

THE **WHITTIER** ALLIANCE

2116 NICOLLET AVE

DEVELOPMENT

Request for Proposals



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Whittier Alliance



The Whittier Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization existing to support, equip, and inspire Whittier's residents, businesses, and property owners. Since 1977 the organization has engaged these stakeholders at the most local level to work together to solve problems and celebrate the extraordinary elements that make our neighborhood one of a kind. We are one of the 70 neighborhood organizations officially recognized by the City of Minneapolis.

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Whittier Alliance has a long and varied history of working in the realm of community development over the past four decades. Our organization operated as a CDC prior to the establishment of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in the 1990s. We played a role in the development and financing of the Whittier International School built in 1997 and have administered revolving loan programs to assist local owners with rehabbing residential and commercial spaces. In more recent years, we have built up our community's capacity to engage with developers on projects proposed in our neighborhood through our Housing and Land Use Committee (previously called the Housing Issues Committee). The Committee is a group of committed volunteers collaborating with each other, with developers, and other organizations to impact Whittier's housing climate in a positive way. The Committee meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month to collaborate on and provide community updates on projects ongoing, to facilitate discussions with developers, and hear from elected officials on housing policy.

The Whittier Alliance Board of Directors requires that this be a collaborative effort between the developer and the community. The Board is composed of individuals who are skilled in project management, understand urban planning concepts including City zoning, have been a part of construction projects at various stages of development. They are versed in architectural design, finance, various real estate construction concepts, and above all, the experience of living in this neighborhood. The Whittier Alliance is committed to anti-racism and facilitating community co-creation to enhance the environment that exists on Nicollet Ave.

Neighborhood History

Our community is situated on the Eastern Dakota lands that were stolen in the Treaty of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux, given subsequently to fur traders. Today, it is commonly known as the Whittier neighborhood, named after John Greenleaf Whittier, a Fireside Poet and abolitionist of the late 19th century. Whittier is located roughly a half mile south of downtown and encompasses 81 square blocks. The neighborhood is defined by the following boundaries: Franklin Avenue (north), Lyndale Avenue (west), Lake Street (south), and I-35W (east).



Whittier is one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in Minneapolis, home to over 7,800 households and more than 15,000 residents. With a median annual household income of \$41,810, it is a mixed income community with rich historical importance and positioning in Minneapolis. The Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District is home to some of the first Gilded Age mansions in Minneapolis, many of them now used as office spaces for nonprofits such as the Blind, Inc., the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, and NUWAY. Until 2021, the District had also been home to the first church-based homeless shelter in Minneapolis, which opened its doors in 1981. Whittier is a renter-dominated community that has historically been a base for immigrant and refugee communities, including Asian immigrants in the 1980s, and a growing community from East Africa more recently. It is known by some as “The International Neighborhood.”

Whittier is well-served by public transit, with major routes running frequently on Nicollet Ave, Franklin Ave, Lyndale Ave, Lake Street, and I-35W. According to the 2020 Census data, nearly a quarter of Whittier residents do not have a personal vehicle, and 43.3% reported traveling to work by public transit, walking, biking, or working from home. Whittier is fortunate to have a network of biking infrastructure along 1st Avenue and Blaisdell Avenue (north/south) and the Midtown Greenway, 28th Street, 26th Street, and 24th Street (east/west). Following the reopening of Nicollet Avenue at Lake Street in the coming years, Nicollet Avenue is expected to see an upgrade of the current Route 18 in favor of a new bus rapid transit line.

