

WHITTIER

THE INTERNATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

2021 Annual Report



MESSAGE FROM THE 2021-2022 BOARD CHAIR



Thanks to the unwavering leadership of Kaley Brown and the dedication of the Whittier Alliance's (WA) staff, board and volunteers, there is exciting, impactful neighborhood work that you will read about in this Annual Report... or that you perhaps have helped bring to fruition! Thank you, thank you, thank you! I will take this opportunity to focus on some behind the scenes work of the board guided by the fourth pillar of WA's Strategic Plan: *Organizational Sustainability - develop the institutional power necessary to achieve our priorities and reliably serve the neighborhood for another 40 years.*

One of my priorities as Chair has been for the organization to look inward, lifting up internal reflection and change, in order to be an authentic guide for community engagement in the Whittier neighborhood. Over the last three years, the Executive Committee has implemented board strategies to encourage teamwork and shared purpose, while nurturing an organizational culture that appreciates differences, embraces anti-racism and prioritizes representative participation over the status quo. Information sharing and transparency is now implemented in ways that better support all board members to have what they need to be confident in their ability to contribute at board meetings, make informed decisions and take on leadership roles.

It has been one year since we entered our partnership with the YWCA Minneapolis Racial Justice team, which has allowed us to take deeper dives into the organization's internal policies, procedures and practices. We've worked tirelessly to bring WA personnel policies up to date, integrating anti-racism and equity approaches that support the organization and center employees' experience, while meeting city funding requirements. There's more to do! We look forward to continue working with the YWCA to build the WA's diversity, equity and inclusion capacity, awareness and skills to help serve the neighborhood for decades to come, expand ways of operating to be responsive and supportive to the diverse members of Whittier, and become a leader for neighborhood organizing for justice in Minneapolis.

As I said last year: *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



Hello neighbors! 2021 marked the 3rd year of our 5 year strategic plan, and as you will read, we took some significant strides forward toward realizing a number of the bigger picture goals in each of the four categories of Community Engagement, Housing, Support for Small Businesses and Other Organizations, and Organizational Sustainability. From anti-displacement research with small businesses, hiring a full-time VISTA Tenant Organizer through a new partnership with HOME Line or implementing a new internal database system, we have been trying new things in search of the most impactful ways to do our work in support of and alongside our community.

As we look to the years ahead, the City's redevelopment of the former Kmart site at Lake and Nicollet further raises the stakes for our neighbors already feeling the pressure of rising residential and commercial rents. There is no shortage of work to do, but we hold momentum on key initiatives to reach many of the goals we set out to tackle. In 2023, we will begin an in-depth evaluation of our progress against our strategic plan to set the stage for the next one to be approved at our 2024 Annual Meeting. Thanks to everyone who has shown up in so many different ways, big and small, over the years to get us here!

With gratitude,

KALEY BROWN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS SERVING IN 2021

Officers

Cyndi Hovey, Chair
Kameron Brodie, Vice-Chair
Nate Broadbridge, Secretary
Sydney Burroughs, Treasurer & Business Representative (Nonprofit)

Committee Chairs / Business Reps

Allison Bross-White, Business Representative (For-profit)
Stephanie Brown, Business Representative (Nonprofit)
Nick Hutchinson, Community Engagement Chair
George Rishmawi, Housing and Land Use Chair

Resident Members

Brigid Higgins	Erika Boelk Tapia
Nate Rastetter	Erin Sjoquist
Daniel Perez	Aldona Martinka
Shinjan Sengupta	Abigail Speller
Danny Villars	
Kate Davis	
Katie Heimer	
Deja' Jendro	



MEMBERS OF STAFF

Kaley Brown, Executive Director
Marcus VanderSanden, Community Engagement Manager
Fartun Ismail, Community Outreach Specialist
Oscar Nieves Rubio, AmeriCorps VISTA Tenant Organizer
Robb Larson, Communications & Admin Associate

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.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Eat Street Fall Arts Fest: WA brought our Whittier community together at our newly acquired property at 2116 Nicollet Ave with the Eat Street Fall Arts Fest, featuring a local artists and makers market, live music and dance performances, mural painting, and hands-on activities from Children's Theatre Company and Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Hundreds of community members enjoyed a beautiful October day, reconnecting with one another after a year and a half of the pandemic. Many of the artists selling their work were current students or alumni of MCAD, and a few of them were doing so for the very first time. A special thanks to our partners at Brave New Media, Creation Audio, The Prodigal Public House, Pimento Jamaican Kitchen, Children's Theatre Company, MCAD, and Mia.

