

**East Falls Community Council
Zoning and Land Use Committee
Minutes of August 17th, 2016 Meeting**

Committee members present:

Todd Baylson	JD May
Chris Rooney	Michelle Kleschick
Meg Greenfield	Bill Epstein

Committee members not present:

Matt McClure	LB Young
Jen Arnoldi	Mark Taubman
Emily Nichols	Paul Elia

-Gina Snyder from EFDC made a presentation regarding the Development Corporation's long term plan for a connector street between Ridge Ave and Kelly Drive, adjacent to 4442 Ridge Ave. 4442 Ridge Ave is owned by HOW Properties. Gina introduced Gary Jonas from HOW Properties.

-HOW Properties would like to partner with the neighborhood to improve the long under-utilized parking lot as temporary parking spaces in part for tenants of the apartment building they intend to build at 4442 Ridge, and partly as an asset to the community, with the long term intent of supporting the idea of a through street that would maintain some parking for both tenants and neighbors.

-EFDC supports the idea of improving the parking lot since it would benefit people wanting to visit the river, with the long term goal of having a through street built that would maintain some parking as well. The idea of a connector street was incorporated into the Lower Northwest Plan, prepared by City Planning.

-HOW's lot has an existing curb cut from Kelly drive. Castle Ringstetten (next door) also has a curb cut on Kelly Drive.

-HOW proposes 53 parking spots in the temporary lot. If/when the street is built, initial calculations have about 40 spaces remaining between the lot and street parking.

-HOW is proposing 105 parking spaces on their lot at 4442 Ridge, which meets the Zoning requirements for the 130+/- apartments that are proposed. Their parking lot will have an entrance/exit on Ridge Ave and also a driveway connecting it to the proposed temporary public/private parking lot. The temporary public/private parking lot will have an entrance/exit onto Ridge Ave.

-N- who lives adjacent to the lot, asked about how many and which trees would have to come down. They have been doing some maintenance of the long vacant lot and several of the trees are quite beautiful.

-HOW said they have initially planned to clear cut the lot and re-landscape in a way that made it most usable. They will further explore the site and see if there are any mature trees that would be worth saving, as taking a large tree out can be difficult, and saving them would benefit all.

-Gina mentioned that there is also a good chance that there are invasive species there that should be taken out as well.

-Meg Greenfield- Suggested a native approach with the landscaping. She also asked if there was any intention of including bike parking, seating, or community gathering space incorporated into the parking -> through street. Even if it meant losing a few parking spaces, the benefit of space for neighbors to mingle is a positive.

-Gina mentioned that across Kelly Drive from the parking lot, funds are being raised to install a boat ramp/river access point for human powered watercraft (canoes, kayaks, paddle boards etc)

-The boat launch has been a high priority of the neighborhood development coalition, that EFDC is in with other neighborhoods along the river between East Falls and the city.

-Encouraging more visitors to access the river from this point requires better vehicular circulation in the neighborhood since currently it is essentially one way through, and difficult to turn around as well as closer parking.

-With a connector street, it may be possible to remove some curb cuts from Kelly Drive and move them to the connector street, which could make Kelly safer with less places for cars to pull out.

-The current connector street plan idea is for one lane of traffic each direction, parking on each side, a bike lane on each side, and a sidewalk on each side. Some of the temporary parking lot will remain permanently on the side of the lot toward the HOW property.

-The plan is based on standard street dimensions, but needs to be designed by a traffic engineer. The merits/ possibility of traffic signals is still being worked out. EFDC doesn't have solid answers. The concept exists but traffic engineers need to officially design it and a traffic study needs to be done.

-N- commented that considering the existing curb cuts, traffic lights and the proposed curb cuts and intersection revisions, it is important to carefully consider the implications of this plan.

-Gina agreed that EFDC will work to make sure that the project only goes forward if it is a boost to the neighborhood.

- improving the existing parking lot now albeit temporarily makes sense since getting funding for the street development will take time and need funding

- In partnering with HOW, HOW is paying for some of the engineering work to help the project move forward.

-Bill Epstein reiterated that the new development of apartments and changes in the area should be considered and Meg's ideas regarding public space/ a plaza should be considered because it will further encourage the neighborhood development.

