- Designer has been chosen – Hewitt Architects, same designer of the SU/Seneca Group project
- The 12th Avenue urban village neighborhood has also recently been prioritized for another park to be identified in the near future.

Question: Will E James be closed to traffic in current design schemes?

Answer: No, even if a “woonerf” concept is built, it would just make the street more pedestrian-friendly, not close it altogether to traffic.

Question: When will construction start exactly? Sometime in 2010?

Answer: Yes, likely 2nd Quarter 2010, depending on how long design takes.

Question: Where will the other new park be located?

Answer: Parks is looking neighborhood-wide for acquisition and wants to work with this group on identifying spots for a new park. The upcoming “parks opportunity fund” is another way to get more open space prioritized for this community. You would have to nominate a project by February 2010.

Question: Can you explain more about what the public outreach process on this park will entail?

Answer: Parks would like to conduct wider outreach (electronic notices, mailings, flyers with translation) but would also like to work through this 12th Avenue group since you are especially interested in the park. Likely there will be two large public meetings to refine the design, using the Hewitt schemes previously produced as a base. There will be an “internal review” stage after each meeting so that Parks can make sure that everything in the design is feasible for them to maintain. Then there will be an “open house” before construction starts next year.

Question: Will we have more than three design options for the park (i.e. more is better)? (Hewitt previously produced three rough design schemes for the space)

Answer: No, Parks will use 3 design schemes as base.

Question: What happened to the acquisition money from the Pro Parks Levy that was to be used to purchase this land in 2007?

Answer: Parks spent about 100k for demo on the site (there was an old building there) and other assorted costs. Then, Parks got the land for free through a “swap” with Department of Neighborhoods. Suzanne could not answer where the remainder of the funds went, and urged Bill Zosel to contact Donald Harris in acquisitions about this.

Comment: Someone urged Parks to update the schematic design with current business names (i.e. Watertown not Animals)

Question: This group formed a Parks Sub-Committee to track the progress of this project. What happened to the letter we sent to you or any other ideas we want to share outside of the public process this fall?

Answer: All communication will go into the record on the park so please share with Parks.

Question: Shall we wrap the public process into these meetings or have separate ones?

Answer: November is probably the earliest the outreach would happen and yes, we could take up a whole 12th meeting if your agenda allowed, Parks will leave this decision up to the 12th group.

Question: Have criteria for the new park been set?

Answer: There will be a public hearing about this in two months where you can learn more and/or please contact Chip Nevins in Parks.

12th + E Cherry Seattle University/Seneca Group Project

Michael Kerns of SU welcomed everyone to the new SU A+A building where we were meeting and announced the grand opening on October 17th. He then introduced Jake and Amy from Seneca who also attended the meeting.

He then gave details on the program at 12th + Cherry:

- 245 student beds

- 5 story building over one retail floor
- Currently soil remediation taking place, next year building construction starts

Question: What will the building look like?

Answer: Not done yet, although it has gone through SU Citizen Advisory Committee Review (major institution version of design review). New renderings will be available soon and Seneca will share them with the 12th group.

Question: Have the provisions for the SU alley vacation changed?

Answer: No, previous provisions and concerns are all still in place and have been addressed, such as how the ground floor units meet the street.

Question: Will the open space courtyard be public or private?

Answer: It will be gated for safety reasons.

Question: Will Seneca work to help activate the retail space at the new James Court Park and how?

Answer: Yes, Seneca intends to put a restaurant on the corner next to the park, one that is active throughout the day and night.

Question: Will the SU bookstore be here?

Answer: No, not in this project any longer, but there other longer term projects on 12th such as the facelift to the university services building that could be a first step to getting something like the bookstore out to 12th. SU wants to do this as a long range goal – activate the streetscape to serve the neighborhood.

Question: What about the schedule of the 12th + Madison project?

Answer: SU thought this would be a 2001-12 project but with the economy it is looking more like a 2014-16 project.

