

South Downtown Steering Committee Meeting #1

May 27, 2010

St John's Episcopal Church

2036 SE Jefferson

Kenny Asher opened meeting. Introductions were done for all those attending.

Name/Affiliation

Joan Shipley – Property Owner /Westside light rail project work

Joe Krumm – NCSD

Arlene Miller – Citizen

Matt Menely – Lake Road Neighborhood

Ed Zumwalt – Historic Milwaukie Neighborhood

Mike Miller – Lake Road Neighborhood/Group of 9

Mark Gamba – Historic Milwaukie Neighborhood/Group of 9

Ray Bryan –Historic Milwaukie Neighborhood

Dave Aschenbrenner – Hector Campbell Neighborhood/Group of 9

Sarah Smith – Hector Campbell Neighborhood

Cynthia Schuster – Art Committee

Patty Wisner –Lake Road Resident

Dave Green – Riverfront Board

Lisa Batey - Island Station Neighborhood /Group of 9

Carrie Rose Berkely – Citizen

Neil Hankerson – Dark Horse Comics/Group of 9

Eric Shawn – Oak Grove resident/North Clackamas Park

Mike Zilis – Walker Macy

Ken Pirie – Walker Macy

Mark Hinshaw – LMN Architects

Nopporn Kichanan – Walker Macy

Joe Loomis – Ardenwald Neighborhood/City Council

Katie Mangle – City of Milwaukie Planning Director

Dion Shepard – Historic Milwaukie Neighborhood/Group of 9

Arlene asked for a show of hands of who lives in Milwaukie. All but 2 indicated they live in Milwaukie.

Kenny went over the ground rules.

The idea for this project started about 3½ years ago. Ideas for the area included having a plaza at end of Main Street. There is underutilized land there. The Light Rail station location decision was made in 2007. This project is designed to get the community what they want.

Role of the committee: to be sure that citizen input gets into the plan, or if it can't to understand why.

Kenny said if they have any questions to call him. His business cards were provided to all committee members.

Consultants are here to hear what people want and guide the plan there; and to get the Pattern Language to the next level of completeness. A new draft will be completed during this phase of the project.

Development advisors – have been contracted with to provide development strategies. They will be here in June. The committee will be able to meet them at that time.

The City needs communication from this group. It is not a voting committee. Not all information will come from these meetings. We are looking for consensus recommendations at the end of this process. There may be a minority report on things that didn't get into the plan.

For input Kenny encouraged the group to make use of any and all means available: call, e-mail, forms, small meetings with Kenny or other staff between steering committee meetings. The role of the Group of 9 is to help us all remember what the Pattern Language means to this project.

We are currently in the middle of the overall South Downtown process – this is Phase 4. Hundreds of hours have gone into the project. City is about 200K into the project. City has made a commitment to the citizens that there will be something coming out of this.

Walker Macy did a slide presentation.

Kenny turned meeting over to the Group of 9 to talk about earlier phases.

David A – it is a unique process. It is not a development driven process. Spent time on the site – wanted to find out what people feel when there. They weren't

looking at buildings or structures. What can make it be alive? They spent two week-ends together walking the site and reviewing the Pattern Language.

Sarah S – it was about sharing hopes and visions for Milwaukie with other committee members. It will be very ‘Milwaukie’ and a wonderful place to live.

Mark G – likes the way it is going to be developed – not profit driven. How can we build something that is the most comfortable and how it would be best for the people who live and work there? Ideas distilled down from people about what Milwaukie wants – not what Chris Alexander wanted – it was just his process.

Mike M – they spent a lot of time together – not everyone agreed on what they wanted. What came out of it is that it should represent Milwaukie. It should be small, unique and welcoming.

Lisa B – agrees with what others have said. From a practical viewpoint - they want to end up with a plaza that gives a great vantage point of Kellogg Creek and the riverfront. Want to feel more connection between downtown and the riverfront.

Kenny said that the other Group of 9 members were – Carlotta Collette, Dion Shepard, Jeff Klein, and Scott Churchill.

Arlene M ask if this is concentrating on the triangle? Who has control over the final plan? They don’t want high rises. Don’t want tax write offs for developers.

Kenny A - City council and the citizens through the council is who will have control over the final plan.

Patty W – said that the Design and Landmarks Committee (DLC) has had a lot of discussion about how information is delivered to our conceptual design teams. Plans need to be consistent with Downtown Design Guidelines so there can be a successful outcome. DLC is willing to help.

Walker Macy did their presentation to the group.

They are excited to be part of the project. They have a great basis to work with from the Pattern Language. They are trying to find a solution that is Milwaukie. They will work with a series of patterns and approaches to make South Downtown unique to Milwaukie. They will take the good work that has been

done to date and refine it. The objective is to have a plan that can be developed. One issue is scale. This process is not driven by scale. This is a catalyst to other projects in downtown. They have talked to a lot of people and are coordinating with other partners.

