

**Whittier Alliance-Community Issues & Business Association Joint Meeting-
Monday January 11, 2010
Whittier Elementary School**

Attendees: Jess Clark, Mary Cable, John Wilson, Steve Kelly, Andrew Cox, Maurice Battle, David Schroth, Laura Jean, CM Robert Lilligren, Linda Berman, Michael Garr, Mike Meland, Scott Smith, Erin Sjoquist, Kurt Nelson, Brian Foster, Christina Le, Jeff Rabkin, Felino de la Pena, Amanda Needle, Nancy Railsback, Erica Christ, Deb Sweetland, Josh Schragar. **Presenters:** Peter Wohler (Source Fallout), Tom Peterson (Station 19), Tom Nguyen, Scott Wende (Lunning Wende), Chelsea Adams & Inspector Eddie Frizell (Minneapolis Police Department), Andrew Virden (Census Bureau) **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Becky Neamy, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to order at 6:12 by Erica Christ, BA and WA Board Chair. Anyone interested in chairing the CI meeting should contact the WA. **A motion** to approve the agenda was made and **carried**. **A motion** to approve the minutes from December 14, 2009 was made and **carried**.

Announcements and Community Comments

Comments/Topics from Whittier residents Deb Sweetland from HCMC updated the community on the building at 28th and Nicollet. Construction is going well and is on schedule. They are looking at an end of July completion, August-September move in. **Annual Meeting – April 1- Board Candidates, Good N’bor/Biz.** The Whittier Alliance Annual Meeting will be Thursday April 1st, from 5:30-8:30 at the Whittier Elementary School. The Annual Meeting is public time to review the neighborhood activities of 2009, elect board members, and to recognize 3 Good Business and 3 Good Neighbor awards. Good neighbor and good business recognition is to people and businesses who are generous and involved in any way; nomination forms available from the WA. The WA Board is 15 members on 3 year overlapping terms. We have a great dedicated board, and are looking for more members to commit to monthly board meetings, coming to CI meetings and neighborhood events when possible. Applications available from WA, please contact Marian or Erica with any questions. **Midtown Greenway Rezoning Proposal-Mtg Wed 4pm WA office.** This is part 2 of the Greenway plan. Some of the rezoning is rather extreme, and City Council has postponed the decision. Now is the time for residents to present what we think would work well in this area. Rezoning has potentially far reaching affects for anyone 28th-31st. **Strategic-Future Planning for Whittier neighborhood.** We are towards the end of our 10 year NRP strategic plan, and need to do more long-range planning. There will be discussions and decisions at the Board level, and we’ll have opportunities for everyone to get involved and give their input. Meeting info will be on the WA website. **Historic Guideline Advisory Group – interested volunteers.** We live in a historic neighborhood, including buildings with significant architecture and history. We now have a 100+ page review of the n’hood, and are looking for volunteers to comb through that, and come up with a guide to help people do historic preservation, and eventually work with the city to update the WFO guidelines. Fed gov’t is doing environmental study of the area because of the light rail options; they have to do a historic building inventory for each possible route, which will add to our knowledge of historic buildings in the neighborhood. If you are interested in volunteering for this group, please contact the WA. **Sidewalk Shovel Shuffle - Jan 23, 1-3pm** . There are many un-shoveled sidewalks in Whittier. We’ll come together as a neighborhood to clear troublesome sidewalks and corners. Please come out and volunteer. Also, please give us addresses of people you know who have trouble shoveling. **5th Precinct report – Safe Specialist Chelsea Adams, Inspector Eddie Frizell.** Inspector Frizell is pleased to be back in the neighborhood, where he’s lived and worked. 2009 info: crime is down 2.6% overall, only increase is in burglaries. Officers in the n’hood are doing a great job, working at the small neighborhood level, talking to officers about focusing on types of crimes (i.e., motor vehicle thefts), and apprehending criminals. Inspector Frizell reports that many criminals are off the street, currently in jail for livability crimes. All major convictions were possible because of good witnesses; if you see someone skulking, call it in. Community impact statements are helpful: you can write a statement that says “this is a crime that affects me.” Individuals or n’hood groups can write one to be included in cases; some cases might not show all previous offenses, or courts might not realize that property crimes are as important to the n’hood as violent crime. Can we ask for geographic restriction? That is typically applied as a parole condition. Contact the city attorney for 5th Precinct or Chelsea with information and reports. Inspector Frizell is accessible, please contact him with questions.

