

WHITTIER ALLIANCE – Community Issues Committee – DRAFT MINUTES

Monday September 8, 2008 6:00pm – 8:30pm

Whittier International Elementary School

Present	David Bagley, Jim Baker, Tom Bissen, Mary Cable, Mahamed Cali, Anthony Carchedi, Wendy Darst, Brian Foster, Chris Gottshall, Art Higinbotham, Peter Jochimsen, Melo Lawson, Barb Lickness, CM Robert Lilligren, JoAnn Musumeci, Destin Nygard, Molly Schned, David Schroth, Tod Skallerup, John Wilson
Presenters	Chelsea Adams (5 th Precinct CCP-Safe), Lisa Godon (5 th Precinct Community Attorney), Lt. David Hayhoe (5 th Precinct MPD), Susan Segal (Mpls City Attorney), Scott Wende (Lunning Wende & Assoc)
Staff	Marian Biehn, Josie Shardlow, Karin Knudsen

Call to Order at 6:15 pm by Destin Nygard, CI chair, followed by introductions. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. Call for additions or corrections to the agenda; Destin added a mention of CIDNA's proposed light rail transit line. A **Motion** to approve agenda as amended was **carried**. Those present were given time to review the August minutes; there were no additions or corrections offered. A **Motion** to approve the August 11, 2008 CI minutes was made, seconded, and **carried**.

COMMENTS FROM WHITTIER RESIDENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A resident has been noticing loitering, drug dealing and drug use on 2200 Clinton Ave. There is also a **continual problem with litter** in the area. There are two trash cans near the intersection but they don't seem to be used. A community member mentioned the possible need for trash receptacles on 28th and Harriet. The area is just north of Karmel and installing trash cans with multilingual writing on them may encourage their use. Marian can contact public works to see who would install and maintain receptacles. There is also an Adopt-a-Trash-Can program, but that doesn't encourage their use. Marian can also talk to Loaves and Fishes, to work with them to be more sensitive to the impact of their services on the neighborhood. One attendee noted that people walking through the neighborhood often don't realize they can be fined for littering, and that bilingual signs might be a good education tool.

Destin gave an update on the **Southwest Light Rail Transit** progress [see CI minutes from August]. The residents along the Kenilworth corridor have proposed another route (alternative E). If the route meets certain standards and technical considerations it could be added as a third option for the light rail. Councilmen Lilligren recommended that interested residents comment on the routes by emailing him, or going to southwesttransitway.org. There will be a decision on the routes in early 2009. This fall, the committee will also be working on the Environmental Impact Statements for the proposed routes. Lilligren will request that the committee will meet in the Whittier neighborhood to present and collect on the impacts before they go forward with their document. All the information will be made public, and there will be notification of all steps and meetings in the process. The scoping phase should last until about the beginning of the year. Steven's Square recently changed their position on light rail to align with the WA position. The WA official neighborhood position, and the potential environmental impacts document for Whittier, is available on the WA website.

Chelsea Adams, CCP Safe, and 5th Precinct Report, Lt. David Hayhoe: Lt. Hayhoe noted that crime was down 26% for August compared to '07; year-to-date, crime is down 13%. One concern is that there have been 7 aggressive assaults this year compared to only 5 last year. Chelsea reported no real crime patterns with robberies, burglaries, thefts, or assaults. Last August there were 12 reported crimes; this year there were only 5. Again, use good judgment: keep your garage doors closed and locked, lock windows and doors, do not leave valuables in your vehicle. In terms of **problem properties**, call the precinct to report on activity at specific addresses or blocks. If Chelsea is notified of nuisance reports on properties, she can work to start the punitive process and start tracking a history of problems. A resident noted that 2220 Clinton seems to be a continual problem property; the current landlord is Ed Johnson, a realtor in the neighborhood. Lt. Hayhoe will proactively reach to him to talk about the neighbors' concerns. It is sometimes useful to notify the landlord about the need/opportunity for a crime-free lease addendum. If there are **problems with loitering**, owners can request yellow "no trespassing" signs to be posted, which allows police to take faster action when confronted with loiterers. If people are loitering in the street near their vehicles and acting suspicious, call 911 and officers will report to the scene. Residents have noticed loitering around 29th and Pleasant, and 26th and Pleasant. There is also activity late at night. Please call on suspicious activity so that problem intersections can be tracked and a history of problems recorded. Lt. Hayhoe will add extra patrol in those areas. A resident mentioned problems with a house near MCAD: Chelsea suggested contacting 911 and contacting the neighbors and letting them know to call also so the incidents are well documented. Chelsea can also contact MCAD's security team with any neighbor's concerns or information about party houses.

