



# Whittier Alliance 2007 Annual Report

Prepared for the Annual Meeting

Thursday, April 3, 2008 6-8:30pm

Whittier International Elementary School

## Letter from the Board Chair, Erica Christ

Welcome to the Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting! Thank you for choosing to engage in the events of your neighborhood and your neighborhood organization!

2007 was an exciting year for the neighborhood. Despite the slowdown in the building and development market, some important projects are moving forward in Whittier. This is a testament to the desirability of the neighborhood and the high level of participation of our residents and businesses.

We are nothing if not an engaged neighborhood. The level and quality of participation in our meetings and events is outstanding. Our meetings have meaningful dialogue. Neighbors are willing to work with other neighbors, businesses and developers to make plans and find solutions that are best for the neighborhood. This is the only way we will maintain the things we like best about our neighborhood and change the things we find challenging. Next time you are planning to come to a meeting, bring another neighbor with you—there are many exciting projects in the pipeline for 2008 and beyond!

Not only do neighbors build community by showing up to meetings, but by supporting their neighborhood organization. Thank you for your generous support last year. Our Spring fundraiser was the best ever and the Fall fundraiser brought in many new donors. Please take a moment to read over the list of financial supporters; we would like them to get all the appreciation they deserve!

Lastly, please join me in expressing gratitude to our skilled, creative and uncompromising full time staff: Marian Biehn, Executive Director, and Josie Shardlow, Community Organizer. We are lucky to have such dedicated people working for the neighborhood and making it possible for the rest of us to participate fully in the process of neighborhood activism.

## Whittier Alliance Executive Director Report, Marian Biehn

The Whittier Alliance effectively fosters opportunities that benefit Whittier and result in a more livable neighborhood. However, for Whittier and neighborhoods all around the City, 2007 was a pivotal year for future neighborhood sustainability and influence in the decision making process.

Policy, funding and governance changes were introduced by the City and have direct consequences for neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations. The City has turned to the neighborhoods to help develop an effective Community Engagement model. Funding for the Phase 2 Neighborhood Revitalization Program was reduced by 30%. And, finally, the City introduced the "Framework for the Future" - its proposal to replace Neighborhood Revitalization Program which sunsets in 2009. NRP, while needing some adjustments, has given neighborhoods over the past 15-20 years the autonomy and flexibility to make improvements and sponsor programs that have had significant positive impact on quality of life in Whittier. We ask that you stay involved while these policy discussions continue.

Although these policy discussions are important, the Whittier Alliance's most vital work is done on behalf of the residents and businesses. The Whittier Board worked on a **Strategic Plan** to continue growth and prosperity in the neighborhood. Additional components of the Whittier **NRP Phase 2 Action Plan** were implemented. Our **website** was updated to be more professional and exciting and to better reflect the activities of the neighborhood. Hundreds of engaged community members attended our **monthly meetings** and brought thoughtful discussion into the decision making process. More participated in **Task Forces** helping to advance the Whittier position on issues such as **LRT** and the **Pedestrian Overlay**. The **Development Review Group** affected better outcomes for neighborhood developments. And, in collaboration with Lyndale and Stevens Square, we sponsored two **Non-English Speaking Business Seminars**.

As Executive Director I am proud to work for a neighborhood that believes in and practices civic engagement. By being attentive and putting voice to our best interests, we have been and will continue to be effective in making positive changes in Whittier. Thank you for supporting the Whittier Alliance.

## Board of Directors – Serving in 2007

### Officers

Erica Christ, Chair  
Paula Horan, Vice Chair  
Tom Bissen, Treasurer  
Damon Nelson, Secretary  
Elizabeth Grzechowiak, Secretary

### Standing Committee Chairs

Destin Nygard, Community Issues  
Erica Christ, Business Association

### At Large Members

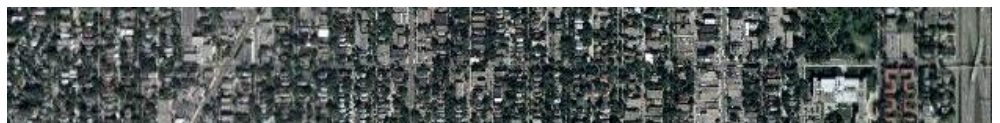
Alex Bauman	Larry Ludeman
Tom Bissen	Bruce Lundeen
Chris Carrow	Linda Martin
Wendy Darst	Damon Nelson
Felino de la Peña	Destin Nygard
Eric Grumdahl	Jesse Oyervides
Paula Horan	Jim Walsh

