

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

Wednesday November 12, 2008 4-5:30pm

Tanek Architects 118 E. 26<sup>th</sup> St #300

**Attendees** Maurice Battle (Mpls 1st 7th Day Adventist), Erica Christ (Black Forest Inn), Liz Grezchowiak (AZIA), Jim Hubal (Edina Realty), Carolyn Humphry (AAUW), Paul Jablonsky (Nicollet Car Wash), Christina Le (TDN Enterprises), Angela Piper (Gale Mansion), Nathaniel Shea (Tanek), Lisa Vecoli (MIA)

**Presenters** Mike Harristhal of HCMC & Gary Nyberg of HGA Architects, Rebecca Lundberg of Powerfully Green, Councilmember Robert Lilligren

**Staff** Marian Biehn, Karin Knudsen

**Call to Order** at 4:06 pm by Erica Christ. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were recognized. Attendees introduced themselves. A **Motion** to approve the agenda was **carried**. Those present were given time to review the October BA minutes, and make additions or corrections (there were none offered). A **Motion** to approve the October 8, 2008 minutes was made by Liz, seconded by Jim, and **carried**.

**Spotlight on Business: Tanek Architects (Nat Shea)** Tanek is an architectural firm that has been in Whittier five years. They have 15 employees, including architects and interior designers. They tend to focus on small urban projects within Minneapolis, including restaurants (ex. LeAnn Chin), medical and office projects, and multi-family residence projects. A recent survey of their employees found they enjoy working within the neighborhood and being so close to Eat Street. However, parking for client meetings is a continual concern. The building dates back to 1885. While the space (and lack of elevator) can be challenging, overall it is a good fit for most of the employees and for the other leased occupants of the building. Tanek also participates in the Façade Improvement Grants facilitated through the Whittier Alliance.

**Powerfully Green (Rebecca Lundberg): How to cut energy consumption and reduce your “phantom load”**

Powerfully Green was one of the tablers at the WA Green Fair in October. Rebecca is a solar installer whose focus is residential and small commercial installations. An overall goal of energy and consumption education is to teach people how to reduce their carbon footprint (a measure of the impact of human activities on the environment in terms of carbon dioxide emissions). The US Department of Energy estimates that the habits and activities of the average American produce 20 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

One factor individuals (and businesses) can focus on to reduce their carbon footprint is their “phantom load”: energy use coming from devices that use electricity even when they seem to be turned “off”. Devices susceptible to phantom loads include electronics with clocks, timers or remotes that remain on even when the device itself is not in use (like a stove or microwave), and devices that have wall cubes/boxes on their power cords (like laptops), as well as electronic power cords (like cell phone chargers). The higher tech your home or business and the more phantom loads you will have. Standby power for such electronic devices consumes 7 to 25% of the average household’s total energy.

Suggestions to reduce your phantom load: turn off or unplug devices when not in use (cell phone chargers, chargers for cordless drills, etc), or plug electronic devices (such as your TV, DVD player, and sound system) into a power strip that can easily be turned off; use a Kill O Watt meter to determine the actual energy use of your devices and brainstorm ways to reduce that use; use a Smart Strip for office use (a power strip with different settings for devices based on your use needs); and, commit to changing 4 light bulbs to CFL. The average Minnesotan household uses 800 kilowatt hours per month (compared to 600 as the national average); reducing use by 200 hours would save each roughly \$20 a month in energy costs. Minnesota has a solar electricity rebate, and a solar thermal rebate system; there is also a federal tax credit system for the installation of some renewable energy systems. One suggestion for the holiday season is to consider the use of LED or solar powered holiday string lights in your business or building.

**Councilmember Robert Lilligren: comments/updates on foreclosure response, transportation, and city policy changes and activity**

**Foreclosure response:** the State has received roughly 58 million for immediate foreclosure response, with 5.6 million designated to Minneapolis/St. Paul. Minneapolis has almost 800 vacant and boarded foreclosed homes, most of them concentrated near northside, but also surprisingly in Powderhorn and Longfellow. City government is currently deciding how best to spend the funds. One approach is to get the foreclosed and boarded homes into the hands of non-profits who can partner with the city to renovate and then manage the homes. The city is also looking to move some properties into sale to first-time home buyers and lead them through the process of responsible borrowing. The funds are coming into the city through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. The state economist has reported that Minneapolis was hit earlier and harder than other places in the country, so it make take longer to recover.

**Mass Transit:** The **Southwest light rail transit** (LRT) project is in the midst of creating the draft Environmental Impact Statement, which identifies the potential environmental and cultural impacts caused by the creation of the proposed LRT lines. The two options which affect Minneapolis are the 3A (Kenilworth) and 3C (Nicollet) alignments.

