

Whittier Housing Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2020, 6:30-8:00pm
Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: Jo Ann Musumeci, Aaron Paul Keith, Brigid Higgins, Nate Rastetter, Jordan Hedlund, Arjun Kataria, Bruce Brunner, Genevieve Johnson, Maddy, Wendy Darst, Nick Hutchinson

Presenters: (none)

Staff: Kaley Brown, Oscar Nieves Rubio

Welcome/Introductions

- The committee went through a round of introductions.
- The chair presented the agenda. **Motion to approve the agenda. Seconded. The motion passed.**
- The committee chair recognized standard of conduct & Non-discrimination and Anti-racism Policies / Conflicts of Interest.
- The committee reviewed the December minutes. **Motion to approve the December 2020 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

WA AmeriCorps VISTA Tenant Organizer for 2021

Oscar Nieves Rubio introduced himself and overviewed his role; he'll be the tenant organizer and break down barriers of language and culture to influence housing displacement. He has read about the work this committee has done so far and will be recruiting volunteers to help with the next stages of outreach to residents.

Oscar invited everyone to share their email and he'll follow up with info on how to stay involved with the work on Kmart and other anti-displacement projects.

2401 Pillsbury Ave 4-Plex Conversion

An overview of the 2401 Pillsbury Ave project is given. Interior renovation, currently a vacant duplex, and the plan is to create 4 units out of it. The small group from the HIC (developer engagement group) has met with the developer prior to the HI meeting and learned that they are planning to enroll one unit in the 4d Affordable Housing Incentive Program and incorporate environmentally friendly paving.

Arjun asked what the WA's role is in the process of development review. Kaley explained that the city asks developers to engage with the neighborhoods and that WA's neighborhood process is pretty robust. It is non-binding, but does help the city with their decision.

Q: Why enroll just one unit? A: Unsure, likely the numbers wouldn't work for the renovation costs

Q: Do we know the rent levels? A: No, but the question can get answered and the info relayed back to the committee

Comment of appreciation that a house of this size will fit 4 units well.

Bruce commented that the unit count will require them to undergo rigorous inspections, so the renovation will need to be done very strictly to code, which is good.

No further questions.

Motion to support the project and variances needed for rezoning, vehicle access, and a cluster development conditional use permit. Seconded. Motion passes 11-0-0.

WA will draft a letter for the board to review/sign off on in advance of the February 22nd Planning Commission hearing.

A quick review of the City of Minneapolis' 4d Affordable Housing Incentive Program was provided.

Housing Issues Committee Subgroup

Kmart Site Visioning & Engagement: Kaley shared the workings of the Kmart redevelopment group - so far the group is meeting semi-regularly and building a framework for how WA should engage with the community once the spring hits and people remember Kmart is a project to pay attention to.

Jordan Hedlund is doing research on the site and will be working with his advisor to create some renderings/plans/etc. to get the community's input. Jordan sent out a survey that he got over 300 responses to. He closed the survey in December but may look at more responses if they come in. Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PYNL78H>

Arjun asked about the milestones and steps to the process. Kaley explained that we're still waiting for formal next steps from the city, but there's been musings about starting with the transportation infrastructure and design in the area.

Anti-Displacement Organizing: Kaley provided an update on the TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Amendment) legislation organizing work. The Council has been supportive of this and Lisa Bender has also been supportive, however there is not full buy-in among City departments (CPED) about how it would be feasibly incorporated and is meeting resistance.

Developer Engagement: An update on the Developer Scorecard is provided; they are working on refining it; a new development was used as a test on the scoring system, and it proved to be a decent representation of how the committee sentiment on the project.

Unhoused Neighbors Support: An update on the unhoused neighbors working group is provided; they were able to provide sanitization for unhoused neighbors in the neighborhood last summer and fall and are trying to figure out new ways to get ahead of housing instability. CP Bender's staff said two new staff positions have been added to the city's rolls with federal funding to be dedicated to coordination and response for encampments and supporting unsheltered community members. One new person will be staffed at the County as well.

Other Development Updates

The WA's new development tracker on the WA website was shared and overviewed. The St. Stephen's development initially proposed for 4th Ave didn't end up working out. They were proposing a 4 story building and once 2040 was codified they would have been limited to three, so the numbers no longer worked out.

Comment that Commissioner Conley is the best person in local government on the unhoused neighbors issue. A question was raised about the Simpson Housing zoning and a comment made in opposition of the size of the size of the facility and its impact on urban design.

Bruce mentioned incorporating the City of Lakes Land Trust a bit more. Maybe bring them in to share what they do. Kaley then shared that City of Lakes Land Trust has made their commercial flagship on the property at 19 E 26th St next to the former Little Tijuana's space.

Other updates, announcements, opportunities

Comment that energy costs are very burdensome and challenged the group to think of how to get solar on every building for renters to get credit.

A free outdoor swap event is planned at Whittier school that connects neighbors to trade things they don't need. Like a garage sale but no money. At the end, if you drop off and don't pick back up, they may donate it. Saturday, March 6th from 1-4pm at 425 W 26th St.

Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association is hosting a Ward 10 Candidate forum where all six of the candidates can share who they are and what they intend to do.

The WA Annual meeting will most likely be in May of this year. Please consider a run for the board!

The Community Issues Committee gatherings will resume in the coming months and will focus on non-housing related topics and engagement opportunities.

Question about how to stay more engaged with the committee - email Kaley!

Motion to adjourn. Seconded.

Motion to adjourn at 8:01pm. Seconded. Motion passes.

HI Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, March 15th, 6:30-8:00 pm @ Zoom

Meeting Minutes submitted by Nate Broadbridge.