

Whittier Housing Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
April 21, 2020, 6:30-8:00pm
Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: Stephanie Brown, Christine Popowski, Nitin Savant, Cassie, Patrick Alcorn, Cat Hammond, Nicole Weiler, Nate Broadbridge, Matt Barthelemy, Nate Rastetter, Morgan Appleberry, Mary Browning,
Staff: Kaley Brown, Fartun Ismail
Speakers: Mauricio Ochoa of DJR Architecture; Daniel Oberpriller & Garrett Duncan of North Bay Companies

Welcome & recognize Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy.

Motion to approve agenda. **Seconded. Motion carries.**

Motion to approve February meeting minutes. **Seconded. Motion carries.**

Introductions.

Development Proposal - 2316 4th Avenue, North Bay Co. & DJR Architecture

Intention is to do a project on a street that does not have much development or traffic activity. They are only asking for one variance on the amount of parking included in the project. They have been working with City staff to tweak the design, but there have been no major issues that would upend the project to this point.

Feedback that was incorporated following the last presentation to this committee:

- They will install an electric vehicle charging station somewhere in the n'hood for public use (?)
- Guest bike parking has been added
- Added stack of 1 bedrooms (3 ct.)
- Added fitness and bike lounge to the 1st floor lounge, though it's not clear that was because of committee feedback
- Covered parking stalls reduced from 24 to 22 last time in order to make them wider per City feedback; need a variance to reduce from 37 to 22 -- 0.30 spaces per unit

Building details:

- Setbacks are generous to create more green space surrounding the building; right now it is all the way up to the sidewalk.
- Now has 72 units total; 69 are studios and 3 are 1 bedroom
- 350--600 sq ft. is the range of unit sizes
- Rents range \$1150-1400 from studio units to the 1 bedrooms
- Fitness center, solar panels on the roof, flexible working spaces on the 1st floor, indoor parking, indoor bike lounge, courtyard space for outdoor leisure; all units have a washer and dryer in-unit
- Shooting for construction this fall still, and they do not expect a significant change in timeline due to COVID
- Complies with all MN building code specifications for ADA accessibility; all grades are accessible -- no steps to/from walk-out units
- Current zoning is now at 4 stories but scheduled to be lower under 2040 zoning maps

Discussion of business practices:

- AMI in Whittier is roughly \$37k; these rents are not accessible to most current Whittier residents

--There was damage done to the community when CPM (a former partnership of this developer, Daniel Oberpriller) attempted to dramatically raise rents on tenants of 2533 3rd Ave S

--He responds that he is no longer associated with that partner following that incident.

--Other North Bay holdings in Whittier: the hostel at 2400 Stevens; 2645 1st Ave is about to begin construction

--North Bay commits to being in Whittier and they are maintaining their office here even though they are relocating it.

--Regarding potential partnership with social service orgs doing supportive housing, he says he would be open to working with organizations in the neighborhood to find ways that North Bay can be supportive

General strawpoll / reactions on the project overall:

--Rent is high for the amount of space

--Would like to see more 1 bedroom units

--Comment: Would approve the project if there was a formalized agreement with St. Stephen's or Simpson to provide supportive units OR if the rent was significantly lower (below \$1,000/mo.)

Scale of 1-10 on this project:

10 - wholeheartedly behind it with no questions/reservations

1 - ready to organize the picket line

Average vote of 3.5

General question to the group for ongoing thought:

How do we think about interacting with a City-based process that is focused on design when our objections are not necessarily based on the design, but more on the company itself, business practices, etc?

Other Updates

- WA has been developing plans for Somali and Latinx Community outreach regarding risk and prevention of COVID; WA is also developing a Whittier business promotional campaign called "Spend Big on Small" to help drive economic activity to small businesses by offering gift card incentives from WA. More to come on those efforts soon.
- Tip to shop at small biz directly rather than ordering through delivery apps (usually about 30% fees for the business). Carrion Delivery is a local bike delivery service based in Midtown Phillips, but they will deliver to Whittier.

Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Minutes submitted by Kaley Brown.