The City's official position is to support both alignments until all of the information is in and they are able to choose the preferred alignment (likely in the first quarter of 2009). There seems to be a growing sense that the Nicollet alignment may be cost-prohibitive. There is renewed talk about a **Minneapolis streetcar system**, including a greenway streetcar line connecting Hiawatha LRT and the southwest line. Midtown Community Works Partnership is in support of the project, and is working with the City and other private partners to look at a preliminary design and a funding stream.

The new state transit sales tax, which will be effective in 5 of the 7 metro counties, was projected to bring in 80-100 million annually. Although the final figures may be lower, the tax means that for the first time there is a dedicated local funding stream dedicated to transportation. Having the local predictable funds should accelerate applications for funds made at the federal level. The Access Minneapolis (Transportation Plan) is currently looking at the how the Bus Rapid Transit System will work at the 35W/exit to Lake Street. The BRT is being built on 35W, but there is no final plan for how it will work from 46<sup>th</sup> Street to Downtown. There should be decisions on the plans for the Lake Street bus modal station in the next 6 months or so; the Whittier neighborhood will be a part of discussions on those. Overall, the focus of City transportation projects is shifting from big-idea/cost projects to low-cost/high-impact solutions. There is some expectation that the new national administration will result in a local infusion of infrastructure monies, some of which will be designated for transportation concerns.

**City Council:** Councilmembers just finished work on the preliminary 2009 City budget, which should be approved December 9. One goal of the budget is tax relief for property owners; there is a push for a smaller increase in property taxes. Lilligren is also pushing to dedicate funds to the reopening of Nicollet and make it a prioritized city project. The new education levy was passed and will replace the levy that is set to expire.

**Old/New Business** Erica noted the WA is in the middle of the **Fall Fundraising campaign**. Please consider donating what you can. Donations go toward the activities and administration of the WA office and enable the WA to coordinate meetings and neighborhood activities and events. There will be prize drawings at the December Community Issues Meeting for donors; prizes include gift cards to Target, Galactic Pizza, and AZIA. The WA still has roughly \$50,000 to distribute to property owners along the commercial corridors who apply for the **Façade Improvement Grant**. The money is matched by 1:1 on Nicollet, and 1:2 on Lyndale, a recent change from matching that was 1:2 and 1:3 respectively.

Mike Harristhal of HCMC and Gary Nyberg of HGA Architects updated attendees on the revised proposal for a **HCMC Family Medical Clinic on the former GFI America site** (28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup>, Nicollet to Blaisdell). The proposal for the building is similar to what they presented in August; however, the overall land use and the parking plans have changed significantly. Mike noted the changes help to increase the density on the site, and set the stage for later development on the southern portion of the block. Phase 1 includes the change of having a ramp at the western end of the building to provide access to underground parking (68 slots), in conjunction with surface parking (104 slots). HCMC is working with the City on a Planned Unit Development (PUD) in which HCMC will transfer ownership of the southern portion of the site to the City, who will set the parameters and create the later redevelopment contract of that area. A PUD allows for a time frame of 6 years before the rest of the site will need to be developed. Some of the options for later redevelopment include retail and office space, or a residential development.

Attendee comments and questions included: encouraging the use of solar powered lighting for the parking lot and solar powered heating in some of the mechanical units [the building itself will be LEED certified]; parking considerations [Gary confirmed the total number of spaces will be 332 in the final configuration; Phase 1 requires 172 slots, which includes reductions due to bike racks and the creation of a transit stop on Nicollet]; number of employees [HCMC will have 120 employees at this location, though obviously they will not all be there at the same time]; the care and maintenance of the portion that will be deeded to the City [Mike confirmed that the proposed landscaping and greenspace are the plans they have for the southern portion—the City should be bound under the agreement to maintain their portion of the site]. Lilligren noted that while the City Planning Commission is likely to reduce their parking requirements for new developments in the near future, the reductions will not be in place to affect this development.

Erica noted that HCMC presented to the CI meeting on Monday, and the variances for this proposal will go before the Board. Liz thanked HCMC for working with the neighborhood and revising their plans to take in some of the neighborhood's concerns. Paul **moved to support the revised HCMC plan, and the requested variances** for the project, **seconded** by Liz.

**BA Motion 1:** The Business Association moves in support of the revised proposal for the HCMC Family Medical Center [28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup>, Nicollet to Blaisdell] and the requested variances from the pedestrian overlay document. **Motion Carried.**

**Meeting adjourned** at 5:43 pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

**Next meeting: December 10, 2008;** Creation Audio, 2453 Nicollet Ave South