

Whittier Housing Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2021, 6:30-8:00pm
Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: Jo Ann Musumeci, Brigid Higgins, Nate Rastetter, Jordan Hedlund, Arjun Kataria, Bruce Brunner, Wendy Darst, Nick Hutchinson, Genevieve Johnson, Rachel W., Nate Broadbridge, Gwen Jenkins, Annika Greenberg, Victoria P., Mandy Hwang, Andrew Faulkner, George Rishmawi

Presenters: Qannani Omar (Harrison Neighborhood Association), Anthony Taylor (Cultural Wellness Center)

Staff: Kaley Brown, Oscar Nieves Rubio

Welcome/Introductions

-The committee went through a round of introductions.

-The meeting chair presented the agenda. **Motion to approve the agenda. Seconded. The motion passed.**

-The meeting chair recognized Standard of Conduct; Non-discrimination and Anti-racism; and Conflicts of Interest Policies.

-The committee reviewed the February minutes. **Motion to approve the February 2021 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

Anti-displacement Policy Organizing Campaigns in Minneapolis, Qannani Omar, Harrison Neighborhood Association

Updates on TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase) policy advocacy

- Last time Qannani spoke to this group in December, there was only a hope that TOPA would come to some fruition this year. City Council and staff had been talking about it since 2017. Only just very recently, the Council gave a staff direction to pursue feasibility on pursuing the second of three possible ways TOPA could be implemented, which is to guarantee tenants' rights to sign their purchase rights to developers who are characterized as an affordable housing provider (exact definition yet to be fully defined).
- If an owner wants to sell a building, the tenants will have the first opportunity to make an offer and first right of refusal; the owner can say no and see what the market will accommodate. If the owner is offered a certain price, they would be required to go to the tenant(s) and ask if they can match it. Then the tenant(s) can determine whether or not to move forward with the stated price.
- If the property is under your name and between 1-4 units, it would not fall under the TOPA policy. If you are a landlord that has 4 duplexes, you do not have to comply with TOPA. It does leave properties off the table, but it would drastically increase the opportunity for tenants to be able to compete.
- Council staff is working with CPED to determine what resources are needed at the City level to be successful, including technical assistance for tenants to learn how to do this, how to overcome barriers to putting together a down payment.

- We will have a better idea in July of what the city is able to offer; right now there is no budget for TOPA. Budget convos for 2022 are already happening now. May not be well funded or strong the first year, but having the infrastructure in place will allow for it to thrive in future years and also to find community resources.
- Q: Who is involved in creating the list of developers who are preferred? A: The City isn't trying to make a list of developers, but they are trying to create criteria that allows new organizations to participate; advocates have made some suggestions but are not sure yet what City staff are working on for that. The goal is not to make it difficult to qualify/participate.

Informational presentation + Q&A - Minneapolis United for Rent Control (MURC) Campaign

- Harrison Neighborhood Association is part of the MURC coalition, which formed in early 2020. Their current policy platform is really about setting the stage for 2022 with a new council coming in and the budget process beginning.
- Community organizations have joined over a variety of concerns, such as impacts of the upper harbor terminal project in North Minneapolis and infrastructure projects such as the Blue Line light rail extension.
- City Council sent 2 amendments to the Charter Commission for review:
 1. Do residents want to give Council power to enact rent control in the future - yes/no - decided by simple majority by voters. The amendment would just grant permission for the council to move forward; they'd then draft and propose a policy that would need 8 City Council members to vote in favor of it.
 2. If approved by 51% of votes or more, MURC could draft a policy that residents would be allowed to endorse by collecting a number of signatures to get it on the 2022 ballot to then be put in place in 2023.
- St. Paul is doing this now by collecting 10,000 signatures in order to be on their ballot this fall. They already have the charter amendment approved. If it's passed, it'd be in place no later than May 2022.
- When the coalition was created, a lot of research was done to determine how rent control could work in Minneapolis and why it failed in different ways elsewhere. CURA was commissioned to do a study for the City back in 2019 and they presented at the end of February 2021. The research showed that the bottom 25% income of renters saw a 45% increase in rents; also no increases in wages. It could be described as "a tale of two cities" for renters. They laid out different scenarios about how it would look here in Minneapolis; it would not be applicable to new development.
- MURC's assumption was that they'd have to work with attorneys and get their own ordinance on the ballot through signatures; they didn't expect the Council to take it up. If they do it and write their own, it'd happen much faster. MURC is prepared to write their own, but they do want to work with City council if they're willing.

Kmart Area Redevelopment

- Kmart Visioning & Engagement Subgroup Update - George Rishmawi

- The subgroup is meeting on the 2nd Monday each month to keep project work moving forward. They are getting a handle on past work done and strategizing around how best to prioritize outreach efforts in preparation for spring and summer.
- Wells Fargo Site Redevelopment Plans - Anthony Taylor, Cultural Wellness Center
 - In the last 2 years or so, the organization has started to look more at community development and its impact on economic systems and neighborhoods.
 - CWC wants to collaborate with us not to talk about cosmetic aspects of a new building, but how we can change the lived experiences of people with measurable and intentional investments in residents and families here now.
 - CWC is working to align energy and resources with Wells Fargo and Kmart, as they are the same with regard to net impact on the community; though Kmart has a longer trajectory time frame, it's the SAME community.
 - Collabing will allow us to share strengths and get more community members involved.
 - Wells Fargo has an opportunity to address systemic barriers to down payments; barriers to buying a home. When we look at affordable housing - we need to build housing that also provides for upward mobility.

Housing Issues Committee Subgroup Updates

- **Developer Engagement:**
 - An update on the Developer Scorecard is provided; committee volunteers are welcomed to contribute the final stages of creating the final product, which we hope to present in April or May for a committee vote.
- **Unhoused Neighbors Support:**
 - (No updates)

Other Development Updates

- 2401 Pillsbury Ave 4-plex conversion approved by Planning Commission

Other updates, announcements, opportunities

- Hennepin County's interim improvements to pedestrian safety at Lyndale / 25th and 27th Sts
- Community Issues Meetings - 2nd Monday of each month
- Save the Date - WA Annual Meeting, Wednesday, May 26th
 - Consider running for the WA Board!

Motion to adjourn. Seconded.

Motion to adjourn at 8:06pm. Seconded. Motion passes.

HI Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, April 20th, 6:30-8:00 pm @ Zoom

Meeting Minutes submitted by Kaley Brown.