



WA Community Issues Meeting Minutes

Whittier Park

Monday, December 12th, 2016

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Attendees: Marie E. Listopad, Erica Christ, Paula Horan, David Saarela, Adriana Cerillo, Kafia Ahmed, Julia O., Will Hodges, David Bagley, Alexis Walstad, Brian Foster, Scott Melamed, Christina Le, David Schuster, Kevin Beaudin, Mary Gazca, Greg Schmidt, Olivi A. Grazzini, Regina Brenner, Felino de la Pena, Laden Busuf, Owen Duckworth, Emma Nelson, Alicia Sojourner, Marian Biehn, Teresa Murphy, Cady Patton, Emanuel Tekle, Meg Reid

WA Staff: Ricardo McCurley, Paul Shanafelt, Camilla Fartun Jamal, Joey Whitesman

Presenters: Owen Duckworth: Coalition organizer at the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
Malik Shabazz: Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing Program Coordinator at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Welcome/Call to Order -

Welcome at 6:14 by Ricardo McCurley. Agenda was reviewed, Introductions are made. Standard of conduct policy was reviewed. **Motion** to approve the Agenda **Carried**. Minutes from 11-14-2016 CI meeting were reviewed. **Motion** to approve 11-14-2016 CI meeting minutes **Carried**.

Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion

- Ward 10 update postponed until next month
- Rex 26 development update: The project at Lyndale and 26th has moved forward. WA voted it down in April. The developer was able to get signatures from surrounding property owners to allow for project to be built. Only changes since April are a proposal to make the building one story shorter and a different facade. The project was approved at most recent planning commission meeting. The grocery store Aldi will be on the first floor with 77 units of market rate apartments above. Traffic is a major concern. Vote at the planning commission was 8 to 1.
Question: What will happen to four houses currently on property? All being demolished.
- Other development updates: CPM is interested in a site on 21st and Lyndale. CPM, developer of many student apartments in Dinkytown has discussed interest in Whittier for projects. Developer Steve Mint is looking to build 100 units of subsidized housing at Lake and Harriet. Brief discussion on how citizens can get on city commissions (such as planning) occurs. Answer was to talk to council members and get recommendations from their office.

- Zeus Jones has created an Eat Street Cookbook “From Eat Street, with Love” for sale now with all proceeds going to the Whittier Alliance. Available online and at Greater Goods, MIA, and Magers & Quinn Bookstore.

Gentrification and Affordability. What is gentrification and is it happening in Whittier?

Ricardo introduces topic:

The topic of gentrification is nuanced and charged. We will refer to our code of conduct and be respectful during discussions. Reasons for discussion include: upcoming strategic planning and this is the beginning of many conversations we will have to prepare for updating strategic plan. Whittier alliance has been doing work on housing for decades and is currently participating in a housing complaint concerning affordable housing. Our hope is to transition the meeting halfway through to focus on a housing survey about this issue . People can leave at that point if they do not want to participate.

The room is split into 5 discussion groups. The groups introduce themselves to each other and a notetaker from each group is selected. Three questions are asked of the groups with the notetaker recording answers to be collected later to help WA understand neighborhood perspective and concerns .

Questions:

1. How do you define gentrification?
2. Based on your personal definition of gentrification, what are your concerns or interests? general feelings?
3. Do we as a community (Whittier, MPLS, etc.) have the power to address these concerns? If we do, how do we do it? If not how do we get that power?

Ricardo invites notetakers to come up and work with Paul to synthesize notes and find patterns and then explains that he has specific feelings and connotations about gentrification but his goal is to know how the Whittier Community feels about it. To help facilitate the conversation he introduces presenter Owen Duckworth to discuss his involvement and understanding of gentrification.

Owen: works with Alliance for Metropolitan stability- a coalition of organizations working to fight gentrification and preserve affordable housing in the city. He gives examples of the work he does such as working with mobile home communities in St. Anthony and Richfield where people being pushed out.

