

Whittier Alliance Community Issues Meeting

DRAFT Minutes

Monday, April 11, 2016 — 6:00-8:00pm — Whittier Park

Attendees: Brian Jon Foster, Dave La Violette, Joanne Krause-Jonson, Laura Jean, Christine Popowski, Mary Gazca, Greg Schmidt, Brett Vandebussche, Valerie Hurst, Karlee Weinmann, Kurt Nelson, Lori Chu, Brooke Erickson, Collin Ehret, Mark Trehus, Felino de la Pena, Michael Tolan, Alice Trehus, Dave Gaarder, David B. Johnston, Hosmor Brown, Erin Sjoquist **Staff:** Ricardo McCurley, Camilla Jamal, Paul Shanafelt, Lucy Lawson **Presenters:** Council Member Lisa Bender, 5th Ward; Mike Huffman, St Stephen's Shelter & Robert Hoffman, Simpson Housing Services; Madeline Leslie, Red Cedar Gardening; Don Gerberding, Masters

Welcome

Meeting called to order at 6:10 by Ricardo McCurley, who explained we would be electing the CI Chair. **Motion** to approve the Agenda **Carried.** Brett Vandebussche was nominated for the position of CI Chair. Brett accepted the nomination. Brett was elected as the CI Chair. Introductions were made. **Motion** to approve March 2016 minutes **Carried.**

Announcements/Community Comments & Discussion

5th Ward update

Council Member Lisa Bender

CM Lisa Bender briefed attendees on n'hood and Citywide issues. A lot of development proposals in this n'hood this year. A project that has returned to the Planning Commission is the Sabri Properties proposal near the Greenway, west of Karmel, between Grand and Pleasant. She doesn't like the skyway part of the proposal – she believes they are not a good initiative outside of downtown. The proposal has changed: the promenade on the site has improved, and he no longer plans to recycle the building materials of the existing buildings on the site. The City hopes to have a pedestrian connection to the south of the greenway in the n'hood; each developer who comes forward is asked to help implement that vision. Along 3rd Ave, directly north of Whittier, they are trying to implement a protected bikeway. A few of the larger property owners downtown sent a letter in opposition to the original proposal, which is 3 lanes with planted medians to protect bikes. A couple of weeks ago staff changed their recommendation to 4 lanes for the entire length of 3rd Ave, despite 3 lanes being probably safer and better for cars as well. Loring Park took a position in support of the 3-lane option. Whittier could also take a position if it wants to.

Shelters in the Whittier N'hood

Mike Huffman, St Stephen's Human Services & Robert Hoffman, Shelter Manager, Simpson

Robert and Mike briefed attendees on the work of the shelters in the Whittier n'hood.

Robert: There has been a shelter in the basement of Simpson Methodist Church since 1982; the church has been there for 100 years. Story, probably apocryphal, is that the men of the church went to City Hall to find out how to get accredited as a shelter, meanwhile the women of the church started letting people in. Shelter serves both male and female adults: 44 men and 22 women. A lot of clients come from the Latino community: almost all advocates are Spanish speaking, and shelter is near the Kmart day labor site. Simpson is not a sober shelter. They want those people who are struggling with sobriety to have a safe place to stay. **Mike:** St Stephen's started in 1980, and is pleased to be part of the community and have the opportunity to talk to the community. They will be hosting the N'hood Clean Up on April 23, and participants will have the opportunity to tour the shelter. St Stephen's has a street outreach team. They also do housing: they house families and single adults through a variety of programs. Don't own any buildings, but work with 600 landlords through Hennepin County. **How people can get involved:** St Stephens is unique in that they manage the shelter overnight solely using volunteers – always two volunteers, and staff do training. Shelter also provides a warm meal each evening – often people prepare it offsite and bring it in. If you have a valuable skill you can reach out to the volunteer coordinator Tess.

Examples of volunteers include seamstress, chiropractor, artists, musicians and theater people.