Spotlight on the Community Engagement Committee: In the past year, the previously dormant Community Issues Committee was reestablished as the Community Engagement Committee, and much of our work has focused on getting things up and running again with a new identity and a new set of goals. Some of our biggest successes of the past year have been in the area of civic engagement. Our first major accomplishment was the creation of the Whittier Alliance's 2021 election guide, which provided a comprehensive look at everything Whittier residents could expect to find on their ballot. We also hosted a public information session with Yes 4 Minneapolis regarding Ballot Question 2, and provided support for the Stevens Square Neighborhood Association's mayoral candidate forum. Additionally, this March, we hosted a discussion with newly elected Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chughtai, who gave an overview of her first few months in office and addressed community concerns, including public safety, the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, and the needs of small businesses in Ward 10.

In addition to this committee's work over the past year, our Community Engagement Committee Chair worked with neighbors to organize the monthly Whittier Really Really Free Market and the Whittier Solidarity Network, both of which have created many opportunities for Whittier neighbors to meet, interact, and get involved.

Voter Engagement: Whittier Alliance promoted voter education efforts, including assistance with first-time registrations, polling place research, compiling information on our digital election guide, and other key pieces to getting out the vote. We organized a Ward 10 City Council candidate forum in partnership with Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza and Latino Media in addition to co-hosting a mayoral candidate forum with other neighborhoods. We hosted speakers on the public safety and rent stabilization ballot measures at our committee meetings and made space for neighbors to ask questions of their current elected officials.



HOUSING & LAND USE

2021 is the year the Housing & Land Use Committee (HLU) transformed from “Housing Issues” into a venue for more holistic discussion of community planning and development projects that now includes the following areas of focus:



Development



Parks Planning



Transportation



Anti-Displacement Strategy



Policy



We discussed a number of projects that get us closer to providing accessible, equitable, and sustainable environments for community members to experience within Whittier. What a year for new developments / updates within our community. We had roughly 10 new developments (buildings) that were proposed / discussed to our committee (not including any transportation & parks planning projects). The committee has streamlined the development process and expectations for developers about what community members would like to see as part of any proposed development and also created a committee subgroup focused on providing more in-depth insight and feedback to developers hoping to build here in Whittier. The committee is currently finalizing the “Equitable Development Scorecard” which will more effectively communicate priorities and expectations upfront and evaluate projects against identified community needs in a more objective way; it will be implemented into full use this upcoming year.

The committee has been a great venue for getting new community members involved in the organization and community in general, and there will be many great opportunities to plug into ongoing work over the next year in whatever way interests you. Whittier Alliance will also be very involved in the community engagement process for the Former Kmart and New Nicollet Avenue project, which will formally start later this summer. To stay in the know on project updates and opportunities to participate, we encourage everyone to sign up for the project-specific newsletter available on the City of Minneapolis' website.



Eviction Prevention: The integration of new communications tools allowed WA to conduct more targeted outreach to tenants, landlords, volunteers, and the general neighborhood. Our team also developed a sharable Eviction Prevention Toolkit and video tutorials, detailing the process that volunteers would follow in order to either proactively build relationships with tenants and landlords to prevent potential evictions in the future, or reactively protect tenants against evictions that have already been filed. Both the proactive and the reactive processes involved educating tenants about programs that offer financial or legal support, such as RentHelpMN. Our team assisted 59 tenants with applications or inquiries to these programs, and recruited 29 new volunteers to assist with these efforts.



