

**WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Business Association Committee – DRAFT MINUTES**

Wednesday September 10, 2008 4:00-5:30pm

U+B Architecture &amp; Design, 2524 Nicollet Ave S

**Present** Maurice Battle, Mark Burgess, Erica Christ, Paula Horan, Jim Hubal, Elizabeth (Liz) Grzechowiak, Paul Jablonsky, Jeff Orluck, Marcy Tollefson, Paul Udris, Lisa Vecoli  
**Presenter** Scott Wende (Lunning & Wende)  
**Staff** Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen

**Call to Order** at 4:11pm by Erica Christ, followed by introductions. Call for additions or corrections to the agenda: Erica added a mention of the open for-profit BA Board seat. A **Motion** to approve the agenda as revised was **carried**. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. Those present were given time to review the August BA minutes; there were no corrections/additions offered. A **Motion** to approve the August 13, 2008 minutes was **carried**.

**Spotlight on Business: Paul Udris and Mark Burgess (U+B Architecture & Design)**

U+B has been in the neighborhood for four years. A smaller firm, they currently employ 6 people, but have had as many as 9 staff members. They work both in and out of state, including residential and commercial projects. They are also involved in Whittier neighborhood projects, such as creating the virtual façade improvement mock-ups the WA BA used when they applied for city grants.

**BA-CPED Grant 2008-09**

The BA had requested an \$11,000 grant from the City of Minneapolis Business Association Assistance program for the 2008-09 funding cycle. The actual awarded amount was \$6,000. The work plan funding and objectives had been budgeted for the requested amount, and now need to be adjusted for the actual award. The objectives include: 1. funds earmarked for staff time, 2. advertising, 3. funding of the design guidelines for the commercial corridors, 4. funding to contract with artists for pedestrian-friendly public art, and 5. funding for a marketing plan (to identify and attract new retail/commercial businesses). The BA needs to vote to approve Marian's suggested funding figures, or make another recommendation for the budget allocation.

Attendees questioned if it would be better to put funds towards one choice project (like the design guidelines) rather than divide up the funding in such small allocations. It was noted that funding for advertising and for staff time are basic essentials, and that moving funding from those two objectives shouldn't be anticipated. It was also noted that if funding for an objective is depleted, the BA can revisit the budgeting and reallocate the funds at a later date.

**Liz moved** to follow Marian's recommendations for the funding with the option to reallocate the funding at a later date should the funds become depleted, **seconded** by Jim.

**BA Motion 1:** The Whittier Alliance Business Association moves to re-allocate the funds for the City of Minneapolis' Business Association Assistance Program Proposal, granted \$6,000 for the 2008-09 funding cycle, per the funding recommendations of Whittier Alliance staff. **Motion Carried.**

**Façade Improvement Grant**

The Façade Improvement Grant offers funds for the improvement of some commercial corridors. The grant matches what the business fronts 1-3 on Lyndale, and 1-2 on Nicollet. The grant info sheet lists the eligibility of different types of improvements. Eventually, the façade improvement will likely follow the suggestions of the commercial corridor design guidelines. Local architects/designers Tanek and U+B are available for professional consultation on potential projects. The grant is a great opportunity for a business that is considering a project but may only have funds to cover part of the cost. Grants are awarded for a 2 year time frame. Please refer any interested parties to the WA office.

**Design Guidelines for Commercial Corridors: Scott Wende (Lunning Wende & Assoc)**

The Design Guidelines project developed out of the work on the pedestrian overlay. The guidelines will help shape the future of commercial (re)development along neighborhood commercial corridors. The WA office has contracted with Lunning Wende to use input from community focus groups to shape a document that speaks to the type/style/vision of commercial development along the corridors of Whittier. LW presented to the BA last month.

Scott noted LW have met with the focus group a few times, in an effort to learn what neighborhood stakeholders envision for the future of development in the neighborhood. The guidelines or development standards should have two purposes: 1. to act as an educational tool for existing business owners, to teach them how to make their commercial spaces more inviting from a pedestrian perspective, and 2. to act as a tool to communicate to new developers the goals and values of the neighborhood in terms of the desired pedestrian experience. LW used the focus group input to gather a sense of the patterns that help to make a micro-environment more inviting. The idea is to recognize the patterns and elements that enhance properties and corridors. The guidelines are meant to inspire creative development, without being prescriptive. A key word the focus group repeated was "eclectic"—one challenge is to create guidelines that encourage eclectic aesthetics while still promoting the qualities and values of development the neighborhood desires.

