

WHITTIER

THE INTERNATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

2020 Annual Report



MESSAGE FROM THE 2020-2021 BOARD CHAIR



The Uprising that followed the murder of George Floyd and the disparities underscored by the pandemic, demanded the Whittier Alliance take a much more critical, anti-oppression lens to our strategic plan focus areas: Community Engagement, Housing, Businesses, Institutions and other Orgs, & Organizational Sustainability. Numerous conversations and meetings led to powerful projects and new commitments, including understanding that:

- to *inspire and equip the Whittier community to be good stewards of the neighborhood*, we must make a clear stance that unhoused folks living in Whittier are our neighbors and our members, who deserve dignity and respect;
- to *protect and expand the variety of housing options in Whittier, for people at every life stage and economic condition*, meant during a pandemic, we would provide direct financial support to our neighbors struggling under injustice;
- to *support the vibrant and distinctive mix of Whittier businesses, institutions, and other organizations*, required walking all business corridors in the neighborhood to ask owners directly what they needed in moments of crisis, without requesting their time and energy in return;
- to *develop the institutional power necessary to achieve our priorities and reliably serve the neighborhood for another 40 years*, we had to deepen the bylaws revision project started in 2019, to ensure we were eradicating as many barriers to participation as possible; we needed to identify an anti-racist consultant to partner with in the continuing review of our guiding documents, policies and internal operations.

Whittier is made up of courageous and compassionate people. And the Whittier Alliance staff and board are no exception. I am inspired by how the neighborhood and the organization moved through the challenges of this past year. The Whittier Alliance remained committed to becoming a more accessible and inclusive organization, while reallocating resources and reassessing priorities to meet the emergency needs of residents and businesses in the neighborhood. A special thank you to Kaley Brown, Whittier Alliance's Executive Director, for her steadfast leadership and dedication during a year of overwhelming uncertainty.

The Whittier Alliance will continue on the journey of becoming a more equitable, more just organization that supports and connects members of our Whittier community, with a focus on those most often excluded in our society. We are grateful for all the volunteers and community members on this journey with us.

In solidarity,

CYNDI HOVEY

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As many of you would probably agree, it has felt difficult to find the words that could come close to adequately describing everything that 2020 brought to the neighborhood, to our city -- to the entire country and globe. What I can say for certain is that the fear, loss and uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the collective trauma of George Floyd's murder was juxtaposed at every turn with neighbors taking care of each other.

Grocery deliveries, stimulus check redistribution, mutual aid sites, plywood installation, and so much more - the Whittier community showed up for those in need and continues to demonstrate how to put in the work towards realizing the kind of connected and engaged neighborhood necessary for everyone to thrive.

This year pushed us to find creative ways to carry out our mission, to build new and maintain existing relationships with our neighbors and partners, and to constantly mute and unmute our Zoom microphones. I'm endlessly proud of our staff and the Board of Directors who supported me, one another, and countless other community members; we reached many neighbors for the very first time this year, and I look forward to building upon that momentum into the years ahead.

In solidarity,

KALEY BROWN



BOARD OF DIRECTORS SERVING IN 2020

Officers

Cyndi Hovey, Chair
Brigid Higgins, Vice-Chair
Aldona Martinka, Secretary
Nate Broadbridge, Treasurer

Committee Chairs / Reps

Ukasha Dakane, Business Association/Nonprofit
Mariana Arriaza, Business Association/Nonprofit
Katie Heimer, Business Association/For Profit
Justin Kader, Community Issues Chair
Stephanie Brown, Housing Issues Chair

At-Large Members

Erin Sjoquist
Michael Perez
Abigail Speller
Nate Rastetter
Christine Popowski
Daniel Perez
Shinjan Sengupta
Samantha Pree-Gonzalez
Jen Kader



MEMBERS OF STAFF

Kaley Brown, Executive Director
Marcus VanderSanden, Business Outreach Coordinator
Fartun Ismail, Community Outreach Coordinator

STRATEGIC PLAN CONNECTION

The Whittier Alliance began developing a new strategic plan in early 2017, organizing over 15 engagement opportunities for direct engagement and feedback. Through focus groups in multiple languages, issue-specific workshops, and online surveying, four priority areas for 2019–2024 rose to the surface: community engagement; housing; small businesses, institutions, and other organizations; and organizational sustainability.