### Business Association Representatives

Andrew Church	Erica Christ
Elizabeth Grzechowiak	Lisa Vecoli

### Staff

Marian Biehn, Executive Director  
Josie Shardlow, Community Organizer  
Eric James, Office Coordinator



## **Business Association**, Erica Christ, Chair

The Business Association meets regularly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month. A different business hosts each meeting and the starting time – morning, lunchtime or late afternoon – is determined by the host business. Each host business has a few minutes in the spotlight at the top of the meeting. It's a great way to get to know our business neighbors, celebrate our successes and join in supporting our common goals for a vibrant neighborhood.

Meeting topics range from City-wide issues to individual business changes and plans. Our biggest item this past year (and it will continue to be) is the proposed Midtown-Nicollet configuration for the Southwest Transitway Light Rail line. More locally, we approved the proposed Pedestrian Overlay for Nicollet Avenue, which was in turn approved by the City Council in August. The BA received a BA-CPED grant. Funds were spent on the Whittier business website and façade improvements. Additionally, we heard from our Councilman about other ongoing City issues and projects and from our 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Police representatives about City and neighborhood issues.

Several big developments are in the works and we have welcomed developers and property owners to our meetings to present their plans. The Ace/Ice House development at 26<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet was the biggest new development proposal of the year. The Murals of LynLake is under construction now. And there are plans to redevelop the building that housed Joe's Chicken Shack.

Many of our Whittier Businesses had plans to change or expand, including BP, Bob's Java Hut, MCAD, Vera's Café, Jasmine 26 and Wendy's. We welcomed many new businesses to Whittier and sadly said goodbye to some old friends.

We welcomed the following new businesses:

- Head to Toe Salon & Boutique
- Vinh Loi BBQ
- Relax Exotic Chinese
- Anew Fitness and Spa
- Jasmine 26
- Nicollet Vision Center

We said goodbye to some Whittier businesses

- Lee's Cleaners (hopefully only temporarily)
- Yummy
- Bubble Delite
- Sinbad's Café & Market
- Argente Photographie
- Yukon Club

We thank our host businesses in 2007: Tasks Unlimited, Sindbad's Deli, Three Sons Catering/Blaisdell Manor, Old Arizona, Azia, Los Amigos, Creation Audio, MCAD, Rainbow Chinese, Gale Mansion and Nico Plating.

Please join us this year! We have many exciting developments and projects in the works. Our group encompasses non-profit and for profit, industrial and service oriented, big institutions and small family-run stores. Residents and property owners are welcome to attend our meetings as well. Whittier is a great place to live, work and run a business!

## **Community Issues**, Destin Nygard, Chair

The purpose of the Community Issues (CI) Committee meetings is to address issues vital to the neighborhood regarding safety, housing and land use and community building. The goal is to use a "town hall meeting" format providing community members an opportunity to be updated on the full range of community events and news as well as an opportunity to raise concerns or provide feedback and comments to the Whittier Alliance.

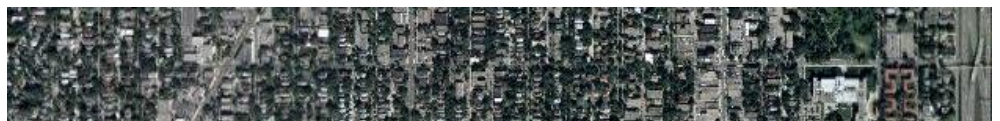
The committee format begins with an open forum for community announcements and news. The remaining time is spent discussing property development requests and changes, and hearing from other presenters. The Community Issues meetings continued to be very well attended over the past year, with several meetings packed to overflowing.

