

WHITTIER ALLIANCE - Community Issues Committee –MEETING MINUTES Draft
Monday December 10th, 2007 – 6:00 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.
Whittier International Elementary School

Present Michaela Ahern, Nimco Ahmed (Ward 6 Aide), Sihem Arak, Maurice Battle, Tom Bissen, Giancarlo Casale, Erica Christ, Wendy Darst, Felino de la Pena, John Donahue, Brian Foster, Eric Grumdahl, Dan Hansen, Jim Hruby, Peter Jochimsen, Dean Kallenbach, Linda Martin, Peg Mountin-NRP, Jeff Nelson, Todd Skallerup, Jeff Thomson, Bryan Wood,
Speakers Pam Nordaune (MCAD), Julie Snow (Snow Architects), Fifth Precinct Sector One Lieutenant Eddie Frizell, Councilmember Robert Lilligren
Staff Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Eric James

Call to Order at 6:15 by Chair Destin Nygard. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. **Motion** to approve the agenda **carried**. A **motion** to approve the Nov 12, 2007 minutes **carried**.

Community Comments & Discussion

Marian asked residents to shop locally and participate in Whittier events; look at the Whittier Business Directory and website. Josie said the Whittier calendar is being sent out and features Mpls College of Art & Design photography

Development Updates

325 East Franklin Ave - Wendy's Extended Hours Non-Conforming Use in CUP

The request for the extended hours and expansion of the non conforming use by Wendy's was denied at the Planning Commission. Wendy's appealed the decision to the Zoning & Planning Committee and they denied the appeal, moving to maintain the integrity of the ped. overlay. The City Council upheld the decision and also denied the expansion/CUP. They do not get extended hours.

2848 Pleasant Ave S - Midwest Machinery Redevelopment "Karmel Village"

The developer is proposing 92 units of 2, 3, 4 & 5 bedroom units built into the existing Midwest Machinery building with some new construction abutting the original building. The neighborhood opposed 92 units and instead asked for 58 units conforming to support for a previous proposal and consistent with R5. The Planning Commission approved 58 units and did not support the site plan. PC noted the plan presented to them at the hearing had changed from what had been submitted for approval. A resident noted at the previous CI meeting the developer indicated building less than 92 units was not economically feasible. Marian said they may appeal but are likely not to appear again at CI. A resident walking the Greenway noted there is construction including what looks like a foundation. The developer has a demolition permit and the City is aware of unapproved activity. Marian also noted the Parking Study reviewed by the PC was done in the early morning hours which is not the critical time of day. The PC acknowledged the study's flaws which will be later reviewed by Councilmember Lilligren.

2550 Nicollet Ave S – ACE Hotel AZIA Icehouse Redevelopment

Kandiyohi the developer will be presenting at the Dec. 17 planning commission. They have one variance, a request for a wider curb cut for the underground parking turn off of 26th St which was not reviewed at the Com Issues meeting.

SouthWest Transitway Nicollet LRT Route 3C

BA Chair Erica noted the BA had moved against the route because there is no economic benefit to the neighborhood due to no stops as well as the destruction of Nicollet Ave. The other two alternatives follow Kenilworth Trail in the west which loops through Bryn-Mawr and next to the downtown garbage burner.

A resident asked Erica to elaborate how the LRT line does not serve the n'hood. Erica said there are no stops along Nicollet inside Whittier. Some businesses would be vulnerable to the noise and disruption (ie: a recording studio) and the construction period would be too long for some of the businesses to survive. Nicollet would also have part-way trench leading into the tunnel under Nicollet and surface at Franklin Ave. A resident noted Nicollet has an urban pedestrian future and the train will serve the community. He disagreed with the idea that it doesn't serve the community. Another resident concurred and noted many people have lived in Whittier for a long time before many of the existing businesses and it's not fair to give a sweeping opinion for the rest of the n'hood. Erica said Whittier is currently well served by bus service and will disrupt bus lines in the future, she noted streetcar was a better option. The residents debated the slow bus service to the south and Uptown, a train would be faster. Linda said she appreciates the current bus system. A resident said the density of Whittier is not great enough for LRT and there won't be demand in the next 20 years unless there is more growth. The City should target areas of higher transit demand (ie: job centers, suburban to downtown). A resident opined the expense of digging tunnels is not worth it. One of the considerations for LRT is the adding new users. Whittier already has a significant transit population and LRT wouldn't add to that—especially with no stops through the commercial corridor. The point of LRT is to move people quickly so more stops are unlikely and too cost prohibitive

