

**Whittier Business Assn.  
DRAFT MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 11, 2012 4:00-5:30pm  
Greenleaf Retail Space – Lyndale at 28<sup>th</sup> St.

**Present:** Nimco Ahmed (Ward 6), Erica Christ (Black Forest Inn), Devin Creuer (Murals of Lyn Lake), Bob Cunningham (Told Development), Jim Flanders (Flanders Bros. Cycle), Sue Flanders (Flanders Bros. Cycle), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Ave Car Wash), Cheryl Johnson (Salem Lutheran), Binh Le (Lake Wine), Trent Mayberry (Told Development), Jen Nagel (Salem Lutheran), Don Portwood (Lyndale United Church of Christ), Tod Skallerup (Travel About), Daphna Stromberg (Travel About), Elizabeth Trumble (Old Arizona), Joyce Tsarek (Pet Doctors)      **Staff:** Lisa Hermanson (Whittier Alliance)

Call to order at 4:15 by Erica Christ, WA BA Chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A **motion** to approve the agenda with the addition of current events in Old and New Business **Carried**. The Dec. BA minutes were presented and a **motion** to approve **carried**.

**Spotlight on Business—Greenleaf Retail & Apartments:** There are 63 apartments on 2 stories that are Section 42 tax credit subsidized rentals for qualified applicants who earn up to 60% of the area median income. Interest has been fantastic—only a couple units are not yet reserved. About 60% are one bedroom and 40% are two bedroom units, targeting individuals and couples and are dog friendly. Tenants are mostly young with a few seniors and very few families. The commercial space is 7500 sq. ft. with a variety of interested partners but no leases to date. Greenleaf is focused on attracting a restaurant that will set the tone for the other commercial tenants. Two experienced restaurateurs have come forward with a great concept, and it looks like a strong possibility. They are very proud of the building and hope the rest of the n’hood likes it. It has 51 underground parking spots and 12 surface spots, which are flexible use for the church or commercial. Many residents don’t own cars. There will be an open house on Sat., Feb. 4th from 1-4 pm. For the new SpringHouse Ministry Center which has 3 congregations in the former Salem English Lutheran Church.

**2700 Lyndale Ave S:** Told Development gave an information presentation regarding the Trader Joe’s proposal and pointed out the proposed site, which is almost 1 acre in the SW quadrant of Lyndale and 27<sup>th</sup> St. The site is 330x119 ft. and covers the area of 5 businesses. Art Materials, owned by Larry and Joann Brown, will move to a building 3-4 blocks south. The other businesses: Sunny Side Up, Coin Laundry, The T-Shirt Shop and Planet Soccer, are owned Mr. Gurtz who is interested in repositioning his property and hired Told Development as an agent. The Gurtz family is enthusiastic about having a Trader Joe’s as a single tenant. Told Development also worked on the St. Louis Park and Highland Park Trader Joe’s. Trader Joe’s is highly committed to their locations. Originally, Trader Joe’s wanted the entire parking lot on the surface, but the n’hood and city disliked that. The building comes up to the corner of the property and will be about 14,000 sq. ft. It will have 40 parking spots under the building and 30 on the surface, which is the maximum allowable for that square footage. Told Development learned the lot needs 2 release points. They added 2 points to get in and out for the site to reduce bottlenecking and made sure to have full circulation throughout the parking lot. There will be no alley access from the site and there will be a buffer along the parking lot, possibly fencing, that is 95% opaque. Trucks will enter from 27<sup>th</sup> St. and exit on Lyndale. Added to the plan is a plaza feature that is intended to be an amenity offering bike access and storage. Told Development wants it to feel like a vibrant, welcoming spot from all angles. They want to have the grocery store in front with entrances from the plaza and Lyndale. The building would have glazing on both street sides. The first rendering of the building were shown with brick, glass and other high quality materials. Feedback from the CI meeting was that it was too modern for the area, looks more like a Super America and doesn’t reflect its location, so Told Development is going back to the drawing board. They currently have a signed lease from Trader Joe’s, and all of the property is under contract. Told Development is presenting to the LHENA n’hood for a 2<sup>nd</sup> time. They hope to get a recommendation/.support from LHENA. They then need to start the Planning Development Review (PDR) process including a review by civil engineers to make specific refinements; public works; etc. Construction will take around 9-12 months. They would like to complete the n’hood process and look at potential elevation changes by the Feb. 1. The PDR process could start in March, and it’s a 2-3 month process through City Council. If approved, Art Materials has up to 4 months to move, but they think it will only take 1-2 mos. After that, groundbreaking will occur. This process will be abandoned if Trader Joe’s does not obtain a liquor license. There is a competing proposal across the street that wants the liquor license and is also in the planning stage. Once there’s a liquor store in place, there can’t be another within a 2000 ft. radius. Told Development said that it isn’t necessarily a competition for the liquor license because they have control of the property and a signed lease. They will move through the application process as diligently as possible while covering all the bases. Applying for a liquor license is a 2 part process, which is being handled by a local attorney. They can’t start the 2<sup>nd</sup> part until PDR is complete, but they are doing everything they can on the front end.. Concerns were voiced about additional traffic and congestion along Lyndale. It would be best if that corner had a traffic signal. Besides up-zoning, Told Development is not aware of any other votes needed. They would be open to putting use restrictions on the property. Trader Joe’s has just started talking about offering green buildings--bit may come up in the PDR process. Told Development was told the more they can design the building and think of the business as integrating into the n’hood as a destination for pedestrians and bikes, the better, vs. a store that attracts people from outside the n’hood. Trader Joe’s has stores in other major cities. They really are one of the best tenants. There’s a lot of latitude given to individual store managers, and it will create 75 permanent FTE jobs just in the retail store and numerous construction jobs. The distribution center is in Chicago. Trader Joe’s was never linked to Aldi, which

was owned by two family members who split up, and one created Trader Joe's. They don't share distribution or labels. The original name was Pronto Market and opened in 1958. The Highland store has 6000 sq. ft. of small shop space and about 80-85 total parking spaces, which is an awfully tight spot for parking.

**Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman:** Commissioner Dorfman worked with Told Development in the past and was impressed with their work. Most communities would tell you they've been a wonderful partner. The 2012 county budget was passed for \$1.65 billion, and they lowered the property tax levy for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. About 40% of the operating budget is supported by property taxes. The county has a AAA credit rating. Out of 3100 counties in the US, only 38 counties have a AAA credit rating. Employees went 3 yrs. without wage increases. About 30% of the county budget goes to social services. As a safety net provider, it does many things such as initiatives with the city like Heading Home Hennepin- a program to end homelessness. That program is making great progress due to the involvement of the faith community and downtown businesses. It is becoming much more of a community effort than a government effort. The county will be closing Century Plaza and partnering with community services from throughout the area and creating many locations to make it easier for people to access the services they need while remaining highly interconnected to provide more holistic assistance. The benchmark for success is really trying to reduce number of people who cycle through system for many yrs. and get them the help they need to build their own self-reliance. The county is also shifting to create its own integrated healthcare pilot. It has its own clinic system and approval from the state to do this. The county is in a unique position to drive a lot of really big projects. A majority don't want to stop programs but rather make huge investments. The Roosevelt and Walker Libraries were opened, and the community has been very involved in the planning of Walker. In forming this project, they went to the community first. The last 2 yrs. were spent meeting with volunteers that lived near or used Walker. They developed the vision. They looked at the n'hood in the respect of access to the Greenway, pedestrian access, programming, etc. Next to Walker is a park owned by the city used only twice per year. They want to make the park an outdoor part of the library with furnishing to read outside with programming, events, etc. They hired a small local firm who came up with a great design, which was awarded by the International Institute of Architects. People want public spaces where they can take their family. The county may consider another library but it's a tough initiative that would take a lot of political and community support. Whittier could set up a kiosk with a virtual library as well.

They finally got approval for the SW rail line, but there is still a long way to go. Met Council is now the lead agency, and the county is involved with land use planning. There would be 5 stations in the city and 12 in suburbs. The focus is to grow jobs and housing near these stations. Consultants will work on it for the next 18 mos. Met Council is moving ahead with design and engineering. They are working with St. Louis Park on what to do with the freight rail. The federal gov't requested that they do more of their own studies. Between Hiawatha and Central, construction will last a decade. Not all stations will be used. The streetcar on Greenway will run from 46<sup>th</sup> through downtown and connect with the West Lake station right behind Whole Foods. It would make sense to do all these projects at one time, but in reality funding and state and federal processes make that impossible. The relationship between the county and Met Council is that they do things together with different lead agencies. Met council and Hennepin County relationship is that all do things together with different lead agencies. The streetcar is led by the city, the light rail is led by Met Council, who got funding based on the connected analysis with busses on Lake St., the master transit plan. The first priority for streetcar is Nicollet and Central. When they design the W Lake St. station, it has to accommodate a future streetcar and figure out where maintenance area for streetcar would be. No one wants a maintenance facility. The city got a grant for the Nicollet line; Met Council got a grant for the Greenway line. There is a \$600,000 grant for the 35W interchange at Lake St, and the policy advisory committee wants the station closer to Lake. They are now moving to configuring the design. It looks like the transit station will be above with the plaza below. There is some of the \$30 million for planning left, but the city is asking for \$6.5 million in bonding for the transit station. When the 35W project starts, rebuilding the bridge on Franklin will come up, and that is an opportunity to improve the area. Commissioner Dorfman still needs to look at the designs. They extend the deck of the bridge and add trees and a sidewalk to compliment the beautiful view of downtown. There are a number of initiatives for jobs at the county level. They provide technical assistance to businesses seeking to expand, help those who are laid off find jobs, and provide a number of capital funds linked to other funds, have \$2 million per year for the environmental response fund, the transit development fund—Met Council has one too—, and \$4 million in the affordable housing incentive fund. Information is on the website. Connecting with Chicago is more of a long range plan. The notion with the Whittier clinic is that for the SW side there is an MOU with the city that was good through Dec. 31, and the hospital wants a 2 yr. extension to possibly build more clinic space. They recently brought in an imaging center. The clinic has not congested the area but created potential accidents from people going the wrong way on 29<sup>th</sup>. The bridge between 50<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> will be closed in the next couple weeks to redo Lyndale. They have done up to 29th, but up to Franklin is still listed as provisional. Any street scaping is on hold until after that. The vision was developed in mid 1990s and was quite visionary, but at first county engineers didn't want to do it. It's now back on the table, and people really like it. It would be the goal for the Lyndale design but doesn't have to be just like it. With Nicollet blocked, the condition of the road is poor and putting a heavier load on Lyndale.

**Adjourn:** 5:39

**Next Meeting:** Wed., February 8, 2012 Muddy Waters Restaurant 2933 Lyndale Ave. 11:00-1:30

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted by:** Lisa Hermanson