Since our last Annual Meeting, the CI Committee has heard presentations covering a wide range of issues. Frequently, the committee will make recommendations to the Whittier Alliance Board of Directors, which may in turn advise the City of Minneapolis on critical issues affecting our neighborhood. Some of the major issues and projects discussed in the past year include:

- MCAD Expansion / Master Planning
- MIA Strategic Plan
- Icehouse / Ace Hotel and Retail Development
- Rex Hardware Site Condominium Development
- Midwest Machinery / Karmel Village Residential Development
- Joe's Chicken Shack / Kim Bartmann Restaurant
- Bob's Java Hut Building Expansion
- City of Minneapolis Community Engagement Process
- Future of NRP

Transportation was a critical topic with potentially long lasting impacts on the neighborhood. Over the course of the year, we had ongoing discussions regarding potential streetcar lines along Nicollet Avenue and through the Midtown Greenway. We also discussed the (long hoped for) reopening of Nicollet Avenue to Lake Street, a vision that is now included in new City of Minneapolis planning documents. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along I-35W is moving forward as part of several large scale projects, and we discussed the needs for an improved station at Lake Street and a trimmed down version of the 35W / Lake Street Access Project.

Perhaps most importantly, we've had numerous discussions regarding the possibility of routing Light Rail Transit (LRT) through the heart of Whittier. One proposed routing for the Southwest LRT, connecting Eden Prairie and downtown Minneapolis, runs down the Midtown



Greenway before turning north up Nicollet Avenue. This routing could have major impacts on the neighborhood (both short and long term, and both positive and negative), and will remain a critical topic in the upcoming year.

Finally, the CI assisted the Nicollet Avenue Pedestrian Overlay District Task Force in helping to shape a new vision for Nicollet Avenue that will improve our neighborhood's signature street. The approved plan helps to ensure that all future development will contribute to a high quality pedestrian experience that reinforces the importance of street front retail.

Residents, business, and property owners are passionate about our neighborhood, and that makes for engaging, exciting, and sometimes surprising meetings. Critically, though, the CI meetings remain a venue where we try to keep discourse civil and ensure that all points of view have a chance to come forward. In addition, the meetings remain a great way for attendees to catch up on the critical issues affecting our large, diverse neighborhood. It's always exciting to see new faces at our meetings, and we look forward to hearing your voice in the upcoming year.

### Resource Development, Marian Biehn, Executive Director

The Whittier Alliance continues to diversify and expand its income sources and reserve funds. On an annual basis, the Whittier Alliance sponsors 2 major and one minor fundraiser. These fundraising events are an important part of our annual budget. They also build community awareness of the resources, advocating and activities provided by the Whittier Alliance. Because Citizen Participation and NRP funding have been cut,, successful revenue building through fundraising will continue to be an important function of the Whittier Alliance. We are especially appreciative of the generosity of our friends and neighbors who financially contribute to the Whittier Alliance, attend fundraising events or give in-kind donations to the organization.

### Income from fundraising in 2007:

Fall Fundraising 2006 received in 2007	1,755
May Day Soiree Silent & Live Auction Neighborhood Benefit	19,112
Hennepin Lake Liquors Multi-Neighborhood Wine Tasting	925
Fall Fundraising Campaign-2007	6,005
Misc. Donations	<u>120</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,917</b>