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE



In 2021, Whittier Alliance purchased the last remaining vacant lot on Whittier's stretch of the Eat Street commercial corridor.

The site, located at 2116 Nicollet Avenue, poses an opportunity to pursue priorities outlined in our strategic plan, and to take leadership in an inclusive, community-led, innovative real estate development process.

In 2022, Whittier Alliance plans to partner with an experienced real estate developer to implement a project that is responsive to community priorities. To guide the process, and facilitate the selection of a development partner, the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors appointed a Steering Committee. This committee was formed with an application process, and members were selected from a competitive pool of applicants with industry experience and community connections. Steering Committee members who have contributed to this process:



Stephanie Brown - Executive Director, Urban Land Institute Minnesota; Whittier Alliance Board of Directors; Whittier resident

Mary Browning - Whittier resident

Alex Burns - Transportation Policy Coordinator, OurStreets Minneapolis; Chair, Land Use & Transportation Committee of Sierra Club North Star Chapter; Whittier resident

Laura Crooks - Digital Marketing Manager, Amplifon; Whittier resident

Ukasha Dakane - Founder and Executive Director, FRAYEO (Whittier-based nonprofit organization)

Alex Harris - Whittier resident

Brigid Higgins - Program Coordinator, City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development; Whittier Alliance Board of Directors; Whittier resident

Mohamud Isse - Owner, Hirey Insurance Agency (Whittier-based business)

George Rishmawi - Architect, DLR Group; Chair, Whittier Alliance Housing and Land Use Committee; Whittier Alliance Board of Directors; Whittier resident

Taylor Smirkarova - Director of Real Estate, Seward Redesign Inc; Stevens Square resident

Y Paul Sussman - Whittier resident



At the time of this report, the Steering Committee is developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) which will articulate community vision and seek a qualified development partner for the site. This work has been informed by the Whittier Alliance Strategic Plan, the Housing and Land Use Committee, industry best practices, and ongoing community engagement. The RFP will be released in August 2022, and a proposal will be selected in the Fall of 2022.

To help inform the RFP and evaluation process, we will be asking community members to rank the importance of the following real estate priorities: Environmental Sustainability, Creative Placemaking, Accessibility, Urban Design, Affordability (residential), Affordability (commercial), and Community Ownership/Wealth-Building. We've also created an avenue for community members to nominate a building name for the eventual development. Stay tuned to whittieralliance.org/2116nicollet as we go!



SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES

Assessing Small Business Displacement Risk in the Kmart Redevelopment Area:

The former Kmart site has been and will continue to be a hugely influential factor in Whittier's trajectory as a neighborhood. For decades, this 10-acre parcel at the intersection of Lake and Nicollet has served as a barrier between the Lyndale and Whittier neighborhoods that some point to as one of the biggest planning errors in the City of Minneapolis' history.

When the City announced its full acquisition of the Kmart store's lease in 2020, Whittier Alliance and Lyndale Neighborhood Association began conversations about how best to facilitate volunteer interest, conduct in-depth outreach, and determine strategies for mitigating displacement of small businesses and low-income renters in the neighborhood. We did not want neighborhood stakeholders to be caught flat-footed, possibly missing the opportunity to advocate for outcomes that they and their neighbors want and need on such a pivotal project. We knew achieving full and diverse representation from our community in planning process would require time and investment. We aimed to identify and connect with the relevant business and commercial property owners and open up an intentional, culturally-informed conversation about the basics of the redevelopment, context about the timeline of a project of this scale, and how and why they should contribute to the engagement process when the time comes.

Through varied outreach strategies including a direct mailer, webpage updates, and direct outreach through door-to-door, phone, and email, we set out to accomplish a few key things:

- Build out a business and commercial property directory for the identified project area to establish clarity around vacant commercial spaces and how best to reach decision makers at those in operation; gather insight into their business operations, concerns, and future plans
- Build awareness among business owners about Kmart site and how they could be impacted
- Evaluate the likelihood of a project area property to be sold for redevelopment in the future

Through this process we connected with many owners with whom we did not previously have a relationship and learned a lot about their experiences in the neighborhood now and their hopes for the future. This work has put us in a strong position to support small businesses through the changes that are sure to come in the years ahead as Nicollet Avenue is reconnected at Lake Street.

