

## Whittier Alliance-Community Issues Committee- DRAFT MINUTES

### Monday September 13, 2010 Whittier Elementary School

**Attendees:** David Bagley, Maurice Battle, Peter Nagell, Laura Benson, Tom Bissen, Ben Ptacek, Jessica Frehse, Daphna Stromberg, Rochelle Woldersky, Andy Baird, Christina Le, Mary Cable, Tod Skallerup, Erica Christ, Brent Roeger, Darrell Washington, Palina Hoffoman, Brim Hoffoman, John Wilson **Presenters:** Chelsea Adams, Robert Lilligren, Dean Duvolis **Staff:** Marian Biehn, Becky Neamy, Jessica Rosenberg

Call to order at 6:17 by Maurice Battle, CI Chair, who noted the Conflict of Interest & Standard of Conduct policies. A motion to **approve the agenda** was made and carried. Attendees were given time to review the August CI minutes; **a motion to approve CI minutes was carried.**

**5<sup>th</sup> Precinct Report**-Indecent exposure in n'hood on Sept 6<sup>th</sup>, no more info right now. The perpetrator listed himself s homeless. He has a history of exposing himself to women who are teenage and older. Trend 27<sup>th</sup>/Nic-28<sup>th</sup>/Pills: Suspects snatching necklaces off of people as they biked by. If you do have jewelry and valuables, best to keep track and pictures of things, in case of theft or emergencies. The rape at 24<sup>th</sup> and Nicollet was questioned but it is still under investigation and can only give limited info. Crimes in n'hood YTD same number, up in auto theft, down in everything else, including rape and robbery. Chelsea updated resource phone number list, including domestic abuse project. **Neighborhood Cleanup:** Sept 25, meet up at office, get supplies, finish up at park with snacks. **Green Fair:** October 9<sup>th</sup>. Info about energy efficiency, gardening, green practices. **Neighborhood Wine Tasting:** 10/20. Tickets \$25/advance, \$30/door. Ticket sold in Whittier, all of the money goes to WA for community outreach and n'hood events. Calhoun Square.

**DJR Architects:** Presenting about Azia block: 3 weeks ago, First and First/Midwest Outdoor Advertising Peter Remes bought the buildings. He also recently purchased Theater de June Lune building and is on board of Walker Arts. A lot is happening fast. When Azia announced they were leaving, a lot of restaurateurs expressed interest in going into the space. Lots of other restaurants are interested in having a location-- all interest has been by word of mouth. They are negotiating with Azia, and it is looking like they are coming back, at a lower price point. Azia is giving up last space, sushi bar, and they have a tea house interested in going in. Multiple people are interested in Taco Morales space: will add French doors on west side, create outdoor dining. Upstairs: restore apartments. Front of building, internet company wants to go into office space. Hiep Thanh grocery Building is in the worst condition, going to be taken down along with the strip mall along the parking lot side. Icehouse will be restored. Sinbad building will be restored. The space left open by the demo of the grocery interior will become parking and plaza for civic events. Icehouse will be a restaurant or commercial space, and hopefully space around it can become viable retail energy, build on energy that Azia has started. The intent is to keep the plaza connected to pedestrian energy. Props to community for building eat street energy, that lots of businesses want to move into. **Questions:** Rooftop seating? There may be some possibility, but you need to stairs and an elevator. Time line? Azia could be back in 2 months. Taco Morales, apartments and office space, could be 3-4 months. For Icehouse, any creative ideas? Urban climbing space, younger active use? Front has street exposure is attractive to restaurants. Back part of Icehouse could become something like a Vertical Endeavors. Theaters? It is a possibility. Great ideas! How many parking spots will it be, and how deep will dining be? Lot will be narrowed to one curb cut. Dean is thinking about a pervious asphalt to create shape and character; estimates additional 25 parking spaces. When the transaction occurred, there wasn't a good record of what had been happening regarding contract parking agreements with previous owner. Azia's lease was the only documented lease. Everything else was invisible. Total tenants? Apx 13 apartments, 3 restaurants in Azia building, Jasmine, 3 retailers, 2 in Icehouse. A lot of times, we see great looking presentations, but when building starts, money runs out, things get scaled back. From the n'hood

perspective, what are the assurances that it will be thoughtful, creative, quality work? Will an artist be hired to do the asphalt paving plaza design? Dean's done budget on this, there is enough money to carry it forward. There will be push and pull, but this is what's out there to generate interest. Is Icehouse historic? It hasn't been designated. History of ice industry is interesting, and this is the only ice house left, so it might be. Is there room for a mini-museum? Could be! Chelsea supported the idea of dining around the plaza/parking area as a deterrent to car break ins. The outdoor dining being that close to the parked cars isn't necessarily that attractive. How does that get resolved? Want to make it a year round outdoor space. What do you plan to do with storm water run off? There is a possibility to put in porous asphalt and put in a rain garden. Will discuss with engineers.

