

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Business Association Committee – DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday August 13, 2008 4:00-5:30pm
The Murals of Lyn-Lake, 2833 Lyndale Ave So

Present Hillary Askew, Erica Christ, Lt David Hayhoe, John Hart, Paula Horan, Jim Hubal, Carolyn Humphry, Paul Jablonsky, Larry Ludeman, Jen Nagel, Felino de la Pena, Lisa Vecoli

Presenters Bob Lunning (Lunning & Wende), Jeffrey Mandyck (MS&R), Scott Mann (The Murals), Pam Newsome (MCAD), Den Vercruysse (MS&R), Scott Wende (Lunning & Wende)

Staff Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order at 4:09pm by Erica Christ followed by introductions of all present. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. Call for additions or corrections to the agenda: Erica noted the presentation on El Campestre and the request for a parking variance has been postponed; Marian added mention of the Eat Street brochures to the Old/New Business. A **Motion** to approve the agenda as revised was **carried**. Those present were given time to review the July BA minutes, and Erica asked for additions or corrections (there were none offered). A **Motion** to approve the July 9, 2008 minutes was **carried**.

Spotlight on Business: The Murals, Scott Mann

Scott M. noted the first phase of The Murals opened August 1; the rest will be done by September 1. There will be 109 units, and retail space in the front of the building. Currently 25% of the units have signed leases, with the majority being the higher priced units [they range from \$1100 to 2300]. The goal is to have 50% booked by the winter. Tiger Sushi plans to open in the beginning of October; this should help to get potential renters into the space and create interest. A second space is leased to Hyjek Chiropractic, and a third space is to be rented. The fifth story decks offers views of downtown and Tiger Sushi will overlook the Greenway. Scott estimated the project cost at \$22 million.

Fifth Precinct: Sector Lt. Hayhoe

Lt. Hayhoe is the new sector lieutenant, taking over for Lt. Frisell. He is coming in from the criminal investigations unit downtown, and is excited to be in the Fifth and get to know the neighborhood. Crime is down in the precinct, and down in Whittier. Thefts and burglaries, a continual neighborhood concern, are down. Lt. Hayhoe passed out flyers detailing how to define and deal with aggressive panhandling and work on business/property theft prevention.

Attendees noted that one problem they have is rapid police response on calls; the Lt. offered to check on the dispatched calls. Erica mentioned the continual problem area restaurants face with how to warn their customers about the possibility for crime/theft in Whittier without alarming them. The Lt. noted that adequate lighting in the parking lots, and better traffic flow through the lots (so that particular cars are not isolated and targeted) often helps. The possibility of crime prevention signs were raised [they were also discussed at the May meeting at MIA]. The Lt. offered to check on how signs would work (on city posts? who pays? are there others in Mpls?). It was noted that graffiti is a long-term livability issue in Whittier; there have been recent incidents along the Soo Line Garden, on 26th and Nicollet, and by 29th and Blaisdell. Graffiti often comes in waves in the neighborhood. The Lt. mentioned there is a tip line and a rewards program, and that the citywide coordinator (Sgt. Valez) is housed at the precinct. Marian noted the Whittier Alliance (WA) does have graffiti removal kits that are free, and there are funds for more permanent graffiti prevention (for personal property) available through the WA.

Review and Update on MCAD Master Plan: Jeff Mandyck and Dan Vercruysse (MS&R); and Pam Newsome (MCAD)

Pam noted MCAD has started the Master Plan process, and looking at a 100 year plan for their campus. The plan should help guide immediate development toward a vision that is consistent with their long term goals. Phase 1 of the plan will include the creation of additional parking, and the expansion of their academic structure.

Jeff explained that MS&R started working on the Master Plan in April. The plan is partially driven by the immediate need for parking on campus, the need to minimize the parking impact on nearby neighbors, and the goal of bringing the Master's candidate students—who currently occupy rental space in Whittier—back to the campus. In the context of the neighborhood and the larger city, the team wants to maximize MCAD's proximity to the pedestrian activity zone on 26th and Nicollet. Part of the project is looking at/anticipating the diversity of transportation in the area [biking, potential street car or transit lines], and trying to identify ways the campus could encourage its use. The immediate campus context—the proximity to MIA, the dense center of campus with the canopy—and the on-campus concerns (like security and safety) also drive the plans. The team is trying to maximize the greenspaces along and within the campus, identify weak areas of campus development, and work on pedestrian/vehicle interface.

