

Whittier Housing and Land Use Committee Meeting Minutes  
July 20, 2021, 6:30-8:00pm  
Zoom Digital Meeting

**Attendees:** George Rishmawi, Stephanie Brown, Jo Ann Musumeci, Leslie Modrack, Regina Brenner, Christine Popowski, Dave Shenzer, Nate Rastetter, Nick Hutchinson

**Presenters:**

**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 June minutes. **Motion to approve the June 2021 minutes. Seconded. The Motion passed.**

**Transportation Project Updates in Whittier**

- [Midtown Greenway Access Expansion Project at Harriet/Garfield Ave](#)
  - NEOO Partners is working on the first phase of community engagement with Soo Line Gardens and other community groups. They are interested in reaching out to POC community members who live around the area and connecting with stakeholders at Whittier School.
  - They will begin preliminary designs in August.
  - A community advisory group may be a part of the project in the future, including people from Soo Line Gardens and Midtown Greenway Coalition.
  - Soo Line Gardens has formed a liaison group to represent the gardeners at Soo Line and communicate with NEOO and Whittier Alliance. Many gardeners are concerned about the amount of concrete that will be required for the access ramp.
    - Q: Did Whittier vote to fill in the financial gap for the project in the past?
    - A: The county was looking for opportunities to increase accessibility, this is the only place where that is possible. They're looking for additional funding, looked to Minneapolis Parks for that money. Every development pays park dedication fee which has to be used in a certain area. Parks approached WA board to get feedback on closing the financial gap on the county project. WA does not control that money, but they did approach the board to ask about it. WA reached out to Soo Line at the time and posted an online survey. Didn't come up to housing issues, it was a board level discussion. The board reached out to stakeholders who generally gave a positive response. We told Parks that we would support using that money to close the financial gap. They emphasized that there was no design yet, at that point we were comfortable knowing that there would be future opportunities for community engagement.

- Once designs are put forward to the public, there will be an opportunity for feedback from Soo Line and other stakeholders. Once a design is proposed, WA will be able to recommend for or against the proposed design.
- Soo Line Garden represents an opportunity to experience a natural environment in an area that is otherwise very dense and developed. There should have been more options presented by NEOO that wouldn't disrupt the garden.
- [Whittier/Lyndale Bikeway Improvement Project](#)
  - Virtual open house August 27
  - Plan to restrike the street on 1st Ave to further delineate bike path. In a few years there are plans to completely redo the street. 1st Ave would be one-way northbound, bike lanes would be further reinforced. Blaisdell would continue to be one-way southbound, and there would be a curb separating bikes and cars on Blaisdell.
  - Q: Will parking, especially handicap parking be a problem?
  - A: The project is about improving the street, there shouldn't be any changes to parking.
- Lyndale Ave Lane Conversion Pilot
  - 4-3 lane conversion pilot project from Franklin to 31st. It's an opportunity to see how well this goes.
  - Our Streets organization pushed for the City to undertake this project.
  - Enhancements of pedestrian walkways would increase safety of intersections.

#### Development Project Updates

- **Whittier Alliance - [2116 Nicollet Avenue Lot Purchase](#)**
  - Steering Committee application
    - The steering committee is to find the right development partner - we can't do this alone so we will have to figure out what this looks like. This is a long-term commitment (1 year).
    - Q: How much time would you have to dedicate per month/per week?
    - A: The goal is to develop criteria to evaluate and select the right partner, and eventually develop a Request for Proposal (RFP). Possibly meeting every week or every two weeks, depending on the phase of the project. Estimated 8-10 hours per month.
- **[Wells Fargo / Kmart Area Redevelopment](#) (Lake St & Nicollet Ave)**
  - Kmart Visioning Subgroup meets monthly
  - Engagement sessions in July & August
    - Next one is this Thursday the 22nd, 6 PM in-person at the Blaisdell YMCA.
  - Whittier Business & Resident Outreach
    - This is a significant area of development that will attract a lot of investment, and we want to make sure we're ready to avoid displacement of neighbors and local businesses.
- **[Whittier Community Housing \(CommonBond Communities, 2609 Blaisdell Ave\)](#)**
  - Whittier Community Housing is working on an expansion and renovation of existing building. Currently 45 units of affordable housing with Section 8 vouchers. Adding another 40 units with new project.
  - They are submitting their land use application to the city and have their funding secured.
  - We hope to have someone from that project present to the committee within the next month or two.
- **[112 E Lake St. & 106 E Lake St.](#)**

- Currently under construction, we're planning to meet with the owner to discuss the mural design. That project would happen in spring 2022.

#### **Other Housing & Land Use Committee Project Work**

- Equitable Development Scorecard
  - Work is resuming. We've developed a scorecard to evaluate potential developments for how well they fit our community goals. We're currently finalizing the scorecard. The developer scores themselves, and then community members have an opportunity to score the development as well. Let George, Stephanie or Kaley know if you're interested.
- Anti-displacement and rent help doorknocking
  - Renter protections and eviction moratorium are winding down as the pandemic eases. We want to start doing more targeted direct outreach to residents to see what people's needs are.
  - This helps landlords too, since renters are able to maintain rent payments.
- Unhoused neighbor support
  - Is anyone interested in restarting this work and recreating the subcommittee?

#### **Other updates, announcements, opportunities**

- Join the [Whittier Solidarity Network](#) Discord server. There will be a general meeting this Sunday at 3 PM.
- September 18 will be the Midtown Greenway Glow from 3 - 9 PM - people decorate their bikes with things that glow, and there's art involving lights and illumination. We encourage people to register in teams. Jo Ann would be willing to sponsor two people.
- Lyn-Lake Street Art series on August 7-8. 60 walls including live mural painting.
- Calvary Church is hosting a block party in their parking lot August 11.
- Community Engagement Meetings - 2nd Monday of each month
- Calvary Church is hosting a barbecue and live music night Friday night at 7. 2608 Blaisdell, music, food and games.
- Really Really Market 1-4 pm August 7 in Whittier Park.

**Motion to adjourn. Seconded.**

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

HLU Meetings Every third Tuesday of the month

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

**Meeting Minutes submitted by Robb Larson.**