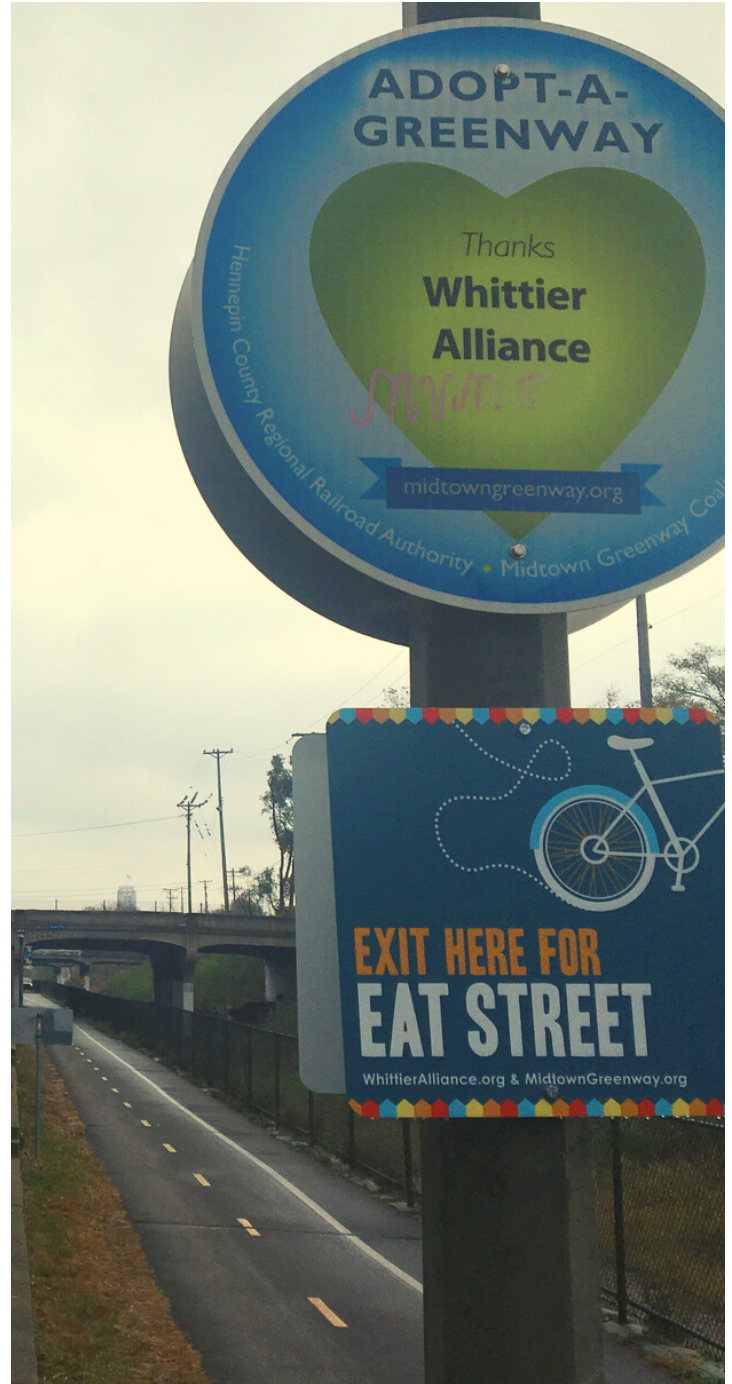
Neighborhood History

In recent years, Whittier Alliance partnered with other local organizations on the Lake Street Alignment Process and with students at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School to identify strategies to prevent displacement, create wealth, and center community in rebuilding efforts. Whittier Alliance is currently co-leading the community engagement process around the future of the former Kmart site, an undertaking that will at once be informed by previous years of community work and also focused on ensuring those most impacted are driving the future vision of Lake & Nicollet.

Nicollet Avenue or "Eat Street," as many refer to it, runs through the heart of the neighborhood, and is enjoyed for its walkability and unique array of global dining options. This important commercial corridor is home to a large number of BIPOC, immigrant-owned, and locally-run small businesses -- a popular destination for customers across the metro. Whittier also has the largest indoor East African Mall in the United States, Karmel Mall, located just 8 blocks southwest of this project site.

