Land Use Minutes DRAFT

SAPCC
October 1, 2015

In Attendance: Carol Herman, Daniel Sarasti, John Seppanen, Les Everett, Alex Susko, Ray Bryan, Bob Straughn

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| Minutes and Agenda | Bob moved to approve the minutes, Alex seconded. It was unanimously approved. Les moved to approve the agenda, Alex seconded. It was unanimously approved. |
| Ecument and Luther Seminary Development Update | Matt McNeill, Dena Meyer, Tim Nichols, Michael Morrow, and Link Wilson attended the Land Use Committee meeting on behalf of Ecumen, their architecture group, and Luther Seminary. Michael introduced the update to the project by explaining that the Seminary will own 20 or 21 acres in SAP even after the sale. He reiterated their desire to support Bockman Hall on campus and renovate it. Ecumen developers explained that they had hosted two community meetings last Thursday to gather input from the community on their initial plans and that they planned to hose 2-3 more. They have received a good deal of positive feedback on the idea of a senior housing cooperative in the neighborhood. The plans they have show that cooperative at Luther Place and Como. They plan to have a salon and spa as well as other accessible amenities at their senior living building. They have yet to determine the nature of the retail in the multi-age building. Ecumen will need to adhere to a T-1 zoning ordinance and the RM2 component for this zoning district. They plan to further focus on sustainability and work within the Land Use Committee’s Development Guidelines. Luther and Ecumen both want the buildings to be designed as a part of a college campus. Ecumen usually builds to the Green Community standards. The group plans to come back to the Land Use Committee in December for a vote on the project. They plan to start development on the cooperative building first with the other two in quick succession. Committee Questions:Bob wondered if they would be open to coming back before December because every two months may not be enough. Dena responded that Ecumen is certainly open to that. Roger wanted to know how, based on the 2030 plan, that Ecumen will bring life down towards the far end of Como as well as keep access points safe? The group responded that they will be looking into those aspects.Community Questions: \*names were captured as they were given. If names were not stated before questions as the Committee requested, they were not recorded\*Glenn Skovholt explained that he believes that the Eustis and Como property needs to be used and wonders why Ecumen would use Luther Place instead? He noted that many in the group feel that Ecumen is patronizing and that they should have worked with the SAP Lutheran Church from the beginning. Another community member mentioned that Luther should apologize for doing something wrong because they might meet with more success in this process. Michael Morrow from Luther did apologize for not reaching out to the community sooner. Some community members asked whether Ecumen and Luther Seminary had considered a citizen input or advisory committee for the project. Matt McNeill from Ecumen answered that if such a thing is to be considered, he would like guidance from SAPCC in how to build it to ensure guardrails for the process. Doug Koons explained that historic preservation is about more than buildings and offered a historical perspective on the property. He noted that the lawns are bookends to the property. Further, he asked Luther Seminary to reject the site plan due to the need to re-think the senior cooperative. Sherman Eagles weighed in to say that the neighborhood needs senior housing and has asked for senior housing, which is what Ecumen will bring to the neighborhood.Alice Shapiro agreed with the concept of senior housing and cooperatives, but disagrees with the senior cooperative’s planned location. She asked about a citizen task force to weigh in on the issue. Glenn Berg-Moberg, pastor of the SAP Lutheran Church, explained that he doesn’t feel the process has been holistic and that he has only been involved at his initiative and insistence. He argued that Ecumen and Luther Seminary “don’t know what you don’t know about the process.” He worries that the senior cooperative housing will create almost a gated community space and will hide parking--making it more difficult for church goers to access the church. He also pointed out that a building at that location may build a “symbolic wall between the church and the Seminary.” He noted that strangers to the church will assume that the church has no parking. Steve Kranz believes that senior housing is necessary but the design at Luther Place does not fit the neighborhood. He notes that it will create a big wall at the entryway to commercial space and that the space at that corner needs to be active. He wants the developers to get full input from the community. Kent Ecklund wondered why that space is separated when other senior housing spaces are contiguous.Tim Nichols explained that active seniors don’t want to live anywhere resembling assisted living, based on