

Whittier Housing and Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes  
October 19, 2021, 6:30-8:00pm  
Zoom Digital Meeting

**Attendees:** George Rishmawi, Laura Hoffman, Katie Luber, Bruce Brunner, Bill Niebur, Nate Rastetter, Sydney Burroughs, Cyndi Hovey, Danny Villars, Stephanie Brown, Jean Heyer, Kate Davis, Harry Davis, Pat Grazzini, Danielle, Nick Hutchinson, Laura Crooks, Anna Salvador, Paul Smith, Thomas George, Matt B, Gary Dombouy, Wendy Darst, Brigid Higgins, Nate Broadbridge

**Presenters:** David Hewitt (Hennepin County) Trish Thacker (Salvation Army), Tammie Fallon (CommonBond), Margo Geffen (Hennepin County), Melodie Bridgeman (CommonBond), Bill Niebur (CommonBond), Kim Bretheim (CommonBond), Marques Morgan (CommonBond), Council President Lisa Bender, Marion Greene (Hennepin County), Danielle Werder (Hennepin County)

**Staff:** Kaley Brown, Oscar Nieves Rubio, Robb Larson

### **Welcome/Introductions**

-The committee went through a round of introductions.

-The meeting chair presented the agenda. **Motion to approve the agenda. Seconded. The motion passed.**

-The meeting chair recognized Standard of Conduct; Non-discrimination and Anti-racism; and Conflicts of Interest Policies.

-The committee reviewed the September minutes. **Motion to approve the September 2021 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

### **Housing & Land Use Committee Project Work**

- **Whittier Alliance - [2116 Nicollet Avenue Lot Purchase](#)**
  - Board selected applicants at the September Board meeting on September 23. Two candidates opted out and one did not respond, so we are down to a committee of 12. Orientation will take place next month.
- **Equitable Development Scorecard**
  - Work is resuming. We've developed a scorecard to evaluate potential developments for how well they fit our community goals. The developer scores themselves, and then community members have an opportunity to score the development as well. We're currently finalizing the scorecard and are looking for volunteers to help. Let George, Stephanie Brown or Kaley know if you're interested.

### **Women's Shelter at 2400 Stevens Ave - David Hewitt | Hennepin County Director of Housing Stability**

- Housing Stability seeks to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.
- There is a great need for a shelter specifically for female-identified individuals who have reported not feeling safe or comfortable in other shelter settings.
  - A 30-bed, 24/7 women's shelter has been operating since December 2020 and has served 134 women to date.
  - Women have reported feeling safe and quiet at this shelter so that they can engage with case management. Very few negative behaviors. We're able to connect people with housing case managers and services.

- Beds are reserved through a screening process to ensure people with most need get them. We serve many who are coming from situations of domestic violence, which is why it's critical for a shelter that is not co-located with men. 3 hot meals a day. We ask people to commit to at least 30 days so we can get to know them and start assisting them.
- 2400 Stevens is quiet, near shopping and transportation.
  - This was renovated 2 years ago as Minneapolis Hostel and does not require any work to make it into a shelter. It would provide a dignified space for people to stabilize.
- Hennepin County does not yet have a purchase agreement - we hope to secure this in the next couple weeks. We have 120 days to do due diligence, hope to close early next year. Conditional Use permit from the city is needed for emergency shelter.
  - This will go to the Planning Commission November 15. People within 350 ft of the property will receive notice and we plan to flyer other nearby properties. If there are issues it will go to City Council.
- **Q:** Shelter housing and sober housing is highly concentrated in this area. It's not healthy for a neighborhood to have a concentration of supportive services in this area. Why this location? How will you fit 30 people into this space?
  - **A:** Some rooms would be double- or quad-capacity. The dorm area in the upper-level would serve as an overflow space in cold months. Our goal is to get people into the smaller rooms. This is a beautiful, elegant location and we believe that makes it perfect for this purpose. We have worked to reduce capacity in existing shelter programs and make them 24/7.
- **Q:** Is the hostel still operating or is it vacant?
  - **A:** They still take reservations but there are very few given the pandemic.
- **Q:** How does the facility plan to use food service trucks? We have a destabilizing problem with the facility and 24th/1st with a lot of food trucks going down the alley. How are you going to access this facility delivering food?
  - **A:** There is a parking area in the back of the building. We'll be cooking meals at the Harbor Light center and we drive it over in a car. It's 30 meals so we won't be using large trucks.
- **Q:** How does the conditional use permitting process work?
  - **A:** The conditional use permit process means that a use is allowed as long as it meets certain conditions. That report would be available publicly before the city planning commission including the county's application and details about how they would meet the conditions for approval. There is a public hearing as part of the city planning commission meetings.
- **Q:** When the county says this is a women's shelter, does this mean all folks who identify as women could have access to this shelter? How will trans women be supported through this shelter and program?
  - **A:** The shelter is for people identifying as female, so we welcome anyone identifying as female into the program. Staff work with shelter guests as needed to ensure that all are welcome, treated equally, and accessing all resources and benefits available to them.