The neighborhood has been a home base for the arts and artists in Minneapolis for over 100 years with the Minneapolis Institute of Art, MCAD, Children's Theatre Company, Jungle Theater, and more all within the neighborhood, alongside other organizations and shops dedicated to the arts. Over the intervening decades the neighborhood has grown to be one of the most interesting, diverse, and popular places to live, work, and eat in Minneapolis.

Cont...



Overall Objectives & Goals

In March 2021, the Whittier Alliance purchased 2116 Nicollet Avenue, a vacant lot approximately 95 feet wide and 100 feet deep, totaling just over 9,500 square feet. This acquisition is an opportunity for an inclusive, community-led, real estate development in partnership with a qualified real estate developer. Whittier Alliance is seeking proposals on this last remaining vacant lot along Whittier's stretch of this important commercial corridor from creative real estate professionals who are inspired to implement development aligned with the community priorities outlined below.



The mission of the Whittier Alliance (WA) is to ensure safety and livability by facilitating, advocating for, and leading the diverse voices of the Whittier Neighborhood. The vision of the Whittier Alliance is to mobilize the human and financial resources, information, and technical assistance necessary to effectively provide leadership to organize and implement a base of operation for citizen participation. The Whittier Alliance is organized to advocate for and provide education and resources to promote the welfare of the Whittier Neighborhood. We carry out our mission in many ways, such as implementing anti-displacement strategies for both residential and commercial tenants, organizing free, community-based art projects and events, and facilitating avenues for stakeholders to participate and take leadership in our organization or with local policy advocacy and city planning.

The organization's current strategic plan, sets goals in the following areas:

- 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.
- Housing Protect and expand the variety of housing options in Whittier, for people at every life stage and economic condition.
- Businesses, Institutions, and other Orgs Support the vibrant and distinctive mix of Whittier businesses, institutions, and other organizations.
- Organizational Sustainability Develop the institutional power necessary to achieve our priorities and reliably serve the neighborhood for another 40 years.

Program & Uses

The Whittier Alliance seeks to provide the community with a vibrant, well-connected, mixed-use development according to the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan with regard to parcels designated as Corridor 6. The proposal would include options for commercial space on the first floor, with an office for the Whittier Alliance and residential units in the upper levels.



Creative Housing Solutions

Whittier Alliance seeks to implement a housing development that utilizes creative strategies to incorporate an affordability component. This could be a fully affordable or a mixed income building that does not rely on traditional subsidy. Compelling proposals will take into consideration the overall housing mix in the neighborhood and existing housing gaps. This could be achieved through the inclusion of any of the following:

1. SRO (Single Resident Occupancy) units,
2. self-subsidizing mixed income units,
3. condominiums that offer lower cost home ownership options,
4. short term rentals,
5. tax credits/traditional government subsidy, or
6. other innovative strategies that seek to offset costs for a select number of units within the building.



Whittier Alliance Office

The proposed development should include space for the Whittier Alliance as an anchor office tenant. Whittier Alliance seeks 800-1,200 sf of shell condition office space, with build out to be negotiated as part of the project. Competitive proposals will consider designs which include shared amenities with other leasable spaces in the building, including gender-neutral restrooms, kitchenette, quiet/prayer room, and conference room. Whittier Alliance is interested in exploring a model that facilitates community-use/reservation of common area amenities, which will be coordinated by the organization.



Small Office/Retail Micro Units

Whittier Alliance will be a collaborative partner in identifying potential tenants for additional commercial spaces. We are interested in micro units that could accommodate our partner organizations and/or other complimentary commercial uses. Additional units should be small in scale (400-1,000 sf) to accommodate local small business or nonprofit tenants or a larger space designed to be shared. We are seeking creative designs with shared amenities in order to maximize functionality and affordability for commercial users. We are open to ideas for the format and uses of this space.

Site Description

Zoning - Currently the primary zoning is OR3, with two assigned built form overlay districts: Pedestrian Oriented and Corridor 6. Pending resolution of litigation concerning the 2040 plan, the simplified zoning structure will likely allow for greater flexibility of uses.