the surveys they do with active seniors at their other locations.Members of the audience disagreed with him. Paul asked Michael if Luther Seminary has considered not selling the property off of Luther.Michael explained that the deal with Ecumen basically includes both properties or neither.Phil Carlson contended that the comments being made in the meeting were about process. The community wants this development to work with the character of the neighborhood. T-1 zoning limits ask basic questions that he feels need to be answered. Jonas Schaver, a new resident in SAP, wanted to know why this meeting was being held--out of a voluntary desire or a prescribed need. Committee members and Michael and Ecumen representatives explained that they do not need to come to the Land Use Committee. Ecumen representatives explained that this is indicative of their willingness to work with the community. Joe Everson noted that this is one of the few remaining open spaces in north SAP. He wanted to know whether they would build on land next to driveways. Members of the audience asked how the determination was made for the number of units. Tim responded that economics drives that determination. They need to have a certain number to be viable.Another member of the audience asked that Ecumen host their meetings in the Commons area at Luther to have enough space for the meeting. Another member thanked the representatives for listening.Yet another member, who did not say her name, noted that developers can sell anything in SAP and it will sell. She mentioned that our downtown is the focal point here and wanted to know how the developers would keep that area safe for kids.Tim Nichols explained that the developers will do a traffic study and, in fact, want to bring even more families in and therefore want to make the area safe.An audience member asked about dropping property values if seniors all sell off their homes at the same time.Tim Nichols responded that there will be no mass exodus because seniors who would move from their single family homes into the new development would do so at different times. Michael Morrow also suggested in response to pop-corn style audience questions about how many senior cooperative units were necessary that a larger number of units keeps them more affordable for people like retiring pastors who were educated at Luther in the past.Tim Nichols also noted that this proposal is less impactful to the neighborhood than other proposals that have been tossed around over the past many years. An audience member wanted to know if the entrance to underground parking would be on Luther Place.Dena Meyer said that they were in the process of reconsidering that given the community feedback they had received.Committee member Les Everett explained that apartment buildings don’t cause a lot of traffic at any one time because people come and go at different times.Paul Han was concerned that a massing of a 60 unit building is too big. He suggested that it would be “tragically ironic” to make the church less viable and noted that the proposed access off of Valentine is too dangrous. Doug Koons asked when Ecumen and Luther will vote on this agreement.Michael Morrow said that October 10th is the next Luther Seminary board meeting and that the board is in a place to consider the agreement. John Seppanen called the question and answer period to a close because it had gone more than an hour.  |
| Luther and Ecumen Discussion | After many audience members who had attended to hear the Ecumen and Luther update left, the Land Use Committee debriefed on the meeting. The committee discussed how the Land Use Guidelines apply to this process--especially whether or not Ecumen and Luther are doing their part to engage the community. **Carol moved to write a letter to the Luther Seminary board of directors encouraging them not to vote on the Ecumen sale at the Oct. 10th meeting due to a high community interest in the process, the speed of the project thus far, and a need for further collaboration. Alex made a second to the motion.** The Committee discussed the suggestion from the audience members that a citizen input committee be developed. Some committee members expressed that citizen input could help Ecumen further their plans because there is support for the type of housing they’re looking for, just not the process up to this point. Other members mentioned that with the pace of the development and the length of time and amount of work it takes to convene citizens to give input that that process may not be appropriate at this time. The conversation seemed to find consensus in having Ecumen and Luther do further outreach to the community. John, Bob, and Roger offered to reach out to Luther about next steps in citizen involvement. |
| Tear Down Issues | Roger moved to table the tear down discussion for next month. It was unanimously approved.  |
| Updates | Staff updated the group on the plans to move the office and that the office will be closed from October 27-30 for a conference staff will attend.  |
| Adjourn | Les moved to adjourn. Ray seconded. This passed unanimously. |