The Chair said the Kenilworth option is very clear how it gets to downtown but the Nicollet alignment has so many questions and the n'hood is being asked to take a leap of faith that the engineering is right. If the line is not done right it will have long-term impacts to the n'hood. He warned the n'hood should not expect to receive definitive answers before it begins and suggested neighbors study the Hiawatha Line to see how it affects those n'hoods. Marian asked residents to bring all their

questions to the Joint Meeting of the Bus. Assn and Comm. Issues on Mon. Jan 14. The meeting will address what information Whittier will include in the Environmental Impact Statement. The n'hood position is a separate topic that will be addressed separately.

CM Lilligren said the Southwest Policy Advisory Group is a group of various stakeholders from downtown to Eden Prairie, the residents opposed to the Kenilworth Corridor always attend and he notes at the meeting his constituents do not always have time and money to be so engaged. Now is a good time for residents to be engaged because the final decision will come in 2008. He noted the Bassett Creek area north of Bryn-Mawr has already been studied as rail-served. A trump card may be that none of the north-south street alignments connect directly to the Hiawatha Line. The Kenilworth line however "interlines" with the existing Hiawatha Line and gives huge operational savings because trains can connect. Linda asked how an expensive Nicollet route is rated. CM Lilligren said the Federal cost-efficiency index (CEI) needs to be met and it is very difficult. The tunneling and other expenses with Nicollet would likely rule it out in the CEI. The CM said the existing Whittier area already has high transit-usage and the LRT line is required to attract new rider-ship.

Fifth Precinct Report – Sector Lieutenant Eddie Frizell

Crime is quiet with few random crimes spread around the sector. MPD has made high profile arrests of people in the summer who have been doing crimes such as car theft, robbery, and theft. They are now arrested due to citizen diligence and accurate descriptions. Lt. Frizell read statistics: Down 11% robbery, assault down 7%, burglary down 13%. Some arsons were accidents. No n'hood in the Precinct have increases. The livability crimes (graffiti, broken windows, etc) tell people they can do that to the n'hood but many of them have gone away. Whittier is in Sector One which is north of Lake Street to the edge of Downtown. Lt Frizell reported MPD has been collaborating with Park Police to come up with more exact statistics. Also Sergeant Mantee will be taking Frizell's place while he goes to FBI Training.

Tom asked about the homeless shelters needing to report sex offenders (ie: the recent rape). Frizell reported two weeks ago there was a dialogue forum of residents, businesses, and stakeholders. A level 3 sex offender was defined for the attendees. An expert at the meeting clarified what shelters need to do when encountering an offender, such as being reported to MPD. At the meeting St. Stevens said the shelter does not allow sex offenders but don't have a policy of asking. If a sex offender is identified as staying in the shelter then they will be turned into the police. A resident asked then where should sex offenders live. Lt Frizell said that's the question and will be under discussion as a national problem. For example probation officers in Miami check on their offenders living under bridges.

A resident said there is an outreach program in Minneapolis to homeless people. He asked how residents can help further this program. Josie said St. Stevens just received a grant to do this work and would focus on the top 100 chronically homeless people mostly in downtown. CM Lilligren said St. Stevens received the first Heading Home Hennepin grant and the program model will continue to build elsewhere such as Ventura Village. The CM said the program is to end homelessness not simply house them.