Neighboring Parcels - To the north is a multi-tenant, two-story commercial office building (2110 Nicollet Ave); to the south is a single-story, owner-occupied commercial space previously used as a dentistry practice (2120 Nicollet Ave); and to the west is a four-story, multifamily rental housing building (12 W 22nd St).



Size and specs - The site is located at 2116 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55404. The property ID number is PID: 3402924210035. It is approximately 95 feet wide and 100 feet deep, totaling just over 9,500 square feet. Property was purchased in 2021 by Whittier Alliance for \$210,000.

OR3

OR3 - Institutional Office Residence District - The OR3 Institutional Office Residence District is established to provide a mixed use environment of very high density dwellings, large office uses, and major institutions, with additional small scale retail sales and services uses designed to serve the immediate surroundings

POD

Pedestrian Oriented Overlay - The PO Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District is established to preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of commercial areas and to promote street life and activity.

COR6

Corridor 6 Overlay - The Corridor 6 district is typically applied along high frequency transit routes as well as in areas near METRO stations. Building heights should be 2 to 6 stories.

The Whittier Alliance has established relationships with a number of these business and property owners, and looks forward to pursuing a development that is complementary to these existing uses. See Community Engagement for details.

Site Circulation - The site is bounded by Nicollet Avenue on the east and adjacent properties on the other sides. There is the potential to add a curb cut to enter the site from Nicollet or discuss easements with adjacent owners. We are open to a building without any on-site parking, and there is a Metro Transit bus stop on the south end of the block.

Environmental - Phase 1 environmental review was completed by American Engineering Testing Inc. in May 2021 and shows no evidence of contamination. Documentation available on request.

Special assessments - The site is a part of the Eat Street special service district, which requires a \$1,519 annual tax assessment. The Eat Street special service district amenities include trash receptacles and service, plowed corners, and street lights, among other services. Total real estate taxes on the property for 2022, including special assessment, are \$5,629.

Design Criteria

With support from the community, Whittier Alliance has identified three principles which should influence the final development design. Competitive applicants will propose projects that prioritize the following design criteria in some way, shape, or form.



Environmental Sustainability

1

features that reduce environmental impact and facilitate sustainable living, including but not limited to:

- on-site energy production/solar,
- blue-green infrastructure/sustainable stormwater management,
- indigenous plants/rain gardens,
- green roof,
- water reclamation systems, or
- gas-free appliances & building heating.



Creative Placekeeping

2

features that create a sense of community identity within the building and reflect the Whittier community, including:

- artist-designed and locally made furniture, fixtures, & equipment,,
- public art: murals, creative facade, 3D installations in street facing windows or outdoor space, or
- iconic architectural elements/statement or building design.



Urban Design

3

features that enhance the characteristics of Nicollet Avenue and the Eat Street Commercial Corridor through human centered design. Ideal designs will activate the site using strategies such as:

- small-scale retail/storefronts,
- public plaza/greenspace,
- pedestrian-scale features and signage,
- limited setbacks,
- bicycle infrastructure, or
- integrated bus shelter.

Community Engagement

Whittier Alliance is committed to a robust community engagement and Board approval process specific to this development project. We are seeking a partner that is energized by the prospect of implementing the vision of residents and businesses who will complement the skillset our



organization brings to this project, specifically, our extensive experience in community organizing and engagement. We anticipate that strong proposals will include a community engagement statement or plan that reflects the selected development team's approach to work in collaboration with Whittier Alliance to ensure neighborhood participation.

Development teams should demonstrate an understanding of neighborhood context and familiarity with community assets and demographics. An ideal development partner would be a stakeholder in the community, and/or have a vested interest in community outcomes that support and retain existing local residents and businesses. They would be able to demonstrate experience working with diverse communities and successful implementation of projects that enhance placekeeping and contribute to overall community health and development.

