

GFI-HCMC Task Force
Wed. March 19, 2008 5-6:30pm
Whittier Alliance

Attendees: Mike Harristhal-HCMC, Gary Nyberg-HGA, Amy Douma –HGA, Dan Vercryse, Darcy Knight, Marcy Tollefson, Paul Jablonski, Jim Coury, Nimco Ahmed-Aid, CM Lilligren, Sharon Lund, Barb Lickness, Marian Biehn-WA Staff

Marian Biehn opened the meeting with **Introductions**. The background materials which included the minutes from the Community Issues meeting, the Whittier neighborhood development overview and the HCMC position statement were noted and an opportunity was offered for the attendees to take some time to review them.

Marian turned the meeting over to **Mike Harristhal from HCMC** who reviewed the clinic's goals, needs, and timeline. He stated that HCMC needs to be more precise on the 1st and 2nd phase of what they are proposing and the amount of the land they need for current and future building. He does the demographic analysis for what the clinic usage might be. If they open the clinic in 2009, they will have room for 5-7 years of growth. They want to preserve the option for enlarging the clinic. Whatever they build needs to have the flexibility to expand if needed. However, he doesn't know if they will need all of the block in the future (could sell off part of the block). He addressed the parking challenge in the neighborhood. They want to figure out how to front the building providing a visibly accented access into the clinic. He reviewed 5 Task Force questions:

- 1-Concepts regarding the placement of the clinic building on the site
- 2-Concepts that enable the clinic building to become an architectural asset to the area
- 3-Review of options in the 1st phase of development that represent affordable discrete parking options
- 4-Identification of options that would permit eventual use of portions of the site for additional development and structured parking
- 5-Sharing of perspectives as to the scope of services that should be considered along with the primary care services.

Marian addressed the Whittier neighborhood position. The clinic is presenting a great opportunity for that end of Nicollet. They will be a catalyst for the development that happens south of 28th to Lake St. As the clinic proceeds with their due-diligence period, we have the chance to help shape what this initial building will look like and how it will sit on the sight. We need to help craft this project but also look at how the balance of the lot will be developed as well as the area to the Greenway. This building is important but just as important is how it will inspire other development. What is it that we want, how do we get there and how do we work with HCMC to move in that direction. Sensitivity to their time line is important –both the due-diligence time line and the construction and target opening date –while achieving the best possible use of the sight.

Gary Nyberg and Amy Douma from HGA started their presentation. They showed context photos from around the neighborhood. They don't know the form of the clinic building yet—still too early and everything is still flexible. They presented 2 options for

discussion. They are aware of the Ped. Overlay feel that they will need to ask for some variances to make the building work. The PO covers the entire block—all sides are influenced by the PO. There is no “rear” yard. Both views placed most of the building along Nicollet Ave. Each had corner set back entries/relief entries but the main entrance was from the parking lot. The parking lots were entered from Blaisdell and 29th St. and were heavily landscaped with a green border along Blaisell. The city requirement is 1 pkg stall for every 300 sqft of building = 200 pkg stalls. Could get reductions with transit and biking credits. Could possibly move the bus stop to the SW corner of Nicolet. Some walk in clientele, some transit but most drive plus the clinic staff. Need to have visible access to parking to avoid confusion.

The budget is \$30 million which includes everything—land, planning, construction, etc. About \$250 sqft in construction cost. There is no \$\$ for a parking structure. Underground parking would need to be ventilated. Both underground and structured parking are out of their budget.

Questions, comments, discussion

The sight has a 1 ½ story basement. Once demo is done and the big hole is there, how can it be utilized? Storage? Parking? Lab facilities? Loading? Utilities? *HGA-HCMC: in hospital/clinic buildings, basements have little use. Can't lease them, storage needs are limited. Clinics don't function well with basements*

The building along Nicollet Ave doesn't serve the pedestrian goals. Probably not much to attract pedestrian interest—windows on Nicollet side not likely to be a viewing attraction for pedestrians. No multi-door or multiple “storefronts” entrances on Nicollet. It wouldn't encourage pedestrians to continue down Nicollet. The linear orientation of the building along Nicollet doesn't offer multiple retail entries. Blaisdell has some residential on it, Nicollet is commercial/retail. The parking with the drop off and entrance in the back takes away from the potential Nicollet Ave use. The parking behind a Nicollet oriented building wouldn't be conducive to shared parking for Nicollet Ave businesses. *HGA-HCM: leaving the Nicollet side open, it might take longer for a developer to build. Need to find a developer who is interested and there is no guarantee of economically vibrant development on Nicollet.*

The 28th St. side or the Blaisdell St sides were preferred as sights for the clinic.

What are the options for another developer to develop on the sight? Are there any other funding options which might allow for a parking structure or underground parking? The value of the Nicollet side is great and could help fund a pkg structure. *HGA-HCMC: another developer would have to do a feasibility study. Zoning is I 1 for the entire lot but could do plat changes for other uses on sections of the sight. A meeting is scheduled with the City next week and they will try to find out if the city has a definitive reason to have the clinic along Nicollet.*

The building should face 28th street or Blaisdell leaving Nicollet available. Should consider a 3 or 4 story stepped back building and press for density. Or do a 2-3 story with the option to build up in the future. The activity along Nicollet will change with the opening of Nicollet. The clinic should be placed with the vision of how the rest of the block all the way to the Greenway might be utilized. Explore ways to fund a ramp or build the infrastructure for a future ramp. Could be a developer collaboration. Consider building to allow for future additional floors to be added on top. Can HCMC go back to

its board or the HC and ask for more funding or reevaluation of how structured parking might be incorporated now rather than going back to it in the future. *HGA-HCMC: Planning for additional floors can be done at the time of original construction and can be considered. The parking ramp is more difficult. Not expensive to tear up a flat lot. There could be future \$ s for a pkg structure A pay ramp probably wouldn't be supported. They try to avoid ramps in medical centers—confusing, can be dangerous.*

Other information:

HCMC's original presentation to their board included other medical services like dentistry and the price tag was \$38 million. They were cut back to \$30 million to build a new clinic including land acquisition. There will be an educational component to their services and some community space. The collaboration with Washburn Center for Children was mentioned but they (WCC) are not ready to build for another 5 years. The configuration of the traffic flow (one ways, fire station) was mentioned and the possibility of vacating 29th St. No Public Work or City Staff were present to address those questions or possibilities. If entrance is placed on Blaisdell or 28th the signage would have to be very clear. Current clinic hours were discussed—some early evening appts but generally not open into the evening. Some short Saturday hours. A suggestion for additional Hennepin county social services being added to the sight was opposed by the attendees. HCMC can't predict what their future client usage and space needs might be once Nicollet Ave is open.

HGA-HCMC To Do

Will meet with City next week

Will check with the HCMC board to find out if the budget can be expanded

Will explore position of building on sight, height options and expansion of building upward in the future

Whittier Alliance Task Force:

Adjust orientation of building to 28th or Blaisdell

Can basement be incorporated – and for what use

Can additional future growth be accommodated by building up?

What are interest, commitment, and timing for collaboration with other developers on the sight?

Explore possibility of incorporating footings for future structured parking or sub parking (basement use?)

What is HCMC's vision for the block and what other assets would help the clinic.

How can HCMC build in a way that develops the block to everyone's advantage?

From a design stand point how does HCMC-HGA feel about positioning the clinic on 28th or Blasdell

Next Meeting: Mon. April 7 5-6:30pm

Summary Notes Prepared by Marian Biehn