

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Community Issues Committee – DRAFT MINUTES

Monday August 11, 2008 6:00pm – 8:30pm

First Christian Church, Fellowship Hall

Present Hillary Askew, David Bagly, Mary Cable, Erica Christ, Felino de la Pena, Dusty Hoskovec, Dean Kallenbach, Tom Kremer, Christina Le, Councilman Robert Lilligren, Julie Manworren, Jeff Nelson, Destin Nygard, Jim Roscoe, David Schouth, Scott Smith, Lisa Vecoli, John Wilson, Corinne Zwick

Presenters Chelsea Adams (MPD), Luis Caire (Isidro's), Cheryl Davidson (Wayside), Kathie Doty (Southwest Transit), Lt. David Hayhoe (MPD), Jessica Harner (MS&R), Jeff Mandyck (MS&R), Juliana Martinez (Marissa's Inc.), Michael O'Keefe (MCAD), Garth Rockcastle (MS&R), Taryn Runck (RJCA), Ellie Skelton (Incarnation House), Renee Turch (PRG), Katie Walker (Southwest Transit)

Staff Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order at 6:06 pm by Destin Nygard, CI chair. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. Call for additions or corrections to the agenda: (there was none offered). **Motion** to approve agenda **carried**, followed by introductions of all present. Those present were given time to review the July minutes, and make additions or corrections; (there were none offered). **Motion** to approve the July 14, 2008 CI minutes, **Carried**.

Community Discussion

A resident mentioned that the former meat packing plant property was not being maintained; it was noted that the Whittier Alliance (WA) office could contact the current owner, and that concerned citizens could call 311 to report the neglect.

Powderhorn Residents Group (PRG): Renée Turch on Foreclosure Prevention and Homebuyer Services

The PRG provides homebuyer education for first time purchasers, and also provides foreclosure counseling for families in distress. They offer classes at Abbott Northwestern, and have brochures and flyers detailing their services. Their services get counselors directly in neighborhoods to assist families who are behind on their mortgage, or who are in default, or into foreclosure. They hold meetings at north Minneapolis libraries to provide counseling. PRG's efforts can help to get lenders to reduce loan interest rates, offer refinancing with a lower refinance fee, or spread out the repayment of delinquent fees over a longer period of time. They provide a hotline for those in distress, and all information is kept confidential. Most of their services are free, although the 9 hour class [that certifies families for home purchase through a series of training and counseling sessions] does cost \$35. Although the number of foreclosures in Whittier isn't that high (north Minneapolis seems to be the most affected), even losing one family to foreclosure makes a huge impact.

Restorative Justice Community Action, Inc. (RJCA): Taryn Runck

RJCA works to bring community members together to address livability crimes in their neighborhood and reintegrate offenders of those crimes back into the community. Offenders of misdemeanors (such as open container in public, public urination, disorderly conduct, etc.) are referred to the program [offenders with a history of violence are screened out]. RJCA often arranges conferences with community members and the offenders, enabling the community to address the offender and come to a consensus as to how best to resolve the issue. Last month, there was a conference in Whittier to address a disorderly conduct case. The offender shared the story of what led up to the offense, and the community responded to that by considering those factors in determining what he should do to redress his crime. Offenders who complete the program successfully have the charges dismissed from their record. Community members are invited to participate in future conferences. A number of offenders complete their service through the WA.

The **Parade of Community Gardens** will be held Saturday August 16 from 10am to 2pm. Josie will be at the Soo Line Garden during the event. From 3-5pm, the Whittier Youth Council will host games and serve refreshments at the Whittier Co-op to celebrate the event. A Whittier resident has put together a biking tour of the participating gardens in south Minneapolis [available online at whittieralliance.org]. For a full list of events and participating gardens, go to www.gardenworksmn.org.

The **Whittier Walkers** will host their annual **Happy Hour** on Wednesday August 27, at 6:30pm at the Black Forest Inn. If you have walked in the past, or would like to know more about what the Walkers do, please stop by. This Happy Hour is a chance to thank the Walkers for being active in the neighborhood, and to thank the Black Forest for being their gathering spot.

