

Whittier Housing Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
May 18, 2021, 6:30-8:00pm
Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: Stephanie Brown, Shannon Dotson, Nick Hutchinson, Maddy Schwartz, Bruce Brunner, George Rishmawi, Nate Rastetter, Jo Ann Musumeci, Zach Levonian, Alex Aspell, Aaron Keith, Mary Browning, Nate Broadbridge

Presenters: Anthony Taylor (Cultural Wellness Center)

Staff: Kaley Brown, Oscar Nieves Rubio, Robb Larson

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 March minutes. **Motion to approve the April 2021 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

2116 Nicollet Avenue Lot Purchase

- What could we do if we put our neighborhood in the driver's seat for development? What can be done on an important corridor in the neighborhood?
- The next steps are to assemble a steering committee. The board is finalizing an application process for the committee.
 - How do we put together an RFP for development partners?
 - How do we make the conversation expansive for the whole neighborhood to drive the development?
 - Our hope is that the steering committee can be representative of the neighborhood.
- There is an interest form on the website if you would like to be involved. Members invited to ask questions and share thoughts on the process.
 - Not enough BIPOC triplex/fourplex owners - it would be a laudable goal to expand equity in this area.
 - There is a need for more creative senior housing that isn't typical senior housing, which is pretty nondescript and boring. Perhaps a 5-7 storey building that has input from active, community-oriented seniors.
 - It's a wonderful opportunity; there's so few undeveloped lots available.
 - It's a tangible way for the community to come together and put some creativity behind it. It is financially and logistically complicated, but if we can prove our ability to do that, it could influence our ability to steer the Kmart redevelopment, and opportunities in Seward and Longfellow.
 - It's one of the only vacant lots on Nicollet. To have our voices heard as a community and know what is feasible and how we can financially support this. It's going to set a great example as a community coming together.
- What would make a steering committee strong and effective? What does it take to recruit the right people, set it up the right way, and make it an equitable process? What are potential

barriers to you participating in a longer-term steering committee? Members invited to share thoughts.

- Look back at the history of what's happened when neighborhood groups have gotten involved with big developers, don't make the same mistakes and learn from the past.
- This area of Whittier from Nicollet to the freeway and Franklin to 26th doesn't have a cohesive concept to pull together the area. It's a vibrant neighborhood but has nothing to pull it together. Perhaps a cultural center on the first floor or something that can unify all the disparate parts of the neighborhood with culture and art.
- Franklin is one end of the neighborhood and Kmart is the other. There could be a correspondence between this development and Kmart, visually.
- Whittier as the "international neighborhood" should be emphasized, and the Whittier School
- Q: Because this is the OR district, does there have to be commercial or office use on the site?
 - A: It has to have active use under Corridor 6 zoning. Has to be built with a minimum of two storeys with office/retail on the ground floor and housing above.
- We've talked about what we can use the site for in the interim, before anything is built there. No concrete ideas yet but let us know if you have ideas.

Wells Fargo / Kmart Area Redevelopment - Anthony Taylor, Cultural Wellness Center

- This (Wells Fargo) is the beginning of the conversation related to Kmart. More information at www.lakeandnicollet.com.
- Wells Fargo has hired Cultural Wellness Center to engage the community in conversation on how to move forward with this site.
- PPL is managing the housing side of redevelopment, Cultural Wellness Center is a co-developer. Wells Fargo is doing an agreement with PPL with the goal of making something beneficial for the community.
 - The community engagement process encourages the community to think about how the built environment impacts us, and how to think more creatively about how to invest in the community.
- Wells Fargo project can be thought of as in conjunction with Kmart, even though they're on different timelines. Community engagement process can be the beginning of the vision of the development of this area.
- Engagement sessions in June, July & August with different themes each session: history, community aspirations, culture and community.
- The first session will be a way to get the broad community to understand how we got to this particular situation, including reopening Kmart and burning down of Wells Fargo site. This is to be a history of the area, movement of people into the community, and the policies that have impacted it. These will last until the first week of August.
 - How will it impact the community's quality of life in a measurable way? E.g., household income, employment.
 - How do we design to facilitate certain types of activity in public spaces?
 - How can we use the space to support entrepreneurship, homeownership with more diverse entrepreneurs and homeowners?
 - We cannot ignore the construction of 35W and the closing of Nicollet Avenue.
 - First session is June 3rd. Sign up on lakeandnicollet.com to get an invitation.

- Equitable outcomes are our goal: to eliminate disparities in household income, educational attainment, healthcare outcomes
- Q: Since it is privately owned land, how much does our community actually have a voice in the development process? Wells Fargo has financial constraints.
 - A: We're hoping to think about the community outcomes that will impact our ability to make the finances work. Are we talking about the ability to make it affordable? Our challenge is not just to build a building, what can we do with the development that will impact the household income of a family?
 - When this is done, PPL will own the site, not Wells Fargo.
- Q: There are similarities between this and the Lake/Hiawatha development. City wanted to redevelop the strip mall. We spent two years meeting with development people and having significant input into mixed-income housing, and then a developer came in and bought the property. There were cohesive neighborhood groups that were involved in that dialogue who were easily identifiable and had strong connections to the neighborhood. This neighborhood seems so disparate to me so it feels different. It may be worth revisiting some of the city people, and the Phillips and Longfellow people who were involved. Minnesota now has a worker-ownership entity, which is more than just co-ops, any worker-owned business. There could be an incubator for worker-ownership and entrepreneurship.
 - A: We are hoping that this will come from the sessions: for example, there is not an African woman-focused entrepreneurship incubator. We are hoping that organizations that are focusing on building the community emerge in this process. The idea of the process is to uncover where people are in the financial spectrum, and how we can assist them. We see that as a simultaneous process with development.
- Q: Nexus Community Partnerships has done amazing work with leadership development among young people and BIPOC business owners.
 - A: We already partner with Nexus, they are doing great work on new financial models for projects like this.

Other updates, announcements, opportunities

- Community Issues Meetings - 2nd Monday of each month
- Save the Date - WA Annual Meeting, Wednesday, May 26th
 - Consider running for the WA Board! 4 resident seats, 3 non-profit/business seats
 - Awards for good neighbor and good business
 - Performances from neighborhood spoken word artists paying tribute to George Floyd
- Save the Boards - Saturday, June 5th. Preservation of plywood murals from last summer in partnership with Pimento and Save the Boards to Memorialize the Movement
- Committee Chair Election will take place at the June meeting

Motion to adjourn. Seconded.

Motion to adjourn at 7:43pm. Seconded. Motion passes.

HI Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, June 15th, 6:30-8:00 pm @ Zoom

Meeting Minutes submitted by Robb Larson.