A resident said he volunteers on Restorative Justice and asked where he would send a graffitist to do graffiti removal. That would be Sgt. Giovanni Gelize, the graffiti specialist at MPD. Josie noted some RJ participants are given "restorative" tasks by doing volunteer work through the office. Local fire stations have graffiti removal kits as well as the WA office.

Crime Prevention: Criminals are looking for easy targets in the Holiday season. A recent arrested person reported he walked by a car several times which had a key in the car, a wallet and laptop which was a Kenwood resident.

Plan Modification of \$200,000 Neighborhood Revitalization Phase I 3R-Loan Program Income

Whittier Board Chair Erica said Whittier has program income from Phase I NRP and gave a brief review of NRP. The income comes from a low-interest loan that has been working in the community and has accumulated for several years. NRP allows n'hoods flexibility over their program income. They wish to use the Phase I Income into the Phase II Implementation. As mandated the Whittier Phase II plan uses the majority of money for housing. Other neighborhood identified strategies do various things such as produce the calendar, Police buybacks, youth programs, etc. Phase II is only being funded to 70% and plan modding the Phase 1 program income could possibly cover some of that shortfall in Phase 2 for strategies or staff and operational expenses. Tom noted the City Council has ruled program income belongs to the n'hood. There is \$604,000 in Whittier Phase 1 Rental Rehab Revolving Loan program and would come from that amount which cannot be rolled into bonds or real estate.

A resident asked for clarification. Erica said this program income is separate from the Phase 2 funding. Whittier was allotted over \$2 million (now lower). Phase II started in 2005 which targets youth, safety, housing, business development, community building, and implementation. The biggest section is housing which includes revolving loan programs (rental and single-family program). Marian noted there the NRP steering committee is working developing guidelines and loan programs for historic preservation and updating the Rental housing loan program. These are not grants for new construction or buildings. One of the strategy goals is the preservation of housing.

CM Lilligren said the Council is slated to vote to guarantee 70% of funding for n'hoods and are discussion how to fund n'hoods after 2010 when the funding mechanism is gone.

What will it be used for? Some of the \$200k will be used for administrative costs and some of the money may be moved into other programs. For example park lighting improvement is now only at 70% funding and that could be replenished.

How much is for administrative? The annual budget is \$170k but this year we're coming in at \$140k for salary, lights, paper, safety, community events, outreach initiatives. Peg Mountin, Whittier's NRP specialist directed people to the NRP website for the Whittier Phase 2 Action Plan. Peg Mountin, the NRP specialist said the plan was written for \$7.6 million but was reduced and approved by the City Council at \$2.4 million and now is only being funded at 70%.

What if nothing is done with the money? The money will not go away but there is lack of trust between n'hoods and the City and the Board would like to move most of it so it can be used for the benefit of the n'hood. The program income from revolving loans by city ordinance belongs to the n'hood for uses consistent with the NRP Action Plan but it is unclear whether that arrangement will be honored. And if there is no NRP organization, it will be unclear as to how to access it. All funds have "contracts" and some of the contracts will go on for very long. Peg said the n'hood organization connects the neighbors and NRP has been instrumental in helping neighborhoods achieve things that the city is unlikely to do. There is no n'hood like Whittier that has the amount of rental, development and change and the n'hood needs to have some independence in directing that change.

Tom said Whittier Elementary School for example was established by the Whittier Alliance in Phase I. He warned it would be difficult to move funds later as the NRP Policy Board may change or not exist. **He moved the Plan Mod and it was seconded.**

What happens when NRP goes away? Peg said every dollar accessed is done via a contract between the City and various city partners. No dollar is moved without a contract. Even if NRP goes away the money is legally bound and continues.

CM Lilligren said there is continual program income even after 2010. He reported at the last NRP discussion there have been several years of studies being looked at. A few council members have come together to answer the future of NRP after 2010 and an initial report will be released at the end of the month for comment, response, etc. Erica said the Whittier Alliance and Board is taking a hard look at what is most important to the n'hood. Residents are welcome to run for the Board in April.

