

Whittier Alliance Board Meeting Minutes
July , 2016 6pm
Whittier Park Community Center

Present: David Bagley, Erica Christ, Andy Cohen, Sarah Estey, Mary Gazca, Laura Jean, Geri Jerez, Christina Le, Marie Listopad, Michael Malone, Jesse Oyervides, Christine Popowski, Daphna Stromberg, Brett Vandenbussche, Kenya Weathers **Absent:** Fadumo Abdinur Anab, Osman Abo, Ted Irgens, Natascha Shawver, Araceli Perez **Staff:** Lucy Lawson **Guests:** Marian Biehn

Call to Order at 6:10pm by Erica Christ, Board Chair. Standard of conduct and conflict of interest were reviewed. **Motion** to approve the July agenda **Carried**.

Comments from the Chair

Erica Christ

Ricardo is sick so Erica will present his agenda items. Mike will be looking at how we intend to update the strategic plan as his pet project, and he invites others to participate.

Secretary's Report

Erica Christ

Minutes from June, 2016 were reviewed and a **Motion** to approve as written, with one minor correction, **Carried**. Attendance was reviewed.

Contracted Project Update (Reopen Nicollet, 35W & affordable housing)

Marian Biehn

Reopening Nicollet Vision: Project Update

Marian gave some background about the Reopen Nicollet workshops held by the Cunningham Group last year, and the 'We see' community vision from those workshops. The Cunningham Group has developed more detailed representations of what could possibly go on the Kmart site, and board members viewed the Cunningham Group's designs. Marian discussed the site and the designs:

- The challenge is how multiple developers can make it profitable with individual investors. Instead of one investor, aka the City, we could have a pilot development site.
- Could lobby for it to be designated as a PUD (planned unit development) area, which would mean all zoning is off the table. It could be a test site for development. Would need to get City planners and developers on board and to see the value in it.
- The drawings are of concepts, not firm designs. They are something we can take to developers and the City, hopefully to create investment and excitement. Next steps could include a marketing study.
- Want to look at how can incorporate existing buildings north of the Greenway, such as Pho Tau Bay, into the designs.

Wide ranging discussion about the project followed. Points made included:

- Want to campaign to encourage the City to fund the project. They will probably need federal funds.
- LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, would be good to plug into site.
- Walkability and usability should be a focus, and fostering neighborhood use.
- The tallest buildings in Cunningham's mock-ups are 9 or 10 stories. The mock-ups look very commercial, not quite Whittier/cosy yet.
- Board members further discussed the visuals that Cunningham has created. Unfortunately it won't look like existing Eat Street, as it's not a model that can get up.
- It could also be good to pitch reopening Nicollet in terms of elements that are missing from Minneapolis at present: create a story with the Greenway and potential development. It needs a story/theme. For example, top metro areas have a blend of these 8 things
- The designs could add individual elements, be it cinemas or planetariums. We want to attract legacy developments. In terms of next steps, having a story is important. The international neighborhood element is also important – we want to maintain the multicultural emphasis. Glass/indoor green spaces would be nice additions. A library would be great in this location.
- We want to encourage City Councilmembers to pursue the project and think of the n'hood as a partner. Need to keep that intention in mind.
- Have some money left for drawings/website. The part not funded is doing market analysis to explore the

developer pool, not the usual suspects. The City has not talked yet about whether it will be a TIF district, etc, as they don't own it yet. That aspect – what the tax situation will be and so on – will be very important to developers as it will be an expensive site.

- On the question of funding further drawings vs. marketing study, something more urban planning focused might be a good idea. We have no authority and no money, we are tilting at windmills, so we need to put something exciting and inspiring on the table.
- Could even put up prize money for, for example, an architecture competition.
- Have to accept won't be as organic/Eat Streetish as we would all like, simply because will all be new, and because of financial pressures.
- Could request Cunningham add a bit more to these drawings, e.g. green rooftops. They aren't inspiring yet.
- Storefronts and housing that are new and trendy but not special will not inspire anyone. Visual designers, rather than architecture students, would be good for adding visual flair to designs.

What does Whittier get out of reopening Nicollet? It will restore the street grid. The plans is for the n'hood to try to hold onto Eat Street in the face of reopening Nicollet. The City closed it without consulting the n'hood and have been talking about reopening it for a few years, so we want to be at that table. The site at the moment is a bit of an eyesore.

35W/Lake St Redevelopment

Currently there is no Whittier rep on the PAC. It is moving forward again. They are talking about the bus rapid transport station, which is actually a freeway widening, and land acquisition. Somebody should be appointed or take on the position of attending those meetings. Weekday mornings, once a month. They are painful and only advisory, but at least someone can give feedback. They call it a transit project, but they are expanding the highway. Plus the added air pollution for the public high rises must be painful. Project leaders are petitioning SHPO to rescind historic designations of bridges. They are still planning to apply for federal funds for 29th St & Nicollet bridges, but it was through an Obama small rail program and who knows where it will be in the future.

