

**Whittier Alliance-Community Issues Committee-
Monday October 12, 2009
Whittier Elementary School**

Attendees: David W. Schroth, John Wilson, Chris Gottshall, Garen Gotfredson, Glenn Stich, CM Robert Lilligren, Julie Manworen, Delroy Calhoun, Jill Garcia, Brad Schappi, Jeff Neols, Henry Bromelkamp, Lee Blons, Jen Nagel, Bruce Lundeen, Harry Greenberg, Erica Christ, Jesslyn Benedict, David Bagley, Verne Greenlee, Tom Bissen, Jessica Frehse, Josie Shardlow, Felino de la Pena, Jean Petersdorf, Glenn Crown, Jaura Jean, Robert Brite, Allison Hobery

Presenters: Ona Keller (Rank Choice Voting), Ben Post (Urban Homeworks), Matt Crellin (Plymouth Foundation), Charlene Roise (Hess, Roise and Company)

Staff: Marian Biehn, Becky Neamy, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to order at 6:13 by Chris Gottshall, board vice chair facilitating the meeting in lieu of a CI chair. The Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies were noted. A **motion to approve** the agenda was made and **carried**, with an addition of discussing the zoning changes to the Greenway. Attendees were given time to review the previous months minutes; a **motion to approve** the Sept 14, 2009 CI minutes was **carried**.

Announcements and Community Comments

Open CI Chair position – If anyone is interested or knows someone who is interested, please contact Marian. People can try it out for one meeting in the next few months.

5th precinct Report- Neighborhood policing plan meeting happened last week. Chris & Becky attended the meeting. Lots of discussion of 29th-Lake, Pleasant-Pillsbury traffic issues, and the policing plan will stay relatively the same from last year. **Green Fair-** Becky announced November 14th Green Fair. New this year: kids area! Becky is looking for volunteers, is passing around sign in sheet. Contact her at to get involved. **Whittier**

Walkers- The current WW arrangement isn't working and options are open for different walking times. She is sending around a sign up sheet to see interest for walks at different times, when crime (car and home break-ins) is higher, and visibility of neighbors on streets would deter. **Anita Tabb** - Candidate for District 4 Park Board, is leaving her contact info and would love to hear from folks. District 4 does not have an incumbent running.

Fall Fundraiser –Each fall the WA send out a letter asking for financial support for the organization. This year, we'll start with an e-mail, with a pay pal payment option, then we'll do a mailing. WA does many things, advocating for the neighborhood, organizes events, promotes neighborhood businesses. Check out last year's annual report, the website or contact Marian for more info on what we do. If you want to get a jump start on donating, and avoid multiple solicitations, donate now! Donation envelopes available. **Tasty Eat Street** – Two nights of food, style, and music. Oct 29 & 30, 5-10pm. Cruise down Nicollet for food, beverage, shopping discounts, music, and tastings!

Zoning Proposal – **CM Lilligren:** Monday October 26th the planning commission is hearing proposals for 28- Lake, Lyndale-35W, rezoning the Midtown Corridor. This has been an ongoing process, raising a lot of interest now. We can take time to do this well, and the city council will defer to the CM's representing the affected area (Lilligren, Glenn and Schiff). Wednesday October 21st (*Ed: Meeting has been changed to **Thursday October 22nd**, 4-5:30, Old Arizona at 29th & Nicollet*). CM Lilligren and WA will have a hearing, with information and proactive discussion of the neighborhood's wants and needs, promoted widely to the affected area. Let MB know if you're interested. Main

concerns are density, green spaces, character of the neighborhoods north of the Greenway. **Comments/Topics from Whittier Residents** – Has the AHTF staff refused to come to CI meeting? Yes, they don't want to come to the CI meeting, because it gets volatile. Marian has met with AHTF staff person, who is interested in hearing from the neighborhood, and who has agreed to come to the Board meeting. CM Lilligren says that we're looking at doing an affordable housing forum, with a broader representation of stakeholders in the affordable housing issue: history of race and poverty, affordable housing provider, Commissioner Dorfman, etc, WA and CM Lilligren's office

Ranked Choice Voting – Ona Keller:

