

Southgate Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee Comments on The Garden District Development

Prepared for the City of Spokane, Agency and Department Comment Period
July 30, 2018

Overview

The Southgate Neighborhood Council (SNC) Land Use Committee (LUC) reviewed the documents presented on the City's website based on our Southgate Neighborhood Connectivity Plan, the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan, Spokane Municipal Code.

The documents provided for review do not seem to reflect the current state of the development proposal, and there was disagreement between some of the documents to be reviewed. Specifically, the site plan included on the website is only one of two site plans being considered by the Hearing Examiner for this PUD and does not reflect the original version that includes the connection of Crestline to Southeast Boulevard via 31st Avenue. At the same time, the Trip Generation Letter included with the documents does not reflect the alternative version of the site plan that does not include a connection of Crestline to Southeast Boulevard making it hard or impossible for reviewers to assess and compare the potential traffic impacts related to this development.

That being said, the consensus of the Southgate Neighborhood Council Land Use Committee is to favor the original site plan with full multi-modal connectivity from Crestline Street to Southeast Boulevard via 31st Avenue in support the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan, Lincoln Heights District Center Master Plan, Southgate Neighborhood Connectivity Plan, Spokane Bike Master Plan, and Spokane Municipal Code. However, the Committee believes traffic calming should be maximized to the greatest extent possible on this new road segment and continuing to the south to mitigate automobile traffic impacts south of the development.

Crestline Street Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Many comments received by the Southgate Neighborhood Council prior to the Design Review of this PUD discussed concern about potential traffic impacts of this new development. Especially impact to Crestline Street south of the development. The City has included Crestline as a Major Collector Arterial through the property connecting to Southeast Boulevard. This designation, while criticized by some residents and the developer, is an extension of Crestline's designation as Collector Arterial from 37th south to the City limits in the Spokane Municipal Code since at least 2008 (SMC 12.08.040). This designation is reflected in the Southgate Neighborhood Connectivity Plan adopted by the City in 2012 that notes the street is a Collector Arterial and shows the neighborhood's desire to enhance it with bike/pedestrian facilities heading north into Lincoln Heights. More critical than the designation of the road is the character and functionality of its design. For context (and possible character comparison) Crestline has the same arterial designation as 44th Avenue between Regal Street and Freya Street in Southgate. That road is a 2-lane, 25mph road with a curvilinear design and bike/pedestrian facilities along both sides of the road. An option may be to consider connecting Crestline to Southeast Boulevard as originally proposed, but end the arterial designation at 37th Avenue designating Crestline north of that point a residential street. This is done in other neighborhoods around Spokane providing connectivity, but providing street calming by diverting traffic to other designated arterials.

Regardless of Crestline's designation, the street's design inside the development as well as south of the development between 32nd Avenue and 37th Avenue needs to be updated in a similar fashion using the City's policy of prioritizing pedestrians first, transit users second, and autos third. Neighbors to the south of the project have valid concerns about traffic impacts and lack of multi-modal bike/pedestrian facilities along Crestline whether Crestline connects to Southeast Boulevard or not. The developer has an opportunity and the City a responsibility to provide those missing links as mitigation for the impact created by the development.

This development of missing multi-modal infrastructure will provide better connectivity for residents of the new development, better safety for the existing residents (especially school children who walk to Hamblen Elementary), and fulfills an envisioned bike/pedestrian link from the Southgate Neighborhood Connectivity Plan between Southgate and the Lincoln Heights shopping and transit amenities across Southeast Boulevard.

Conclusion

In addition to the mitigations already proposed by Greenstone in previous public presentations and documents (separated sidewalks, bike lanes, enhanced pedestrian crossings), the City and developer should consider further traffic calming measures within the development such as speed tables at pedestrian crossings and intersections, roundabouts at intersections to slow traffic, and on-street parking along Crestline and 31st Avenue to further narrow the road and slow vehicular traffic. All of these concepts are supported by the Comp Plan and Municipal Code.

The SNC Land Use Committee also believes the City and developer should add traffic calming features along Crestline to the south between the edge of the development and at least Thurston Avenue. Features like separated sidewalks, bulb-outs, and enhanced pedestrian crossings on the school route can maintain the traffic-calming design within the proposed PUD into the adjacent neighborhood. The lack of pedestrian and bike accommodations along this section of Crestline does require attention and would help the development and City further achieve Comp Plan and Neighborhood Plan goals in providing Complete Streets, improving safety along routes to school, and improving active transportation modes between residences to the south of the development and the Lincoln Heights District Center.

Finally, Southgate would request that a new Trip Generation Letter be provided prior to the open public comment period that shows the traffic impact of the development should Crestline not be extended to Southeast Boulevard and a comparison of the two scenarios be made available for residents to easily understand the differences between the two. Furthermore, until the Hearing Examiner has made a determination regarding the PUD design, the City should present both versions of the site plan so residents can have a full and transparent view of the proposal.

Southgate looks forward to further discussions with the developer, city staff, and Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Council about how to realize the goals and vision of our plans as they relate to this development opportunity.