

Dunbar Spring Neighborhood Meeting September 19, 2016

Announcements

- Kare and Alan Williams are opening a Cross Fit Gym over at 301 W. 4th St. They are waiting on permits, but if the door is open you can stop in and say hi. Cross Fit Milo on Facebook
- Upcoming library events – Tue. Sept 20 – Fall garden, noon-1; Sat. Sept 24 – Whole Brain Writing, 2-4:30; Sat. Oct. 1st – Calling all brown thumbs, 11-1; Tuesday Oct 3 – Jazz, noon-1; Sat Oct 8 – The heart of it all (writing), 2-4; Sat Oct 15 – Seed library volunteer orientation, 8:30 a.m.

Discussion

- **11th Ave. parcel** – (note from the secretary – I was not able to capture/understand everything that was said – any mistakes are mine and feel free to correct if you heard differently at the meeting).

This is to be a housing project between 1st/Speedway for work-force housing. The original design model had 7 lots. We want to see a path to home ownership and that the homes will be affordable housing in perpetuity (a nonprofit would buy the home back and resell at a lower than market price). Glenn Moyer from the City of Tucson Housing and Community Development Dept. came to talk about this project. The parcel is currently cleared so the city can dispose of the parcel.

Glenn shared a draft of the design guidelines that were put together with input from the neighborhood. This draft has contradictions as some of the requests are not workable along with some of our other requests. Also, the lot itself is shallower than originally planned, so some of our requests won't fit in the current configuration of the lot. These guidelines were for building/site design, elevations, parking, materials used, screening, color, site perimeter walls, landscaping, guidelines if rowhouses are included.

The idea is that the city will sell to a developer or nonprofit at a zero cost who will then be charged with producing affordable housing. Habitat for Humanity has expressed interest in the project.

At this time, work force housing is looking at 50-80% of the median income for Pima County (approximately at the high end \$45,000 for a family of four) with a mortgage around \$150,000 or so. Glenn would like to see net-zero housing as a possibility. Home buyers would also be able to apply for other down payment assistance as well.

City is looking at a 20 year lifetime of affordable housing, many in the neighborhood want the home to be affordable housing in perpetuity (forever). This would knock down the number of developers who would be interested in developing this property and adds another layer of complexity to the whole deal.

The city will take all of our input into account, but does not promise to agree to everything we might want. We need to work towards a middle ground.

The city is interested in getting this lot developed within the next two years if possible. Is willing to accept the idea that at least 50% is developed within the next two years if we wanted to have a partnership with the University of Arizona design/build program for example.

In the past, the city has used HOME funds (federal money) to buy down the price of land for low income housing. Currently, all of the HOME funds that the city has are being used for low income tax credit projects that have already been approved.

The city would put restrictions on the property to make sure the homes stay affordable. One possibility is to create a trust that would own the property and the land, but would take the land out of the equation for the mortgage, since the land is already essentially paid for.

Glenn indicated he would like the project as quickly as possible but as slowly as necessary. He is really surprised that a neighborhood is requesting and wants workforce housing located there (usually neighborhoods are fighting this kind of housing).

A question was posed about higher density, doing a small apartment. We moved away from higher density to act as a buffer between the new hospitality house as well as the two-story casitas the Salvation Army wants to still build and the rest of the houses on 11th Ave.

A question was asked about reducing the amount of required parking for development. Glenn indicated that if the neighborhood can stand a reduced parking requirement, so can the city.

There is a precedent of having row houses of 3-4 units in the neighborhood, so it can be a mix of row houses and detached houses.

A question was asked about including passive solar as part of the development agreement to ensure winter sun access on the south side.

Glenn indicated there is a developer interested in doing "small houses" of 700-900 sq. feet. Many in the room indicated that is how big our houses are now, and that is fine.

Glenn wants a larger neighborhood meeting to happen just for this topic before the holiday season. He wants to send a mailed notice 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

Question asked about putting preference for owner occupied vs. rental units in the development agreement – answer was yes.

This topic will also be on the October agenda.