Rank choice voting means you can vote for a 1st choice, 1st and 2nd choices, 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. You CANNOT vote for the same person 3 times. If you do, only your 1st choice will count. Election judges will only look at 2nd choice if 1st is out, so if you've marked the same person in all 3 categories, that person would be out of the running by the time they get to the 2nd and 3rd choice. Your ballot will be invalidated if you mark different people in the same column. You can vote for only one person **Attendees**
Comments and Questions: When will results be out? Everything will be counted by Dec 18th, working on streamlining it. Counting is done ward by ward, so results will come out every few days. Why are we doing this if it is costing us more money? We saved money on not having a primary, and we won't know the full cost until it is done. Elections Commission has spent some money on education for staff and materials. There has been additional training of election judges. Why are we doing this? Voters choose this in 2006, by over 60%. What was the margin of error in previous elections? What will it be for this? It was a 99.999% accuracy, with the electronic readers. Now there will be hand counting, going for a 100% accuracy. Counting will be split up in different teams, so no one board of judges oversees the whole process. Every time a ballot is handled, it is handled by two judges of opposing parties. Voter education is happening every weekend, happening door to door. City is still looking for volunteers, and responses to door to door education has been positive. So there won't be any results for 2-3 days after the election? There will be ballot counter results, so questions will be answered. And you'll know how many 1st, 2nd, and 3rd votes each candidate received, but not their relationship to each other. We'll have a rough idea, but nothing official, on election night. Why aren't we using machines? There are no federally certified machines that will count rank choice voting. The certification offices are backlogged, and the machines are used in states that don't have stringent laws about it as MN. The machines that are out there could be certified by 2013. Voteminneapolis.org for more information; on City of Mpls Precinct Finder you can see your ballot.

Historic Context Study Presentation – Charlene Roise (Hess, Roise) Marian spoke on why we're doing this: As part of the NRP Phase 2 planning, the neighborhood identified historic preservation as an important part of the housing strategy. The goal is to have a historic loan program, and preservation guidelines that will preserve the historic sites in the neighborhood. Charlene is here presenting, picking up for Marjorie, who just retired. Charlene presented a power point, detailing the history of built development in Whittier (*Hard copy available at Whittier Alliance*). Charlene pointed out that Whittier is a post

war construct, formed in part by the construction of 35W. Subcontexts of the study include looking at infrastructure, single-family residential, multi-family dwellings, commercial development, public buildings, churches, institutions, industrial structures, and transportation building and development from each of 4 time periods: Initial Development: Euro-American Settlement to 1880, Urbanization: 1880 to 1920, Growth & Renewal: 1920 to 1960, and Late 20th Century & early 21st Century Urban Area: 1960-present. Few buildings remain from **Euro-American Settlement to 1880**. Much of the area was farms, and the city was built around walking. In 1872, the first horse car line started, which changed city planning and established the grid. During **1880 to 1920**, the city's industry and population boomed. The railway came through, where the Greenway is now, electric street cars and the Franklin & Lake St bridges were built. A new class of people developed around office jobs, and so we have preserved multi-family dwellings, workers' homes in the neighborhood from this period. Hospitals and the MIA are built. From **1920 to 1960**: Lots of turmoil, and the city matures, starts to build the things that make Mpls feel the way it is now. Fair Oaks Park developed mid 1920's. The goal of the parks system is to have a park within 6 blocks, and a torn down mansion gives us Fair Oaks Park. Cars catch on, zoning is developed, and design is streamlined. During **1960-present**: 35W was a major change in the city, ripping out a lot. Backlash leads to 1966 Historic Preservation Act passage. 1976 Washburn Fair Oaks district gets designated historic. Fine Arts Park: MIA expanded, Children's Theater moves in, MCAD moves in. 2005: the Greenway is built.

Attendees Comments and Questions:

How does the historic context report inform how we can protect some properties? There are 6 requirements for local designation, 4 for national. National registration is honorary, and with your own money you can still do whatever you want. Local designation has teeth. You need the historical context study in order to know what is significant. This document will be the guide. Designating a whole district can be easier logistically, but with a big area, it is harder to get neighborhood buy-in. Historic Preservation Commission can put a moratorium on individual buildings for a year, which can be extended. This report will be the ammo, for the hard work. The study will give some recommendations, strong hints, but won't say exactly what should or shouldn't be designated. Does this affect home insurance? Don't know completely. Sometimes it increases values, which may or may not be a good thing. Gentrification is sometimes worry but that has not affected Whittier. 29th Street worker homes; how did they survive? Preservation by neglect, as living by the tracks wasn't desirable. If there is no other demand for the area, it survives, and then hopefully people realize how cool it is. How do you create the buy-in and support for preservation? Education, letting people know they've got valuable things here. Often it takes people from outside the neighborhood to come in and point out things. Lynden Hills has a history club that meets regularly, they've done a book. When will the report be completed? Any day now. Can you walk through what happens now? Get a community group to start targeting buildings you want to highlight, so that you can get ahead of the curve, and are not just reacting to endangered buildings, which is harder. Is there a limit at which things can be designated, how many can be recommended? Not everything is historic, and that's hard to deal with. Local designations are easier; sometimes you can get the Heritage Preservation

