

Land Use Committee reviews city budget, objects to middle housing amendment

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

The Land Use Committee, a standing committee of Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc., met on Feb. 21 to hear pertinent land use updates from city bureau managers and an advisory board member.

This working group is comprised of Southwest neighborhood association land use committees and other land use advocates. This group tracks and responds to the many land use and planning issues in the area.

These include infill projects, demolitions, new developments, design reviews, tree preservation, affordable housing, and comprehensive zoning changes.

"The last few meetings have been canceled due to inclement weather," said committee chair Jan Wilson.

Claire Carder, who is in her first term as a representative on the Development Review Advisory Committee, gave a report on how the Bureau of Development Services processes requests when a property owner subdivides property.

DRAC is a citizen advisory body representing those with interests in the outcomes of policies, budgets, and regulations. There are 17 appointed members.

"A lot has been going on at city hall," Carder began. "We're going line-by-line over the bureaus' budget."

Portland City Commissioner Chloe Eudaly now oversees the Office of Neighborhood Involvement and the Bureau of Development Services. "I certainly see progress with Eudaly in charge," Carder said.

"The city is also looking at having an assigned liaison for each geographic region/neighborhood like Joan Frederickson, who is bureau project manager for the entire Southwest."

Carder said there is a surplus of money—about \$50 million—which comes from a fee that developers pay the city.

"These are short-term funds secured by the housing project loan to the bureau," Carder explained. "This money is slated for the affordable

housing crisis."

DRAC has a demolition subcommittee and recently released its report. It suggested a change in the demolition ordinance which requires better notification for permits.

Carder said this is an opportunity to save more houses from the wrecking ball.

"Equity is the main issue with this policy," said Claire Colman Evans from Bridlemile. "Neighborhoods without much money don't have the means to fight the demolitions. Many times it turns associations or groups of neighbors into real estate agencies."

"Why is the bureau understaffed?" another committee member asked.

"There are state statutes that have strict ways expenditures are spent," Frederickson replied.

"Can it be used for inspection staff?"

"There is also a backlog of positions," Frederickson added. "We're also looking at staff for asbestos and lead removal programs in which schools have the highest priorities."

Carder finished up her report saying that two-way communication needs to be improved. Information from the land use committee to DRAC is good, but information doesn't always trickle down to the neighborhood association, she said.

Frederickson provided a snapshot of projects in Southwest which can be found in the SWNI newsletter. Barry Manning, a manager from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, was also in attendance.

"Code reconciliation projects are planned in 2017," he said. "Some commercial zones have changed. We're also working on landscaping and parking requirements."

"The biggest issue is that inclusionary zoning now is required in multi-family units with more than 20 units," he said.

New housing projects must include no less than 20 percent of units at affordable prices (80 percent of median income level).

A motion was made by Multnomah land use chair Jim Peterson, requesting that SWNI write a letter in support of the associations' objection to middle housing policy



One infill project that has the land use committee concerned is the 70-unit, four-story apartment building under construction on Southwest Capitol Highway at 33rd Avenue in Multnomah Village. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

5.6 (Amendment P45) to the 2035 Portland Comprehensive Plan.

"This letter is consistent with SWNI's prior letter dated April 28, 2016, on the same issue," said Peterson. "We're

asking for as many letters of support as possible for this objection."

The motion was adopted and the issue will go to SWNI's board of directors for consideration.

MULTNOMAH NOTEBOOK

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"These concerns remain despite the work so far of the Residential Infill Project."

Multnomah neighborhood association members and board have been saying for years that this process has been hijacked by developers who sit on RIPSAC.

"In terms of the RIP process, take a look at the stakeholder advisory committee make-up," Strunk continued. "The developers, realtors, and others with financial interest in the infill project outcomes out-weighed the neighborhood representation."

Strunk said that it appears that the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability may be ignoring this input and ignoring City Council decisions from December.

"UNR has been opposing the comprehensive plan middle-housing amendment (P-45) that was snuck in at the last moment," Peterson added.

Eight housing projects at 46th Avenue and Carson Street

Markley expressed his frustration with the state of the streets near his house.

"There are eight housing projects going on around Southwest 46th and Carson," Markley said.

"The crumbling, gravel roads are falling apart from the construction truck traffic," he said. "Why aren't we holding the developers accountable for tearing up the road?"

Multnomah chair Martie Sucec said that the city only maintains streets that are brought up to city code. "This roadway is not one of them," Sucec stated. "It has to do with when the area was annexed by the city of Portland."

Editor's Note: "Up to code" means a complete buildout including paved streets and curbs. Sidewalks are required along arterials and side streets where there is new residential development.

"I'm going to put this issue on a future agenda and see what we can do about these streets," said Sucec.

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