As a partner in this process, the Whittier Alliance team of staff and volunteers--many of whom hold subject matter expertise--will help to guide the project through multiple conversations with community members as the project progresses. As with other developments proposed in the neighborhood, we are able to help the community understand more about the development process, budgetary considerations that influence decisions of building design and uses, funding sources, as well as the City of Minneapolis' requirements and approvals process. An ideal development partner would value this opportunity to increase the Whittier community's capacity to engage with and guide new developments moving forward in a way that supports and enriches the existing community fabric.

Partnership Expectations

Legal & Financial Business model

The Whittier Alliance is seeking a shared ownership structure in which the organization and selected partner each maintain a stake in the eventual development. Responses may propose a partnership structure and financial model based on respondents' past experience and recommendations, while keeping in mind that Whittier Alliance seeks a shared developer fee and to maintain long term ownership in the project.

Below are some of the desired terms and parameters which should be considered by prospective applicants. Final partnership terms will be determined collaboratively and defined by an operating agreement.

Whittier Alliance Contributions & Responsibilities

The Whittier Alliance will play a key role in site access, community coordination, and nonprofit fundraising as applicable. Whittier Alliance has a small full-time staff and a robust volunteer network, including an active housing and development committee, but does not have recent experience as a developer. Whittier Alliance's proposed contributions and responsibilities include:

- 2116 Nicollet Avenue property, purchased outright and owned in full by the organization
- predevelopment contributions to date:
 - phase 1 environmental study
 - holding costs including maintenance, taxes, and special assessment, and
 - marketing and preliminary community engagement
 - Preliminary market analysis
- continued holding costs through 2025,
- nonprofit status and fundraising capabilities and relationships,

- pro bono support from community volunteers with subject matter expertise,
- relationships with City of Minneapolis staff and experience navigating entitlement process,
- community engagement, outreach, and partnerships, and
- ability to create and execute the leasing/marketing plan including an agreed-upon approval structure for commercial tenants.

Whittier Alliance will work with the selected partner to define a structure for on-going coordination that provides the necessary agility for decision-making throughout the process. The Executive Director will serve as the primary contact for the partnership, with final contract approval resting with the Board of Directors, an elected body with overall financial and legal oversight for the organization.

Partner Contributions & Responsibilities

Applicants should demonstrate an ability to drive the development process forward with keen organization and project management skills. It is also essential that potential partners can financially contribute to predevelopment costs, and are reasonably capable of securing private construction financing. The selected partner should expect to contribute:

- project management and team coordination,
- remaining pre development expenses:
 - site survey,
 - permitting application fees,
 - legal fees,
 - design and engineering services,
 - soft costs,
- access to capital/ability to secure construction financing.

Selection Process



Response Requirements

RFP responses should include each of the following components:

- Personal statement including:
 - Project vision and reason for interest
 - Community engagement statement or plan
- Conceptual deal structure and sources and uses for desired concept plan
- Initial concept plan
- Development team qualifications/resumes
- Past project examples and/or professional references

Additional materials or financials may be requested from finalists. Respondents are encouraged to submit any additional materials or information necessary to address the below evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

All complete and responsive proposals that are received by the submission deadline will be evaluated by the Whittier Alliance. Proposals will be evaluated to ensure that they meet the minimum requirements of the proposal format. The project steering committee will evaluate qualifying proposals and select finalists for an interview. Appendix 1 provides greater insights from the community feedback already conducted as a resource in developing proposals.