Josie noted the **Whittier neighborhood has a yahoo e-group**, which the WA office uses to send out neighborhood notices of events, happenings, and announcements. Please go to whittieralliance.org to sign up if you would like to receive the announcements.

Josie promoted the **Picture Whittier Digital Photo Contest**. The WA is looking for color photos to be used in the third annual neighborhood calendar, delivered in early January. The office has hired a fall intern who will design the calendar. The photos may be in jpeg or tiff file format. If you are submitting film photos that have been scanned and converted to a file format, they need to be at 300dpi resolution. A committee will pick at least 12 photos to be used. There are entry forms and more information at whittieralliance.org. The deadline is October 3.

Josie has organized the annual **Whittier Clean-up for Saturday September 20 from 10am to noon**. Participants are encouraged either to meet at Whittier Park at 10, and collect litter in that area, or collect trash from their part of the neighborhood and meet at the park at noon. There will be pizza, pop, and a prize drawing at noon. The WA office will provide bags, gloves, and graffiti removal supplies, as well as the refreshments. There also might be an opportunity to do fall weeding and maintenance of the Whittier Rain Garden on the Midtown Greenway. Josie will send around a signup sheet; please email or call the office to let her know if you or your group will be participating [612-871-7756 or josie@whittieralliance.org]. There are also some "Make Whittier Prettier" stickers and buttons available.

The **Whittier Green Fair** will be **October 18 from 1 to 4pm at First Christian Church**. Josie has already scheduled a number of tablers and presenters, including representatives on pollution control, transit, and energy conservation. CVS has donated reusable shopping bags for the first 50 attendees. There will be food and giveaways. On Tuesday, September 9 there will be a planning meeting for the event at 6 pm at the WA office. If you have suggestions, or would like to volunteer to help with the event, please contact Josie.

The WA office is looking for **quotes that speak to the use and appreciation of Whittier** by its residents and business owners. The quotes may be used for Whittier and WA informational and promotional materials, as well as fundraising activities. Please take a postcard to fill out with your "quote" and mail in to the office.

Marian gave an update and brief history of the **Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP)** in Whittier. The NRP began about 20 years ago or so (with a sunset of 2009), as a program to help distribute funds to neighborhoods. In Whittier, the NRP has funded things like the development of the Whittier Elementary School, the streetscape and branding of Eat Street, and investment in housing and rental properties. The WA is charged with the distribution and allocation of funds within the neighborhood. The WA works with its NRP Steering Committee to allocate the funds according to five major strategies and implementations: safety, youth, business and local economy, housing, and community building & administrative work. The strategies emerged out of focus groups that envisioned the development of the neighborhood. Some of the current NRP funded projects include: a preservation context study for the neighborhood, with the eventual creation of loan for the preservation of historic structures; the single family loan program; the creation of the design guidelines for commercial corridors; as well as safety initiatives and youth programs. The future funding of NRP is vague. The funding of future projects is identified through the Framework for the Future, a document in critical review and up for public comment. Tom noted that the Framework has been discussed at recent City Council meetings, and outlines a new program for the distribution of like funds. Marian re-emphasized all the NRP has done for the neighborhood. Part of the strength of the program is that neighborhood improvements have been grassroots-driven, and that the money is spent with the input of neighborhood stakeholders. Lilligren noted the committee of the whole meets Thursday, September 11, at 10am. To comment on the Framework/NRP, email your councilperson, or you may email Marian with comments and questions. For more information, please go to www.nrp.org, or www.neighbors4nrp.org or <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/communityengagement.asp>.

City Attorney Susan Segal, and Lisa Godon of the Fifth Precinct: Susan became our city attorney at the end of February; Lisa is the community attorney for the Fifth Precinct. The City attorney's office has 100 employees with 60 attorneys. The office handled about 30,000 criminal cases in the last year. They prioritize offenses that are violent, and livability offenses (c.f., public urination, aggressive panhandling). The office has community attorneys housed in each of the city's five precincts, along with a paralegal, to work with localized crime prevention plans. Lisa works to develop the Fifth Precinct CLEAN sheet: the 30 people identified as the top offenders (of livability crimes) within the precinct. Lisa receives a lot of help from Josie, as Josie often writes community impact statements (CIS) which help to identify and explain how offenders impact the neighborhood, and Josie also nominates offenders to the CLEAN sheet. For example, they are currently seeking impact statements for a Somali gang member who spends time in Whittier; they have already received a statement from the WA. The statements help to give judges a sense of the impact an offender has on the neighborhood, especially in cases where the crime seems to have no one individual victim. The city office has developed a chronic offender top 200 list, which identifies the most trouble-causing offenders, and allows their office to prioritize their efforts to prosecute those offenders. These chronic offenders are responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes and violations. The city attorney's office also works closely with Restorative Justice Community Action, and with alternate systems, to provide the best treatment and restoration for offenses within the community, and to promote better efforts at reporting crime. For example, the Fifth Precinct is part of a domestic violence pilot project, in which the scene investigation is more inclusive and more expansive, and which has led to a greater number of convictions. The number of cases the city attorney's office handles has been steadily increasing, but that could mean the police have more time to

