

NOTES ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

By Clare Murphy with additional notes from Kira Lueders

Kira [Lueders] and I attended the Public Meeting on the preliminary development plan for the former Kaiser Permanente property last night at the Wine & Co. restaurant. The property is actually two lots separated by Brainard Ave. One lot is the office building at the corner of Summit and Knowles and the other is currently a surface parking lot across Brainard Ave from the rear of the office building.

As usual, the developer's team made presentations with visual displays of the area and preliminary graphics of the site plans. Tom Brault is listed on the County Planning Department's website as the "Contract Purchaser" for this project. He was there last night and very much in charge. There were no handouts with the names of the presenters or the details that they described.

The basic design of the project is for two, five story buildings, one on each lot, and totally residential. There will be 75-100 units, with a split of 1 and 2 bedrooms, with numbers of each to be determined by the level of interest. A contentious point was a concern that some will be airbandb units. Brault said the decision to make them condos or apartments hasn't be made. I spoke to one of the construction guys after the meeting and he said it's pretty certain that the existing building will be demolished and a new one constructed. The exterior of the buildings will be brick similar to the plan for the new mixed-use building across Summit for this project.

I don't think the presenters, the building architect, landscape architect and the civil engineer for the project understood who their audience was and that made for a raucous meeting. The architect and landscape architect made several comments about meeting with the TOK Mayor and Council to inform them of the preliminary plan and wanting to keep the TOK "Gateway" beautiful. After the presentation was finished, I asked the presenters why they met with TOK since this project's property isn't in TOK and other communities would be more directly affected by development. That started an outcry from different people directed at the presenters. One person was very loud and agitated and, at one point, said to me "that we're going to stop this, sister".

The major complaint was from residents of Knowles Ave and Kensington Estates who have serious flooding problems and blame poor storm-water drainage. They're convinced that the County is not dealing with existing problems and allowing too much development in the area. Brault, the developer, contended that after construction, there will be an improvement rather than add to the problems of homes on Knowles. He blamed the County for not managing the storm water. He said problems for residents on Knowles had diminished after he installed pipes for his Wine building, but then recurred because pipes that were supposed to be 13" according to County plans from the 60s turned out to be only 8" pipes. In contradiction, one man who lives on Knowles said water problems had actually gotten worse since the Wine building was built. Brault said the County would install larger pipes when the apartment house is built.

Another complaint was too much residential development, particularly rentals, and not enough commercial. Brault answered each complaint and wants us to understand that we're "all neighbors" and we're all better off with his developments. And he made the usual push for the Summit Ave Extension.

After the meeting, the landscape architect told me that they didn't really meet with TOK about this particular project but just mentioned it in a meeting about other developments. Brault said the same thing in reply to my question during the meeting.

The project is in the "pre-application" stage and no documents have been filed with Planning. Planning has assigned a Plan Number but not a Reviewer yet.