The document LW are drafting includes four major areas: the experience of pedestrian and street, building and pedestrian, lot and building, and implementation and repair. For example, the “pedestrian and street” section includes guidelines for plantings, public art, open spaces, and walls. The document will include photos from the neighborhood (as examples of encouraged development), and dialogue on each of the pages that outlines what is encouraged. They would also like to include a comment from a resident or business owner with each element/pattern, to add a personal touch that grounds the document in the Whittier perspective. It is important that the tone match what the neighborhood feels and thinks about the neighborhood and corridors. LW will meet with the focus group after they have put a full draft together of the guidelines; all are encouraged to take part in the discussion. The draft should be available on LW’s website for comment. LW should have a full draft by November for comments and suggestions. For questions, contact Marian.

Attendees commented on: the idea of public art (how to tap into the talent at MCAD, and create ways of bringing art into the streetscape; repetition of an art form that could help to define Whittier and create its own identity); the possibility of a neighborhood art installation/event along the commercial corridors (an active art event that gets people into the neighborhood; or the idea of a series of art installations that create a larger message, rather than individual works of art); if the cultural/social/ethnic diversity of the neighborhood should be part of the document (as another layer that helps identify this part of town); concerns and ideas for defining “lighting” (use of neon, potential for colored lighting and advances in technology, also LED paint); the need for photos of night activity on the corridors; the possibility of a small public space that could be used for neighborhood events; addressing the issue of vacant lots (pushing for development first, then re-development, to help keep some older buildings with lower rents); how to connect with upper-story businesses (to connect with the pedestrian level and demonstrate activity and use along the commercial street); promoting safety as one of the values of the neighborhood.

### Old/New Business

Tammy Wong of Rainbow Chinese had a city designer create a **bike rack with an Eat Street logo** to further market and brand the idea of Eat Street. The loop racks are about twice as expensive as regular bike racks; one rack costs around \$515, although the cost lowers if they are bought in bulk. If the racks are installed through the special services district the cost would be 100% assessed, and all businesses on Nicollet would have to agree to the design of the racks and agree to pay for their installation over a length of time. Another option would be to go through the city councilmen and have half the cost of each rack reimbursed through the City. The racks take 4-6 weeks to manufacture. Tammy would like to install some racks this fall. The WA/BA will start a list of businesses who are interested in having the bike racks.

Attendees commented: it might be most logical to apply for racks next year, and ask the City to pay for half the cost at that time, and get commitments from local businesses so that they racks could be purchased in bulk at a lower cost. It was suggested that the design could be changed: to a plain pole with a top circle for the logo, to make the rack design taller so the design could be seen even if the racks were being used, to make the rack capable of stacked bike parking, to install the racks in groups of three (with 1 taller Eat Street rack flanked by 2 shorter plain racks). It was noted: the racks do not qualify to be covered under the façade improvement grant, and that the WA Board had discussed using NRP funds for the project but had not favored that option.

Josie has organized a **Neighborhood Clean-up, Saturday September 20** from 10 to noon. Residents and property owners are encouraged to participate by meeting at Whittier Park at 10 to pick up litter, or by picking up around their section of the neighborhood and then meeting at the Park at noon for pizza. You may also help with the fall maintenance of the community gardens.

The WA is sponsoring a **Picture Whittier** Photo Contest for the 2009 Whittier calendar, distributed to 8000 neighborhood households and businesses. Please take a flyer to distribute to anyone who may be interested in submitting their color, digital photos. The calendar will be designed by the WA fall design intern.

The WA BA has an **open for-profit seat to the WA Board of Directors**. The term would last through March. The Board meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month to discuss and take action on items forwarded from WA committees. Current BA reps include Maurice and Lisa (non-profit), and Erica and Liz (for-profit). Interested parties should contact Marian or Erica for more information.

**Neighborhood notes:** Crime was down for August. Lt. Frizell has been transferred; the new Lt. is David Hayhoe. Michael Pham is looking to sell the lot on 27<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet. Construction is moving forward at 24<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet for the parking lot for Washburn Center for Children. There are no new developments on the Ace hotel plans; Marian has emailed Huey Fung and Craig Wilson. Plans for HCMC to build on the former GFI site (the block Nicollet and 28<sup>th</sup>) have been deferred by the planning commission for 2 cycles. It is unclear if/how HCMC will move forward; Marian has been in contact with Cmen Lilligren about the project. The MIA has closed on the purchase of First Christian Church; the church will continue to use the property. MIA is working on a strategic plan to shape how they will manage the investment, which includes a nursing home that will need some environmental (asbestos) cleanup.

**Meeting adjourned** at 5:45pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

**Next meeting: October 8, 2008;** time and place to be announced. **Attachments:** none.