Ricardo and Marian give general profile of Whittier’s housing for context- we have a lot of affordable and subsidized units as well as supportive housing. Marian discusses demographics- diversity, rental vs. owner rate, etc. Whittier has invested historically in affordable housing. Whittier is not exempt from renter problems yet market rate overall is affordable in the neighborhood compared to the rest of the city with exception of newer development. We are in the process of working with CURA to look at current data on market rates in Whittier (our last inventory was done in 2008). Additionally, 1/3 of the roughly 13,000 Whittier residents move every year whether by choice or by need.

Ricardo then summarizes CURA’s research and methods on gentrification which in part concludes that at the neighborhood level there are major fluctuations in affordability. This differs from Myron Orfield’s study which uses a regional scale for analysis and concludes poverty is the root of the problem. He then introduces Malik Shabazz, Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing Program Coordinator at CURA

Malik: The fundamental question is: how do we deal with poverty? We don't deal with this as a country. It's important to look at a local (neighborhood) level. CURA looked at census tracts- clear patterns: rises in rent, looked at Highland Park, Harrison, Willard Hay, Northeast, etc. With the goal of answering questions such as Who is benefitting from this development? We need to look at both economic and racial history. Defend Glendale one of the leaders in this. These conversations are hard but we have to have them.

Ricardo then reviews the synthesized notes from the three questions and focuses on the third question: if and how we can address our concerns surrounding gentrification.

Discussion on neighborhood's role in the issue follows with key points/ questions including:

- How has city changed zoning, laws, policies, etc. that discourage living-wage jobs.
- How Do we want development to grow as a neighborhood.
- Poor people are expected to take low-grade housing when wealthy people move out.
- Apartments in the neighborhood will sometimes turn into condos over time
- There are changing demographics in the neighborhood
- There are power dynamics that takes place in gentrification.
- There is a correlation of gentrification occurring where there has been disinvestment in neighborhoods. If a community is already struggling how do they react to the power that people coming in carry.
- Gentrification means: displacing low income families and working class families. Rent, class, and race play major roles. There is fear that the city wants to convert public housing to private.

Ricardo wraps up the gentrification discussion and shares that Links to neighborhood data/ articles on gentrification will be posted to the Whittier website. He explains that the gentrification conversation will continue if there is community interest and that as we go into next year, we can take action by creating a task force and continuing this work of engaging the community.

Affordable Housing Complaint

Due to time limitations, the survey questions are not discussed or answered by attendees. Instead Marian briefs the meeting on the Affordable Housing Complaint and Whittier's involvement. The Complaint focuses on inequitable distribution of affordable housing in the twin cities. There is now a Housing Committee working on this issue. Minneapolis, St Paul, 9 other jurisdictions, and groups focusing on poverty and housing issues are all represented on the committee. HUD is overseeing the committee- which is assigned to revise analysis of impediments in segregation and integration in the twin cities. A Consultant was hired to collect data (Mosaic) which is due January 15th ? Mosaic will look at zoning ordinances and if they perpetuate systemic poverty. We have opportunity to feed into analysis which will inform policy in MSP and other jurisdictions.

Discussion and questions follow on:

- Myron Orfield's involvement in basis for complaint
- The complaints affect on renewed gentrification
- The Intention vs. impact of policy that could emerge from complaint
- Representation for folks that are not at the table
- The impacts on current affordable housing
- Whittier's historical reasoning for signing on to complaint

- personal experiences with New Americans moving to suburbs and importance of choice
- The very different historical experience for African Americans than for New Americans in mobility and choice in the U.S.
- The advantages of having a mixed (economically, socially, racially, etc.) community

Ricardo wraps up conversation and explains that WA will do four discussions for this complaint survey including with translation (somali, spanish). There will also be ways to participate on our website

Old/New Business

- No Calendar this year

Ricardo thanks everyone for coming and for their participation.

Meeting adjourns at 7:59.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Joey Whitesman