

## Whittier Housing and Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 16th, 2024, 6:30-8:00pm  
Hybrid Format: WhittierAlliance (10 E 25th St) +  
Zoom Digital Meeting

**Attendees:** Harry, Sonia, Kedar, Kate, Nick, Halley, Willow,

**Presenters:**

Grand Ave Bridge - Abdullahi Abukar, Trey Joiner, Casey Black

City of Skate/Tot lot - Paul Forsline

Simpson Housing - Steve Horsfield

**Staff:** Meggie Garcia, George Rishmawi, Anna Schmitz

### Welcome/Introductions

-The meeting is called to order at 6:30pm.

-Attendees completed a round of introductions.

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

-Motion to approve today's agenda

- April minutes review or motion to approve

George Rishmawi nominated for chair - 8 votes

Election did not meet the quorum. Election will happen again at next meeting

**Meeting was recorded and uploaded on the Whittier Alliance youtube channel:**

<https://youtu.be/UTE3FrtIHU0>

### Simpson housing - Steve Horsfield

- History of Simpson Housing/Methodist Church
  - Simpson Housing Services started in 1982 operating out of the Methodist church
  - Methodist Church was 1 of 19 congregation that open their doors to the homeless
  - Mid-80's asking big questions/re-assessing of the program and where it would go.
  - Came a point where it was not financially stable to continue being part of the church so they separated and became a 501c3 in the early 90's
  - Operated in the basement of the church enough for 72 beds
  - Simpson housing operated in this way for 40+yrs up until today
  - Have grown so much, they have 600 unit across the metro where they offer support services to former homeless individuals and families
  - 2019 methodist church gifted building to simpson housing in memory of the church's mission
    - Simpson saw this as an opportunity to expand and better serve the community.
- Did a lot of engagement on how best to meet the needs of the community to inform the project
  - Part of this was informed, not only by member they already served, but by native and indigenous homeless individuals from the navigation center, by giving them insight on what it's like to run a 24/7 shelter with good amount of services and resources
  - New building now the only thing that is in the basement is basement stuff, no people
- No bunk beds but 6 to 8 beds to a room and have many services

- 40 Beds for those who identify as male
  - 38 beds for those who identify as female
  - Few rooms reserved for those who are non-binary
  - These rooms and spaces leave much room to flex and adapt to community needs moving forward
- Whittier Alliance a key partner in the development of this - helped get started in the process
  - 42 units of supportive housing help get them used to stability ready for official stable housing
  - Broke ground last week hoping to be up and running after the year fall of 2025 people through the doors

Q&A:

Design change? Was it budget reasons?

Yes, cost played a part in it. Other thing there is a duplex next to the building this was torn down which opened up the space and

Shorted, L shaped, and more green space

Timeline all on track? Any issues with the city?

No they are working with us but the state gave us some issue

As for delays, only the rain.

Big thank you!

### **City of Skate: Tot lot park update - Paul Forsline**

History/info on the lot: ([28th St Tot lot info slides](#))

- 2020 tot lot's long term plans were approved
  - This is 1 or 20 skate parks approved in the 2017-2020 MBRP long term planning
- Originally the skate park design was going to be a DIY project meaning it would have been a collaborative design with community skaters. Due to some technical issues this model was changed. Formally cut out of the plan 2023
- Improvement budget of \$20k - MNDOT owns land
- 2022 Project Manager assigned - Land Acquisition begins
- 2023 Community engagement in progress, June MPRB stops the DIY skate park design, Mark Leski brought in to design park maintaining the DIY spirit. MPRB finalizes playground plans

Park board chose to not use funds from land acquisition to obtain land but chose to use park dedication funds.

- MNDOT did lower their asking price for the land to be bought but this still depleted park dedication funds

Public Art was thought about not yet planned, this is the most difficult part. Hoping to use the sound wall to have some type of art.

Skate park was planned to be against the sound wall and the playground closer to the road with 2 separate paths for skaters and pedestrians.

### **Ask of Whittier Alliance and community members**

To support that the build, and funding for all of it to be built and funded at once.

This would save a bit of the money - to would be more expensive if broken down into phases

Need WA and community support to get this supported

Committee Chair and WA staff to meet with Paul about next steps to gain support.  
Aiming to get this by spring 2025

Brief update in soo line funds - they have expired  
Park board said no to ramp going through garden  
What happens to funds sitting there when there's already a project ready to go?

**Grand Ave reconstruction - Trey Joiner, Casey Black, Abdullahi Abukar**  
Bridge over the Midtown Greenway

Primary - general maintenance of the bridge  
Constructed in 1914  
High maintenance cost - focusing on the usability of it  
Making sure nothing is falling on those below

Accommodate for future transit - plans in the works  
Part of historic district- comes with limitations  
Study if it can be rehabilitated or if it needs to be reconstructed  
This will help inform what is possible and bring options to the public  
If it can be replaced this opens up options  
No pedestrian crossing at top of bridge - finding a way to accommodate this

Help with future plans - if rehab not much flexibility - replace much more flexibility  
Sumer

Comment: continued updates would be very appreciated.  
Any assistance or offered is whats wanted for this and other

Grand low bike path - can you build a bike path into the greenway (north side of grand)  
Can you build access to the greenway  
Only focusing on the bridge - can't see anything added to this project at this point

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**Announcements:**

[Lyndale Ave Reconstruction survey](#) is still open. Please take the survey and/or use the contact information on the [project page](#) to reach out directly to the design team.

[Washburn Fair oaks Historic district design guidelines](#) have been updated and adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission

**Next Meeting:**

**July 16th 6:30-8pm**

Meeting Minutes submitted by Meggie Garcia  
6/26/24