Census Information – Andrew Virden: Recruitment Associate with the Mpls Census Bureau. April 1st is National Census Day, and they are hiring. If you don't return your census form, the CB is required to send a person to your door. It is the policy of the census bureau to hire by n'hood (ie Whittier census takers for Whittier n'hood). Minneapolis has the most hard to count parcels in MN. The stakes are real: representation, funding, schools. Full time positions are clerical, 12.50/hr, 9-5. Census takers: Part time, flexible hours, 16.50/hr, 5-10 weeks. Hiring is based on how you do on the test, and where you live. Whittier needs a lot of people. It will be a blast; nonstop party at the census. Lots of people are needed morning, afternoons, evenings, nights; 20-40 hours a week. For more information, stop by the WA office or check out www.census.gov

Source Fallout - Peter Wohler (Source Fallout) & Tom Peterson (Station 19 Architects): Request for Certificate of Non-Conforming Use for 2601 2nd Ave S. –currently zoned OR-2. The Source Fallout is requesting the neighborhood support for their application for a certificate of non-conforming use for 2601 2nd Ave. The Fallout Arts Initiative exists to house the art community for the community: urban art center, art co-op, and creative services. Some history on the co-op building: Jimmy Jingle occupied it in 70's and 80's. The owner rented it out to artists, including Children's Theater Company on top floor. Mid 90's, the CTC took over the whole building. Source acquired it in 2002. CTC moved out in 2004, Source Fallout started updating. They are using it for similar purposes as it has been since 1990. They've been following along with city codes, but the certificate of non-confirming use that the previous owner had did not transfer with the sale of property. What makes most sense for city is to zone it as an educational art center, which isn't quite what they are: they don't have specific educational programs. The building is currently zoned OR-2. If they downzone to Office/Residential-1, they can be an educational art center in a smaller lot. Down zoning is not what the city usually wants, but is typically friendly to the neighborhood, as it means there are more restrictions on what can be done in a space. Tom points out that OR -2 was created in 2000. There has been continuous use of the 2601 2nd Avenue space for the same purpose, so can apply to the board of adjustment to get back to the Certificate of Non-Conforming Use. The city hearing will be February 11th, after WA Board can weigh in. Co-op space has been full all year. Most events in performance space are small; about 5 events in '09 were over 50 people. They have a parking lot, and the timing of their performances usually doesn't conflict with other parking needs. Only growth could be with renting out Studio 3, which they are hoping to do more this year. Is there any possibility that you'd be buying the building next door? Unlikely in 2010.

CI Motion 1: The Community Issues Committee supports the request for a certificate of non-conforming use for 2601 2nd Ave S. **Motion passes. 18-0-2.**

2610-2612-2614 1st Ave S. -Tom Nguyen Request for Certificate of Non-Conforming Use for a commercial use of property in R2B. The building is zoned residential, want to put a business in. Everything in the space is the same, they have a hair salon tenant whose building was foreclosed, and wants in here. The plumbing will have to be changed slightly, but no other major changes to the space. **Discussion/ Comments:** The space is hard to imagine residential, there is no home there. Would it be hard to get the zoning changed to commercial? That's something that WA or Tom could do, it is a commercial building with commercial parking lot. It could probably be rezoned, but this is an expedient way of getting a tenant in. Is there a lot of renovation needed? It is ready to go, they just need to move plumbing around to serve the hair salon. Is there room for more tenants? Not currently. That is a commercial area, can we get some nice signage, or windows out front, so that it looks like an active pedestrian commercial space? Yes, Tom will be doing that. Would getting the Certificate of Non-conforming Use make it harder to get a zoning change? No, you can do both. A motion to **call the question** was made and **carried**.