focus on misdemeanors and pursuing livability crime offenders. The crime levels throughout the city have been decreasing.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR DESIGN GUIDELINES: SCOTT WENDE OF LUNNING WENDE & ASSOCIATES

Marian explained the development of design guidelines for Whittier's commercial corridors emerged out of the work of the pedestrian overlay. The pedestrian overlay document was created to support pedestrian friendly development and changes along Nicollet. The design guidelines will help to encourage and promote the pedestrian interface and use of Whittier's commercial corridors, by offering neighborhood recommendations for new and existing commercial development.

Lunning Wendé is in the early stages of putting a set of design standards together, based on the input of neighborhood residents and business owners. The guidelines will provide a document that helps to convey what the neighborhood prefers to new (and existing) developers. Scott and Bob (Lunning) have met with neighborhood focus groups, and have walked and photographed the commercial corridors. LW have used the input from the focus groups to identify the patterns that create and encourage favorable commercial environments from a pedestrian standpoint. They see the document's purpose as two-fold: 1) as an education tool for business that are already in the neighborhood, and 2) and a document that explains the values and desires of the neighborhood to potential developers. In either case, the guidelines will promote development and rehabilitation in line with neighborhood desires.

The guidelines approach the commercial corridors and the pedestrian experience from 3 scales: pedestrian and street, building and pedestrian, and lot and building. The pedestrian and street experience includes such concerns as: outdoor furniture, windows that open to the street, public art, open spaces, walls. Building and pedestrian concerns include: storefront, entries, transparency of materials, signage, color and materials, and building detailing. The lot and building scale includes recommendations for site development, height, massing, parking, solar access, protecting water resources, and increasing energy efficiency. For each of the topic areas, the guide will have a page detailing what is encouraged, a set of design descriptions, and photos from the neighborhood as examples (where applicable). They would also like to include quotes from neighborhood stakeholders illustrating the importance of each topic. For example, one page might be "signage". The section would list out the recommendations and descriptions of preferred designs, include pictures of "good" signs from the neighborhood, and have a quote about signage and how it relates to making a pedestrian feel welcome going into that business.

Neighborhood stakeholders and focus group members have repeatedly stated that what they like about the commercial corridors is the eclectic nature. One of the largest challenges LW face is develop guidelines or standards for "eclectic" development. They want the guidelines to be suggestive, rather than prescriptive, and to encourage and inspire rather than to detail what not to do. LW want the document to express the tone of the neighborhood, as they feel it will be most successful that way.

A resident mentioned the Elliot Park guidelines: the guidelines have given Elliot Park the opportunity to influence new development, and it seems like the bigger developments ended up as superior products coming out of the guidelines. Their guidelines have been an effective, professional tool to help their neighborhood reach out to developers they would like to see and offer a framework to guide and shape development. The hope is that guidelines will be similarly useful in Whittier.

Resident comments included: concern that if the guidelines only included photos from the neighborhood it might be too limiting, and the suggestion of including pictures from other outside-the-neighborhood develops that are encouraged; that the guidelines don't address new development on vacant lots and the demolition of old buildings [Scott recognized that it will have to be looked at eventually as it is an issue in Whittier]; and how to use the guidelines to reach out to developers the neighborhood would like to work with. One question was if the guidelines will be adopted by the City, or if they will be looked at by a City planner; the document will have more merit and power if it goes through the city process and is adopted and applied to the pedestrian overlay. Marian will look at how to do that, but reiterated that the guidelines are being developed as suggestions and a framework for the neighborhood in support of the ped overlay. Scott encourages anyone with comments or suggestions to communicate with Marian, who will pass the information on to LW. He would also like more quotes and photos from the neighborhood, as specifics will help give the document a more personal feel.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: none offered.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm. Minutes submitted by Karin Knudsen.

Attachments: none.