

Whittier Housing Issues Committee Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2020, 6:30-8:00pm
Zoom Digital Meeting

Attendees: *Stephanie Brown, *Brigid Higgins, *Christine Popowski, *Shannon Dotson, *Nate Rastetter, *Jo Ann Musumeci, Esther Shmagin, *Cyndi Hovey, *Nitin Savant, *Nate Broadbridge, *Nicole Weiler, *Aldona Martinka, *Emma Sherman, *Nancy Julia Hicks, *Ron Johnson, *Erin West, *Morgan Appleberry, *Nick Hutchinson (email), Aaron Paul Keith, *Cat Hammond

Staff: Kaley Brown

Speakers: William Wells (Wells & Co. Architects), Eric Ollestad (Value Homes, LLC), Asher Michaels-Allen & Leah Stockstrom (CommonBond Communities)

**Asterisk indicates they are a registered voter*

Welcome & recognize Standard of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy.

Motion to approve agenda. **Seconded. Motion carries.**

Motion to approve April meeting minutes. **Seconded. Motion carries.**

Introductions.

Development Proposal - 2413 1st Ave S - Value Homes

- 6 unit apartment proposal designed to look like an old house with a pitched roof
- William Wells - architect located in south Mpls that only does housing projects; this is their first project in Whittier
- Eric Ollestad - Value Homes based in Minneapolis; often chooses luxury finishes and layouts with quality materials that last; looking to provide quality living experience including building maintenance and overall management
- The 2040 Comp Plan currently requires them to seek a variance but after zoning is updated it would not be needed
- May 19th & June 16th - 2 meetings at Whittier
- Because this is in the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District, they plan to go before the Historic Preservation Commission in July and want to discuss historic overlay and details tonight with the community
- They plan to go before the Planning Commission in August and begin construction in early October
- 3 units on ground floor + 3 units on 2nd floor - all connected by hallways on the street level
- 2 variances: one to allow for 6 units (3 bedrooms each) on this parcel & one for maneuvering/turning in the alley; only need the variance because it's more than 3 units
- 7 ft setback on the south side and 11 ft setback on the west entrance and will likely add a fence to maximize green space
- Model with 3 bedrooms per unit is successful because it can often be used as an office or studying space; not many new 3 bedroom apartments on the market right now

AESTHETIC DESIGN

Option 1: Proposing a pitched roof, brown, earth tones, horizontal lines and craftsman details; want it to look new but also to fit in; materials & environmental impacts: wood composite lap siding with stucco + stone on the base

Option 2: Idea to do something more modern, lap siding, clean lines

Q: Where are materials coming from and environmental impact?

A: City of Mpls is strict on what they will allow in terms of following zoning rules and historic guidelines; can follow up and answer more in depth.

- Strong preference so far Option 1
- Comment that the wider steps and porch on Option 2 look a bit more welcoming and wondering if the same on Option 1 can be amended; they will explore that possibility
- Comment that the parking ratio seems too far off still - too many people for not enough parking
- Rents are around \$2200 per unit - they feel it's comparably affordable for a new 3 bedroom in this n'hood
- Small families, students, young professionals are the likely target tenants but it's versatile enough for broad appeal
- Remark that we often never have consensus at community meetings on parking
- Washburn Fair Oaks historic guidelines are vague, so they want to make sure we feel that it fits
- Questions about accessibility of units & the units - No ADA-accessible units because it's less than 7 units, which is what the trigger threshold is
- Question about stormwater retention - rain garden and bike parking expected to be included on the site

CommonBond Communities - Whittier Community Housing Repairs and New Building Construction - 2609 Blaisdell Ave

- Majority of parking will be underground for new residents + 11 spaces in lot "N" - .8 to 1:1 estimated for the new property
- Hope to build out public plaza along the Blaisdell Ave side
- Moderate rehab of existing building - painting, structural repairs, plumbing, cabinetry; currently building out a plan for what is needed
- Tonight they want to introduce the project, as they are early on in the process and seeking funding
- Regarding the city's planning guidance, the current zoning code has not yet been updated to align with 2040 Plan
- Their application for financing from City of Mpls is due in July
- Spring or summer of 2021 they expect to start construction with a year-long process
- They plan to come back when they have more details regarding building design
- They expect rental rates to be at or below 60% AMI on new property; if they are granted more MPHA vouchers for a percentage of the units then those would become even cheaper if offset by the vouchers
- (11) 3 bedrooms @ 1,000 sq ft or so, (7) 2 bedrooms, (20 or so) 1 bedrooms @ roughly 650-700 sq ft
- Motion** is made to table this conversation until we have further detail on the building. **(No second on the motion).**
- Motion** is made to draft a letter of support that CommonBond can utilize when seeking project funding. **Motion is seconded. Motion passes 11-0-0** with 11 eligible votes cast.