CI Motion 1: The Whittier Alliance moves to approve a plan modification of \$200k of Phase 1 program income from the 3R loan fund to the Phase 2 Implementation F1.1.1b. Motion carried 19 / 0 / 0

Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) – Pam Nordaune (MCAD Relations) & Julie Snow (Snow Architects)

Review of facility (parking, buildings, and green space) campus needs, Overview of short & long-range campus master plan
Julie Snow briefed CI on MCAD's need for new parking as their lease is being ended at the MIA ramp. A resident asked how the Heritage Preservation Committee (HPC) would allow the unique four-plexes would be removed. Snow said they were fragile and falling apart; and would invite neighbors to see it. The foundations are poor on the housing and a lot of money has been sunk into them. He said they are very historic buildings. The resident pointed out MCAD had mismanaged buildings previously.

The revised options were reviewed. Option 1 & 2 builds where the two duplexes are, option 3 retains the duplexes and extends a skinnier parking ramp, option 4 places studio space around the duplexes with a ramp on top (a resident noted a ramp up there would be unusable), and option 6 preserves a view towards Morrison Hall. MCAD has spoken to HPC about vacating and restoring the 25th Street view. A resident commented there seemed to be many parking ramps and flat parking in that area and is another really necessary, Snow agreed. The student population of MCAD is about 800 students with 100-150 faculty and the dorms house 250 people. A resident on Stevens called for critical parking on his block. The CM noted the cons against critical parking (cost to residents, etc) but said his office will assist in whatever the block wants. Tom pointed out the blue house. Snow said MCAD wishes to move it to an empty lot, it is preservable. Julie and Pam will bring information on how long MCAD has owned the duplexes. Marian thought it was 7-10 years. MCAD has consistently maintained and sunk money into them. Tom said he would like to go on the duplex tour. Removing the duplexes is not easy as MCAD has to prove the public good and how it will provide a public good in return, parking ramps is not one of them.

A resident asked what the MCAD Board likes. Julie hasn't presented to them yet. A resident asked about underground parking. That is twice the cost. \$12k-\$15k for each stall in structured parking and doubles to \$20k-\$50k per stall for underground. Due to utilities there is also limited land space to do underground. The traffic demand management study predicts about 275-350 spots are needed in the ramp. The City says 133 spaces. A resident deplored why students choose to park on the street even with the existing MIA ramp. Julie suggested they want to be as close to their building as they can. The CI reviewed height levels of the ramps. Julie said the ramps will not have a large profile compared to existing buildings and noted the ramp's top level will be uncovered (less visual height) unless they do a green roof. A long-time resident of the area deplored that students and faculty don't care about the area neighbors and forget the history of the area as a residential n'hood.

Linda asked to be sensitive to the exterior based on MCAD's past history doing poor design based on cost which does not speak well on MCAD. Julie said as an architect she utilizes a real budget in the beginning so there is no situation such as that later on. She will not value-engineer the project. A resident opined MCAD has some of the ugliest buildings in the area. Julie concurred. A resident asked about the existing dorms on the southwest corner. Julie and Pam said they are one of the most productive centers on campus with about 250 students and will not be going away. The zoning for the area is currently

OR3 for a college. Julie said MCAD will not be asking for any variances other than vacating the street to build parking. Marian said a certificate of appropriateness is also needed. The Chair asked if parking could be located more north near the center. Julie said she would like future academic space to be there. Erica said she likes the mixed use and integrity of 2nd Avenue. A resident asked about wrapping parking. Julie said MFA studios cannot be broken up. Academic space will be built in the north and west with the east as housing. Tom asked what is being done about the other property owners. MCAD is in discussion with them.

35W Access Project – Councilmember Robert Lilligren

CM Lilligren lives in Ventura Village in Phillips and got involved with the 35W access project years ago as a resident. He reviewed the project. The Access Project is creating greater access to Lake Street and employers (originally Allina, Honeywell, etc but now Wells Fargo). CM said he knows more about the project than most people should know. It is design-work and a tremendous piece of infrastructure. Timeline is beyond 2025, when there is transportation funding. The project extends from 5th to Blaisdell and 46th to Franklin which includes key areas including Lake and Nicollet (reopening project) as well as the Lake Street Reconstruction. The project has been dormant, it is expensive, costs are going up, etc.

