

Whittier Alliance-Community Issues Committee- DRAFT MINUTES

Monday, November 08, 2010, Whittier Elementary School

Attendees: Jenny Morrill, Jesse Oyervides, Holly Verhage, France Barbean, Maggie Coats, Jeff Nelson, CM. Robert Lilligren, Larry Ludeman, William Prouty, Brian Hoffman, Pahoua Hoffman, Giancarlo Cosale, Sinem Arcaly, Darrell Washington, Tanh Toi, Jen Wendland, Sherman Ford, Brent Roeger, Andrea Roeger, Felino dela Pena, Mary Cable, Tom Bissen, Steve Kelly, Joe Sweeney, Julia Gordon, David Scroth, John Champe, Laura Jean, Erica Christ

Presenters: Lt. Diaz & Chelsea Adams (5th Precinct), Dean Duvolis, Morgan Luzier, Paul Kosmidis, Jeremy Woerner, Pam Postona, Nate Postona
Staff: Marian Biehn, Becky Neamy

Call to order at 6:17 by Marian Biehn, WA Executive Director, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion to **approve the agenda** was made, and carried. A **Motion** to approve the October CI minutes as presented was **approved**.

Announcements and Community Comments

Comments and Topics from Whittier Residents On behalf of the BA, there will be another Eat St Excursion. Lots of discounts around the neighborhood (specifically on Eat St), Thursday the 18th and Friday the 19th in the evening. This overlaps with Third Thursday at the MIA and the MCAD annual art sale. **5th Precinct report & 2011 Neighborhood Policing Plan– Safe Specialist Chelsea Adams & Lt. Diaz:** The sheet being passed around is the 2010 plan and the idea is to see if there is anything else that is needed for updates or alterations. WA has been doing a fantastic job in helping with the policing of the area. If anyone is thinking about volunteering to help out, they should. Volunteers are really what leads to the success of these programs. Lt. Diaz specifically acknowledged how well organized the WA is. Are there priorities for next year? The 2010 plan is a good basis, but what more do you-the community want to see in the plan or for safety improvements. Communication is a key part of making sure that the policing plan is successful. For next year, there will be four beat officers assigned to the Stevens Square and Whittier area. This is a two officer increase from this year and all four officers applied and were interviewed for the position. A beat officer will be along eat street in the evening and early morning hours. Lake and Hennepin beats will still be around. The CRT was mostly directive patrols this year. This is an undercover team that focuses primarily on robbery or whatever the current crime trend is. Next year, the CRT will be focusing on low level narcotics investigations. They will be flexible and changing gears to address the communication given from Whittier residents. If anyone sees something suspicious, they are encouraged to report it. This can be done anonymously. Transit police are keeping a list of individuals trespassing on transit property, such as loitering in bus shelters or selling drugs at bus stops. This info being shared with police, who have the authority to arrest. Staff levels will remain relatively constant. Again, calling 911 is the backbone of the operation. This is incredibly important to really make an impact on the crime rate.

Comment—really glad to hear that the beat officers are increasing. You can tell the difference when they are around. There is less activity that is clearly suspicious. As soon as they left the area, the crime went back up. I'm really glad to hear this. Credit to the police and the businesses in the decrease of graffiti. Reporting helped. But there has been a recent uptick in occurrences. What is the protocol? If you see it in progress, call 911. If you see the next day, call 311. If on private property, call 311 and it will be painted over in about ten days. The property owner is charged for the paint over service if Solid waste and recycling does it. Take pictures if you can as these can be sent to 311. This can help identify who is behind it/if it is malicious. You can paint over it yourself. Police are capable of taking the pictures, too, but they are not in charge of the clean up. The pictures from those who call in can be used as evidence for apprehension. There is a lot of damage done and this is a livability issue. For more information, call 311 and ask if they take pictures of the graffiti. Another resident echoes the concern for a consistent response. Sometime response is within a few days or a month. This inconsistency is disconcerting. If you do have damage, you DO need to document that for ease of future prosecution. The cost of the graffiti damage is important for prosecution. Lt. Diaz—three folks were arrested for spraying because a resident made a phone call. After the damage is done, it becomes difficult to make an arrest. Catching them in the act is the easiest way to do this, and that comes down to people reporting. Chelsea will touch base with Clean City to find out what the response is supposed to be.

Prostitution and drugs on Clinton between 22nd and 24th often coupled with loud music early in the morning, mostly on the weekdays and appearing to come mostly from 24th. A resident has called in and seen response slow enough that this

is no longer happening by the time a patrol car gets there. This is a frequent problem. Is this something the beat officers could address? Lt. Diaz—the CRT team has been in that area, but it seems to go in streaks. Resident—it is better, but it's mostly in the cars at this point, not so much on the street. Lt. Diaz—If you can catch someone in the act, it should be a higher priority. In the end though, it is more important just to make the call.

