

Whittier Housing and Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes  
June 15, 2021, 6:30-8:00pm  
Zoom Digital Meeting

**Attendees:** Stephanie Brown, Deja Jendro, Jo Ann Musumeci, Andrew Faulkner, Bruce Brunner, Dave Shenzer, Micah Ruelle, George Rishmawi, Nate Rastetter, Nick Hutchinson, Madeline Schwartz, Mary Browning

**Presenters:** Denetrick Powers (NEOO Partners)

**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 May minutes. **Motion to approve the May 2021 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

**Committee Name and Scope Expansion - Stephanie Brown**

- From this point forward, the committee will not only include residential questions, but also commercial and transportation related questions.
  - The scope expansion will include greater overlap with the Community Engagement Committee.
  - Community safety, Small business engagement/initiatives, Voter engagement outreach, Environmental sustainability work, General community building activities, Other miscellaneous topics for community conversation.

**Committee Chair Nominations and Vote**

- George Rishmawi: I've lived in Whittier for the past several years and in Uptown for longer. Very happy to be part of this community. I've been very interested in helping the community as a practicing architect. I've been involved in campus/higher ed work but also housing. Would like to work closer with community partners to develop affordable housing in the community. The built environment affects us, policy affects us. How do we prioritize goals in our community? I like leading, I want to build a better community and for everyone to have an equal voice.
  - Motion to elect George Rishmawi to Housing and Land Use Committee Chair 2021-2022. Second. Motion passes by unanimous voice vote.

**Midtown Greenway Access Expansion Project in Whittier - Denetrick Powers, NEOO Partners**

- Cofounder and Director of Planning at NEOO. I'm leading community engagement for this project. Partnership between Hennepin County and Minneapolis Parks.
- Project is to design an ADA ramp from Harriet to the Greenway. Intended to fill a gap in ADA access, 1.25 mile gap. We are in conversation with Soo Line Community Gardens.
- Want to learn how best to stay engaged with Whittier Alliance, residents, and underrepresented voices in the community.

- We currently don't have a design to show. First phase is to engage with the community, make introductions, and ask questions.
- Q: Walk us through some of the design possibilities for the ramp.
  - A: Questions we're considering: Which side should the ramp come from? Garfield and Harriet both or just one? How do we minimize impact to the garden? How can we create better access to the gardens while limiting people biking through?
- Q: Given the ADA requirements, does that easily fit within the current space or does it require changes to the garden? Ramp length can't exceed 60 feet, and has to accommodate two wheelchairs with 8.3% grade.
  - A: I'm not a landscape architect or engineer so I can't answer technical questions, but I am taking questions to the designers.
- Q: Will there be signage in the garden to let people know there are changes coming and how to get involved?
  - A: There will be yard signs placed at multiple locations along the Greenway, being printed this week.
- Q: Tell us how NEOO is approaching this, what guidelines you're using.
  - A: Current goal is to minimize impacts and find ways to benefit the garden.
- Q: Would it be possible to set up user stations with links to the project website where people can see the design options?
  - A: Great suggestion, I will bring it back to the team.
- Q: Is there a survey of current garden "owners" planned? Most people I talked to at the gardens have not heard of the project.
  - A: Survey is online on the website. I joined a group of gardeners Friday morning and we will have more meetings in the future. Also in contact with a staff person from the Midtown Greenway Coalition.
- Q: Has this been brought to the WA Board or committees before?
  - Prior to this being the Housing and Land Use Committee, this was brought directly to the WA Board.
  - A: Previously, the funding was not available. We are now in the beginning stages of the project, with construction starting in 2023.
- Q: What is the best way to stay involved?
  - The Hennepin County website has a lot of information: <https://www.hennepin.us/midtown-greenway-access>. I'm available for phone calls, and you can always email me: [powers@neopartners.com](mailto:powers@neopartners.com)

### [Wells Fargo / Kmart Area Redevelopment](#)

- Cultural Wellness Center community input sessions are ongoing - next one is this Thursday June 17 at 6:30 PM.

### [2116 Nicollet Avenue Lot Purchase](#)

- We are currently accepting applications for the steering committee for a year commitment. This lot will be the largest asset of the Whittier Alliance. We are asking people to step forward to design what this will be with engagement from the community.
- If you are interested, please apply. Not required to be WA members or neighborhood residents.
- Q: Are there any specific types of people you're looking to have on the steering committee?
  - A: We want to make sure the steering committee is composed of a mix of people familiar with the subject matter, and people who may not have any experience, but have deep ties to the community. The goal is to have a balance, and to have community members

without “relevant skills” but who have life experiences and valuable input have a place, but also have the technical elements covered.

- Q: Is there a skill set makeup as far as who’s already on the team? Or is it just forming?
  - No one is on the committee yet - some people have been involved in designing the process: me, a planner, George, an architect, Erin Sjoquist, a real estate agent, etc. No one is assigned yet to the committee and there isn’t a specific skill set required.
- Q: How often will the committee meet?
  - The goal is monthly meetings with the expectation that there will be some work outside of meetings. Not an insignificant time commitment; higher time commitment than serving on HLU committee.

**Other updates, announcements, opportunities**

- Community Engagement Meetings - 2nd Monday of each month
- Anti-displacement and unhoused neighbors efforts are currently on pause.
- Calvary Church is throwing a block party in their parking lot tomorrow night from 5:30-7:30. 2608 Blaisdell, music, food and games.
- Really Really Market 1-4 pm July 10 in Whittier Park.

**Motion to adjourn. Seconded.**

**Motion to adjourn at 7:39pm. Seconded. Motion passes.**

HLU Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

**NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, July 20th, 6:30-8:00 pm @ Zoom**

**Meeting Minutes submitted by Robb Larson.**