Recently its been brought up again via the Urban Partnership Agreement, UPA, a Federal transportation grant for \$133 million to reduce congestion. The Twin Cities applied and was narrowed down to five sites. The criteria includes transit, technology and telecommuting and the impact from the current administrative is that transit projects are accelerated. Priced dynamic shoulder lane (PDSL) a shoulder lane open during high periods. Center-lane bus-rapid transit system and center stations (46th which is currently under construction and Lake Street). The CM noted the project has created so much confusion and MNDOT has realized it needs to be completed in 2009, as a result interest has increased from various stakeholders. Components left out of the project include a connection to the Midtown Greenway (a transit corridor). The UPA agreement rules that different transportation options must be provided then it won't work. If people can't choose BRT over a toll lane then congestion is not reduced. The CM noted stakeholders have felt the UPA might be setup to fail because of this requirement.

Hennepin County which owns Lake Street, and the infrastructure will not last when the improvements come and the County will move on reconstruction regardless of the project stalls. Following the 35W Bridge collapse, the City created the priorities. The resolution for 35W at Lake Street call for

- 1) BRT to downtown Minneapolis with a stop at lake St.
- 2) Seamless connection to the Midtown Greenway
- 3) Access to Lake Street (freeway ramps)

CM noted an amendment regarding staff examining a 28th Street option due to Wells Fargo which he opposed.

The CM noted the original alignment of 35W was along Lyndale and a powerful constituency on Lyndale resulted in moving the 35W alignment to the east and created the Crosstown Commons mess which is now costing taxpayers. The Chair asked about why there are little projects on 35W. MNDOT had originally proposed a massive corridor project to Lakeville which was opposed by every city and as a result made a smaller project approach. Marian asked about access to Lake Street. There should be a full exchange at Lake Street in all directions. Current plan shows Lake expands to eight lanes with a Hiawatha-Lake like intersection. The CM opined it was poor urban design and could not accommodate pedestrians such as elderly, people with children & disabled.

Erica asked about how the project affects the Nicollet Reopening. The CM said he felt the reopening would be a benefit to put funds into n'hoods and others felt it would gain n'hood support of the Access Project. However the Lake Street Reconstruction will proceed nonetheless as the infrastructure weakens. She asked about the City Street and County Street. The CM said there's a complicated ownership scale but the City has funds designated through CLIC and is interested in reopening the street. The CM said the City is using powerful tools such as municipal consent to bring the projects to a local standard. The CM said the BRT station is strengthened by the priority. The CM noted there is also a disconnection between what the residents and communities see versus the actual schedules. The Access Project for example is not due until 2030.

NRP Future: Tom asked about NRP. Robert said that Implementation dollars are the priority and components of NRP funding will be similar. One of the significant aspects of the new model will be allowing n'hoods to affect budget decisions and improve the delivery-based service. Erica said the Board will communicate what works for Whittier to the CM. The CM said the inner city n'hoods are where NRP has worked the best. The first half of 2008 will be used to discuss the structure of NRP. In 2009 the Commons Project goes away and interim measures will be in the report. The discussions have acknowledged there is no way to rebuild the existing infrastructure of NRP and it must be continued. N'hoods should express what they value and need from NRP not how the funding is setup. The administrative costs will be established and the funding stream will be steadied and reliable. Marian commented on how the CBDG funds for Whittier were reduced with in 2 years to almost nothing and the n'hood had no say. The result was a huge budget deficit. Also some autonomy over funds—like the plan mod earlier in the meeting—would be unlikely. Depending on funding from the city to do independent neighborhood work is highly unlikely.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m. Minutes submitted by Eric James, Whittier Alliance.