**Whittier Community Housing Expansion Project** - Melodie Bridgeman, HM Collaborative

- 45-unit property that has 100% Section 8 housing, at the old school at 2609 Blaisdell, and we'll be building a new building that will have project-based housing.

- The design has not changed significantly since April. The new 3-story addition is set up to match the existing building and align fairly closely with the adjacent building on the next lot. We are renovating the existing building with new windows and finishes.
  - Creates a new accessible entry into the next building which would be connected on the lowest level to the existing building. We'll complete the fencing on the alleyway, replacing damaged sidewalks, moving garden plots closer to Blaisdell. We revised the space below the community room to house 40 bikes, and we will replace the existing bike racks.
- The conditional use conforms with all regulations of the district, except for the following requested planned unit development alternatives:
  - To allow multiple principal structures on a single zoning lot;
  - To increase maximum gross floor area of individual buildings in the Interior 3 Built Form Overlay District; and
  - To reduce the front yard setback adjacent to Blaisdell Avenue from 20 feet to 13.7 feet to closely align with the adjacent apartment building.
- **Q:** Can you advise the unit breakdown by number of bedrooms for the Common Bond new build?
  - **A:** New construction - 40 units made up of 8 - 1BR units, 23- 2BR units, 9-3BR units
- **Motion** to support the Whittier project and the conditional use and variance that they need. **Seconded.** Motion passes unanimously by a vote of 19-0-0.

#### **Rent Stabilization Ballot Question** - Minneapolis City Council President Lisa Bender

- [Question 3: Rent Stabilization](#): Should we allow council and mayor an opportunity in the future to consider a rent stabilization policy? This question would need to go directly to voters.
- [Rent stabilization study with CURA](#)
- 80% of ward 10 residents rent their homes. We are a majority-renter city. There are significant racial disparities in the rental market.
- Rents have been more volatile since the last recession and have been going up in older housing stock. Significant racial disparities in rent increases. Average increase is 2% but larger increases on the fringes. Landlords can raise rent at any time, by any amount, with very little notice.
- This work is grounded in personal stories and experiences. We've done a huge amount of housing policy change in the last two terms: made it easier to build shelter including single-room occupancy; adjusted zoning to make it easier to build smaller buildings and concentrated housing near transit, renter protection policies, etc.
- **Q:** What future opportunities are there to shape the ordinance?
  - **A:** On housing policy, we've grounded this work in an enormous amount of community engagement and research. The goal of most rent stabilization policies is targeting older buildings where we are trying to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing and preventing extreme price gouging. Some could argue those policies don't go far enough in protecting people from getting priced out.
- **Q:** What are the top points of misinformation about this amendment?
  - **A:** The question on the ballot allows us to consider a policy in the future, because it is required by state law. The most likely step would be for the city to stop very large rent increases and price gouging. It's hard to imagine something that goes farther than that passing.

#### **Other updates, announcements, opportunities**

- Minneapolis Municipal Elections are on November 2nd. You can view our election guide [here](#).

**Motion to adjourn at 8:12 pm. Seconded. Motion passes.**

HLU Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, November 16th, 6:30-8:00 pm @ Zoom**

**Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Robb Larson.**

## APPENDIX: Meeting chat transcript

18:32:54 From Kaley - Whittier Alliance to Everyone:

Reminder to put your microphone on mute until you're ready to speak.

18:35:29 From Cyndi (she/her) to Everyone:

googling it now, Bruce

18:36:12 From Bruce Brunner to Everyone:

What the constitution means to me - Guthrie Theater

18:59:31 From Robb Larson to Everyone:

<https://www.whittieralliance.org/2116nicollet.html>

19:18:37 From Margo Geffen to Everyone:

The building is currently zoned (as the hostel) for 67 people.

19:24:39 From Wendy Darst (she/they) to Everyone:

Would like to voice support for this project!

19:26:39 From lcrooks to Everyone:

I just want to say that I am in full support of this project - we have an obligation as a community to shelter our most vulnerable population from violence. These are our neighbors and we have the opportunity to give them dignified housing and a fair shot. I can't wait to get involved as a community member.