### Thank you to our 2007 contributors and supporters:

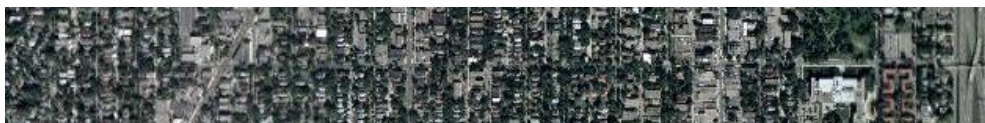
Alex Bauman	Erica Christ	Alan Ingber	Pam Nordaune
Abdikadir Adan-Somali Education Center	Andrew Church	Mark Jossart-Kleinman Realty	Nuway House
Michaela Ahern	Keith Covart-Electric Fetus	Kate Kellett-Park Nicollet	Destin Nygard
Marily Anderson	Andrew Cox	Fran Killian	Becky Olson
Denise Arambadjis-It's Greek to Me	Wendy Darst	Lee Klement	Scott & Barbara Olson
Jim Armstrong	Felino de la Pena	Kelly Koehnen	Mark Otness-Fair Oaks Apartments
Javier Azpiri	Cy & Paula DeCosse	Michael Lawyer & Cara Spaccarelli	Moses Renault-Moses
Martha Ballou	Wayne Delange	Barb & Kevin Lickness	Patricia B Saunders
David & Dominique Bereiter	David Dorava	Robert Lilligren	Jeff Shade
Tom Berthiaume & Cheryl Kachenmeister	Jim Dowds	Diane & David Lilly	Mary Simpson
Berven Real Estate	Paula Fischer	Kelly Linton & Victoria Jaskierski	Tom & Shelly Sinas
Tom Bissen	Flower Realty-Rose Manor Apartments	Larry Ludeman	Pat Smith
Derf Bistodeau-Romer & Co	Brian Foster	Bruce Lundeen	Erin Sjoquist & Kurt Nelson
Diane Blomberg-Just in Case Staffing	Dana Fox	Linda Martin	Scott Smith
Lee Blons-Plymouth Church Foundation	Michael Garr & Natalie Ste	Andrew McDermott	Jeff Spencer
Pete Bonahoom-Galactic Pizza	Christopher Gottshall	Mary McDill	Nancy St. John
Roger Brake	Mel Gray	Steve Meyer	Marcy Tollefson-Washburn Center for Children
Uri & Melissa Camarena	Verne Greenlee	Larry Miller	Rosarah Townsend
Luana Campbell	Eric Grumdahl	Kevin Miller & Robert Jardin	Lisa Vecoli
Ivan Cardenas-Pancho Villa	Elizabeth Grzechowiak	Andrew Mogendorff	Jim Walsh
Giancarlo Casale	Stanley Hale & Janet Lofquist	Jeff Nelson	Steve Wiese-Creation Audio
	Michael & Betsy Halvorson	Tamra Nelson-AAUW	Ralph Yehle
	Mary Jane Hand	Marilyn Neuberger-J. Michaels Co.	
	Emberly Hermann	Si Nguyen-Saigon Nho Newspaper	
	Paula Horan	Jim Niland & Elizabeth Nerud	

Thank you also to our contributors who wish to remain anonymous

Contributions are accepted and appreciated throughout the year

### Whittier Alliance Community Organizer Report, Josie Shardlow

2007 was a very busy year for the Whittier Alliance. As Community Organizer I collaborate with many residents and organizations in order to build community in the neighborhood and facilitate its safety and livability for all residents. I am grateful for the participation and volunteerism of Whittier residents. I look forward to building on the successes of 2007 to get even more residents involved and working towards positive change in the neighborhood.



## Some of the collaborations the Whittier Alliance was involved with in 2007:

Residents who walk as Whittier Walkers  
Block clubs, Police, SSCO, probation officers, city attorney,  
CCP/SAFE for Law Enforcement Group meetings and other crime  
and safety related issues.  
MCAD, 2008 Whittier calendar project  
Campus Group (Whittier youth serving agencies)  
Family & Children's Service for Neighborhood  
Champions and Whittier Youth Club  
PPL organizers for outreach to their buildings  
Franklin/Nicollet Alcohol-Related Crime Task Force  
27<sup>th</sup> St and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave Block Club  
Golden Living Center-Chateau, grant for graffiti kits purchase  
Restorative Justice Community Action, Inc.  
Whittier Youth Service Learning Group, Whittier Coop  
Minneapolis Park and Rec for improvements to Clinton Field Park

## Some of the events the Whittier Alliance sponsored or participated in were:

Dog Days of Whittier in Fair Oaks Park  
May Day Soirée Benefit for the Neighborhood  
Uptown Multi-neighborhood Wine Tasting Fundraiser  
National Night Out  
Parade of Community Gardens  
World of Whittier Family Fair  
Neighborhood Clean Up event  
Greenway Clean up event  
Community meeting regarding Clinton Field Park and  
Clinton Field Summer Social  
Butterfly Festival – planting event at Los Amigos  
Community meeting for input on Fair Oaks Park  
Vigil for Kira Simonian  
Whittier Green Fair  
Workshops for non-English speaking businesses with  
Lyndale and Stevens Square