All proposals are expected to demonstrate evidence of the following minimum qualifications:

- Experience with small-scale, mixed-use developments
- Ability to finance projects of similar size and complexity
- Experience of key project team members

Scoring Guide

The general quality and responsiveness of the proposals will also be evaluated based on:

- Program and Uses - **40%**
 - Comprehensive program that meets goals of creative housing solutions (particularly including affordable units or units which address an otherwise undermet community need) and a community-oriented ground floor plan (e.g., neighborhood-based retail, community meeting spaces)
 - Feasibility
- Community Engagement Plan - **15%**
 - Creative engagement strategies to elicit and incorporate community feedback
 - Demonstrated experience working collaboratively with community
- Design Criteria - **25%**
 - Environmental sustainability features beyond market norms that model decarbonization approaches, renewable energy, and living building strategies
 - Creative placekeeping ethic, including a strategy to incorporate community identity, local art, and welcoming spaces, plantings, and iconic features
 - High-quality urban design that enhance the characteristics of Nicollet Avenue and the Eat Street Commercial Corridor, with a focus on the pedestrian experience
 - Proposal should also demonstrate an understanding of the cost and feasibility of design criteria elements and reflect considered tradeoffs between proposed elements or options for the committee and/or future community engagement to consider
- Partner Excellence - **20%**
 - Track record of successful projects that demonstrate a community-oriented approach to development
 - Clear understanding of and alignment with Whittier Alliance goals
 - Evidence of company practices, internal and external, that illustrate commitment to inclusion and anti-racism
 - Experience with community wealth-building strategies or appetite to explore potential for community investment options



Selection Process

Timeline

Proposal Timeline	Date
RFP Released	9/6/2022
Pre- Proposal Meeting	9/27/2022
Optional site tour	9/28/2022
Final deadline for questions	9/30/2022
Submission Deadline	11/14/2022
Finalist Interviews	11/28 - 12/9
Partner Selection	End of December
Contracting	January 2023



Disclaimers

Final selection will be made based on the scoring guide outlined above, at the discretion of Whittier Alliance leadership.

Whittier Alliance reserves the right to evaluate proposals based on any additional information requested or obtained, and to consider and/or accept modifications from respondents throughout the review process. We look forward to getting to know prospective applicants and responding to any questions!

Respondents who are considering an application but do not meet every criteria laid out in this document are encouraged to reach out to kaley@whittieralliance.org for further conversation.

Appendix

Figure: 1

Location of Respondents

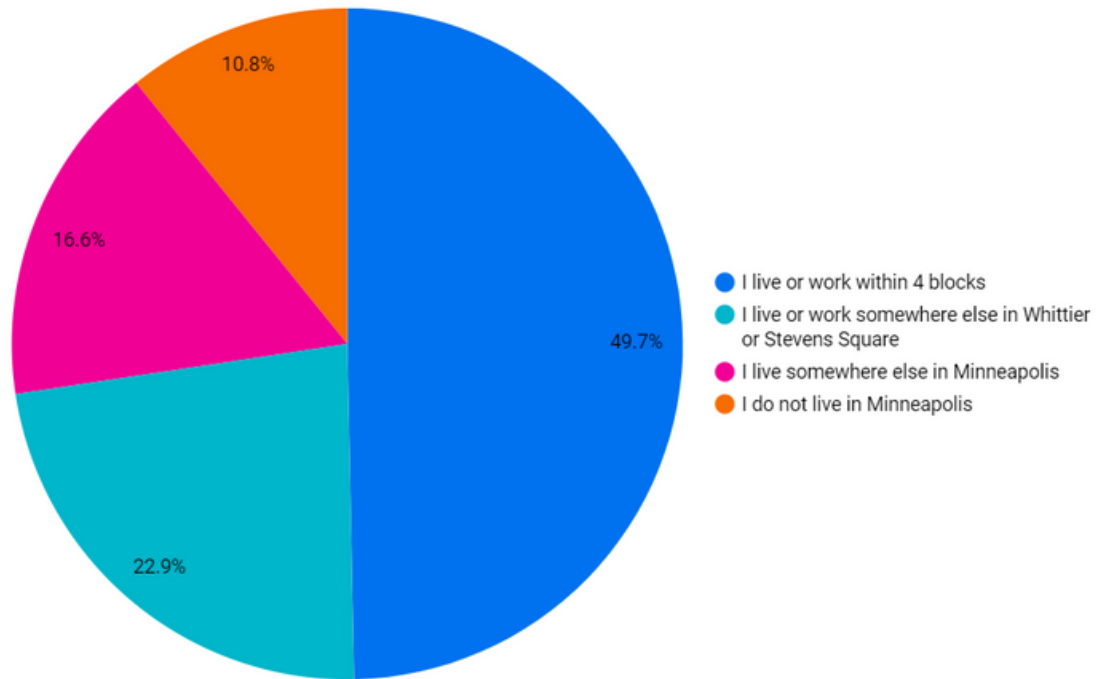
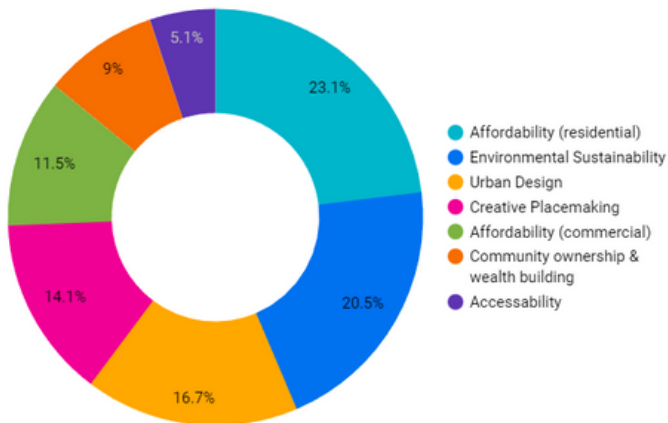