- **Zoning variance for 255 W. University Blvd** – University is considered a major thoroughfare that could one day be widened. Therefore more space is needed than on other locations for the right of way. Vince wants to build a carport that would be 6 feet away from the right of way so needs a zoning variance. He has no opposition from direct neighbors. Meeting will be held on Sept 30 from 4-5 on-site if you are interested.

Motion to approve Vince's carport setback: Approve 18, Abstain 3

- **Speedway/Stone development** – developers have approached the Ward 1 office to indicate they want to build either a gas station or student housing on the SW corner on the property they own. We have asked them to come to the October meeting to discuss this.

If you are interested in joining a subcommittee to talk about what you want to see on this parcel (using the plans we put together years ago as a starting point), contact Ezra.

- **Main Ave Road Diet Update** – Sky shared the letter we have already sent to the city that would change Main Ave to 2 lanes with a turn lane, bike lanes and on-street parking, with perhaps a short stretch without parking – this letter is available on our neighborhood website. This will possibly move forward after Stone Ave project is done. Natasha will bring this letter to business owners on Main, as she has heard that some of them are upset with this plan.

Neighbors were concerned that there should be crosswalks at both University and 1st St. And wanted the bike lane physically separated from cars.

Ann Chanecka, City of Tucson will be at our October meeting to discuss this project

- **Fall neighborhood tour** – Sunday October 16th from 1-3 p.m., with an after-party for neighbors and friends from 3-4, at Whistle Stop. This will be a biking/walking neighborhood tour and will feature homes, businesses, artist studios, public art and green/water harvesting features. Neighborhood author Aloma B. will give a reading from her book at the Dunbar School. BICAS will provide a bike tour. We are still looking for volunteers to help out with flyer distribution, set up, cleanup, etc. Please contact Ezra (ezrroa@gmail.com) or Karen (kgreene5050@yahoo.com) to help out with the tour. Information about the event is on the neighborhood website and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/283371565388531/>

- We will vote in October about **opening a bank account with Tucson Old Pueblo Credit Union** to have easier access to money earned at the neighborhood tour as well as other donations.
- **Neighborhood cleanups** – Major clean up scheduled Sat. Oct. 1st from 8-12. We have requested 3 roll-off dumpsters (at BICAS, at Dunbar School and 1st St. between 9th Ave/Perry) from the city. Meet at the garden and small groups will hit key areas. Bring hat, water, tools and gloves to any of the cleanups. There will be a chipper/shredder available at about \$30/house to shred green waste into mulch. Contact Ezra if you are interested in this. Also contact Ezra if you need help with pruning in your right of way and volunteers will work with you on that. There is a concern with the Sahara property along 9th Ave – it is completely impassable, plus irrigation is leaking leaving standing water which is a mosquito problem – Pima County health dept. has been contacted. We will vote in October about the neighborhood helping to pay for chipper/shredder rental if not enough people participate.
- **Meet the board at the garden** – this would be an opportunity for neighbors to share concerns with each other as well as the board. It was decided to just combine it with the after party in October, and board members will wear name tags so people will know who they are.
- **Walkability concerns** – (note from the secretary – I was not able to capture everything that was said, but hopefully captured the spirit of the discussion)

The letters that were sent out were cordial, courtesy letters to just let folks know there is an issue with the right of way. There is no plan at all for the neighborhood as an organization to call code enforcement for these issues for residents (the issue mentioned above for the commercial property is viewed differently).

A comment was made about whether people have the right to walk in the right of way, vs. the right of home owners who see obstructions (either rocks, gravel, cars, etc) or planting as a privilege. There are places where you are forced to walk in the street since you can't get through. There is a concern about visibility. Technically, by city code, there is only a right to plant in the right of way if prior approval is gotten from the city. Most people have not applied for permits from the city to plant in the right of way.

There have been many disagreements on the e-mail list about wording.

There is a concern that many people in the neighborhood are not on the e-mail list so are not part of the discussion. They may or may not care about walkability in the right of way, but we don't know this.

Many people expressed a preference to discuss these issues in person with their neighbor, and some resented receiving a letter.

Some people asked what is the consequence of not doing anything once a letter was sent

A comment was made that it doesn't need to be a sidewalk, just some kind of path that a stroller could be rolled on – in some places a dirt path has been carved out of the gravel – it works for strollers in some locations and not in others. Smoothing the pathway is helpful.