## Neighborhood Revitalization Plan Implementation—Marian Biehn

Thanks to a dedicated group of Whittier volunteers, the process of getting funds into the neighborhood based on the Whittier NRP Action Plan continues to move forward. Funding discussions and contracting were addressed in each of the five strategies: Housing, Safety, Youth Business & Local Economy and Community Building were. The following implementation of Phase II funds was accomplished in 2007.

- **Housing:** The **Rental Rehab and Renewal Loan** (3-R) fund is still active with Rental Property Owners borrowing to make improvements on their properties. Exploration into making the 3R loan more streamlined is on-going. The Center for Energy and Environment's contract was renewed as the administrator for the **single family home** improvement fund. The NRP Steering Committee recommended loan guidelines and term changes to make the fund more appealing to Whittier home owners. The Single Family Improvement loan fund was increased to \$236,000. Discussion was also initiated regarding the Washburn Fair Oaks **Historic Preservation** guidelines and loan fund. Work on that strategy is still in progress. Over 8100 **2007 Whittier Housing Calendar for 2007** were distributed to Whittier households and businesses. **\$7536** of housing funds were spent to promote housing in Whittier. The calendar features quotes from Whittier residents on their appreciation of Whittier as their home. It also offered housing-related and other resource information. The calendar was a collaborative project with Minneapolis College of Art and Design students who photographed and interviewed the calendar participants.
- **Safety:** Improved safety and livability is an important focus for Whittier residents. Funds from the Safety strategy were contracted in a variety of ways during 2007. The **Whittier Walkers** safety patrol is a function of this strategy as well as the tracking of chronic offenders for community impact statements resulting in stricter sentencing. The safety strategy also funded **\$8888 in Police Buy-Backs** which put additional police on the streets in the summer months of 2007 with a focus on the South Whittier areas and the commercial corridors. Funds still remain in the strategy for future use.
- **Safety and Community Building:** The number of block & apartment clubs and contacts grew in 2007 and outreach activities were funded. Particular focus was put on outreach to the Hispanic residents to build trust and community participation. In 2007 Whittier hosted about a dozen National Night Out events.
- **Graffiti Removal/Prevention** Grants are slowly but regularly being distributed to Whittier residents and businesses to subsidize graffiti removal and abatement projects. One third of the cost of graffiti prevention methods such as lighting, landscaping, murals or mosaics, removal or preventative coating can be reimbursed to the applicant.
- **Youth:** The contract with **Family & Children's Services** was renewed for **\$38,000**. In 2007 they held many successful outreach events. The Whittier Youth Club is open to youth 8-17. They meet weekly and plan special events and activities that build leadership and civic engagement.
- **Implementation: \$84,500** NRP Phase II provides funds to assist in the day to day operations of the neighborhood organization. These funds help defer the cost of public meetings, resource and information dispersal, community building and outreach, rent and utilities. All funds are put under contract and reimbursed to the provider after submitting a comprehensive report on the expenses.
- **Plan Mods:** In 2007 the Board acted to ensure the sustainability of the organization by redirecting (Plan Mod) funds from NRP Phase 1 strategies that have a "program income" component. The program income is available for use at the neighborhood's discretion. \$25k was redirected from the Phase 1 Single Family Improvement fund program income into Implementation –operations for immediate use. And, to assure future operational funds, \$200K was redirected from the Phase 1 3-R loan fund program income. Neither redirection affected availability of the loan programs to operate.

**Whittier Alliance**  
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Minneapolis, MN 55404  
Phone: 612-871-7756

**Keep informed!**  
For timely updates on neighborhood meetings and events, sign up for the Whittier e-groups by going to the Whittier Alliance website at:

Fax: 612-871-0650  
E-mail: [marian@whittieralliance.org](mailto:marian@whittieralliance.org)  
[www.whittieralliance.org](http://www.whittieralliance.org)