Commission to put a study on their work list. Can a building lose its designation? Yes. You identify character defining features, if too many of them go, you lose designation. There are 4 national requirements for designation: 1: Association with broad patterns of history. 2: Significant association for significant person. Has to be big. 3. Architecture. 4. Archeology. Buildings have to have at least one. Is there a good source for researching the history of a property? Inventory forms, building inspection department for permits, directory at the library. Hennepin History Museum will hand over what they have, but have a challenging system. If something is designated historic: does it stay static? No, designation is not to freeze things. Four types of designation: 1. Maintaining: Fix what breaks. 2. Rehabilitation: Major overhaul (Sears Building → Midtown Exchange). 3. Restoration: Restoring to what it was. 4. Reconstruction: Rebuilding what it was. What was happening in 1960's when the "not nice" 2 story walk ups went up? Baby boom, demographic needs, and the real estate value here was low. After the report comes out, can you help us? Yes, happy to.

2616 Blaisdell – UrbanHomeworks – Ben Post UrbanHomeworks, a nonprofit community developer, primarily in North and South Mpls, with a few in St. Paul, is applying for a competitive grant from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. 4plex in Whittier, out of 40 units city wide, \$80,000 will be spent in Whittier. This application is part of broader strategy to eliminate debt service for scattered site units. The AHTF dollars can only go for rehab. The property does not cash flow currently. Bought in 2003, when Section 8 vouchers were readily available. This is a 0% interest loan. UH is committed to keeping this mixed income affordable housing. Affordable units will be restricted to HUD levels between 50-30% AMI (1090-654 for 3 bedrooms; for qualified families at 30% of income). AHTF covenants run from 15-30 years. This property is currently affordable housing. UH is requesting support to keep it affordable, not adding any affordable housing to the neighborhood.

Attendees Comments and Questions:

How long do families typically stay at UH properties? Ranges, average 3.5 years. Rates now? Average is \$850, for all 3 bedroom. Resident expressed that this doesn't seem like a good investment, when this is average rate that landlords are charging. And the neighborhood already has affordable housing. Ben says that if UH gets the funding, they'll be further subsidizing units, closer to 850, and lower than area medium income, and this won't add to the number of affordable units in the n'hood. How many units of affordable are there in Whittier: approximately 1200 units designated as affordable with up to 30 covenants. There are additional supportive homes and shelters. How many years is UH applying for? 30 year, or as long as we take out the financing. A neighbor to 2616 Blaisdell has had no problems with residents, good neighbors. UH is a present landlord, with screening. Is UH competing with other orgs? Yes, if UH doesn't get the grant another org would get it for here or another n'hood. AHTF application gets rating for impacted areas? In impacted neighborhoods, prioritization is for preservation of existing neighborhoods, in non-impacted, preference is for new affordable housing. No points are lost for applying to continue affordable housing designation in impacted neighborhoods. And when affordable housing rents are parallel with market rents in a neighborhood? No answer, AHTF hasn't considered that yet. Ben says that UH is also funding for the future.

UH will keep these affordable, as rents around go up. A local property owner expressed that the city subsidies are hurting small landlords, not big landlords. Other local property owners disagreed, said that as duplex/triplex owners they don't have that problem; duplex owner sees specific market, different from affordable housing trust fund market, and supports UH's plans. If UH is going to provide affordable housing, with good management, keeping up the property and keeping rents low, at affordable housing that is already there, resident is in support.

CI Motion 1: The Community Issues Committee denies support to Urban Homeworks for their application to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for 2616 Blaisdell Ave S.

Motion fails. 1-12-5.