Goals and objectives for each priority area were developed by the community through issue-specific workshops in 2018. The strategic decisions in the plan will drive work plans, budget, board agendas, existing committees and new committees and their charges, and accountability to the community. **The entire plan and specific objectives for each priority area can be viewed at whittieralliance.org/guiding-documents or provided upon request to WA staff.**

Keep an eye out for the corresponding icons below throughout this report to track our progress!

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2024



Community Engagement: *Inspire and equip the Whittier community to be good stewards of the neighborhood and to make the change they'd like to see.*

- Be a warm and welcoming organization to the full Whittier community.
- Actively build awareness of how to participate in WA activities and connect with fellow community members.
- Help community members develop the civic, political, and grassroots experience/skills they need to make real change and have real influence.
- Recruit participants and leaders that reflect and represent the broad diversity of the neighborhood, from one-time volunteers to the Board of Directors.



Housing: *Protect and expand the variety of housing options in Whittier for people at every life stage and economic condition.*

- Increase the diversity, accessibility and affordability of Whittier housing.
- Serve as a resource hub for all residents and property owners/managers.
- Establish and promote a clear, strategic vision for Whittier's built environment.



Businesses, Institutions, and other Organizations: *Support the vibrant and distinctive mix of Whittier businesses, institutions, and other organizations.*

- Promote Whittier and its destinations.
- Support small, independent, locally- and family-owned businesses at all price points.
- Connect Whittier-area businesses and organizations with one another and the broader community.
- Serve as an effective resource for Whittier-area businesses and organizations navigating City or County processes and regulations.



Organizational Sustainability: *Develop the institutional power necessary to achieve our priorities and reliably serve the neighborhood for another 40 years.*

- Align plan strategies with greater financial stability, diversification, and organizational independence.
- Develop culture and procedures among Board, Staff, and volunteers that encourage institutional health and sustainable growth.
- Increase awareness of Whittier Alliance and what the organization does.

SHOWING UP FOR COMMUNITY



Whittier Emergency Monetary Relief Fund: Whittier families have been hit hard by the pandemic. Whittier Alliance launched an emergency fund to aid neighbors with rent assistance, monthly bill pay, food, and other household essentials. been able to distribute over \$34,000 to 87 applicants and will continue fundraising for this need. In 2020, 99% of recipients are cost-burdened (spending 30% or more of their monthly income on housing) renters; 96% identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, or a person of color), immigrant, or refugee; 86% of households make less than \$30,000 per year; 70% speak a primary language other than English; 52% are a family of 4 or larger. Small dollar donations by many neighbors in conjunction with a \$10,000 gift from Minneapolis College of Art and Design directly supported neighbors stay in their homes, keep the lights on, and feed their families over the last year.

Community Healing through the Arts

Whittier Alliance, our partner organizations, and dedicated volunteers provided direct assistance to many small businesses in securing plywood and installing, uninstalling, hauling, storing, and relocating plywood murals in the days and months following the murder of George Floyd. WA secured grant funding from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council for a partnership with Save the Boards and Memorialize the Movement, two Black-led community collectives, to support long-term preservation and the goal of ensuring that this physical representation of the moment stays in the hands of the Black community.

The preservation work will include everything from photographing and cataloging the more than 800 pieces of plywood that have been collected to date, digitizing the records, research and networking to identify artists, and creating an online platform to house the digitized catalog of pieces to ensure the artwork remains accessible by the general public. Whittier Alliance will also be partnering with Save the Boards and Memorialize the movement on an in-person exhibition near the anniversary of Floyd's death with a sampling of some of the murals that were collected from the Lyn-Lake area.