CI Motion 2: The Community Issues Committee supports the request for a certificate for non-conforming use for 2610-2612-2614 1st Avenue South, to use the residential space for a business. **Motion passes 16-0-1.**

Whittier Commercial Corridor Design Guidelines -- Scott Wende, Lunning Wende. Erica gave a background on the Design Guidelines work. The neighborhood made the Nicollet Franklin Pedestrian Overlay, so that pedestrian needs are the priority in neighborhood building, development and planning. First we worked on zoning with the city, then on putting together design guidelines, to suggest to business owners useful and inspiring design guidelines. The guidelines are not trying to be prescriptive or restrictive. What the group working on this really likes is the creativity, what we don't like is basic, plain looks. We want something more

interesting to live in, look at, work in. Scott presented the current, close to final draft of the design guidelines, a 43 page document. An earlier draft was presented in the spring. Over the summer there was a public review process. The design guidelines consider existing businesses, redesign projects, and new projects in the n'hood, primarily at the commercial corridors: Lake, Lyndale, Franklin, Nicolette, some of 26 & 28. Guidelines focus on: (1) how the pedestrian interacts with the buildings, (2) how the pedestrian interacts with the commercial streets, (3) lots and buildings (site issues, protecting water resources, solar access, height and width, parking, transit, etc) and has a section of (4) other thoughts to tie the document together. Each topic area has descriptions and intent, elements, what we encourage, and the feel (ie, jazzy, provocative, ethnic, sophisticated, sassy, lush, living, radical). Other thoughts include encouraging innovation, do not underestimate the n'hood, take time in the n'hood. There is some challenge (and irony) to developing guidelines to keep the eclectic nature of a place, but we think we did a good job with describing a neighborhood feel. N'hood pet peeves are listed as well, including: Flat lots, bad signage, dumbing down a building, cheap materials, franchises and big box stores. The Design Guidelines are now a 40 pages or so document. We're not going to print many, but we've talked about having it on the website and CD in PDF form.

Discussion/Questions: MB: Scott is still doing small last changes. Does this direction work for everyone? This is a good time to be doing this; over the past several years we've been at a disadvantage: lots of development proposals but no n'hood recommend design guidelines that put forward what we preferred in design and style. We could say what we didn't like but didn't have positive directives—lead to contentious relationships. We want to be able to say not just what we don't want, but articulate what we like and what we want more of. HCMC, for example, came with an institutional looking building, but we articulated our design preferences, and now they are building a much more playful, fun building for people to get well in. Can we have too dense of a commercial area? Yes, can have too much business for how much the neighborhood can support. Jess points out that we should consider that when courting development and new business. What kind of varieties of transportation were you thinking about? We did address how much land area is given over to parking, and the feel and fit of the parking lots. We are trying to encourage bike parking, and talked about having a high quality transit environment. We didn't address light rail, b/c routes hadn't been decided. There's a transit bill that will be at the legislature in February, about n'hoods saying what they want; this fits well with that. Kmart? There is a plan to open Nicollet, it is in the city's comprehensive plan; transit station planned next door to clinic, there is money set aside to rebuild the bridge, it is part of CM Lilligren's goals, etc. The last part of the plan is Kmart giving up the lot, and that piece hasn't happened yet. How receptive are developers to design guidelines, and how do they get them? People do call WA and say, we're developing this project, and ask for input. We've had one developer look at it so far, and say they read it all. How much it is applied depends on the contractor and the developer. Also, the document is open to interpretation: a developer might think they are building something creative that fits with the guidelines, but that can be subjective and some residents might agree, some might not. It also depends on the project budget and how obligated they are to their corporate image/branding. We've talked about proactive business development. One idea is to have our website with info on what properties are available, and design guidelines accessible there. Hopefully giving them a document in positive terms of what we like and what we want to see is the start of the dialogue. Tom, as a designer, says it is helpful to have direction. These are just guidelines, not enforceable law. The city said they'd keep it on file. Erica's guess is they'd enforce it when they want to.

We're at this point where we'd like to have it adopted and embraced by the neighborhood, but the guidelines aren't static. We can drop in more photos, address other issues; it is easy to update as an electronic document. If there is a big land use change (ex, Opening Nicolette, transit stops, etc), we could update it. Has Lunning Wende done this for any other n'hoods? Yes, Elliot Park, that's how we were recommended. We'll give a month to look at the document online at

http://www.whittieralliance.org/Whittier%20Design%20Guidelines_Draft_4-20-09.pdf , or come see it in the WA office. Please look at it, and we will vote on it next month.

Old New Business-

Deb Sweetland, on behalf of HCMC, wants to have a grand opening art exhibit, with MCAD, MIA and other n'hood arts groups. WA can facilitate a meeting with HCMC and arts orgs to plan a fall grand opening.

Meeting adjourned: 7:51 p.m.

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

Next meeting: Monday, Feb. 8th, 6 pm, the Whittier Elementary School