CI Motion 2: The CI Committee supports Urban Homeworks' application to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for 2616 Blaisdell. **Motion passes 13-1-5.**

Discussion: I've lived in this neighborhood from 1982, through drug, liquor, and violence problems. Turning down this money is turning down manna from heaven. Yes, the place would be rented at lower rate with other landlord, but would anyone want to live there? Whittier has had a long history of unscrupulous landlords, but they are out now. This is free money from a trust fund that is going to be used for this cause anyway, if we don't take it someone else will. Improving already affordable housing is a good idea. You're not going to reduce the number of poor people in Whittier by denying this app, supporting this improves the setting for everyone. Other resident said, this is not about getting rid of poor people, or whether UH is a good landlord. It is about cash infusion from city money, which is strained to the max, into a property. The city could use this money differently right now. We've yet to see money turned down, no matter what we do. Our letter of support has to do with the use of these funds, and the choice the city is making with these funds. But, UH property is well maintained. When you think about the foreclosure crisis, and the people who have been irresponsible, this is very little money, and they are making a good investment where I live. **Call the question.**

2220 Clinton Ave – Plymouth Foundation – Matt Crelin

Plymouth Foundation owns 2016 Clinton, and is applying to buy adjacent building at 2220 Clinton. 2016 is Northhaven, 4 unit. Since August 2005, has housed refugee families. PF is asking for city money for phase II, four- 3 bedroom units and one 1 bedroom (caretaker basement apartment). 2220 is 14 feet away from 2016. PF has had problems with the management and tenants of 2220: break-ins for laundry, allegations of dog breeding. Owner at the time lost the building, let it deteriorate. Fee owner took it over, offered to sell it to PF, but they couldn't afford it in that condition then. Fee owner fixed it up, PF has bought it, and the city loan would allow them to lower rents. Bridge financing: building does not cash flow. Market rent would make them split up families, or find substandard housing. PF is asking city for \$223,000, some for rehab (roof, fire alarms, asbestos). **Attendees Comments and Questions:** Is this temporary or long term for the families? Long term, permanent housing. Families come in, are referred to PF by service providers. They can stay as long as they want. Once the families' income goes up, the rent would go up. ½ they would save in an IDA account, and money would go back to them for ed or business. Other ½ would keep rents low for other tenants.

Same org that acquired Lydia House? How could anyone be against the good work you're doing, but that was a fraught time, and we heard from PF that they might not have bought the property if they'd heard the n'hood concerns first. But here we are, 8 years later, and you come to tell us you've already purchased it, and have no regard for n'hood's opinion. The timing is from the seller; PF bought it now because of the market. How much of property portfolio is outside of Whittier? 9 units in this n'hood, out of 160 properties. Properties in non-impacted areas? Of the 233 units PF is working on, 49% are in non-impacted area (Kingfield, Tangletown, Plymouth East). A neighbor expressed that the property now is a lot better vacant than it was occupied; was a difficult property on the block. There is still activity around the house, needing policing. That block is full of this housing (St. Stephen's, Loaves and Fishes, other PF). One more program could be tipping point, really affect property values of the block. Current PF property is maintained at the bare minimum, would like to see someone occupy to building who would fix it up. Another Whittier resident said they are more comfortable with PF being part of the solution for that block, rather than it going to someone who won't pay any attention. There are concerns raised, and this can be the call that we all need to pay more attention to the block. This is for 2010? No, this was submitted this year, for 2009.

CI Motion 3: The Community Issues Committee supports a letter of support for Plymouth Foundation's application to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for 2220 Clinton Ave. **Motion passes.** 13-5-2

Discussion: Bought it on the private market, non-restricted? Yes, now there would be 30 year, restricted affordable housing. Are other people looking to buy it? [PF] is at risk here, purchased it with the hope that we could refinance it with the affordable housing dollars. Allison, who works at St Stephens, says the previous management and tenants were horrible. PF has been an improvement. They should be making a commitment to Whittier: attend meetings, block clubs, keep residents active. Would there be a caretaker living on site in the unit? A possibility, yes, PF would like that. Does PF intend to keep buying properties in Whittier, against the wishes of the neighborhood? Lee Blons, the Executive Director of PF, wants to wait for the vote today to see if they're welcome in the neighborhood. PF has worked with Stevens Square n'hood, want to work with Whittier.

Old / New Business (there was none offered).

Meeting adjourned: 8:25pm

Minutes submitted by: Jessica Rosenberg, Administrative Assistant, Whittier Alliance

Next meeting: Monday, November 9th, 6 pm, the Whittier Elementary School