

Regent Neighborhood Association Meeting

Best Western InnTowner Hotel

January 28, 2014

Members present: Jon Miskowski, John Schlaefer, Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, LD Oakley, Mary Sarnowski, Karen Christianson, Ronnie Hess, Ron Rosner, Dan O'Callaghan, Betsy Greene, Eric Steege, Lorna Will, Jessi Claringbole, Marcia Vandercook.

Guests: Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, Karin Wolf, Sam Dennis, Steve Hiniker, Barbara Schrank, and 3 of Prof. Dennis's students from the Landscape Architecture Program.

1. Minutes of 10-30-13 approved.

2. Introduction of new members: sustainability committee co-chairs Lorna Will and Jessi Claringbole.

3. University Avenue Corridor Plan – arts component. Karin Wolf, city arts administrator, suggested that Prof. Sam Dennis of the UW Landscape Architecture Program have his students take a look at the draft University Avenue Corridor plan and see if they could contribute ideas for enhancing the corridor through art, consistent with the goals and vision of the plan. The idea is to have the students take on a real-world exercise in planning and offer fresh ideas to the community.

The students looked at the plan and decided that one of the greatest needs expressed was for improvement to the two underpasses below Campus Drive, at Highland and Walnut. Karin Wolf said that the plan will be coming soon to the arts commission for approval and that this is an opportunity for the RNA board to see the possibilities for what the area could be. Doing an actual design and looking for grants or other funding will come at a later stage. Steve Hiniker, neighborhood resident and executive director of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, described the underpasses as poorly designed and insulting to bicyclists and pedestrians. He offered the assistance of 1000 Friends to work with RNA on grant-writing.

Professor Dennis presented slides of possible art options and talked about what's required for the student projects. The students asked RNA board members what they would like to see from the project. Ideas included: better lighting, more pedestrian friendly, more bike-friendly, a destination, something unexpected that people might come look at, emphasis on the ties between the neighborhood and the university, emphasis on neighborhood only, historical, modern, exciting, not too scary, creating an entrance, common thread with other neighborhood gateways, gardens, part of neighborhood brand, sustainable, walkable, functional, gathering place, something that addresses both sides of the underpass. Professor Dennis said the target area is within 400-800 meters of the underpasses, so suggestions for something like a gathering place wouldn't have to be right under the bridge. He thanked the board members for the many ideas and said that he and the students would report back later this semester.

4. University Avenue Corridor Plan – city meeting schedule. So far the plan has been reviewed by the city committees for Public Works, Board of Estimates, and Pedestrian/ Bike/ Motor Vehicle. Public Works voted 5-2 not to approve the plan because the building heights didn't appear consistent with the city's goal of increasing density. Board of Estimates approved it on its consent agenda without discussion. Pedestrian/ Bike/ Motor Vehicle discussed a suggestion by Robbie Webber to require less parking for multi-unit buildings but did not adopt it. City staff noted that the plan included many goals that were consistent with the city's overall transportation goals. A traffic engineering staff report offered some technical corrections and small amendments. This committee also recommended that another pedestrian bridge be added across Campus Drive and that an eastbound on-ramp, if ever built, should be located at Highland rather than at Walnut. Upcoming meetings include Landmarks, Arts Commission, and Urban Design. It has also been referred to joint west.

John Schlaefer said that he is happy to attend each of the meetings and take the lead on testimony when it is required, but it is important to have other people show up at the meetings and register in favor of the plan, even if they don't testify. For some committees it is preferable not to register to testify so the item can pass as part of the committee's consent agenda. But it is important to have people attend and testify at the land use committees, since there will be a push by developers, the university, and city planning staff all in favor of taller buildings and higher density than the plan recommends, especially on the north side of University Avenue. Parking issues will also come up again. The final hearing will be in front of the Plan Commission on March 18, where a strong neighborhood turnout will be important.

Alder Bidar-Sielaff said she would work with Jon Miskowski to put together information for the neighborhood about the meeting schedule and how to testify or write if they want to be heard. They will send this out on the listserv soon. Lorna Will suggested that up-to-date information also be included on the RNA website. The schedule for committee meetings regarding the UAC Corridor Plan is found on the city Legislative Information Center (Legistar) website under tracking number 32635.

4. Sustainability. Lorna Will said that she and Jessi Claringbole are looking for stories about incentive programs available to the neighborhood for sustainable home projects like solar panels, insulation, water management, etc. They will be looking at environmental, economic and social sustainability. Jessi said that she is able to do research on programs and providers and to help put together groups of neighbors who may want to do the same work at the same time for a discount rate. John said that the corridor plan contemplates that the neighborhood will evaluate and monitor development proposals for sustainable attributes.

5. Elected officials. Shiva reported that another tenant is negotiating for space at 2550 University, the Mullins building. She is talking with the current owner of the Korean restaurant property about possible redevelopment. There will be major construction this summer on Kendall from Lathrop to Allen and on Prospect north of Kendall. The results of the near west traffic study will be reported at a meeting in February, date to be announced.

6. UW relations. Dan O'Callaghan reported on the university's recreational sports master plan to improve recreational sports facilities, which are thought to be sub-par for a university of this caliber. A referendum to spend student activity money will be before the students this spring and university officials are working to promote it. The fields by the hospitals, the natatorium and the Surf will be reworked. Construction will take place over many years, from 2015-2021. For the fields, there may be concerns about overuse, traffic and parking, tall lights, outside athletic events, and astro-turf.

Plan for graduation to be held at Camp Randall are underway, and the university is working on a parking plan. The impact on the neighborhood will primarily be for the morning of graduation. Also, Dan and Shiva are reaching out to the new chancellor to suggest a possible reception at Olin House for her to meet with her neighbors, possibly in June.

7. May membership meeting. Karen Christianson suggested that the meeting offer a discussion of the racial divide in Madison, something that's being focused on all across the city. Shiva said she would be happy to facilitate finding appropriate panelists for such a discussion. Karen said she would appreciate a discussion with suggestions for further actions. Eric Steege suggested inviting the principal of West High since it is the most diverse place in the neighborhood. The board asked Shiva to go ahead and pursue her ideas for panelists. The May meeting date would ordinarily be May 28, but that can be flexible to accommodate the panelists.

8. Treasurer's report. Karen Christianson submitted a report showing a balance on 1/21/14 of \$27,780.47. The only expenses over \$500 in the last half of the year were printing and administration for the newsletter. Ron Rosner renewed his suggestion that there is no reason for the board to carry a high balance, and suggested that perhaps some of the money could be seed money or matching funds for the art project suggested tonight.

Minutes submitted by Marcia Vandercook