Figure: 2

I live within 4 blocks of the site:



I live somewhere else in Whittier or Stevens Square:

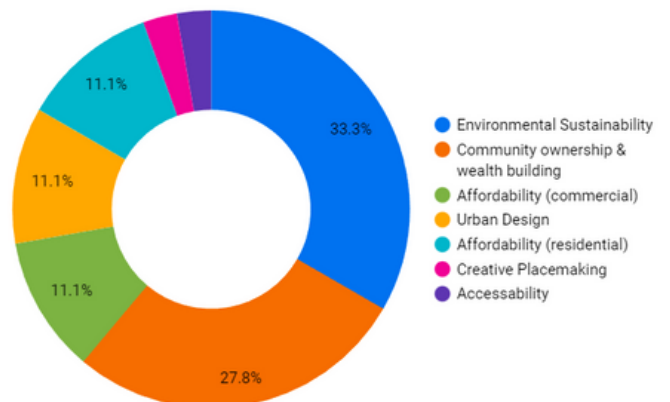


Figure 1 and 2 are both summary results of a survey conducted June-August 2022 within the Whittier neighborhood via community events, pop-up conversations around the neighborhood, and online platforms; the majority of the 170 respondents live within Whittier and 49.7% live with 4 blocks of the site.

Appendix

Figure: 3

1st choice		Record Count ▾	2nd choice		Record Count ▾	3rd choice		Record Count ▾
1.	Environmental Sustainability	37	1.	Environmental Sustainability	39	1.	Environmental Sustainability	32
2.	Affordability (residential)	29	2.	Affordability (residential)	31	2.	Affordability (residential)	25
3.	Creative Placemaking	26	3.	Creative Placemaking	28	3.	Community ownership & w...	25
4.	Community ownership & w...	24	4.	Community ownership & w...	16	4.	Creative Placemaking	25
5.	Urban Design	18	5.	Urban Design	13	5.	Urban Design	16
6.	Affordability (commercial)	14	6.	Accessibility	12	6.	Affordability (commercial)	13
7.	Accessibility	9	7.	Affordability (commercial)	11	7.	Accessibility	11

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- [Whittier Alliance Strategic Plan](#)
- [Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan - Built Form Regulations](#)
- [Minneapolis Zoning Code Map](#)
- [Minneapolis Great Streets Map](#)
- [Whittier Neighborhood Design Guidelines](#)
- [Creative Placekeeping](#)
- Weighted Averages for Community Development Survey Summary (Available upon request)