Comment—there will be a Somali holiday on the 16th. A lot of people will be coming. Will there be any increase in security for the influx and to help address the traffic? The morning before prayer will probably be heavy. Lt. Diaz will inform the day watch to see what they can do.

Comment—6 gang members arrested. Thank you for your hard work and time.

MB—if there are any suggestions for topics for the policing plan, talk to Chelsea or MB. Resident—there needs to be an increase in Block Club leaderships. Chelsea—if anyone wants to become a leader, the training takes about an hour. Let her know or Marian. And, in general, if anyone wants to volunteer, please say something so we can begin incorporating you into the plan.

2528-48 Nicollet Redevelopment – Dean Duvolis, DJR Nate (Vertical Endeavors), Jeremy (Blue Door Pub), Mark Krogh (Leasing), Matt (Construction and Development)

Nate—Vertical Endeavors is located in St Paul. Has been looking for a location in this area for some time, Ice House is a perfect fit. We're excited to be a part of this. As a destination oriented business, many will come here. Jeremy of Blue Door Pub—In St. Paul now. Been around for a couple of years and have a staff of about 37. Are excited to open location here. It is quite an honor and achievement. Hoping for spring open. Matt (Construction)—Worked mostly in Northeast. We're not building then disappearing, but investing in the space. Have a 24 hours, staffed call line. Staff will be sweeping streets, cleaning, etc. Dean—Demolition of the interiors in the Azia building is already underway. This project is fully leased out and fully funded. This may be one of the most dynamic developments on Nicollet in a couple of years because of the quality of the tenants coming in to the space. The Vertical Endeavors space will have one of the largest climbing walls in the nation. The Blue Door will take the Sinbad space. Azia is coming back on the corner with a lower price point restaurant and a remodeled space. Blue Plate Restaurant group has dibs on the space West of Azia. The 13 apartments are being renovated. Dunn Bros is taking the Sushi Bar space. Jasmine Deli is staying on the corner. The development will demo the cinder block grocery and make the space parking and outdoor dining and can be used as a plaza for community events. Another outdoor café will be developed adjacent to Blue Plate. This should create a civic space that has a lot of activity and may serve as a catalyst for further development along Nicollet. Soon, they will be submitting to the City the drawings. Pervious pavement will be used in the plaza and a rain garden will be built in to try to deal with runoff all on sight. Parking is in balance and a variance is not currently needed. 65 spaces required, 65 spaces available. Also, some tenants are going to be mostly used in the day, whereas others are more at night. The goal is to have everything open in spring. Azia first, then Ice House. Tonight, they are seeking initial sight plan approval.

Attendees Comments and Questions:

Question: Do the 21 spaces go to the apt building next to it? No, it used to be used by Azia and is currently vacant. And the plaza? The plaza was a building, so those parking spaces are a gain and do not interfere with the outdoor dining. If there was an event, those spaces would be lost.

Question: How are the parking spots split? VE gets 37, BD 13, Apts 13, Jasmine 5, etc. The numbers are based on the square footage. Started with restaurants first and then worked from there. With the separation between day use and night use, there will be a pretty good balance. There will be peak moments, but the balance is there. Question: Is this a historic district? Not a historic district. The Ice House could qualify as a historic building, but developer is not pursuing this classification. Jeremy from Blue Door: We have a strong commitment to the n'hood we are in in St. Paul, and intend to do the same here. We are not looking for just a paycheck.

MB—the concept of parking lot that is designed for use as a venue is a nice idea, but this isn't going to be anything more than a parking lot in reality if there is not an intentional or frequent use of the space as an event space. Who will be doing the events? The tenants may make use of the space, but the neighborhood is in charge of using the space and programming it. The community use is what will make the understanding of the space as more than parking possible.

MB—is there a concept for winter outdoor dining? The curved structure uses solar heating because of the south exposure with the curve. This will trap heat and there will be a bit of a heat sink because of the positioning of the building. This is a possibility.

Question: Apartments market rate or affordable? Market Rate. Bike racks? Will be worked in, Nice Ride station might be worked into this as well. Landscaping? Combination of perennials and annuals, street trees. Not heavily landscaped, but it will be landscaped. The green interior with landscaping will soften the look of the buildings.