Robert: Simpson also has a variety of folks who come in. It takes 30,000 volunteer hours per year to

run the shelter, and a diverse array of volunteer contributions: e.g. mending, orchestra performances, Adopt a Family programs during the holidays, and tutoring and mentoring kids. Fundraiser coming up: Art for Shelter, a blind art auction. Some of the artists are shelter guests, some are famous artists, but the paintings are unlabeled.

Food Gardening in an Urban Environment

Madeline Leslie, Red Cedar Gardening

Madeline Leslie talked to attendees about gardening in a dense urban neighborhood. Plants need light, water and nutrients to be successful. Challenges in an urban situation: soil quality, shade or zero outdoor space. Poor soil quality includes metal contaminants, such as lead, arsenic & cadmium, or low nutrient or highly acidic soils. City of Minneapolis tests lead in soil for free. University of Minnesota has a soil testing lab, which costs about \$17 for a basic test. One solution is gardening with raised beds: can import clean garden soil. Raised bed gardening also allows plants to go out earlier in Spring, has good drainage, discourages rabbits and is aesthetically pleasing. Some residents will have a yard that is very shady. Most vegetables/herbs need min 6 hrs, optimally 8-10hrs. Arugula, spinach, other lettuces, swiss chard and kale will survive a very shady environment. Mobile planters or straw bales can be put in sunny spaces like a driveway. If you have no outdoor space, you can grow herbs, arugula, mesclun mix indoors. Growing plants like tomatoes and peppers indoors is too difficult except with grow lights, etc. Or you can find a local community garden, such as Soo Line, Greanleaf or St Stephen's.

Rex 26 Development Project

Don Gerberding

Don has presented the Rex 26 project to the CI previously. He came the first time with just an idea and incorporated some suggestions from the community. He looked at the Lynlake Small Area Plan, the Whittier Design Guidelines and the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth. First level will have a retail grocery and loading area for retail, above that will be 100 units of housing. They have made the building above the retail in the shape of an 'I', allowing a 40 feet plaza with lounge chairs and grills. Trucks and cars will enter from Lyndale Ave.

- **Q:** Any units provide housing for people of low income? **A:** It is a market rate project. Typical rents on the Greenway are \$2.45 to \$2.60 per sq. foot, this projects rents will average \$2.10.
- A technicality to be aware of is that the first floor has a height of 23 feet in order for trucks to be able to enter/exit. The City says if a 1st floor is over 20 feet, they call it an extra story. City will say project is 6 stories, but it is a 5-story building.
- Trucks from Lyndale will make one or two deliveries a day, in mornings, perhaps a supplemental one in afternoon. Exit is to 26th St, keeping cross-turning traffic to a minimum.
- **Q:** Are any houses being relocated? **A:** One is in good condition and happy to explore that.
- **Q:** Parking in the n'hood already bad, 26th has bad traffic & Wedge has parking problems . How will cars go right onto Lyndale Ave? **A:** 70% Wedge customers are from out of the n'hood. However, this is a grocer that will service the n'hood. Still talking to Aldi. Anticipate the retailer will generate less traffic than the Wedge & provide a different price point. Will be preserving the bus stop – a requirement of the retailer – and commissioning a traffic management plan.
- **Q:** What variances will you be asking for? **A:** Rezoning of the parcel of properties from C2 and O2 to C2, a frontyard setback variance from 25 ft to 20 ft, on the south a variance from 13 ft to 5 ft for the first floor, and a Floor Area Ratio variance from 2.4 to 2.32.
- Attendee suggested postponing the discussion to next month so the variances could be properly examined. Gerberding said this was his 4th month working with the n'hood and his project was going before the Committee of the Whole in a week's time.

Motion: The CI Cttee will defer the discussion to next month's meeting. **Motion carried: 10-7-0.**

Motion to Adjourn: 8.30pm. Motion Carried.