19:26:53 From Brigid Higgins She/Her to Everyone:

We've seen a lot of residential development here in Whittier and I'm so happy to see a variety of projects that support economic diversity in our community. I also support this project, thank you for your work!

19:27:59 From Cyndi (she/her) to Everyone:

When the county says this is a women's shelter, does this mean all folks who identify as woman could have access to this shelter? How will trans women be supported through this shelter and program?

19:28:16 From Danny Villars to Everyone:

Thanks everyone for presenting on this project. Sounds like a valuable & important addition to the community. Thank you for your work! Hope this moves along and is approved speedily.

19:28:29 From David he/his to Everyone:

Yes! Thankyou for the question - it is for anyone who identifies as female

19:28:39 From Marion Greene to Everyone:

Thank you for asking that - I had intended to use that language. This is a shelter serving people who identify as women.

19:28:50 From Lisa to Everyone:

The conditional use permit process means that a use is allowed as long as it meets certain conditions. That report would be available publicly before the city planning commission including the county's application and details about how they would meet the conditions for approval. There is a public hearing as part of the city planning commission meetings.

19:29:48 From Lisa to Everyone:

This is a link to information about the city planning commission meetings, and where agendas and those reports are posted: <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/boards-and-commissions/planning-commission/>

19:29:59 From Laura Hoffman (she/her) to Everyone:

If anyone has any additional questions or comments about this project or any other, please reach out to the District 3 Office.

You can reach me at [laura.hoffman@hennepin.us](mailto:laura.hoffman@hennepin.us) or 612.348.0863, and Commissioner Greene at [marion.greene@hennepin.us](mailto:marion.greene@hennepin.us) or 612.348.7883.

19:31:02 From Trish Thacker to Everyone:

The shelter is for people identifying as female, so we welcome anyone identifying as female into the program. Staff work with shelter guests as needed to ensure that all are welcome, treated equally, and accessing all resources and benefits available to them

19:32:43 From Kaley - Whittier Alliance to Everyone:

We are voting on this project tonight. For anyone who has not voted with WA since 2019 or is not sure whether they are a registered voter with us, Robb is going to drop a link into the chat for the online registration form. If you can submit your info during the meeting, you may cast a provisional vote and it will be counted after the meeting upon verification of your residency based on the info you provide.

19:33:36 From Robb Larson to Everyone:

<https://www.whittieralliance.org/voterreg.html>

19:33:37 From Matt B to Everyone:

Thanks for making it accessible to participate!

19:39:28 From Bruce Brunner to Everyone:

Can you advise the unit breakdown by number of bedrooms for the Common Bond new build?

19:40:59 From Stephanie Brown to Everyone:

Glad to see this project moving forward!

19:41:42 From Melodie Bridgeman to Everyone:

New construction - 40 units made up of"

19:42:13 From Melodie Bridgeman to Everyone:

8 - 1BR units, 23- 2BR units, 9-3BR units

19:42:28 From Kaley - Whittier Alliance to Everyone:

The conditional use conforms with all regulations of the district, except for the following requested planned unit development alternatives:

--To allow multiple principal structures on a single zoning lot;

--To increase maximum gross floor area of individual buildings in the Interior 3 Built Form Overlay District; and

--To reduce the front yard setback adjacent to Blaisdell Avenue from 20 feet to 13.7 feet to closely align with the adjacent apartment building.

19:46:12 From BRNiebu to Everyone:

We are also on the agenda for the 11/15 CPC hearing.

19:50:34 From Robb Larson to Everyone:

<https://www.whittieralliance.org/voterreg.html>

19:51:47 From Lisa to Everyone:

<https://vote.minneapolismn.gov/voters/ballot/>

19:53:14 From Lisa to Everyone:

<https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/23336/Rent-Stabilization-Research-Study-Session-Presentation.pdf>

19:55:17 From Marques Morgan- CommonBond to Everyone:

If you have any additional questions about the CommonBond Project, please dont hesitate to reach out to me directly!

Marques Morgan- Development Associate

[Marques.Morgan@commonbond.org](mailto:Marques.Morgan@commonbond.org)

20:04:58 From Cyndi (she/her) to Everyone:

was just gonna ask that! Thanks, George

20:07:58 From Brigid Higgins She/Her to Everyone:

This was so helpful! Thank you!

20:09:01 From Cyndi (she/her) to Everyone:

heck yeah, Oscar!

20:10:54 From Matt B to Everyone:

thank you for organizing and facilitating!



20:11:37 From Robb Larson to Everyone:

<https://www.whittieralliance.org/2021elections.html>

20:12:17 From Nate Rastetter (he/his) to Everyone:

Goodnight, everyone!