The WA is holding a **Picture Whittier** photo contest to collect iconic neighborhood images to be used in the 2009 Whittier calendar. The contest is open to anyone who lives or owns property in the neighborhood; the pictures must be digital and in color. The WA is looking for images that capture the essence and uniqueness of the Whittier neighborhood. Entry forms are available at www.whittieralliance.org and through the WA office.

Josie is looking for ideas and input for the upcoming **Green Fair**, scheduled for October 18. Please call or email the office; 612-871-7756 or josie@whittieralliance.org.

The **Whittier Dining Guides** have been printed with the help of the MIA; please distribute to your neighbors and visitors to promote the dining in the neighborhood.

CCP Safe, 5th Precinct Report: Chelsea Adams and Lt. Dave Hayhoe

Lt. Dave Hayhoe is the new sector lieutenant, replacing Lt. Frisell. He has been with Minneapolis police department for over 20 years, and most recently worked in the criminal investigation department downtown. Chelsea noted that overall, reported crime is down 11% for the year-to-date. Robberies are down 22%, as most of the robbery activity in the 5th Precinct is south of Whittier. As a follow-up to and reminder from the annual meeting, Chelsea has a home inventory form to record serial numbers from electronic valuables—useful in the event of fire or theft. A handout lists tips on preventing burglary, and you can contact Chelsea to get an electronic copy of the property inventory record.

A resident noted the police presence on 29th has been good over the last year, especially as the parking regulations seem to need constant reinforcement in that area. Residents can call 311 to report any suspicious vehicles if they are concerned about people making long-term living arrangements on public property. Graffiti continues to be a problem. There is a reward program for witnesses whose efforts lead to convictions (see city of Mpls website). Residents mentioned concerns with safety on the Greenway; please call 911 or contact the park police with any issues.

On August 25th, at the WA office at 6pm, the **Nicollet Avenue Design Guidelines Task Force** will meet. The task force is a chance for neighborhood residents to talk with Lunning Wende, a St. Paul firm who will use community input to create the guidelines. The task force will discuss what they like best about the commercial development along Nicollet Avenue, with the goal of creating guidelines or standards that will shape future development and redevelopment.

The **September 8 Community Issues meeting** will be held at Whittier School (27th and Grand Avenue) at 6pm.

Josie gave an update on the **safety camera feasibility study** [discussed at the June CI meeting]. Josie participated in a walkthrough of the problem areas with officers and city personnel. The City will do the study, but there is no set timeline. Lilligren noted the study will also cover from Franklin toward 35W, so if there is money at a later time that area will have already been studied for potential camera use.

2728-50 Nicollet Avenue South, Luis Caire and Juliana Martinez: Presentation on El Campestre Reception Hall and request for a Parking Variance for 30 spots

Isidro Perez, the owner of Marissa's Bakery and other establishments at 2750 Nicollet, is planning to build a reception hall on the northwest corner of his property [where Quality Foods used to be]. The hall will seat 115 people, and will have a catering area but no on-site food prep. The hall should be available from 10am to midnight [although they plan to ask the planning commission for one more hour of operation for cleanup]. Catering will be offered by licensed caterers, like nearby Greek, Asian, and Mexican restaurants. The reception hall will pay corporate taxes, as it is a for-profit business. Isidro is a long-term property owner in the neighborhood, and is a past WA "Good Business" award winner. Over the last few years, he has been working to improve the properties he owns by investing in their redevelopment. Luis noted the reception hall will require a variance for parking, as they have 62 on-site parking spots but they believe they will be required by the city to provide 109 or so. They plan to provide bike racks for 30-36 bikes, which should give them a parking credit reduction for 6 slots. They are planning to ask the city about providing a transit shelter on their property, which would also give them a parking reduction. Luis believes the City will require 109 slots, which would mean they would like a variance for somewhere between 30-40 spots.