-Gina mentioned that the other EFDC parking lot, under the twin bridges, has improved that area and does so without having any public gathering areas. If a lot with paid spaces can cover the costs to maintain itself, it can be its own benefit to the community without incorporating other uses. EFDC will work with the community for the best outcome.

-HOW is okay with losing a few parking spaces if it is decided that community space/green space/bike parking spaces are more important than the parking spaces. BUT they don't want to pour too much money into something elaborate that hopefully will be ripped out sooner rather than later, to develop the street.

-EFDC doesn't control street design but wants to work for the best street they can get, and also connect people to the river and provide more pedestrian/ seating places near the river.

-TB asked HOW to see the Kelly facade of the building.

-HOW said a majority of the building is on stilts to keep the building well up out of the floodplain, with the parking below

-Commercial space is where it is because of the changes in building elevations, the floodplain etc.

-The curb cut in from Ridge, and the other one off Kelly goes under the building

-They tried to push the parking to less visible places and acknowledge that the retaining wall needs to be spruced up/better detailed.

-N- asked if the whole thing is really in the floodplain. HOW has seen floodplains designations be revised and wants to safeguard against the periodic reevaluation of floodplains

-HOW said building has green roof and a roof deck for residents. They want to have an affordable price point, more reasonable than some of the other development along Ridge.

-Not positive of the bedroom count/# of bedrooms per apartment yet

-Commercial space will be 2,700 s.f. +/-

- N- commented that traffic on Ridge is really bad at 5pm
 - HOW is doing a traffic study, and 130 units really won't have that much of an impact on the 30,000 or so cars that travel on Ridge during rush hour. He agrees that the traffic exists and can be a problem, but thinks that the development of the area outweighs the difficulties.
 - Gina chimed in that hopefully the street would help with some of the traffic issues.
- TB mentioned that HOW is presenting at this meeting because they have a Civic Design Review scheduled and that process requires an RCO meeting.
- TB asked about what variances are needed by HOW to get the parking lot developed
 - HOW doesn't feel comfortable going through with the project without the extra parking and would likely sell the property if the variance isn't granted.
 - EFDC would be the applicant for the parking lot and would be the leaseholder for the lot.
- N- asked about any money coming into the neighborhood from parking fees
 - EFDC sees the lot as being a free lot
 - Generally for lots leased from the City, any fees collected pay for maintenance and upkeep. The leaseholder can't make money on the lot. Any excess money would go to the City.
- MG- asked if the parking spaces under the building will be included in the rent or charged separately.
 - HOW said they do intend to charge for parking spaces, but with their projects in the neighborhood, they have all of their allotted spaces full, and if they had more spaces to rent, tenants would snap them up
- MG asked if a shuttle bus to the train station should be arranged with the other apartment buildings along Ridge.
 - Gina said that she doesn't like the idea of a shuttle because it discourages foot traffic along the business corridor which is more likely to support the businesses.
- N- asked if the roof deck would ever be open to the public
 - HOW said that it will generally be just for the residents of the building, but there may be times when it could be used for community events
- N- asked about seating near the boat ramp
 - EFDC is coordinating with Parks & Rec because they would be a big part of determining what kind of furnishings would be placed.
 - The furnishings need to be carefully selected because they will likely be underwater from flooding periodically
 - There are currently picnic tables there, but they have sunken into the ground

-N- asked about the water treatment plant in the vicinity

-It is an intake site and doesn't cause concern for small water craft.

-N- asked what the approximate height of the new building is

-HOW said it is about 60'.

-N- asked about timeline for development

-HOW would like to get started as soon as January.

-N- suggested HOW encourage/ posting positions to the neighbors first to get workers from the local community

-HOW said they like to engage with the communities they build in

-N- said he is a merchant in the neighborhood and is glad to see another parking lot that will benefit the neighborhood businesses and glad that HOW will be helping maintain it

-N- brought up concern about the Water Department requesting runoff mitigation since the existing parking lot is admittedly in poor repair

-HOW said they have \$250,000 set aside to deal with water collection if necessary, but in

initial conversations with the Water Department, the Water Department said they consider the lot to already be impervious pavement, so new mitigation remedies would be minor

-N- brought up that the lot could be made of pervious pavement etc, but when the street is developed, it will be impervious

-EFDC said that while this project is in the process, the parking lot could be temporary for a long time.

*HOW will be presenting updates to the project on October 19th, 2016.