

Newsletter

Seward Redesign / Seward Neighborhood Group / SCCA
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IN THIS ISSUE:

- p. 1 Week 1 Recap
- p. 2 – 3 What the experts are saying ... Transit-Oriented Design
- p. 4 notes from the SNG CDC meeting

TASKFORCE MEETING TIMES AND DATES

Visual Identity – Landscaping

Mondays at 6:30 PM
(skip Monday May 26th)

Movement

Tuesdays at noon

Community Involvement Crime and Safety

Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

Local Business Vitality/Gateways

Fridays at 8:30 AM

Seward Redesign
<http://www.sewardredesign.org>

Seward Civic & Commerce Association (SCCA)
<http://www.sewardredesign.org/SCCA-about.html>

Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG)
<http://www.sng.org/>

Week 1 Recap

By Emily Wergin,

In the first week, our four task forces faced a formidable challenge: begin developing a comprehensive vision for the Avenue with the Riverside Market Task Force recommendations and topics from the April Walks as a starting point.

A bit about what we had to work with:

- The Riverside Market Task Force created a document that outlines a thorough set of recommendations for a specific site. These recommendations are a well-developed community vision for one small slice of the Avenue.
- The April Walks gathered a collection of perceptions from all over the Avenue. This data can help us find blindspots that a study of one piece of the Avenue would leave out, but the rawness of the data (we presented it as a list of topics – everything from benches to LRT connections) definitely posed a challenge.



Our Task Forces have discussed the importance of community gathering spaces, like this one outside 2nd Moon (photographed during the Franklin Avenue walks)

Some highlights from each group:

The Visual Identity / Landscaping group saw the Avenue's sense of identity and place as central to their perspective. This task force suggests that our extensive arts community and value for green/sustainability issues are core elements of that identity. Neighborhood gathering places were also recognized as important components of our community. This group described Seward as a place for "all things cultural, edible and green."

Continued on page 4

TASKFORCE AGENDAS

Meeting #1: Review input to date and set the stage for vision and values

Meeting #2: Set Vision and Values

The goal for this week is to refine a working set of values/visions that will ground the strategies and test projects the task forces will recommend.

Core values that began emerging in the first week include:

- Good design
- Local-sourcing
- Multi-modal movement
- Stewardship and Safety
- Identity
- Sustainability

This week we'll edit, refine and define this list.

Meeting #3: Define Strategies

Meeting #4: Detail out test projects

Meeting #5: Finalize and refine, and Celebrate!



What The Experts Are Saying ...

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT or TOD is typically defined as more compact development within easy walking distance of transit stations (typically a half mile) that contains a mix of uses such as housing, jobs, shops, restaurants and entertainment . . . TOD is really about creating walkable, sustainable communities for people of all ages and incomes and providing more transportation and housing choices (including townhomes, apartments, live-work spaces, and lofts). These neighborhoods provide for a lifestyle that's convenient, affordable and active, and create places where our children can play and our parents can grow old comfortably.

(from Page 4 of "TOD101: Why Transit-Oriented Development and Why Now?" This brochure can be downloaded from the Reconnecting America website. Print copies are also available at the Seward Redesign office.)

What is Transit-Oriented Development?

By Emily Wergin

Transit-Oriented Development is a pretty straightforward concept (despite the lengthy definition above). TOD is the hip planner-jargon used to refer to **good urban design** near public transit stops.

TOD recognizes that the transportation choices available to us are shaped by how our neighborhoods are designed. Transit stops are nuclei that focus development; however, walkability (how easy and enjoyable it is for people to navigate an area on foot) is the base component of TOD ... not the transit itself. This is because most people who use transit (in an urban environment) walk to and from the stop.

A walkable place, even without the presence of a transit stop, reflects good urban design. An area around a transit stop that is not walkable is not good urban design, no matter how frequent the transit service.

Good urban design is **pedestrian seductive** (to use a "technical term" introduced by Alan Hoffman*). A pedestrian seductive place induces walking by being so alluring that people choose to walk there. The best local examples include Grand Avenue in St. Paul or parts of Uptown.

The core question that TOD hopes to answer is, how to make places nicer to walk?

Of the many factors that influence walkability, there are three that make the biggest impact. They are: activity, variety and distance.