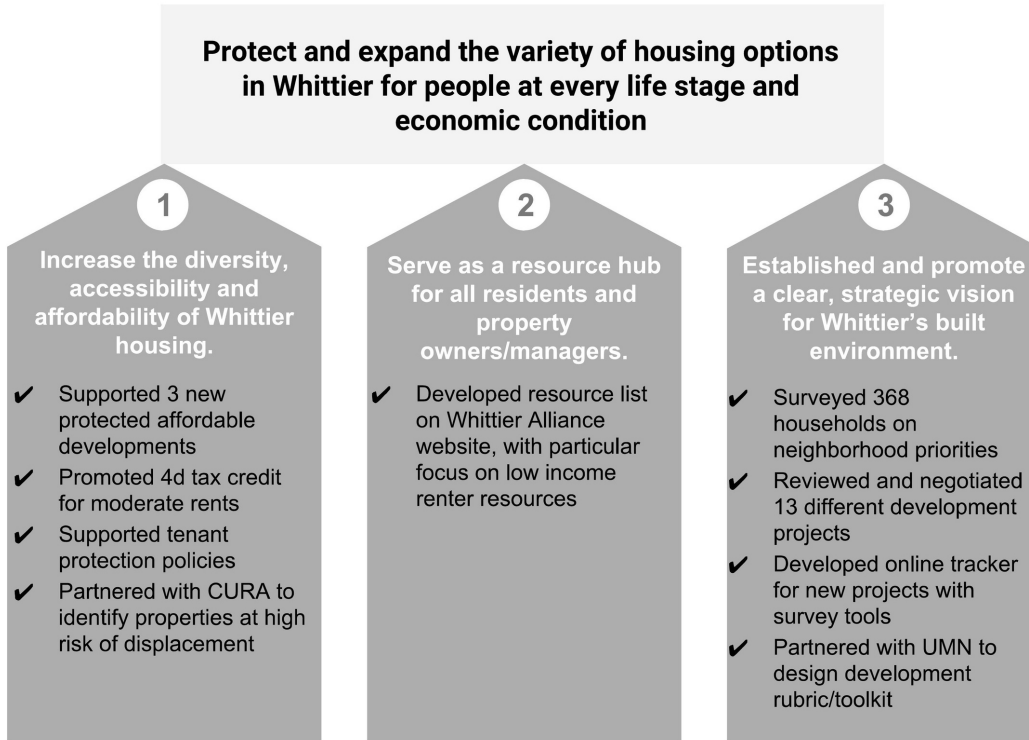
Support for Neighborhood Food and Household Supplies Distribution

Over the summer, a number of volunteer-run sites popped up in Whittier, offering free food essentials and household supplies to community members with limited resources. WA provided support to community leaders who merged operations to form Community Aid Network (CANMN) and ultimately continued operations through the end of the year and into 2021 out of Children's Theatre Company available space. WA supported with research on distribution locations, considerations for fiscal agency, volunteer recruitment, and equipment to conduct their distribution work.



HOUSING ISSUES COMMITTEE

As this Committee began its third year of work, a recap of the work completed to that point was overviewed with the community. **So, what have we done so far?**



2020 Areas of Focus:

- **Anti-displacement Strategy & Policy:** We continued to build on anti-displacement work started in 2019 through advocacy and organizing with the goal of bringing to life the vision of a diverse community that stands for and with each other.
- **Developer Engagement:** We are carrying forward into 2021 the work so far to refine a Developer Engagement Toolkit with a scoring system to help evaluate and respond to proposed development projects, as well as to communicate the priorities and vision for Whittier's built environment.
- **Kmart Site Visioning & Engagement:** Committee members have been meeting regularly to plan strategies for ensuring that the public process around the once in a generation opportunity with the Kmart site redevelopment is equitable and centers the voices of those most immediately impacted by the changes.
- **Unhoused Neighbor Support:** Committee members led direct engagement with unhoused neighbors, connected with nearby housed neighbors, and sought out strategies to provide meaningful support to those most vulnerable, such as crowd-funded portable restrooms.

Housing Process Navigation: WA began a new program to help immigrant and refugee families navigate the rental housing process to find a new home in the Whittier neighborhood. Our Community Outreach Coordinator, Fartun Ismail, provided one-on-one assistance for clients with language and cultural barriers, transportation barriers, past trauma, past evictions, a lack of family/friend network, and/or other challenges. In total, our team helped 30 families stay in or relocate to Whittier or an adjacent neighborhood in 2020.



SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

Spend Big on Small Campaign: With four vibrant commercial corridors playing a key role in our community fabric, WA created the Spend Big On Small campaign to encourage community members to buy local whenever possible to help carry our neighborhood businesses through to the other side of pandemic closures. It established a gift card incentive for folks willing to snap a picture of their Whittier business purchase, share and tag on social media, then receive a gift card to another Whittier business of their choice courtesy of WA. An artist of color was selected to design various digital media assets that businesses and other organizations could utilize on their own social media channels with options for "Eat Street", "Whittier", or "Lyn-Lake" depending on how the business or organization identifies with their location.

Revamping the Eat Street and Whittier Neighborhood Dining Guide: WA worked this fall with a group of students from MCAD's Entrepreneurial Studies department on a full redesign of the Whittier Neighborhood and Eat Street Dining Guide. At its core, the guide is meant to serve as a promotional piece for all of Whittier and Eat Street's many culinary options, elevating the smaller, lesser-known spots to the same plane as the established restaurants with broader marketing capabilities. Some additions were made to this year's design to make the printed piece more interactive, encouraging recipients to utilize it as a checklist when they've visited a new place. We also aimed to expand what it meant to dine in the Whittier neighborhood by including a list of alternative food resources to help community members find the food shelves, free food and household supplies sites, and hot meals available to them each week. The guide was distributed to roughly 8,500 addresses, both residential and commercial, in the neighborhood in early 2021.

Mitigating Commercial Displacement: WA partnered with graduate students at the University of Minnesota's Master in Urban and Regional Planning program to develop tools and actionable strategies to proactively combat future commercial displacement on Nicollet Avenue and test research methods. In 2021, we will continue into the next phase of this work with a grant from the City of Minneapolis' Business District Support program, focusing on small business security on blocks surrounding the Kmart site.

BIPOC Small Business Rebuild Grants: WA secured a grant from the Minneapolis Foundation in partnership with other neighborhood and business organizations in Lyn-Lake to provide grants to BIPOC-owned, small businesses who sustained physical damage during the June uprising following George Floyd's murder. We established paid and volunteer support to ensure that our Spanish, Somali, and Vietnamese business owners had access to this opportunity no matter their preferred language or grant application experience. Over \$92,000 was distributed to 25 selected applicants, and others were connected with pro bono technical assistance providers for help with digital marketing, insurance claims, legal questions, and other needs.



OTHER EVENTS, PROGRAMS, & PROJECTS IN 2020



2020 Census Education & Outreach: WA drove outreach, education, and multilingual support to dispel misinformation and make sure our neighbors were counted in the 2020 Census. Our team hosted pop-up tables at culturally relevant locations in Whittier throughout the summer and fall, providing one-on-one assistance to more than 40 families in completing their responses.



Voter Education & Registration: WA led voter registration efforts in Whittier, assisting countless community members in getting registered for the first time, requesting absentee ballots, looking up polling information, and other key pieces to getting out the vote.

Façade Improvement Grants: Continued to administer a City of Minneapolis matching grant program aiming to revitalize and maintain neighborhood business districts through storefront improvements.



Improved Wayfinding at the Nicollet Ave Greenway Entrance: Partnered with Midtown Greenway Coalition and Hennepin County Midtown Works to hire a local artist to create improved wayfinding to/from Eat Street at the Nicollet Avenue on and off ramp to the Greenway.

Community Organics Program: Continued subsidizing an organics drop site at the Wedge Table for residents living in multi-family buildings who do not have access to municipal organics recycling.

Community Organizing Training: Partnered with the Neighborhood Organizing and Leadership Program at the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) to do some foundational skill-building on strategic base building and relationship development in community-based work with a group of volunteers.

Neighborhoods 2020: Served in a leadership role for city-wide organizing efforts focused on securing a larger overall pool of funding for neighborhood organizations in conjunction with the City of Minneapolis' process to finalize a new funding and program structure for the neighborhood organization system.

Mobile Iftar in partnership with Provision Community

Restaurant: In 2020 we have celebrated Ramadan differently with our Muslim neighbors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with Provision Community Restaurant we were able to deliver halal meals for Iftar to more than 30 families in Whittier Neighborhood. It was a way to wish our neighbors Eid Mubarak even though we could not sit together this year.