**Neighborhood Community Relations:** Marian- WA has been supported over the past 20 years from the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. N'hoods submitted long range plans and a budget. NRP was aligned with the city but separate from it. WA got oversight from NRP. Some funds still available, but there won't be any new NRP funds. City developed N'hood Community Relations Department. They are asking for comments from people about NCR proposal. They will be funding n'hoods at some level. Term won't be as long and funds will be less. WA Board is working on it, and will develop an official position on it. We are used to a lot of interaction with neighbors, and the WA office responding to things, and we intend to continue that, but it might look different. Individuals can and should go online, read proposal, and give comments here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/ncr/>

**Questions:** How was NRP funded? NRP is funded through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, established by MN legislature. It sunsets and wasn't renewed. Property taxes? Yes. New program also from property taxes. Erica mentions NRP was independent, in relationship with city, not within city. NCR is part of the city government. They hope to have n'hood work closely aligned with city goals (naturally, they're funding it). We have concerns over autonomy of n'hoods to decide their own goals, how they want to use funds. NRP had generous funding for ambitious n'hoods. It takes \$160,000/year to run our office. It looks like we're going to be getting about \$40,000 a year. We have program income that is going to keep us going for about 5 years. Whatever we get from NCR we can use for programming on top. There will also be competitive grant programs.

**Strategic Plan:** Board is working on a strategic plan, almost finished plan for a plan, are about to hire a consultant. Our working, guiding vision: we want this to be a world-class neighborhood. We are thinking about the idea of options/choices/something for everyone. You can be a student, elderly, business owner; diversity of races, incomes, people. Eclectic. We've been trying to change our paradigm; not: what problems to do we have to solve. Instead what do we want to have here: what businesses do we want here. The idea is to think strategically: what big plan will make the n'hood world class. Eat Street, Whittier Elem., 20 years ago were visions and concepts that came true. What can we put in strategic plan, raise the bar, and work towards our vision.

**Councilmember Lillgren:** It would really benefit Whittier residents to look over and engage with NCR plan. Isn't too wonky. There is a formula, so that money gets split by need. Whittier is a big winner in the formula, based on population and other indicators. NRP was set on a 20 year clock. Mpls is possibly the only major metro city that has this amount of organized n'hoods. NRP one of the only programs in the world that puts property taxes at discretion of people in n'hoods. As NRP sunset: Henn County was not interested in continuing funding, they're money came off. City and Park Board are two jurisdictions that are continuing funding. Robert and others in city hall are hoping that not only do n'hoods align with city, but city will align better with n'hoods. In a perfect world: through n'hood organizing, there is greater alignment so that city is crafting agenda and

spending based on n'hoods, on things like capital investments, long range planning. Did the increase in property values downtown get back out to n'hood? That is what happened with NRP. There was concern that there is focus on downtown at expense of rest of city/neighborhoods. NRP was designed to address that inequity. Where are funds going, if not to NRP? TIF Districts: have a life, generally 20 years. They work to capture future value on interest on properties. With reinvestment, can tax property on higher value. The city generates bond to that amount, tax pays service on those bonds. Those bonds expire. And when they expire, they stop existing. Property taxes: city, parks, county, schools, libraries will levy property off of that. Also, some of TIF money is going to debt reduction on Target Center, which city owns. When it was 1<sup>st</sup> built, the benefit was no public funds! Few years later, TC went belly up, city bought. Through state statute, city has debt obligations on Target Center. Always option: why don't we let it go dark? Concerns around impact on downtown. St. Paul also owns Xcel, the competition. Both are now run by same company. CM Lilligren feels, as do others, the city should get to keep and control more of the tax revenue that it generates. Tom says that legislature was ready to renew TIF district, until mayor and city said no. City could have repaid Target, and funded n'hoods. Robert disagrees, says the legislation would not have gone through. City does have power, by state statute, to reauthorize up to 100%. Properties are returned to property tax revenues for 1 year, and then come off, which puts a big bump. Idea was to do 50%, to smooth bump. How did citizens of city feel about this? There was a range. Some felt neighborhoods should be funded at 0% some felt 100%. Tom says it is disappointing that the city wouldn't preserve n'hood funding. Robert says you can say city killed it, or you can say city was only funder willing to preserve anything and build on what we have.

Will property taxes be increasing? Likely. Property values increasing? Hopefully. Jim speaks on the issue of segregation; greater in Minneapolis than in other cities. Once you become racially segregated, you don't become desegregated, and this has implications on class and poverty. Robert says: yes, Minneapolis, and the region, is incredibly segregated, and it is increasing. And we do talk about it. At city hall, when we're talking about concentration of poverty, that's what we're talking about. We see the region with policies that concentrate poverty, which re-segregates. Some of this is about political power and will: Mpls used to have it, now ring suburbs have it. We live in a culture where race and economics are related, and there are racial motivated policies. Darrell: How are we going to work with schools, get them improved so that people, when they are looking to buy houses, consider Mpls. How do we have multijurisdictional approach? Robert says yes, groups need to work more together. We have a very horizontal gov't, with lots of community input: school board, park board, was a library board, city council, board of taxation. Benefit: lots of community involvement. Weakness: can become very separate and narrow focused: school board is just for schools, city council doesn't mess around with xyz. For time in city council, CM Lilligren has been working on how to integrate. In a programming way, city has stepped up: Step Up, Mpls Promise. Darrell is getting more convinced that Chicago, NYC, where one person is in control, more accountability, is better. We all need to be asking ourselves, who is excelling, who isn't. Robert agrees when we hear grad rates and home ownership rates, it is hard to think about, who does that include? People of color aren't included in those numbers. As we build buildings better, why do we need to keep funding fire services the same way? People's houses don't burn down as often as they used to. We're trying to operate under 21<sup>st</sup> century standards, and we're trying to figure out what that is. The budget is shrinking: fewer fire fighters and fewer rigs.

### **Old / New Business**

**Meeting adjourned:** 7:44pm

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

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