A comment was made that people in wheelchairs would never be able to use the pathways.

Some suggestions for appropriate pathways will be made on the e-mail list. Here are some possible path materials

Native compacted soil, ¼" minus decomposed granite; ½" minus mulch; maintained concrete sidewalk.

These items will NOT work well – gravel, granite larger than ¼", rocks, mulch larger than ½" or thicker than 1"; severely destroyed sidewalk

Comment was made that most of the problem areas were for people that are not involved in the neighborhood.

Comment was made that in the spirit of live and let live – people denying other people the ability to walk in the right of way of the neighborhood are not letting folks live the way they want to live.

Secretary brought in copy of 2015 annual newsletter that mentioned a reminder about walkability, right of way issues and that we would be creating a letter.

Concern was brought up whether it is in the right of the neighborhood to clean vacant lots without talking to the owners.

One neighbor who was out of town for the meeting requested the secretary read a letter she wrote – here is the text of the letter:

Although I am unable to attend this meeting, I would like my thoughts to be read to the group, concerning the walkability issue and its extenuating implications. I will read the minutes for your responses/comments.

Dunbar/Spring has a unique history of acceptance and tolerance for others. From its earliest beginnings in the 1890s, it was a mixed-race neighborhood whose occupants were respectful of one another. Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Caucasian, of different faiths, economic levels, and ideals, embraced the goal of creating a welcoming community.

It has gone through some pretty rough periods, as long-term residents, such as myself, readily recall. Issues of right-of-way pale in comparison to pimps beating up prostitutes on street corners, used needles in the gutters, and various other violent and unsavory activities.

Many, many good people mustered on and bravely strove to recreate our neighborhood's original ambience, against often overwhelming odds, volunteering their time, effort, and resources. Once the flavor of tolerance returned, new neighbors began to trickle in, young and enthusiastic. They were welcomed and encouraged to express their ideas. Somewhere along the line, though, it appears some of them began to believe they were responsible for this renaissance, when in fact it was merely that they had found a place which allowed the expression of their values.

I believe mutual respect for our differences is at the core of our current issues: it is important that we all recognize that this is not a commune which adheres to principles established by a single mindset, but a collective of widely varied lifestyles and opinions. In order to restore our original compassion, all must be respected, included, and given a voice at the table.

Live and let live has long been one of our most cherished principles. There are small houses, big houses, mobile homes, well-kept gardens, some not so much. It is this very diversity which is the root of our success: a place which is accepting of every human being, regardless of their stage of life and/or limited resources. I would ask of those who seek to impose a uniform code on others to carefully examine the ultimate result of that ambition. What would be gained compared to what would be lost?

Both sides of the ROW discussion have made fair points. I believe a compromise is possible, and also the best option. A respectfully worded letter to property owners out of compliance, along with an openly scheduled date to assist with said compliance, by an organized group of our many talented landscape-savvy folks could be an answer.

May I add in closing that most Dunbar/Spring residents have walked in the street for over a century and never took issue with it before. It's where I personally have always preferred to amble, without incident, for the 28 years of my residency.

There is a need for a subcommittee to be formed to discuss these issues. Motion to form a walkability/right of way subcommittee was introduced, but tabled until the October meeting since it was not on the agenda.

A concern was brought up that there needs to be people interested in both sides of the issue on this subcommittee.

If you are interested, contact Ezra.

- **E-mail etiquette**

Discussion was had around the ideas of being cordial, stop rudeness, name calling and swear words and to always sign your name when you send out an e-mail to the neighborhood list. If someone is a repeat offender, they may be kicked off the list.

Committee Reports

- **DNARC** – prior report sent out – new CEO being selected; grant applied for three alleyways downtown to create a place-making space in the alleys.
- **Downtown Links** – no new information
- **Garden** – Becky is moving ahead with garden plans
- **Dunbar Coalition** – Barber Academy on 2nd floor with 38 chairs. 1st Floor will turn into training center for beauty college. There are two new board members and more are needed.

Motion to approve August 2016 minutes. Approved 17-0