FINANCES



Each month, the Finance Committee reviews the income and expenses of the Whittier Alliance. The financial report is then forwarded to the Board for final review. All incoming funds and invoices are identified with an account number to track against the annual budget. Expenses are coded to the appropriate funding sources. Professional oversight of the Whittier Alliance financials is provided by Petersen Professionals, CPA.

Balance Sheet: January 1 -- December 31, 2020

Assets

Checking/Savings - \$556,685.75

Accounts Receivable - \$62,476.77

Total Assets - \$619,162.52

Liabilities

Deferred Revenue--NRP - \$10,000.00

Deferred Revenue--CPP - \$10,000.00

Total Liabilities - \$20,000.00

Equity

Net Assets - \$589,003.13

Net Income - \$9,075.34

Total Equity - \$598,078.47

Total Liabilities & Equity - \$619,162.52

Income

CPP - \$143,493.22

NRP Consolidated 1016 - \$72,510.62

Grants - \$130,663.04

Fundraising - \$34,660.23

Non-Cash Donations - \$0.00

Program Service Revenue - \$0.00

Interest - \$3,865.53

Total Income - \$385,192.62

Expenses

Grants - \$96,418.92

Salaries/Wages - \$148,313.96

Simple IRA Match - \$4,405.29

Payroll Taxes - \$16,820.71

Staff/Volunteer Recognition - \$312.18

Payroll Services - \$2,304.17

Background Checks - \$0.00

Professional/Contract Services - \$44,564.57

Office Supplies/Equipment - \$3,187.31

Food/Beverage - \$537.01

Phone/Internet - \$2,254.63

Postage & Mailing Services - \$3,394.33

Bank Fees - \$25.00

Printing & Copying - \$5,332.53

Rent & Parking - \$10,620.00

Utilities - \$277.69

Travel/Meeting Expenses - \$191.08

Insurance - \$2,069.23

Staff Development - \$0.00

Membership Dues - \$300.00

Advertising - \$1,379.00

Emergency Community Outreach - \$33,384.07

Misc. Expense - \$0.00

Tax Filing - \$25.62

Total Expense - \$376,117.30

Gross Profit - \$385,192.64

NET INCOME - \$9,075.34

FUNDRAISING

The Whittier Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; and all donations, including those in-kind, are tax-deductible. Many thanks to the residents, businesses, friends, and advocates who supported Whittier Alliance with a financial or in-kind contribution in 2020. Although our primary source of income comes from the City of Minneapolis, we rely on generous donations from our community to fund and grow our community-focused events and programming.

2020 Financial Contributors

Abbie Speller
Alisa Coddington
Andrew Hovel
Anna Grelson
Anna Harriss
Anna Wienke
Anne Thompson
Annika Bowers
Anonymous
b. Resale
Beth Millea
Brave New Media
Cat Hammond
Christine Popowski
Christos Greek Restaurant
Claire Zabel
Crystal Nichols
Cyndi Hovey
Cynthia Aegerter
Dana Fox
Danny Brown
David Miner
Dayna Liffey
Diane Lovett
Donna Moreno
The Electric Fetus

Eliza Ann Green
Ella Kampelman
Eric Reich
Flowers by Miss Bertha
Hazel Bidwell
Jacalyn and Dan Millea
Janet Preus
Janice Geis
Jen and Justin Kader
Jill Hamilton
Jo Ann Musumeci
Joan Millea
Julian Ward
Kaley Brown
Kate Brennan Hall
Kathryn Nettleman & Charles Block
Kylene Guse
Lake Wine & Spirits
Laura Svec
Lee Hurton
Lowry Hill East Neighborhood
Association
Lyndale Neighborhood Association
Mallorey Lazzarini

Marc Lauer
Michael Millea
Michael Perez
Michael Wambach
Minneapolis College of Art and
Design
Natascha Shawver
Nicole Weiler
Patricia Clarke
Paul Wilmes
Rebecca Patton
Rebekah Schulz-Jackson
Riley Kidd
Sarah Elfering
Sharon Koelblinger
Stephani Pescitelli
Stephanie Brown
Tara Dawson
Willow Kreibich
Zach Levonian

No in-kind contributions were made in 2020.





WHITTIER

THE INTERNATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

MISSION

The Whittier Alliance is dedicated to building a flourishing and distinctive neighborhood

VISION

A world class neighborhood



Whittier Alliance

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