The next major meeting is 6/9 with the development advisors: Marilee Utter, Jerry Johnson, and Mike Mahaffey. They will be having a workshop. There will be a social event at Wine 30 that evening, where the committee members can meet the development advisors. There will be a late July or early August public meeting. They will have drawings for people to look at.

It will be about experience of this place over time. They are looking at incremental development with business and property owners. The Patterns showed different opinions of people in Milwaukie. They have assessed the Patterns. They have a handout of what the patterns have said. The plaza needs to be a gathering place of a certain scale. Riverfront Park will be for larger gatherings. Agree with most of what is said in the Patterns.

-They discussed the armature plan: The Plaza/Kellogg Creek/open to river/usable space at end of Main/connection to light rail. What will the character of the space be?

-Recommended revisions: Closure of streets and how that happens, particularly Main/Lake Road. We need to be sure we know the implications of closing streets.

-Parking structure: It may or may not be viable. Some day it could be good.

-LR Station's relationship to the plaza: Light Rail is coming – is a catalyst for some good things to happen.

-Tower in the plaza: Is that the right thing to do for the scale of the area?

-Ring of buildings may be difficult to occupy due to location next to the rail line.

-Essential Elements: Vibrant, lively place, plaza as the central anchor for South Downtown, activity and events, small local businesses and artist's studios, respect history, reuse buildings, locally appropriate materials. There needs to be public spaces active with people; intimate scale; preserved views and connections to the river, preserved natural elements, pedestrian and bike-friendly, integrated light rail, and hidden parking.

-Sustainable issues are going to need to be part of plan. How we can take advantage of the location? Bike friendly. Will be thinking about these things as the plan is developed.

-They need to interface with schools.

-It is an incredible location with lots of potential. The station will change how we connect with people. Kellogg Lake returning to Kellogg Creek will be reestablishing fish runs.

-Maintaining the vantage point looking towards the river is important. The riverfront is one of the most important parts of the location.

-It is a great solar space. Access to sun is important.

-They talked about the treatment plant changes, riverfront development, and changes to Main Street. They pointed out that there is a 20 foot drop to the water from the site. There is some public and some private ownership. The light rail station relationship to the plaza and getting people across the tracks to the plaza needs to be evaluated in the plan.

They are going to redraw the South Downtown maps to show other areas in the South Downtown and the interaction.

-They think the proposed plaza is too large for Milwaukie. It is similar in usable space to Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland. What will it be used for in Milwaukie needs to be determined. The space should be available for activities like the farmer's market. Weather is a factor. Activities that don't require a large space like places to rest [benches] that are comfortable need to be available. An interactive fountain is one idea. Adjacent uses are important. Café seating is a nice element. We need to think about what elements will bring people in. What could a tower look like? The plaza needs to have a variety of uses to make it the most pleasant. It needs to be clean and safe and active. Need to set up reasons for people to be there. There needs to be both day and night activities. Night time is important – need to have things going on in the evening and night time. Lighting is important.

-Circulation is an important component. Streets are the primary open space in most cities. They identify the city. There needs to be good circulation. Outdoor

seating is already starting to happen in downtown. There will be a lot of energy coming to the area soon and we need to harness it.

Kenny opened the meeting to comments – he asked people to them to keep their comments brief.

Mark G – High Speed Rail has not been talked about here. He feels there is a bigger nod to cars than the Group of 9 had arrived at. Thinks we need to move away from a car driven development. Walker Macy– agrees it should not be car centric, but we can't eliminate cars altogether.

Kenny said that would be a good discussion item for development advisors. Moving away from cars can develop over time.

Dave G – Milwaukie is not a pedestrian friendly place right now. The transit station isolates the high school from the plaza.

Lisa B – thinks a parking garage is going to be an important piece. The cash spot with a plaza on top with access to downtown and to the riverfront might be a good addition.

Mike Z – one issue is when can the city afford it – how can it be phased in? If the structure does not fit on the site it could be a detractor.

Eric S – three of his electric cars will fit into one parking spot. As the size of cars changes less space may be needed.

Mike Z – it will be a long-term project and needs to accommodate those kinds of changes.

Patty W - has the amount of retail been discussed?

Mike Z – not yet. Want to balance bringing in and/or taking away business. Retail which provides activity needs to be balanced.

Kenny – by the end of the process it will be much clearer on what the ratio needs to be.

Patty W – doesn't think we need to be completely car-free – as people age – women especially need their cars and need to be able to park them someplace near

there. Space needs to be age appropriate. People need to have access to cars to do normal activities like shopping.

David A – does not know what buildings are worth keeping. Most buildings are not historic buildings. Is a fan of a terrace to the riverfront.

Matt M – talked about examples of places in Europe that have moved away from the use of cars. Compared the farmer's market area to Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Kenny A – it is almost the same size.