Attendees commented on: the good businesses Isidro runs in the neighborhood; the possibility of other parking contracts for day use (won't they need more parking during the day?); the possibility of increasing the number of bike racks to further reduce the variance; that a hall that seats 115 is large enough for most parties, but will be too small for weddings (so most parties at that hall will be a little tamer); that asking for a variance now seems premature—the committee should wait until the City sets a firm number. It was noted that the committee could grant a specific number (like 30 spots), and then Isidro/Luis could come back to the committee and ask for more if necessary. Or the committee could table the item until Isidro/Luis had set details. One resident commented that he would feel comfortable giving them a variance, even without set figures, based on their track record in the community.

Felino **moved** to grant a parking variance for 30 parking spots, down from whatever number the City requires, **seconded** by Jim.

CI Motion 1: The Community Issues Committee moves to grant a parking variance for 2728-50 Nicollet Avenue South, for 30 parking slots. **Motion Carried: 9-2-1.**

2120 Clinton Avenue South, Ellie Skelton, Executive Director of Incarnation House and Cheryl Davidson of Wayside: Request for Letter of Support for Funding to Rehabilitate the Interior of the Building

Incarnation House services homeless women and children as they transition to more-permanent housing. The House opened in 1999, and is run by Wayside House Inc. (who has other housing in St. Louis Park). The building is staffed 24 hours a day. The property is in need of rehabilitation, including: kitchen updates to allow for better use of donated food; a security system upgrade to provide better safety for the residents and employees; and the use of green-friendly paints/tiles/carpets and energy-efficient appliances to up-grade, repair, and refresh the interior of the building. All of the

work—with the exception of a few components of the security system—will be interior [exterior work would require meeting historic housing requirements and regulations]. They anticipate the project will start in October, and be completed by the end of May 2009. They are applying for Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds (around \$65,000) and plan to use about \$20,000 from the Wayside operating budget. Although the City was favorable of their initial request, the City asked that they get neighborhood approval, and ensure that about 70% of the budget was federally funded and 30% come from additional funding. They would use the neighborhood letter of support in their application for ESG funds.

Attendees commented on: the site being well maintained and well kept (it seems very quiet); that the building is nice and will remain approachable if it is well maintained; and that if the ESG funds are available, this seems a worthy project. It was noted that Incarnation House is required to serve a population of at least 70% homeless, designated for 20 years (beginning in 1998/99). This funding will not add years onto that designation. They believe the rehabilitation will better allow them to serve their population.

Felino **moved** to grant the letter of support, **seconded** by Julie.

CI Motion 2: The Community Issues Committee moves to grant a letter of support to Incarnation House, 2120 Clinton Avenue South, to be used in their application for Emergency Shelter Grant Funds. **Motion Carried:** 13-0-1.

**MCAD Master Plan, Jeff Mandyck and Garth Rockcastle of MS&R, and Mike O’Keefe of MCAD:
Update/Review of Current Progress on Campus Master Plan**

Mike explained they had presented at previous CI meetings, and were here to present the refinements of the master plan. The Master Plan is a 100 year vision that will guide new development and redevelopment toward the long-term goals and vision of the campus. They have prioritized parking needs and academic expansion. They have contracted with MS&R to develop the plan.

Jeff noted some neighborhood and city forces shaping the plan: the proximity to MIA, the location of trees and greenspaces within and around the campus, and the emergence of 26th and Nicollet as a pedestrian/active zone. The Master Plan calls for MCAD to recognize 26th as the new entry and “face” of the campus, and they are working to create uses along 26th that are complementary to that orientation (which may include more community-friendly spaces like an arts supply store, café, or gallery space; and a more developed entrance; as well as access to the parking ramp and greenspace). Another focus of the plan is working to give the campus better access to the diversity of transportation (access to bike paths, buses, a potential street car) while planning for future transportation needs/possibilities. One goal is to highlight the strengths of the campus in terms of the greenspaces and activity centers. Phase I of the plan would include the academic expansion (planned for 2010-11), and the parking structure (2009-10). Phase II could be 5-10 years away.