Lake Street Rebuild & Nicollet Avenue: Whittier Alliance supported the Cultural Wellness Center and neighboring organizations to open community engagement on the future of the Wells Fargo site at Blaisdell and 31st. The partnership grew to set the stage for a broader process backed by the McKnight Foundation to re-imagine and rebuild Lake Street with racial, economic and environmental justice at its core. Teams of organizations led by Cultural Wellness Center provided a framework and support for a 6 month process focused on centering the voices of historically marginalized people and communities; creating an aligned vision for the future of Lake Street; rallying and coordinating local and national financial support to help ensure there are resources to implement the community's aligned vision. Whittier Alliance's team served on the Project Team for Lake & Nicollet, one of four identified nodes in the corridor.



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, 2021

Assets

Checking/Savings - \$373,930.04
Accounts Receivable - \$82,820.37
Real Estate Holdings - \$212,190.75

Total Assets - \$668,941.16

Liabilities

Deferred Revenue--NRP - \$10,000.00
Deferred Revenue--CPP - \$10,000.00
Simple IRA Payable - \$1,003.83

Total Liabilities - \$21,003.83

Equity

Net Assets - \$588,078.47
Net Income - \$59,858.86

Total Equity - \$647,937.33

Total Liabilities & Equity - \$668,941.16

Income

CPP - \$151,470.57
NRP Consolidated 1016 - \$45,694.27
Grants - \$93,394.85
Fundraising - \$6,357.50
Non-Cash Donations - \$0.00
Program Service Revenue - \$1,085.85
Interest - \$1,531.03
Other Donations - \$2,364.92

Total Income - \$301,898.99

Other Income

Pandemic Relief - \$30,800.00
Temp Restricted - \$10,000

Expenses

Grants - \$14,539.00
Salaries/Wages - \$141,590.91
Simple IRA Match - \$3,880.20
Payroll Taxes - \$16,286.39
Employee Disability Insurance - \$1,172.27
Staff/Volunteer Recognition - \$2,774.35
Payroll Services - \$2,503.15
Background Checks - \$0.00
Professional/Contract Services - \$48,030.69
Office Supplies/Equipment - \$2,651.00
Food/Beverage - \$2,339.77
Phone/Internet - \$1,924.71
Postage & Mailing Services - \$5,904.37
Bank Fees - \$48.45
Printing & Copying - \$11,640.29
Rent & Parking - \$11,819.10
Utilities - \$283.87
Real Estate Taxes - \$4,819.86
Property Maintenance - \$742.10
Travel/Meeting Expenses - \$41.60
Insurance - \$790.21
Staff Development - \$369.00
Membership Dues - \$175.00
Advertising - \$4,024.99
Emergency Community Outreach - \$3,403.00
Misc. Expense - \$1,085.85

Total Expense - \$282,840.13

Gross Profit - \$342,698.99

NET INCOME - \$59,858.86

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. Thank you to everyone who attended our Eat Street Fall Arts Fest and supported Whittier Alliance through food and beverage purchases!

2021 Financial Contributors

Benjamin Nelson & Anne Killian
Christopher Perez
Creation Audio Recordings
Cyndi Hovey
Dana Fox
Danny and Peg Brown
David Miner
Diane Tvedt
Emma Howe Foundation
Eric Reich
Erin Barwis
Glenn Stich
Hannah Reeth
Heather Turngren
Jill Hamilton
Jo Ann Musumeci
Johnathan Mosier
Katherine Davis
Larry Ludeman

Margaret Reid
Medtronic
Mint Properties LLC
Dana McDill
Nicole Weiler
Rebecca Patton

Robin Gillette
Shinjan Sengupta
Stephanie Brown
Tamar Herman
Willow Kreibich



No in-kind contributions were recorded in 2021.





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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