Comment: A community member liked the designs he has seen for this building and encouraged SU to undertake it sooner rather than later.

First Hill Streetcar

Bill Zosel introduced some details on the streetcar and gave an update of the recent “in the news” related to the Mayoral candidates. Kate Stineback commented that it is unclear how politics will influence the streetcar since it has already been funded in the Sound Transit ballot measure in November 2008. Tri Nguyen commented that he had passed around a Facebook sign-up sheet for the streetcar group and encouraged people to join in the work. Kate mentioned that a “bike audit” had recently taken place to identify where the danger spots for bikes would be for the various streetcar alignment ideas.

Question: When will the alignment be decided?

Answer: We don’t know. Previous to the election, we had heard from SDOT that outreach and alignment study/investigation would happen during the fall of 2009.

Question: Is SDOT considering the 12th Avenue alone alignment? Or is only the 12th/Broadway LOOP up for serious consideration?

Answer: SDOT has no official position but based on what we have heard and seen the likelihood of 12th alone seems not good.

Question: Who pays the operating subsidies for the Streetcar once built?

Answer: Sound Transit.

Question: Can the Mayor take back the ballot measure funding?

Answer: Our impression is that if the voters approved it, it cannot be given back or reallocated.

12th Avenue Street Furniture Update

Kate Stineback gave a brief update on the grant CHH got to work with businesses to create permanent street furniture on 12th. A committee has been meeting about this and a design has been produced by John Feit. The committee will be getting together to look at this in the near future, as well as reaching out to businesses for participation.

There were no questions.

12th + E Jefferson CHH Workforce Housing Update

Bill Zosel gave a brief intro on the history of this site and project especially as it related to the swap with Parks. Kate Stineback then updated the group that since CHH met last with 12th Avenue to talk about the rezone needed (going from 4 to 6 stories) in May a couple of things have happened.

- CHH met with neighbors on Barclay Court to talk about safety concerns and shading due to additional height.
- CHH had discussions with Council, as we discussed at the May 12th meeting, about pursuing a legislative rezone of the site, primarily through the “text amendment” process. This process would be open and transparent and involve a public process with the community. This wasn’t an idea that was embraced by Council for this site, as they don’t favor text amendments, so CHH has decided to recently submit for a Master Use Permit, kicking off the Contract Rezone process which could take up to a year to achieve and cost roughly about 200k.
- Design has been updated per a community design charrette with 12th Avenue designers. She assured the crowd that the building is not pink and will have a focus on streetscape issues for the community.

Question: Does this mean you have to design to six stories?

Answer: Yes, Contract Rezones require that you design to your optimal envelope even though you might not get the rezone.

Question: Which Council member dislikes text amendments?

Answer: The Council as a whole does not generally embrace them even though they sometimes get done, most recently for the Poly Clinic on First Hill.

King County Youth Services Center Update

Bill Zosel updated the crowd about the “terrible slowness” of this project to redevelop the site that the juvenile justice center is on. Again it has been delayed, even though King County did an RFQ for future development partners last year. They have apparently switched gears and are seeking to do the work now themselves.

Question: What about the previous 4 design schemes produced for this site?

Answer: These are no longer being used as they were a part of the 2005 Arai Jackson report, before the County had completed their study of what they needed on the site.

Question: How will the County remember what we want there then?

Answer: Well, they came to the last Squire Park Community Council meeting and we can ask them to come hear so that we can keep reminding them that a surface parking lot is not good for the community, among other things.

Question: Is that a park on the back of the site?

Answer: No, it is a public art piece owned by 4Culture, which is a County public development authority for art. It is not maintained as a park as a result.

Question: The lights on the sculpture are broken, can we get them fixed?

Answer: Yes, they recently started mowing the lawn, which is a good sign, so we can pressure them to fix the lights as well. Although we have heard that this is as a result of a larger wiring problem.

Compiled by Kate Stineback

These minutes were not transcribed and are a rough approximation based on written notes of the issues discussed.