MCAD currently enrolls 750-800 students; the plan will accommodate 1000, which is a growth comparable to other creative institutions of a similar scale. They have about 35-40 full-time faculty, plus 80 adjunct instructors; the recently completed parking study accounted for the variability of the parking load. The parking ramp will have space for about 200 vehicles, plus there will be a surface lot on 26th. The Master Plan allows for some flexibility in the parking scheme, so that it might shift to accommodate future parking/transportation requirements by the City. The immediate push is for the parking structure, with an eventual plan for submerged parking with active use at surface level. Mike noted the parking ramp will be financed by private bonds, but the academic expansion monies should come from fundraising that is currently being developed. The overall goal is to make decisions now that align with the long-term vision for the campus.

Attendees commented on: concern for the amount of construction planned (will the campus be in a state of disarray for years to come?) and the placement of the construction [the concentration is to build the center of the campus, the construction on the edges could be 20 years away]; the number of off-campus grad students [MCAD would like to bring the 35-40 master’s level students back to on-campus living]; concern over the surface lot [they would be paving over some current greenspace to provide about 70 surface spots in addition to the 200 provided by the parking structure]; and concern that 26th and Stevens is a weak corner that wouldn’t be actively reconstructed in the plans. It was suggested that maybe cooperative parking would be in the community’s best interest, although the surface plus the ramp is the combination that best meets MCAD’s current needs. There was concern that the plans assume that the houses along 26th in the southwest corner will be sold to MCAD, and that the plans don’t call for keeping and maintaining those houses as an interface to the neighborhood.

Email president@mcad.edu with comments/suggestions. They will be back at future meetings.

Southwest Transit, Katie Walker: Update on Light Rail Progress and Public Comment Opportunities

The Southwest Transitway, after looking at a variety of modes and routes, has narrowed proposed southwest light rail transit (LRT) options to three potential routes. Each serves downtown Minneapolis from the southwest metro area. LRT route 3C would directly affect the Whittier neighborhood, as it would route through Uptown and the midtown corridor at the greenway, and tunnel under Nicollet from 28th to Franklin before following Nicollet downtown to end at 4th Street.

Another proposed option is to have the LRT follow the Kenilworth Corridor (route 3A) before interlining with Hiawatha downtown.

They are working directly with the federal transit administration to finalize the notice of intent. Once published, the notice will state when the scoping process will begin, and list the times and dates for the scoping meetings. They are hoping that the notice will be finalized in late September to mid-October. The scoping process asks for public comments on 1) the purpose and need of light rail (as it concerns the proposed areas); 2) potential alternatives (is there a viable alternative route that should be considered?); and 3) potential environmental impacts to the proposed areas. They would like to extend the public comment period from 45 to 60 days to allow for more community input. Citizens can publicly comment at the public scoping meetings as a way to get their concerns and comments on the record. There will also be an email comment option, and the option to fax in comments. Once submitted, Hennepin County staff will divide the comments into 3 categories: those already in the scope of consideration, those outside of the scope, and comments that could potentially affect the time frame and progress of the project (like an overlooked environmental issue or a viable alternative route suggestion). Developments that occurred after the proposal of the alternate routes in 2007 will also affect the decisions (like the new Twins stadium). In early 2009, they will begin working with consultant, and in early 2010 there should be a scoping decision document that informs the public of their decision. It was noted that LRT 1 is a fallback option, as the preference is to serve the employment centers along route 3.

Attendees commented on: MIA/MCAD/MCT isn't listed as an activity center and should be; concern that there will be a rate increase to help pay for the new line [SW are hoping an increase in ridership will allow them to build the line without further rate increases]; concern that the new lines would affect bus service along Nicollet and the express buses to the southwest metro [Katie noted that buses would only move off Nicollet along Nicollet Mall downtown, and that some of the southwest express bus routes would be eliminated if they were not 12 minutes faster than the comparable light rail]. Lilligren noted that the passage of the corridor sales tax—which dedicates its funds to transit ways—will be significant in getting the Southwest LRT completed in a timely manner. 2015 is the projected opening date for the new line.

The official position adopted by the Whittier Alliance is available on the website, at www.whittieralliance.org.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen. **Attachments:** none.