

**Whittier Alliance Joint Community Issues and Business Association Meeting  
Monday, January 11, 2016 — 6:00-8:00pm — Whittier Park**

**Attendees:** Felino de la Peña, Michelle Bruch, Laura Jean, Natascha Shawver, Mary Gazea, Greg Schmidt, Erin Sjoquist, Dave La Violette, Rachel Lewis, John Edwards, Carrie McCabe Johnston, Kieren Eversen, Giancarlo Casale, Shane Morn, Jo Ann Musumeci, Teresa Murphy, Mark Trehus, Karlee Weinmann, Philip Schwartz, Jose Ramirez, Chris Popowski, Erica Christ, David Bagley, Sam Fettig, David Schroth, Andy Cohen, John Sharhun, Ted Irgens, Jen Kader, Scott Wolf, Brooke & Collin Erickson, Marie Listopan **Staff:** Ricardo McCurley, Paul Shanafelt, Camilla Jamal, Lucy Lawson **Presenters:** Ben Somogyi, Aide to Councilmember Lisa Bender; Developer Gerberding, Master

**Welcome Call to order** at 6:05 by Brett Vandenbussche, Community Issues Committee Chair. A **Motion** to approve January agenda as written **Carried**. Attendees were asked to review the December 2015 CI and BA meeting minutes. A **Motion** to approve December minutes of CI and BA meetings **Carried**. Introductions were made, attendees shared their name and a new development in the neighborhood they are excited by, including a new icecream shop in the works on Lyndale Avenue.

**Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion**

**Whittier Alliance new Executive Director**

Ricardo McCurley greeted attendees. He has previously worked at the SE Como n'hood organization and in youth development. He is excited by the n'hood, and encourages people to stop by the WA office.

**10th Ward update** Ben Somogyi (Council Aide, 5<sup>th</sup> Ward) briefed attendees on City Council activities – what happened in 2015 and is in store for 2016. Attendee raised pedestrian safety on Lyndale Ave. Lyndale is a County road, not a City road, but Hennepin has its own Complete Streets policy. Ben lives nearby, and knows it's hard to cross Lyndale currently. An attendee raised some stop sign issues in the n'hood, and Ben encouraged attendees to forward traffic concerns to his office.

**Development Proposal for 26th St & Lyndale – Developer Gerberding, Master**

Developer Gerberding briefed attendees on Master's mixed use proposal for 1st floor grocery & 76 residential units – seeking an informal dialogue about the concept, rather than asking for a letter of recommendation immediately. The project is mixed use, with a retailer on the first floor – a national retailer with which they are having discussions – the housing is what used to be called urban 'workforce housing'. There will be two levels of underground parking. The development will cover six lots, beginning on the corner. They have already talked to City Planners, Transportation and a Traffic Engineer, and will do a Traffic Demand Management Plan. Developer wants to make design contemporary – feels that there is enough brick and stone on the street – and wants a canopy that helps direct people into the retail.

- There is a bus stop on the corner, and development will take advantage of transit corridor. Development will have adequate parking for units, with excess parking to support the retail.
- City code is 4 stories, 56 feet in height. Expect project to be 59 ft in height because need 20 feet for the retail component. Would be asking for a CUP (conditional use permit) for extra 3 feet.
- Original idea was that the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3rd and 4th floors be shaped like a U, with the open area facing the back of the property. Development will have a community room and fitness center that will look out onto a 'plate' on top of retail level, possibly could be a terrace for residents. Now developer considering having the 'U' facing Lyndale Ave instead.
- Developer also thinking it makes sense to add an additional floor, a 5th floor, providing about 24 extra units. Adding a 5th floor would bring height up to 70 feet, which would be a CUP request.
- Will need one variance on south side edge of property, as it abuts a residentially zoned lot code, which requires a 30 foot setback. In order to get underground parking, developer is requesting that it be reduced to 9 feet, so a 4 feet variation. Entrance/exit to parking will be on Lyndale Ave.
- The 4 existing houses will be razed or moved – have purchase agreements on all 6 lots. Master has a purchase agreement with current property owners to buy at end of Feb.

- Parking will be 162 stalls, with 60 stalls for retailer, and the remaining for the use of the residents.
- Attendee asked why developer chose a national retailer, not a local retailer. Developer commented that there may be an announcement about the retailer on Friday.
- Attendee asked whether U shape could go down to the ground, creating public space. Developer said it would be in middle of the retailer's sales floor, but U shape could reduce the perceived massing.
- Attendee raised concerns w. studios/1 brs – larger units bring welcome variety to housing stock in n'hood.
- Asked about pricing of units, developer commented will be \$2 to \$2.10 per square foot, which translates to 500 square feet at \$1000 per month.
- Attendee asked if Master is planning to build and sell, or manage? Master will hire professional management, a larger company that will manage the building. Master's financial partners will want to own and operate, and Master will own a small share.
- Developer said will incorporate bicycle racks, bicycle repair stations, and resident bike parking area.
- Building covers less than 1 acre so not required to have a Stormwater Management Plan, but are considering a green roof and a number of other sustainable initiatives.
- Developer is not pursuing LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification because \$60,000 in application fees, but is pursuing best practice.
- A retailer loading dock will be inside the building, so no loading or unloading outside the building
- Attendee asked whether the developer is willing to move the houses currently on the site. Developer said one single family house is in good condition and they are looking at finding a lot they could move the house to. The other three houses would not be cost effective to move and rehab.
- Developer said with design materials, building will include some brick, stone, metal shingles and metal panels. Don't have proportions of each material yet. No Hardie panels.
- There will be windows onto Lyndale Ave. Visibility to and from street creates activity for retailers.
- Sidewalk to and from street will have a greater depth than 5 feet minimum. Design will have trees and work around the bus stop.
- Waste stream will include trash and recycling, but have not discussed organics yet.
- Attendee raised traffic issues in n'hood. Developer said they are projecting parking ratio in building as about 0.6 – i.e. 40% residents will not have cars. Current average is 0.8. Developers are seeing trend to people owning fewer cars. Have had meeting with City traffic engineer.
- Attendee raised traffic problems being likely with the retailer rather than residents, particularly on Lyndale. The Wedge parking lot is already a nightmare. Lyndale is a really difficult traffic corridor.
- Regarding timelines, if all goes smoothly, construction is to start this summer, and it will be a 13-month construction period. Developer wants to come back next month to present plans formally to the community.
- Developer said plans are not entirely dependent on national retailer coming on board.
- Attendee commented that support of local businesses is one of Whittier's strengths. Starbucks and CVS went in as the tenants on Franklin and Nicollet's recent developments. Developer argued that vibrancy of community is dependent on having a wide range of choice and diversity.
- Developer commented that having the U shape facing Lyndale Ave will take some persuading of City because policy is for a continuous face on buildings along the street – would need community support for that design element.

#### **Old and New Business:**

- Whittier Annual Meeting, Board Candidacy & Good Neighbor/Biz Nominations: If you are a member of the organization and have been involved for six months, you are eligible to be a board member.
- Attendee raised whether community could have advance notice of the developer's revised design will be before the next CI meeting, particularly whether it includes the 5<sup>th</sup> story.

**Motion to Adjourn: 8:00pm. Motion Carried.**

**Minutes respectfully submitted by Lucy Lawson**