Affordable housing complaint

Affordable housing RFP is asking the consultant to assess impediments to fair housing, such as policies and practices that create barriers to housing choice and reinforce segregation. The City will be accepting proposals till the start of August. The consultant will have from mid-August to September to do an impediments analysis study; in September to December there will be a lot of neighborhood outreach. Whittier should participate in this and hold multiple meetings. The Whittier affordable housing map does not include naturally occurring affordable housing and supportive housing. We need to encourage other areas to create similar maps to see where the clusters are. Section 8 is invisible, unless an entire building is section 8. However, public subsidized housing or supportive housing is public information. Many neighborhoods don't know this housing information because it's not on their radar. Phillips, Stevens Square, Whittier, etc, have a lot of public housing, so they are more aware of it. HUD & FIC will pay for the study. To do outreach on our local housing conditions Whittier can get a microgrant through HUD. HUD is overseeing this process. The City is also heavily involved. Ricardo has a copy of the RFP in the office. It's not really at the public input phase yet.

2607 1st Ave S: Potential new office space

Erica Christ

About half the board members have seen the building. Opinions were mixed. The owners have had it for 30 years. The commercial space is the valuable bit. There may be a black mold problem. It's not a great building, but wouldn't need a ton of work (that we know of) to be serviceable. Cash flows would be \$66 a year, so doesn't increase our occupancy costs, assuming we could get the property at an aggressive price, and no horrible surprises. The price of \$275,000 is too high. The property next door sold for less. We don't want to interfere with negotiations with an outside investor in the n'hood. Over the years, this is the closest a property has come to meeting our needs. It would be good to know who the other investor is. There is no current purchase agreement on the property.

Board members discussed question: what is the purpose of the purchase? Firstly, does it provide a meeting space or give back to the neighborhood? Secondly, would we be freshening up a dilapidated space and making it an asset for the community? It does have 10-12 parking spaces that could be rented and/or used for meetings. It could host small meetings. Making money is the third big reason to purchase a new office.

Other considerations: The current location has extreme heat in summer and is not a great office. If we don't

use our NRP money we may lose it. Could possibly use NRP or CPP funds, although language modifications would be required. There are strings attached to that money. The City would ask for an environmental analysis. It's possible that Hennepin County did testing already because of the superfund site across the street. We have NRP money that is contracted but idle, and there has been chatter from the City about reallocating it, particularly after 2020. We could move forward to the investigative phase, but that will take money. Could create a letter of intent that includes bringing in a contractor to look at the building. Could give a heads up that we would be paying cash but at a much lower price than what they are asking. Can create a mini task force of three or four people who could hammer out the strategic aspects.

Finance Committee

Andy Cohen

June 2016 Financial Statements: The financial report was presented. The balance sheet was reviewed. We have a chunk of cash sitting in Sunrise Bank where it doesn't get interest and want to move it to the Trustone account where it does get interest. We are a bit behind on fundraising, but not too materially, about \$1000 off from the budget. We do want to attend to fundraising soon; we need a fundraising and development Task Force and will start to think about it.

FC Motion 1: The Finance Committee accepts the Whittier Alliance June 2016 financial report.

Motion Carried.

FC Motion 2: The WA Board moves that the Whittier Alliance transfer \$100,000 from the Sunrise Banks account to the Trustone Financial savings account. **Motion carried.**

Community Issues Committee

The CI was good. Chelsea from MPD and Anita Tabb from the Parks Commission presented. There were a ton of questions for Anita. Brett announced his resignation. If anyone from the board is interested in being CI chair, they should come to the next meeting.

Old/New Business

- The Enviro Task force is promoting biking to business.
- Developer Steve Minn has put forward a proposal for an affordable housing project on a vacant lot on the corner of Harriet and Lake. Steve was one of the partners on the Eat Street Flats project. He did a nice job on the Franklin building, but abandoned another lot that was meant to be part of that project. He has a reputation for riding roughshod over objections. He has a lot of friends in the planning department. Would be a good idea to reconvene the Development Review Group, get them to review his proposal and get him to the table soon. He is looking at more than 100 units, mostly 1BRs.
- The Citywide Neighborhood Meeting minutes are in the board packet. Will draft a document with volunteers from other neighborhoods. May meet one more time in September.
- ED review has been completed, and will talk about it next month.
- Staff reports are in the board packet. Paul's includes a Musicant Group project update.

Adjourn 8:35PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson.

Meeting Minutes Approved on _____

Erica Christ, Board Chair

Erin Sjoquist, Board Secretary