Activity. People like to walk where other people are. Sidewalk seating, benches, and people lingering outside make a place active. An active place makes a street interesting (more people-watching opportunities) safer (more "eyes on the street"), and helps build community (more informal interactions as people bump into one another.)

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS!

Research for this "What the Expert's Are Saying" section is made possible through funding from the **McKnight Foundation** and the **Phillip's Family Foundation**.

For more in depth TOD information, check the **Twin Cities TOD Toolkit**, available online at:

www.reconnectingamerica.org/static/twincitiestodtoolkit/index.html

To read more about creating walkable and bikeable streets and communities, go to:

www.walkable.org

Newsletter

Variety. A variety of colors, textures, materials and landscaping help create a place that is appealing and enjoyable to walk. A variety of small details make it possible to see new things, even after you've walked the same stretch of a street many times.

Distance. When a mixture of different destinations (stores, restaurants, services, homes, etc.) are within a short distance, it is faster for people to run errands, commute and/or socialize on foot. Other factors that contribute to walking distance are the size of blocks and frequency of intersections. Small blocks with frequent intersections make a variety of more direct walking routes possible.

In short, streets with lots of destinations in a compact, compelling area with lots of activity make great urban spaces. When placed near a transit stop, the synergy between foot traffic and people arriving by public transportation can make the place really thrive.

**Alan Hoffman is an urban designer who recently gave a presentation in the Twin Cities about TOD. For more about his work, see www.missiongrouponline.com.*

Is TOD relevant in our neighborhood?

The two images at the right were taken during the Franklin Avenue Walks.

What does your experience of these places tell you about good urban design and walkable places?

Based on your experience, would you modify the walkable place criteria in any way?



Franklin Avenue near Welna Hardware



The intersection at Franklin, Minehaha and Cedar Avenues

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Newsletter

Week 1 Recap – continued from page 1

Members of the **Movement Task Force** strongly value having basic goods and services accessible within the neighborhood. This requires viable local businesses that can be accessed by a range of transportation types (walking, biking, bus, car, etc.) Connections are also important to this group ... How can Franklin be better connected to the rest of the neighborhood? Also, how can we become better connected to our neighboring communities?

Community Involvement / Crime and Safety recognized that a safe community brings more people out, which creates a safer community, which brings more people out, etc. This group hopes to explore how events and activities that celebrate our local businesses can promote that safety/activity cycle. Of specific concern is events, activity and design elements that make the Avenue safer at night.

Like the Visual Identity group, **Local Business Vitality / Gateways** also recognized identity as being very important. This group is interested in better connecting the identity of Franklin Ave to the identity of Seward as a whole. Franklin should be perceived as a comfortable, safe, easily accessible place. Locally owned businesses play a large role in the community because they attract visitors who may end up wanting to work or live here.

For the second series of task force meetings, we will be exploring the common themes that are emerging across these four groups. Each task force will review, critique and edit a draft of emerging core values. By the end of Week 2, we hope to have a working community vision that can be used to develop strategies for making Franklin a place that reflects those values.

SNG Community Development Committee (CDC)

May 12, 2007

We discussed Franklin Avenue Planning at last week's Community Development Committee meeting. The CDC meets monthly to discuss transportation, housing and business issues in Seward.

We asked this group to contribute their thoughts to the developing vision/values for Franklin Avenue. Here are some of the topics that were discussed:

This group talked about access to Franklin Avenue businesses. It is important that drivers be easily able to get from the highway to destination businesses. However, since our portion of Franklin is narrow and can only handle so much car traffic, we need to do a good job of creating safe ways for bike and pedestrians to travel on the Avenue – especially since a growing number of residents are using bikes and feet as their primary modes of transportation. Thriving businesses on Franklin Avenue is important to this community because it allows residents to get things done in the neighborhood.

How Franklin looks also contributes to the strength of Franklin Avenue businesses. We want visitors that come in from outside the neighborhood to feel safe here.

(We hope to get Franklin Avenue Planning on the agenda of all regularly occurring community meetings. In the next month, will attend all SNG committee meetings and the regular resident's meetings at Seward Towers East and West. To invite us to participate in another meeting, please contact Katya: Katya@sewardredesign.org)