One aspect of the plan is focusing the main entrance and the identity of the campus to the south/to 26th. The placement of a parking ramp there, and a planned submerged parking structure, help to reinforce that area as a main entrance. They are also considering more-public uses of the space along that street. One of the plans for the academic expansion is to work on creating buildings that feel more porous and have a neighborhood scale. Phase I includes the

parking structure, with a plan to start construction by the end of 2009. The academic expansion could occur in 2010. Phase II could take a 10 year build-out, with other phases occurring later. One goal is to balance the growth of the campus so that the campus center remains intact, while gradually shifting the uses of the space.

Attendees commented on: Stevens and 26th as a weak corner and weak use of space; concern over the plan for an interim surface parking lot on 26th and Stevens (is there a way to create parking without a flat lot?); concern for how close the planning parking ramp will be to the existing MIA parking ramp [MS&R have structural engineers looking at that]; and the possibility of integrating the MIA ramp and building a deeper parking structure that could be shared [it was noted that MIA was unlikely to want to do that]. MCAD anticipates that this plan will accommodate 1000 students. Although the City currently requires 275 parking slots, the number might change if the push toward alternative transportation occurs on a citywide basis. MCAD wants to come up with a plan for alternative transportation that they can present to the students that gives them a range of options (like an hour car, zip cars, metro pass, biking). They may consider restricting incoming freshman from having an on-campus vehicle as early as next spring.

MCAD and MS&R should be back to with updates on their progress in October, and regularly after that.

Design Guidelines for Commercial Corridor: Scott Wende and Bob Lunning (Lunning Wende & Assoc)

L&W have met with a neighborhood focus group, which included some residents and business owners, and have met with Marian to define the scope of their work. They have walked and photographed the Nicollet commercial corridor. The focus of the last meeting was to identify the places that worked best, and discover why participants felt drawn to those spaces. Within their office, one idea that emerged is to advocate for Nicollet as the premier pedestrian route from downtown to south Minneapolis. Some of the immediate impressions about the corridor include: the difference in pedestrian “feel” between one-story and multi-story developments, and the potential for improvements to existing properties and to refresh the landscaping and tree canopy. The focus group liked the eclectic nature of Nicollet Avenue, so one challenge is how to develop guidelines that are flexible enough to encourage eclectic growth, while still creating a high quality vision for the neighborhood. Bob expressed their desire to have the guidelines communicate effectively to the current business and to potential developers, and identify what existing patterns and qualities the neighborhood wants to maintain. Bringing the ideas to the business community is necessary, as the success of the guidelines depend on the corridor businesses working with and using the set guidelines. L&W would like to bring their initial ideas to the business association meeting to have them reviewed and commented on. They recognize that a potential step—after developing the guidelines—is for the neighborhood to envision how the guidelines can be used as a marketing tool to encourage and draw commercial growth. They reiterated the need to encourage and maintain the urban vitality of the corridor. The guidelines need to provide a balance that allows for entrepreneurialism and continued growth and development.

Attendees commented on: the ethnic/cultural expression on Nicollet (how can the guidelines encourage this kind of development without squashing the uniqueness that emerges?); the urban aesthetic of the avenue (vs. the suburban aesthetic found elsewhere in the city); and how best to promote the pedestrian experience. It was noted that Stevens Square does share part of Nicollet Avenue, and that they have their own set of design guidelines shaped by the more homogenous look and feel of their neighborhood. L&W noted that they have done some research on local sets of guidelines (which include Wyzata and downtown Stillwater), but that they could look at more national cities and see what has been established elsewhere. L&W would like more feedback from businesses along Nicollet, especially as to the practicality of the guidelines. It was also noted that Nicollet represents a variety of building eras, including a number from the 60's. L&W would be interested to know what conditions encouraged the growth at that time to see if that kind of rise of development could be encouraged again.

The next meeting of the Focus Group is the 25th. Please see the WA website for time.

Old/New Business

Marian solicited ideas for the upcoming **Green Fair**, tentatively scheduled for October 18th. Attendees suggested: having a speaker talk about the future switch from CFL's to LED's, and having more speakers/short presentations at the Fair.

The WA is sponsoring a **Picture Whittier** Photo Contest for the 2009 Whittier calendar, distributed to 8000 neighborhood households and businesses. The idea for the calendar is “What makes Whittier unique? What are the iconic images that speak Whittier to its residents?” The calendar is sponsored by NRP funds. Please take a flyer to distribute to anyone who may be interested in submitting their color, digital photos.

The **Eat Street/Whittier Dining Guides** have been printed, with partnership by MIA to cover printing costs. The guides detail dining spots within the Whittier neighborhood along Nicollet, Lyn-Lake, and Lyndale. Please take some brochures to distribute to your business/guests/friends of the neighborhood.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

Next meeting: September 10, 2008; time and place to be announced. **Attachments:** none.