Discussion of Encampment of Unhoused Neighbors at 2835 Stevens Ave

- There has been a presence of unhoused community members residing on a parcel of land controlled by MNDOT adjacent to the I-35W construction project at 28th and Stevens near the Midtown Greenway
- There have been a number of issues at the site
- MNDOT had taken control of the land to be used as a staging area for their construction project equipment
- The MNDOT Ombudsman has been working the last few weeks in coordination with the Ward 10 office at the City of Mpls, the homeless outreach specialist at MPD, St. Stephen's' Street Outreach Team, and a

number of community members to establish a plan for a safer and more stable living situation for those within the encampment and those living on the 2800 block of Stevens Avenue and surrounding homes.

-Comment: Attendee states a long-term interest in rehabbing property on the 2800 block of Stevens Ave and shares the challenges that some folks living and owning property on that block have experienced in conjunction with the growth of the encampment on the MNDOT parcel.

-Comment: Same attendee also states opinion that multi-modal transportation is not adequate for the number of people and new projects being proposed.

-Comment: Neighbor counters that we have plenty of buses; Route 18 does get full at times, but their opinion is that we have adequate transportation.

-Comment: The frustration around the encampment is understandable, though the WA Housing Committee does not hold any authority over whether or not it exists there; in general, lack of affordable housing drives up demand which increases prices. It's a systemic issue, not an isolation problem.

-Comment: Neighbor also lives a couple blocks from the encampment and appreciates the concerns it has raised and feels that unhoused individuals will continue to impact sheltered community members as long as they do not have adequate supportive services; CDC guidelines recommend that encampments not be cleared and that they be provided with proper sanitation services.

-Question: How has MNDOT been using the space? Answer: Staging area for heavy equipment, which is why it was not initially fenced off

-Question: How has Lisa Bender been involved on this issue? Answer: She and her staff have been very involved to this point, working with other agency and City departments to determine a holistic transition plan for those residing at the encampment. Kaley at WA speaks with them at least once per week usually to receive updates and check-in on progress.

-Comment: Neighbor shares desire to lift up the humanity of everyone who lives in the area; there is trauma in witnessing trauma and that is not something they want for any of their neighbors but it is an unfortunate reality; they want to see Whittier Alliance focusing efforts on maintaining dignity of the unhoused community members residing there.

-Comment: Attendee shares that an officer has told him that there are available shelter beds but drug use is not permitted there; not looking to make a motion or seek support on a specific issue.

-Motion is made for Whittier Alliance to advocate for sanitary conditions and public hygiene infrastructure at unsheltered encampments and does not advocate for the clearing of camps without adequate accommodations made for the individuals in those camps. **Motion is seconded. Motion passes 11-0-0** with 11 eligible votes cast.

-Comment: Neighbor understands that because of COVID precautions, shelters are focused on accommodating the same people consistently and must enact new waiting periods before accepting new residents than they may normally do.

Other Development Project Updates

-Lake Street Dwelling project did receive approval from the Planning Commission with a couple of conditions on the ground floor uses despite an overall recommendation of project denial from the City planning staff. Stephanie and a representative of Lake Street Council both spoke in favor.

-North Bay project at 2316 4th Ave: the Whittier Alliance board could not support it at this time and Stephanie will be seeking out committee members who would like to strategize further on how to press for improvements on this project.

-Committee members have formed a few active small groups for specific projects such as the future Kmart parcel development (collecting names, thinking about process), anti-displacement efforts (meeting soon), and committee members wishing to field development-related questions/presentations

-North Bay project at 1st Ave and 27th St has now begun construction

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Minutes submitted by Kaley Brown.