Question: One of the best things about the Whittier neighborhood is diverse options and the independent stores. Isn't there a better option than Dunn Bros? Competition will be there, but that was the client that was interested. Question: Will there be any effort for a green roof? At this point, no, as they are all out of sight. This isn't the best site for this. Also, the cost and structural integrity make this difficult. However, there is an effort to collect water from the sight, holding it, and then using it for the landscaping. There is a strong effort to not dump the rainwater back into the sewer system. Comment: Design looks really suburban. A more urban look would be better. Also, this seems very car heavy. Dean—I am trying to reduce the amount of parking here, but the zoning requires the 65 spaces. There is an effort to try to keep it balanced. Chelsea—from a crime prevention standpoint, this much visibility is really good for reducing the number of thefts from cars and cars themselves. This will be safer for cars, bikes, and people. Comment: I would like to speak in favor of this design because the original buildings are being kept and this helps make the street more interesting. This is still a mix-use site, this fits a lot of the criteria. Another way to serve the n'hood is to not tow people out of the parking lot. This is very inhospitable. Mark—We try to contact the car owners first, especially tenants, to reduce the number of the cars towed. Comment: I am nervous about Ice House. It is a historic building and I don't want to see it destroyed or diminished because of the use. Nate—Alterations to the exterior will be minimal. The climbing walls will be built into removable walls. Mark—In terms of historic preservation, hardwood floors and interior woodwork are all going to be restored. The bathrooms and kitchens may be adjusted. Even though this is not a historic site, it is going to be treated similar to one and with respect. Comment: I am an avid climber and at other climbing centers, there are 75 cars in the parking lot almost all the time. I am worried the parking will be taken up by the climbing center alone. Dean—it goes back to the balance idea again. St. Paul site is very car dependent. Here, transit, bike and walk are options

CI Motion 1: CI moves to approve the concept of the site plan for the Ice House Development aqt 2528-48 Nicollet Ave. Passes 13-0-3

Balance Fitness Studio– 2902-04-06-08 Garfield Ave S.: Morgan Luzier Presenting for a zoning change. Balance fitness will be relocating from Lyndale Ave & 35th. This will be in front of the planning commission next week so there is a short timeline. Balance is a wellness facility that specializes in small group and personal training. Opened in 2002 across from Crème Café but is looking to move elsewhere. 2902 is a perfect fit and the studio was officially closed on Friday. The building straddles two zoning classifications and the city is considering the space an industrial zone. In order for Balance to open and operate, it needs to be considered commercial, which is what the desire is in asking for this zoning change. There have been requests and suggestions to already change the zoning from light industrial to commercial by various entities.

Attendees Comments and Questions: The site looks industrial, but I don't see any reason why it shouldn't be rezoned.

CI Motion 2: The Community Issues committee moves to approve the zoning change at 2902-04-06 Garfield Ave S from I1 to C3A. **Motion Passes 13-0-0**

Discussion: What of parking? We currently have enough spaces to be within the compliance with the city. The business is open by appointment only, so the parking should not be in high demand. The 8 ft fence? Good for security, but doesn't look nice. Balance doesn't want to see that fence there either and it is a concern. The green space north of the building? Balance wants to make it a useful space. It is being used currently as a rain garden but may be used as a community garden plot. Balance doesn't plan to do any build out in the near future and doesn't necessarily want to pave over green space. Will take time in the space before asking for any changes. Can get to the parking through various alley access points. Comment: I think this is a great space. Question: Any plans for a bike rack: yes!

Question: Landscaping? Yes. Comment: Massive rezoning effort in the spring along the greenway. There was a suggestion during that project that the properties between Lake and the greenway be rezoned as well as per individual action.

CI Motion 3: The Community Issues committee moves to approve the site plan for Balance Fitness Studio at 2902-04-06-08 Garfield Ave S. **Motion Passes 11-0-0.**

Old / New Business. GiveMN Nov. 16th One of two big fundraisers for the WA. Residents will receive a letter asking for gifts. This serves to supplement the funding for WA. The funds will be used for the operating costs, advertising, etc. Please consider giving. Give to the Max is happening on Tuesday 11/16 online. You can always donate online on the WA website. The nice thing about GiveMN is that they will pay for the credit card fee. If you donate to United Way, you can designate WA as the organization. **By the People:** History of NRP films showing Sunday the 14th at Ritz Theater in NE. **Update on Karmel Village:** There was a request for an additional 18 units. Last month, CI committee and the planning commission denied the request for many reasons, including safety, traffic, parking. Planning commission was uncomfortable moving ahead until previous issues were addressed. Additionally, they felt the current density was appropriate for the space and that further density would not be appropriate. Community concerns about congregations in the middle of the street were also heeded. A pattern of building without permission, paying the fine, and then returning for permission had been established. To stop a precedent from being established, permission was not granted. He has till Wed to appeal, and as of this meeting no appeal had been submitted.

Meeting adjourned: 8:18pm

Minutes submitted by: Jen Wendland, Whittier Resident

Next meeting: Monday, December 13th, 6 pm, Whittier Elementary School