Arlene M – a lot of the property in that area is privately owned. Some buildings will be torn down. Businesses such as banks will be in another part of downtown . Where are the busses going to go? Is this a light rail station with the plaza around it?

KA – we are trying to figure out how all that is going to fit together. Property owners will be meeting with development advisors.

Mark G – it seems like the orientation turns its back on Kellogg Creek.

Mark Hinshaw of LMN Architects did a presentation.

-Mark H talked about scale. He is looking for clues among the skeleton that has developed over time.

-Most building frontages are around 50 feet. It should be looked at as the maximum for the development. He thinks it should be a small entrepreneurial system with small parcels that people can take and use in a way that fits the community.

-Main streets are usually removed from nature. South Downtown has a direct connection to nature. It is a unique attribute for Milwaukie.

-He looked at how each business can create its own unique space – showed some pictures of historic Main Street in Milwaukie and current pictures that show how things are still refined to the individual business owners. He showed some examples of the unique character of different businesses. His examples showed openness, transparency and fluidity to the outside area around the business.

-There could be activities other than retail that can add character to the Main Street.

-The size of development and repetitive nature needs to be limited.

- Uniqueness of existing buildings can add positively to the experience people have when downtown – used the Masonic Lodge as an example.
- Milwaukie needs an anchor building for South Downtown – it may be an existing building.
- He showed some examples of how other areas have developed – the Alberta District [showed some businesses that are not the normal businesses for an area like that]. Snohomish [north of Seattle] has learned some painful lessons. Scale doesn't always fit – some rules need to be followed.
- He showed Bainbridge Island as example. Everyone contributes to the general community spaces.

South Downtown Buildings need to reflect Milwaukie by looking at these criteria:

- Qualities
- Size and Types
- Building uses.

Dave A – asked about colonnade type of buildings.

Mark – they don't work in this part of the country – are more of a southern design. Northern answer to that is more use of glass.

David A – what about stepping the second floor back?

Mark – do we want it too look like a lot of smaller developments or one large one.

Kenny A – these consultants are here to test the Pattern Language to see if it really fits Milwaukie. They are using their experiences from other projects. We need to figure out what we want to stay and what should go. We have figured out that we can't have everything.

Joe K – hears the word historic a lot. He senses permanence and that it will be there for a long time. On McLoughlin south of Milwaukie and in Milwaukie a lot of the buildings have outlived their usefulness. They don't really meet the test of what we want downtown to be. How do we get that sense of history Milwaukie wants?

Mark H – thinks we should not have a historic theme town. Don't want fake false fronts that look old. Need to use the genuine historic buildings.

Mark G – that was addressed in the Pattern Language with the use of building materials. What we find appealing in old buildings is what it is made of – like brick that has a lasting quality.

Joan S – need to be respectful of the historic feel, not all buildings need to look exactly the same.

Patty W – we have an approved guideline for what materials can be used in downtown and encourage a design style that fits Milwaukie. We are not looking to build a town that all the buildings are the same. The developer needs to use their style and character that will fit in downtown.

Eric S – how does the city create retail stability?

Kenny A – more residential use will make a difference. Eventually the area will create its own appeal because of the character of the street. We have development advisors to help us learn what other places have done. Quality materials and design can be done without large buildings and a lot of expensive development. We need to learn how we can bring what we want in.

Mike Z – one of the big challenges is the cost of space. Right now space in Milwaukie is pretty inexpensive.

Mark H – small downtowns use to lead with retail and now they realize that it needs to be led by residential space – residents spend a lot more money near where they live than people who work in the area.

Joan S – can there be an anchor building like a post office that will bring people in?

Patty W – we need a grocery store if people are going to give up their cars. It has been talked about for years. There needs to be one within walking distance.

Lisa B – The Group of 9 thought a tower that could be seen from a lot of different directions would draw people in. If the Steering Committee could get out and walk the area it would be helpful.

Kenny A – if there are concept ideas, walking the site would be a good time to talk about them.

Things to think about when you are there: imagine what you would envision for this space – would you live there – challenge yourself to think about what would bring you down there and what would keep you there.

Mike Z – he will be taking the input from the committee members and start drawing what the vision might be. When we get back together they will have lots of ideas of what could be there, like public open space and connections to green spaces. They will be meeting with the development advisors in June. They will build on these conversations.

Kenny A – passed out a memo from Walker Macy. We will be revising the Pattern Language for where we are now, not where we have been. Send ideas to Kenny or you can meet with him individually. We will try to get someone from Walker Macy to attend if there needs to be more committee time – may not be able to afford to have the consultants at all of them.

The committee roster needs to be sent to the committee members. They also need the e-mail group sent.

The next event is a social gathering on 6/9 – let Kenny know if they are going to be able to attend. We need a head count.

David A – Wine 30 is small – not sure everyone will fit.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05